

## **Children's Rights and Child Protection Awareness Day at PUSH**

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South African children are very important, every one of them has a right from birth which was insured by the South African constitution that states every child has a right to protection, health and safety, these are some of the children's rights stated in the constitution. Therefore, every citizen must ensure that every child is protected in every way possible and also make sure that all children are treated equally. This includes better education, and access to library and sports facilities that will help a child grow in a healthy environment or community.

When a child is well taken care of and receives the best education, that's a blessing because that means the country will have better future leaders with the knowledge to solve every situation the country might be facing. That is why it is strictly highlighted in the Freedom Charter that free education for all children, was to ensure that every child in South Africa gets a better education, with better infrastructure to ensure a better future for them. Child protection includes making sure that every child is not physically abused or emotionally abused in any way. Child Protection Week aims to make sure that everyone understands that it is not right to abuse children in any way, this includes telling children how to feel and act when they are being abused.

On, Saturday, 1 June 2024, PUSH, based in Kliptown, Soweto, held a Children's Rights Day and Child Protection Awareness. The purpose of the event was to remind the children that they are not alone in the journey of life and to tell them that they are important and that no one has a right to take advantage of them in any way. The aim was to give the children the platform to freely express themselves, about how they understand children's rights and in which way a child must be protected. Children were also informed about what to do if they were being abused either by a parent or anyone else. It is known that abusing a child comes with serious consequences if being found guilty of doing so.

This year's event at PUSH started at 10:00 am, the children were divided into three groups after an introduction and the aims of the event were shared. They were then given three topics about child protection, the first group had to talk about how safely they felt while at home, the second group focused on how safe they felt at school and finally, the third group of children were to talk about how safe do they feel safe in the communities they live in.

Every group was given 30 minutes to discuss their topics, this exercise was for the kids to say and express what they face and go through in their daily lives at home, school and community. Amongst the guests were respected officers from Kliptown Police Station, Mr Maleka to give children legal advice about child protection and what action they should take if they are being abused.

Mr Mashudu from Jo'burg Child Welfare told the youth of Kliptown that no matter what the situation may be, being abused is and will always be wrong.

The Khanya College staff was also invited to the event as part of the wonderful PUSH and Khanya do to keep children safe and literate.

The day was a very good opportunity to highlight what children are going through in their communities, the children that (sic) were given a chance to represent their groups told the crowd, "Every kid must respect their parents and must be open at all times, this will also help the kids to be more free (sic) with their parents because some parents go through a lot, this includes drug and alcohol abuse which tends to destroy the relationship, especially

when kids want an advise from their parents. That is the reason why most kids find it difficult to open up to their parents when there is something that is bothering them.”

Mr Malika said that Kliptown is the most dangerous part of Soweto when it comes to crime, drugs and other dangerous substances that are being used by the community members, and which in the end might also end up in the hands of children as there is no proper guidance from the community or homes.

Mr Malika said, “They notice what is happening in the community but there is a way they do things which are approaching the gangsters in a polite way that won’t cause violence”, he continued saying that schools should continue to search scholars for dangerous weapons and illicit substances.

This response came after group two explained the dangers they came across at schools, which is a major cause of many kids dropping out of school. Some teachers take advantage of kids and most of them don’t even care about the kids at school, that is why rape cases are coming from schools, the very same place that is supposed to make them feel safe. There are wrong things that happen at school, some children have to pay a fee to access the toilets while others pay protection fees, according to group two.

Mr Mashudu closed off his speech by clearly advising the children that joining community organisations will help them with a sense of understanding of what is happening in the communities, whatever they are facing in the community, there are always people ready to help them.

Mashudu concluded that there are some organisations and people like social workers, including police stations or even better, that children must find someone they trust and share their sorrows with, people who will not take advantage of them.

*This article is an opinion piece submitted on 12 June 2024. The views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect those of Karibu! Online or Khanya College. You may republish this article, so long as you credit the authors and Karibu! Online ([www.Karibu.org.za](http://www.Karibu.org.za)), and do not change the text. Please include a link back to the original article.*