

## **Parents and Allies of the Queer community engage in Queer Issues**

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Parents Families and Friends of South African Queers (PFSAQ), hosted a workshop in Kwa-Thema, Springs where they had parents and allies of the queer community engaging on issues affecting the queer community and learning more about the community at large. Pfsaq is an organisation that aims to develop parents, families and allies of the LGBTIQ+ people into becoming public advocates for dignity, equality and social inclusion. To also provide information to parents who are willing to be public advocates.

The purpose of the event was to bring parents of queers' together, share information to parents so they understand the diversity and the acronym. Lydia Maggie Mashinini a 73 year old ally who attended the workshop shared her outcome on the event. "We have learned a lot, I didn't know about the differences on sexual orientation, I so wish this can happen also in schools and we can get to invite more parents so we can engage in such conversations and help our children come out"

The topics tackled by the facilitator Virginia Magwaza who is also the founder and managing director of Pfsaq included, Sexism, Patriarchy, Feminism, Heteronormativity and Legal framework. Parents were taught about the constitution and how to go about when attending to cases, be it family court, magistrate court and high court. "I am grateful to the facilitators today, as old as I am I got to learn about how the law deals with issues, now I can be able to assist my community" said Thokozile Sibeko (62 years old). "Today we know how to be comfortable with our children, I am thankful to the facilitator for teaching us, as we go back into our homes we will be able to give our children hope" concludes MaSibeko

"The work of working with parents is complex because of the stereotypes namely: Religion, Tradition and our Culture, now we are seeing the shift on how parents think and perceive us, we now have leaders who are willing to seat with us and listen", said Virginia

When asked about challenges, Virginia spoke on the Governments non-inclusion when it comes to Queer issues, "The state is not supportive, we are facing structural issues as we had to hire a church to use for this workshop. We need a venue to give out refreshments and to provide transport, we all had to do that ourselves. But today's event went well because we already had a core group existing in Kwa-Thema and we partnered with Ekurhuleni LGBTIQ+ Organisation previously know as EPOC (Ekurhuleni Pride Organising Committee) for this particular event.

Many of the parents who were part of the discussion have queer children, whether by birth or otherwise some of them are allies. "We really need to have these conversations more so that we can support our children, the killings are not nice, these are our children, we birthed them" said MaMashinini

"Today's workshop was positive, very touching and heart-warming to hear our mothers saying that they will support, protect and continue to advocate. That's what

we want, for parents to speak on phobias and that is the true realization of the freedom and human rights of the LGBTIQ+ in South Africa” concluded Virginia.

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