

Mystery Over Death Of Gay Teenager In Limpopo

By Noluvuyo Lata

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On Friday, 23 June 2023, the lifeless body of 17-year-old Bruce Shaba was found hanging in a house located in a small village near Giyani. Before the police had confirmed anything to the media, there were Facebook posts going around claiming that Shaba had been raped and stabbed to death. Other posts claimed that the teenager had been hung by angry residents because Bruce was openly gay.

But on Saturday, 24 June 2023, when the police did confirm that the teenager was found hanging, they believed that it was a suicide that was the result of Shaba being bullied and discriminated against by his family and his community. At this point, police are only suspecting this, but it has not been proven as the investigation is still underway.

According to the online news platform, *MambaOnline*, the teenager's mother had this to say when speaking to the South African Broadcasting Corporation SOC Limited (SABC):

"The news came to me that my son committed suicide. He was told to leave where he was staying. I have a lot of questions that I would ask him if he was here. They told me he committed suicide. How can he commit suicide? Something is fishy. I don't understand; I'm shocked."

Seems the death of young Shaba still has a lot of speculation surrounding it. People, including his friends on social, do not believe that he committed suicide and that instead, the police should be focusing on finding his alleged killers. It is no secret that the LGBTQIA+ community experiences a lot of hate from society and sometimes that hate does result in the loss of the lives of queer community members, and this cannot be ruled out as one of those times.

Speaking to SABC News regarding the matter, members of the gay community in Giyani Clinton Sithole and Adam Mhlongo shared that, "The community is hurt and disappointed at what happened... It's a struggle. We are still fighting for our rights. As gay people, we are not safe... Discrimination and bullying has become our daily bread and butter."

It is tragic that such a young life needed to be lost because of hate and discrimination, whether it was by his own hand or the hand of someone else, this needs to come to an end. The queer community cannot live under constant threat by family and their society as if they are not part of those entities, they are as much family and community members as anyone else, and their sexuality should not matter.

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