

**AGENDA FEMINIST MEDIA**  
**SCRIPT: GENDER VIOLENCE IN EDUCATION**  
**DURATION: 10'03''**

**INTRO SIG TUNE**

**INTRO:** Lithemba Jama, Olga Hendrick and Inge Lotz... These South African students were brutally murdered by their boyfriends. The country's high levels of domestic violence, rape and femicide are well documented. This, in spite of the fact that South Africa boasts one of the world's most progressive Domestic Violence Acts. Hello and welcome, my name is Dineo Mphahlele. In this programme, we look at gender violence in education.

**VOX-POP:** Ja, I do think we have a fair share of violence against women on campus but I don't think our girls would wanna say anything because they are supposed to be the "educated girls" and "should" know better. I also know of a few cases where women have not reported it and gone back. A friend of mine even told me of a case that he witnessed where a girl was abused by her boyfriend – physically – and the next day, I saw them holding hands. So I feel there is a bit of ignorance, maybe a sense of vulnerability from some women who feel that they have to be with a guy and would do it at any cost... Gender violence, I can't say I am aware of it. I have heard of stories of people being in violently abusive relationships: two stories of girls who stayed in (residence). So I think it is a big issue. I am more aware of verbal abuse. I suppose, kind of, an attitude as well on campus about how it's okay for guys to say certain things that are offensive. I have actually never experienced or ever heard of any form of abuse on campus but I think that it does happen. I think the reason why we don't hear about it is because of this perceived level of intellectualism that is supposed to be amongst students at universities. I think that what we have to do is we have to actually just break that perception so that people can feel more free to talk about their vulnerabilities and their problems... I've never heard of any experiences of gender violence on campus. I think it varies on the extent of the violence perhaps... Before I started, several friends of mine who had gone here years ago warned me about it. Like, don't ever stay on campus after dark. There (are) several rape cases reported. I haven't felt that kind of insecurity at all, to be honest but I am sure that there are things that happen that I don't know about... I think the only reason we don't hear about it is because people are trying to keep it as low-key as possible. They don't want others to know about it because it is quite embarrassing for an "educated" girl to be abused because she's expected to know more but it is happening and I think we need to make a plan to sort it out.

**NARRATION:** Those were the views of students at a prominent local university. Violence against women is a widespread human rights issue but because the perpetrator is often known and trusted by the victim, these incidents go unreported. Cultural norms which dictate social constructs are largely to blame as they promote inequality between men and women. Dr Pholoho Morojele, lecturer in Social Justice Education at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, explains.

**PHOLOHO 2:** The causes of gender violence in education... we will have to look at it from the context of cultural and social relationships of men and women; of boys and girls in society. The cultural constructions of gender, which is masculinities and femininities, have got a bigger bearing on the kinds of relationships between men and women; or boys and girls. You will find that most cases of gender violence in education happened when boys draw from these cultural constructions of masculinity and try to conform to these particular constructions. You will find that dimension makes room for gender

violence to take place. Remember some of cultural constructions of masculinity have to do with men as physically strong, uncaring, etc. and in boy's attempts in trying to conform to this, you will find that cases of gender violence happen.

**NARRATION:** While gender violence is mainly perpetrated by men and directed against women and girls, it is also used to victimize those who do not adhere to gender roles.

**PHOLOHO 3:** Another dimension happens when women or girls in schools have formed gender in ways that subvert these cultural constructions of femininities. So boys have the inclination to want to police and punish gender roles that do not signify cultural constructions of femininity. In that way then, you find that girls who are gay or lesbians become the adverse victims of gender violence.

**NARRATION:** Even at primary school level, young girls are taught not to question violent acts perpetrated by boys. Vangisa is a 35 year old woman from a village called Volkrust in Mpumalanga. Today, she has a restraining order against her husband who psychologically abused and threatened to kill her and their two children. She tells us that she's experienced some form of violence in every relationship she has ever been in because, culturally, it was accepted.

**VANGISA 18:** My first boyfriend, when I was in standard six was Nhlanhla. It was weird because I knew he was my boyfriend but he had a girlfriend in each and every class. I didn't have a problem with (this) because it was just a situation where we'd agreed that I'd be (his) girlfriend but we won't sleep together because I don't want a child. {XH intact}

**VANGISA 19:** It happened that sometimes break time at school, he would take one of the girls and they would go somewhere and some of the students would come to me and tell me "there goes Nhlanhla with a girlfriend," and I would tell them that's fine because he and I have an agreement that I don't want to sleep with him and I don't want children. Then some day what happened is he asked me if I will go with him to his home and I said no. He dragged me saying "we're going to my house!" That's when I decided I don't want him in my life because he wants to give me that very child that I don't want. {XH intact}

**NARRATION:** Every relationship or interaction has a power dynamic to it. In each instance, this power dynamic is either healthy or dysfunctional. As Dr Morojele explains, boys and men who are prone to violence have internalized the social constructions which assert them as superior to the opposite sex.

**PHOLOHO 6:** You'll find that the kinds of unequal relationships that are forged by dominant constructions of masculinities and femininities ensure that boys have got some kind of dominance in their relationships. Some girls find it very difficult to negotiate favorable engagements and relationships with them and as such, should anything go wrong in the relationship, you will find that girls are likely to be the victims than boys.

**NARRATION:** Vangisa's family removed her from school at the age of fifteen because they considered her to be old enough to get married. In that year, she was abducted by a man who claimed he loved and wanted to marry her.

**VANGISA 32:** It wasn't a strange thing. We all knew that it happens... girls get abducted and they get married into families. So it wasn't really something that was out of the ordinary. So my family just had to be informed. It is normal practice. {XH intact}

**VANGISA 33:** To me, it seemed as if it was right because I thought it was law because, first of all, they took me out of school; and it seemed like it was normal though I felt it couldn't be right but because that's the way things were done, I just thought it must be right then. **{XH intact}**

**NARRATION:** How does this happen and why are these incidents not reported? We pose this question to Dr Morojele.

**PHOLOHO 9:** You find that our legal systems and social systems do not allow for people who have reported these cases to be protected against the perpetrator. So you report the case and you are likely to face more adverse consequences than if you did not report it. Those are the kinds of things that actually make these incidents so brutal.

**OUTRO:** Dr Poloho Morojele brings us to the end of this programme on gender violence in education.

**PHOLOHO 14:** We need to think of what kind of language; what kinds of symbols help girls identify. This construction of gender violence is actually done through language presentations, through messages and attributes associated with an identity. A lot of our intervention strategies do not talk to the kind of language; to the kinds of symbols and presentations that is about alternative discourses through which girls can draw from and use as a means to subvert and challenge some of the damaging constructions of gender.

**OUTRO SIG TUNE**