

Sex workers want to ply their trade within law

Decriminalisation 'would solve woes'

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GAUTENG sex workers have made impassioned pleas for the decriminalisation of their trade.

The workers took their frustration to the Gauteng Provincial Legislature yesterday to fight what they called exploitation, abuse, discrimination and violence.

Yesterday was their day to make their voices heard, as sex workers stood before the Speaker Ntombi Mekgwe and gave testimony on the difficulties they faced and how decriminalisation of their work would solve problems such as their access to justice and quality healthcare, HIV infections, access to UIF contributions and payments, as well as ending police brutality, among others.

Palesa Mokoena spoke with zeal about the problems sex workers encounter, eliciting applause from a gallery full of co-workers.

"We work for our children in order to give them a better future and for them to get to schools that we couldn't," she said.

Another sex worker, who wouldn't name herself, said: "Sex workers are citizens of this country. We vote and pay tax, yet we can't apply for bank loans because we have no pay-slips," she said.

"We can't own bonded property because of this, so we have to wait for RDP houses

which aren't guaranteed. "We are forced to fall under the hands of *mashonisa* (loan sharks) and are expected to work underground like the mafia, yet just in June a sex worker was raped by a *mashonisa* because she couldn't repay a loan of R2 000 that had become R10 000."

In a report on the decriminalisation of sex work that was unanimously adopted at the legislature, it was alleged that sex workers were over-policed but under-protected and were, as a result, vulnerable to violence and predators targeting them with virtual impunity.

"Police officers always tell sex workers that they do not have any rights. An example will be that of police officers raping sex workers. Sex workers are afraid to lodge a case against them in fear of their lives," the report read, in part.

In the report, sex workers decried how police officers confiscated their condoms as evidence that they were sex workers and how they were allegedly denied their HIV antiretroviral treatment when in police detention.

Yesterday also marked the commemoration by the Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Taskforce (Sweat) and Sisonke National Sex Workers Movement in South Africa of the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers.

The day is celebrated on December 17, but the groups arranged memorial events in several provinces yesterday to



HAVING THEIR SAY: Gauteng sex workers in the provincial legislature yesterday after debating decriminalisation of their trade.

PICTURE: DUMISANI SIBEKO

stand in solidarity with sex workers and their coalition, named Asijiki, to decriminalise the trade.

Sweat said that last year saw a "high number of brutal murders" of sex workers, one being Desiree Murugan, whose body was found beheaded in Durban.

"In November (this year) alone, four sex workers were murdered in South Africa. The

"We pay tax yet we can't apply for bank loans"

deep stigma and vulnerability of sex workers to violence and harassment has further

been illustrated by the recent actions of the police in Pretoria, who, in response to the murder of a sex worker, terrorised the deceased's colleagues who were willing to give statements, and set fire, four times, to their shacks and possessions," the group said in a statement.

The legislature also adopted two other reports, following submissions on both, on the

decriminalisation of sex work – one of access to health services and another on access to the economy.

The chairwoman of committees at the legislature, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, said they would submit the reports to the various departments, and the sex workers would be given feedback next year regarding their submissions.

Officers also victims of abuse, women told

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FEMALE members of Joburg's metro police department (JMPD) and emergency services shared experiences of abuse and violence in commemoration of the last of the 16 Days of Activism.

A room at the JMPD's headquarters was filled with orange and blue as the officers gathered for a dialogue over the dangers they face as women in uniform. They acknowledged that the uniform did not protect them from rape or domestic abuse, and said that sometimes they're even attacked on duty.

"A lot of you ladies get abused," said JMPD spokeswoman Edna Mamonyane. She told her colleagues about her sister's seven-year struggle in an abusive marriage that ended with her being shot dead in her own driveway. "Leave them! You had better go home and start again," Mamonyane urged her colleagues.

Other women shared similar stories of rape and abuse. One officer told the group they have several options for leaving. "The window. The door. The gate. They're open," she said. This became a unifying chant for the group.

Mamonyane, in an interview, recalled two female paramedics who were raped when they responded to a call.

"As female employees for public safety, we are abused by a whole lot of people, by the public and people we

think we're protecting out there," she said.

Striking members of the South African Municipal Workers Union from the various licence department offices tried to interrupt the discussion by singing and toying up to the doorway of the room.

However, the women's conversation persevered with messages of self-acceptance and self-worth.

When a speaker said something particularly powerful, the women shouted "Yes!" and "Yebo!" in approval. Led by the Memeza Campaign, the women shouted for 16 seconds as an exercise to be heard.

"If there's more of us shouting, something is going to happen," said Tshidi Mpitso of the Memeza Campaign. "You start relating to my story and start getting strength. It's selfish to keep quiet."

Mpitso said she hoped the movement would grow into 365 days of activism. The officers seemed to share her hope.

They asked for management to review and workshop the department's sexual harassment policies and for dialogues like yesterday's to happen on a regular basis.

The women also carried placards with messages such as "Women in uniform also have the right to speak out."

"What kind of society do we want to build if we violate women who respond to calls?" public safety MMC Sello Lemao asked.



UNITED: Joburg metro police and emergency services officers release balloons to commemorate their taking part in 16 Days of Activism.

PICTURE: KATE MORRISSEY

FIVE-DAY FORECAST FOR JOHANNESBURG Min Max °C

Today 11th	Sat 12th	Sun 13th	Mon 14th	Tue 15th
19 / 35	19 / 28	17 / 28	16 / 29	16 / 27
30%	60%	60%	60%	60%

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GAUTENG PCloudy/TIS

MAIN CITIES Minimum Maximum °C

Cape Town	15 / 22	Durban	22 / 28	Mbombela	22 / 31
Bloemfontein	17 / 33	East London	18 / 24	Port Elizabeth	17 / 23
Polokwane	19 / 33	Kimberley	18 / 35	Rustenburg	21 / 34

Today's Temps Min Max °C

Pretoria	21 / 39	Klerksdorp	20 / 36	Vereeniging	18 / 35	Polokwane	15 / 33
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MOON: NEW MOON DEC 11 12:29

WORLD TEMPERATURES Minimum Maximum °C

Amsterdam	6 / 10	Cairo	12 / 21	Paris	3 / 11
Athens	6 / 17	Chicago	6 / 11	Rome	8 / 16
Auckland	15 / 20	Harare	18 / 33	Sydney	19 / 27
Barcelona	11 / 18	Lisbon	12 / 17	Taipei	19 / 24
Beirut	13 / 20	London	3 / 9	Tel Aviv	6 / 19
Berlin	2 / 9	Nairobi	17 / 25	Tokyo	5 / 12
Brussels	4 / 9	New York	8 / 12	Tunis	11 / 18

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Erykah extends an olive branch to Iggy

LOS ANGELES: American singer Erykah Badu appeared to apologise to Iggy Azalea in a new Twitter video posted on Tuesday.

But it wasn't all as it seemed, with the 44-year-old issuing a reluctant apology saying she was doing it only because her children are fans of the 25-year-old Australian songstress.

"I want to do this for my daughters," Erykah prefaced her apology addressing her daughters Seven, 18, Puma, 11, and Mars, 6.

"I want to apologise to Iggy Azalea because she's one of their favourite artists and they listen to her all the time and it's for them," she said, before rapping them on the knuckles.

"But when I think about it, I mean if y'all love her so much, why don't you all go be with her then? Go and be with her, y'all – go on Puma, go on Mars.

"Is Iggy Azalea gonna miss the healing seminar to go to the school and sit across from the teacher so she can tell you that all y'all been doing is talking to your neighbours and not getting your lesson? Is she? Where's Iggy for that?" she ranted.

However, Iggy, who is now based in LA, took the high road and accepted the singer's apology, even providing an incentive to her chil-



BAD BADU: Singer Erykah Badu, left, seemed to apologise to Iggy Azalea after Badu slammed Azalea when Badu hosted the BET Soul Train awards.



dren to get good marks at school. "I'm gonna announce a new tour soon, if they do great in class, there is an open invitation to them and friends with good report cards to come and enjoy a show anytime," Iggy said on Twitter.

She also told the American star she is a big fan "even if we don't agree where to file my music in their iTunes folders", she wrote, accepting the olive branch.

The online feud began after Erykah slammed the Australian rapper as she hosted the BET Soul Train Awards on Sunday.

The *Tyrone* singer blasted the artist during her opening monologue, as she said she wouldn't let any rap artists get involved on the

night. Pretending to take a phone call from the *Fancy* hitmaker, she said she was welcome because "what you're doing is definitely not rap".

Later on, Erykah retweeted a post which read: "Life would be wonderful if women celebrated each other instead of emulating garbage like @fatbellybella. "You have my support @IGGYAZALEA."

She continued to retweet positive comments from fans who thought she had done a good job on the night.

Iggy hit back online, returning to Twitter to say: "We are days from 2016, but I came online today and saw it's still cool to try and discredit my 2014 accomplishments.

"LOL, ***king hell." – Daily Mail

Top R&B boy band kick off SA tour in Mother City

BOYZ II Men fever is running high as Cape Town prepares to host the most iconic R&B boy band of all time.

Boyz II Men and Joe will be kicking off their South African tour, The Hits Live, in the Mother City tonight.

Boyz II Men, the best-selling R&B group of all time, on Tuesday tweeted: "We're on our way #Capetown #SouthAfrica..."

So don't be surprised if you bump into Joe, Shawn, Nathan or Wanya. The stars were seen

hanging out at the Waterfront this week.

The group are known for their emotional and sexy ballads, including the chart-topping *I'll Make Love to You*.

Joe, best enjoyed with a candlelit dinner and red wine, recently stole the show when he did a cover of Adele's *Hello*.

The group will also perform in Durban on Sunday and Joburg on Tuesday. – Staff Reporter



BEST-SELLERS: Boyz II Men will also be performing in Durban on Sunday and Joburg on Tuesday.

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