

## Media witch hunt on Semenya will lead to hate crimes

-Media Statement Gender DynamiX and the Saartjie Baartman Centre  
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This week South African media, in particular radio DJ's and print media have been having a shameless orgy with the gender dispute of our gold medalist heroine competing in Berlin.

Last year we lost a South African sport star to a hate crime because she transgressed gender boundaries. Banyana soccer star Eudy Simelane was murdered in a township because she challenged expected gender stereotypes.

Is our media putting a South African hero's life in danger on her return, gold medal in hand?

Instead of being proud of our champion the South African media and public is on a witch-hunt trying to define Semenya's sex. DJ's on radio are dissecting Semenya's person to a point of reducing her accomplishments to her genitals.

Says Gender DynamiX Director: "In our work we are reminded of how (wo)men's bodies are so easily ridiculed and made into a spectacle because of gender notions". Gender DynamiX focuses its work in the field of transgender, transsexual and gender non-conforming people.

Civil society organisations, are fighting battles against homophobia and transphobia in South Africa. With their work the killing of black lesbians in acts called "curative rape" has come to light. Gender DynamiX maintains that these hate crimes are not only rooted in sexual orientation but also in gender identity.

Ilse Ahrends, Partnership coordinator at the Saartjie Baartman Centre in Cape Town asks "Alas where was the media when National Banyana-Banyana soccer player, Eudy Simelane was murdered because of her sexual orientation?"

Gender non-conformity does not always equal gay or lesbian. It merely refers to a person physical appearance that does not conform to society's expectations. In general people are outraged and confused by gender ambiguity.

As in the case of Caster Semenya, when confronted by people who challenge our perceptions of masculinity or femininity, we react with anger and fear. This is the daily reality for many South Africans.

Gender DynamiX board member Simone Heradien says: "We are appalled by public and media mechanisms that spur hate speech of this nature. We should not forget the part of radio in the genocide in Rwanda."

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