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Centre alumni deliver messages of hope to LGBTI community

Six recent graduates of the LLM (Human Rights & Democratisation in Africa) programme participated in the **It Gets Better South Africa campaign**. It Gets Better South Africa forms part of the global It Gets Better Project where online videos are used to share unique messages of hope and solidarity with LGBT youth. Since its first video, the It Gets Better Project has inspired more than 50 000 user-created videos that have been viewed more than 50 million times.

It Gets Better South Africa features struggle hero Ahmed Kathrada, FreshlyGround violinist Kyla-Rose Smith, presenters Jo-Ann Strauss and Sade Giliberti, models Kerry McGregor and Shashi Naidoo and Mr Gay World 2011, Francois Nel.

Six of the Centre's alumni teamed up with these South African celebrities to share messages of hope, dignity and equality with young people who are victims of bullying and discrimination.

View all the It Gets Better South Africa videos by going to: **www.youtube.com/itgetsbettersa**

In his video message, Paul Ogendi who has been handling several LGBTI litigation cases in Kenya, suggests that instead of merely 'tolerating' homosexual people, members of the LGBTI community should be loved.

Caesar Mavuso, a lawyer and human rights activist from Swaziland states in his video that hope can change everything and that it will get better by having and maintaining a positive attitude. 'We will continue to fight for an all-inclusive society, both the powerful and the feeble, the mighty and the powerless, both the secular and the holy, it gets better every day.'

Kitui Barbara is from Uganda and currently works as a Legal Officer for the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative. Her message is simple but powerful: 'Every human being is entitled to dignity, equality and freedom from discrimination'.

Hailing from Malawi, advocate Tadala Muyaya reminds viewers that bullies are most of time themselves insecure and that members of the LGBTI community must not forget that they 'are loved, beautiful and handsome'.

Gambian Satang Nabaneh is currently a lecturer at the University of the Gambia. According to her it is easy not to take a stand against something but when it comes to justice and equality, there is no in-between and we need to take a stand. 'Let's take a stand against bullying. Let's take a stand against discrimination. Let's take a stand against homophobia.'

Ofentse Motlhasedi is a South African who feels that homophobia is an unfortunate aspect of our modern society. Her message is not about sex and it is not about religion. Ofentse's message is "about creating a society that is based on non-discrimination and equality, a society where everyone is included, where everyone feels safe, a society where we all hope it surely does get better."

The producer of the series is Andrew Barry, a Master of Philosophy in Education student at UCT. Barry says: "If you're the target of bullying on the basis of sexual orientation, please seek support. You don't have to suffer alone. Tell someone you trust. If you're scared and you don't know who to reach out to, please call the Triangle Project Helpline." He would like to see more South Africans make contributions to the It Gets Better Project.

The videos were launched in at the 'In Whom Can I Still Trust' exhibition in conjunction with a book launch 'Challenging Homophobia: Teaching about Sexual Diversity' (edited by Lutz van Dijk and Barry van Driel) at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre. On 14 and 17 March 2013, the public is invited to film their own videos at the Cape Town Holocaust Centre. To make an appointment, please contact itgetsbettersa@gmail.com

If you're bullied on the basis of sexual orientation, call the Triangle Project Helpline 021 712 6699. It's a free and confidential service for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth in South Africa.