

## 2013 August 9: For the love of sport activism

Posted on [August 9, 2013](#) by [inkanyiso2009](#)

*by Dikeledi Sibanda*

*Where:* Antwerp, Belgium

*What:* 2013 World Outgames

*When:* 31 July – 11 Aug.

First of let me acknowledge the [National Women's Day](#) to all the women in South Africa, it is hard for me to say **Happy Women's Day** since we all know the hardships that many women are faced with in our 'democratic' country.

I might be writing this note right now and yet a woman or a girl child is being raped or violated. Personally, at this moment there is no cause of celebrating this historical day till all women in my country are free from the entrapment of gender based violence.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> **August 2013**, I was awarded with a **gold medal** by WOGA officials for making it through to the finals and as well as beating the Russian team we played against. However, somehow the medal I wore around my neck did not feel special instead it made me sad.

I say that because I didn't win the medal playing with the team I belong to, which is **Chosen FEW**. I won the medal with a Belgium team that I was placed in just so that I could play soccer.

However, that is not the case, I am here alone to represent the whole team, a team of capable and talented young black lesbians, but due to financial support the team couldn't make it to Belgium.

With that said, I refuse to keep quite and not voice out my frustrations about this whole thing.

Chosen FEW applied for the World Outgames scholarship well in advance as to make sure that we get full package. Coming from poor families, we knew that we couldn't afford to pay for ourselves and wanted to participate in the games that are by and for us gay people.

After registering for the outreach program, WOGA responded and offered the team partial outreach, which only covered registration, accommodation and allowance. The biggest challenge that we encountered was the return flights for **13** soccer players from South Africa.

We wrote to the WOGA organisation and explained our situation and our grievance fell on deaf ears.

We then as [Forum for the Empowerment of Women \(FEW\)](#) did everything in our best to fundraise for the team to get flight tickets and sporting equipments.

We held a range of activities and events to raise funds, we used social media networks and website to ask for donations and support from individuals who were willing to assist us.

We even sent out concept notes to relevant funders and companies e.g. *South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC)*, soccer city and the **Gauteng Departments of Sport** (GDS).

Different individual donated but still it wasn't enough, all the money that was raised wasn't enough to even to pay for one person's return ticket. Coalition of African Lesbian also pledged to pay for one person to go and represent Chosen FEW.

With all the different support received it was still not enough because we didn't get sufficient assistance from our own government particularly from the Sports & Recreation Department and private sponsors.

The whole experience of struggling with financial back up showed that we still have a long way to go when it comes to accessing services for black lesbians athletes in South Africa.

It's even worse now that I am here, the welcoming was cold. The place that I am hosted at is not a good space. The sports tournament is too white and discriminating. I felt that white people enjoyed certain privileges more than the minority blacks.

There's nothing good, friendly or equal about the 2013 World Outgames. There are not well organized, and people who needed support the most were not given.

To say that the aim and goal of creating an equal space for queer people who love sport with no action is just a *fantasy*.

Queer sport spaces are not yet accommodative when it comes to black LGBT's especially for black lesbians. The spaces are predominantly white and male dominated.

The absence of black queers in the organization of the Outgames I feel is the cause of this racial division within, expecting white people who do not relate to issues we deal with as black queers is illogical; but then again, if us as black people we don't involve ourselves in such spaces such divisions will always be felt.

I sometimes ask myself what's the meaning of the World Outgames and what purpose do they serve?

I first attended Chicago Gay Games in 2006 and for me that was a lifetime experience and it will never be the same again. Those games had brought people together, we shared our stories with other countries, and we were well received and our presence there was greatly appreciated compared to what I am experiencing here now.

I feel the absence of Chosen FEW at the World Outgames, considering the fact that it is the only 'outspoken' black lesbian soccer team I know off from the African soil.

Their presence would have made a queer, political statements: of inclusivity and equality like they did in all previous gay games we attended.

I feel that the lack of support from sports departments in South Africa is homophobic, but what do we expect from a country that doesn't respect rights, which are enshrined in the Constitution.

I would like to edge that South African sport bodies, to start taking us: black lesbians sport persons serious and support queer people in any other forms like they do with other minority groups like *Amakrokokroko*.

They must be proud of us because we are deserving/ talented/ passionate about sports.

We want to represent South Africa at international games.

***Related articles by Lerato***