



Commission for Gender Equality

Public Education and Information on Heritage Month and Gender Equality by the Commission for Gender Equality

In September, we observe Heritage Month as a time to reflect on how our traditions, values, and cultural practices shape our national identity and how they influence gender equality in society. Heritage is not only about the past we inherit, but also about the future we create. In this reflection, we must also confront how certain harmful practices, such as not equally recognising women in traditional leadership roles, virginity testing, or cultural norms that normalize gender-based violence, continue to undermine equality and dignity. At the same time, our heritage also carries powerful values such as ubuntu, solidarity, and respect, which can be harnessed to strengthen gender justice. It calls us to celebrate practices uplifting dignity and unity while challenging those encouraging discrimination and inequality. For heritage to have real value, it must embrace inclusivity, protect the rights of women, men, youth, and gender-diverse people, and promote a society where all are treated with fairness and respect. This month calls on us to reflect on how cultural practices affect gender justice, and to act to ensure that our traditions are aligned with the values of dignity, humanity and equality. The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), mandated to promote, protect, and monitor gender rights in South Africa, continues to engage with communities and institutions through advocacy, oversight, and public participation, ensuring that culture becomes a tool for inclusion rather than exclusion, and a foundation for unity rather than division. Heritage Month is about honouring our history and shaping a present and future where culture becomes a living source of safety, belonging, and equality for all. In this way, we pass on our traditions and a lasting commitment to justice, fairness, and respect to the next generation. By choosing equality as part of our heritage, we ensure that the legacy we leave is one of dignity and shared humanity. For more information, visit our social media platforms. We are on X: @CGE_ZA, Instagram: @cgelive and Facebook: Commission for Gender Equality.

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