

Via email: [minister@dac.gov.za](mailto:minister@dac.gov.za); [deputym@dac.gov.za](mailto:deputym@dac.gov.za);  
[AsandaM@dac.gov.za](mailto:AsandaM@dac.gov.za)

31 July 2019

Honourable Minister Mthethwa  
Department of Sports, Arts & Culture  
Sechaba House  
202 Madiba Street  
Pretoria 0001

Dear Honourable Minister Mthethwa,

**Re: Request to Red List Mbongeni Ngema in light of sexual harassment reports**

The Wise Collective, dba Wise 4 Afrika, (WISE) is an advocacy organization that is driving **w**omen **i**nspired **s**olutions for **e**mpowerment and seeks to advance a feminist agenda to address gender inequalities. Inspired by and emerging from the movement of thousands of women who marched on August 1, 2018 to protest against gender based violence in South Africa, **we are determined in our resolve to address and arrest gender based violence and femicide (GBVF) wherever and whenever it exists.** Central to our mission is ensuring that womxn of South Africa can enjoy their constitutional right to safety.

We are writing to you regarding the pervasive reports of sexual harassment in the arts industry aka “couch interviews” and more specifically seek action on Mbongeni Ngema. First, we wish to commend the Joburg Theatre for believing the womxn who brought complaints of sexual harassment against Sarafina playwright, Mbongeni Ngema. In addition to believing the womxn, The Joburg Theatre acted swiftly and precisely taking measures to remove Ngema from the set thus ensuring a safer workplace for the womxn.

In addition to the recent incident, Ngema has a history of perpetrating violence against womxn as documented through the various past accusations ranging from harassment to sexual assault. He has managed to avoid accountability for his behaviour largely due to inaction and/or protection from associated institutions that failed to believe the womxn and/or take adequate action against his behaviour. Action taken by The Joburg Theatre should send a resounding message to the arts and entertainment that **it ends here!**

Sexual harassment is not simply about the misbehaviour of a few misguided or malicious individuals. The prevalence and persistence of sexual harassment together with widespread impunity of perpetrators, manifest a systemic, structural problem linked to broader social, economic and political distributions of power that vest authority, decision making and belief in men.

We therefore call upon the ministry to lead all arts institutions, businesses that procure such services and in particular to:

- adopt policies and procedures that are grounded in **believing and supporting victims/survivors of sexual harassment #iBelieveHer**;
- hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, starting with action to ban and **red list Mbongeni Ngema** as a producer / director, etc.;
- launch a campaign to raise awareness and promote **zero tolerance for violence against womxn and an end to couch interviews. #No2Sex4Work**

As we approach the first anniversary of the historic womxn's march on August 1st, organized by #TheTotalShutdown in 2018 against Gender Based Violence, it is an opportunity for the arts and entertainment industry, civil society, private sector and government as a whole to **arrest sexual harassment and proactively ensure safer workplaces for womxn. The time to #EndGBVnow and the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Sports has an opportunity to lead the arts industry notwithstanding the sports industry, specifically SAFA's handling of the rape accused Danny Jordan.**

Thank you in advance for your consideration and taking this matter seriously. We look forward to your swift response; please note we are also available for an urgent meeting and can be reached through [retha@wise4afrika.org](mailto:retha@wise4afrika.org) if necessary.

Sincerely,

  
Brenda Madumise-Pajibo

  
Pinky Mgobozi

Wise 4 Afrika Directors  
#FeministsAtWork

  
Onica Nonhlanhla Makwakwa

  
Sibongile Mthembu

cc Joburg Theatre  
Market Theatre  
State Theatre  
Artscape Theatre Centre  
Baxter Theatre

**Wise 4 Afrika Directors  
#FeministsAtWork**