Unveiling the Hidden Narrative: Untold Stories of Gender-Based Violence Against Men in Zimbabwe

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Gender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread problem that affects individuals worldwide, regardless of their gender. While there has been significant attention and rightful condemnation of GBV against women, the experiences of men who fall victim to gender-based violence are often overlooked. In Zimbabwe, a country known for its vibrant culture and resilience, the untold stories of gender-based violence against men are gradually coming to light. This article aims to bring attention to this lesser-known aspect of GBV in Zimbabwe and spark a crucial conversation that challenges stereotypes and promotes inclusivity.

Violence against men based on their gender, also known as gender-based violence, encompasses various forms of physical, sexual, and psychological harm. Examples of such violence include domestic abuse, sexual assault, emotional mistreatment, and societal discrimination. Although many assume that men are not vulnerable to such violence, the reality is quite different.

Instances of gender-based violence among men often remain unreported, primarily because of traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Men are commonly perceived as stoic, strong, and impervious to vulnerability, resulting in doubt, scorn, and victim-blaming when they seek help or disclose their experiences. Overcoming these stereotypes is essential in establishing a secure environment for male victims to speak out and share their stories, which can contribute to a society that recognizes the multifaceted nature of gender-based violence.

Another hidden narrative is the sexual violence experienced by men. Sexual assault and rape can affect anyone, regardless of their gender. However, the stigma and disbelief surrounding male victimhood often prevent men from reporting these crimes or seeking support. This lack of recognition and understanding further marginalizes male victims and denies them the justice they deserve.

Gender-based violence leaves lasting scars on its victims, regardless of their gender. Men who experience GBV often suffer from long-term physical, emotional, and psychological consequences. The stigma surrounding male victimhood can exacerbate these effects, leading to feelings of shame, guilt, and isolation. Recognizing the impact of GBV on men is crucial for providing appropriate support and services to aid their healing process.

Moreover, the discrimination that men who experience gender-based violence face from society can worsen their suffering. Blaming the victim and the notion that men are accountable for their victimization reinforces harmful stereotypes and obstructs any progress in dealing with the issue. It is essential to challenge these stereotypes and change the narrative to one that fosters empathy, comprehension, and encouragement for all survivors.

It is essential to increase awareness and challenge societal norms that promote silence and stigmatization of male victims of gender-based violence. Educational and sensitization programs should aim to dispel myths surrounding this issue and encourage survivors to speak up and seek help. To provide male victims with the necessary support and assistance, specialized support services, helplines, and counseling centers should be established.

It is important to explore the hidden narratives of gender-based violence against men in Zimbabwe. Doing so can help create a society that recognizes and addresses all forms of violence, regardless of gender. By amplifying these stories and advocating for change, we can work towards building a more inclusive and compassionate society that supports and validates the experiences of all survivors. It is crucial to implement legal reforms that ensure laws protect and recognize male victims of gender-based violence. This can be achieved by creating legislation that explicitly acknowledges male victimhood and provides legal protections and support services.