

MAY 17
INTERNATIONAL DAY
AGAINST
HOMOPHOBIA, TRANSPHOBIA
AND BIPHOBIA

17 May 2022

Companies must do more in the fight against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

Today marks the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia; observed annually since 2005. This day aims to raise awareness around LGBT rights globally and specifically, violations against the LGBTQIAP+ community. The date was chosen to commemorate the removal of homosexuality from the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Classification of Diseases (ICD) on 17 May 1990. Until 1990, homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder by the WHO.

While the statement "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," appears in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to the United Nations^[1], same-sex relationships are still criminalised in a third of all countries. The fact that the rights of the LGBTQIAP+ community are all too often diminished, or totally disregarded, speaks to systemic marginalisation on a global scale. In a fair, just and equal society, no one should be left behind.

This year's theme is "Our Bodies, Our Lives, Our Rights." Sadly, too many marginalised LGBTQIAP+ people cannot take this basic human right for granted. Workplaces are an important source of community and we need to ensure they are places

^[1] UN Free and Equal, United National Human Rights Office (2022): *The United Nations' Global Campaign Against Homophobia and Transphobia*. Accessed on 13 May 2022: <https://www.unfe.org/about-2/>

of equality and belonging. **The National Business Initiative (NBI)** strongly advocates for the rights of LGBTQIAP+ employees in the workplace.

What is the NBI doing to enhance belonging for LGBTQI+ Employees?

The NBI conducted research during 2020 on **Understanding the Experiences of LGBTQI+ Employees in the Workplace**. By understanding these experiences, companies can formulate transformative policies and create inclusive cultures which recognise inclusion as a human right.

In addition to strong and protective policies, companies need to prioritise workplace values and cultures centred around meaningful inclusion of LGBTQIAP+ communities. Belonging in the workplace extends to addressing stereotypes, microaggressions and biases, which negatively affect how LGBTQIAP+ employees navigate and succeed in the workplace. Recently we released a six-part video series, the **Pride in Belonging Edu-Series**. Based on the findings of our research, the series serves as an educational platform, elevating the experiences of the LGBTQIAP+ community, while advocating for companies to make structural and social changes that prioritise belonging. These moving personal accounts engage with emerging knowledge around how organisations must accelerate transformation in the workplace.

Companies need to continuously engage with the nuances of belonging in the workplace, as this has a direct correlation with an organisation's ability to attract and retain talent, extend support and show solidarity to the LGBTQIAP+ community at work. This requires companies to foster an environment which prioritises diverse participation and social values in line with being a purpose driven organisation.

Companies interested in learning more about our equity and transformation pathway are encouraged to contact Khanyisa Nomoyi (KhanyisaN@nbi.org.za)

^[1] UN Free and Equal, United National Human Rights Office (2022): *The United Nations' Global Campaign Against Homophobia and Transphobia*. Accessed on 13 May 2022: <https://www.unfe.org/about-2/>



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The National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent and voluntary coalition of South African and multinational businesses launched in 1995 by the then President, Nelson Mandela.

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