

NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER 2019

Free State Centre for Human Rights Community Engagement Program



About Us:

Through building partnerships and collaborating on mutually beneficial projects, we not only assist community projects to address unmet human rights within communities, but we also bring awareness to the beneficiaries about their human rights and understand the relevance of these community projects in their communities. This is to build more collaborative platforms for engagement between beneficiary and community projects to fulfil these unmet human rights, one community at a time.

Table of Content:

Free State Centre for Human Rights	1
Advocacy Division	3
Project 1: NELSON MANDELA DAY	6
Project 2: CLIMATE MERAKA	8

Free State Centre for Human Rights

The Free State Centre for Human Rights (FSCHR) is a *critical, interdisciplinary, and contextually engaged* research, advocacy, and legal-practice institution, focusing in its work on the relationship between *human rights and transformation*.

Established in January 2016, the centre's genesis was the 2007 incident of racial discrimination at the Reitz student residence on the University of the Free State (UFS) Bloemfontein Campus. Following this incident, an agreement was reached between the UFS and the South African Human Rights Commission that a centre for human rights would be established, with the mandate to work toward the transformation of the UFS campus and campus community.

Given this background, the centre's broad focus is not on human rights in the abstract, but on the relationship between human rights and our actual mandate, transformation. This relationship is approached from a critical perspective, that is, one that recognises its double-handed nature; the fact that human rights, in whatever context, relate both positively and negatively to transformation, can both enable and hinder transformation.

This inevitably means that the centre's work and its research community is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on a range of different disciplines and combining insights and wisdom from a variety of disciplines. The centre participates in its research and other activities with the whole UFS community, be it through teaching in the centre's Interdisciplinary Master's Degree in Human Rights; co-supervision of postgraduate students; participation in research projects; or simply involvement in the centre's research discussions and events.

Although the centre is primarily an academic research institution, its work is contextually engaged. Apart from its Research and Postgraduate Division, coordinated by Prof Loot Pretorius, the centre consists of an Advocacy Division, coordinated by Dr Annelie de Man, and a Legal Services Division, currently coordinated by the centre's director, Prof Danie Brand. The Advocacy Division engages in transformation-related human rights advocacy on the UFS campus, working primarily with students in the university's student residences. The Legal Services Division operates as a Free State-focused public interest strategic litigation unit, partly in cooperation with the UFS Law Clinic.

All of the centre's work is geographically located: research, advocacy, and litigation focus on issues on the UFS campus and in Bloemfontein, the Free State Province, and Lesotho.

Advocacy Division

The Advocacy Division promotes transformation through human rights education and advocacy on the UFS campus and more broadly in the Free State Province and Lesotho.

We currently run the following projects:

Human rights ambassadors

Each UFS student residence has a designated human rights ambassador with the dual role of monitoring respect for and promoting a human rights culture within their respective residences, to achieve transformation in the residences.

Public lectures / workshops / seminars / conferences

Various guest speakers and experts in the field of human rights are invited to address interested participants on a variety of topics within the human rights field.

Campaigns and activities to raise awareness

Through the student assistants employed by the Centre and our volunteers, the Advocacy Division hosts a number of human rights awareness raising activities throughout the year within the UFS and/or surrounding community.

Collaborations and partnerships

The FSCHR works in strong partnership with the provincial office of the South African Human Rights Commission. All interested local and national NGOs and human rights organisations are welcome to contact the Centre to build partnerships and collaborate on mutually beneficial projects.

Human rights-related queries and assistance

We also assist any student, staff member or member of the public who contacts the Centre with human rights-related queries.

The Advocacy Division is coordinated by Dr Annelie de Man

(DeManA@ufs.ac.za | **T:** +27 51 401 7216)

FSCHR: Community Engagement Programme

This programme is a combination of the following projects

- *Campaigns and activities to raise awareness*
- *Collaborations and partnerships*

Problem Identified

Most people aren't aware of what their human rights entail. This lack of awareness results in people being taken advantage of, or in people who exercise these rights irresponsibly. This contributes greatly to why these rights aren't properly met.

Opportunity Identified

Community projects are a response to these unmet human rights, thus you can link just about any community project to a human right. In essence community projects have become the life line for communities to access their human rights.

Proposed Solution

Through building partnerships and collaborating on mutually beneficial projects, we not only assist community projects to address unmet human rights within communities, but we also bring awareness to the beneficiaries about their human rights and understand the relevance of these community projects in their communities. This is to build more collaborative platforms for engagement between beneficiary and community projects to fulfil these unmet human rights, one community at a time.

Progress Made

The following is a short brief on the progress we've made thus far in addressing this problem through the framework of our solution using collaborations and partnerships to raise awareness around human rights.



Project 1: NELSON MANDELA DAY



Project: Menstruation Awareness

Date: 26 July 2019

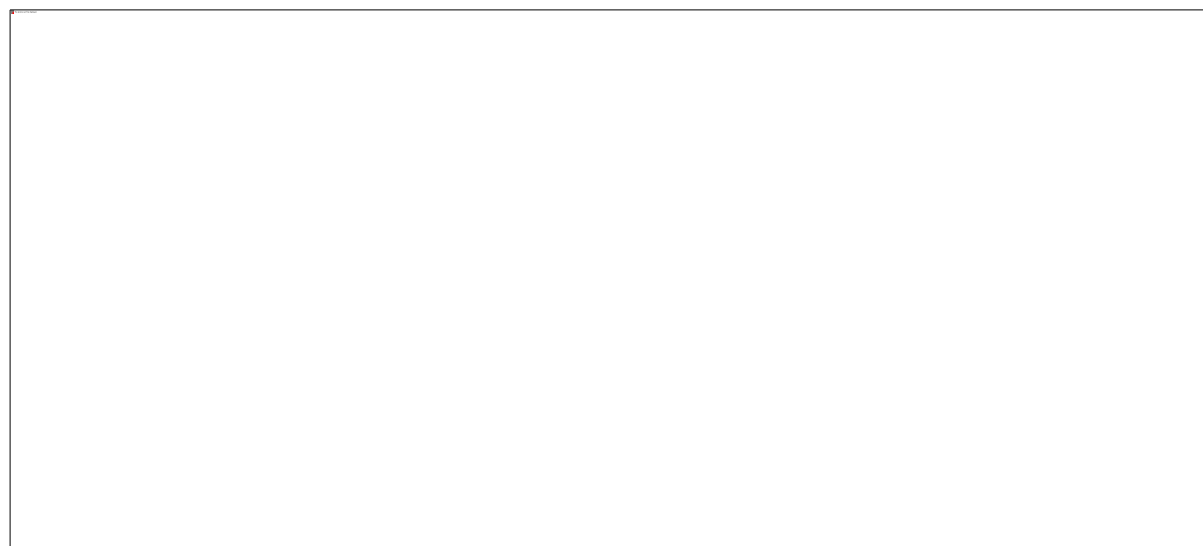
Venue: Bainsvlei Combined School

Partners:

- Social Work Student Association - UFS
- Department of Nursing - UFS
- Central University of Technology

Word from Social Work Student Association

On 26 July 2019, UFS Social Work students hosted a Mandela Day activity at Bainsvlei Combined School under the theme "My day goes on, period or not". The purpose of the event was to raise awareness about menstruation and other alternatives of sanitary towels. We had an interdisciplinary collaboration with the Department of Nursing UFS and the FSCHR and Central University of Technology. The event was a success. Thanks to everyone for the support



The Event

The event was initiated by the Social Work Student Association for Bainsvlei Combined School and reached nearly 300 learners ranging from grades 6 to 8. The aim was to address the taboo around menstruation and to start a culture of including boys in the discussion. This was aimed at really making it clear to the

learners that menstruation is not a disease or something to be ashamed of, instead it is a natural part of being a female.



The programme started with an address from the Principal of the school. Ms Lihle Malinga from the Nursing Department at the UFS followed up with a talk and activities on what is meant by menstruation and showcasing the current means available in managing it.

The volunteers of the FSCHR followed up with an interactive game explaining what human rights are from the perspective of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. We then engaged the learners on which human rights are infringed on when boys ridicule the girls around them for their experiences during the menstruation cycle and further elaborated on what the boys should rather do to support the girls in their class during their menstruation cycles.



The programme followed a skit put together by the Social Work Student Association on how men should behave and address scenarios around menstruation such as buying sanitary pads. They involved some of the learners to act as part of the skit who received prizes for taking part.

Dorothy Giwayi followed up with a presentation on reusable sanitary towels and hygiene. She discussed the processes to follow with motivations on why it is important to follow these processes along with who is affected when these processes are not followed through properly. This was later supplemented by Lisso from the Environmental Health Students at the Central University of Technology who further elaborate on the issue in a fun and interactive format.

FSCHR: Volunteers Activities

The volunteers assisted **before**, **during** and **after** the programme was over.

Before the event started, the volunteers came in and worked together with the Social Worker Students to clean and setup the venue, moving the tables and chairs in place while the other volunteers helped to prepare the kitchen for refreshments to be served after the program.



During the program they helped to facilitate the learning environment for the learners by keeping them quiet when it was time to listen and motivating learners to engage with the content during group work activities.

After the event, the volunteers assisted in dishing out the refreshments to the learners and engaged with them via making jokes, taking pictures and sharing

experiences of what it's like to be in varsity and what it took to get there. The day concluded with cleaning up the venue and saying our goodbyes to the learners.



Project 2: CLIMATE MERAKA



Project: Global Climate Awareness

Date: 20 September 2019

Venue: University of the Free State

Partners:

- Anita Venter
- Johanet Kriel-De Klerk
- Frans Kruger
- Tshiamo Malatji



Background Information

Anita Venter launched a Climate Meraka on the 13th of September 2019. She defined the platform as a space to share information on the climate crisis as well as a space for creative idea generating on how to address the climate crisis. Her passion and drive were received by the FSCHR in a collaborative project with Tshiamo Malatji, Johanet Kriel-De Klerk and Frans Kruger to scale the platform.

Word from Anita Venter

Student volunteers from the FSCHR positioned themselves in 5 stations all over campus. The students developed a rigorous academic climate quiz to engage students in exchanging climate knowledge. A student-led Climate Meraka 101 officially kicked off at the University of the Free State!

The Event

There was a Global Climate Strike against fossil fuels. Students and staff from the UFS wanted to take part in the Global Climate Strike by raising awareness to the student population on the crisis and to establish collaborative initiatives to address the current climate crisis as per the foundation set by Ms Anita Venter.



Together with the help of our partners, we developed a rigorous academic climate quiz. This quiz consisted of 101 questions around information that the youth ought to know about the climate and its current state. The volunteers then positioned themselves in 5 stations within the campus with the most student traffic.

Each of the stations had refreshments a set of questions and answers for the climate quiz. The volunteers would stop any student passing by asking them to answer any one of our questions and if the student got it right, they would receive a refreshment as their prize. If they got the question wrong, they would be given the correct answer thus learning something they didn't know about the climate



and be allowed to try again on a different question. This would go on until the student answered a question correctly.

After the quiz, we briefly explained the reason for why we have these stations all over campus along with what is happening globally between 20-27 September 2019. We then extended an invite to participate in collaborative initiatives to address the crisis of our current climate conditions and 166 students signed up.



FSCHR: Volunteers Activities

With the assistance of Frans Kruger who contributed the paint and Johanet Kriel-De Klerk who provided the printouts, the volunteers collected abandoned cardboard boxes and made all the posters themselves.



FSCHR: Community Engagement Programme

Do You
Have a Community Based Project?
or
Do You
Want To Start One?
or
Do You
**See A Problem Within Your
Community That You Want To Be
Solved?**

Contact:
**Free State Centre For Human Rights
(FSCHR)**

Helping You To Change The World, One
Community At A Time.

Together We Can Do More

T: +27 51 401 7216 | E: FSCHR@ufs.ac.za | www.ufs.ac.za

 UFSUV |  UFSweb |  UFSweb |  ufsuv

Inspiring excellence. Transforming lives.

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS·UV

LAW

FREE STATE CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS