

# Witness Change



**Witness Change is a non-profit that uses interviews, testimonies, film and photography to support marginalized groups - like LGBTQI+ identifying folks, people living with mental health issues and refugees - to tell their own stories in their own words. We use storytelling to advocate for positive change for their communities.**

Since 2014 we've been amplifying the voices of marginalised groups, helping them to redefine narratives, and campaigning with them to bring about change.

## What we offer people and organisations that support our work:

- **Create Tangible Impact:** An opportunity to create tangible impact that changes, for the better, the lives of some of the most vulnerable people on the planet
- **Change Narratives:** A chance to change narratives that harm marginalised people
- **Create Meaningful Stories:** Help the creation of compelling and meaningful storytelling

## Examples of how Witness Change worked with partners:

- **Human Rights Watch:** collaborated on a global campaign to end the chaining of people with mental health conditions
- **Vans:** conducted "Portraits with Purpose" workshops to celebrate Pride in Europe, fostering inclusion and visibility for LGBTQI+ communities.
- **Handicap International:** collaborated to document humanizing stories of their beneficiaries attracting multiple years of funding and enhancing their advocacy efforts.
- **OutRight International:** campaigned at the United Nations to bring an end to the extrajudicial execution of LGBTQI+ people.
- **Elton John Aids Foundation:** created a series of videos documenting the lives of their beneficiaries
- **Doctors Without Borders:** creating a LGBTQI+ sensitization campaign for staff and front line health workers
- **Youth Empowerment Group:** creating life skills and mental health educational materials on teen mental health in schools (and published as a cover story on Time Magazine)

## Some examples of our impact:

We've worked with grassroots LGBTQI+ organisations in countries that criminalize queer people. We've told their stories in powerful ways that have led to important impacts such as:

- Marginalised queer folks appearing on the covers of international magazines
- Thousands of dollars being donated to grassroots organisations
- Our founder addressing world leaders at The United Nations
- A social media campaign that has reached hundreds of millions of people around the world
- Staging 70+ exhibitions in dozens of countries around the world

We've worked with mental health advocates to, amongst other things:

- Free imprisoned and shackled people living with mental health conditions
- Raise millions of dollars for local mental health service providers

We've worked with campaigners in refugee rights to:

- Change the toxic narratives towards refugees in Europe
- Campaign at the European Union Parliament for compassionate treatment of refugees
- Ensure refugee voices are heard across Europe by having our refugee project published in many mainstream media outlets throughout Europe

# Witness Change Projects



WITNESS  
CHANGE

2023

## Where Love is Illegal - Exhibition in a Box

This year, with support from the fashion brand Vans (their third year of providing funding for Where Love is Illegal), Witness Change produced and sent 20 exhibitions of Where Love is Illegal to grassroots LGBTQI+ organizations around the world. These organizations, from Bangladesh and the DRC to Tulsa & Miami in the USA, were able to increase their profiles locally and create greater regional connections, providing more support and a louder voice to their local queer communities.

## In My World - Youth mental health crisis

Partnering with Colorado based service provider, Youth Empowerment Group, Witness Change has collected testimonies from 48 young people in the US, speaking about their mental health experiences and challenges. These video testimonies will be released by Time magazine in September 2023 and will be used as part of Youth Empowerment Group's mental health curriculum circulated in schools across the US to provide support to thousands of other young people struggling with their mental health.

## 1000 Dreams - EU/Greens

Witness Change, partnering with the German foundation, Heinrich Boell, exhibited photos and stories from 1000 Dreams in the EU parliament in Strasbourg during their July voting session. The exhibition brought some of the refugee storytellers to present their work and experiences as refugees during a crucial time of debate in the EU Parliament. The exhibition also created a partnership with the EU Green party, who are funding future exhibitions of refugee stories aimed at keeping refugee narratives at the forefront of legislators' minds.

## 1000 Dreams - Istanbul

Witness Change will be leading its 9th refugee storytelling workshop in Istanbul, Turkey in September 2023. The workshop will lead to eight new refugee storytellers contributing to 1000 Dreams, providing them with essential tools and funding to produce this work. With the refugee climate in Turkey becoming more hostile towards refugees, these narratives are more important now than ever.

## 1000 Dreams - Barcelona

Witness Change will lead its 10th workshop in partnership with Barcelona service provider Barcelona Actua to highlight the refugee experience in the city and advocate for greater support. For the first time, one of the workshop instructors will be a former participant of 1000 Dreams. This is part of a goal to eventually make 1000 Dreams a refugee led project.

# Witness Change Projects

## 2024

Witness Change is currently developing and expanding multiple campaigns in 2024. All projects in 2024 are in development stages and are not for external communication.

### Where Love is Illegal - MSF partnership

Partnering with Doctors Without Borders, Witness Change will conduct a series of videos of LGBTQI+ folks speaking about their experience accessing health care. The video produced will be part of a sensitization campaign run by Doctors Without Borders to teach their local staff how to provide inclusive care leading to improved health care experiences for the most marginalized queer communities.

### Incarceration Project

Witness Change will train formerly incarcerated people as storytellers to produce mitigation packages for individuals being charged with a crime. Designed to reduce or eliminate excessive prison terms, these packages will show prosecutors and judges that the person before them is more than the crime with which they are charged. Reducing prison populations and shortening sentences is a key tool in the fight against poverty, especially in the communities most affected by mass incarceration, which disproportionately affects people of color.

### Where Love is Illegal - Film

To amplify queer voices in places where they are criminalised we are making Where Love Is Illegal the film. This feature length documentary will document four queer couples in four countries where they must hide who they are or face imprisonment or death. At its heart, this is a love story taking place in hostile environments.

## Additional Resources

### Monitoring and Evaluation Reports

- [1000 Dreams SM Sentiment Report](#)
- [1000 Dreams Endline Evaluation Report - Workshops](#)
- [EiB Vans Activations Report](#)
- [1000 Dreams EU Parliament and Strasbourg City Hall Report](#)