

PRESS RELEASE

Five year anniversary. Seven days to go!

South Africa, 21 September 2017

Iranti-org is proud to announce that it will be celebrating five years of activism and advocacy in the name of lesbian, transgender and intersex Africans; monitoring the lived experiences of queer communities across South Africa and the rest of the continent, and recording their stories. Iranti means memory, and just as we have worked toward recording the memory of our region's forgotten people, so too do we now invite you to remember our own history with us:

From humble beginnings in the home of Jabulani Pereira, who co-founded Iranti-org with Neo Musangi in 2012. Starting with just a camera and the realisations that so many queer narratives were told by non-queer storytellers, the inspiration for Iranti-org was twofold; to prove the agency of queer Africans in telling their own stories, and document violations which too often went under-reported.

With this came an enormous ethical responsibility placed on its shoulders. Not only was this a media organisation, but also an advocacy one. Iranti-org's first case came in the form of the brutal murder of Thapelo Makutle in Kuruman, Northern Cape. Travelling to Kuruman with his camera, Jabu's reporting on the young gay man's murder shone a light on the brutality not previously made public. The local South African Police Service (SAPS) had reported that Makutle had died because of a 'neck injury'. The truth was that Makutle was partially decapitated, with his own severed genitals forced into his mouth.

Mainstream news soon picked up the information that the murder was far more horrific than many could imagine, and the shockwaves rippled across the globe. The European Union placed extra pressure on the South African government to deal with hate crimes effectively, and thus Iranti-org began to grow and define its role in activism. Nevertheless, "selling" our style of media-activism to funders took time and growth was not always smooth. But five years on, Iranti-org is poised to make real change.

We continue to advocate for the rights of transgender, intersex and lesbian South Africans, having recently covered the horrific murders of Nonki Smous and Lerato Tambai. We look into countless hurtful incidents which range in brutality, rarely seen by the mainstream media. The toll it takes on activists and community members is immense but the fight for justice in our society must continue.

Further, we have successfully branched out into the international advocacy space, having built relationships with activists in countries such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Kenya, Botswana, Liberia, Seychelles and many others. This has facilitated the formation of the Africa Queer Media Makers Network and allowed us to host multiple training sessions and dialogues aimed at strengthening LGBTI storytelling and activism at a time when queer Africans are under ever increasing threat of discrimination, imprisonment and violence.

Our celebration, on 28 September, will thus mark not only the milestone that is five years of organisational heritage, but is also an opportunity for us to reflect on what has worked and what has not; and ask the communities we serve what they expect from us going forward. We seek also to consolidate our base and expand our message. As such we invite members of the media and public to speak to us about our story, and the stories of our community. Together we can show society a rarely seen part of life in Africa, and make a tangible difference to countless lives in the process.

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