

WHO ARE WE?



Diketso Sello of Schweizer-Reneke, North West Province, spoke to Iranti about her life and how she often fears for her safety in the small town. Story on page 3. Photo by Gugu Mandla

About the ZwaKala Project

ZwaKala, is an isiZulu term which means to “speak out” and to be heard. Founded in 2015 by Iranti, the project’s goal is to contribute to the enhancement of LGBTI advocacy and strengthen queer communities in urban, peri-urban and rural settings. ZwaKala provides training and assistance to local CBOs in the North West, Limpopo and Gauteng provinces. ZwaKala is headed by Iranti in Johannesburg and is aimed at empowering CBOs to be self-sustaining by the end of ZwaKala’s operations in April 2018.

The ZwaKala Project is currently partnered with eight CBOs: Limpopo LGBTI Proudly Out, Gays and Lesbians of Rustenburg, Gay Umbrella, Vaal LGBTI, UTHINGO, IHAWU, EPOC and Tisa Tshireletso; and is also partnered closely with the European Union (EU) as the primary funder of the project.

Together, activists from across target provinces are being brought together to cooperate and support each other, finding a united voice for the LGBTI community in the region.

About Iranti

Founded in January 2012, Iranti was established with the clear intention of building local partnerships and movements that use multimedia as a key platform for documentation, advocacy and educational interventions across Africa. We have made our mark through capacity building in multimedia and documentation for individuals as well as organisations.

We aim to continue probing and developing a deeper understanding of gross human rights violations through media; while seeking ways to change policies, laws and individual mindsets; to bring about an end to homophobia, intersexphobia, transphobia, sexism, patriarchy and racism.

Our interventions are designed within an intersectional framework as an acknowledgement of the way in which poverty and systemic social and material injustices impact human rights within communities. It is our belief that even a small contribution towards these immense problems will produce positive change.

Correction

In Edition 2 of ZwaKala Speaks!, we published that the body of Kagiso Maema was uncovered in a dam in North West Province. New evidence has come to light showing that her body was found in an open field.

Editorial

Nomsa Manzini, ZwaKala Coordinator

27 April is Freedom Day. It can be easy to take this fact for granted given all that has happened – good and bad – over the course of the last 24 years. As a nation we have achieved many things. We have defeated the Apartheid-state, implemented what is widely considered to be the world's most progressive constitution, made great strides in combating poverty, illiteracy and illness. More recently, we have seen the first signs of the turning tide against state capture and debates around land and racism are once again, rightfully, at the fore of the national discourse.

But for all the progress we have made, many in our country are not yet free. Too often, the poorest, blackest and queerest go unheard by our government, which is why we do what we do at Iranti, and why our great allies at the ZwaKala-affiliated CBOs do what they do. Same-sex couples having the legal right to

marry means nothing so long as civil servants are allowed to deny them that right based on personal bias. Transgender persons being allowed to change their name and gender-markers are still being assaulted in the street and shamed for who they are. Intersex people still face infant genital mutilation or infanticide for not conforming physically to the supposed male-female binary.

In short, queer South Africans and Africans, especially in rural or township settings, are not free.

This Freedom Day, we call on you, the reader, to stand up for the rights of LGBTI persons. We have made great progress by standing together and forming a community around our shared diversity. Join us today and for all days to come, in our united call for freedom!

UPDATES FROM THE REGION

African Union

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has been a growing voice on the continent for the rights of LGBTI persons. Lawrence Mute, chairperson of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture in Africa, also said the use of forced anal examinations to prove homosexuality may amount to torture and urged states to "respect and protect the rights of persons or groups at heightened risk to acts of torture and other ill-treatment, including [LGBTI] intersex persons." However, given that homosexuality is still illegal in 33 African nations, the power of the plea is yet to be seen.

Botswana

Botswana has made huge strides in recent years. In December 2017, a transgender man was granted the legal right to change his gender marker, with former Director of Gender DynamiX, Ricki Kgositau following suit in her own application. In March, the recently recognised advocacy group LEGABIBO (Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana) filed evidence in a court case to declare Botswana's anti-sodomy laws unconstitutional. The case will be heard in May 2018.

Egypt

Starting in October 2017 in response to the display of a rainbow flag at a concert, Egyptian authorities arrested hundreds of

suspected gay men, and forced a media blackout of any positive stances on homosexuality. The government later submitted a Bill to be reviewed which would arrest any individual and disband any business or organisation believed to support LGBTI persons.

Tanzania

2017 saw an unprecedented wave of violence against LGBTI persons in Tanzania, police forces arrested and detained hundreds of suspected lesbian, gay and transgender citizens. Two South African lawyers were arrested while meeting with an HIV/Aids Healthcare NGO that the government was targeting. This led to pickets in Pretoria outside the Tanzanian consulate and the eventual deportation of the lawyers back to South Africa.

Kenya

Though polls still show most Kenyans to be homophobic or transphobic, the LGBTI community of the country is making gains. In 2017, the regulations regarding changes of name were amended, allowing countless transgender Kenyans to update their documents. This year, courts ruled that subjecting gay men to forced anal testing was illegal, and on 26 April a ruling will be made on whether "Section 162", the anti-sodomy law, will be repealed.



B*ITCH MAKOYA

Queerness, Life & Death

Samora Sekhukhune

Iranti is producing a documentary focusing on crimes against lesbian and transgender women in rural and small towns of the North West Province. *B*TCH MAKOYA* investigates the murder of Kagiso Maema, a 25-year-old transwoman who was brutally murdered in January 2018. Her best friend first identified her from her trademark tattoo, *B*TCH MAKOYA*, etched onto her outstretched arm, already decaying in a field.

The documentary uses the crime as an anchoring-point to interrogate issues at the intersections of crimes against queer women: visibility, space and safety.

The North West Province has seen a spate of attacks against the LGBTI community in recent years, and the need for a film which investigates the root of such violence is sorely needed.



Samora Sekhukhune joined the Iranti team to document and investigate the death of Kagiso Maema. Photo by Gugu Mandla.

Reaching out to the community of Mahikeng

MAHIKENG. On 6 March, Gay Umbrella hosted a community dialogue in the provincial capital with the support of PFSAQ and the Commission for Gender Equality. More than 70 attendees, from the LGBTI community and public at large, joined the discussion which aimed at sensitising and educating people about LGBTI identities.

The floor was opened to questions and comments from the public, in an attempt to start a dialogue and find common ground, though this proved a challenge for the activists present when some community members attempted to derail the talks.

While most of the group came with a genuine desire to learn and have their concerns addressed, one local pastor maintained his objections to the "homosexual lifestyle."

"Does anyone here know of any older people who are homosexual?" He asked. Many in the group indicated

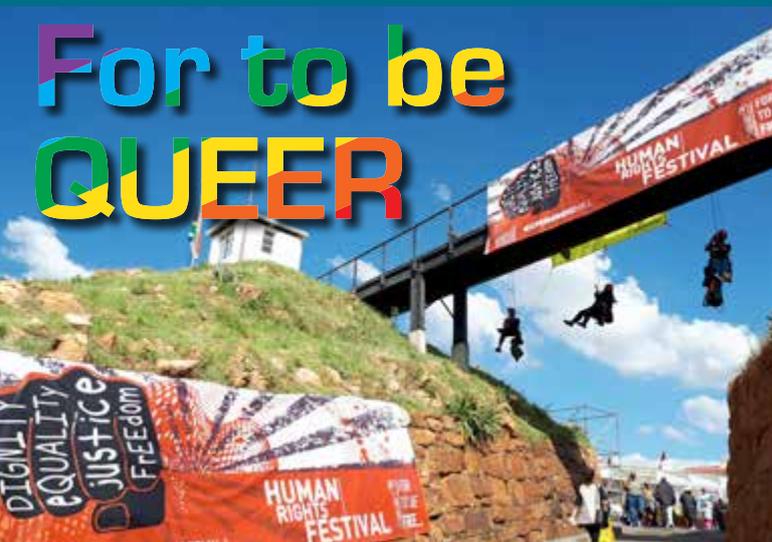
that they did know elders from the LGBTI community, but the pastor remained skeptical. "In my experience, they always regret it and turn back.

The pastor continued to speak out against the LGBTI community, going so far as to say that same-sex practice is Satanic before Virginia Magwaza of PFSAQ intervened.

"If being a lesbian makes me Satanic, then I am happily Satanic," she said, labelling the pastor's words as hateful.

Thozamile Ngenelwa of PFSAQ later noted that such difficult interactions with members of the public are important, however, as they "allow us to see how much work is being done. If people are homophobes we must allow them to be homophobic in this space, so that we can see if our message is reaching the community effectively."

For to be QUEER



The Human Rights Festival at Constitution Hill, Johannesburg, sought to celebrate South Africa's values of dignity, equality, justice and freedom. Photo by Kellyn Botha.



Thozamile Ngenelwa of PFSAQ calls to passers-by to garner interest in the LGBTI collective's room. Photo by Gugu Mandla.



The LGBTI room hosted multiple workshops to educate and engage with the public. Photo by Gugu Mandla.

The LGBTI collective at the Hum

JOHANNESBURG. Between 23 and 25 February, Iranti, in collaboration with FEW (Forum for the Empowerment of Women), PFSAQ (Parents, Families and Friends of South African Queers), EPOC (Ekurhuleni Pride Organising Committee), ISSA (Intersex South Africa), Vaal LGBTI and Ihawu, participated as the primary LGBTI+ presence at Constitution Hill's "For to be Free" Human Rights Festival.

The partnership between Iranti and the other organisations was proposed to showcase the widest possible range of community support and advocacy work from the area, and giving the public the opportunity to engage with as many queer-focused organisations as possible.

Despite intense pressure to pull together an LGBTI+ programme for the festival, the team excelled and managed to draw the many curious new visitors to the LGBTI room. The room was also used to host two workshops over the course of the weekend.

One workshop, hosted by Iranti and ISSA, described the differences between sexuality and gender identity, and put special focus on intersex identities. Another, hosted by PFSAQ, sought to engage with families and parents of LGBTI+ children, highlighting the importance of acceptance in the family.

Iranti, PFSAQ, FEW and EPOC also held a panel discussion in the much larger Social Forum tent, which sought to address the prevalence of hate crimes against LGBTI+ persons in South Africa, specifically in rural and township settings.

"You ask why we fight. Why we label ourselves as gay or lesbian," said panel member Thozamile



Joshua Sehoole and Kanyanta Kakana speak on a panel, looking at hate crimes. Photo by Gugu Mandla.

Human Rights Festival

Ngenelwa of PFSAQ, “but it is because we are being murdered for being gay and lesbian. That’s why we fight! We call ourselves queer because society tells us to just be ‘normal’, and discriminates against us because of who we are. That is why we fight!”

In the closing hours of the festival, Constitution Hill hosted a “Peoples’ Court”, an exercise which put *Inxeba: The Wound* on trial. Two sides argued both for and against the right to screen the controversial film which depicts homosexual behavior between two men during the isiXhosa initiation ritual of Ulwaluko. Iranti’s Director, Jabulani Pereira, joined in favour of screening the film, while the opposition called the film culturally insensitive and inaccurate.

“*Inxeba* is truly a postcolonial film. You cannot make this film in America or Kenya. It is an authentic South African identity film,” said Jabulani. “The film has achieved its goal. It has evoked emotion and feeling. It may not be the emotion you like but the point is it made you think and got you to respond.”

The People’s Jury voted four to one in favour of *Inxeba*. To Iranti, this signifies the public’s desire to embrace and defend LGBTI+ rights in South Africa.

Constitution Hill’s inaugural Human Rights Festival presented a fantastic opportunity for Iranti and partners to be visible to new sections of the public, and to be heard, while listening to others. We are thankful for the work that everyone put into making the weekend a success, and look forward to future collaborations with our partners such as this one. We have learned from this experience and have grown immensely from it.



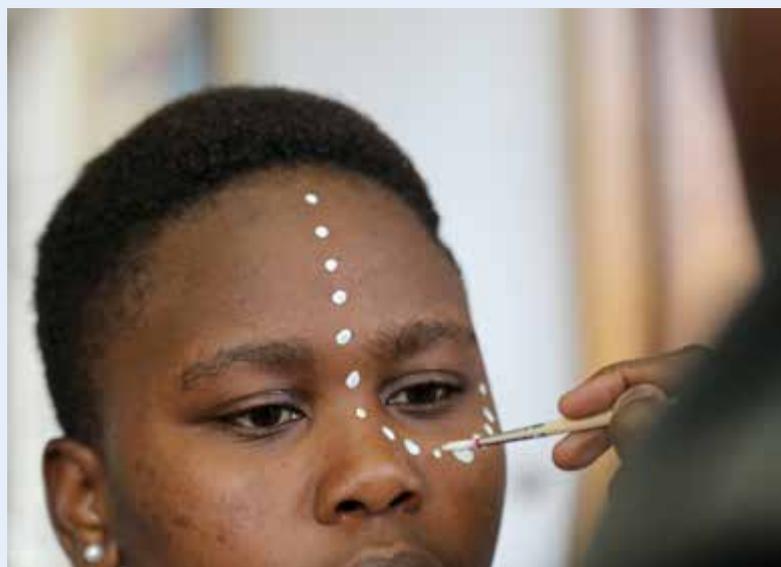
...ing into the reasons behind South Africa’s anti-LGBTI hate



Lungile Maquba of Intersex South Africa prepares to engage with the public. Photo by Gugu Mandla.



Posters were used to draw the attention of festival-goers. Photo by Gugu Mandla.



A school pupil after a session with classmates about the importance of family support for LGBTI youths. Photo by Kellyn Botha.



Thozamile Ngenelwa and Zingisa Ngwane of PFSAQ reflect on the annual learning discussions. Photo by Gugu Mandla.



Pro Sedumedi of Gay Umbrella speaks to the delegates on her fundraising ideas for the local LGBTI community. Photo by Gugu Mandla.

Time to look forward after ZwaKala's final annual learning

JOHANNESBURG. On the 3rd and 4th of April 2018, ZwaKala saw its last formal gathering of CBOs for the annual learning meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to build organisational and personal wellness skills, as well as to find ways for CBOs to strengthen their community impact. More than 40 delegates attended the programme from all three of Iranti's target provinces.

Over the course of both days, many writing and organisational skills development courses were held, as well as multiple sessions on personal and organisational wellness. The closing of the session saw reflections on the importance of the network that has been built and on all that had been learnt since the inception of the ZwaKala Project.

In the first edition of *ZwaKala Speaks!*, Iranti reported on the 2017 annual learning meeting. Since then, a marked improvement was noted by staff. ZwaKala Coordinator, Nomsa Manzini, is especially pleased that the project has paid off.

"Participants have a clear understanding of personal and organisational wellness," says Nomsa. "Many have also put together clear plans on monitoring and evaluation processes to assess their own work independently. I am very proud."

The project itself was always designed with the end-goal of creating sustainable, independent grassroots activism in South Africa. Delegates overwhelmingly reported a positive takeaway from the annual learning meeting, and from the ZwaKala project overall. While many challenges, such as funding, remain, most delegates claimed that they feel confident going forward.

"I think we can do it," said Pro Sedumedi. "We have been given the skills now to advocate for our rights on the ground. But I would still want to collaborate with Iranti going forward. All of us together have become like a family now."

As the ZwaKala Project comes to a formal end, it is clear that the network of activists will live on. But for Nomsa, this culmination of many months' work comes with mixed emotions.

"With the project coming to an end, those feelings are based on the love I have for community work. This work is very important for our LGBTI groups and the community at large. I joined this initiative out of the respect I have for the activists who dedicate their lives into bringing change into the sector. ZwaKala is the type of project we need to sustain as advocacy organisations, because it has touched on core issues faced by our LGBTI community on the ground."



Delegates were treated to a yoga and meditation session to promote wellness within the group. Photo by Kellyn Botha.

The marriage equality fight continues!

In 2006, South Africa became one of the first countries in the world to legally recognise same-sex marriages, marking a huge victory for the gay, lesbian and bisexual communities. However, when the Civil Unions Act was passed more than 10 years ago, a compromise was made which would ensure marriage was out of reach for many LGBTI South Africans.

Home Affairs officials, the law says, have the personal right to deny marriage certificates to same-sex couples. Thus, across South Africa's 400-plus Home Affairs offices, less than 120 (28%) will issue same-sex marriage certificates. Same-sex couples in rural and township areas are often affected the most.

Gladly, some members of parliament are standing against this blatant discrim-

ination. An amendment to the Act was introduced by Deidre Carter of COPE, after it came to her attention that same-sex couples were being turned away from some home affairs offices.

Carter said Chapter 10 of the Constitution requires that public services must be provided impartially, fairly and without bias. She has since been joined by other members of parliament and multiple LGBTI advocacy groups in calling for a change.

"It cannot be constitutionally acceptable or permissible that public servants can be exempted on any grounds from providing services to certain sectors of our society," Carter said.

The subject is yet to be formally debated, as parliament has yet to receive enough submissions from the public.

The deadline to reach out and put pressure on the elected leaders of the nation has been extended, but only to 28 April. We urge everyone to contact the Honourable Speaker of Parliament at speaker@parliament.gov.za and MP Deidre Carter at dcarter@parliament.gov.za, expressing your support for these amendments.

Beware the dangers of fake news!

On the 10th of April, news started spreading around Gauteng province of a lesbian woman who was placed in a police cell with 19 men, then raped and killed as a result. This news outraged activists and the public. However, the event in question never happened.

We urge everyone to not share fake or unverified news stories, as they only hurt our cause. Lesbian and transgender women face disproportionate violence in township and rural settings, being raped, assaulted or murdered simply for their gender identity or sexual orientation. SAPS have a track record, too, of not taking reports of such crimes seriously, and of placing transgender women in harm's way by making them share jail cells with cisgender men.

Thus, to give time and energy to misinformation, fake news, means that when real violations against our community do occur, they are increasingly doubted by the authorities and the public. Our work, and the work of many brave activists on the ground, is undermined by stories such as this one, and we firmly stand against it and those who started it.

Below are some key tips on how to fight to spread of fake news:

- Verify information. Always look for more sources of information to check for contradictions.



Photo by Gugu Mandla.

- Ask questions. Who would benefit or be harmed by this story? Does it make sense? Can it be proven?
- Don't make assumptions. If you do not have all the information, don't fill in the gaps without the proper research.
- Communicate clearly. If you don't communicate with your team or community clearly or represent the facts fully, you could become the source of harmful fake news!
- Be careful. Spreading fake news that damages the reputation of others could bring legal action against you or your organisation.

Rose-Mary

By 'Lurighter'

A Rose in the thorns rose beautifully,
 Her Triumph was to stay true as Rose-Mary.
 Her Bloom bright red,
 The plan was to be broken for a deserving woman's smile.
 Her day came.
 She felt shivers down her stem when the cold flower snip snapped.
 Dew drops on her rose petals.
 The worst is over.
 A warm pink vase is her last home before her final sacrifice as her days are numbered.
 'He loves me, he loves me not, he loves me, he loves me not'
 Rose-Mary enjoys the sniffs and adorable stares for hours while her petal edges wrinkle to her fate.
 The woman's smiles turn into frowns as she gently pulls Rose-Mary out of the water.
 One, he loves me
 Two, he loves me not
 Three, he loves me
 And on the count of her 8th petal, the last of her petals remain attached.
 A love Russian-roulette.
 Rose-Mary is laid to rest on tattooed diary pages with one rose petal as victory next to loving words of mixed emotions.
 Some beauty was created as a sacrifice to those who find beauty in them.



Photo by: Kellyn Botha

ZwaKala Speaks! is not just an Iranti publication; it belongs to all the CBOs in the ZwaKala network. Be sure to submit articles for our next edition, and send us feedback so that we can ensure everyone's voices are represented and included. Let us know how we can make ZwaKala Speaks! truly collaborative!

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