

INTRODUCING ZWAKALA SPEAKS!

About the ZwaKala Project

The ZwaKala Project is a network of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) located in the North West, Limpopo and Gauteng provinces of South Africa, organised and headed by Iranti-org in Johannesburg. Founded in 2015, the purpose of ZwaKala is to contribute to the enhancement of LGTBI advocacy and strengthening of queer communities in urban, peri-urban and rural settings by training and assisting local CBOs.

Iranti-org through The ZwaKala Project implements a programme where all participating organisations are expected to create and document stories, as well as engage their communities around LGBTI awareness.

This work not only increases grassroots advocacy in several communities, but allows knowledge sharing between Iranti-org and the partner organisations.

Beyond media and advocacy training, ZwaKala employs interns on a regular basis for more in-depth training than can be provided at skills-development conferences. CBOs are also taught organisational skills and provided with logistical support where possible in the hopes that they will be self-sustaining by the end of the third year of operations.

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 partnered closely with the European Union (EU) as the primary funder of the project.

ZwaKala is an isiZulu term meaning “speak out”. This would not be possible without the continued support of the European Union, as well as The Other Foundation, Foundation for Human Rights (FHR), ARASA and many more. Together, activists from across our 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-org

Iranti-org was founded in January 2012. Iranti-org was established with the clear intention of building local partnerships and movements that use multimedia as a key platform for advocacy and educational interventions across Africa. Iranti-org has imprinted its mark through capacity building in multimedia and documentation for individuals and organisations.

Iranti-org does national, regional and global advocacy interventions that have brought to the fore the immense value we bring to the

LGBTIQ+ human rights discourse in the form of our evidence-based documentation combined with story-telling and advocacy. Our value-add to the effective social justice lies in our ability to integrate new media and traditional advocacy methods in strategies for change. We forge ahead seeking restorative justice for LGBTIQ+ persons in our region and in the

world so that we can live with dignity and autonomy, and have the liberty to freely express ourselves.

Iranti-org's future lies in probing and developing a deeper understanding of these gross human right violations and seeking ways to change policies, laws and individual mindsets to end homophobia; intersex phobia; transphobia; sexism; and patriarchy. Iranti-org acknowledges the manner in which poverty and the systemic social and material injustices impact on the human rights situations of our communities, and thus our interventions are designed within an intersectional framework. We know that our small contribution towards these immense problems will eventually produce the changes we desire within our society.



Matshidiso Mofokeng from Vosloorus Activators, during group workshop discussions in Johannesburg. ARTICLE ON PAGE 4. Photo by: Gugu Mandla

It is a time of joy and a time of sadness

Firstly, I would like to say welcome to all our readers of this, our very first edition of ZwaKala Speaks. Welcome to the members of our many CBOs, our funders and the public at large, and thank you for the interest and support you have given the ZwaKala project, Iranti-org and our allies.

A very big thank you goes to Nomsa Manzini, who manages the ZwaKala project; Jabu Pereira, the director at Iranti-org; to Iranti's hardworking media and advocacy teams; and of course to all the activists in North West Province, Limpopo and Gauteng, where the ZwaKala Project is being rolled out; and especially to those who submitted work for this publication. So it is an all round THANK YOU to the Iranti-org family.

The creation of this newsletter shows just how dedicated our network is to documenting and publishing information on the state of LGBTI matters in our country, and is the latest step in the growth of the ZwaKala network into a real activist force. For

us queer South Africans, we have never been so visible, nor so close to public acceptance and full legal protection. In Limpopo, Nare Mphela, a transgender woman, was victorious in a lawsuit against the Limpopo Department of Education for their failure to stop discrimination at school. It truly is a time of progress; a time of joy.

But progress brings backlash, and with it, sadness for those we have lost and for the battles we still face. In many countries across the continent, homosexuality remains criminalised, while transgender and intersex people receive virtually no legal recognition. Closer to home, just in our three target provinces, our team has had to deal with a spike in hate crimes against LGBTI citizens. In April a lesbian woman was raped and assaulted in the North West, just the latest victim of such violence in that province. In May, Lerato 'Tambai' Moloi was found stoned to death in Soweto, Gauteng. Iranti-org attended the funeral.

Helpbox: Some useful terms

- **Activism** – To fight or work for a cause.
- **Advocacy** – To promote and work toward wider acceptance of certain ideas or ideals.
- **CBO** – Community-Based Organisation. A term for any number of groups who gather to achieve goals at the grassroots level.
- **Chapter 9 Institutions** – Organisations within government that work independently to ensure democracy and the rights of South Africans are protected and upheld.
- **Cisgender** – A person who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth. Usually male or female.
- **HCB** – The Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill is a proposed law which would criminalise hate speech and define hate crimes as different from other illegal action.
- **Homophobia** – Fear or hatred of gays and lesbians. Sometimes used to refer to hatred of all LGBTI groups.
- **Intersex** – A person who is born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads and chromosome patterns) that do not fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations.
- **LGBTI** – An acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex. This is the most common term to refer to people of many diverse sexualities and gender identities. Sometimes written as LGBT, LGBTIQA, or LGBT+.
- **NGO** – Non-Governmental Organisation. A group which usually works on matters of advocacy, activism or charity outside of governmental control.
- **Nonbinary** – An umbrella-term for people whose gender identity does not match the male-female binary in some way. Sometimes it is written as NB.
- **Queer** – A shorthand phrase for many LGBTI people. Originally referring to anything strange, it became a slur used against LGBTI people. Today, many are reclaiming the word for themselves.
- **SAHRC** – The South African Human Rights Commission. A Chapter 9 Institution which monitors the protections or abuses of human rights in South Africa.
- **Transgender** – A person who does not identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.
- **Transphobia** – Fear or hatred specifically of transgender people.
- **Womxn** – An alternative to “woman” and “women” meant to exclude “man” or “men” from the word, but include gender-diverse people who may share some of the lived experiences.

ZwaKala Interns

The ZwaKala Project strives to empower queer activists in more ways than just the occasional workshop. The knowledge needed to fully participate in the world of advocacy cannot be passed on in an afternoon.

That is why ZwaKala strives to employ three activists from Gauteng, Limpopo and the North West every three months as interns at Iranti-org, where they will receive first-hand training in media-production, human rights advocacy, and organisational development. No two interns receive the same experience as they are placed in a dynamic work environment, and training methods are constantly updated based on their feedback.

It is our hope that by working directly and extensively with our interns, they can take new knowledge back to their own organisations, contributing to a broader and stronger network of activists across our target provinces.



Noxolo Lolo (left) discusses the day's work with Nomsa Manzini (right) at the Iranti-org offices. Photo by Gugu Mandla

My Experience at Iranti-org as an Intern

By Noxolo Lolo (Iranti-org intern)

When I first started as an intern I was clueless about how things work and what is expected of me. I did not have much knowledge of how to use Microsoft Word Documents, PowerPoint or Excel, nor how to save my work on relevant icons. Now I do! All thanks to Nomsa Manzini, who was always patient and lenient with me.

It really has been a great experience to be an intern at Iranti-org because I now know much more about human rights violations, and how Iranti-org seeks to change the societal norms and around the issues that the LGBTI's face in their everyday lives. I am now well aware of the severe cases of homophobia, and that even if I am not the one affected by a hate crime; I still am affected, indirectly. Being an intern also enabled me to work closely with other CBO's, which has shown me how to build good relationships with stakeholders; as well as building up rapport with them. Most importantly, I have learnt how to work under pressure and multitask.

My own weakness has been my inability to socialise with the staff. I am working on turning this around, by strengthening my communication skills. Being involved in attending the hate crimes cases, has made me realise that the social justice system is really failing us and things will not change anytime soon. Our rights are just in the constitution; but are not actually practiced nor implemented in any way.

The ZwaKala Project has been an eye-opener to me on how the constitution is structured.

I am also aware that there is donor money being invested in LGBTI issues; though we do not really see much of it, at the grassroots level.

The last Zwakala training programme taught me a number of things on how to use social media; which channels to follow; the platforms to use in raising our voices for the voiceless; and how to use media to ensure that justice is served.

I am greatly looking forward to learn how to use a camera and connect it to the tripod, how to film and edit my footage. I really would like to record the stories of the LGBTI people I serve.



Director of Gay Umbrella, Mildred Maropelela, presented on the various media platforms during the Johannesburg dialogues. Photo by: Gugu Mandla

ZwaKala training Highlights a need for funding

By Kellyn Botha

JOHANNESBURG. *Between 19 and 21 April, Iranti-org hosted an extensive training workshop as part of the ZwaKala Project's advocacy and activism expansion mandate. A total of 38 delegates from across the three provinces attended, most of them part of the queer community themselves and representing multiple Community Based Organisations (CBOs).*

"The main obstacle for most of the organisations we work with is a lack of funding," says Nomsa Manzini, who facilitated the event, "and not many organisations are properly informed on funding procurement."

Some of the main challenges in accessing funding were highlighted, such as the fact that government often overlooks smaller, grassroots organisations, when funding CBOs, NGOs and charities. This is ironic as it is often these small organisations that people on the ground have access to. The training also highlighted the responsibility of advocacy

groups to remain transparent and accountable with their resources and plans, in order to maintain donor confidence and community trust.

With an apparent spike in hate crimes against trans and lesbian women in recent years, the importance of training by initiatives like ZwaKala in contributing to bringing justice to victims is more clear than ever. The delegates returned to their homes in the Gauteng, North West and Limpopo, more committed to combating hate crimes, and taking with them Iranti-org's hopes for a safer, freer future.

Limpopo Dialogues reveal discrimination by doctors

By Lornah Nefale (Limpopo LGBTI Proudly Out)

POLOKWANE. In the province of Limpopo LGBTI health issues are not openly discussed. On 8 April Limpopo LGBTI Proudly Out (LLPO) and Iranti-org held a dialogue around LGBTI health issues. Taxis travelled to five districts to pick people up for the dialogue. There were various speakers, including a nurse from Tshildizini Hospital; and a clinical psychologist, who addressed issues of health within the province. LGBTI members spoke about the issues they faced within the province. A lesbian from Sekhukhune, told of being admitted to a hospital, and before she being discharged by the doctor she was told to have protected sex with her husband. The woman corrected the doctor, telling him that she is a lesbian and therefore does not have a husband. This completely derailed her discharge, as the doctor called other nurses to interrogate her about her sexual orientation. Another lesbian who presents as 'butch', and wears masculine clothes, was admitted to hospital and taken to a men's ward because the nurse concluded that she is a man based just on her looks.

Most lesbians who present as 'butch', spoke of being told to take off their clothes in front of doctors and nurses so they can really prove that they are women and have breasts. They are asked questions such as: "How do you do it (have sex)?" "How are you going to have children?" etc. They are humiliated publically, and told they are a disgrace to their communities.

Hate speech and discrimination towards lesbians and gays starts from the registration at the reception desk, and extends all the way to the doctors. This far reaching discrimination, leads many LGBTI people feeling that there is no one within the health facilities that they can report their problems to.



Nomsa Manzini (left) hands over camera equipment to Sindile Maotoana (right) of LLPO after the Limpopo Pride march in Seshego. Photo by Gugu Mandla

ZwaKala provides equipment to core CBOs

By Lornah Nefale and Noxolo Lolo

POLOKWANE. On 27 May 2017, Limpopo LGBTI Proudly Out (LLPO) hosted the sixth annual Pride at Seshego Stadium, to raise awareness to people living in the township to stop the violence against LGBTI bodies. More than 100 LGBTI persons together with families and friends came together to celebrate the lives of LGBTI bodies.

After a six kilometre march people had to settle in at the stadium, where Nomsa Manzini of the ZwaKala Project handed over digital equipment like DSLR cameras and tablets to Sindile Maotoana, the director of LLPO. Equipping CBOs with cameras training group members on how to use them, organisations like LLPO are more able to document their own local stories of hate crimes, sexual harassment, social health issues, court

monitoring and interviewing those affected by hate-crimes.

In exchange, the CBOs are pushed to work responsibly together as teams; work towards getting the organisation registered; finding donors to fund them; writing proposals and annual reports; and having a facility to keep equipment and hold their meetings. The organisations having their own equipment will enable them to raise awareness in their communities, have a platform to access internet and organise necessary events.

All in all it was a successful pride event, with community members also joining in to support. The growth of LGBTI acceptance and support in the region continues to grow despite the failures of the educational, medical and justice systems. The brand new digital equipment will serve to expand coverage of those failures and keep events like Limpopo Pride going for many years more.

HCB Engagement in the North West Province

By Kellyn Botha

POTCHEFSTROOM. As part of its commitment to work across the country Iranti-org had a workshop in the North West Province of South Africa, on 28 January 2017, in partnership with the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW), Action for Social Justice International, and Gay Umbrella. The workshop took the form of a provincial engagement with LGBTI residents and the local community. The topic of discussion: *The Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill*.

A group discussion was held in which LGBTI residents from across the North West Province outlined issues affecting them. It was noted that in many instances, cases of violence against LGBTI persons in the region are not resolved, and that victims often see the perpetrators living freely. Multiple examples of rape, murder and assault of lesbians in Potchefstroom have come to Iranti-org's attention over the years, with locals saying that the gang members would often intimidate court officials into distancing themselves from the cases.

Many asked whether the passing of the bill in question would change the mindset of those who continue to terrorise LGBTI people; and whether it would in reality empower law-enforcement. The point was also made that since in many cases victims of sexual assault or violence know their attackers personally, it would be difficult to determine whether or not their actions constituted 'hate crimes'.

The bill, which remains a contentious issue across the country, has been criticised for not protecting the most vulnerable South Africans. Thus, with the assistance of Iranti-org, 158 LGBTI delegates at the Potchefstroom Municipal Hall signed a petition asking for the deadline of the implementation of the bill to be delayed, in order to have time to consult and make valuable additions to the draft bill.

A Broken Woman

By Noxolo Lolo

When you first saw her your eyes locked into her soul,

Her smile melted your heart away. You thought to yourself,

“She’s the one,” you tripped her and she fell for you deeply.

You promised her the world, you promised not to break her fragile heart.

She didn’t just fall deeply in love with you, but she learnt to love you. You.

You were different, you smelt like love to her, you were pure and purified her soul like no one ever has.

When you could see deep into her eyes and the burning love she had for you, you broke her!

You didn’t just break her, you destroyed her, and you broke her to the core.

Still, she wanted to hold on and never let go, she couldn’t imagine the world without you. When you left her countless times, she would fight for you with every broken muscle in her body. It killed her that she loved you like this, she cried herself to sleep, wondering what went wrong and what it is that she’s not doing right.

You broke her, made her feel less of woman. Her tears meant nothing to you. When she wanted to leave you, you rushed to the door and said, “Honey please don’t leave me.”

She wanted you to fight for her always, not when she wanted to leave you. Not when she had tears rolling down her cheeks. That broke her because you promised to never leave her. You promised her a never land, but still she wanted you with every beat of her bleeding heart.

You were never in love with her, but with the idea of being with her just so she could be your distraction. Since you’ve been gone she’s been longing to be with you only.

“You fell in love with the flowers, but when the wind came you didn’t know what to do. She wanted to dance in the rain with you,

But one day when you woke up, you stared at her while she was asleep and realised you don’t love her anymore.

All you could say was, “I’m not good for you. You know that. I am toxic.”

But she needed that toxic in her veins, that’s where you were embedded.

Till this day, she is still on her bent knees, loving you from a distance, missing you every day.

You Broke Her!!

Lerato 'Tambai' Moloji, just one of many our community has lost to violence in recent months, was laid to rest with a candlelit vigil on 20 May 2017. Photo by Kellyn Botha



The Footprint of Hate

By Joseph Khumalo (*Gays and Lesbians of Rustenburg*)

As I walk through these streets, these streets that I've walked countless times, these streets where I have seen and experienced many things; I'm cut by this feeling. This feeling of a million eyes staring at me. Eyes which were once so insignificant to me, so invisible, like a mirage you think you see in the distance on a hot day.

These steely eyes pierce through me like a knife through butter, and leave me with a feeling so unfamiliar to me, a feeling that I don't quite understand. And yet this feeling has slowly stalked and crept ever so silently into the back of my mind, scratching the walls of my subconscious, like a splinter in my brain that I can't get out. And with each passing day it burrows deeper inside, until everything disappears...falls away... except this feeling. A feeling that I can only describe as fear, dwelling from deep inside of me, where it has never before called home.

This feeling that first took root when manifestations of hate in this country went as berserk as a bucking bull. Bloodied, burnt and lifeless bodies screaming against the futures that were stolen from them; piling up in an ever growing realisation ... that I am hated just for existing. Why? Why

must our existence always be called into question? Why?

The explosion of sick depraved madness reverberated throughout our communities like a cancer, and yet the powers-that-be lifted not a finger in opposition, their silence is deafening. Leaving me and all those like me feeling as abandoned as a lost child at a supermarket. This abandonment by the government has inspired a rebellion against the gatekeepers sworn to protect and serve, in a bid to hold them accountable for their complacency.

It's funny, I grew up in a country that always claimed freedom, diversity and equality for all; but apparently all except LGBTI people. This type of freedom seems selective, applicable only to those who are deemed normal, while the rest of us are cast out to fend for ourselves.

I see the evidence, the crimson soaking through my soul, leaving me filled with dread. With a fear that highlights an undeniable truth; I no longer feel safe in my own country, I no longer feel safe in my own city, and I no longer feel safe in my own neighborhood. Fear, inequality, stigma, discrimination and hate crimes; these words choke the life out of me every day and have become synonymous with this country and the world today.

So is this it? Is this what our struggle heroes fought for? Is this what the constitution was written for? Is this what it means to be South African? To walk around in fear at who will be next?

The ultimate tragedy of the world is when people can't find the wisdom or make the effort to try to understand each other.

A Statement from One Woman To The Other

By Refilwe Lentsitse (EPOC LGBTI)

KWA-THEMA. Let's talk woman to woman. Give me your ear and I'll tell you my story. Tell me your story and I'll feel your pain.

One Woman To Thee Other is a support group for women; lesbians, bisexuals and WSW (women sleeping with women). One Woman to Thee Other was first established on the eighth of April 2017 in Kwa-Thema as part of EPOC's programmes.

We are trying to bring change in the lesbian community. Until you understand yourself you cannot change the world. We meet twice a month to share the members pains, experiences, feelings and ideas, and to discuss social issues, health issues, emotional issues, sexual issues and relationships – practically everything and anything.

ZwaKala Speaks! is not just an Iranti-org 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.

What types of content should our newsletter focus on? What form should the newsletter take to make sure as many people as possible can read it? Should we include articles in more languages to the publication? How else can we make ZwaKala Speaks! truly collaborative?

Unapologetic

by Sandisiwe Dlamini – Iranti-org

I am unapologetic about my existence

I explain myself if it pleases me

If you are worth it

If you are willing to learn

If you are willing to grow

You don't have to understand

But accept that what works for you might not work for me

These are woman that are radical

Men that refuse to conform

A group of people that breaks the boundaries of heterosexual norms

We are African

We are Queer

And we are here

In this support group members try to bring change in the lesbian community; to change the stereotypes of lesbians who think what you wear or who you're dating is what being lesbian is about. We're trying to show the younger generation that being lesbian doesn't really mean you have to be drinking and wearing a certain style, but rather that it's about an individual person.

Let's get real and peel away the weaker you, and build a stronger,

newer you who believes in loving your neighbour, caring for your society and living a healthy lifestyle. Let's meet and initiate change in our lives. Let's all sing lesbian songs in one spirit and one love. Let's change how the world sees lesbians. Let them see us being united, caring for each other, building one another, singing in unity and succeeding in everything we do. This is for us ladies; by us, to help us.

For queries, comments or suggestions, you can find out more or contact us at:

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