

WHO ARE WE?



*Residents of Meriting and Seraleng, North West Province, listen to Wilhelmina Maema tell her story after the launch of Iranti's documentary, B*tch Makoya, which looks at the murder of her child, Kagiso. Story on Page 3.*

Photo By: Kellyn Botha

About the ZwaKala Project

Founded in 2015 by Iranti, the project's goal was to contribute to the enhancement of LGTBI advocacy and strengthen queer communities in urban, peri-urban and rural settings. ZwaKala provided training and assistance to local CBOs in the North West, Limpopo and Gauteng provinces. Zwakala was headed by Iranti in Johannesburg and aimed at empowering CBOs to be self-sustaining by the end of ZwaKala's operations in April 2018.

The end of the ZwaKala Project does not mean the end of Iranti's relationship with the partner CBOs (Limpopo LGBTI Proudly Out, Gays and Lesbians of Rustenburg, Gay Umbrella, Vaal LGBTI, UTHINGO, IHAWU, EPOC and Tisa Tshireletso), as they represent the frontline in the ongoing fight against homophobia, transphobia and gender-based violence in the region.

Together, activists from across target provinces continue to cooperate and support each other, finding a united voice for the LGBTI community in the region. The ZwaKala Project has ended, but the work will continue!

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.

Editorial

Kellyn Botha

Change, they say, is the only constant in life. That is something I have come to learn first-hand in putting together ZwaKala Speaks! since its inception. My task, to deliver to Iranti's supporters and the CBOs we work with, with an easily digestible set of updates around our work every few months, has been fraught with change and at times uncertainty. For one thing, the ACHPR, (African Commission on Human and People's Rights) has recanted CAL's (Coalition of African Lesbians) observer-status under pressure from the AU in an alarming attempt at undermining the independent operating of the ACHPR. The AU is using homophobia to dissolve Africa's main and strongest human rights institution. Iranti and our allies will continue to monitor this worrying trend. Iranti and our allies will continue to monitor this worrying trend.

But one thing the wonderful participants of the ZwaKala Project have taught me is that activists cannot let a little

uncertainty get in the way of building something great. Back home at the Iranti office, change is a constant part of life, too. Since the last edition of our newsletter came out, we have added to our team a talented new Finance Manager, Mmaletsatsi Moeketsi, and a Research Manager, Lihle Ngcobozi who will help bring a new level of evidence-based advocacy into Iranti's work.

And finally, change has come to ZwaKala Speaks! The ZwaKala Project has formally concluded. Iranti still maintains close ties to the CBOs who participated, and their continued growth in their respective communities has filled us with immense pride. But, as a formal project, ZwaKala is over. With that comes a reimagining of the newsletter, shifting away from just the North West, Limpopo and Gauteng Provinces, and looking increasingly at the goings-on of our region. It's a big world out there and a lot is changing in it. We hope you will help to be part of that change!

BEYOND ZWAKALA

Interview with Nomsa Manzini

Since the ZwaKala Project ended operations, the former head of the project, Nomsa Manzini, has moved on to new endeavours. A close friend of many at Iranti and at the ZwaKala CBOs, we thought it would be good to catch up:

So, Nomsa, what are you doing these days?

I work for Nal'ibali as a Provincial Support Coordinator in Mpumalanga. Nal'ibali, which is isiXhosa for "here's the story" is a national initiative to promote a love of reading in children.

How do you feel having ended your time at Iranti?

It's been hard to start a new life with new people in different province, but I travel a lot with my work so I get to visit often. I miss the work I did with the CBOs and the exciting moments we all had as a team.

What does the future hold for you?

The future looks great! Nothing fulfils me more than working with the youth and helping them to channel their energy in the right direction. Someday I will look back

and be proud that children have developed an interest in reading. It is so valuable.

"Do you think the ZwaKala Project was important?"

Yes, I do. More than 8 CBOs were trained on media, human rights and organisational development. They use these skills to work closely with communities and advocate for the rights of LGBTI people. For example, EPOC (Ekurhuleni Pride Organising Committee) recently hosted their annual Pride, and in the North West, Gay Umbrella remains active in following up on hate crimes. This country is still so dangerous for LGBTI people, uplifting the community to have a voice is a real positive step.

What do you think the future holds for LGBTI advocacy?

I think the future is in good hands. The CBO teams will continue to do good work, and of course, there is Iranti. Larger organisations such as Iranti have a duty to not only advocate for LGBTI rights, but also guide future generations of activists. I believe they are doing that.



B*tch Makoya: When making media cuts deep

Sandisiwe Dlamini (Irantí)

The prevalence of hate crimes has escalated alarmingly in the North West Province. Members of the community blame this escalation on increased gangsterism, meaning that rape and other forms of violence go unreported out of fear. Iranti has documented more individual cases of violence against LGBTI people in the North West than any other province.

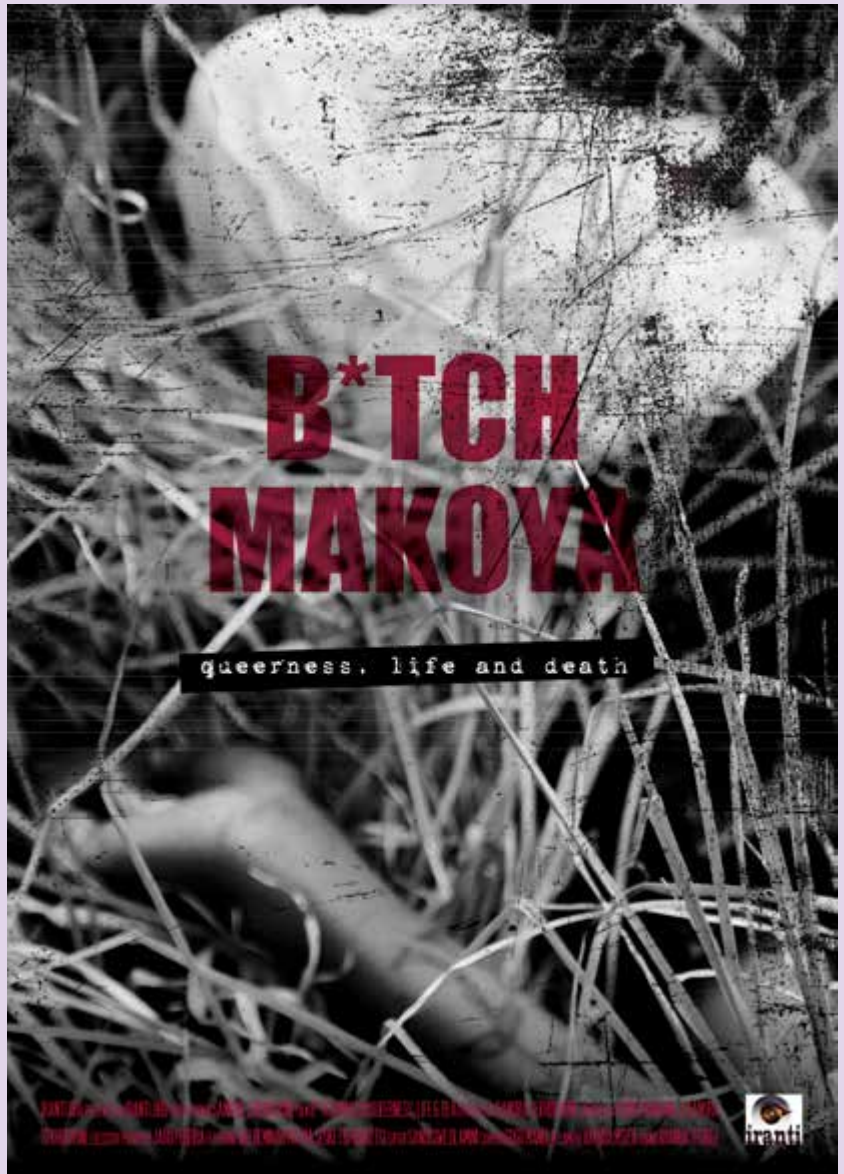
One such case is that of Kagiso Maema, a transgender woman who was brutally murdered in her neighborhood after a night out. She was hacked with an axe and strangled. Her body was identifiable only through her iconic tattoo which read “B*tch Makoya”.

Iranti continues to cover the events in the North West as a way of visualising this issue while using our media content as a call for public action. However, given the extent of violence in the province, we decided that a longer documentary was needed. Kagiso became, to us, the poster-child of these horrors. We had to do her story justice.

The process of shooting the documentary was emotional. Filmmaking for Iranti is storytelling with the intention to influence change, and so, the Iranti team spent many days documenting and getting to know Kagiso’s family and community. As the video editor I spent many days and many nights putting those shots together to create the story. It was an emotionally challenging task, because we are not dealing with fiction but people’s lived realities.

Documentaries reflect reality, yet it is so difficult to comprehend when I am editing alone in a dark room. I must construct a story out of the facts and footage that depict a truth so painful that it is difficult to believe it is real. I must decide where the story starts and where it ends with the help of the director and media team. But, reality doesn’t have an ending, and for Kagiso’s mother, Wilhemina, the mystery of her child’s death remains. For the LGBT population in the North West, the threat of violence remains.

Despite this, I am honoured to be a part of a movement that delivers the raw truth to people who wouldn’t otherwise have access to it. It is because of this that Iranti had opted to launch the film in Meriting, near



*The official B*tch Makoya poster. The documentary was screened at the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg, 25 October, 17:30*

the community that started the team’s journey into Kagiso’s life. It was a small but important step in bringing closure to the community and gave them a chance to respond to how we represented the story.

This film also created an opportunity to open discussions with the communities where hate crimes are most prevalent. We found that while homophobia and ignorance were common in the area, many people wanted to engage, and wanted to see the situation change for the better. It gives me hope.

The next step was the Johannesburg launch, which was held at the Market Photo Workshop in Newtown Johannesburg on 25 October. But it doesn’t mean we have left the North West. There have been more murders since Kagiso, Gugu Modise springs to mind. We will return. We must!



Iranti's Joshua Sehoole takes questions at the intersex pre-conference meeting after presentations by Julius Kaggwa of Uganda and Lungile Maquba. Photo by Kellyn Botha

Decriminalising queerness in Botswana: A slow and steady process

Lihle Ngcobozi (Iranti)

The impact of Western imperialism and ideological imposition on the African continent drastically altered the varied ways in which African cultures, traditions, and social mores were understood and how they shaped social organising. The dual relationship between racially engineered discrimination and Euro-Christian norms significantly disrupted African philosophies around gender and sexuality.

This shared colonial experience across the African continent has had an impact on the varied laws which have, and in some countries still do, sanction the freedom of sexual identities and gender expression. In Botswana there exists no specific act which overtly criminalises homosexuality. However, the overarching Penal Codes prescribes the many ways in which people may choose to interact sexually and otherwise. The code, under **Section 164** asserts

that 'Unnatural Offence' includes any person who "has **carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature; [or] permits any other person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature.**"

Although the wording itself is vague, it has had a detrimental effect on the LGBT+ community in Botswana as it has increased and justified the stigma, violence, and discrimination they face under the state but also at the hands of the greater society. Despite this, Botswana has an effective and impactful LGBT activist base which has penetrated public discourse into recognising the rights and protections of the LGBT community. Two seminal court judgments have had a significant impact in the move to protect the rights and dignity of the LGBT community. The first being the legal recognition

Intersex Preconference at PAI Con

By Lungile Maquba (ISSA)

Intersex South Africa (ISSA) made their international debut at the biennial PAI Conference in May 2018. The conference saw LGBTI organisations from across the continent come together in Gaborone, Botswana, to discuss the issues they face and the state of activism in the region.

ISSA brought renewed intersex representation to the gathering and held a series of intersex-specific dialogues during the pre-conference period, along with TransBantu (Zambia), SIPD (Uganda), Intersex Advocate Trust (Zimbabwe), IVY Foundation (Malawi) and Trans Smart (Kenya). The purpose of the intersex pre-conference was to meet, once again, following up from the first African Intersex meeting that was held in November 2017 in Johannesburg.

The pre-conference dialogue covered a broad range of topics, but was aimed primarily at sharing knowledge and experiences in order to formulate local advocacy strategies; envision a collective future and look at the possibility of formulating a larger intersex Africa organisation; understanding the functioning of global and regional human rights institutions and actions taken at the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR); and exploring and planning a collaborative research project to build more accurate data

on the state of Africa's intersex population.

Unfortunately, the intersex pre-conference meetings were placed in a relatively small room, but with unexpectedly high levels of interest from a wide range of delegates, the room was always filled, with many seated on the floor or standing for hours to be part of the conversation. As an often-overlooked group within the LGBTI community, it stood out once again through the venue allocation that the intersex community is not visible, though through the work of ISSA and its allies, this surely will change. Awareness on intersex identity and issues needs to extend beyond the general public and be circulated within queer spaces as well.

One positive outcome of the pre-conference, apart from the building of a stronger intersex community than ever before, was that by the time the main conference began, intersex visibility had increased dramatically as intersex delegates worked to make their voices heard. The time for silence is over!

**ISSA was founded in 2012 but ceased operations after its founder, Sally Gross, passed away. In 2017 Irantu worked in tandem with intersex activists from across South Africa to re-launch the organisation. Irantu today acts as fiscal sponsor for Intersex South Africa.*

and registration of Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LEGABIBO), as a recognised NGO. The Botswana Court of Appeal found that the government's refusal to register an LGBT organisation was unconstitutional.

The Southern African Litigation Centre (SALC) noted in 2016 that the case "created important precedent on the right to freedom of association, and the right of LGBT persons to advocate for law reform."

Secondly, a case was heard for the right of a transgender man have his gender-marker changed was successful, with Judge Nthomiwa Nthomiwa stating that "recognition of the applicant's gender identity lies at the heart of his fundamental right to dignity. Gender identity constitutes the core of one's sense of being and is an integral [part] of a person's identity."

Despite these two ground-breaking cases and the development of legal jurisprudence in Botswana, the process of decriminalising or repealing existing Penal Codes has been slow-paced. The call for decriminalisation has received support from and be-

yond the region of Southern Africa. In July 2018, the Pan-African ILGA conference was held in Botswana, Gaborone, which saw various LGBTI organisations and groups gather to discuss issues on the continent which adversely affect the LGBTI community. This was significant in that a court hearing was to be held regarding the decriminalisation of same-sex activity and although the hearing did not materialise, the political statement made by having an international LGBTI gathering at such a crucial moment in Botswana's history should not be taken for granted.

To publicise the call for decriminalisation in Botswana, Irantu has started the process of documenting and engaging with key stakeholders who can speak on the impact decriminalisation would have on Botswana. This forms part of a continental discourse around issues faced by the LGBTI community. These go beyond the scope of decriminalisation as they incorporate how such codes have an impact on the adequate access to health, education, employment, state security, the violence meted out on LGBTI people and a myriad of other violations.



The Rock of Hope's Melusi Simelane (center) leads the march alongside numerous supporters and colleagues, Mbabane, eSwatini. Photo by: Kellyn Botha



Sonkhe Siyafanana - "We are all Equal" displays a colourful placard during the eSwatini Pride March, Mbabane, Swaziland Photo by: Gugu Mandla

Being Queer in the Kingdom of eSwatini

Those who are part of the LGBTI+ community know all too well the daily struggle that comes with existing and seeking equality in a world that rarely listens. But every now and then, there is an event that can give us hope; that can encapsulate the beautiful, joyful diversity for which we stand.

On Saturday 30 June, the last day of International Pride Month, the Kingdom of eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) hosted its first ever Pride March in the capital, Mbabane. The Iranti team drove out to wit-

ness the historic event, which remained festive and safe throughout the day and in an effort to reach out to the broader public, vendors were not charged for setting up stalls to sell their goods, and entry to the venue was entirely free.

eSwatini does not formally criminalise homosexuality, but colonial "anti-sodomy" laws remain on the books. But, thanks to organisations such as Lidwala Lelitsembe (The Rock of Hope) which made eSwatini Pride a reality, it is clear that the Kingdom is changing for the better.



Local members of the LGBTI+ community hold a home-made rainbow banner proclaiming the country's newly adopted name, eSwatini. Photo by: Kellyn Botha



Iranti's Zethu Gqozo celebrates during the eSwatini Pride celebrations. Photo by: Gugu Mandla XXX

Mauritius Pride

With LGBT people across the region gaining unprecedented new levels of acceptance and visibility in recent years, it is no surprise that Pride Marches are becoming ever more common. But with increased visibility comes increased backlash from the more conservative sectors of society against LGBT persons, and against the marches that symbolize their struggles.

One case in point is the East African island nation of Mauritius. In May of 2018, the 13th annual Mauritius Pride, organised by Collectif Arc-en-Ciel (CAEC), was due to march through the streets of the capital. However, the marchers were forced to cancel due to a growing number of anti-LGBT protestors who, armed with machetes and stones, physically threatened the group and cornered them within a local mall.

“They were saying that that the march is against Islam” said Carou Labonne of CAEC. “There were rumours that the Pride marchers were sharing anti-Muslim messages, or that members of the Muslim community were taking part in the march, which made other people angry. Lots of different rumours. The reason for the threats was not clear.”

The march had received the full support of the Prime Minister, Pravind Jugnauth, and the police commissioner. But the Mauritian authorities were unable to ensure the safety of the group, even after police dispersed the protestors. The march was cancelled for safety reasons, but a celebratory event elsewhere in the city was not, in a display of defiance against hate and bigotry.

“I don’t want it to seem like it was gay people against Muslims,” added Carou. “Mauritius is a peaceful country and thankfully nobody was hurt. It is just a small minority of people who are against us.”

Soweto Pride

By Jade Madingwane (FEW)

The annual Soweto Pride took place at Protea Glen Extension 14 in on 29 September. Soweto Pride is a **political project initiated by the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) in 2004** with the aim of creating and entrenching a political and social space for black lesbian women as well as the broader lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community, to celebrate our sexuality and our humanity within the communities we inhabit, and yet within which we are excluded and marginalized on a daily basis.

The project is used to confront homophobia and discrimination experienced by gays and lesbians in South Africa, especially those who live in the townships. It is also a space to express our outrage at the violations we still face in South Africa because of our sexuality.

Soweto Pride has grown in numbers over the years. An estimated 8000 people attended the event in 2017 and the 2018 crowd is believed to have matched, if not exceeded that. The LGBTI community of Johannesburg showed huge support for the event, and were deeply involved in the setup, and many activities that were on offer at Pride.

A workshop on how to organise a community pride; stalls offering a wide range of crafts and refreshments and more; a number of parties and social gatherings which were naturally well-attended; camping and of course the main Pride march were part of the festivities of the day.

The march itself was hugely important, not just as a Pride tradition, but as a means to make the community visible and reclaim the streets of Soweto where so many of our queer siblings have faced violence and murder. Having fun, and being visible, in a space like Soweto, or anywhere in South Africa for that matter, is a revolutionary act of defiance.

Next year, we will be back in Soweto to defy hatred and ignorance again!



Jade Madingwane of FEW with Mapaseka Morobe at Pride celebrations. Photo courtesy of FEW

Sweet love

Sandisiwe Dlamini

I hope That you are fine
 I hope That the sun lights up your smile
 The same way your smile lights up the room
 I hope That to you life is never cruel
 You're too precious
 And if the sun ever sets on you
 I hope your memory lingers on for generations to come
 Because for people like you and I
 There are no guarantees of safety
 However, I hope That you are safe
 I hope That God's mercy follows you
 For all of your days
 I hope That you are never affected by the violence and the hate
 Because you were created as an extension of God's love
 I hope That you experience love
 And I hope That you experience it abundantly
 And if you are hurt
 I hope you pick yourself up and find your way
 Because the world can be cruel
 To people like you and I
 Sweet Love
 I hope that you are fine
 I hope That the sun
 Lights up your smile
 The same way your smile
 Lights up the room

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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