



COVERING SEXUAL AND  
GENDER MINORITIES & RELIGION  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

A REPORTING GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS

# COVERING SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES & RELIGION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

A Reporting Guide for Journalists

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Finally, we thank the 24 journalists who traveled from across Sub-Saharan Africa to join us in Cape Town for this intensive workshop. Their willingness to learn and share was inspiring, and we hope their final stories, some of which appear in this reporting guide, encourage fellow journalists to cover sexual and gender minorities & religion with honesty, fairness, accuracy, transparency, sensitivity and thoroughness.

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# INTRODUCTION

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# Introduction

In Sub-Saharan Africa, as in much of the world, reporting on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE) can be tricky. Cultural taboos, entrenched stereotypes, social hostilities, legal prohibitions and editorial censorship often distort coverage of these sensitive topics. Add religion to the mix and producing responsible journalism on sexual and gender minorities can seem impossible.

In November 2016, Religion News Foundation set out to show that ethical and sensitive coverage of marginalized individuals and communities is not only possible but necessary. To this end, we assembled 24 professional journalists and editors representing 15 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa for a four-day reporting workshop in Cape Town, South Africa.

During the week, we discussed our motivations and professional obligations as journalists; reviewed key concepts and terms around SOGIE issues and religion; shared regional media freedom challenges and opportunities from our own communities; analyzed structural roots of inequality; brainstormed story ideas, angles and sources; strategized how best to protect source safety and sensitivity;

and debated issues around news value and public interest. We started the week as strangers and ended it as friends, committed to helping one another improve coverage of sexual and gender minorities & religion in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This guide summarizes the key topics discussed at the Cape Town workshop and provides readers a trove of resources and sources to enhance their own coverage of these issues. It also includes final versions of trainees' stories, which originated during the workshop and evolved in the weeks that followed under Religion News Foundation's editorial guidance and support. To read more of the trainees' stories, visit: <http://religionnews.com/tag/lgbtqi-religion-africa/>.



*Trainees hear from Imam Muhsin Hendricks.  
Photo by Brian Pellot.*

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# REPORTING RESOLUTION



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# Reporting Resolution

In Sub-Saharan Africa, sexual and gender minorities remain disadvantaged, stigmatized and excluded from many aspects of economic, political and social life. Alarming levels of discrimination, prejudice and violence make these often marginalized and misunderstood individuals and communities particularly vulnerable to human rights violations.

As journalists, we have the power to replace dehumanizing stereotypes with nuanced and accurate portrayals of persecuted minorities. Doing so requires us to

put biases aside and to embrace the core teachings of our profession.

The following reporting resolution, drafted as a group exercise at the end of the Cape Town training, reflects some of the best practices journalists identified to improve coverage of sexual and gender minorities & religion. It serves as a useful starting point and summary of what's to come in this reporting guide.



*Trainees visit Auwal Masjid in Bo-Kaap, Cape Town. Photo by Brian Pellot.*

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Religion News  
Foundation Resolution

Covering Sexual and  
Gender Minorities & Religion  
in Sub-Saharan Africa

November 6 - 10, 2016  
Cape Town, South Africa

As journalists from across Sub-Saharan Africa, we adhere to our profession's principles of honesty, fairness, accuracy, transparency, sensitivity and thoroughness. When reporting and editing on sexual and gender minorities & religion, we resolve to:

01. Independently develop our knowledge of different belief systems and SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression) issues.
02. Avoid mentioning faith affiliation or SOGIE status when such information is not directly relevant to a story.
03. Carefully consider word choice and framing around sexual and gender minorities and followers of different faiths. Use sources' preferred terminology when appropriate.
04. Allow marginalized people to speak for themselves and in their own voices.
05. Strive to include moderate voices in our reporting, not just the extremes.

06. Seek out knowledgeable sources capable of providing accurate information and analysis.
07. Always consider the motivations and potential biases of our sources.
08. Be especially diligent in verifying all details when covering sensitive news and ask for clarification when needed.
09. Avoid including dangerous hate speech in our stories.
10. Avoid sensationalizing or capitalizing on marginalized identities.
11. Avoid using imagery that depicts religious or sexual and gender minorities in stereotypical or dehumanizing ways.
12. Take all measures possible to provide anonymity when necessary to protect the safety and security of individuals and communities.
13. Practice the qualities of responsible, ethical journalism by minimizing harm and avoiding hearsay and rumor.
14. Encourage diversity in our newsrooms.
15. Ensure that our personal beliefs and biases do not influence the objectivity of our reporting or limit the topics we cover. If our beliefs somehow make covering a story impossible, we should pass it onto a colleague.

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ETHICAL  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
REPORTING  
PRINCIPLES

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# Ethical Human Rights Reporting Principles

The London-based **Ethical Journalism Network** lists truth and accuracy, independence, fairness and impartiality, humanity, and accountability as five of the most important principles that distinguish ethical journalism from propaganda and public relations.

To ensure truth and accuracy, we as journalists must learn about the topics we cover. To achieve independence, we must limit the influence of interested parties that try to shape our work. To foster fairness and impartiality, we should interview and seek input from a diverse range of relevant stakeholders, most importantly the individuals and communities we're covering. To safeguard humanity, we should recognize and strive to reduce any potential harm our reporting may bring upon vulnerable individuals and communities. To ensure accountability to our readers, we need to humbly acknowledge and correct past mistakes in our reporting.

If we commit ourselves to these basic principles of our profession, we can contribute to the accurate portrayal of silenced minorities and give individuals

and communities the opportunity to speak in their own words.

We started our Cape Town workshop by asking the 24 trainees why they became journalists. Common responses included: to give voice to the voiceless; to make sense of the world for my audience; to challenge stereotypes, entrenched norms and structural inequalities; to expose corruption; and to enact positive change in my community.

We also asked trainees why they were keen to report on human rights issues. Responses included: to right wrongs and injustices; to inform people of their rights; to promote good governance; to create a freer society; to advocate for vulnerable and exploited communities; to address violence and impunity against groups; and to expose the daily struggle of my people.

Finally, we asked them to list traits that make a good journalist great. Responses included: passion; curiosity; sensitivity; empathy; patience; integrity; tolerance; conscientiousness; courage; thoroughness; objectivity; impartiality; willingness to learn; and commitment to accuracy.

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These motivations, qualities and principles form the backbone of ethical human rights reporting. By identifying important stories that are not being told accurately (or at all), we can shed light on human rights abuses and do our part to help make the world a better place, all while maintaining our journalistic credibility.

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### COVERING AND AVOIDING DANGEROUS HATE SPEECH

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Ethical journalists have a responsibility to cover the facts, but we also have a responsibility to avoid unnecessarily stoking hatred and violence, especially when tensions are running high.

Some politicians and religious leaders across Sub-Saharan Africa and around the world use homophobic and transphobic hate speech to rally public support around a common perceived enemy (sexual and gender minorities), distracting the masses from other economic, political or social concerns. By labeling same-sex attraction and gender non-conformity as unAfrican, ungodly, sinful, amoral, illegal and unacceptable, these leaders create scapegoats out of already vulnerable minorities. Local media are sometimes complicit in legitimizing and spreading such vitriol, as we'll explore in later sections.

When hate speech crops up in professional journalism, it does a disservice to our profession, our audience, and society at large. Sometimes it reinforces unpleasant stereotypes; other times it contributes

to evils far worse. But what constitutes hate speech, and how do we balance the right to freedom of expression with a need to prevent the spread of dangerous rhetoric?

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### WHAT CONSTITUTES HATE SPEECH?

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Broadly speaking, we can think of hate speech as that which denigrates people based on some aspects of their individual or group identities. Legal discrepancies and local sensitivities mean that the same quote from a source or line in a story might be considered discriminatory, hateful, offensive, dangerous, libelous, blasphemous, treasonous, seditious or perfectly acceptable from one country to the next. It's important to familiarize yourself with local red lines when reporting on controversial issues at home and abroad.

[Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) broadly defines hate speech as any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. The U.S. outlaws speech intended to and likely to provoke imminent lawless action — a very high threshold. The legal bar is much lower in most countries, resulting in prohibitions against homophobia, transphobia, racism, blasphemy, religious defamation and a range of other speech and thought crimes.

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## RELIGION AS SOURCE AND TARGET OF HATE

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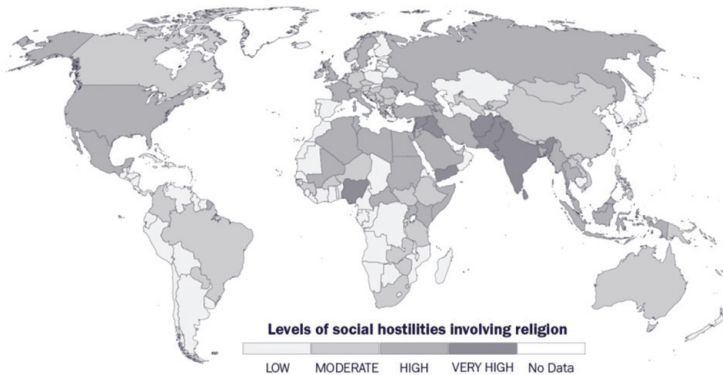
Conflict is bound to arise when different groups express mutually exclusive claims to truth and believe salvation to be on the line. For this reason, religion and hateful or offensive speech often overlap in complicated ways. We see Christians slamming Mormons for following a “false prophet,” Jews attacking Hindus for worshipping multiple deities, and Buddhists persecuting Muslims for not conforming. We also see hatred within religions: Sunnis vs. Shiites, ultra-Orthodox vs. Reform Jews, Protestants vs. Catholics. Then there’s hatred exchanged on other belief grounds: fundamentalists denying rights to sexual and gender minorities; “New Atheists” lampooning believers of any stripe.

These inter- and intra-religious tensions often result in faith-based hate speech, even if religion is just one factor in a broader conflict over resources, culture, politics or other fault lines.

A [2015 Pew Research Center report](#) citing 2013 data found harassment of religious groups in 164 countries. Christians, Muslims and Jews face harassment in the most countries, but Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Bahá’ís, Hindus, Buddhists and people of other faiths are also subject to social hostilities and government restrictions on their faiths, as are nonbelievers.

### Social hostilities around the world

*Level of social hostilities in each country as of December 2014*



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.  
“Trends in Global Restrictions on Religion”

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## IDENTIFYING HATE SPEECH: A FIVE POINT TEST

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The **Ethical Journalism Network's five-point test of speech for journalism in context** highlights a few points journalists and editors should consider when deciding how to report potentially inflammatory news:

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### 01. The content and form of speech

Journalists should ask themselves whether the speech they are quoting is dangerous. Will it incite violence, intensify hatred or lead to prosecution under local laws?

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### 02. The economic, social and political climate

Hateful speech can become more dangerous amid economic, social and political strife. Where insecurity and instability reign supreme, journalists should evaluate what impact quoting hateful speech might have on its intended targets.

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### 03. The position or status of the speaker

Journalists should not act as indiscriminate megaphones for hate speech. If a prominent source makes hateful, false or malicious claims, those claims should be scrutinized and reported accordingly. If a non-public figure makes unsubstantiated claims, they should be ignored if not newsworthy.

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### 04. The reach of the speech

Limited off-color remarks in private conversations are unlikely to produce much harm. That changes if hateful remarks are repeatedly broadcast for all to see, a good indicator that the speaker may be trying to deliberately promote hostility.

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### 05. The objectives of the speech

Journalists should strive to determine whether speech is deliberately designed to denigrate the rights of others and should know what forms of expression are subject to legal sanctions. When confronted with incidents of hate speech, EJN advises journalists not to sensationalize the story and to pause for a moment before publishing to think through potential consequences.



*"Journalists on Duty"* by **Yan Arief Purwanto** is licensed under CC by-SA 2.0 license.

# HATE SPEECH

TURNING THE PAGE OF HATE:  
A MEDIA CAMPAIGN FOR  
TOLERANCE IN JOURNALISM

When it comes to **hate speech**, journalists and editors must pause and take the time to judge the **potential impact** of offensive, inflammatory content.

The following test, developed by the EJN and based on international standards, highlights questions in the **gathering, preparation and dissemination** of news and helps place what is said and who is saying it in an **ethical context**.

## 2 REACH OF THE SPEECH

How far is the speech traveling?  
Is there a **pattern** of behaviour?

## 3 GOALS OF THE SPEECH

How does it benefit the **speaker** and their interests?  
Is it **deliberately intended** to cause harm to others?

# A 5 POINT TEST FOR JOURNALISTS

## 4 THE CONTENT

Is the speech **dangerous**? **ITSELF**  
Could it incite **violence** towards others?

## 5 SURROUNDING CLIMATE

SOCIAL / ECONOMIC / POLITICAL

Who might be **negatively affected**?

Is there a history of **conflict** or **discrimination**?

## 1 STATUS OF THE SPEAKER

How might their **position** influence their **motives**?

Should they even be **listened to** or just **ignored**?

DON'T **SENSATIONALISE**!

AVOID THE **RUSH** TO PUBLISH

TAKE A **MOMENT OF REFLECTION**

EthicalJournalismNetwork.org





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## IDENTIFYING DANGEROUS SPEECH: A FIVE-POINT TEST

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“Dangerous speech” is inflammatory speech that has the capacity to catalyze violence among different groups. Susan Benesch, who heads the Dangerous Speech Project, says the most dangerous speech acts occur when the following **five factors** are maximized:

.....

**01. The speaker is powerful and has a high degree of influence over the audience**

.....

**02. The audience has grievances and fear that the speaker can cultivate**

.....

**03. The speech act is understood as a call to violence**

.....

**04. There exists a social or historical context propitious for violence, for any of a variety of reasons, including long-standing competition between groups for resources, lack of efforts to solve grievances, or previous episodes of violence**

.....

**05. There exists a means of dissemination that is influential in itself, for example because it is the sole or primary source of news for the relevant audience**

Use these two five-point tests to help determine whether your sources’ statements, your colleagues’ broadcasts and your own writing could be considered dangerous hate speech.

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## HOW TO HANDLE OFFENSIVE SPEECH

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Someone might be upset by facts or ideas you publish, but that alone is no reason to censor them. A journalist’s duty is to inform the public, not to shield people from uncomfortable or upsetting realities. The newsworthiness of a story should be balanced with concern for the safety of sources and vulnerable communities that might be affected by your reporting.

The tenets, norms and nuances of a particular faith sometimes mean that a minority or majority of believers will consider certain forms of expression hateful or offensive, even if they are perfectly legal in most countries. The 2005 **Danish cartoons controversy**, 2012 **Innocence of Muslims YouTube debacle** and 2015 **Charlie Hebdo attacks** all demonstrated the dangers that can arise when taboos — depicting the Prophet Muhammad, in these cases — are broken.

Outrage over **blasphemous artworks** such as “Piss Christ,” nude Hindu deities and **music videos** by Madonna, Lady Gaga and Tori Amos shows that Muslims aren’t the only ones who take offense to irrelevant portrayals of their sacred beliefs. When reporting on these tensions, try to understand why individuals or groups are

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offended, but don't confuse freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression — both fundamental human rights — with a nonexistent right to be shielded from offense.

Before journalists can weigh whether to publish potentially offensive material, they first need to learn what different groups consider offensive and how they might react. Consult local faith leaders and SOGIE activists and check out ReligionLink's [various reporting guides](#) to ensure that your language is accurate and nuanced.

The five-point tests above can help you calculate whether source quotes that some readers consider offensive are likely to prompt violence or actual harm. Sources who resort to sensational rhetoric, hateful slurs or dehumanizing stereotypes should be ignored or chal-

lenged by including alternative voices in your reporting. Biased, misleading or otherwise inaccurate portrayals of individuals and groups have no place in a responsible journalist's toolkit.

It's important to remember that journalists do not enjoy absolute freedom of expression. We all face legal and ethical limits on our reporting, and our profession's harm limitation principle should be carefully considered when determining how to handle potentially offensive speech. Different media outlets will arrive at different conclusions in this balancing act. Whatever rationale shapes such decisions, basic news values should trump fear of causing offense.

For more resources and sources on ethical human rights reporting principles and hate speech, visit: <http://www.religionlink.com/source-guides/covering-and-avoiding-religious-hate-speech/>.



*Prince Appiah interviews Kwasi, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, near Kumasi, Ghana in January 2017.*

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KEY SOGIE  
TERMINOLOGY

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# Key SOGIE Terminology

Before reaching out to sources, it's important to familiarize yourself with the relevant terminology that tends to come up in conversations about sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE). Knowing that LGBTQI+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and more (+) is just the tip of the iceberg. Not every SOGIE minority chooses to use these terms and labels. Rather than trying to fit sources into particular identity categories, allow them to use their own vocabulary, and describe them as such in your reporting when appropriate. For some of the terms you're likely to encounter in your reporting, reference the following glossaries:

The [GLAAD Media Reference Guide - 10th Edition](#), published in October 2016 and updated every few years, offers tools to encourage fair, accurate and inclusive reporting of SOGIE issues. The guide includes glossaries of [LGBQ terms](#), [transgender terms](#), [terms to avoid](#), and a summary of relevant [Associated Press and New York Times style terms](#).

The National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association's [Stylebook Supplement on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Terminology](#) is intended to complement the Associated Press stylebook and those of individual newsrooms.

The [Gender Spectrum Guide to Gender Terminology](#) explains non-binary gender notions and includes relevant terminology.

The Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism's [Diversity Style Guide](#) has an [LGBTQ glossary](#) of relevant terms.

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*Church World Service, a cooperative ministry that aims to promote peace and social justice, offers the following definitions in its guide for faith actors working with sexual and gender nonconforming forced migrants in Kenya. Though not exhaustive, this is a good introductory list to get you started. It has been slightly adapted for this guide:*

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Ally:</b>   | A term for people who are supportive of LGBTQI+ social movements and rights but do not identify as LGBTQI+.  |
| <b>Biphobia:</b>                                     | Irrational fear or hatred of bisexual persons driven by stereotypes and myths.   |
| <b>Bisexual:</b>                                     | A binary term for someone who is sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to both males and females.  |
| <b>Coming out:</b>                                   | Process of identifying to oneself and to others in accordance with one's sexual orientation or gender identity.  |
| <b>Gay:</b>  | Describes a person who is sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to people of the same sex. This means males who like other males or females who like other females. The word "gay" can refer to any homosexual person, but mostly it refers to homosexual men. |
| <b>Gender:</b>                                       | Socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.   |
| <b>Gender expression(s):</b>                         | How an individual presents their sense of masculinity or femininity through external characteristics and behavior. This can include dress, mannerisms, grooming, speech patterns and social interactions.  |
| <b>Gender identity:</b>                              | Refers to a person's innate, deeply felt psychological identification as male, female, or something else. This may or may not correspond to a person's designated sex at birth.  |
| <b>Gender Identity Disorder or Gender Dysphoria:</b> | A controversial diagnosis given to transgender people. This disorder is marked by severe distress and discomfort caused by a perceived conflict between one's gender identity and one's designated sex at birth.   |
| <b>Gender minorities:</b>                            | Individuals who do not fit a binary model of gender i.e. masculinity or femininity in terms of their expression(s), mannerisms or identity.  |

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|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Heterosexism:</b>               | Promoting heterosexuality as superior or assuming that all people are heterosexual.  |
| <b>Heterosexual/<br/>Straight:</b> | Someone whose predominant attraction is to the “opposite” sex.   |
| <b>Homophobia:</b>                 | Fear or hatred of homosexuals or homosexuality. Homophobia is a human-made construct often fed by political, religious, legal and even pseudomedical justifications.   |
| <b>Homosexual/<br/>Gay:</b>        | Someone whose predominant attraction is to the same sex.   |
| <b>In the Closet:</b>              | Being secretive about one’s sexual orientation or gender identity. Also referred to as “closeted.”   |
| <b>Intersex:</b>                   | A person born with a body that is not entirely male or female. This may be caused by a range of medical conditions including genetic or chromosomal anomalies, which interfere with sexual differentiation during gestation. |
| <b>LGBTQI+:</b>                    | Acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and more (+).  |
| <b>Lesbian:</b>                    | A woman who is sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to other women.   |
| <b>MSM:</b>                        | Men who have sex with men. They may or may not identify as gay or bisexual.  |
| <b>Queer:</b>                      | This is an umbrella term that is used by many sexual and gender minorities to describe themselves. Many value its inclusiveness of the SOGIE spectrum. Only use when doing so is clearly not offensive.                      |
| <b>Questioning:</b>                | The process of seeking information and support when uncertain of one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity.  |

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|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Safe space:</b>               | A positive environment that enables all persons, including sexual and gender nonconforming individuals, to be free to express themselves without fear of discrimination or violation of their rights and dignity. Individual actions and reactions are key in upholding or violating a safe space.  |
| <b>Sex:</b>                      | Assignment at birth as male or female based upon biological and physiological characteristics.  |
| <b>Sex reassignment surgery:</b> | Genital alterations as a part of transition. This term is preferred over “sex change operation.”  |
| <b>Sexual behavior:</b>          | What we do sexually and with whom. Most people pursue this with a person(s) they are attracted to. This is not always an accurate indicator of sexual orientation or preference.  |
| <b>Sexual minorities:</b>        | Refers to persons who engage in sexual activities that are not exclusively heterosexual, and individuals who do not fall into the binary sex categories of male and female.   |
| <b>Sexual orientation:</b>       | The preferred term used when referring to an individual’s innate romantic, sexual and/or emotional attraction to other people, with regards to sex and/or gender. “Heterosexual,” “bisexual” and “homosexual” are all examples of sexual orientations. A person’s sexual orientation is distinct from a person’s gender identity and expression(s). |
| <b>Sexual preference:</b>        | Indicates sexual desires that are more fluid than sexual orientation. Someone may have a sexual preference for people who are tall, short, slim or curvaceous, for instance, or prefer certain sexual practices. See GLAAD usage notes about this term below.   |

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|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>SGN:</b>           | Acronym used to refer to Sexual and Gender Nonconforming individuals. These are people whose sexual practices, attractions, gender identities and/or gender expressions diverge from societal expectations based on assigned sex at birth. This is an umbrella term that is inclusive of LGBTQI+ persons. Sexual and gender nonconformity is diverse and is influenced by culture, law, religion and medical factors, among others. |
| <b>Sodomy laws:</b>   | Laws that prohibit consensual sexual acts among consenting adults. Such acts are seldom fully defined but can include anal and oral sex. Sodomy laws are most often used to target men who have sex with men, but also apply to women in many jurisdictions.  |
| <b>SOGI or SOGIE:</b> | Acronyms used to refer to Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression(s) (for example, "SOGI(E) related discrimination").  |
| <b>Transgender:</b>   | Umbrella term for a person whose gender identity or expression(s) differ from societal expectations based on that person's assigned sex at birth. Trans people may not necessarily also identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual.   |
| <b>Transition:</b>    | The process of altering one's sex and/or gender. This may or may not include medical and other physical alterations. It can also include changing legal documents.  |
| <b>Transman:</b>      | Assigned female at birth, but identifies as male. May be referred to as FtM (female-to-male transgender).   |
| <b>Transphobia:</b>   | Emotional disgust, fear, anger and/or discomfort felt or expressed towards people who don't conform to society's gender expectations.   |
| <b>Transsexual:</b>   | A person who takes some measure to physically alter their sex to be more like the "opposite" sex. This may include hormones, implants, sex reassignment surgery, etc.   |



|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Transwoman:</b> | Assigned male at birth, but identifies as female. May be referred to as MtF (male-to-female transgender). |
| <b>WSW:</b>        | Women who have sex with women. They may not identify as lesbian or bisexual.                              |

The [GLAAD Media Reference Guide - 10th Edition](#) elaborates on some of these definitions in its [Terms to Avoid](#) section, which has been adapted and republished below.

| OFFENSIVE  | PREFERRED  |
|--|--|
| <p><b><u>“homosexual” (n. or adj.)</u></b></p> <p>Because of the clinical history of the word “homosexual,” it is aggressively used by anti-LGBTQ extremists to suggest that people attracted to the same sex are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered – notions discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Please avoid using “homosexual” except in direct quotes. Please also avoid using “homosexual” as a style variation simply to avoid repeated use of the word “gay.” The Associated Press, The New York Times and The Washington Post restrict use of the term “homosexual”.</p> | <p><b><u>“gay” (adj.); “gay man” or “lesbian” (n.); “gay person/people”</u></b></p> <p>Please use gay, lesbian, or when appropriate bisexual or queer to describe people attracted to members of the same sex. Do not use “gay” or “gays” as isolated nouns.</p> |

| OFFENSIVE  | PREFERRED  |
|--|--|
| <p><b><u>“homosexual relations/relationship,” “homosexual couple,” “homosexual sex,” etc.</u></b></p> <p>Identifying a same-sex couple as “a homosexual couple,” characterizing their relationship as “a homosexual relationship,” or identifying their intimacy as “homosexual sex” is extremely offensive and should be avoided. These constructions are frequently used by anti-LGBTQ extremists to denigrate LGBTQ people, couples, and relationships.</p>                         | <p><b><u>“relationship,” “couple” (or, if necessary, “gay/lesbian/same-sex couple”), “sex,” etc.</u></b></p> <p>As a rule, try to avoid labeling an activity, emotion, or relationship gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer unless you would call the same activity, emotion, or relationship “straight” if engaged in by someone of another orientation. In most cases, your readers, viewers, or listeners will be able to discern people’s sexes and/or orientations through the names of the parties involved, your depictions of their relationships, and your use of pronouns.</p> |
| <p><b><u>“sexual preference”</u></b></p> <p>The term “sexual preference” is typically used to suggest that being attracted to the same sex is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured.”</p>  | <p><b><u>“sexual orientation” or “orientation”</u></b></p> <p>Sexual orientation is the accurate description of an individual’s enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex and is inclusive of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and queer people, as well as straight men and women (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style).</p>   |
| <p><b><u>“gay lifestyle,” “homosexual lifestyle,” or “transgender lifestyle”</u></b></p> <p>There is no single LGBTQ lifestyle. LGBTQ people are diverse in the ways they lead their lives. The phrases “gay lifestyle,” “homosexual lifestyle,” and “transgender lifestyle” are used to denigrate LGBTQ people suggesting that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a choice and therefore can and should be “cured” (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style).</p> | <p><b><u>“LGBTQ people and their lives”</u></b></p>  |

| OFFENSIVE   | PREFERRED  |
|---|--|
| <p><b><u>“admitted homosexual,” “avowed homosexual,” “confessed homosexual,” or “confirmed homosexual”</u></b></p> <p>Dated terms used to describe those who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. The words “admitted” or “avowed” suggest that being attracted to the same-sex is somehow shameful or inherently secretive.</p> | <p><b><u>“out gay man,” “out lesbian,” or “out queer person”</u></b></p> <p>You may also simply describe the person as being out, for example: “Bisi Alimi is an out activist from Nigeria.” Avoid the use of the word “homosexual” in any case (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style).</p>   |
| <p><b><u>“gay agenda” or “homosexual agenda”</u></b></p> <p>Notions of a so-called “homosexual agenda” are rhetorical inventions of anti-LGBTQ extremists seeking to create a climate of fear by portraying the pursuit of equal opportunity for LGBTQ people as sinister (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style).</p>  | <p><b><u>Accurate descriptions of the issues (e.g., “inclusion in existing nondiscrimination laws,” “securing equal employment protections”)</u></b></p> <p>LGBTQ people are motivated by the same hopes, concerns, and desires as other people. They seek to be able to earn a living, be safe in their communities, and take care of the ones they love. Their commitment to equality and acceptance is one they share with many allies and advocates who are not LGBTQ.</p> |
| <p><b><u>“special rights”</u></b></p> <p>Anti-LGBTQ extremists frequently characterize equal protection of the law for LGBTQ people as “special rights” to incite opposition to such things as relationship recognition and inclusive nondiscrimination laws (see AP, Reuters, &amp; New York Times Style). As such, the term should be avoided.</p>  | <p><b><u>“equal rights” or “equal protection”</u></b></p>  |

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## DEFAMATORY LANGUAGE

### "fag," "faggot," "dyke," "homo," "sodomite," "moffie" and similar epithets

The criteria for using these derogatory terms should be the same as those applied to vulgar epithets used to target other groups: they should not be used except in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted. So that such words are not given credibility in the media, it is preferred that reporters say, "The person used a derogatory word for a lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer person."

### "deviant," "disordered," "dysfunctional," "diseased," "perverted," "destructive" and similar descriptions

The notion that being LGBTQ is a psychological disorder was discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s. Today, words such as "deviant," "diseased" and "disordered" often are used to portray LGBTQ people as less than human, mentally ill, or as a danger to society. Words such as these should be avoided in stories about the LGBTQ community. If they must be used, they should be quoted directly in a way that clearly reveals the bias of the person being quoted.

### Associating LGBTQ people with pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest

Being LGBTQ is neither synonymous with, nor indicative of, any tendency toward pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest. Such claims, innuendoes and associations often are used to insinuate that LGBTQ people pose a threat to society, to families, and to children in particular. Such assertions and insinuations are defamatory and should be avoided, except in direct quotes that clearly reveal the bias of the person quoted.

For guidance on religion-related terminology, check out the Religion Stylebook, an easy-to-use guide created for journalists who report on religion in the mainstream media. It's an independent supplement to The Associated Press Stylebook and is a service of the Religion News Association. It can be found at [religionstylebook.com](http://religionstylebook.com).

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**SORTING SOGIE  
MYTHS FROM  
FACTS**

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# Sorting SOGIE Myths from Facts

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One of our most vital roles as journalists is sorting fact from fiction. Audiences rely on us to help them distinguish factual truths from mythical falsehoods. With fake news dominating Facebook feeds and Twitter streams, real, accurate, factual news has never been more important.

Because SOGIE issues are sometimes considered taboo, myths around sexual and gender minorities often go unchecked and unchallenged, even in mainstream media reports. News examples in the “How NOT to Report on SOGIE” section of this guide show some of the sensational and false stereotypes that are carelessly or maliciously recycled in regional and global reporting.

Perpetuation of these myths can contribute to inequality, human rights violations, privacy violations, gender-based violence, physical and sexual violence, stigma, arrest, unlawful detention, prosecution, denial of autonomy over sexual health choices, removal of children from

parental custody, housing discrimination, employment discrimination, educational discrimination, healthcare discrimination, mental health issues, suicide attempts, homelessness...the list goes on.

Below you’ll find a mix of common SOGIE myths and facts. Cover the right column with your hand or a piece of paper and read each statement on the left from top to bottom, revealing and learning more about its myth or fact status as you go.

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*The following myth and fact statements were inspired by and partially adapted from a reporting guide produced by GALA. The right column explanations are original to this guide:*

| STATEMENT  | MYTH VS FACT   |
|--|--|
| <p>People can change their sexual orientation through prayer</p>   | <p><b>Myth:</b> Sexual orientation is an individual's innate and enduring romantic, sexual and/or emotional attraction to other people with regards to their sex and/or gender. Prayer will not change it.</p> |
| <p>Queer people are capable of having healthy, long-term relationships</p>   | <p><b>Fact:</b> Look for examples in your community and abroad.</p>  |
| <p>Sexual and gender minorities often face higher rates of violence and discrimination than the general population</p> | <p><b>Fact:</b> Consult local and international human rights groups and authorities for statistics.</p>  |
| <p>Every society has sexual and gender minorities</p>  | <p><b>Fact:</b> Just as every society has left-handed people, every society has sexual and gender diversity.</p>   |
| <p>Same-sex attraction is caused by witchcraft and evil spirits</p>  | <p><b>Myth:</b> If it can't be proven, it's not a fact.</p>  |
| <p>Gay men are more likely to abuse children</p>   | <p><b>Myth:</b> Consult credible local and international statistics.</p>   |
| <p>Not all congregations are against homosexuality</p>   | <p><b>Fact:</b> See the Sub-Saharan Source Guide section below for examples of inclusive and affirming congregations and faith leaders.</p>  |
| <p>Homosexuality is a mental disorder</p>  | <p><b>Myth:</b> Major international mental health organizations are in agreement that homosexuality is not a mental disorder.</p>  |

| STATEMENT   | MYTH VS FACT  |
|---|---|
| <p>People are LGBTQ+ because they were abused as children</p>                 | <p><b>Myth:</b> Interview a diverse range of LGBTQ+ people at home and abroad. Some may have been abused as children, as is true of the general population, but most will say their queer identities and expressions are not a result of childhood abuse.</p>   |
| <p>If a lesbian has sex with a man she will be “cured”</p>                    | <p><b>Myth:</b> Same-sex attraction is not a mental disorder that needs to be “cured,” and sexual orientation is enduring. The so-called “corrective rape” of lesbians constitutes a criminal violation of human rights.</p>  |
| <p>Scientists still don’t know what causes a person’s sexual orientation</p>  | <p><b>Fact:</b> Theories abound, but none have been decisively proven.</p>  |
| <p>Children of same-sex parents will grow up to be same-sex attracted</p>     | <p><b>Myth:</b> If same-sex adoption is not legal in your country, interview several children raised by same-sex parents abroad. Some might be same-sex attracted, in proportion with the general population, but not as a result of their upbringing. Remember that sexual orientation is innate and enduring.</p> |
| <p>Sexual and gender minorities are celebrated in some African traditions</p> | <p><b>Fact:</b> See the 2015 book <i>Boldly Queer: African Perspectives on Same-Sex Sexuality and Gender Diversity</i>, available for free online at <a href="http://hivos.org">hivos.org</a>.</p>  |
| <p>There are indigenous African words for sexual and gender minorities</p>    | <p><b>Fact:</b> <i>Talasi</i>, <i>unongayindoda</i> and <i>umjendevu</i> are just a few examples from South Africa. Ask local activists for local indigenous terms.</p>   |



| STATEMENT   | MYTH VS FACT   |
|---|--|
| <p>You can't tell a person's sexual orientation just by looking at them</p> | <p><b>Fact:</b> Gender expression can be displayed, but sexual orientation is innate and cannot be determined merely by looking at a person.</p>   |
| <p>A transgender woman is a woman</p>                                       | <p><b>Fact:</b> The words "woman" and "man" refer to a person's gender identity, while "male" and "female" refer to biological sex. If a transgender person identifies as a woman, she is a woman regardless of biological sex, sexual orientation or gender expression.</p> |
| <p>Same-sex relationships always have a 'male' and 'female' role</p>        | <p><b>Myth:</b> This is not true, and some sources will consider the premise offensive. In any case, it's probably not relevant to your reporting, so don't formulate this myth into a question when interviewing sources.</p>   |
| <p>People become queer from hanging out with other queer people</p>         | <p><b>Myth:</b> Sexual and gender diversity is not contagious.</p>   |

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RELIGION  
REPORTING  
TIPS

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# Religion Reporting Tips

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Writing and producing stories about religion in ways that resonate with ardent believers, well-read worshippers, spiritual dabblers and unconcerned agnostics requires skill. Read on for some of our best religion reporting tips.

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## COVERING RELIGION WITH ACCURACY, BALANCE AND INSIGHT

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- Be curious and willing to learn about others' beliefs.
- Be willing to work through cultural and language barriers.
- Respect the role of faith in people's lives, but maintain your journalistic skepticism.
- Look beyond institutional religion and delve into informal, unorganized faith practices.
- When possible, be local and national—or local and global—by connecting a story in your community to bigger trends or issues.
- Ask sources to characterize and label their own beliefs rather than making your own generalizations.

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## FINDING AND VETTING SOURCES AND STATISTICS

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- Religious groups can be wary of outsiders. Learn how to network and develop relationships with sources.
- Visit houses of worship, bookstores, hobby groups, sports games, conferences, festivals or meditation centers—wherever people of faith gather.
- Try to find local representatives of national organizations that are tied to specific faiths.
- Visit online chat sites, social network sites, advocacy and support sites. Sign up for newsletters and Google Alerts on faith topics that interest you.
- Try contacting sources on other journalists' beats or asking your journalism colleagues for help.
- Seek out knowledgeable sources capable of providing accurate information and analysis.
- Always investigate and evaluate the credibility of your sources and consider their motivations and potential biases.

- Strive to include moderate sources in your reporting, not just extreme or powerful voices.
- Be cautious with statistics. Some religions do not keep accurate membership records, and some advocacy groups promote their own polls. Be specific about what numbers represent and where you found them.
- Official websites of denominations and religious organizations are generally reliable but sometimes outdated. Make sure the information you gather has been updated recently.
- Look out for critics of religions who create websites with URLs similar to those of whatever group they are criticizing. It's easy to stumble on a site that you did not intend to visit.
- [ReligionLink.com](http://ReligionLink.com) is a helpful website for journalists. It features thousands of story ideas, resources and sources on a wide range of issues related to religion, public policy and culture.

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## VISITING PLACES OF WORSHIP

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- Journalists should experience worship services first-hand whenever possible.
- Consider letting religious leaders know in advance that you will be attending a service.
- If a worship service is open to the public, you can consider what is said to be “on the record,” even if the house of worship is private property.
- Be respectful. This may mean following customs such as standing, being

silent during prayer, and even observing modesty customs regarding head coverings, etc.

- Research gender expectations of other faiths and know what to do about segregated seating, head coverings and handshakes ahead of your visit.
- Ask permission in advance if you wish to photograph, film or record a worship service.

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## REVEALING PERSONAL BELIEFS

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- Be prepared to handle questions about your personal beliefs from sources.
- Become familiar with and follow any ethical guidelines set by your media organization regarding such questions.
- Assure your source that you will listen to them and that you are committed to representing their faith in a fair and accurate way.
- It's perfectly fine to decline to answer such questions or to ask why the person wants to know about your beliefs. Use your discretion.

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## HANDLING DISAGREEMENTS

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- Remember that your job is to report, not comment or judge.
- Maintain fairness in your story by representing multiple sides. Use counterclaims so that one person's quotes or accusations do not stand alone. This will help show how prev-

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alent your source's views are within a faith tradition.

- Adding context can accurately characterize a person's beliefs. Using quotes from an expert or a fact can quickly show your audience whether a source is on the fringe or in the mainstream.
- If you decide that you won't be able to accurately and fairly report on someone you disagree with, courteously bow out and ask that another reporter be assigned to cover the story.

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### THE MAJOR "DON'TS" OF RELIGION REPORTING

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- Do not preach, teach or proselytize in a story.
- Never promote your faith tradition above others or endorse its beliefs in a story.
- You can report on your own religion. Just make sure to avoid conflicts of interest such as writing about your own congregation.
- Never assume a source knows what deities, angels, or demons are up to. For example, write that a source says

she saw an angel rather than that an angel appeared in front of the source.

- Don't assume that because someone is a leader or member of a faith group they necessarily agree with all of that group's policies and beliefs. Make sure to clarify their views on a topic.
- Don't use terminology that defines the depth or commitment of someone's faith or religious practices unless a source describes themselves as such ("devout," "practicing," etc.).
- Don't forget to double-check and clarify your sources' quotes.
- Don't wait for a story to "break." Actively seek out topics that interest you.



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SOURCE  
SAFETY AND  
SENSITIVITY

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# Source Safety and Sensitivity

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Journalists have a duty to allow marginalized people to speak for themselves and in their own voices. We also have a duty to minimize harm, which means doing everything we can to protect the safety and security of the sources and communities we spotlight in our coverage.

Sexual, gender, and religious minorities are sometimes understandably reluctant to speak to the press if they or people they know have been written about in sensational or stereotypical terms in the past. The best way to build trust with sources is to consistently produce responsible and ethical journalism that demonstrates a commitment to fairness, accuracy and sensitivity.

Be sure sources understand the potential ramifications of being interviewed and quoted on sensitive topics. Clearly tell them where your story will appear and its likely audience. If they provide information off-the-record or on background, respect that. If they ask not to be photographed or that their real name not be used in a story, respect that too. Your editors should have a policy on pseudonyms and source anonymity. If they don't, find out how other ethical news

outlets handle such requests and suggest that your newsroom follow suit.

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*The Samir Kassir Foundation's Journalist Survival Guide offers the following tips on protecting source identity:*

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## ESTABLISHING THE TERMS

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Before conducting the interview, establish the rules under which the information you get will be reported.

Can you use their first name?

Can you identify their place of work or position within an organization?

Can you quote them directly?

As a journalist, it is important that you reveal as much information about your source as possible to establish their, and your, credibility to your audience. When negotiating these terms, try not to make too many suggestions. Let the source think and decide for him or herself how much to give away about who they are.

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Avoid saying you WILL keep their identity secret, because there may be circumstances where you are compelled to reveal it. Instead say you will do EVERYTHING IN YOUR POWER to keep their identity secret, and then be specific about how you intend to do that.

As always, take careful notes during these discussions, and secure those notes. Use a single notebook for all of your reporting on the confidential source. Do NOT use that notebook for his or her contact information. If possible, commit their name to memory, and identify them in your notes by a number or a symbol.

Do not discuss the identity of your source or the information you have obtained with friends or family.

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### FIRST CONTACT

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The absolute best way to get information that cannot be traced is to have an in-person conversation in a private place. Emails, texts and phone calls can be traced.

Bring a small compact camera capable of shooting video with you to the meeting, even if you intend to do a full interview later. It's always possible that the source will only agree to speak with you once. Do not use a smartphone camera or anything that is online.

In many cases, an in-person interview is impossible and you will need to communicate electronically. You should familiarize yourself with the technology that exists to conceal your own identity.

Secure internet services such as TOR will mask your computer's IP address. Secure chat rooms and email services offer a degree of security. One popular method of chat encryption that can take advantage of Facebook's widespread use is Off-The-Record messaging through the Pidgin chat client for PCs ([pidgin.im](#)). Similar services are available for Mac users with the Adium chat client with OTR. A step-by-step guide for installation is offered by [letsencrypt.org](#). There is an encrypted email service for Google's Gmail through a Google Chrome browser extension as well, but nothing is foolproof. You should operate on the assumption that your online communications can be monitored, logged, and recorded. Wi-fi networks are notoriously insecure. And the very presence of safe mail or proxy internet software on your computer may be seen as suspicious.

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### FILMING ANONYMOUS SOURCES

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If your source agrees to an on-camera interview, there are several production techniques you can use to protect their identity. One of the most commonly used techniques is blurring the face in edit after the interview is completed. Be careful if you do this, because your raw video files will of course reveal the person's face. Shooting "in shadow" is also not particularly secure. Facial recognition software can easily identify people by their profiles, or even the shape of their ears, and even if the face looks completely blacked out on your camera monitor, there is a good chance the dark areas contain much more information than you think.



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Another technique is using face scarves or masks to hide everything but the eyes, but eyes are unique to individuals, and your interview subject can easily be identified by their irises alone.

You may be able to cover your interview with shots of the subject that do not include the face. Be aware that clothing, hands, even gestures, can give away their identity as well.

One effective solution, if you have a camera operator, is to shoot back at yourself with the back of the subject's head in the foreground. If they have a scarf or a hood then you can protect their identity and still maintain a visually interesting shot. Be aware of any reflections that might show their face.

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## SECURING YOUR MEDIA

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You should always use a camera that has removable media and record onto that rather than the camera's built in memory. Most modern cameras use SD cards. These are very useful for securing your media. Bring at least two with you to the interview.

As soon as your interview is shot, you should immediately remove the SD card and secure it.

Replace the card with a fresh one, and once you are clear of your source, shoot some new material, for example a street scene or a marketplace. This way if you are stopped and your camera is confiscated, you will have a plausible explana-

tion for what you were doing because the new media will be time and date stamped. If the SD card in the camera is blank, whoever confiscated it will be more suspicious.

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## EDITING VIDEO FOOTAGE

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Video journalists who routinely deal with confidential sources will often keep two computers, one for general use and another that is never plugged into the internet. If you have two computers, use the offline one to import and edit your media. If you don't have two computers, avoid being online while you're working with the material.

Once your edit is complete, you may export the finished project and delete your source files and any proxy files created during the edit. The original SD card should be the only archive you need. If you need to transfer or upload your finished report via the internet, copy it onto a thumb drive and plug it into your online computer.

Depending on your circumstances, you may come up with systems of your own to protect the identity of confidential sources. The important things to remember are to be careful about what you promise, stick to those promises, and continuously educate yourself about all the technological changes that can make your work more dangerous and safer.

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## OTHER RESOURCES

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The Samir Kassir Foundation has short animated video tutorials on other topics including how to protect your computer from malware and hackers, how to get a secure internet connection, and how to secure your Skype account, all available at: [video.skeyesmedia.org](http://video.skeyesmedia.org).

The Security in-a-Box Community Focus guide to digital security tools and tactics for the LGBTI community in Sub-Saharan

Africa is another excellent and comprehensive resource for journalists reporting on sexual and gender minorities in the region. It can be found at: [securityinabox.org/en/lgbti-africa](http://securityinabox.org/en/lgbti-africa).

You may also wish to consult the Electronic Frontier Foundation's surveillance self-defense guides for Journalists on the Move and LGBTQ Youth, available at: [ssd.eff.org/en/index](http://ssd.eff.org/en/index).



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TIPS FOR  
REPORTING ON  
TABOO TOPICS

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# Tips for Reporting on Taboo Topics

In certain countries and contexts, reporting on sensitive or taboo topics is not only dangerous for sources. We may need to protect ourselves, our families and our newsroom colleagues from imprisonment, fines, torture and even death.

The most obvious restrictions reporters face are legal ones. Constitutions and laws prohibiting defamation, libel, apostasy, blasphemy or “gay propaganda” are often used to muzzle the press and free expression. Some journalists also face social and political backlash when broaching sensitive topics. Pakistan hasn’t executed anyone for blasphemy in recent decades, but people are still being killed by vigilantes accused of the crime. In Nigeria, Boko Haram has bombed media outlets and murdered journalists for “distorting” portrayals of the radical terrorist group. And in the Netherlands, some media professionals are still afraid to cover religion after an Islamist murdered one of their colleagues in 2004.

Reporters also take their economic livelihoods into account. Websites that discuss religion in Brunei must register with the government or face up to \$200,000 in fines. In Jordan, journalists face fines of up to \$40,000 for denigrating religion. And in Ireland, blasphemy fines top \$30,000.

Faced with these legal, social, political and economic constraints, how can journalists and bloggers responsibly cover sensitive issues around religious, sexual and gender minorities while staying out of hot water?



“Site Blocked” by *Lars Plougmann* licensed under CC 2.0

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### 01. Know the local red lines

In order to push the limits, you first need to understand them. Freedom of expression is egregiously undervalued in many countries. Brush up on local laws and cultural sensitivities so you know what's taboo before getting yourself in a bind.

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### 02. Let sources say what you can't

Include alternative voices in your reporting—people who can express ideas and opinions you can't or who represent identities that are often absent or distorted in the press. This might sound like a basic principle of good reporting (it is), but it's also a powerful way to air dissent and to highlight local controversies and debates. If including such quotes could potentially endanger your sources, consider how to mitigate threats before publishing.

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### 03. Write anonymously

If you care more about reporting the facts than seeing your byline, consider writing anonymously or pseudonymously. Don't think for a second that doing so will make you totally untouchable. If you're reporting on sensitive issues, you should take every precaution to avoid being traced, tracked or identified. If you fail to do so, you're not only compromising your own safety but also that of your sources.

Start with some basic online privacy tips from the [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#), [Tor](#), [Privacy International](#) and [Access Now](#).

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### 04. Report from exile

Hardly ideal, but reporting from exile is often a necessary option. If journalists and citizens are unable to cover sensitive topics from within their countries, they might choose to safely, securely and anonymously feed information to outsiders who have large international followings. Diaspora journalists living and working abroad still need to consider the safety of family, friends, colleagues and sources back home. [IranWire](#) is a great example of this kind of reporting.

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### 05. Write between the lines

If your main obstacle is automatic keyword censorship online, get creative. Netizens in China long referred to the Tiananmen Square incident of June 4, 1989, as "the thirty-fifth of May." Such obfuscation is usually just a stopgap until the censors catch on, but if your readers know what you mean, it's worth a shot.

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# HOW TO REPORT ON SOGIE ISSUES

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# How to Report on SOGIE Issues

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Although some of these points are covered in other sections of this reporting guide, it may be useful to review an adapted version of the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya's guidelines for reporting on SOGIE issues. The original version is available in GALCK's 2016 media toolkit *SOGIE 101 for the Kenyan Media Professional*.

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## 1. THINK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE COVERAGE ON YOUR AUDIENCE

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SOGIE-related stories have an effect on the SOGIE community and on society at large. Like any other topic, journalists should be aware that their stories have an effect on how the SOGIE community is treated, and that their words can have a positive and negative effect on people.

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## 2. AVOID OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF THE ISSUES

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SOGIE issues are highly diverse and are seldom black and white. Journalists should take care and perform due dili-

gence when researching stories. Quote reliable data whenever possible.

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## 3. STEER AWAY FROM MELODRAMATIC AND SENSATIONALIZED DEPICTIONS

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Always evaluate whether your story is in the public interest. Are you doing the story to stir emotions, or will it improve knowledge and livelihoods? Sensationalized depictions are often full of false or exaggerated information and lead to the public being misinformed, which can have long-lasting effects and serious security implications for the SOGIE community. A professional journalist must question the motives of different sources before offering them a platform.

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## 4. AIM FOR SENSITIVE COVERAGE

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Coverage of SOGIE issues should reflect the true state of the community, and the use of sensational or abusive language should be avoided. Grant people from the SOGIE community anonymity when

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reporting on them if their lives will be negatively affected by the story. Remember, “do no harm.”

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## 5. CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE PLACEMENT OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND PICTURES

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It is very common for the media to use sensational and irrelevant stock video, photos or illustrations when reporting on SOGIE issues. Pictures are part of a story and should be chosen very carefully. Using the image of one person to continually depict a certain sexual orientation,

gender identity or gender expression is misleading if that person is not part of the story. When choosing photos, carefully consider if you are infringing on someone’s right to privacy.

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## 6. AIM TO EDUCATE AND INFORM

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A story should be newsworthy and useful to your audience. While some media aim to entertain, it is unfair to trivialize the lives and stories of minority groups to entertain the majority.



“LGBT Diversity Color Run” by [Gina Giardina](#) licensed under CC 2.0



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# HOW NOT TO REPORT ON SOGIE ISSUES

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# How NOT to Report on SOGIE Issues

Most of this guide focuses on best practices, but it's worth flagging some problematic reporting examples we've come across so that you can avoid replicating the same mistakes.

Sloppy or sensational reporting on sensitive issues can cause real harm to vulnerable communities, harm that can lead to discrimination or violence. In October 2010, the Ugandan tabloid *Rolling Stone* published an article with the headline "100 PICTURES OF UGANDA'S TOP HOMOS LEAK" alongside the caption "Hang Them". Three months later, Ugandan LGBTI rights activist David Kato was murdered.

While normal standards of good journalism obviously apply to covering SOGIE issues, be extra careful about your framing and presentation. If sources you interview demonize or dehumanize individuals or entire communities, consult the hate speech and dangerous speech tests outlined in the Ethical Human Rights Reporting Principles section of this guide. Your job as a journalist is to present fair and accurate portraits of people in your community. Don't let your own biases or those of the loudest or most extreme voices dictate your coverage.

Here are some common tropes and pitfalls to avoid when reporting on SOGIE issues:

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## 1. DON'T LET ISOLATED OUTLIERS SPEAK FOR ENTIRE COMMUNITIES

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[Headline: "Men made me a lesbian after raping me three times" - The Standard, Kenya, January 17, 2013](#)

In this story from Nairobi, a lesbian attributes her sexual orientation to sexual violence. Few sexual minorities would agree with this parallel, but absent any other voices in the article, the subject's controversial claim stands as authoritative testimony. While the subject is certainly entitled to her belief, it should be balanced by a range of opinions and testimonies so that readers are not left to falsely believe that sexual violence dictates sexual orientation.

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## 2. DON'T LEND FALSE CREDIBILITY TO UNINFORMED "EXPERTS"

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**Headline:** *["Is there anything like a gay gene?"](#)*  
**Daily Nation, Kenya, April 23, 2013**

In a column called "Medical Clinic," written by a medical doctor, the author quotes his former professor's false and misguided views about homosexuality:

*In his opinion, the majority of men attracted to other men were not necessarily born gay. They do not have the characteristic 'gay' look, and it would be difficult to tell such from a 'straight' chap. "So how do they become gay?" he questioned.*

*"Men are indoctrinated into a gay lifestyle at an early age when they are impressionable," he explained. "This is usually by a friend or older boys. However, the stimulation of the prostate is what makes them seek out men time and time again. This eventually develops into a lifestyle."*

The above statements, presented as medical fact, are nonsensical. So is the article's excerpt, which reads, "Is homosexuality genetic or is it a learned behaviour bordering on addiction? All medical indicators point to personal choice and conditioning rather than genes."

When quoting doctors, lawyers, psychologists, academics, and other "expert" sources who hold controversial, unconventional, or patently false views, beware of lending them undue authority and credibility. Speak to a variety of sources to deduce and present mainstream professional views on the matter. If you determine that your original expert source is completely off the mark, you may decide not to include his or her views unless doing so with proper context exposes the incorrect and fringe nature of those views. Beware of implying false balance on issues that have already achieved general consensus.

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## 3. AVOID PUBLISHING IMAGES OR DETAILS OF SOGIE MINORITIES WITHOUT FIRST NOTIFYING THEM OR OBTAINING THEIR CONSENT

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**Headline:** *["Lesbian pastor vs church" - The Cape Times, South Africa, May 22, 2013](#)*

Although the text of this story was ethically sound, the massive photo that accompanied it on the front page of Cape Town's most widely circulated newspaper was problematic. The minister profiled was out to friends, family and colleagues, but her wife was not. The front page photo of the married couple smiling side-by-side was published without the subjects' consent, a legally defensible decision given that it was taken in a public place, but one that raises ethical

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concerns and created real problems for the minister's wife, who was outed against her will. When photographing or covering sensitive SOGIE issues, confirm that sources know what will be done with the material produced and that they consent to being quoted or featured.

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4. DON'T EXPLOIT SOGIE MINORITIES FOR SALACIOUS CLICKBAIT.

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[Headline: "I Got Three Grindr Dates in an Hour in the Olympic Village" - The Daily Beast, Brazil, August 11, 2016](#)

In this article from the Rio Olympics, a straight reporter used the gay social network app Grindr to chat with athletes — some of them closeted and from countries where coming out can be dangerous — and published potentially identifiable details about them. This practice, sometimes called Grindr-baiting, is intrusive and unethical. SOGIE minorities should not be exploited for sensational or salacious entertainment coverage.

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5. DON'T PUBLISH IF YOU'VE NOT DONE YOUR RESEARCH

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[Headline: "House to address matter of intersex people" - Daily Nation, Kenya, October 10, 2016](#)

While the author's seemingly objective approach to covering intersex issues is admirable, his ignorance of the actual issues and misuse of terminology do more to confuse than inform the reader.

The author characterizes intersex people as "victims" who "suffer" from a "rare gender disorder," a "gender identity disorder that makes it difficult to determine whether they are male or female at birth, though their gender becomes apparent as they grow."

The author quotes "expert opinion" as saying, "the victims have both female and male sexual organs at birth, both poorly formed." He quotes an MP as saying, "an intersex person requires at least four chromosome tests to determine their gender" and implies that "corrective surgery" is required.



'MUSCULAR ATHLETE FOR MEETS' 08.11.16 1:00 AM ET

## I Got Three Grindr Dates in an Hour in the Olympic Village

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The author's victimizing language, muddling of gender and biological sex, and reliance on false information from "expert" sources shows that he hasn't done his homework. The absence of any intersex voices in the piece may shed some light on these oversights. Avoid the rush to publish, reach out to relevant sources, and research the issue in-depth before confusing your audience with misrepresentations and falsehoods.

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## 6. DON'T LET VILIFYING STEREOTYPES GO UNCHALLENGED

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[Headline: "Homosexuality finds room in the office" - The Standard, Kenya, October 23, 2009](#)

Your sources might say some pretty outlandish things about SOGIE minorities. Take a look at the quotes in this story about workplace SOGIE issues in Kenya:

*"I think we should not shun gays unduly so long as they do not embark on a recruitment drive in the workplace. Their lifestyle should remain private, and they have a right to it just like anybody else," said a lecturer at Egerton University.*

*Mr Nelson Njema, an accountant with an oil firm, says being gay is just like being impotent or a hermaphrodite.*

*He says gays and lesbians have the right to workplace benefits and respect like anybody else.*

*Do you turn away people from the workplace on account of physical disability that does not in any way affect their productivity? He poses.*

*But Mr Anthony Wainaina, a secondary school teacher, differs. He has no patience with gay mannerisms. "They dye and plait their hair and manicure their hands at the expense of doing any real work," he says.*

*He quotes the bible, terming homosexuality as the most serious transgression next to murder.*

These notions that SOGIE minorities go on sexual recruitment drives, that being gay is a disability, and that gay people are too distracted grooming themselves in the office to get any work done are frankly ridiculous. They would seem almost humorous if such stereotypical beliefs were not so widely and genuinely held. Journalists have a duty to challenge sources who parrot vilifying stereotypes. If such quotes are somehow deemed newsworthy, they should be contextualized and balanced with alternative opinions that more closely reflect reality.

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## 7. BEWARE OF BOGUS SURVEYS AND STATISTICS

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[Headline: "Nkurunziza furious as Senate rejects anti-gay law" - The East African, Burundi, March 28, 2009](#)

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This article makes numerous reference to “the roughly 400 gay people living in Burundi,” a country of more than 10 million people, without ever citing a source. Statistics concerning sexual orientation and gender identity are extremely unreliable given that such data must be self-reported, often in societies where homosexuality is stigmatized or unlawful. That being said, the proportion of sexual minorities among Burundi’s general population is certainly above .004% if surveys from other parts of the world provide any guidance. Be skeptical of any SOGIE statistics you come across, and always check and report the source if you do use numbers in your stories.

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## 8. DON’T PANDER TO YOUR AUDIENCE’S FEARS

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[Headline: “I’m your dad, he’s your papa” - Daily Nation, Kenya, May 22, 2012](#)

Our audiences’ biases, prejudices and fears around SOGIE issues often stem from ignorance or misinformation. Our job as journalists is to inform the public, not to prey on their fears for our own financial gain. Consider the following introduction to a story about a Kenyan National Human Rights Commission report that recommended the decriminalization of homosexuality and same-sex marriage:

*Picture 21st Century Kenya as a country where same-sex marriages are legal. A man falls head over heels and marries*

*a “bearded sister.” As time goes by, the couple takes to the children’s department over that small matter of adopting a future voter.*

*The child duly goes to school where the couple dutifully attend visiting and Parent’s Days. One is daddy, the other the “male mother.” Now imagine the child filling forms with spaces for “Father’s and Mother’s” names. Picture too, trying to introduce them in a social gathering.*

*This is not far-fetched.*

The unnamed author’s fear mongering and reliance on invented terminology to introduce a news report is irresponsible, unprofessional and unethical. Such framing does a disservice to our readers and should be avoided at all costs.

For more advice on what NOT to do, see GLAAD’s “Terms to Avoid” in the Key SOGIE Terminology section of this guide.



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FAITH LEADERS'  
PERSPECTIVES

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# Faith Leaders' Perspectives

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During the Cape Town workshop, journalists met with human rights activists and faith leaders from across the religious spectrum. Here we summarize three of those speakers' presentations.

## ECCLESIA DE LANGE:

The Rev. Ecclesia de Lange is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). She has been involved with Inclusive and Affirming Ministries since 2014 and is currently part of IAM's senior management team.

In their booklet "[The Bible and Homosexuality](#)," Inclusive and Affirming Ministries contextually engages with eight Biblical passages that refer directly or indirectly to homosexuality. These are:

- The Creation story as narrated in Genesis 1–3
- The Sodom narrative in Genesis 19: 1–26
- Judges 19
- Leviticus 18:22
- Leviticus 20:13

- Romans 1:26–27
- Corinthians 6:9–10
- Timothy 1:10

Many Christians believe these passages condemn homosexuality as a sin, but IAM cautions against reading the Bible literally:

*"One cannot randomly choose isolated verses as if they represent God's command to us today. We must interpret and understand the Bible, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, within the Biblical context as well as our own context. The big challenge therefore is: How do we read the Bible, inspired by the Holy Spirit?"*

To do this, IAM suggests that readers strive to understand: 1) the cultural contexts in which the Bible's authors lived, 2) how specific verses fit into larger passages and the Bible's overall message, and 3) how verses can be read with contemporary context.

On the issue of homosexuality, IAM warns of several potholes readers should avoid stumbling into when reading the Bible.



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These include:

01. Isolating specific verses from their broader meanings or context.
02. Inconsistently applying the literal method by regarding certain verses as eternal truths while ignoring other verses that bear similar style.
03. Using isolated texts to prove your own point of view. No text 'speaks' on its own.
04. Relying on translations of the Bible that introduce ahistorical prejudices or misconceptions.
05. Falling back on moralism and prescriptiveness or categorizing certain sexual sins as worse than the sin of judgement.

*"It is irresponsible and unscientific to interpret isolated verses in the Bible literally or in a fundamentalist way. The Bible says absolutely nothing about, nor does it condemn, a committed, loving and faithful homosexual relationship as we know it today."*

#### **MUHSIN HENDRICKS:**

Muhsin Hendricks is a Cape Town-based Islamic scholar with a background in Classical Arabic and Islamic Sciences from the University of Islamic Studies in Karachi, Pakistan. He is an imam (religious leader) by profession and also a human

rights activist who focuses on sexual orientation and gender identity within Islam. Muhsin is the founder and director of The Inner Circle, the world's largest formal organization that supports Muslims who have been marginalized because of their sexual orientations or gender identities and expressions.

Muhsin says homosexuality and gender non-conforming identities have existed within predominantly Muslim societies since Islam's inception more than 1,400 years ago.

He cites the example of the mukhan-nathun, a social group mentioned in ancient ahadith and sunan among which sexual and gender non-conforming activities and expressions were prevalent. Some of those mukhan-nathun were castrated and worked as servants in Muslim homes.

Although lesbianism has been present throughout the history of Islam, it has often been ignored or undocumented due to patriarchal notions that sex must involve penile penetration.

Numerous homoerotic and homoromantic paintings and poetry emerged during the early centuries of Islam from such luminaries as Abu Nawas, Caliph Muhammad al-Amin, Omar Khayyam, Rumi, Ibn al-Farid, and Hafez.

Under the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates, which ruled after the Prophet Muhammad's death until about 1258, Muhsin says there is no record of poets being punished for their published sexual

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opinions and statements, or even for their sexual activities.

Muhsin says a contemporary conflict between queer narratives and orthodox Islam leaves many queer Muslims with cognitive dissonance and low levels of self-esteem when trying to reconcile their sexual orientations or gender identities with their faiths.

*“This cognitive dissonance, coupled with blatant rejection from orthodox Muslim communities, has led many queer Muslims to negotiate this dilemma between sexuality and spirituality through assuming dual identities, drugs and alcohol abuse, irresponsible sexual behaviour, apostasy and even suicide.”*

Barring the Hanafi school of Islamic thought, Muhsin says mainstream Sunni and Shi’a scholars agree that homosexuality falls under adultery and should be punished under Islamic law. In 2007, the Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa declared that any Muslim who accepts homosexuality should be considered an apostate.

*“The Quran is written in a poetic form, leaving it open to evolving and varied interpretations. Quranic interpretation has to constantly evolve as humanity evolves otherwise it becomes a dead book. Unfortunately, Muslims have ‘preserved’ the Quran to such an extent that alternative interpretations of it have been discouraged and marginalized.”*

Muhsin says there are verses in the Quran that are broad enough in meaning and interpretation to acknowledge human diversity and to include sexual identities and gender expressions that go beyond traditional male and female binaries.

## PHARIE SEFALI:

Pharie Sefali is a freelance journalist and an executive committee member of Ubambo Lwam Luvuyo LGBTI Traditional Healers Forum in Cape Town.

Pharie describes traditional healing as more cosmology than religion and says that traditional healers (also called sangomas) serve as the medium through which physical, psychological, spiritual and ancestral worlds are connected.

LGBTQI+ sangomas are often considered strange and out of line with African ancestral beliefs. In rural communities across South Africa, families of LGBTQI+ individuals organize ceremonies with traditional healers in hopes that ancestors will change their loved one’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Traditional Healers Forum advocate for the social and institutional rights of LGBTQI+ traditional healers. The forum educates sangomas and society at large about issues surrounding sexuality and spirituality. Pharie describes the forum as a safe space for people to talk more openly about their sexuality and to challenge beliefs that LGBTQI+ people cannot be sangomas.

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Pharie interviewed fellow LGBTQI+ sangomas at a workshop for a [2015 article that originally appeared in GroundUp](#):

*Sindiswa Tafeni told the workshop that being lesbian in the township was hard enough, and being a lesbian sangoma was even harder because of the attitude of other sangomas.*

*“It’s hard to get clients because communities and straight healers speak badly of you. If you go to a traditional ceremony where you meet other healers, they have an attitude of mockery and say that you are faking the healing gift and that being lesbian shows that your ancestors are angry at you,” said Tafeni.*

*Nokuthula Mbetse, who works for the Quaker Peace Center and is a traditional healer and a pastor, said some parents assumed that a child who disclosed that he or she was gay or lesbian was “bewitched” and that the family had been cursed. The children were sent to traditional healers “to reverse the curse and heal the child from the homophobic disease.”*

*“People take homosexuality as something that can be solved, fixed or cured. I work with youth every day. Some get suicidal because their parents are giving them traditional medicine to cure the homosexual ‘disease’. So even sangomas have to be educated about sexuality, and we have to change their stereotype mindset,” Mbetse said.*

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TRAINEE  
STORIES

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# Trainee Stories

The following stories originated during the November 2016 workshop in Cape Town and evolved in the weeks that followed under Religion News Foundation’s editorial guidance and support. Each story has been published in the trainees’ own publications and via Religion News Service. Additional trainee stories, including television and radio pieces, can be found at: [www.religionnews.com/tag/lgbtqi-religion-africa](http://www.religionnews.com/tag/lgbtqi-religion-africa)

## STORY 1



*The nonprofit Tulinam held a dialogue workshop with female church leaders in Otjiwarongo, Namibia, on 6 August 2016. Photo courtesy of Madelene Isaacks.*

## NAMIBIAN CHRISTIANS GRAPPLE OVER ‘PRAY THE GAY AWAY’ TACTICS

**AUTHOR:** Martha Mukaiwa

*As Namibian church leaders try to decipher God’s will for LGBTQ+ congregants, sexual minorities forge their own relationships with God.*

WINDHOEK, Namibia — First there was the oil. A small steady stream the church prophet poured over Marco’s head as he knelt, crying on a rough brown sack in the back room of a Pentecostal church in the Namibian capital.

His country’s flag and the smell of candles are all Marco, a pseudonym used to protect his identity, remembers about the space.

Along with the ritual’s oil and ash, the 25-year-old says he washed away the traumatic memories from that summer ceremony in 2014, but only after he’d assured his mother, the church prophet and a church elder that he was no longer gay, that he’d been cured, and that the evil was gone – vanquished by fervent

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prayer and scattered ashes.

Marco didn't ask any questions about the prayer ceremony at the time but later researched it online. Ash, according to Old Testament stories about Job and Nineveh, is a symbol of repentance. Sackcloth was worn by kings and subjects as an expression of humility, and Jesus' disciples used oil to heal the sick.

From the substance of their prayers, Marco concluded that his mother, the prophet and the elder believed he was being influenced by an evil spirit.

"The prophet took my hands, the three of them surrounded me, and they were all saying different things, mostly that they wanted the thing in me to be gone so I could fulfill my greater calling on Earth. Eventually they started praying in tongues," Marco said, adding that they wore white and looked almost angelic as their prayers hit fever pitch.

"I love my mum, but in that moment I felt she had deserted me," he said. "I am a very private person, and I felt so ashamed and humiliated. The person I expected to be there and who I loved most let me down."

Two years later, Marco says he is still gay. Pastor Duane Dowie, one of the few Windhoek-based pastors eager to comment on his story, believes Marco is destined for hell.

Dowie, who preaches at the non-denominational Floodgates church in Prosperita, is among the 90 percent of Namibians

who identify as Christian. From his pulpit in the Windhoek industrial area, he tells congregants that sin without repentance leads to literal fire and brimstone.

"If a gay person came and asked me for help, I would embrace the person," Dowie said. "I don't treat homosexuality any differently from any other sin. There must be some form of chastising. They must be disciplined. If they sit under my ceiling, change will come."

Like Alan Chambers -- the former president of Exodus International who was at the forefront of a faith-based ex-gay movement in the U.S. before publicly requesting the LGBTQ+ community's forgiveness for undue harm in 2013 -- Dowie doesn't think you can pray being gay away.

"I think you must decide to change, and that you can infuse that with prayer, but whether you bombard heaven with prayer, you will obviously be tempted until the end of your days. Just like I may be tempted to sleep with someone other than my wife. Gays just need to have discipline," he said.

Dowie's seemingly judgemental tolerance of sexual minorities is something Madelene Isaacks is all too familiar with.

A lesbian and a Christian herself, Isaacks' faith-based NGO Tulinam has witnessed four years of intolerance and restrictive acceptance while helping to create safe spaces for sexual minorities in Namibian churches.

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“As a LGBTI person, you are expected to leave your sexuality at the church door,” she said of her experiences with local faith communities. “Where there is compassion or tolerance, it comes mostly with the notion that ‘if you let us pray for you and if you confess your wrongdoing, God will free you from this sin.’ So a pastor will tell you ‘we love you, but we hate the sin that you do.’”

While a few denominations, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), express tolerance towards LGBTQ+ Christians, Isaacks says most are outright condemning or say they leave judgment to God.

“These churches are fiercely homophobic, to the point that, if they can identify them, they will single out gay people in their congregation and ‘drive out the gay demon’ or attempt any ritual that they feel is needed to deal with this person,” she said.

Recalling a pastor who threatened to out a gay congregant to his family as well as three gay men who allowed the “demons” to be “driven out” of them to no avail, Isaacks said, “It’s as if some pastors do not realize that they are dealing with human beings, with feelings and emotions.”

According to Windhoek-based clinical psychologist Shaun Whittaker, the possible effects of this sort of shaming and lack of support can include severe depression, emotional dysfunction, feelings of isolation, loneliness and even suicide.

“Unfortunately, a highly conservative brand of Christianity dominates in Namibia and promotes all kinds of falsehoods.” Whittaker said. “If you consider, for example, that Archbishop Desmond Tutu has publicly and very strongly supported the LGBTQ+ community, then you should realize how subjective the approach to religion is.”

South African archbishop emeritus and human rights activist Desmond Tutu has said **God makes him speak up on gay rights**.

“What many Namibian parents do not realize is that LGBTQ+ people are born with their sexual orientation and cannot change themselves,” Whittaker said. “The best approach for parents is to accept and emotionally support their offspring, especially when they are teenagers, as this is a time of great uncertainty and identity clarification.”

George’s nightly prayer sessions began at 15 when his parents discovered explicit text messages on his phone.

Both Pentecostal church leaders, George’s parents believed the way to stop their son’s same-sex attraction was to forbid him from seeing gay friends and to pray with him every night for six months.

Intense, focused prayer sessions were mandatory in the kitchen or in the living room after dinner. His parents would place anointing oil on his forehead and ask God to change their son.

"I believed God would change me, but I struggled, because why would God make me this way if it was so wrong?" George, also a pseudonym to protect his identity, said. "I prayed, but I felt like I was acting a certain way so I could shut my parents up. It hurt to have to give up my friends. I had to pray by myself and with my parents, focusing on specific verses about Sodom and Gomorrah. I asked to be forgiven. I read out verses that highlighted how unnatural I am, how I'm an abomination."

After promising that he would continue praying on his own and avoiding his gay friends, the parent-monitored prayer sessions fizzled out. George hoped he would eventually become attracted to women, but he never did.

Neither did Marco.

As local churches struggle to decipher God's will for LGBTQ+ individuals in their congregations, Isaacks, Marco and George continue to see God as the compass in their lives.

"The church has a responsibility to put God's love into action by addressing injustices and the plight of minorities in Namibian society," Isaacks said. "Let this not divide us. Rather, let us approach it with humility and admit our limitations. How do any one of us know that we are correctly interpreting God's word for us today?"

Despite the trauma of his sackcloth and ash ceremony, Marco maintains a loving relationship with his mother and attends church regularly.

"My mum and I don't talk about it. Not about the ceremony. Not about my sexual orientation," he said.

Watching a judge on South Africa's version of American Idols with his mother two years later, Marco wondered if she would ever see her son for who he is.

"A few weeks ago we watched Idols and Somizi was on -- yellow hair, so flamboyant -- and my mum said she loves him. And I just thought, 'Mum, here I am too! I'm gay too!'" Marco said. "Maybe if I achieve something like him, I'll get the love that I want... as myself. I think she still has this hope that the ceremony worked and that I changed that day. But I didn't. I can't."

*Martha Mukaiwa is a journalist based in Namibia.*

## STORY 2



*The number of LGBT-friendly bars in Cameroon shrunk recently when a formerly friendly pub posted a sign forbidding access to "homosexuelles." Photo provided to the author by an activist who requested anonymity due to safety concerns.*

## CAMEROON'S OUTLAWED SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES FACE A 'CEMETERY PEACE'



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**AUTHOR:** Mbom Sixtus

*“Some people may think LGBTI+ people live in peace in Cameroon. Their lives can only be compared to the peace and serenity of a graveyard. They are silent but live in distress.”*

YAOUNDE, Cameroon — Awono, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, fidgets and laughs uneasily as she describes her trip “to hell and back.”

“I was 16 when my father called me up for questioning. He is a police officer and criticized me for acting ‘too girly.’ I tried to make him understand that it was just who I am. The whole family was confused. They said I was not like that when I was growing up, but I argued they simply did not notice,” she said.

Awono, now in her early 30s, is a transgender woman in Yaounde, Cameroon.

“People attack me at home and steal my stuff,” she said. “Whenever the case goes to the police, they say they attacked me because I am of the LGBTI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex) community, and [the perpetrators] get away with it.”

Brice Evina, President of the Cameroon Foundation for AIDS (CAMFAID), says the West African country has witnessed a recent spike in arrests and attacks targeting sexual and gender minorities. He describes the current situation as a “cemetery peace.”

“Some people may think LGBTI+ people live in peace in Cameroon. Their lives

can only be compared to the peace and serenity of a graveyard,” he said. “They are silent but live in distress.”

Awono’s distress started in her teens when her father insisted it was a sin for a biological male to act “like a woman.”

“I was criticized for not doing what boys do, not playing football, for walking and talking ‘like a girl.’ I tried to hide my feelings. At the end of it all, my father sent me away from home,” she said.

Awono became homeless and struggled to make ends meet.

“I was ready to do anything for food and shelter. I ended up being raped by so many men I can’t even remember how many. When I fell sick, I couldn’t go to hospital for fear of rejection. I was obliged to call my mum on the phone and explain how natural my gender identity is. You know mothers have soft spots for their children,” she said.

Awono says her mother then rented a house for her and sent her back to school where she became “married” to her education.

“I knew it was my only chance for survival,” she said. “I went through lots of things, and today, I am a happy woman.” Yet Awono and other gender and sexual minorities in Cameroon face new challenges every day.

“Right now, we only hang out in particular bars, which are LGBTI+-friendly,” Awono said.

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The number of such spaces shrunk recently when a formerly friendly pub posted a sign forbidding access to “homosexuelles.”

“We find that disturbing, but what can we do? The bouncers see you from a distance and ask you to walk away. They have a database with our photos. Even when they find you sitting, they ask you to leave,” she lamented.

Serge, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, has faced ostracism and violence in Cameroon because of his sexuality. When his family learned he was gay, they prayed to cast out the witchcraft they believed possessed him.

“People come preaching and asking you to stop sleeping with men and telling you how sinful it is. At the end of the day, they still take your ‘evil’ money when they need your help,” he said. “I know parents who only accept their children’s sexuality when they start earning a living. But when you die, they call you names and say you probably died of some of ‘those LGBTI+ diseases.’ What a pretentious world.”

Serge says he was attacked at his apartment in October 2015.

“When we got to the gendarmerie, the attacker admitted he wanted to kill me because I was gay and claimed I was having sex with his younger brother,” Serge said. “The following day, I was shocked. A TV crew from the CRTV national broadcaster was brought in, and I was in the news. During a chamber hearing, the judge insisted I was gay and

guilty because I work for an NGO that advocates for LGBTI+ rights.”

Serge was eventually released without charge. His attacker remains in jail.

Serge believes his release is unique and that other sexual and gender minorities in Cameroon would likely still be in custody after being attacked.

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## HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE

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In 2013, when Cameroon’s human rights record was reviewed at the U.N. Human Rights Council, 15 nations urged the country to improve its treatment of LGBTI people.

Cameroon’s network of human rights advocates agree that Article 347-1 of the Penal Code runs contrary to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and even Cameroon’s constitution, which guarantees freedoms and condemns all forms of discrimination including that based on gender.

Article 347-1 prescribes fines of up to 200,000 Central African Francs (about \$320) and prison terms of up to five years for anyone who has sexual relations with someone of the same sex.

Emmanuel Mbanmi Ndinga, a member of parliament in Cameroon’s Northwest Province, says not everything in international conventions or charters should be implemented in local law.

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“We cannot implement aspects that are repugnant to our cultures,” he said of equal rights for sexual and gender minorities.

CAMFAID Human Rights Coordinator Jean Jacques Dissoke says Cameroon’s anti-LGBTI legal framework promotes discrimination.

When people are charged under Article 347-1, it becomes difficult to find lawyers willing to defend them publicly. Some even abandon court proceedings mid-trial due to scrutiny and stigma.

CAMFAID has recorded 50 arrests under Article 347-1 since 2012. In late-November 2016, gendarmerie officers raided a house in Yaounde and arrested 12 suspected sexual and gender minorities who were living together.

“We do not have enough funds to follow up on their cases. It is funny how people think that being of the LGBTI community or defending the rights of sexual minorities is always about money,” Dissoke said, citing a common trope that Western donors funnel money to Africa to “promote and recruit unAfrican notions of sexuality.”

Although Cameroon’s sexual and gender minorities face stigmatization, verbal aggression and criminalization, Evina says local human rights advocates have successfully improved their access to health facilities and services.

“We sensitize prison wardens and medics on the health needs of the community. At times, gay persons go to

hospitals and are denied medical attention. In some cases, we go there and sensitize the medics, and they agree to treat the patient when he returns.”

Awono is familiar with such discrimination but says she feels none when she visits her local Catholic church.

Cardinal Christian Tumi, archbishop emeritus of Douala, has on several occasions reminded congregants that his church does not excommunicate sexual minorities. He insists that all humans sin and that homosexuality should not be singled out as a bigger sin than others.

In a 2015 [interview](#) with the Catholic Church newspaper L’Effort Camerounais, Tumi said, “In imitation of Christ, the Church has never condemned a sinner.”

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## BLEAK FUTURE?

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In January 2013, Cameroon’s President Paul Biya [told journalists](#) “there’s no reason to despair...Minds are changing,” with regard to LGBTI issues. Six months later, the founder of CAMFAID Eric Lemembe was found dead at his home.

Freedom House [reported](#) that Lemembe’s “neck and feet had been broken and his face, hands and feet had been burnt with a hot iron.” The killing, according to the American NGO, was a demonstration of ignorance, prejudice and laws that deny LGBTI people in Cameroon their fundamental rights.

Cameroon’s Communication Minister Issa Tchiroma held a press conference and

condemned Freedom House for requesting equal rights for LGBTI people. Tchiroma said Cameroon is made up mainly of Christians, Muslims and traditionalists whose beliefs are against such rights. He also added that a criminal offence cannot be promoted.

Three years later, Cameroon still has a long way to go to reach equality for gender and sexual minorities, but Awono and Serge are hopeful for the future.

“Inasmuch as issues of human rights will always exist in our society, I am happy that we now have organizations that will always be there to promote and defend these rights, especially those of sexual minorities,” Serge said.

*Mbom Sixtus is a journalist based in Cameroon.*

### STORY 3



*Rev. Patrick Leuben Mukajanga, founder and executive director of St. Paul's Voice Centre of Uganda (SPAVOC). Photo by Barigye Ambrose at LGBTI Pride 2015 in Entebbe, Uganda.*

## UGANDA'S LGBTI FAITH LEADERS SAY GOD'S LOVE IS UNCONDITIONAL

**AUTHOR:** Barigye Ambrose

*Ugandan human rights activist Barigye Ambrose profiles religious LGBTI Ugandans and their allies who have stood firm in the face of local homophobia.*

KAMPALA, Uganda— Religion is at the core of many African societies, including those that cite faith and culture to condemn sexual and gender minorities as unAfrican, ungodly and unnatural.

In Uganda, despite stigma and legal prohibitions, the gender and sexual minority movement has grown into a formidable force fighting for the realization of equality for all citizens. This fight has been met by strong resistance from most religious leaders and anti-gay advocates who argue that same-sex relations are a threat to traditional African family values and that they deserve no place in the predominantly Christian.

Homophobic ideas have united different religious sects, political parties, and the general public. Muslim, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Seventh Day Adventists, Pentecostal and leaders of traditional religions have all united to fight LGBTI rights and preached sermons that label homosexuality as an evil practice among unholy people who need spiritual and sacred cleansing.

Such rhetoric has led some religious LGBTI Ugandans and their straight allies

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to denounce or abandon their faiths while others work to spiritually nourish their peers.

Here we profile leaders and allies of the Ugandan LGBTI community who have kept their faith when religious leaders disowned them.

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## BRIAN BYAMUKAMA

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*Brian Byamukama-Executive Director for Rural Movement Initiative (RUMI) and pastor and founder of Bethany Baptist Church in Mbale, Uganda. Photo by Barigye Ambrose on 1 January 2017 in Mbale.*

Brian Byamukama is a pastor at Bethany Baptist Church in Mbale district, Eastern Uganda, and a human rights defender who works on LGBTI issues. He is the founder and Executive Director of Rural Movement Initiative (RUMI) an organization protecting marginalized people in Mbale district. Brian is an out bisexual man married to a woman, with whom he has one daughter.

Brian says the persecution of fellow LGBTI Ugandans prompted him to come out as a human rights advocate. He believes that many LGBTI Ugandans have run away from their faith communities because they

are seldom given a platform to speak or defend alternative interpretations of Biblical verses often used to condemn them.

Brian believes there is no fundamental difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships as long as both are built on love. According to this preacher, God doesn't focus on gender or sexuality but rather on the human being.

Being a religious leader and open advocate for the rights of sexual minorities has not always been easy for Brian.

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## MOST RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN UGANDA CONSIDER SAME-SEX RELATIONS EVIL.

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*"[Uganda] has become a dumping site for hate propaganda from the West. That is why most religious fundamentalists have brought their anti-gay gospel to Africa. These [fundamentalists] do not solely hold the blame. Our systems also are partly to blame for allowing people like Scott Lively to come and sow their seeds of hate in our country, pushing for the persecution of LGBTI people."*

Scott Lively, president of Abiding Truth Ministries in California, has advanced anti-gay agendas in different countries around the world, including Uganda.

Brian also notes the effect of Ugandan mainstream media's negative reporting

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on LGBTI issues and advises media outlets to embrace a fair and balanced approach rather than relying on sensational reporting of already marginalized people.

*“Let us spread the word of God without divisionism because salvation is by grace and we have to understand that we are diverse and God is the only judge.”*

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**REV. PATRICK LEUBEN  
MUKAJANGA**

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*Rev. Patrick Leuben Mukajanga, founder and executive director of St. Paul's Voice Centre of Uganda (SPAVOC). Photo by Barigye Ambrose at LGBTI Pride 2015 in Entebbe, Uganda.*

Rev. Patrick Leuben Mukajanga is the founder and executive director of Saint Paul's Voice Centre of Uganda (SPAVOC), a Christian-based NGO that partners with local and international organizations to fight against the discrimination of LGBTI people in Uganda. Patrick is an out gay advocate for the rights of sexual minorities and a Christian who has dedicated his life to preaching the gospel of love to those that feel abandoned because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Most religious leaders in Uganda consider same-sex relations evil. This has been witnessed during various religious “crusades” in which pastors and other evangelicals call upon the general public to fight homosexuals with all their might because they believe they contradict African family values. Patrick advises these leaders to preach the gospel of inclusiveness and to leave judgment to God. For his work, Patrick was awarded the Makwan Prize for Human Rights in 2013.

Patrick said he has been ostracized and attacked by angry residents of his home district of Ibanda in western Uganda and threatened and arrested by police on charges of promoting homosexuality. Uganda's Penal Code Act Section 145 punishes “carnal knowledge against the order of nature” with life imprisonment.

*“Because of the nature of my work and my openness while advocating for the rights of LGBTI people, I have suffered many forms of discrimination from my immediate neighbors. I have kept strong despite these challenges.”*

Ugandan media has been known to out and shame people suspected of being LGBTI. Some tabloids have printed the names, faces, and addresses of such people alongside sensational headlines, inciting public violence against sexual minorities. Targeted Ugandans have been disowned by their families, evicted, fired from their jobs and kicked out of school. Facing verbal and physical attacks, many LGBTI Ugandans have sought asylum abroad.

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*“Our media here in Uganda has always reported stories about LGBTI issues with more sensationalism, which has caused more harm to these outed members of the gender and sexual minority community. I hope that all this can be eradicated if our journalists here researched more and emphasized professionalism while reporting on such sensitive topics in society.”*

Patrick believes that God loves all his creations and that all humans deserve equal and fair treatment in society, despite their differences.

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#### DIANA SYDNEY BAKURAIRA

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*Diane Sydney Bakuraira, administrative officer at Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG). Photo by Barigye Ambrose on 7 January 2017 in Kisasi-Kampala.*

Diane Sydney Bakuraira, better known as “Didi Baks” in the Ugandan LGBTI community, is an out lesbian woman, a trained paralegal and administrative officer at the Kampala-based NGO Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG).

Born and raised in a Christian family, she was taught that God loves us despite our sins. Although religious persecution of sexual minorities has caused her to question her faith at times, she believes that only God can judge us.

Diane uses social media platforms including WhatsApp and Facebook to share scriptures of encouragement with her followers and to encourage them not to lose hope in the face of persecution. She does the same offline at LGBTI community gatherings.

She believes these messages of hope have impacted many LGBTI lives. On a recent trip to the U.S., a friend told Diane that her messages on social media had encouraged her to return to church to try to reconcile her sexuality and her faith.

In 2007, Diane left her old house of worship in Kampala because of the pastor’s hate sermons. She then moved from church to church in search of an all-inclusive space and finally found Rubaga Miracle Centre in Kampala, which preaches against discrimination and focuses on love.

*“The best way for these religious leaders to understand LGBTI people is to first of all get in touch with them, understand who they are, their background, and then approach them with a gospel of love, not hate. Before you change your attitude towards something you must first understand why you have that very attitude. They need to first understand the LGBTI community and find a way of preaching to them the appropriate message of love depending on different interpretations of the Bible.”*

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Diane believes that religious leaders who disown sexual and gender minorities often do so because they selectively and wrongly interpret verses of the Bible. She says these verses from Leviticus and Deuteronomy make LGBTI people feel guilty and unwanted, yet the Bible is meant to encourage us to love one another. She encourages preachers to embrace diversity in their churches and to make an effort to understand their congregations.

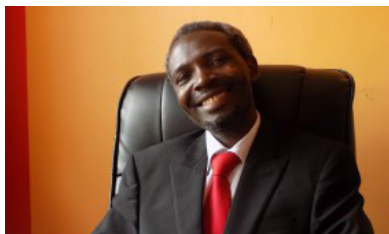
*“However much the world does not understand me, my God does and he is the only person who will judge me and the only one who holds the truth and the answers. So, for me to keep in touch with my faith is quite important as a Christian.”*

Diane encourages LGBTI people to find churches where they feel spiritually comfortable and to not always focus on hate speech or they will become demoralized. She advises religious leaders to embrace peace and love and tells the public not to judge, persecute or discriminate against LGBTI people, encouraging them to research sexuality and gender identity.

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## PASTOR SAMSON TURINAWA

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*Pastor Samson Turinawe, founder and executive director of Universal Love Ministries. Photo by Barigye Ambrose on 23 November 2016 in Kamwokya-Kampala.*

Pastor Samson Turinawe is the founder and director of Universal Love Ministries, a charity based in Kampala that preaches for the inclusion of LGBTI persons. After his graduation from Life Bible school in 2005, Turinawe ministered in a Pentecostal church as a youth pastor in Bushenyi, western Uganda. By 2006, his congregants started openly discussing sexual minorities, and the church that he was administering started expelling suspected LGBTI members.

Convinced that these members should be heard and understood rather than banished, he stood in their defense and eventually parted ways with the church.

“It is not right to chase away someone that is seeking the righteousness of God, because we are all God’s children,” Samson says he told church officials. “My church responded by saying that they can’t tolerate this and that I am a dangerous person and that they can’t allow me to continue administering in their church



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because I am promoting homosexuality.”

His own banishment from the church inspired Samson to create a space where sexual minorities would be free to express themselves without prejudice and where he could educate religious leaders about the gospel of love, tolerance and acceptance of sexual minorities.

Thus was born Universal Love Ministries, which educates religious leaders on gender identity, sex orientation and spirituality. Samson believes most preachers who spread messages of intolerance towards LGBTI people do so because they lack knowledge about them and that these sensitization programs can help them learn more about SOGIE issues.

Samson also educates religious leaders on how to contextually interpret the Bible in ways that respect all people. While some leaders are willing to learn more about sexuality and gender identity and have responded positively to such messages and techniques, others refuse to listen.

*“We believe that if these religious leaders are sensitized about these issues and understand them, they will be able to make informed decisions.”*

Because of his work with LGBTI people, Samson has faced discrimination and been called a sinner and a pastor gone astray, often by other pastors. He believes religious leaders who use the Bible to persecute sexual minorities are teaching their own gospel but not the one that Jesus taught.

*“We see Jesus identifying with every person, we see Jesus teaching love, but we don’t see Jesus teaching to discriminate, and so those using [the Bible] to condemn and persecute LGBTI people have gone astray. You are not going to heaven because of your sexual orientation or who you hold hands with. You are going to heaven because you are God’s child and because of his grace. God loves every person.”*

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### **BISHOP CHRISTOPHER SENYONJO**

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*Bishop Christopher Senyonjo, founder and head of St. Paul’s Reconciliation and Equality Centre (SPREC). Photo by Barigye Ambrose on 21 November 2016 in Bukoto-Kampala.*

Bishop Christopher Senyonjo is a retired Anglican Bishop in the Church of Uganda who has dedicated his life to defending marginalized people, especially LGBTI Ugandans, through counseling and spiritual refurbishment programs. He is the founder of St. Paul’s Reconciliation and Equality Centre (SPREC), which aims to reconcile heterosexual and LGBTIQ persons.

His open declaration for support of sexual minorities prompted the Anglican Church to bar him for supporting what peers consider “ungodly.” This didn’t stop him.

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Senyonjo believes God loves all his creatures without any form of discrimination, and this is evidenced in Jesus' gospel of loving one another.

Senyonjo worked with determination to combat the infamous Anti-Homosexuality bill that was signed into law by President Museveni in February 2014 and annulled by the Constitutional Court in August 2014 on technical grounds.

*"The only problem we have is a lack of education, and some people are not willing to learn and understand deeply the concept of sexuality and gender identity. Once people embrace and research more about these issues, homophobia will be eliminated gradually in society."*

Bishop believes God's love does not segregate and that LGBTI people should be given space to express themselves in their churches rather than being fenced off or excluded for being different.

*Barigye Ambrose is an activist and journalist based in Uganda.*

## STORY 4



*Members of Kenya's gay community hold a sign during a demonstration. Religion News Service photo by Fredrick Nzwilli.*

## FOR GAYS AND LESBIANS IN MOMBASA, COMING OUT CUTS BOTH WAYS

**AUTHOR:** Mkamburi Mwavasi

*Members of Mombasa's LGBTI community discuss the pain and pleasure of coming out to friends, family and society at large.*

MOMBASA, Kenya—Family rejection, homelessness and imprisonment are some of the harsh realities facing Mombasa's sexual and gender minorities. Although human rights organization are fighting for their equal rights, stigmatization and discrimination remain high.

Eric, 18, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, said he came out as gay to himself and to his family in July.

Having dated girls in the past, Eric's family was surprised to learn of his sexual orientation and responded by kicking him out of the family home.

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“Family members were all shocked. It was a blow to them, and they got angry,” he said. “My dad disowned me and chased me out of his house. He told my sister we were not related anymore and threatened to take me to jail.”

In addition to his family calling him an abomination and telling him he was cursed, Eric faced backlash on social media and lost most of his friends.

He went into hiding for six weeks, avoiding the streets of Bamburi and Bombolulu in Mombasa County where people had threatened to beat and kill him.

“Finally, my dad and I settled our differences. After accepting me, he promised to pay my school fees, and I’m happy to be back home,” he said.

Eric advises other sexual and gender minorities to come out as early as possible to someone close to their family who can help explain the situation to other concerned relatives.

“I would also like to ask the community not to discriminate against us. They should understand that one does not wake up in the morning and decide to be gay,” he added.

Louisa Essendi, 27, a lesbian in Mombasa, says her mother learned of Essendi’s sexual orientation at the age of 18.

“Being a single parent, raising three children, with a minimum paying job, trying to acquire funds to get me into college. This is not a truth she wanted to deal with then,” Essendi remembers.

After coming out, she said her mother would not look at her for nearly a year. Other members of her immediate family took the news better than she had expected.

“Apart from a few who believed it was a phase and constantly tried to hitch me up with their male friends, I can’t say I have ever faced any stressful situation from my family,” she said.

Essendi said her circle of friends also accepted her.

“In my eyes, I am one of the luckiest SOGIE [sexual orientation, gender identity and expression] persons living in Kenya to have such an accepting and supportive family,” she said.

But problems arose when she joined a religious college in Karen, Nairobi County.

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**GICHURU SAID THE MORE KENYANS UNDERSTANDS THAT HOMOSEXUALITY IS A SEXUAL ORIENTATION, THE EASIER IT WILL BECOME FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES TO BE ACCEPTED IN SOCIETY.**

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She says she faced hostility and discrimination from lecturers and students because of her sexuality, which was no longer a secret.

“Coming out is a very personal initiative. One has to closely analyze their context before making that step,” she said.

“However, that doesn’t mean that those who have not yet come out cannot be themselves. They absolutely can. It is the violence perpetuated by our Kenyan brothers and sisters towards our community that limits all the rights we have as human beings and Kenyan citizens.”

Essendi’s case is similar to that of Mary’s, whose name has been changed to protect her identity.

Mary calls herself a “super lesbian” and said it was easy to come out two years ago because she was only living with her mother. She opened up to her mother through a friend who is a psychologist.

“My mom’s friend was very understanding, and I felt I could trust her with how I feel towards my fellow ladies,” Mary said.

She advises those who have not come out to take their time and to start by telling people they trust, as not everyone will be supportive.

“People should not be judged because of being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender,” Mary said. “I always go by the saying, ‘you only know my name, not my story.’”

Winnie, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, said coming out

at the age of 16 to supportive friends and family was made easier by the fact that her parents were both deceased.

She said the process was very natural because she knew she was attracted to women.

“The idea of getting intimate with a man freaks me out, and I’m so happy that my family was supportive meeting my partner for the first time,” she said.

Evans Gichuru, board chairman for the Mtwapa Initiative for Positive Empowerment, works to sensitize Kenyans to sexual orientation and gender identity issues.

“Homosexuality is not a bad behavior as perceived by the society, it’s an orientation. The community should also understand that people are born gay,” he said.

Gichuru said the more Kenyans understand that homosexuality is a sexual orientation, the easier it will become for sexual minorities to be accepted in society.

Ishmael Bahati, legal advocacy officer at the Mombasa-based LGBTI rights group Persons Marginalized and Aggrieved, advises sexual and gender minorities to develop emotional intelligence and financial independence and to try to maintain good relationships with friends and family despite fears of being ridiculed or rejected.

*Mkamburi Mwawasi is a journalist based in Kenya.*

## STORY 5



*Bwala Referral Hospital in Lilongwe, Malawi. Photo provided by Mirriam Kaliza.*

### LGBT MALAWIANS FACE HOMOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION AT PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITIES

**AUTHOR:** Mirriam Kaliza

*Activists say the religious beliefs and affiliations of health workers and their institutions often contribute to anti-LGBT discrimination.*

LILONGWE, Malawi—Dressed in a red checked shirt and camouflage shorts, sporting his signature mohawk, 18-year-old Precious is already seated in the Centre for Development for People (CEDEP) office where we are supposed to have our interview.

He has never faced a reporter before but seems eager to share a personal story he rarely talks about in a society where people like him are often considered outcasts.

“I realized I was gay at the age of 14 while

in secondary school,” said Precious, whose name has been changed to protect his identity. “My family knows I am different, but no one has ever approached me to find out about my sexual orientation, though I suspect some members of my community know I am gay, as I have received some death threats ...because people think I am evil.”

When asked about his experiences trying to get medical care at a health facility, Precious’s eagerness to speak evaporates.

“I had a sexual health issue that required medical attention. I was disappointed with the way the nurse at the health facility handled the situation. After the routine diagnosis, she asked me if I was homosexual. I said yes because I wanted help. She told me that I was evil and my future was doomed because God does not allow that,” Precious said, his head bowed.

“She then called her colleagues to come and see me. They took turns pouring insults on me. One of them openly said I did not deserve medical attention.

Instead I should be arrested for indulging in homosexuality, which is an offence. I was totally upset and I left the clinic for a drug store so I could treat myself,” he added.

Precious’s case is not an isolated one – many LGBT Malawians face similar discrimination and hostility when seeking health care at public and private facilities in the country.

CEDEP, an organization that works to

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promote minority rights in Malawi, is trying to change that. Maria Ngulube is the Projects Coordinator for Linkages, a project CEDEP and other organizations are implementing to ensure equal access to health service for everyone in Malawi, including the LGBT community.

“We have had cases of the community complaining of maltreatment at the health centers and clinics, so the project decided to engage the health workers themselves,” said Ngulube.

CEDEP and its partners have trained more than 50 health workers in Malawi since Linkages started in 2014. The program, which Ngulube plans to expand, offers guidance on how to address the specific health needs of sexual minorities.

Ngulube says the religious beliefs and affiliations of health workers and the institutions where they work often contribute to anti-LGBT discrimination. With few public hospitals available in the country, many LGBT Malawians access health care at church-owned facilities operated by the Christian Health Association of Malawi.

Fatsani Kalino is a health worker at Bwaila Referral Hospital, a public facility in Lilongwe, where she works on HIV Testing and Counseling within the STI Department. She describes the pervasive stigma that existed around treating sexual and gender minorities before CEDEP’s training program began.

“Sometimes we were regarded as LGBT health workers. If colleagues learned that

we treated an LGBT member, they said it means we are promoting sin, so for fear of being labeled, health workers indeed were shunning them,” Kalino said.

She said CEDEP’s trainings have softened some of the stigma around treating LGBT patients.

Another CEDEP-trained nurse who requested anonymity said Malawi’s LGBT community faces discrimination when seeking medical treatment because too few medical practitioners are trained to address their specific health concerns.

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## **I REALIZED I WAS ATTRACTED TO WOMEN WHEN I WAS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL.**

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“Somehow religion plays a role, as many faith groups condemn the [LGBT] community, saying they are sinners. If [their sexuality is] known, they end up being excommunicated from church, and in that case anyone associating with them is considered a sinner. That is why many health workers find themselves in a dilemma between doing their job as a professional and being a spiritual being,” the nurse said.

On average, she said she treats between 40 and 80 sexual minorities each month.

“The CEDEP training has helped us to treat clients without stigma and accept

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them as anyone else, but I wish the society accepted them so that they may be using the social services freely," she added.

Chisomo, a gay man whose name has been changed to protect his identity, says access to health care among LGBT people in Malawi has improved somewhat since CEDEP's health worker trainings began in 2014.

"We are now being directed to those that have been trained on how to deal with marginalized groups," Chisomo said.

His boyfriend James says cases still exist where LGBT people go to the hospital for medical assistance and are humiliated and ridiculed for their sexual orientation.

"I wish for the day Malawians will accept us as we are. Being gay or lesbian in this country, you risk being excommunicated from church, fired from work, banished from home, even getting arrested," James said. "I would like to urge the organizations fighting for our welfare to offer training to more health workers for a fairer health care treatment to everyone."

Mercy, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, describes being lesbian in predominantly Christian Malawi as a nightmare.

"I realized I was attracted to women when I was in secondary school. I have never had any feelings for the opposite sex. No one can change that. So I plead with churches and everyone concerned to let us be and to accept us. Give us health care like anyone else regardless of cultural

beliefs and religion," she said.

In December 2016, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi held a protest march asking the government to enforce laws that criminalize same-sex relationships and homosexuality, arguing that they threaten traditional family values.

Under Malawian law, consensual sex between men is punishable with 14 years imprisonment. In 2010 two men received the maximum sentence for allegedly holding a public engagement ceremony. The sentencing attracted international condemnation with some western donors withdrawing support to Malawi. The couple was pardoned after serving five months of their sentence when then U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon met with Malawi's then president the late Bingu wa Mutharika.

Malawi's government has since suspended prosecutions under its anti-sodomy laws. Despite the moratorium, inequality in access to health services among LGBT people remains high.

Malawian journalist Suzgo Chitete produced a documentary focusing on the plight of sexual minority groups in Malawi in early 2016. Chitete thinks that no matter how much the government is willing to protect sexual minorities, churches will still be able to stimulate homophobia and discrimination against them.

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“The moratorium on sodomy laws is a step forward. But again, in a society where the moral compass is dictated by religion, the political leadership cannot easily stand against such a dominant view for fear of losing public support,” he said. “We need more dialogue on the issue. Concerned stakeholders should engage religious institutions to be tolerant to diversity. The church must not preach love, peace and harmony and yet perpetrate discrimination.”

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## I WISH FOR THE DAY MALAWIANS WILL ACCEPT US AS WE ARE.

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According to a recent report from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), homosexuality remains illegal in 73 countries worldwide, 33 of which are in Africa.

Even in African countries where same-sex sexual relations are not officially criminalized, LGBT people often face marginalization, discrimination and violence for their sexual orientations or gender identities and expressions.

*Miriam Kaliza is a journalist based in Malawi.*

### STORY 6



*A worshipper falls to the floor during a deliverance ceremony at the Mountain of Fire and Miracle Ministries prayer service called “Power Must Change Hand” in Lagos, Nigeria. Photo by Andrew Esiebo, used with his permission.*

### GAY AND LESBIAN NIGERIANS SEEKING DELIVERANCE FIND MENTAL HEALTH ANGUISH INSTEAD

**AUTHOR:** Wana Udobang

*Distrust of Nigeria’s mental health system prevents many sexual and gender minorities from seeking professional help when coming to terms with their faith and sexuality.*

LAGOS, Nigeria—A pastor spits out prayers as his subject falls to the ground, writhing and contorting after a 30-day fast. Ministers form a circle around the emaciated man and douse him in anointing oil and holy water. When the prayer tsunami ends, a hovering calm ensues. A hologram glides through the man’s atrophied body as he springs to his feet, professing his salvation. So goes the



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standard script for a deliverance session or exorcism in Nigerian film.

Bree, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, said her first deliverance session in 2004 had none of this Nollywood drama.

“The pastor acted like it was pretty normal and routine. It was a quick 15 minutes, and nothing changed,” she said, stifling a laugh. “I felt like he didn’t realize it was a big spiritual issue, and he didn’t treat it with the weight it deserved.”

Bree, who identifies as queer and Christian, had been grappling with reconciling her faith and sexuality for most of her life. Growing up in a conservative community in Lagos where the two identities were considered mutually exclusive, her sense of God’s disapproval and abandonment had taken its toll. Her meandering from unstable to abusive relationships reinforced a belief that her queerness was wrong and something that would continually punish her.

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**I WOULDN'T TALK TO A PROFESSIONAL ABOUT IT, BECAUSE I'M NOT GOING TO HAVE SOMEONE VALIDATE NEGATIVE FEELINGS.**

In 2009, while attending a Pentecostal church service with her girlfriend at the time, the pastor asked women who wanted to be “delivered from the spirit of lesbianism” to approach the altar.

“I was so tired of feeling rejected by God. I just wanted peace,” she said of her decision to step forward. “I was so conflicted. You go to church and keep hearing about how lesbians and gay people are an abomination, how they are going to hell, and you don’t understand why God is rejecting you before you even had a chance to say, ‘I don’t want this’.”

The pastor laid hands on Bree and her girlfriend. Believing they were entranced in spirit, the women rolled on the ground and were surrounded by ministers.

“It was intense, and I was hopeful this was it, maybe we had been cured. I needed to not be gay anymore,” Bree said of the experience.

After a tearful breakup from her partner following the deliverance session, they got back together a week later, both exhausted from acting “healed.”

“I finally had a conversation with God saying that if this is who I am, ‘you made me, then you fix me,’” Bree said.

Bree says one of the burdens religious exorcism places on sexual minorities is the need to perform. She reminds herself to switch feminine pronouns to masculine ones when discussing past relationships with work colleagues and when writing on her blog. Once, when a colleague

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gave her a suspicious look for staring admiringly at a woman, Bree lied about having previously met the person to diffuse the situation.

Olumide Makanjuola is executive director of The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS), an organization based in Lagos that works on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) rights and sexual health.

“In a space like Nigeria, people perform sexuality quite well. We don’t care what performance does to people mentally, as we are focused on how people see us and how they imagine us,” Makanjuola said.

Through his work, Makanjuola has encountered many people in the local LGBTQI community dealing with acute anxiety and depression as a result of performing straightness brought on by deliverance attempts and conversion therapy.

“Exorcism reduces people. They feel so incomplete and powerless,” he said.

“We run a religious system that is full of condemnation as opposed to understanding, which is very problematic.”

Makanjuola emphasizes the importance of deconstructing social norms and warns about the mental health strain that can arise when people feel a constant need to perform.

Bree said her deep-seated distrust of Nigeria’s mental health system prevented her from seeking professional help when

coming to terms with her faith and sexuality.

“I wouldn’t talk to a professional about it, because I’m not going to have someone validate negative feelings. The people who we talk to will fall back on culture or religion,” she said.

Makanjuola says Nigeria’s LGBTQI community often face stigmatized responses from health care providers due to institutionalized homophobia and prejudice, making it difficult for gender and sexual minorities to seek help.

Addressing this lack of trust and presumed discrimination, psychiatrist Dr. Gbonju Abiri from the Federal Neuro-Psychiatric Hospital in Lagos said, “Nigeria is deeply ingrained in culture and religious beliefs, and we are not able to deal with diversity just yet as we should, though our practice encourages that we should put health above all first.”

She added that many LGBTQI patients ask doctors about their views on sexuality prior to consultations, using the doctors’ responses to determine whether or not to go forward with the appointment.

It is almost impossible to discuss the issues sexual and gender minorities face in Nigeria without mentioning the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, which stipulates up to 14 years in prison for sexual orientation and gender identity expressions that deviate from cultural norms.

Makanjuola believes the law validates existing social prejudices.

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“As a health service receiver, you are dealing with two monsters: a doctor who is prejudiced towards you, and a service provider who is also using the law to validate their own sense of what is right. If you win with the law, are you going to win with the angle of their personal belief system?” he asked, rhetorically.

In 2012, exhausted from feeling depressed and condemned, Bree decided to study more about the intersection between her faith and her sexuality. She looked through the works of theologians, unlearning most of what she had been taught and reading stories of people who had taken their own lives when faced with similar battles.

“You can’t blame people, because there is a culture that has been handed down, but I will not accept that anybody is an abomination because of whom they love,” she said.

Bree is now working to earn a professional counseling qualification to help others who were once in her shoes. She hopes to find acceptance inside herself, and to help others do the same.

*Wana Udobang is a journalist based in Nigeria.*

## STORY 7



*Faithful Word Baptist Church Pastor Steven Anderson talks about being prohibited from entering South Africa in a video sermon posted online on 12 September 2016. Screenshot from YouTube video*

## STRIKING OUT IN SOUTH AFRICA, ANTI-GAY AMERICAN PASTOR STEVEN ANDERSON BRINGS HIS MESSAGE TO MALAWI

**AUTHOR:** Edwin Nyirongo

*The Arizona-based pastor, known for his hate speech against sexual and gender minorities, says homosexuality is a crime worthy of death and is trying to spread this message in Southern Africa.*

BLANTYRE, Malawi—The Book of Matthew is very clear about the greatest commandment: love. One should not wish death or bad luck upon loved ones.

Unfortunately, many who claim to be continuing the work of Jesus Christ seem not to understand his basic teachings.

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Take, for example, the American pastor Steven Anderson of the Faithful Word Baptist Church.

The Arizona-based pastor, known for his hate speech against sexual and gender minorities, says homosexuality is a crime worthy of death and has tried to take his message to Southern Africa.

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## THE GOVERNMENT SUSPENDED ENFORCEMENT OF ANTI-GAY LAWS IN 2012 AND RENEWED THE MORATORIUM IN 2015.

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The church is supposed to bring love among the people, and what happened will only make these people vulnerable

Although he was denied entry into South Africa in September under a section of the country's Immigration Act that prohibits advocating social violence, Botswana accepted him.

In Gaborone, he called gay men pedophiles and said homosexuals should be "stoned to death" during a radio interview, declarations that prompted the government to arrest and deport him.

Despite these setbacks, the pastor's thirst for Africa did not end there. Anderson said he wanted to set up a church in Malawi.

Then government spokesperson Malison Ndaui told local media, "Thinking of coming to set up a church here with such ideologies cannot be allowed...The ideologies are against human rights, which the Government of Malawi respects."

The government suspended enforcement of anti-gay laws in 2012 and renewed the moratorium in 2015. But within Malawi, many religious leaders side more with Anderson than the government.

In January of this year, the government organized prayers to ask for divine intervention to help end a severe drought. Anti-gay messages soon dominated the prayers.

In February, pastors in Malawi's Northern Region went to court to challenge the government's moratorium decision.

Then in December, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) and the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) organized a march against homosexuality and abortion.

"We note with grave concern that the institution of marriage between a man and a woman is under direct attack by those pushing for the legalization of homosexual practices and unions. Besides being sinful and unnatural, homosexual acts and unions are a threat to the community and morality of a society," said a statement the two organizations released on December 6, 2016.

Gift Trapence, executive director of Centre for the Development of People

(CEDEP), an organization that champions the rights of sexual minorities, thinks local clergy have gone overboard.

“Malawi is a secular state. As such, the diversity in beliefs should be recognized,” he said. “I don’t think Jesus would behave like many church leaders we see today. There is a lot of hypocrisy and pretense to be holy. Let us preach the message of love rather than hate. Leave judgment to God.”

Trapence tells clergy that the church and God should exist for everyone regardless of sexual orientation, wondering how God could discriminate or hate His own creation.

Father Martin Kalimbe of the Anglican Church in Malawi said he feared the anti-gay demonstrations as well as the conduct of the American pastor might bring hatred and chaos for sexual minorities in the country.

“I don’t think that [marching] was the right thing to do,” he said. “The church is supposed to bring love among the people, and what happened will only make these people vulnerable. Some people will interpret the march [in December] to mean they have been given the green light to do whatever they want against homosexuals.”

General Secretary of the General Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Reverend Dr. Timothy Nyasulu said all sins should be treated equally to avoid being misinterpreted.

“In Luke 19:10, Jesus came to seek and save the lost. You would not stone to death a person you regard as a sinner, but make him or her repent,” he said.

Nyasulu added that the paramount law in the Bible is love—first God, then your neighbor.

*Edwin Nyirongo is a journalist based in Malawi.*

## STORY 8



*President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe on 2 June 2015. Photo courtesy REUTERS/Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah.*

## ZIMBABWE MINISTRY GIVES HOPE AND COUNSELING TO ABUSED SEXUAL MINORITIES

**AUTHOR:** Problem Masau

*In a country where homosexuality is criminalized and authorities and religious leaders often shun and demonize LGBTI people, one Pentecostal church outside Harare is encouraging survivors of sexual violence to speak up.*

HARARE - Zimbabwe’s President Robert Mugabe has on various occasions labeled

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LGBTI people “worse than dogs” and has used international fora to castigate them.

In 2013, he criticized South Africa’s Nobel Peace Prize Winner Desmond Tutu for supporting LGBTI rights and said, “never, never, never will I support homosexuality in Zimbabwe.”

In this Southern African country where homosexuality is criminalized by authorities and religious leaders often shun and demonize LGBTI people, many sexual minorities suffer in silence after being abused or harassed.

The NGO Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) says over 55 percent of its members have either been arrested or raided by police in the past year and that some of its members have also been chased away from the church.

Chido, a GALZ member who prefers to use only her first name for security reasons, knows the feelings of ostracization all too well. Tears wet her cheeks as she discusses the neglect, stigma and abuse she has faced from close relatives and religious leaders because of her sexuality.

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**I PROVIDE COUNSELING TO EVERYONE. I AM A MINISTER AND A SERVANT OF THE LORD.**

“After my relatives discovered that I was somehow ‘strange’ to them, my uncle who I was staying with forced me to have sex with him several times. I was just 16. He said that was the only way of ‘correcting’ me,” said the now 29-year-old mother of one.

“I got pregnant when I was 19 as a result of these sexual encounters with my uncle, just after writing my A Level exams. He chased me, and I had to live with my grandmother in the rural area since my parents are dead. For the next two years, I was holed in the remote Muzarabani district until a good Samaritan decided to pay for my university education. I had to leave my son with my grandmother,” she said.

We believe sex should not be a taboo, and there is nothing wrong with consensual sex between adults regardless of their sexual orientation.

Amid her distress, Chido said she found no solace from local churches.

“The pastor shunned me after I told him about my predicament. At one point, I was contemplating suicide,” she said.

Today Chido is working with Gracious Light Ministries Pastor Anyway Humbe to support sexually abused LGBTI individuals in Bindura town, about 50 miles North East of Zimbabwe’s capital Harare.

“My case is just a tip of the iceberg of many cases in Zimbabwe. I am a living testimony that one can be abused because of his or her sexual orientation,” Chido said.

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Gracious Light Ministries, a Pentecostal church, gives counseling and legal help to LGBTI people and others who have been sexually abused. Through support groups, they encourage survivors to talk about their abuses and find solidarity in their shared struggles.

Pastor Humbe said the church should be a safe haven for everyone regardless of his or her sexual orientation.

“I provide counseling to everyone. I am a minister and a servant of the Lord. It is not up to me to judge,” he said. “Everyone is welcome here, and I believe we are all equal in the eyes of the Lord.”

Humbe’s sentiments have drawn rebuke from local Seventh Day Adventist Church Pastor Sikhumbuzo Dube, the author of “Sodom Has Bounced Back: A response to Contemporary Challenges Faced by Young Christians,” who says gays and lesbians should have no place in the clergy and church membership.

“It is a sin, and the church should not tolerate such practices,” Dube said of homosexuality. “The LGBTIs do not need counseling but to be told point blank that what they are doing is a sin.”

Dube said his book, which is popular among Seventh Day Adventists in the country, discusses what he believes motivated the Lord to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah in biblical times.

Another popular preacher in Zimbabwe Emmanuel Makandiwa has described LGBTI people as “mentally sick” in a ser-

mon broadcast on his television channel Christ TV.

Faced with such statements, GALZ said churches should rather foster love, unity, empathy and cohesion.

“We pray for a day when the question of one’s sexuality will become irrelevant and discrimination against LGBTIs will be relegated to the same heap containing slavery, racism, sexism and discrimination against socially marginalized groups and people,” GALZ Programs Officer Sylvester Nyamatendedza said.

Ongoing abuse of LGBTI people in Zimbabwe has spurred the establishment of Sexual Rights Center (SRC), a local human rights organization that works with LGBTI communities, men who have sex with men, women who have sex with women, sex workers, and society at large.

“When we talk about gays and lesbians, the police forget that they have rights just like anyone,” said SRC Programs Officer

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**CHIDO SAYS SHE IS STILL WAITING FOR THE DAY WHEN PEOPLE IN ZIMBABWE WON'T BE STIGMATIZED BECAUSE OF THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION.**

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Nombulelo Madonko. "Because of fear and rebuke, [sexual minorities] become faceless. We believe sex should not be a taboo, and there is nothing wrong with consensual sex between adults regardless of their sexual orientation."

Dumisani Nkomo, chief executive officer of the Zimbabwe human rights NGO Habakkuk Trust, said every citizen is entitled to dignity, privacy and the enjoyment of all rights.

"I do not believe gays or lesbians should be discriminated against or should be persecuted or discriminated because, like everyone, they are human beings. What everyone does in their bedroom is none of people's business," he said.

Zimbabwe's former sodomy law was changed to a 'sexual deviancy' provision in 2013 under Section 73 of the country's Criminal Code. According to the law, it is an offense for two people of the same sex to kiss or have sex.

Section 4.78 of Zimbabwe's constitution reads, "Persons of the same sex are prohibited from marrying each other."

Despite the laws, Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) spokesperson Kumbirayi Mafunda said abuse emanating from one's sexual orientation is still a crime.

"Any harassment and persecution based on sexual orientation is a monumental tragedy and also a violation of international human rights law," he said.

Chido says she is still waiting for the day when people in Zimbabwe won't be stigmatized because of their sexual orientation.

"It is my hope and wish that one day we will all be equal before the law regardless of one's sexual orientation. I look forward to the day when victims of sexual abuse because of their sexual inclination will see justice," she said.

*Problem Masau is a journalist based in Zimbabwe.*

## STORY 9:



*U.S. and Uganda flag. Photo courtesy of US Army Africa under a Creative Commons 2.0 license.*

## IN UGANDA, PARENTS SEEK CONTROVERSIAL GENITAL SURGERY FOR INTERSEX BABIES

**AUTHOR:** Yasin Kakande

*An intersex rights group says operations carried out in Uganda are unnecessary and sometimes botched, advising parents to wait until after children have reached puberty before making any decisions on surgery.*



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KAMPALA, Uganda — After their baby was born in a private clinic near the Ugandan capital, parents Justine Nakato and Stephen Mbaziira Dembe were frustrated their nurses and doctors would not show them their baby or tell them its gender.

They kept asking the nurse to tell them what was going on. She said the baby was doing well and they would tell them the sex soon.

When the mother was discharged, the hospital staff handed over the baby wrapped up in blankets and warned them not to expose the infant's skin to the cold until they got home. There the couple discovered their baby had both a vagina and a penis.

"At first we were shocked, we went to many physicians to try to find out what we should do," Dembe said at his home in Nsambya, a suburb of Kampala.

"He started passing urine through the penis. Then we decided to give him male names, Timothy Ziwa."

Timothy is now 10 months old and his parents are trying to raise funds to carry out genital reshaping surgery, a controversial process that involves procedures intended to make genitalia more like those of either typical males or females.

They are not alone.

Local radio stations in Uganda buzz with appeals seeking donors to help fund genital reshaping surgery abroad. One, played regularly on Metro FM, tells a

story of a poor child born with ambiguous genitalia and pleads for donations.

But an intersex rights group says operations carried out in Uganda are unnecessary and sometimes botched, and advises parents to wait until after children have reached puberty before making any decisions on surgery, whether at home or overseas.

Tamale Ssali, a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist in Kampala who has examined Timothy, said the child's parents would need around \$50,000 to pay for the surgery in Britain as Uganda lacks the facilities to safely undertake such complex surgeries.

"The baby was born with a condition called ambiguous genitalia. There is a small vagina but no possible uterus and a well developed penis but no scrotum," Ssali said.

According to an August 2015 report by the Support Initiative for People with Congenital Disorders (SIPD), a Ugandan intersex rights organisation, at least three children are born with an intersex or "difference of sexual development" condition every week in Mulago National Referral Hospital, the biggest hospital in Uganda.

Giving birth to an intersex child can come as a shock to parents, and many opt for genital reshaping surgery, according to Ssali.

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In its survey of 25 districts in Uganda, the first of its kind, SIPD recorded 48 cases of such surgeries being performed.

Julius Kagwa, executive director of SIPD, whose book “From Juliet to Julius” describes changing gender as an adult, said Uganda does not have a laboratory performing chromosomal tests for children to help determine sex, and genital reshaping surgeries are often flawed.

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## **SUPERSTITION AND SHAME IS ANOTHER FACTOR FACING INTER-SEX CHILDREN IN UGANDA.**

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“A few surgeries have been attempted to alter ambiguous genitalia in infancy but most of these have been unsuccessful and the intersex children have ended up developing physical characteristics of the opposite sex at puberty,” he said.

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### **BIOLOGICAL MILESTONES**

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Most intersex children in Uganda are assigned female at birth and raised to identify as women, according to the SIPD report.

But for many intersex women, female biological milestones, such as menstruation and breast development do not necessarily follow. Instead, some are

faced with changes associated with male puberty, such as beard growth, body hair and voice deepening.

These developments can bring ridicule and stigma, which can lead to suicide attempts and higher rates of school drop-out, according to SIPD.

“SIPD advocates for the ‘best guess’ non-surgical approach where an intersex child should be raised in the best-suited gender, without irreversible surgical intervention, until they can be active participants in the decision,” said Kagwe.

Sam Lyomoki, a doctor and member of the Ugandan parliament, said parliament issued guidelines in 2015 to the Ministry of Health advising against surgical intervention for intersex infants.

“The guidelines stress counselling for the parents, and there are counsellors trained to do that. Surgery can only be done when the child is old enough and has shown more features of either sex or the child can decide for him/herself,” he said.

Intersex people who have undergone early genital reshaping surgeries have complained of problems like loss of sexual sensation.

Betty, who uses a pseudonym to protect her identity, said from her home in Kampala that she underwent genital reshaping surgery when she was a baby. She went on to have a child, but has no clitoral sensation.

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“I think what the doctors and my parents agreed to cut out was just an elongated clitoris but not a penis,” she said.

Not fulfilling family obligations and angering one’s ancestors could be a reason one gets an intersex child.

Malta was the first country to prohibit involuntary or coerced modifications to sex characteristics. The Council of Europe has also recognised a right for intersex persons to not undergo sex reassignment treatment against their will.

Superstition and shame is another factor facing intersex children in Uganda. Intersex children are often hidden as their families consult traditional healers for answers.

SIPD reported cases in which mothers conspired with witchdoctors to have their intersex children killed in cleansing rituals because they were believed to be cursed.

Mothers also abandoned their intersex children in toilets or forests, and others subjected them to harmful mutilations to reshape their genitalia, according to the report.

Joseph Musisi, a traditional healer based in the Makindye suburb of Kampala, said the mutilation of intersex children is an outdated practice and said his peers practice therapies within the confines of the law.

“Not fulfilling family obligations and angering one’s ancestors could be a reason one gets an intersex child. This

can be rectified if a traditional healer speaks to the ancestral spirits, identifies their demands, and has them fulfilled,” he said.

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## **DESPITE LEGAL PROHIBITIONS ACROSS MUCH OF AFRICA, SOUTH AFRICA STANDS ALONE AS THE ONLY COUNTRY ON THE CONTINENT TO RECOGNIZE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE.**

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Intersex people have also challenged laws in Uganda, including the Registration of Births and Deaths Act, which has a provision that restricts people above 21 years of age from changing their sex details in the National Births Register.

*Yasin Kakande is a journalist based in Uganda.*

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## STORY 10:



*Cape Town-based Imam Muhsin Hendricks founded The Inner Circle 20 years ago in his garage as a safe space for queer Muslims. RNS photo by Brian Pellot.*

### QUEER INCLUSIVE PRAYER SPACES IN CAPE TOWN

**AUTHOR:** Cara Mazzola

*Even in Africa's "gay capital," sexual and gender minorities can feel invalidated or rejected by religious communities. Here are three inclusive prayer spaces in Cape Town that work to reconcile rifts between faith, sexuality and gender identity.*

CAPE TOWN, South Africa—Many governments and religious institutions around the world share a legacy of tension with and towards sexual and gender minorities. In at least 72 countries, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or intersex (LGBTQI+) relationships and identities are punishable by law, sometimes even by death.

Despite legal prohibitions across much of Africa, South Africa stands alone as the only country on the continent to recognize

same-sex marriage. The country's liberal constitution makes it a refuge of sorts for LGBTQI+ people, but even Cape Town, often considered the continent's "gay capital," is not immune to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (SOGIE)-based discrimination. Hate crimes, including so-called "corrective rapes," still plague impoverished communities, and LGBTQI+ tolerance is still hotly debated among many religious institutions.

To support SOGIE minorities who feel invalidated or rejected by their religious communities, inclusive prayer and worship spaces have emerged in Cape Town to help reconcile the rifts between faith, sexuality and gender identity/expression. Here are three such spaces, one for each of the major Abrahamic faiths:

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#### GOOD HOPE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH, CAPE TOWN CITY CENTER

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Good Hope Metropolitan Community Church (GHMCC) bills itself as a "theologically progressive and inclusive Christian community founded on the principles of Jesus Christ that celebrates diversity in a safe environment."

"The desire of Good Hope Metropolitan Community Church is that there will no longer be a need for that safe space of worship because other denominations will have become more embracing and celebratory of the entirety of a person and of respectful consenting relationships between people," Senior Pastor Rev. Beulah Dürrheim said.

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GHMCC holds weekly services at the Central Methodist Church in Cape Town’s city center near Greenmarket Square. The church uses inclusive language and offers congregants gender-neutral bathrooms, a rare sight at even non-religious buildings in Cape Town.

GHMCC is part of the interdenominational Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, the world’s first LGBTQI+-friendly church started in the late 1960s in the United States following the Stonewall Riots, a series of milestone resistance demonstrations by the American LGBTQI+ community.

GMHCC held a service of lament and hope on Sunday, October 26 in partnership with the Centre for Christian Spirituality, Inclusive & Affirming Ministries and the Dutch Reformed Church’s Groote Kerk. The service focused on the Dutch Reformed Church’s recent decision to revoke its recognition of gay marriage and ordination of non-celibate gay ministers.

“It’s like inviting somebody for dinner and, as they arrive, you slam the door in their face,” said Groote Kerk minister Riaan de Villiers about the DRC’s reversal.

Despite what many consider to be a step backward in the fight for equal rights, congregations from various Christian denominations, including the Dutch Reformed Church itself, continue to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQI+ community.

“Some people managed to fill up the

cracks in the dam, but they won’t hold because cracks never hold when rivers of justice flow. There’s no wall that can stop it, the dam will burst,” de Villiers added.

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## THE PEOPLE’S MOSQUE, WYNBERG

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Muhsin Hendricks, one of the world’s few openly gay imams, founded The Inner Circle (TIC) in 1996 to support LGBTQI+ Muslims. Hendricks later opened the People’s Mosque as a welcoming place for all Muslims.

“There’s nothing in the Islamic text that denies people from different sexual orientations, cultures and religious backgrounds to enter a relationship of mutual consent, love and intimacy as long as there is commitment and agreement between the two parties,” Hendricks said.

Women are not obliged to wear hijab at the People’s Mosque, nor are they required to sit separately from men.

They are encouraged to take up leadership roles and to lead prayer.

“Most other mosques in Cape Town are very conservative, especially when it comes to separation of genders,” a congregant at the People’s Mosque who wished not to be named said. “Even though some of them are good at engaging in discourse [around] sociopolitical analysis, queer politics, capitalism, sexuality, I don’t think they implement it as fully as TIC.”

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Despite a fatwa passed against him by South Africa's Muslim Judicial Council in 2007, Hendricks continues to operate The Inner Circle and host workshops contextualizing the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, which he believes is not a condemnation of homosexuality at all, but rather a cautionary tale about power and privilege.

"The Quran is written in classic Arabic poetry style, and one word in Arabic could inflect in 14 different interpretations. It can be stretched to meet the context of any human experience," Hendricks said. "Each Surah begins with, 'in the name of God, the most compassionate, the most merciful,' to remind us to interpret it in a healing way."

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### TEMPLE ISRAEL PROGRESSIVE JEWISH CONGREGATION, GREEN POINT

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The prayer books used in Temple Israel's services refer to God with gender-neutral pronouns, and women are expected and encouraged to fulfill the same religious obligations as men. In Rabbi Greg Alexander's words, "We don't just campaign for women, we campaign for what is right."

Temple Israel made the decision to recognize same-sex marriages after the Civil Union Act was passed in 2006 legalizing same-sex marriage in South Africa.

Rabbi Alexander approaches SOGIE issues with three questions to himself, "Where are there voices that are not

heard? Where are there people who are not seen? How can we bring those people forward and make them visible, included, and part of this community?"

Temple Israel seeks to provide a safe space for LGBTQI+ Jews and allies and hosts the annual Pride Shabbat, which forms part of Cape Town's Pride Week celebrations each year.

"I think our progressive way of looking at the world is about recognizing injustice and fighting injustices. That's really the true essence of Judaism in the Torah," said Sofía Louisa Zway, Temple Israel's youth development officer. "The world God wants us to create is one that is just and inclusive and welcoming and loving."

The people behind Cape Town's inclusive prayer spaces use their houses of worship to deconstruct power, exclusion and dogma. They celebrate and empower marginalized identities through worship and community. They show that religious institutions can be part of the upliftment and not the oppression of marginalized individuals and communities.

As Rev. Dürrheim says, "God is where the pain is. God walks closest with those who feel outcast, misunderstood, rejected, oppressed."

*Cara Mazzola is a journalist in Cape Town.*

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## STORY 11:



Nigerian pastor and televangelist T.B. Joshua. Photo courtesy of Creative Commons/S Briggs.

### NIGERIAN MEGACHURCH'S CLAIM TO 'PRAY THE GAY AWAY' BRISTLES LGBT ACTIVISTS

**AUTHOR:** Anthony Akaeze

*Megachurch pastor and televangelist T.B. Joshua's Synagogue, Church of All Nations (SCOAN) claims to "drive demons" out of sexual minorities on live television. LGBT activists and psychologists say the practice can bring about new harms.*

**Pastor Christopher:** *What have you been pushing him to do against his will?*

**Tedus Odupute:** *I made him love men. Instead of loving women, he loves men... I made him gay.*

**Pastor Christopher:** *You unclean spirit, come here! Come here!*

To anyone familiar with the Nigerian

movie industry, this dramatic exchange between a pastor and a businessman may well have emanated from a Nollywood film studio. Instead, the words come from a real life conversation between Pastor Christopher of The Synagogue, Church of All Nations (SCOAN), one of Nigeria's best-known Pentecostal churches, and Tedus Odupute, a Nigerian businessman based in Cameroon.

The testy exchange took place in April 2015 at SCOAN headquarters in Lagos and was broadcast on Emmanuel TV, the 24-hour satellite channel set up by SCOAN's charismatic leader and founder T.B. Joshua to reveal his congregation's activities to the world.

As a popular Pentecostal church, SCOAN claims to offer miraculous healing powers, attracting more than 30,000 visitors each week. Emmanuel TV viewers witness a variety of supposed healing and deliverance sessions on a daily basis.

Among those who visit SCOAN are sexual and gender minorities seeking "deliverance." In many African societies, as is true in much of the world, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people are sometimes viewed with suspicion or considered to be in need of spiritual cleansing.

In his televised account to SCOAN, Odupute said he wasn't originally gay but was "initiated" on a business trip he made to Asia.

After swimming with some men he met at a hotel, Odupute said he felt "as if some-

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thing entered (inside) me and I started having a passion for men and going closer to my fellow man.”

The “I made him gay” comment supposedly emanated not from Odupute himself but from the “demon” inside of him. Odupute later claimed his session with SCOAN rid him of the demon, and that his life has changed for the better.

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## REAL SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES HAVE NO REASON TO SEEK DELIVERANCE, SHE INSISTED.

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“I have been myself, I’m so happy today,” he said after the session.

“What do you mean by ‘you’ve been yourself?’,” T.B. Joshua asked.

“I now have total deliverance and a real passion for the opposite sex...I have been living like a normal human being, the way I was before three years ago,” Odupute replied.

Many LGBTI community members and activists disagree with the notion that someone can or needs to be cured in the first place. They insist that sexual and gender minorities who visit churches or mosques for healing are often forced to do so by family members or friends.

Jude, an LGBTI activist whose name has been changed to protect his identity, said he knows at least two LGBTI people who underwent deliverance sessions at Pentecostal churches in Nigeria without success.

“There was a time in my life I thought I wasn’t really living right, and I went to a Pentecostal church, but at the end of the day you find out it doesn’t help matters because they are just going to tell you that you are evil, you are possessed, which you are not,” he said. “[Deliverance] doesn’t last because these people would go back to their lifestyle.”

Another member of the LGBTI community, who also requested anonymity for security reasons, said some of those who visit religious centers in search of deliverance are lured by monetary rewards from the churches. Real sexual and gender minorities have no reason to seek deliverance, she insisted.

Fagbohunbe Oni Bamikole, a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Lagos, says that while “the act of cleansing people who are possessed by evil spirits is as old as man himself,” he believes such acts can either be “real and true cleansing” or “phony or stage-managed healing” depending on the persons involved.

“I have personally witnessed real and true deliverance in life,” Fagbohunbe claimed, drawing a distinction between what he believes to be “phony” “deliverance by arrangement” aimed at attracting “multitudes into the church” and extorting



“money from unsuspecting victims” from what he considers a more genuine practice.

For Fagbohunge, from a psychological perspective, the issues of religion and deliverance may boil down to individual belief.

“If a man defines a situation as real, it becomes real in its consequences. In Christianity, it is called strong faith, i.e. you receive, you believe and you become,” he said.

Fagbohunge listed some of the potential psychological effects of healing or deliverance sessions, including “anxiety, neurosis or agoraphobia ... triggered by the memory or any activity that symbolizes the purportedly cured evil spirit.”

Justine Dyikuk, a writer and communications director of Bauchi Catholic Diocese, Nigeria, said the use of electronic or social media for evangelization can be good but should not be used for miracle sessions, as doing so “amounts to propaganda, cheap popularity or seeking membership, which is often tied to monetary gains.”

“It is God who gives healing powers to the Church,” he added.

Although SCOAN says it publicizes its activities on Emmanuel TV in order to glorify God’s work, church officials declined to speak about LGBTI-related issues when contacted for comment. A source within the church who requested anonymity said the church does not bill beneficiaries for its healing sessions but that people who

feel they have benefited from the church’s services are known to willingly show appreciation in the form of financial or material gifts. Church members also tithe. Such donations are believed to account for the wealth of T.B. Joshua and other Nigerian Pentecostal pastors, whose individual net worths exceed billions of naira (tens of millions of dollars).

*Anthony Akaeze is a journalist based in Nigeria.*

## STORY 12:



*Activist Lundu Makoza displaying the rainbow flag during an anti-AIDS march in Lusaka, Zambia. Photo provided by Lundu Mazoka.*

## ZAMBIA’S LGBT COMMUNITY PUSHES FOR OFFICIAL RECOGNITION IN HIV FIGHT

**AUTHOR:** Paul Monde Shalala

*A consortium of Zambian civil society organizations championing the rights of LGBT people has embarked on a campaign to advance their rights in the soon-to-be-launched 2016 – 2019 Zambia National AIDS Strategic Framework.*

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KITWE, Zambia—A consortium of Zambian civil society organizations championing the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people has embarked on a campaign to advance their rights in the soon-to-be-launched 2016 – 2019 Zambia National AIDS Strategic Framework.

According to the consortium’s submission to Zambia’s National AIDS Council, the group wants the new framework to openly recognize their plight and to channel funds towards the fight against AIDS in the LGBT community.

The confidential submission, leaked by an activist who helped draft it, details names and explanations of LGBT-relevant terminology the consortium hopes will be included in the forthcoming framework. It also notes that use of the phrase “key population” to refer to the LGBT community in the 2014 – 2016 National AIDS Strategic Framework has not helped reduce the stigma and challenges facing the community.

According to the Zambia Population-based HIV Impact survey released in December 2016 by the Ministry of Health and the U.S. Embassy in Lusaka, 12.3 percent of people living in Zambia are HIV-positive.

There are no official statistics on the prevalence of HIV among Zambia’s LGBT community due to sensitivity surrounding issues of sexual orientation, much of which stems from conservative beliefs in the country.

Under Zambia’s Penal Code, any person

who has “carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature,” a vague definition that includes homosexuality, can be jailed for 14 years.

Natasha, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, is an activist with Friends of Rainka, an NGO that campaigns for LGBT rights in Zambia. She says the consortium submitted its recommendations because LGBT people need support and recognition from the Zambian government to ensure the protection of their equal rights.

“We are aware that last year, the Global Fund [a partnership organization that works to accelerate the end of AIDS] gave the Zambian government \$2 million to help the LGBT community fight HIV, and we are waiting for the way forward,” she said.

The National AIDS Council has not responded to requests for comment on why the money has yet to be spent on the community for which it was intended.

“We know that the money is in the hands of government, and we cannot demand a share. However, what we want is money to be channeled towards sensitization activities in the LGBT community and increasing access to health in the community,” said Natasha.

The National AIDS Council is currently holding a series of meetings with activists to devise a plan for how the Global Fund allocation will be disbursed and utilized.

Both activists and the council are

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tight-lipped on what they expect these meetings to achieve, but whatever comes of them will likely be key in mapping approaches to HIV prevention among the LGBT community going forward.

Various interest groups are submitting what they want included in the forthcoming framework. In the current framework, which expires this year, key populations include the LGBT community, sex workers, migrant laborers and children on the streets. The document refers to LGBT in its high-risk class but does not spell out what interventions can be done to fight AIDS in the community.

Zambia's most prominent gay activist Lundu Mazoka says a holistic approach is needed.

He cites culture and religion as two factors that propel ignorance and apathy towards the LGBT community.

During the run-up to the 2011 general elections, Zambia's three church mother bodies the Council of Churches in Zambia, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia and the Zambia Episcopal Conference issued a joint statement condemning homosexuality and asking voters not to support anyone who was suspected of supporting the LGBT community.

Since then, many churches have been vocal in their opposition to equal rights for LGBT people, and in January 2016, Zambia's President assented to a constitutional amendment that once again declared Zambia as a Christian nation. Lusaka-based evangelical preacher

Moses Lungu believes homosexuality is wrong because marriage is between a man and a woman in the Bible.

"From the Old Testament to the New Testament, marriage has always been between a man and a woman. Leviticus calls [homosexuality] an abomination. In this country we shouldn't allow what the Bible doesn't allow," Lungu said.

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## ZAMBIA'S MOST PROMINENT GAY ACTIVIST LUNDU MAZOKA SAYS A HOLISTIC APPROACH IS NEEDED.

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Other groups in Southern Africa, including the Cape Town-based Inclusive and Affirming Ministries, endorse a more contextual and contemporary reading of scripture.

In 2013, a Zambian Pentecostal musician whose stage name is Kings released a song called "Wake up Zambia" in which he called on Christians to resist what he terms "donor-driven homosexuality."

On the cultural side, many Zambians consider homosexuality taboo. Hundreds of the country's traditional chiefs outlaw same-sex sexual relations in their chiefdoms. Chiefs are very influential in social and political lives, and their subjects widely respect their authority.

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Mazoka says human rights issues concerning the LGBT community need to be enshrined in Zambian laws to properly safeguard the LGBT community and to promote tolerance in society.

“Because Zambians thought unprotected anal intercourse was just for homosexuals, we have also failed to address this high-risk sexual behavior in young girls who engage in anal intercourse as a way to preserve virginity and avoid pregnancy,” he added.

In the past four years in Zambia, three people have been brutally arrested and taken to court on suspicion of promoting or practicing homosexuality. The cases have all ended in acquittals due to lack of evidence.

Despite laws prohibiting homosexuality in Zambia, other laws allow universal access to health services for all citizens irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity.

*Paul Monde Shalala is a journalist based in Zambia.*

## STORY 13:



*Prince Appiah interviews Kwasi, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, near Kumasi, Ghana in January 2017.*

## CLERGY COUNSELORS STOKE LGBT FEARS AT GHANA HIGH SCHOOLS

**AUTHOR:** Prince Appiah

*In Ghana, LGBT students are expelled for “sexual misconduct” or silenced for fear of being demonized by school counselors who double as religious leaders.*

KUMASI, Ghana—On a summer afternoon in 2012, Kwasi, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, gathered the courage to confide in his school counselor Frederick Ansah.

Then 18, Kwasi told Ansah, who is also a pastor and a teacher at the school, that Kwasi had been sexually attracted to men since he was 14 and that he had had intercourse with several of his male peers.

Kwasi’s coming out that day was driven by taunts from schoolmates, who were threatening to publicize a picture of him

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kissing a male student at their senior high school on the outskirts of Kumasi in Central Ghana.

Kwasi told Ansah that the classmate he kissed had pretended to be gay to deceive and blackmail him.

“There was a plot,” Kwasi said. “I stupidly agreed to his proposal, believing it was genuine.”

According to Kwasi, the students behind the alleged plot knew that if school authorities ever learned of the kiss, Kwasi would be expelled, so they extorted him for 500 Ghanaian Cedi (about \$120) in exchange for their silence.

“I was seeing a counselor, a religious leader. He gave me assurance. I trusted him, but he disappointed me,” Kwasi said of Ansah, who had promised to keep this coming out a secret and to help him become “straight.”

In December 2012, a witch-hunt ensued at Kwasi’s school when another student came out and was forced to identify fellow gay students.

A long list of names was pasted on the school notice board under the heading, “Due for Dismissal; Report to the Disciplinary Committee as soon as possible.”

Then 19, second-year student Charles, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, was fourth on the list. Surprised, he walked into the committee room gripped with fear but confident he would be absolved because he had not

been caught or blackmailed like Kwasi.

At the hearing, Charles was shocked to see Ansah sit quietly as other members of the committee heaped accusations on him, accusations presumably based on information Charles had shared confidentially with the counselor.

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## **IF THEY ARE ACCUSED AND YOU DISMISS THEM, YOU ARE NOT HELPING THEM EXPRESS THEMSELVES.**

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Charles told the committee he had told Ansah of his same-sex attraction in hopes that the counselor would help him overcome the desires.

“I was lucky. I think it’s because of how emotionally I spoke the truth, that is why I was spared in the mass dismissal, because innocent people were also dismissed,” he said.

The Ghana Education Service Discipline Code for Students stipulates that students who are found guilty of “sexual misconduct” should be summarily dismissed.

The 2016 case of Barima, 17, and Osei, 19, two close friends at Opoku Ware Senior High School in Kumasi whose names have been changed to protect their identities, demonstrates the damage

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these rules can cause.

In January 2016, the two male students were accused of kissing and having sex, allegations they denied. Students wielding sticks and belts tried to attack Barima and Osei for their “unacceptable” sexual orientation.

The crowd refused to retreat until the students confessed to their “crime.” It was only on the advice of a school counselor that the mob dispersed.

“On the day we were summoned [for our disciplinary hearing], we denied all charges, but school authorities compelled us to say, ‘yes, we’re gay,’ in order to avoid being beaten to a pulp by the boys. They claimed it was our confession,” Barima said.

“The authorities did not even enquire to get evidence before they asked us to stay home for two weeks, which ended up extended to two months,” Osei added.

Both students said the incident’s emotional trauma and their lengthy suspensions negatively affected their exam performance.

“We suffered stigma. It hurt me a lot because our final exam was approaching. Even in class, people didn’t want to sit by you. Learning became difficult because you have to stay home. Some of our friends still don’t talk to us,” Osei said.

“It was very bad because school authorities asked us to go home without allowing us to take any books along. We were not allowed to go to our rooms to take

anything. Their explanation was that the other boys might lynch us,” Barima said.

Frank Okyere is a researcher, student counselor and teacher at a senior high school in Kumasi.

He thinks the sexual misconduct clause in the Education Service Discipline Code for Students is unhelpful because school authorities often hide behind provisions of the code to unilaterally dismiss students accused of being gay.

“If they are accused and you dismiss them, you are not helping them express themselves. Therefore, they get to conclude that they are not welcomed in this world,” he said.

Okyere is also executive director at SEAT OF GRACE, a pastoral and counseling NGO that tries to convert sexual minorities to heterosexual orientations, a controversial and potentially harmful practice.

Still, he suggests the discipline code be revised to accept lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students and provide guidance to assist them emotionally rather than demonizing them.

“Education is holistic, teachers are supposed to help students in and outside the classroom. I think that particular piece must be reviewed. A regulation that is geared towards reforming students must be applied,” he advocated.

Alberta Agnes Tardie, a senior tutor at Opoku Ware Senior High School in Kumasi, describes local guidance and counseling systems as “weak and use-

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less.” She believes this institutional weakness has contributed to the dismissal of perceived sexual and gender minorities from the education system.

“Students don’t trust counselors anymore because most of them are pastors who demonize them, at the least,” she said.

Tardie hopes that when more professional counselors are employed in senior high schools, the situation may improve.

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## I THINK THERE SHOULD BE INTENSIFIED EDUCATION ON SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS IN SCHOOL.

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Assemblies of God Church pastor Rev. Dr. David Okai also worries about school counselors demonizing LGBT students.

He believes the church must work to embrace LGBT people, understand them, give them love and work on their emotions.

A November 2016 document by SEAT OF GRACE titled “Legalising Homosexuality in the World; Will Ghana join the New Order?” was recently presented to senior high schools students in Kumasi.

It flags as problematic the threats and beatings of perceived sexual and gender minorities in Ghana’s schools and society at large.

Okyere, the document’s lead researcher, says special training must be given to school counselors to equip them to be able to address sensitive matters concerning sexual and gender minorities.

The document also confirmed that sexual and gender minorities are often afraid of being demonized by the many senior high school counselors who double as religious leaders.

“I think there should be intensified education on sexual orientations in school,” Charles said. “I was lucky I was not expelled from school. It could have ended my education.”

*Prince Appiah is a journalist based in Ghana.*

### STORY 14:



*Women dance outside Zimbabwe’s Parliament in Harare on December 7, 2016, demanding condoms in schools. Photo by Ray Mwareya.*

### CHURCH CONDOM RESTRICTIONS IN RURAL ZIMBABWE LINKED TO RISE IN TEEN PREGNANCIES

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**AUTHOR:** Ray Mwareya

*With Zimbabwe's government deep in debt, churches play a critical role in providing free or subsidized sexual health clinics, maternity homes, and schools. Their support comes at a price.*

HARARE, Zimbabwe—"If ever I'm spotted walking into a beer hall to buy a pack of Durex condoms, my father will beat me with a rubber belt, my teachers would banish me from the classroom, our church pastor will expel me from the Sunday choir band."

Nancy, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, is a 17-year-old biology student at a Baptist-run school in Chimanimani, a mostly rural part of eastern Zimbabwe.

"Condoms are a banned word in our church youth seminars," she said. "On rare occasions our church pastor speaks, he shouts, 'condoms are full of holes, beware! Condoms stick inside women! Abortion is Satan's invention!'"

Between February and September 2016, Nancy says 10 of her classmates became pregnant and were kicked out of school despite directives from the Zimbabwe Education Ministry and constitutional court mandating that pregnant girls must not be excluded from finishing high school.

"I know for sure religious stigma towards condoms put girls in harm here," Nancy said of her classmates.

Rural eastern Zimbabwe, a bastion

of church authority, is witnessing the country's fastest growing rate of teenage pregnancies.

According to Zimbabwe's Demographic Health Survey, the fertility rate among regional teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19 increased from 99 per 1,000 to 115 per 1,000 between 2005 and 2015.

Observers and some experts attribute the rate rise to church restrictions and stigma around condoms and other forms of contraception.

With Zimbabwe's government deep in debt, churches play a critical role in providing free or subsidized sexual health clinics, maternity homes, surgeries and schools in this region.

"And churches strictly discourage the debate on condoms within their assemblies," said Bishop Fani Moyo, a sociologist and founder of The Progressive Churches Sexual Health Forum of Zimbabwe.

"It is seen as a profanity for Sunday school girls to introduce a sermon on condoms publicly."

Authorities take a more relaxed view. "Parents are free to drop in condoms when they pack food and books in their children's schoolbags," Zimbabwe's education minister Lazarus Dokora said.

At Rusitu Mission Hospital, a large institution run by United Baptists Church in Zimbabwe, nurses motion patients to



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participate in morning prayer sessions before giving out medication.

“If you ask for condoms when you get into a relationship, church nurses will report you to the church school principal. A beating follows. We girls endure sex without protection,” Nancy said.

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## IN THE DISTRICT WHERE THIS CHURCH THRIVES, THE MAJORITY OF SCHOOL GIRLS, SOME AS YOUNG AS 10, HAVE BEEN MARRIED TO OLDER MEN FROM THEIR CHURCH.

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Many businesses and tribal courts in the region also restrict the distribution of condoms to teenage girls.

“It is an offense punishable by a fine of two goats if a schoolgirl is seen buying condoms in a beer tavern in my village,” said Sam Chirandu, a tribal village head in east Zimbabwe. “School girls mustn’t do sex before marriage. It is against our social values.”

Unlike in neighboring South Africa where condoms are widely available, often for free, in rural Zimbabwe they are almost hidden.

“For fear of stigma and beating, I have to

cleverly send my 18-year-old boyfriend to buy us condoms from supermarkets, and hope the pastor or his parents don’t see him with them. Each pack costs \$1. The price is too much for teenage girls,” Nancy said.

Rural east Zimbabwe is home to the Johane Marine Apostolic Church denomination, a strictly Africanist church sect that draws tens of thousands of followers and is wildly popular among Zimbabwe’s influential government ministers, security chiefs and diplomats.

The denomination is famous for its promotion of polygamy and child marriage and for its fiery dislike of condoms and other forms of contraception.

In the district where this church thrives, the majority of school girls, some as young as 10, have been married to older men from their church.

“Most marriages are arranged between adult church men and underage girls. Request for condoms can result in a teenage bride being divorced harshly,” said Edson Tsvakai, a community health project coordinator at The Union for the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe-Africa (UDA-CIZA).

Zimbabwe’s Ministry of Education and Culture says only one-third of the 10,000 local girls who enroll in high school graduate after four years.

Tsvakai pins the high dropout rate on “runaway teenage pregnancies.”

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“The police are the biggest let down in early forced child marriages and pregnancies, as they have continued to turn a blind eye to these religious crimes,” he said. “Prosecutions die down quickly. Church sect leaders are secretive, and in high favor with political elites.”

The country’s Domestic Violence Act prohibits marriage under the age of 16 for both girls and boys, but enforcement is weak in rural districts where poverty incentivizes underreporting.

Noah Pashapa, a bishop of the Pentecostals Liberty Churches International in Harare and one of Zimbabwe’s most famous preachers, holds a pragmatic view on contraception.

“Condoms are a necessary evil. They save lives and marriages,” he said.

Pashapa keeps condoms in his office for needy couples and sexually active youth. He says Zimbabwe’s HIV/AIDS crisis, which contributed to 29,000 deaths in 2015 according to [UNAIDS](#), is slowly breaking down the Church’s high moral ground on sexual abstinence among youths.

He would like to see a future in which “condoms should be distributed in churches – accompanied by information promoting abstinence and informed choices among the youth.”

*Ray Mwareya is a journalist based in Zimbabwe.*

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ADDITIONAL  
RESOURCES  
AND READINGS

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## Additional Resources and Readings

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- ILGA's annual [State Sponsored Homophobia Report](#) documents sexual orientation laws around the world.
- The [2016 ILGA-RIVI Global Attitudes Survey on LGBTI People](#) surveyed nearly 100,000 people online in 65 countries, nine of which are in Africa.
- "[The Global Divide on Homosexuality](#)" is a 2013 Pew Research Center report on global attitudes to homosexuality in 39 countries. On the question, "Should Society Accept Homosexuality," a majority of people said "No" in the six African countries surveyed, namely South Africa (61% "No"), Kenya (90%), Uganda (96%), Ghana (96%), Senegal (96%), and Nigeria (98%). The survey found that acceptance of homosexuality is most widespread in countries where religion is less central to people's lives.
- "[Violence Based on Perceived or Real Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Africa](#)" is a 2013 report compiled by African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHer) and the Coalition of African Lesbians. The report documents different forms of violence, factors fueling violence and the impacts of violence on LGBTI individuals in Africa. It is available in English and French.
- "[Canaries in the Coal Mines: An Analysis of Spaces for LGBTI Activism in Southern Africa](#)" is a 2016 report by The Other Foundation that assesses the depth and nature of social exclusion of LGBTI people and analyzes how LGBTI groups are organizing to transform that reality in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- "[Criminalising Homosexuality and Understanding the Right to Manifest Religion](#)" (2016) is a briefing note by the Human Dignity Trust that discusses how religion and criminalisation of homosexuality are connected around the world. The note includes statements by religious leaders from a diversity of faiths on LGBTI issues.
- "[Breaking the Silence: Criminalisation of Lesbians and Bisexual Women and its Impacts](#)" (2016) is a report by the Human Dignity Trust that documents the history of laws criminalizing consensual sexual intimacy between women, and the homophobia anti-LGBT criminal laws foster and perpetuate against lesbians and bisexual women in particular.
- The [summary report](#) from "Homophobia and the Churches in Africa: A Dialogue" synthesizes a two-day conference held in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, in April 2016. You can watch video recordings of each session [here](#).

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- The ILGA-Europe magazine’s [Winter 2015/16 edition](#) on reconciling sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and religion features a section on the right to freedom of religion or belief and its intersection with other rights.
  - “[Silenced Voices, Threatened Lives](#)” is a 2015 report documenting the impact of Nigeria’s 2014 Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Law on freedom of expression. The report was written by the PEN American Center, PEN Nigeria, and the Leitner Center for International Law and Justice at Fordham Law School in New York City.
  - “[Dipolelo Tsa Rona -- Our Stories](#)” is a collection of personal essays published in 2016 by Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LeGaBiBo).
  - FeminismInIndia.com’s Sameera Khan summarizes [16 strategies for implementing gender ethical journalism](#), all of which can be readily applied in the Sub-Saharan Africa SOGIE context.
  - Religion News Service’s 2015 [reporting series on the intersection of faith, ethnicity, and sexuality](#) features 12 stories that address religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression in the Global South.
  - Watch [Quorum](#), a 2015 video series from the Daily Beast featuring LGBT activists from the Global South.
  - Watch [God Loves Uganda](#), a 2013 film that documents the connection between North American evangelicalism and homophobia in Uganda. The documentary is available on Netflix.
  - Watch [African Pride](#), a 2014 film that documents how black lesbians and allied activists are rallying to stop homophobic violence in South Africa’s townships. Contact filmmaker Laura Fletcher to request access to the full film ([laura.backstory@gmail.com](mailto:laura.backstory@gmail.com)).
  - Read “[Out in Africa](#)” by Aryn Baker in TIME, June 4, 2015. Baker’s story documents the harm caused to Uganda’s LGBT community at the hands of American evangelicals and sensational media reporting.
  - The United Nations’ [Free & Equal Campaign](#) posts several [fact sheets](#) on LGBTI rights and equality including FAQs, international human rights law, and specific information on criminalization, violence, refuge and asylum.
  - [ProjektHope’s Guidebook to Reporting Gender and Sexuality](#) (2015) offers practical advice for journalists reporting on LGBTI issues in Nigeria. It includes sections on understanding gender and sexuality in the African context and their implications for public health.
  - Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA)’s [2006 “Out in the Media?” report](#) discusses knowledge, attitudes and practices among South African media towards LGBTI issues and offers a historic benchmark from which to assess reporting today.
  - Inclusive and Affirming Ministries’ [training booklet on the Bible and homosexuality](#) analyzes and interprets eight passages of scripture often cited as pertaining to homosexuality.

- “[Where Do We Go for Justice?](#)”, a 2015 report by the civil rights organization Chapter Four Uganda, documents abuse of the rights of sexual minorities in Uganda’s criminal justice system.
- The Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria in South Africa held a week-long course on sexual minority rights in February, 2016. See the course program and key readings on the Centre’s [website](#).
- Read Security in-a-Box’s [guide to digital security for the LGBTI community in Sub-Saharan Africa](#). The guide’s tips are equally relevant for journalists reporting on the community.
- Watch the [Journalist Survival Guide](#)’s animated videos on [protecting source identity](#), [journalists’ international rights](#), [how to protect your computer against hacking](#), [how to get a secure internet connection](#), and [how to secure your Skype account](#).
- The Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia Journalism School’s [Digital Security and Source Protection For Journalists](#) guide (2014) offers strategies for reducing source exposure online.
- Amnesty International has [information and resources about LGBT rights](#) on its website.
- Outright International’s 2015 report on [Homophobia and Transphobia in Caribbean Media](#) encourages regional media to: promote self-regulation among media groups in the pursuit of ethical and fair-minded coverage; ensure accountability for unethical and unbiased coverage; issue joint state-

ments condemning prejudicial and biased reporting on LGBTI individuals; provide training for journalists on how to ethically cover LGBTI-related events; and promote the voices of LGBTI activists and organizations in media coverage that affect the community. These guidelines have global relevance.

- The U.K. Department for International Development’s [Faith, Gender and Sexuality Toolkit](#) includes sections on sexuality & gender diversity, culture, tradition and faith.
- The Media Institute of Southern Africa published a [series of articles on the state of Africa’s press](#) on the 25th anniversary of the [Windhoek Declaration](#), which in 1991 set out to promote an independent and pluralistic African news media landscape. Several articles directly address [journalism safety](#).
- The [Solutions Journalism Toolkit](#) (2015) offers tips to help journalists produce rigorous and compelling reporting about responses to social issues.
- International Media Support’s [Handbook for Conflict Sensitive Journalism](#) (2004) offers tips to help journalists report information to the public in times of conflict without exacerbating tensions. IMS has also created country-specific handbooks for [Zimbabwe](#) (2009), [Rwanda](#) (2008), and [Kenya](#) (2007).
- UNESCO’s [Conflict-Sensitive Reporting guide](#) (2009) aims to strengthen media’s capacity to contribute to dialogue, mutual understanding, reconciliation and peace.

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# SUB-SAHARAN SOURCE GUIDE

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# Sub-Saharan Source Guide

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For the most up-to-date source information, visit [religionlink.com/source-guides/lgbtqi-religion-africa/](https://religionlink.com/source-guides/lgbtqi-religion-africa/).

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## SOUTHERN AFRICA:

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- **Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM):** IAM, based in Cape Town, works as a catalyst for full inclusion of LGBTI people within mainstream churches in Southern Africa and for the celebration of diversity within religious contexts. IAM raises awareness of diversity regarding sexual orientation and faith interpretation, encouraging people to re-examine their beliefs and attitude towards homosexuality and engage in dialogue in affirming and inclusive ways. Contact IAM's director the Rev. Judith Kotzé: [judith@iam.org.za](mailto:judith@iam.org.za), +27 21 975 8142.
- **The Inner Circle:** The Inner Circle, based in Cape Town, provides support to Muslims who are marginalized based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. The organization strives to raise consciousness around gender and sexual diversity by engaging faith and beliefs and to encourage collaboration with queer members of the local, national and international Muslim community. Contact Imam Muhsin Hendricks: [admin@theinnercircle.org.za](mailto:admin@theinnercircle.org.za), [muhsin@theinnercircle.org.za](mailto:muhsin@theinnercircle.org.za), +27 21 761 0037.
- **Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA):** GALA is a center for LGBTI culture and education based in Johannesburg. Its mission is to act as a catalyst for the production, preservation and dissemination of knowledge on the history, culture and contemporary experiences of LGBTI people in Africa. GALA's archival collections can be viewed by appointment. Contact archivist Linda Chernis: [linda.chernis@wits.ac.za](mailto:linda.chernis@wits.ac.za), +27 11 717 4239.
- **Triangle Project:** Triangle Project is a non-profit human rights organisation based in Cape Town that offers professional services to ensure the full realization of constitutional and human rights for LGBTI persons, their partners and families. They offer sexual health clinics, counselling, support groups, a helpline, public education and training services, community outreach, and a



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library. Contact Sharon Ludwig ([health@triangle.org.za](mailto:health@triangle.org.za)) or Matthew Clayton ([matthew@triangle.org.za](mailto:matthew@triangle.org.za)): [info@triangle.org.za](mailto:info@triangle.org.za), +27 81 257 6693.

- **Gender DynamiX**: Gender DynamiX, based in Cape Town, works towards the realisation of all human rights of transgender and gender nonconforming people within and beyond the borders of South Africa. Contact Sivu Siwisa and Zachary Shimange: [com-munications@genderdynamix.org.za](mailto:communications@genderdynamix.org.za), [community@genderdynamix.org.za](mailto:community@genderdynamix.org.za) +27 21 447 4797.
- **Sonke Gender Justice**: Sonke Gender Justice works across Africa to strengthen government, civil society and citizen capacity to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS. It has offices in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Mpumalanga, South Africa. Sonke works closely with a range of organisations and individuals including women's rights organisations, social movements, trade unions, government departments, sports associations, faith-based organisations, media organisations, university research units and human rights advocates. Contact Patrick Godana: [patrick@genderjustice.org.za](mailto:patrick@genderjustice.org.za), [info@genderjustice.org.za](mailto:info@genderjustice.org.za), +27 21 423 7088.
- **African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHer)**: The African Men for Sexual Health and Rights is a coalition of 18 LGBT/MSM (men who have sex with men)-led organisations across

sub-Saharan Africa that works to address the disproportionate effect of HIV/AIDS on MSM and LGBT individuals; to redress the human rights violations these populations face on the continent; and to increase the visibility of LGBT individuals and their issues. Contact Executive Director Kene Esom in Johannesburg, South Africa, at [kene@amsher.org](mailto:kene@amsher.org), [info@amsher.org](mailto:info@amsher.org), +27 11 482 4630. Contact Law & Human Rights Advocacy Specialist Berry Nibogora based in Dakar, Senegal, at [berry@amsher.org](mailto:berry@amsher.org).

- **Sex Workers Education & Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT)**: SWEAT is South Africa's leading sex worker rights organization working on advocacy, human rights defense and mobilization from its head office in Cape Town. SWEAT works closely with LGBTI rights groups across South Africa. Contact Lesego: [lesegot@sweat.org.za](mailto:lesegot@sweat.org.za), +21 21 448 7875.
- **Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria**: The Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria in South Africa works towards human rights education in Africa, a greater awareness of human rights, the wide dissemination of publications on human rights in Africa, and the improvement of the rights of women, people living with HIV, indigenous peoples, sexual minorities and other disadvantaged or marginalised persons or groups across the continent. Contact Director Frans Viljoen, [frans.viljoen@up.ac.za](mailto:frans.viljoen@up.ac.za), [chr@up.ac.za](mailto:chr@up.ac.za), +27 12 420 3228, +27 12 420 3810 / +27 12 420 3034.

- [Iranti-org](#): Iranti-org is a queer human rights visual media organization based in Johannesburg. Iranti-org works within a human rights framework to build local partnerships and movements that use media as a platform for lobbying, advocacy and educational interventions across Africa. It aims to serve as an archive of queer memory in ways that destabilize numerous modes of discrimination based on gender, sexuality and sexual orientation. Contact director Jabu Pereira: [jabu@iranti-org.co.za](mailto:jabu@iranti-org.co.za), [getinfo@iranti-org.co.za](mailto:getinfo@iranti-org.co.za), +27 11 339 1476, +27 11 339 1468.
- [The Other Foundation](#): The Other Foundation is an African trust that advances equality and freedom in Southern Africa with a particular focus on sexual orientation and gender identity. It gathers support to defend and advance the human rights and social inclusion of LGBTI people and offers support to groups in ways that enables them to work effectively for lasting change, recognizing the particular dynamics of race, poverty, inequality, sex, national origin, heritage, and politics in the region. Contact CEO Neville Gabriel [ngabriel@theotherfoundation.org](mailto:ngabriel@theotherfoundation.org), [tsekoma@theotherfoundation.org](mailto:tsekoma@theotherfoundation.org), [info@theotherfoundation.org](mailto:info@theotherfoundation.org), +27 72 011 6536.
- [Heinrich Böll Foundation Southern Africa](#): The Heinrich Böll Foundation's office in Cape Town works to advance gender and sexual equality in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. The foundation partners with key civil society actors as well as public and religious thought leaders to challenge

homophobic policies, legislations and attitudes. Contact Human Rights Program Manager Paula Assubuji: [Paula.Assubuji@za.boell.org](mailto:Paula.Assubuji@za.boell.org), [info@za.boell.org](mailto:info@za.boell.org), +27 21 461 62 66.

- [Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa \(OSISA\)](#): Based in Johannesburg, OSISA is committed to deepening democracy, protecting human rights and enhancing good governance in the Southern Africa. OSISA's vision is to promote and sustain the ideals, values, institutions and practices of open society, with the aim of establishing vibrant and tolerant southern African democracies in which people, free from material and other deprivation, understand their rights and responsibilities and participate actively in all spheres of life. Contact LGBTI Program Manager Ian Southey-Swartz: [ians@osisa.org](mailto:ians@osisa.org), +27 11 587 5000.
- [Southern Africa Litigation Centre](#): The Southern Africa Litigation Centre's LGBT and Sex Worker Rights Programme works to end discrimination and mistreatment faced by people who identify as such throughout Southern Africa. Contact Anneke Meerkotter: [enquiries@salc.org.za](mailto:enquiries@salc.org.za), +27 10 596 8538.
- [Coalition of African Lesbians](#): The Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) is a regional network of organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa committed to advancing freedom, justice and bodily autonomy for all women on the African continent and beyond. It is based in Johannesburg. Contact Regional Advocacy Officer Fadzai Muparutsa: [110](mailto:fadzai@</a></li>
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- [cal.org.za](http://cal.org.za), [info@cal.org.za](mailto:info@cal.org.za), +27 11 404 0004, +27 11 404 0007.
- **Women's Leadership Centre:** The Women's Leadership Centre in Windhoek, Namibia, promotes women's writing and other forms of personal and creative expression as a form of resistance to discrimination and oppression embedded in patriarchal cultures and society, with the aim of developing indigenous feminist activism in Namibia. Contact Liz: [info@wlc-namibia.org](mailto:info@wlc-namibia.org), +264 61 221106.
  - **Tulinam:** Tulinam is Inclusive and Affirming Ministries' Namibian partner organization. Contact Madelene and Lukas: [madelene.isaacks@gmail.com](mailto:madelene.isaacks@gmail.com), +264 8169 47699, [lmukongo@yahoo.com](mailto:lmukongo@yahoo.com), +264 8123 98558.
  - **Out-Right Namibia:** ORN, based in Windhoek, Namibia, is an LGBTI, MSM (men who have sex with men), WSW (women who have sex with women) human rights organization that offers psychological counselling and support groups for survivors of gender-based violence, holds conferences and workshops, and raises awareness of issues affecting the LGBTI community. Contact: +264 61 237329, [outrightnamibia@gmail.com](mailto:outrightnamibia@gmail.com).
  - **Rights Not Rescue:** Rights Not Rescue, based in Windhoek, Namibia, has outreach programs that target sex workers and LGBTI people. They offer counseling, lobbying, advocacy and home-based care. Contact "Mama Africa": +264 8120 68240, [naoxamub@yahoo.com](mailto:naoxamub@yahoo.com).
  - **Positive Vibes:** Positive Vibes, based in Windhoek, Namibia, works to ensure that LGBTI people are empowered to respond effectively to discrimination and health challenges. Contact: +264 61 245 5556, [info@positivevibes.org](mailto:info@positivevibes.org).
  - **GALZ:** GALZ was founded in 1990 to serve the needs and interests of LGBTI people in Zimbabwe and to push for social tolerance of sexual minorities and the repeal of homophobic legislation. It is Zimbabwe's leading LGBTI organization. Contact Samuel in Harare at [progs@galz.co](mailto:progs@galz.co), +263 4741736, +263 4740614. Contact Teddy in Bulawayo at [teddy@galz.co](mailto:teddy@galz.co).
  - **LeGaBiBo:** LeGaBiBo (The Lesbians, Gays & Bisexuals of Botswana) is the most prominent LGBTI organization in Botswana. Contact Bradley: [dbfortuin@gmail.com](mailto:dbfortuin@gmail.com), +267 316 74 25.
  - **Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS:** BONELA is a non-governmental organization (NGO) formally established in 2001 to support human rights initiatives in the area of HIV/AIDS and to protect and promote the rights of all people affected by HIV/AIDS. Contact: +267 393 2516, [bonela@bonela.org](mailto:bonela@bonela.org).
  - **Matrix Support Group:** Matrix, based in Maseru, Lesotho, is a local LGBTI network that aims to build a society that is free from stigma, abuse, rejection and discrimination against people who identify as LGBTI. Contact: +266 22324120, +266 59978705.

- **LAMBDA Association Mozambique:** LAMBDA works to ensure the economic, political and social rights of LGBT citizens in Mozambique. Contact on [Facebook](#): +258 21304816.
- **ZANERELA+:** The Zambia Network of Religious Leaders Living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS (ZANERELA+) is an interfaith networking and advocacy organization that is geared towards bringing together faith leaders who are living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS in Zambia. ZANERELA+ is the national chapter of the International Network of Religious Leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+). Contact: [kenpachunguone@gmail.com](mailto:kenpachunguone@gmail.com), [gershomkapa@gmail.com](mailto:gershomkapa@gmail.com).
- **Juliet Mphande:** Juliet Mphande is a human rights, media and peace activist in Zambia who started the LGBTI group Friends of Rainka. Contact via [LinkedIn](#).
- **Pharie Sefali:** Pharie Sefali is a journalist and activist based in Cape Town who has written about gay and lesbian sangomas or traditional healers. Contact: [phariesefali@gmail.com](mailto:phariesefali@gmail.com).
- **Gabriel Khan:** Gabriel Khan is the sexual diversity rights officer in South Africa for Hivos International. Contact: [gkhan@hivos.org](mailto:gkhan@hivos.org).

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## EASTERN AFRICA:

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- **UHAI-EASHRI** - UHAI-EASHRI, the East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative, is an indigenous activist fund based in Nairobi, Kenya. It provides

flexible, accessible resources to support civil society activism around issues of sexuality, health and human rights in the East African region (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi) with a specific focus on the rights of sexual minorities. UHAI has an archive of LGBTI media clippings going back to 2008. Contact Wanja or Roselyn at [roselyn@uhai-eashri.org](mailto:roselyn@uhai-eashri.org), [info@uhai-eashri.org](mailto:info@uhai-eashri.org), +254 20 2330050.

- **Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK):** GALCK acts as an umbrella organization for six LGBTI organizations in Kenya: Minority Women in Action, Ishtar MSM, Tea and Gay Kenya, PEMA Kenya, and Afra Kenya. Its mission is to defend the interests and rights of LGBTI organizations and their members, including their health rights. In 2016, GALCK produced the media toolkit SOGIE 101 for the Kenyan Media Professional. Contact Jackson at +254 20 2426060, [info@galck.org](mailto:info@galck.org), [jotieno@galck.org](http://jotieno@galck.org).
- **Esther Adhiambo:** Adhiambo was until recently the executive director at Persons Marginalized and Aggrieved (PEMA), an LGBTI rights organization based in Mombasa, Kenya, that organizes outreach sessions and workshops with local faith leaders. Contact via Roselyn at UHAI-EASHRI.
- **Neela Ghoshal:** Neela Ghoshal is a researcher at Human Rights Watch. She joined HRW's LGBT Rights Division in 2012 after five years in the Africa Division, where she covered human rights issues in Burundi and Kenya, including political repression, police abuse,

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justice sector reform, and transitional justice. As LGBT rights researcher, Ghoshal is currently conducting research on rights abuses affecting sexual and gender minorities and other marginalized groups in several African countries, including Tanzania and Cameroon. Contact: [ghoshan@hrw.org](mailto:ghoshan@hrw.org), +254 20 220 8105.

- **Pembizo Christian Council:** Pembizo Christian Council is a faith-based advocacy organization in Kenya that seeks to build an all-inclusive Church in Africa. It works with Christian leaders in several African countries. Contact: [sologish@gmail.com](mailto:sologish@gmail.com).
- **None on Record:** None on Record is a media organization based in Nairobi, Kenya, that collects the stories of LGBTI Africans and produces media content on LGBTI rights. In 2015, they trained East African journalists how to better report on LGBTI issues. Contact Selly Thiam: [questions@noneonrecord.com](mailto:questions@noneonrecord.com), [selly@noneonrecord.com](mailto:selly@noneonrecord.com).
- **Selly Thiam:** Selly Thiam is a journalist and oral historian whose work has appeared on NPR, PBS and in the New York Times. She was a producer for the Storycorps Oral History Project, PBS' Learning Matters and a Carnegie Fellow at the ABC News Investigative Unit. She is the founder and Executive Director of None on Record, an African LGBT digital media organization. Contact: [selly@noneonrecord.com](mailto:selly@noneonrecord.com).
- **National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission:** NGLHRC is a Kenyan organization that provides legal aid

to advance equality and inclusion of LGBTIQ persons. Contact Eric: +254 20 4400525, [ericgits@gmail.com](mailto:ericgits@gmail.com).

- **David Kuria:** In 2013, David Kuria became Kenya's first openly gay politician to seek office. He writes regularly about LGBTI issues and heads the Kuria Foundation for Social Enterprise, which aims to enhance social inclusion by contributing technical and financial resources to socially excluded persons and groups. Contact: [info@kuriafoundation.or.ke](mailto:info@kuriafoundation.or.ke), +254 721360365.
- **Human Rights Network for Journalists - Uganda:** HRNJ works to enhance human rights by defending and building the capacities of journalists in Uganda from its office in Kampala. HRNJ researches, monitors and documents attacks and threats aimed at journalists, as well as abuses of press freedom in Uganda. They also offer legal support to journalists who need these services because of their work. Contact national coordinator Robert, [coordinator@hrnjuganda.org](mailto:coordinator@hrnjuganda.org), +256 414 667 627, +256-414-272934.
- **Spectrum Uganda:** Spectrum Uganda, based in Kampala, offers support to promote a healthy and empowered community of men who have sex with men (MSM) in Uganda. Contact: [info@spectrumuganda.net](mailto:info@spectrumuganda.net), +256 800100040.
- **Icebreakers Uganda:** Icebreakers Uganda is a nonprofit support organization for LGBT people in Uganda. It focuses on sexual health, sexual health rights advocacy, community mobilization and

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HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention for all LGBT people. Contact: [info@icebreakersuganda.com](mailto:info@icebreakersuganda.com), +256 392853652.

- **Bishop Christopher Senyonjo:** Bishop Dr. Christopher Senyonjo is a retired Anglican Bishop in the Church of Uganda who founded St. Paul's Reconciliation and Equality Centre (SPREC) to reconcile tension among straight and LGBTI persons. He has become one of the leading LGBTI voices as a straight ally for LGBTI people in Uganda and the world. Contact: [info@stpaulsreconciliation.net](mailto:info@stpaulsreconciliation.net), +256 31 2514537.
- **Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF):** HRAPF is an NGO based in Kampala, Uganda, whose mission is to promote respect and observance of human rights for marginalized groups, including LGBTI persons. Contact: [info@hrapf.org](mailto:info@hrapf.org), +256 414 530683.
- **Uganda Media Women's Association:** Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) is a human rights advocacy and service delivery NGO that helps Ugandan women make informed decisions by providing them access to information on rights. It also fights for the rights of women working in media and counters negative portrayals of women in local media. Contact: [info@umwamamafm.co.ug](mailto:info@umwamamafm.co.ug), +256 393 113 848, +256 772 469 363.
- **Kuchu Times:** Kuchu Times is a media organization based in Kampala, Uganda, that aims to provide a voice for Africa's LGBTI community.

Contact: [info@kuchutimes.com](mailto:info@kuchutimes.com).

- **Sexual Minorities Uganda:** SMUG is an umbrella non-governmental organization based in Kampala, Uganda that advocates for the protection and promotion of human rights of LGBT Ugandans. Contact Frank: [info@sexualminoritiesuganda.com](mailto:info@sexualminoritiesuganda.com).
- **Freedom & Roam Uganda:** FARUG is a Ugandan organization that works to stop harassment and discrimination against LGBTI people. Contact: +256 392 176977, [info@faruganda.org](mailto:info@faruganda.org).
- **African Centre for Media Excellence:** ACME is a Uganda-based organization that strives to improve professionalism in the media. They have worked to improve reporting on LGBTI issues and religion in local media. Contact: +256 393 202351, [info@acme-ug.org](mailto:info@acme-ug.org), [mwesige@acme-ug.org](mailto:mwesige@acme-ug.org), [akakaire@acme-ug.org](mailto:akakaire@acme-ug.org).
- **LGBTI Sey:** LGBTI Sey works to provide an open, safe, inclusive space and community committed to challenging sexism, genderism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and heterosexism in the Seychelles. Contact: [lgbtisey@gmail.com](mailto:lgbtisey@gmail.com).
- **Centre for the Development of People:** CEDEP is an organization based in Malawi that works with media and religious leaders to defend the welfare of marginalized communities, including prisoners, sex workers and LGBTI people. Contact Gift Trapence: [directorcedep@yahoo.com](mailto:directorcedep@yahoo.com).

- **MANERELA+**: The Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS (MANERELA+) is an interfaith networking and advocacy organization that is geared towards bringing together faith leaders who are living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS in Malawi. MANERELA+ is the national chapter of the International Network of Religious Leaders living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+). Contact: [amwachande@manerela.org](mailto:amwachande@manerela.org), [kachepatsonga@gmail.com](mailto:kachepatsonga@gmail.com).
- **Gift Nankhuni**: Gift Nankhuni directs the Malawi-based Lawyers Forum for Human Rights. Contact: [giftnankhuni@me.com](mailto:giftnankhuni@me.com).
- **LGBT VOICE**: LGBT VOICE is an LGBT rights organization working to advance equality, diversity, education, and justice in Tanzania. Contact via the website.
- **Geofrey Mashala**: Geofrey Mashala is the founder of AMKA Empowerment Organization, a community-based group in Tanzania that works on human rights, empowerment, and health issues of LGBTIQ people. Contact: [amkaempowerment@gmail.com](mailto:amkaempowerment@gmail.com).
- **Ethiopia Gay Library**: Ethiopia Gay Library aims to be a reference point for everything posted on the web about gay Ethiopians and gay life in Ethiopia. Contact: [happyaddis@gmail.com](mailto:happyaddis@gmail.com).
- **Afdhere Jama**: Afdhere Jama is an American writer and filmmaker of Somali origin. He wrote the book *Being Queer and So-*

mali: LGBT Somalis at Home and Abroad. Contact: [afdhere@gmail.com](mailto:afdhere@gmail.com).

- **Young Queer Alliance** empowers young LGBTI people in Mauritius to promote equality. Contact the organization's president Najeeb Fokeerbox: +230 454 50 76.
- **Collectif Arc en Ciel**: Collectif Arc en Ciel is an association based in Mauritius that campaigns against homophobia and the various forms of discrimination linked to sexual orientation. Contact [info@collectifarcenciel.org](mailto:info@collectifarcenciel.org), +230 465 4596.
- **Humure**: Humure is a human rights organization in Burundi that works to fight all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and to fight AIDS within the LGBTI community. Contact: [amissi.humure@gmail.com](mailto:amissi.humure@gmail.com), [alsahabo.humure@gmail.com](mailto:alsahabo.humure@gmail.com).
- **Isange Rwanda** is an umbrella coalition of Rwandan LGBTI organizations. Contact: [isangerwanda@gmail.com](mailto:isangerwanda@gmail.com).
- **Rights for All Rwanda (RIFA)**: Rights for All Rwanda (RIFA) is an organization that works to improve the health, rights, and protection of lesbian, bisexual and transgender sex workers and individuals in Rwanda. Contact: [rifaworwanda@gmail.com](mailto:rifaworwanda@gmail.com).

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## WESTERN AFRICA:

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- **Interfaith Diversity Network of West Africa (IDNOWA)**: Founded in 2016, Interfaith Diversity Network of West Africa is a regional network of activists, faith-based

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individuals, LGBTQI persons, advocates and individual activists working to advance the inclusion of and respect for diverse persons. Network members are based in Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Mali, Benin, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and the Gambia. Contact: [interfaithdiversitynowa@gmail.com](mailto:interfaithdiversitynowa@gmail.com), +234 80 231 999 612.

- [Africa Regional Sexuality Resource Centre](#): ARSRC, based in Lagos, Nigeria, aims to promote more informed and affirming public dialogue on human sexuality and to contribute to positive changes in the emerging field of sexuality in Africa, by creating mechanisms for learning at the regional level. Contact: [info@arsrc.org](mailto:info@arsrc.org), +234 1 7919307.
- [The Initiative for Equal Rights](#): The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS) is a Lagos-based NGO that works to protect and promote the human rights of sexual minorities nationally and regionally. Contact: +234 8125549015, [info@initiative4equality.org](mailto:info@initiative4equality.org).
- [Queer Alliance Nigeria](#): Queer Alliance Nigeria is a human rights, health advocacy and support group for the LGBTI community in Nigeria. Its mission is to create an enabling environment for the respect and recognition of the fundamental human rights of LGBTIQ Nigerians through advocacy, education, research and publications. Contact Rashidi Williams: [rashwilliams@gmail.com](mailto:rashwilliams@gmail.com), +234 8136137852.
- [Cheikh Traore](#): Dr. Cheikh Eteka Traore, based in Abuja, Nigeria, works at the intersection of public health and

human rights. He has trained journalists how to better report on LGBTI rights. Contact: [Cheikh.eteka@gmail.com](mailto:Cheikh.eteka@gmail.com).

- [NoStringsNg](#): NoStringsNg.com is a Nigerian advocacy media platform for LGBTIQ news and information. Its aim is to debunk negative stereotypes in mainstream media against the Nigerian LGBTIQ community. Contact Mike (pseudonym): [info@nostringsng.com](mailto:info@nostringsng.com).
- [Bisi Alimi Foundation](#): The Bisi Alimi Foundation promotes and advocates for equal opportunity and social inclusion of LGBT people in Nigeria. Contact: [bisi@bisialimi.com](mailto:bisi@bisialimi.com), [info@bisialimifoundation.org](mailto:info@bisialimifoundation.org).
- [Felicity Thompson](#): Felicity Thompson works on LGBTI rights in Western Africa for Human Rights Watch. Contact: [thompsf@hrw.org](mailto:thompsf@hrw.org).
- [Panos Institute West Africa](#): Panos Institute West Africa, based in Dakar, Senegal, works to democratize communication and strengthen public spaces for open African societies. Contact: [info@panos-ao.org](mailto:info@panos-ao.org), [mcoulabaly@panos-ao.org](mailto:mcoulabaly@panos-ao.org), +221 33 849 16 66.
- [Article 19 Dakar](#): Article 19 is a British human rights organization that focuses on the defence and promotion of freedom of expression and freedom of information. Article 19 has an office in Dakar, Senegal. Contact Fatou: [fatouj@article19.org](mailto:fatouj@article19.org), [westafrica@article19.org](mailto:westafrica@article19.org), +221 33 869 03 22.
- [Senegal Tomorrow/Association Prudence](#): Senegal Tomorrow is a legal defense fund that seeks to assist those



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who face discrimination on the basis of race or ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital status, or sexual orientation. Contact Nick Diamond or Djamil Bangoura: [nick.diamond@senegaltomorrow.org](mailto:nick.diamond@senegaltomorrow.org), [prudence12349@hotmail.com](mailto:prudence12349@hotmail.com), [djamilbangoura@yahoo.fr](mailto:djamilbangoura@yahoo.fr), +221 77 651 5282, +221 77 903 1221, +1 248 931 2115.

- **Charlotte Campo:** Charlotte Campo is Associate Human Rights Officer at the West Africa Regional Office of the United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Dakar, Senegal. Contact: [ccampo@ohchr.org](mailto:ccampo@ohchr.org), +221 33 869 89 76.
- **Oumar Zié Coulibaly:** Oumar Zié Coulibaly is vice president at REPMASCI (Réseau des Professionnels des medias, des Arts et des Sports pour la lutte contre le sida et les autres pandémies en Côte d'Ivoire), which helps fight the stigmatization of LGBTI people. He is a journalist at the newspaper Notre Voie in Côte d'Ivoire and helped run a regional project called Voices and Ways Against Homophobia. Contact: [zieoumar@yahoo.fr](mailto:zieoumar@yahoo.fr).
- **Bianca Juhl Andersen:** Bianca Juhl Andersen is a United Nations Programme Analyst on Human Rights and Gender based in Accra, Ghana. Contact: [bianca.j.andersen@one.un.org](mailto:bianca.j.andersen@one.un.org).
- **Human Right Advocacy Centre:** The Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC) is a not-for-profit, independent, non-partisan, research and advocacy organization set up to advance and protect human rights in Ghana. Contact George Owoo: +233 302

768 733, +233 266 191 054.

- **Solace Brothers Foundation:** Solace Brothers Foundation, an organization based in Accra, Ghana, trains paralegals to defend the rights of LGBT people in the country. Contact via Facebook message.
- **Stop AIDS in Liberia (SAIL):** Stop AIDS in Liberia (SAIL) is a Liberian organization that addresses issues affecting sexual orientation and gender identity minorities and other key populations at risk of contracting or transmitting HIV, including sex workers and injecting drug users. Contact: [smcgill\\_sail@yahoo.com](mailto:smcgill_sail@yahoo.com).
- **Liberia Women Empowerment Network:** The Liberia Women Empowerment Network focuses on women and girls living and or affected by HIV/AIDS in Liberia. They also work with local LGBTI groups. Contact: [info@liwenliberian.org](mailto:info@liwenliberian.org), +231-888465042, +231-886133299.
- **Benin Synergies Plus (BESYP):** BESYP is an organization based in Cotonou, Benin, that advocates for the rights of key populations that have the highest risk of contracting and transmitting HIV, including female sex workers and men who have sex with men (MSM). Contact: +229 67 18 11 81.
- **Dignity Association** is an organization in Freetown, Sierra Leone that campaigns for LGBT rights. Contact: [hudson@lgbtdignityassociation.com](mailto:hudson@lgbtdignityassociation.com).

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## CENTRAL AFRICA:

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- [Associação Íris Angola](#): Associação Íris Angola is an LGBTI rights group based in Luanda, Angola. Contact: [carlos.irisangola@gmail.com](mailto:carlos.irisangola@gmail.com), +244 929082666.
- [La Voix des Sans-Voix](#): La Voix des Sans-Voix, which translates into English as “The Voice of the Voiceless,” is a human rights group based in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo. Contact: [info@vsv-rdc.org](mailto:info@vsv-rdc.org), +243 995 814 266.
- [Rainbow Sunrise Mapambazuko \(RSM\)](#): Rainbow Sunrise Mapambazuko, based in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, facilitates education, coordination, and outreach to those who identify as LGBTI and networks with other organizations to build respect for LGBTI rights in the region. Contact: [rainbow.mapambazuko@gmail.com](mailto:rainbow.mapambazuko@gmail.com).
- [Ligue Centrafricaine des Droits de l’Homme \(LCDH\)](#): The Central African Republic League of Human Rights, based in the capital of Bangui, advances human rights in the country. Contact: [tiangaye@hotmail.com](mailto:tiangaye@hotmail.com), +236 72 28 54 58.
- [Alternatives Cameroun](#): Alternatives Cameroun, based in Douala, Cameroon, works on sexual minority rights in the country. Contact Yves: [guyphoide@yahoo.fr](mailto:guyphoide@yahoo.fr), +237 698 48 26 14.

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## PAN-AFRICAN AND INTERNATIONAL SOURCES:

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- [International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association \(ILGA\)](#): ILGA is a worldwide federation of 1,200 member organisations from 125 countries that campaign for LGBTI rights. Contact Andre du Plessis or Daniele Paletta: [andreduplessis@ilga.org](mailto:andreduplessis@ilga.org), [daniele@ilga.org](mailto:daniele@ilga.org), +41 227313254.
- [Pan Africa ILGA \(PAI\)](#): PAI is a federation of organizations in Africa that work to improve human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity expression (SOGIE). It is based in Johannesburg. Contact: [anthony.oluoch@panafricailga.org](mailto:anthony.oluoch@panafricailga.org), [sivu.siwisa@panafricailga.org](mailto:sivu.siwisa@panafricailga.org), +27 11 339 1473, +27 72 196 8743.
- [Global Interfaith Network for People of All Sexes, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression \(GIN-SSOGIE\)](#): GIN-SSOGIE, based in South Africa, aims to promote interfaith dialogue and to strengthen LGBTI voices within religious institutions and structures. They provide resources, training, and collective programmes to help individuals and organisations engage in meaningful, constructive dialogue with religious leaders and to advocate at the regional and international level for dignity and rights. Contact: [ginssoגיע@gmail.com](mailto:ginssoגיע@gmail.com).
- [Alturi](#): Alturi is an online hub for news, stories, and advocacy that aims to educate and engage individual supporters who want to help improve the lives

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of LGBTI people worldwide. Contact Steve Roth: [Steve@alturi.org](mailto:Steve@alturi.org), +1 310 908 5075.

- **OutRight Action International:** Outright (formerly known as International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission) is a U.S.-based INGO that addresses human rights violations against LGBTI people. They have an office in Johannesburg that works on Sub-Saharan LGBTI rights. Contact the New York headquarters: [hello@outrightinternational.org](mailto:hello@outrightinternational.org), +1 212 430 6054.
- **American Jewish World Service:** American Jewish World Service is an international development and human rights organization headquartered in New York City. AJWS supports women, girls and LGBT people, as they organize to end discrimination, stop violence and live with dignity, safety and health. Contact Javid Syed on the Sexual Health and Rights Team: [ajws@ajws.org](mailto:ajws@ajws.org), [jsyed@ajws.org](mailto:jsyed@ajws.org). +1 212 792 2900, +1 800 889 7146, +1 212 792 2930.
- **National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA):** NLGJA is a U.S.-based network for LGBT media professionals and allies dedicated to the highest journalistic standards in the coverage of LGBT issues. Contact executive director Adam Pawlos: [adam@nlgja.org](mailto:adam@nlgja.org), +1 202 588 9888.
- **Arcus Foundation:** The Arcus Foundation is a charitable foundation focused on issues related to LGBT rights, social justice and conservation. Contact Social Justice Program Vice President

Jason McGill and Global Religions Program Director Randall Miller: [jmcgill@arcusfoundation.org](mailto:jmcgill@arcusfoundation.org), [rmiller@arcusfoundation.org](mailto:rmiller@arcusfoundation.org), +1 212 488 3000.

- **Human Dignity Trust:** The Human Dignity Trust is a legal charity based in London that supports those who want to challenge anti-gay laws wherever they exist in the world. They support local activists and their lawyers to uphold international human rights law, including a person's right to dignity, equality and privacy. Contact former Executive Director Jonathan Cooper: [jonathancooper@humandignitytrust.org](mailto:jonathancooper@humandignitytrust.org), +44 20 7419 3770.
- **Kaleidoscope Trust:** The Kaleidoscope Trust, based in London, works to uphold the human rights of LGBT people in the Commonwealth and beyond where individuals are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Contact: [felicity@kaleidoscopetrust.com](mailto:felicity@kaleidoscopetrust.com), [info@kaleidoscopetrust.com](mailto:info@kaleidoscopetrust.com). +44 20 8133 6460.
- **Gill Foundation:** The Gill Foundation is one of the United States' leading funders of efforts to secure full equality for LGBT people. Contact Sara Santos: [SaraS@gillfoundation.org](mailto:SaraS@gillfoundation.org), [info@gillfoundation.org](mailto:info@gillfoundation.org), [grantsmanager@gillfoundation.org](mailto:grantsmanager@gillfoundation.org), +1 303 292 4455, +1 888 530 4455.
- **Fund for Global Human Rights:** The Fund for Global Human Rights. The Fund has made recent grants to groups working on LGBTI rights in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo,

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Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Contact John Kabia and Tony Tate: [jkabia@global-humanrights.org](mailto:jkabia@global-humanrights.org), [tate@globalhumanrights.org](mailto:tate@globalhumanrights.org), [info@globalhumanrights.org](mailto:info@globalhumanrights.org), +1 202 347 7488.

- **ARC International:** ARC International, based in Geneva, Switzerland, advances LGBT rights and facilitates strategic planning around LGBT issues internationally, strengthening global networks, and enhancing access to United Nations mechanisms. They have played a key role in the development of the Yogyakarta Principles on the application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Contact Kim Vance and Arvind Narrain: [kim@arc-international.net](mailto:kim@arc-international.net), [arvind@arc-international.net](mailto:arvind@arc-international.net).
- **Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice:** The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice works exclusively to advance LGBTQI human rights around the globe. The Foundation supports grantee partners in the U.S. and internationally and works for racial, economic, social, and gender justice so that everyone can live freely, without fear, and with dignity. Contact Director of Programs Sarah Gunther: [sgunther@astraeafoundation.org](mailto:sgunther@astraeafoundation.org), +1 917 930 8509.
- **The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries:** The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries aims to support religious teachers and laity in moving towards a theology of radical inclusivity led by an equally radical social ministry, reaching to the furthest margins of society to serve all

in need without prejudice and discrimination. Contact Bishop Joseph Tolton: [jtolton@blurcommunications.com](mailto:jtolton@blurcommunications.com), +1 415 861 6130.

- **The Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa:** The Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa, based in Johannesburg, is a Pan-African and feminist-led initiative that aims to contribute to the development of jurisprudence on sexual rights and women's human rights on the continent by providing expertise on strategic litigation. Contact: +27 11 338 9024.
- **House Of Rainbow:** House Of Rainbow Fellowship is an inclusive, welcoming and affirming religious community to all people, including sexual minorities and marginalised people, based in the U.K. It was founded in London by the Rev. Rowland Jide Macaulay, an openly gay African theologian. Contact: [jide@houseofrainbow.org](mailto:jide@houseofrainbow.org), +44 7507 510357.
- **African Gender Institute:** The African Gender Institute at the University of Cape Town is a teaching, learning and research institute which focuses on issues of gender and development on the African continent. The AGI has delivered innovative integrated outcomes on gender justice, sexuality and human rights, peace and conflict studies and capacity building in relation to gender and women's studies knowledges. Contact Jane Bennett: [jane.bennett@uct.ac.za](mailto:jane.bennett@uct.ac.za), +27 21 650 2970.

- **Church World Service:** CWS works to create a safe space for LGBTI persons, providing both resettlement for LGBTI refugees and protection to those still facing the fear of persecution. CWS currently works with LGBTI communities in both Africa and the United States in order to safeguard the human rights of all persecuted persons and provide services that address the needs of the LGBTI community, engaging faith communities to achieve impact. Contact Marie Ramtu in Nairobi: [MRamtu@cwsafrica.org](mailto:MRamtu@cwsafrica.org), +254 20 444 0150.
- **Fabrice Houdart:** Fabrice Houdart is human rights officer at OHCHR New York who works on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. His team leads the [United Nation's Free & Equal campaign](#) to promote global LGBTI rights. Contact: [houdart@un.org](mailto:houdart@un.org), +1 202 250 1356, +1 212 963 1816.
- **Joel Bedos:** Joel Bedos is executive director at the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia (IDAHOT). The annual day is observed on May 17 to draw the attention of policymakers, opinion leaders, social movements, the public and the media to the violence and discrimination experienced by LGBTI people internationally. Contact: [joelbedos@gmail.com](mailto:joelbedos@gmail.com).
- **Colin Stewart:** Colin Stewart runs the "[Erasing 76 Crimes](#)" blog, which focuses on the human toll of more than 70 countries' anti-LGBTI laws and local struggles to repeal them. Contact: [stewacster@gmail.com](mailto:stewacster@gmail.com), [76crimes@gmail.com](mailto:76crimes@gmail.com).
- **Bishop Joseph Tolton** is based in New York City and works with The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, The Fellowship Global, and The United Coalition of Affirming Africans to empower progressive and inclusive clergy in Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Côte d'Ivoire. Contact: +1 212 462 8808, [jtolton@blurcommunications.com](mailto:jtolton@blurcommunications.com).
- **John Marnell** is the publishing and communications officer at Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) in Johannesburg and is often based in Melbourne, Australia. He has trained journalists from across Sub-Saharan Africa how to better report on LGBTI issues. Contact: [john\\_marnell@hotmail.com](mailto:john_marnell@hotmail.com).
- **Shawn M. Gaylord:** Shawn M. Gaylord leads [Human Rights First](#)'s initiative to combat violence against LGBTI people globally. Contact: [GaylordS@humanrightsfirst.org](mailto:GaylordS@humanrightsfirst.org), [PlummerC@humanrightsfirst.org](mailto:PlummerC@humanrightsfirst.org), +1 202 370 3310.
- **Brian Pellot:** Brian Pellot is director of global strategy at Religion News Foundation and Religion News Service. He organized and implemented the November 2016 workshop in Cape Town and wrote this guide. Contact: [rnsbrian@gmail.com](mailto:rnsbrian@gmail.com).
- **Graeme Reid:** Graeme Reid is director of the LGBT rights program at Human Rights Watch in New York City. Originally from South Africa, Reid has conducted research, taught and published extensively on gender, sexuality, LGBT issues, and HIV/AIDS. Contact: [reidg@hrw.org](mailto:reidg@hrw.org), +1 212 290 4700.
- **Michael Heflin:** Michael Heflin is the director of equality for the Open Society Human Rights Initiative, which advocates to promote justice, equality,

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and participation of all, including [LGBTI individuals and communities](#). Contact: [michael.heflin@opensocietyfoundations.org](mailto:michael.heflin@opensocietyfoundations.org), +1 212 548 0600.

- [Mindy Michels](#): Mindy Michels manages Freedom House’s Dignity for All LGBTI Assistance Program from Washington, D.C. Dignity for All provides emergency assistance; security, opportunity, and advocacy rapid response grants (SOAR grants); and security assessment and training to human rights defenders and civil society organizations under threat or attack due to their work for LGBTI human rights. Contact: [Michels@freedomhouse.org](mailto:Michels@freedomhouse.org), +1 202 296 5101.
- [Tiffany Mugo](#): Tiffany Mugo is the co-founder and curator of HOLA Africa, a pan Africanist online hub that aims to share the stories of Africa’s queer female community and increase the digital visibility of queer African women. Contact: [tiffanymugo@gmail.com](mailto:tiffanymugo@gmail.com).

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TRAINER  
AND SPEAKER  
BIOGRAPHIES

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# Trainer and Speaker Biographies

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## BRIAN PELLOTT:

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Brian Pellot is director of global strategy at Religion News Foundation and Religion News Service. He has worked and reported from more than 50 countries and currently lives in Cape Town, South Africa. Brian's writing has appeared in the Daily Beast, Washington Post, Huffington Post, USA Today, Inter Press Service, Foreign Policy, Religion News Service and dozens of other publications. He speaks regularly about freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief at media and human rights conferences around the world. Before joining RNF, Brian was digital policy advisor at Index on Censorship in London and online editor at Free Speech Debate in Oxford, UK. He studied international convergence journalism and Middle Eastern studies at the University of Missouri and earned an MPhil in Modern Middle Eastern Studies as a Marshall Scholar at Oxford University.



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## DEBRA MASON:

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Debra Mason is a leading scholar and trainer on how religion is portrayed in the media. She brings more than 30 years of professional and scholarly experience to her position as director of the Center on Religion and the Professions, an interdisciplinary center at the world-renowned Missouri School of Journalism that works to improve the religious literacy of professionals so they can better serve a multi-faith public. She has also directed the largest repository of religion resources for journalists, including ReligionStylebook.com and ReligionLink.com. For nearly 20



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years, she served as director of Religion News Association, a professional association of journalists who cover religion in mass media. She is publisher emeritus of Religion News Service (RNS), the world's only non-sectarian wire service exclusively covering religion. As publisher, she led a multi-million dollar expansion that converted RNS from a for-profit to non-profit business model, quadrupled monthly online traffic to more than 1 million unique visitors; created five local niche religion sites, garnered an unprecedented number of industry honors for RNS, and oversaw the rebuilding of ReligionNews.com's front and backend. She has played key roles in entrepreneurial efforts to create local, online and sustainable models of professional religion news, resources and training. Mason has received numerous grants, awards and honors for her work.



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#### **SELLY THIAM:**

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Selly Thiam is a journalist and oral historian whose work has appeared on NPR, PBS and in the New York Times. She was a producer for the Storycorps Oral History Project, PBS' Learning Matters and a Carnegie Fellow at the ABC News Investigative Unit. She is the founder and Executive Director of None on Record, an African LGBT digital media organization.



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#### **LAYLA AL-ZUBAIDI:**

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Layla Al-Zubaidi is director of the regional office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation in South Africa since 2012. From 2006 to 2012 she was director of the Middle East Office in Beirut and was based in Ramallah/Palestinian Territories prior to that, working for development and media organisations. Layla studied social anthropology in Germany and the United States. Books she co-edited include "Anywhere but Now: Landscapes of Belonging in the Eastern Mediterranean" (HBF), "Unmaking Power: Democratic Transition in the Middle East" (Routledge) and "Diaries of an Unfinished Revolution: Voices from Tunis to Damascus" (Penguin), which won the British PEN award.



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**PAULA ASSUBUJI:**

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Paula Assubuji is the Human Rights Program manager of the Heinrich Boell Foundation in Southern Africa. As an economist by training she developed her expertise on socio-economic issues through years of working in development in Southern Africa and Europe. She has a track record of working with community-based and community-driven projects with a particular focus on gender issues. Among a range of other organisations in Mozambique and Germany, she has worked as the Director of Operations for OneWorld Sustainable Development and led the Secretariat of Slum Dwellers International in Cape Town.



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**MUHSIN HENDRICKS:**

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Muhsin Hendricks is an Islamic Scholar with a background in Classical Arabic and Islamic Sciences obtained at the University of Islamic Studies (Jamia-Dirasat Al-Islamiyyah), Karachi Pakistan (1990-1994). He is an Imam (religious leader) by profession and also a human rights activist focusing on sexual orientation and gender identity within Islam. He has done independent research on Islam and sexual diversity, an area that does not often get explored in the Muslim world. He has also delivered many papers and facilitated workshops on Islam and Sexual Diversity to many organizations in South Africa, USA, Asia and Europe. Muhsin is also the founder and director of The Inner Circle (founded in 2004), the world's largest formal organization that supports Muslims marginalized based on sexual orientation and gender. It is the only organization that has a strong focus on movement building, mainstreaming and public training. Muhsin Hendricks also holds a Diploma in Counselling and Communication obtained through the South African College of Applied Psychology.



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### ZACHARY AKANI SHIMANGE:

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Zachary Akani Shimange is the Community Mobilization Officer at Gender Dynamix. Zachary studied a BSc degree in Microbiology at the University of Limpopo where he founded OutRAGE UL, the campus society for LGBTIQ+ persons. He has many years of experience working with gender minorities within the NGO sector. After leaving the University of Limpopo, Zachary went on to work with Limpopo LGBTIQ+ Proudly Out. He then joined Iranti-Org as an intern under their Zwakala Program.



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### ECCLESIA DE LANGE:

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The Rev. Ecclesia de Lange is an ordained minister of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA). She holds a Comprehensive Honours degree in Theology from the University of Southern Africa (UNISA) and a Masters degree in Social Science from the University of Cape Town (UCT). After announcing to her congregation that she was going to marry her same-sex life partner, Ecclesia was charged, suspended, disciplined and discontinued as a Methodist minister in February 2010. She has been involved with Inclusive and Affirming Ministries part-time since 2011 and became a full-time staff member in 2014. She is currently part of IAM's senior management team.



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### TEBOHO KLAAS:

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Teboho Klaas is an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, working with a congregation in Vosloorus, Johannesburg. He has a long history of involvement in ecumenical church leadership and social justice activism. After working at the Institute for Contextual Theology, he became the national health director of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and also served as the executive assistant to the general secretary of the SACC. Teboho also worked as the national coordinator of the Jubilee 2000 debt cancellation campaign in South Africa. He holds a Bachelor of Theology (Honours) degree.



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**PHARIE SEFALI:**

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Pharie Sefali is a freelance community journalist and is currently working for an organisation called Equal Education as a materials developer. She is also an activist for human rights focusing on education and LGBTIQ+ rights. Pharie is in the executive committee member for LGBTIQ+ traditional healers forum and a board member for the Quaker Peace Centre.



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**AZILA REISENBERGER:**

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Dr. Azila Talit Reisenberger is head of the Hebrew Department at the University of Cape Town where she lectures on gender, sexuality and religion. Her academic articles, volumes of poetry, short stories, and novel have been translated into many languages and won much acclaim. Since 1989, she has served as spiritual leader (Rabbi) of the Jewish Progressive Community in East London.



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**ZETHU MATEBINI:**

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Zethu Matebini is an activist-academic and documentary filmmaker based at the University of Cape Town. In the academy, Zethu is known for black queer radical politics centred on nuanced understanding of what it means to be Queer in Africa. Zethu is also a tourist guide in the Western Cape region.



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**RABBI OSHER FELDMAN:**

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Born and raised in Sydney, Australia, Rabbi Osher Feldman hails from a prominent Rabbinic family spanning many generations. Rabbi Feldman received his Rabbinic ordination after studying in Rabbinical colleges in the USA, Canada and Israel. While completing his Rabbinical and post-graduate studies he was involved in the Rabbinate and community outreach in countries as far flung as the USA, Russia, Estonia, Australia and Israel. In 2007 the newly married Rabbi Feldman and his wife Sarah joined South Africa's first Synagogue, the Cape Town Hebrew

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Congregation otherwise known as the Gardens Shul, founded in 1841. With their youthful enthusiasm, the young Rabbinic couple initiated programmes and activities which brought a new spirit to the ageing community, attracting many new young members and changing the fabric of the congregation into a vibrant community.



