

Homophobia and HIV in Africa: Contexts of Criminalisation, Attitudes and Implications for Public Health

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COLLOQUIUM: Challenging Homophobia and Transphobia in SA Schools and Promoting Good Practice

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AIMS OF THE PRESENTATION

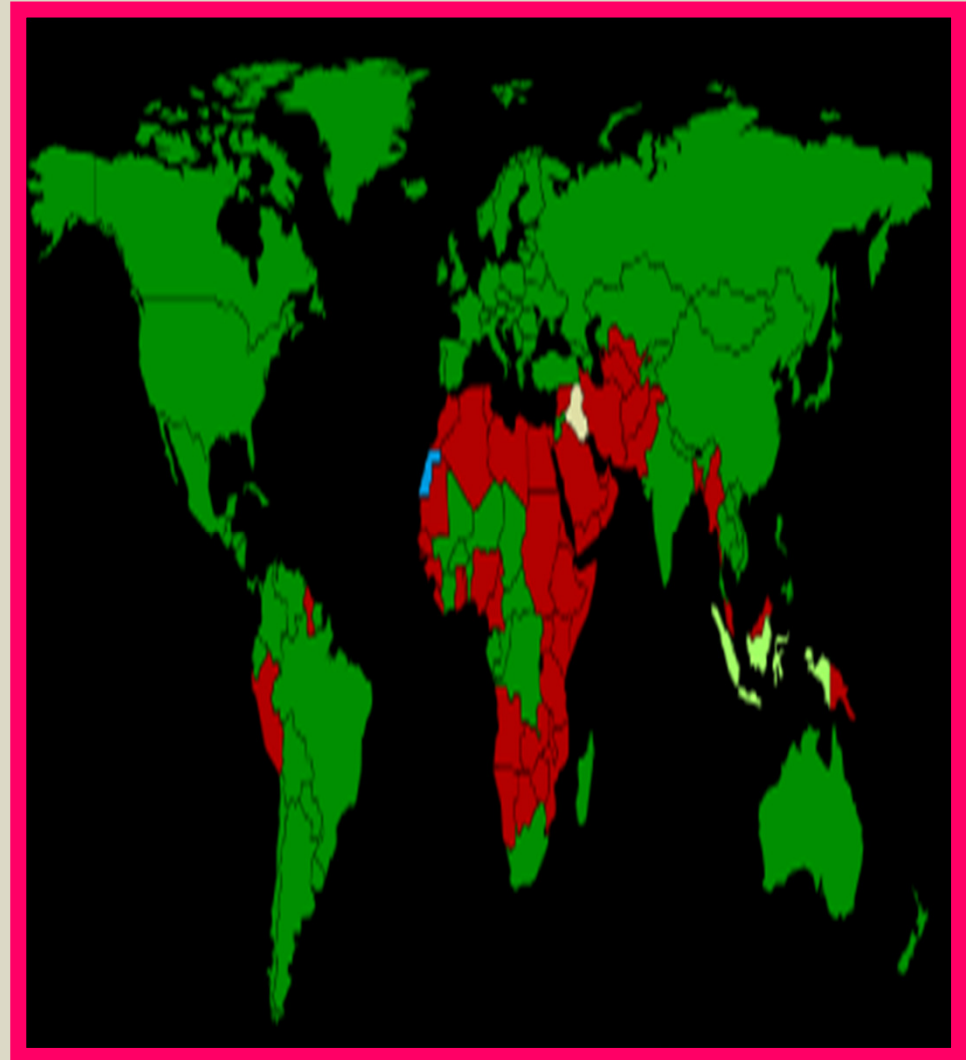


Provide a perspective on:

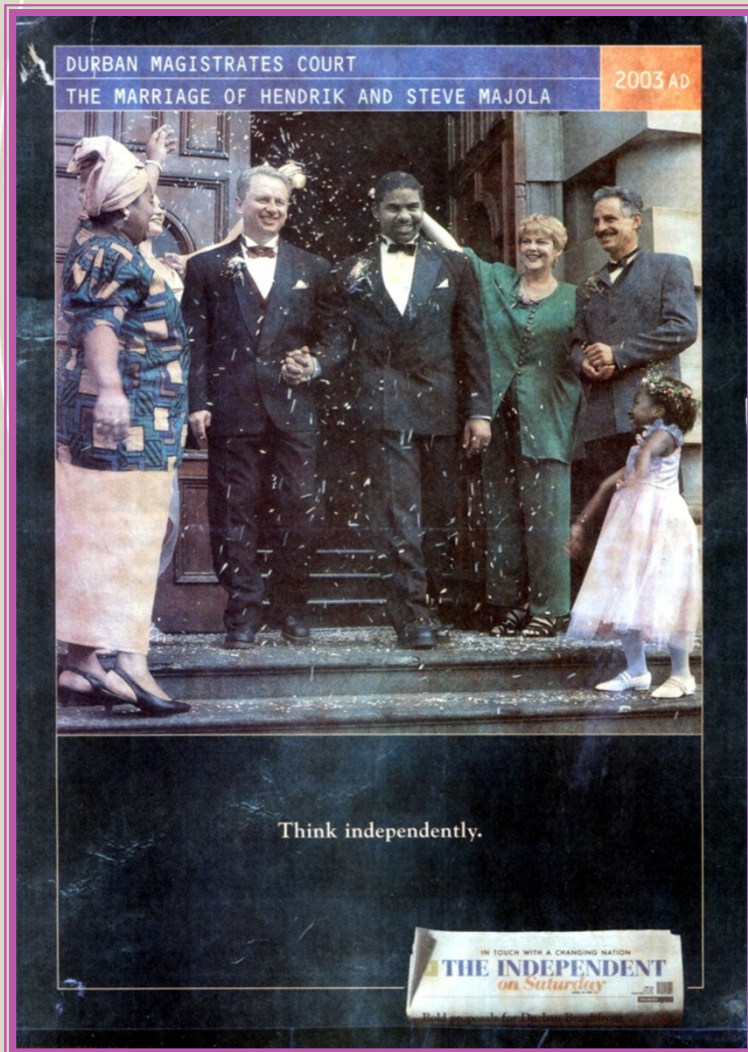
- African homophobia: a brief story line
- Linkage to SA Attitudes
- What all of this means conceptually?
- What all of this implies for HIV responses?
- What could be done to address the problem of HIV and Homophobia?

AFRICA:

- To be understood in its **multi-layered and diverse** meanings, but also in the relation its own complexity.
- Is **not a homogeneous or uniform continent**: the cultural, linguistic, political and religious diversity is larger than Europe.
- Is shaped by histories of colonialism and new forms of power, social position, economics, culture, tradition, other material realities (disease, illness, poverty etc.) and *hope* because *change* remains a constant despite the negativity.



Where are we? (1)



Where are we? (2)

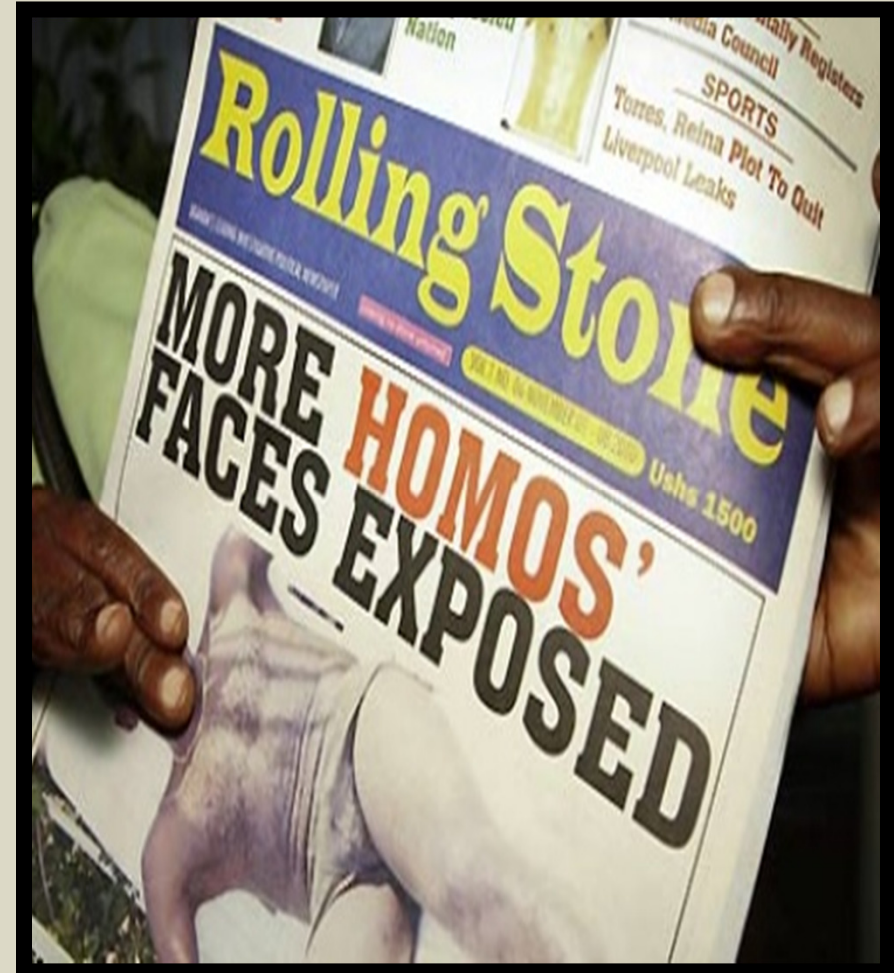


Malawi: Steven Monjeza, left, and Tiwonge Chimbalanga sit in a pick-up truck before appearing in court. Photograph: Eldson Chagara/Reuters

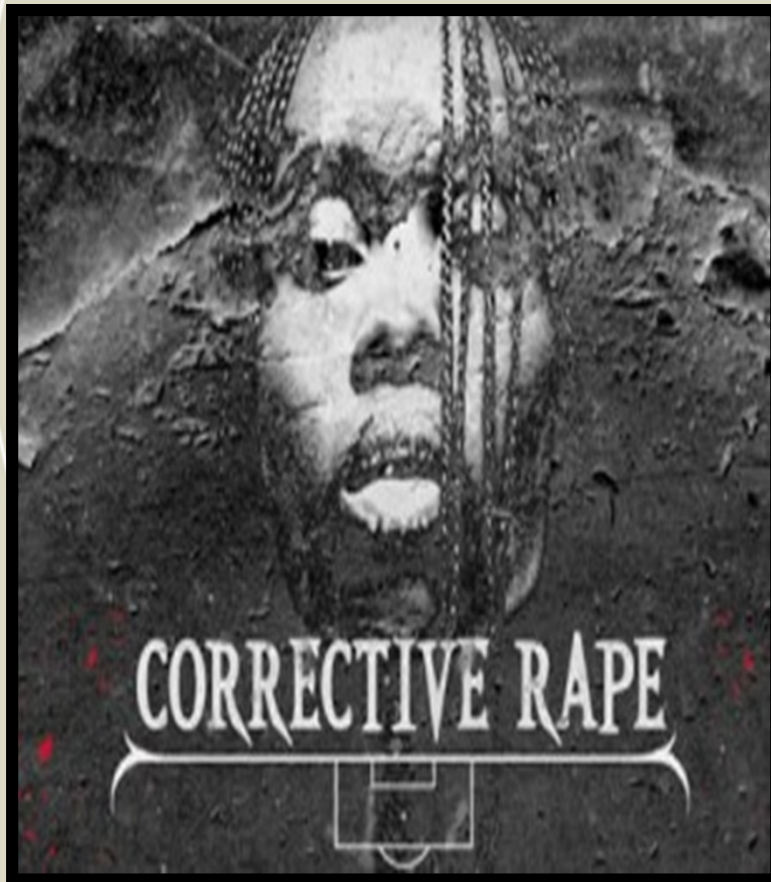


Kampala: A child demonstrates against homosexuality in Uganda's capital city, Friday, Jan. 22, 2010. (AP PHOTO)

Where are we? (3)



Where are we? (4)



TAKE ACTION



SOUTH AFRICA: STOP 'CORRECTIVE RAPE'

People the world over call on President Zuma and the government of South Africa to condemn 'corrective rape' -- the practice of raping gay women to 'cure' them of their lesbianism -- and to treat it vigorously as a hate crime.

Take action now ►

Where are we? (5)

- **Equality Court orders venue not to bar gays (30 June 2012)**



Where are we? (6)

- Mandisa Mbambo, 25, Inanda, KZN



TURNING TO AFRICA: BRIEF EXAMPLES (1)

- Sexual minorities live in contexts where same-sex practices are criminalised: where **heterosexism, homophobia and prejudice** is rife.
- Severe **penal codes/cultural ban/social norms** exist where in some it is exercised heavily with severe penalties.
- **Imprisonment; blackmail and extortion; media support and media withdrawal** (political fear and repression for fear of reprisal).
- Mauritius has no section in its constitution dealing with Sexual Orientation but has laws against sodomy, including a Sexual Offences Bill which includes forced anal rape and oral sex in definition of rape: Employment Equity Bill bans discrimination on basis of sexual orientation and an LGBT organisation exists.
- Comoros' penal code does not outlaw homosexuality; *only acts: ironically not a gay intolerant country but "gayness" not discussed as a nation*: a few 'gay-friendly' bars exist
- In Madagascar homosexuality is not specified in the penal code (is neither legal or illegal). Stigma and discrimination is high and perceived to be invented by the vazaha ("foreigner"). The country has no NSP. NO visible gay culture but a very evident **"homosocial culture"** (men holding hands; caressing each other, sitting on each others laps)

Africa: Examples (2)

- Ironically: **In Sudan even a kiss can get you killed.** Sudan's NSP does not include MSM but they reported on one UNGASS indicator (HIV testing for MSM: less than 40 % of men tested for HIV in the last year).
- In Tanzania (not mentioned explicitly in law although certain sections of the penal code is used to prosecute): Zanzibar (autonomous region explicitly outlaws same-sex acts). In the country you get 5 years for having sex with someone of the same-sex; you receive 7 years for having a same-sex wedding. LGBT organisations operate (without pushing a gay agenda) and MSM included in the NSP.
- Zambia another case in point: illegal (based on sections of the penal code); LGBT organisations cannot be registered but do exist. MSM not included in NSP but the UNGASS report (2009) listed one indicator (60-79 % MSM used a condom the last time they had sex).
- Illegal in Angola (using a penal code of 1886). Their latest NSP (developed in partnership with the US, 2009-2013 includes scale up for MSM). Ironically for UNGASS Angola also reported on the % of men receiving HIV testing

MSM/Gay Cultures & Communities



- Some organised, visible and active, but many operate by strategically not pushing the gay agenda
- Many LGBT organisations work under severe conditions of oppression and repression in the face of state-sanctioned homophobia
- Communities are secretive, non-visible in many instances, homosocial in others, with the existence of gay-friendly spaces (“the love that dare not speak its name”; live without naming it)

MSM IN NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANS

- NSPs show marked differences across countries. Where some include MSMs, others prioritise other MARPs: women, children, commercial sex workers, mobile populations, uniformed services (shows itself in several NSPs), including fishing communities (Uganda)
- And some even provide UNGASS Indicators (a marked absence of indicators demonstrates the absence of fully-fledged scientific data for such a population) – a gap in the research which is also slowly changing on the continent with emerging studies.
- What does it Mean? States can persecute homosexuality even where it is technically not criminalised



“Sex is always political”

Its politicization involves a continual attempt to draw boundaries between “good” and “bad” sex based on

« hierarchies of value »

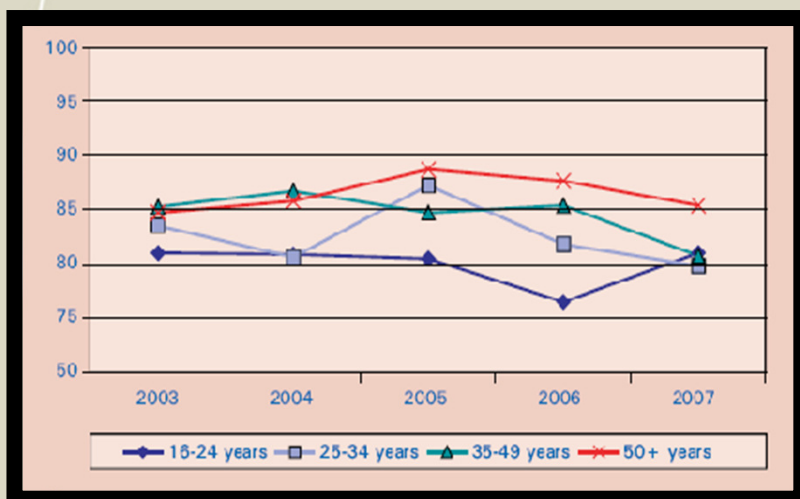
Religion, medicine, public policies, and popular culture

anxieties lead to « moral panics »

Negotiations over sexual goodness and badness become contested and overtly politicized

Gayle Rubin, « Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory in the Politics of Sexuality » in: Vance, *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (1984)

South African Social Attitudes



- *Attitudes towards homosexuality by age group, 2003-2007 (%) Note: The lines represent the percentage of each subgroup that answered 'always wrong' to the question: 'Do you think it is wrong or not wrong for two adults of the same sex to have sexual relations? Source: (Roberts & Reddy, 2008; HSRC Review, 6(4): 9-11)*

- More than 80 % (16 and above) considered homosex always wrong'.
- No pronounced divergence across genders
- Older SA's more intolerant than younger
- Matriculants and tertiary educated have more liberal views
- Religious affiliation (more entrenched negative views)
- Racial gradient (black South Africans vs Coloured/White; strong fluctuations with Indians)
- Rural/Urban Divide (more entrenched negative views found in rural areas)

Types of homophobia

Denial & ignorance

Social & official discrimination

Legal and extra-judicial persecution and violence

Altman, Aggleton, Williams, Kong, Reddy, Harrad, Reiss, Parker (*The Lancet*, July 2012)

What counts as evidence

- We often learn more about the lived reality of sexual lives from culture than from empirical studies.
- Emphasis on peer reviewed journals ignores other forms of knowledge
- A full discussion of homophobia and its impact demands poets as well as epidemiologists

Altman, Aggleton, Williams, Kong, Reddy, Harrad, Reiss, Parker (*The Lancet*, July 2012)

The roots of homophobia

- The problem of religion
- Fears about 'traditional' gender power relations
- "Political homophobia" and national assertion
- Authoritarian states and lack of political space

Altman, Aggleton, Williams, Kong, Reddy, Harrad, Reiss, Parker (*The Lancet*, July 2012)

Global attitudes towards homosexuality are increasingly polarised

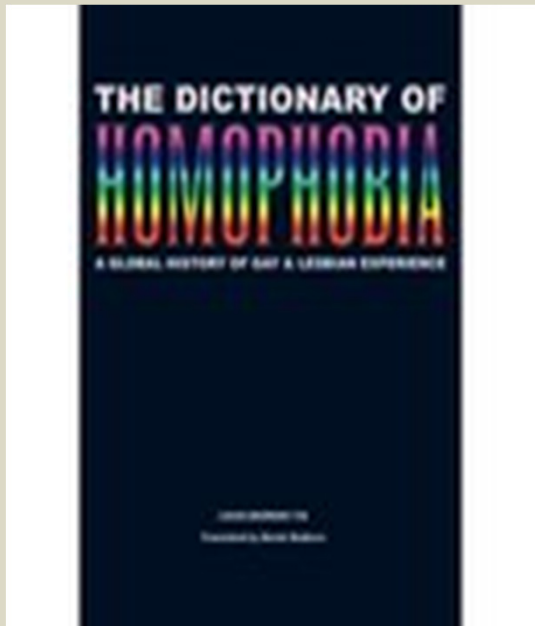
- Marriage versus execution
- Pressure from international bodies and significant donors must be aware of possible backlash
- Mobilisation of opposition around notions of national and cultural identity

Altman, Aggleton, Williams, Kong, Reddy, Harrad, Reiss, Parker (*The Lancet*, July 2012)

HOMOPHOBIA: ETYMOLOGY OF THE CONCEPT

“the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals – and, in the case of homosexuals themselves, self-loathing”

George Weinberg, *Society and the Healthy Homosexual* (1972: 4)



- **Emphasis on individual pathology**

HETEROSEXISM

“the ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any nonheterosexual form of behaviour, identity, relationship or community”

Gregory Herek, in: D'Augelli & Patterson: *Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Identities over the Lifespan* (1995: 387-404)

- Structures and beliefs that maintain assumptions that heterosexual relations are *normal*
- “Operates at the level of generalized belief and social sanction, rather than on emotive pain” (Tom Boellstorf, *Ethnos*, 69(4): 471, 2004)
- An extension of Adrienne Rich’s “compulsory heterosexuality” (*Signs*, 5(4): 631-660)
- Monique Wittig’s “straight mind” (*The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, 1992)
- R.W. Connell’s “gender regimes” (*Gender and Power*, 1987).
- Judith Butler’s “heterosexual matrix” (*Gender Trouble*, 1990)

POLITICAL HOMOPHOBIA

- A new violence *directed* against gay men and women (Boellstorff, 2004)
- Used in context of state sanctions and scapegoating
- Language (particularly hate speech) used as a strong by political leaders (Reddy, *Southern African Linguistics*, 20 (3): 163-175, 2002)
- Strong links between political homophobia and phallic masculinity (Ashley Currier, *Gender and Society*, 24(1): 125, 2010)



What do all of this mean?

- Attitudes toward homosexuality becomes a marker of debate between “tradition” and “modernity”
- Homosexuality viewed as a colonial import; therefore a corruption of pure Africa
- Ironically countries colonized by French (*Code Penal*) have no laws against homosexuality, while British law does (so what is the real import?)
- Gay men threaten a masculinist nationalism and challenge African patriarchy.
- Sexual and gender non-conformists have citizenship & human rights withdrawn (they cannot “belong”).
- In Africa the dominant cultural model denies freedom, protection and erotic justice for homosexuals
- Homosexuality signifies sexual excess even when heterosexual promiscuity is admired.
- State and extra judicial violence and persecution is evident, and is also revealed subtly, through social processes

What do all of this mean conceptually?

- People's **control over their sexual lives and choices is shaped by gender-related values**, norms and traditions become important determinants of vulnerability to HIV.
- The greatest threat is a **gender-based violence** (whether through hate campaigns, physical/sexual and verbal assault) target homosexuals, especially feminized men. Such violence increases vulnerability.
- **Criminalisation and stigmatization further reinforce violence**, aligned to received notions of masculinity and femininity.
- **Disempowerment of homosexuals** (including trauma, fear and anxiety) is often an outcome of political homophobia

What do all of this mean for HIV responses?

- Ultimately all of this have implications at the structural, behavioural and epidemiological levels
- Structural violence appears strongest: stigma, discrimination, prejudice as a result of culturally and politically sanctioned homophobia
- Inadequate information and denial of resources imply that homosexuals may be less able to adopt preventive techniques
- Attitudes by health care workers, including the homophobia in the health care systems (in countries where criminal sanctions exist) further compromise programming and services for homosexuals

So what can be done?

- Pushing *evidence* over ideology (these *two* aspects are related)
- Develop “data” to challenge the myth of LGBTI existence (“enumeration”)
- Sensitizing health care workers and improving responsiveness of health care system
- Promote HIV testing, knowledge and disclosure of HIV
- Promote early access to treatment
- Establish ongoing surveillance of HIV among MSM
- Training people for quality services. Work across class, gender, sexual orientation
- Advance universal minimum standards (incl. approach to patient needs on account of diversity)
- Minimum package of services (e.g. STI diagnosis and treatment and HIV treatment, care and support services)

So what can be done? *Ctd.*

- Behavioural interventions to reduce UAI and sex while under influence of alcohol and drugs
- Link MSM and HIV to Reproductive Health Services (view these issues holistically)
- **Tackle the State** by Monitoring and Evaluating Implementation (and advocate for inclusion of MSM in NSPs where it is absent)
- Implement **public education** to reduce stigma and discrimination
- **Promote advocacy at political level for tolerance of diversity**

Thank you!
Ke a leboga!
Ngiyabonga!



Social science that makes a difference



Social science that makes a difference

