



# SAFE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL

A WORLD CAFÉ ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

This bulletin provides an overview of the World Café held recently by Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA), in partnership with the Labour Research Service (LRS). The event brought together members of the police and correctional services

unions, public servants, community workers and activists to discuss how we can build safer communities for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. It was a morning of delicious food, stimulating conversation and collective learning, and we are excited to share with you some of the highlights.

We have also taken on the feedback we received about the need for accessible information on issues relating to sexual and gender diversity. Those who participated in the event agreed that education is the key to changing people's attitudes and behaviours, and so we have included

here some practical advice on working with and supporting LGBT people. There was also a request for clarification on current anti-discrimination laws and for tips on how trade unions can better promote LGBT rights. Finally, as requested, we have included some straightforward definitions, as well as the contact details of relevant organisations and support services.

We hope you find this bulletin to be useful, and look forward to working with you in the future to build a safer and more inclusive South Africa.



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# WHAT IS A WORLD CAFÉ?

The first thing one notices is the chatter. People are deep in conversation, the seriousness of the discussions occasionally punctuated by a quick laugh or nod of the head. The air is rich with the smell of coffee and cake. A long table at the back of the room is stacked high with treats: tarts of tomato and basil, tender skewers, nutritious soups, and platters of meat, cheese and fruit. Weaving through the tables – dressed smartly in black and white – are the waiters, delivering plate after plate of food.

This may sound like any regular café on any regular day, but something much more exciting is taking place. Welcome to the World Café! The idea is simple: people are brought together to enjoy a tasty meal while also sharing their thoughts on a particular topic. Today's group is diverse: there are police officers and public servants, religious leaders and community members, and activists from the labour and LGBT movements. And even though the room is filled with people of different backgrounds and experiences, the conversation is flowing.

A World Café is not a physical space, but rather a way of bringing people together to talk. At its heart, the World Café model is about uninhibited dialogue, but it is also about having conversations in a structured and constructive manner. The approach recognises that food and drink are integral parts of being human, and that eating and drinking with others can help us to relax and connect. Sharing a meal, the theory goes, helps us to forget our differences, to see each other as people.

This idea of connecting as *people* is crucial to the process. The police officers here today are not dressed in uniform and are not expected to put



## LGBT! WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

THIS ACRONYM STANDS FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER. THESE WORDS ALL RELATE TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR GENDER IDENTITY. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THESE TERMS, PLEASE REFER TO THE 'HELPFUL DEFINITIONS' SECTION NEAR THE END OF THIS BULLETIN.

forward the 'official' position. Likewise, those hosting the event are not facilitating the conversations in a way one would expect at a workshop or seminar. In fact, it is the organisers themselves who are making sure that people are having fun and that the plates are full.

So what is this particular World Café all about? Today's discussion is focused on how we can make our communities safe for LGBT people. This is no small problem: violence and discrimination remain a daily reality for many LGBT people, even with the legal protections that are now in place. This violence ranges from bullying, harassment and social exclusion, through to rape and even murder. The homophobia and transphobia that drives this violence also makes it difficult for LGBT people to finish school or find a job, or even to access basic services such as medical care.

This already bad situation is made worse because of the barriers LGBT people face when trying to access the criminal justice system. Many LGBT people have reported being mistreated by police officers when trying to open a case, as well as various other

forms of secondary victimisation. These discriminatory behaviours take many forms, from being laughed at or ridiculed, through to being physically or sexually assaulted. Some police officers are also reluctant to investigate hate crimes targeting LGBT people and/or fail to follow procedures correctly, and this results in very low rates of conviction. The lack of seriousness with which these crimes are treated makes LGBT people vulnerable to crime, and it is this urgent need for better policing services that motivated GALA and the LRS to host today's event.

A World Café is never intended to solve a problem, but rather to encourage free and frank discussion. Right now, there is little to indicate that the conversations will die down anytime soon. The organisers are still busy serving food, and the din of hurried speech continues to reverberate around the room. Every now and then I see another person nod their head or scribble onto the tablecloth. It is clear that everyone here today is passionate about community safety and creating positive change, and so I look forward to hearing more about the ideas that are being shared.

## **A WORLD CAFÉ: THE FACTS**

- **A flexible discussion format that allows for dialogue within a large group**
- **Takes place in a simulated café environment, in which participants are provided with food and drink**
- **Attendees participate in a series of conversation clusters (no more than five people per group), with each conversation**
- **focusing on a specific discussion prompt.**
- **Paper tablecloths allow participants to write or draw their thoughts, feelings or impressions.**
- **Individual action points identified by each participant.**
- **Reflections, key learnings and action points shared with the entire group after the conversation rounds.**

# WHAT DID YOU TAKE AWAY FROM THE WORLD CAFÉ?

I enjoyed going from table to table and having normal, peaceful conversations with a range of people. The World Café allowed me to better understand what other people think about LGBT rights. I liked that we were being asked to share from our experiences, as this helped to avoid any arguments. The event showed me that we can all do something to make our communities safer.

**Rev. Nokuthula Dhladhla**  
(House of Prayer and Worship, MCC)

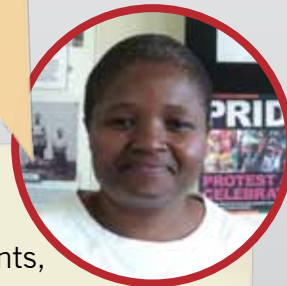
The comfortable atmosphere helped a lot: we were able to enjoy our food and learn from each other. We have a lot of work to do around this issue, and I will be sharing what was spoken about with my comrades.

**Gcina Mahlatshana**  
(COSATU, Greater Johannesburg Region)



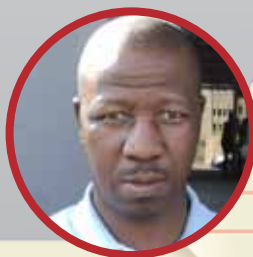
At first I was very uncomfortable. I tried to avoid the LGBT participants, but that was because I was ignorant. I didn't understand about these issues. People in different sectors – including police officers like me – need to be educated, and then we need to go out into our communities and share this knowledge. Each of us has a part to play in tackling discrimination.

**Simon Dlamini**  
(South African Policing Union)



The highlight was to see people seriously discussing these issues. As one of the waiters, I was able to observe how people were engaging. People began to relax as the conversations progressed; I could see that their body language had changed. By the end, people didn't want to stop talking. It was also nice to see people respecting the diversity that was in the room.

**Nosipho Twala** (Labour Research Service)



As a society, we have a long way to go in the fight against discrimination. LGBT people are not supported or accepted by communities, and we must work to change this. My fellow police officers need to be properly educated on this topic. Only then can we all work together to make our communities safe.

**Motlalepule Theletsane**  
(South African Policing Union)

The conversations led me to reflect on my own experiences of violence, and this in turn helped me to better understand what LGBT people go through. Letting people talk in a relaxed environment – and not judging them for their lack of knowledge or prejudices – allows people to learn and grow. I want to keep the conversation going by hosting similar events.

**Matsi April** (Department of Community Safety)



# TAKING ACTION IN SUPPORT OF LGBT RIGHTS

Everyone who participates in a World Café is asked to identify something they can do to create positive change. This may be as simple as educating a family member on a particular topic, or perhaps checking in with work colleagues to see that they are okay. Or it may be something more ambitious, such as facilitating a training session or hosting a special event.

The attendees of this World Café came up with many great ideas, both in terms of what they can do as individual citizens and as professionals. We don't have the space to list all of the ideas here, but hope that the ones included below inspire you to take action.

## NOTES

Think back to a time in your life when you were a perpetrator or a victim or an accomplice or remained silent about discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Share with us how you felt at that time and what you did.

"I commit to being proactive in combating bad workplace practices. If necessary, I will blow the whistle on colleagues not performing their duties. I will also help train those colleagues who are do not know the correct procedures."

"I will encourage my union to hold workshops with front-line officers so that they can better understand and support LGBT people."

"Acceptance of LGBT people must begin at home. I will speak to my children and other young people in my community."

"I will start conversations with people in my community through one-on-one discussions or by having community dialogues."

"As a gay man, I can contribute by teaching others about LGBT people and by sharing my personal experiences."

"We have a duty to educate others about these issues and to advocate on behalf of our LGBT brothers and sisters. I will begin creating change by teaching my colleagues and friends the new words I have learnt here today."

**WHAT WILL YOU DO TO MAKE OUR COMMUNITIES SAFER FOR LGBT PEOPLE?**



# UNDERSTANDING THE LAW



**Some people at the World Café felt unsure about the legal protections that exist for LGBT people. While everyone knew about the Constitution, some participants were unfamiliar with the clauses relating directly to sexual and gender diversity. There was also some confusion over how hate crimes are handled in South Africa.**

To clear things up, we have listed below some important laws and policies. There are many other laws that relate to discrimination and unfair treatment, and information about these can be found online. You can also find out more by speaking with your superior officer, your shop steward, one of the organisations listed in this bulletin, or a representative of the National Task Team on Gender- and Sexual Orientation-based Violence Perpetrated against LGBT Persons.

## **THE CONSTITUTION AND ITS PROTECTIONS**

The Equality Clause is one of the most important parts of our Constitution. Along with many other protections, the Equality Clause safeguards a person's right to freely express their sexual orientation and gender identity. This means that it is illegal to harass, intimidate, attack or otherwise discriminate against a person because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act gives further detail to the protections enshrined in the Bill of Rights. The Act prohibits various forms of discrimination (either by government or by private institutions/ individuals) and explicitly prohibits hate speech

and harassment. Sexual orientation and gender are both included in the list of 'prohibited grounds' for discrimination.

## **LEGISLATION RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF SERVICES**

The Minimum Standards on Services for Victims of Crime and Violence outline the basic rights of those seeking assistance because of crime. The minimum standards are clear that a person cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Another important policy for service providers is the Batho Pele principles. These encourage public servants to put the needs of people first, and are summarised by the slogan 'We Belong. We Care. We Serve.' All public servants, including those working in the criminal justice sector, must adhere to the eight principles, which aim to ensure that all South Africans have access to quality, efficient and effective services. If you would like more information on the Batho Pele principles, we recommend you consult the website of the Independent Police Investigative Directorate ([www.icd.gov.za](http://www.icd.gov.za)) or of the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development ([www.justice.gov.za](http://www.justice.gov.za)).

# WHAT IS A...



## CRIME?

The term 'hate crime' refers to any crime committed against a person because of a particular characteristic or because of a group to which that person belongs. It is considered a hate crime if people are attacked because of their race, country of birth, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

Hate crimes are different from other crimes because the person is targeted for a specific reason – for instance, a lesbian woman is attacked *because she is lesbian*. In other words, the crime is motivated by prejudice.

Hate crimes can include intimidation, harassment, blackmail, physical assault, sexual violence and murder. It is important to remember that hate crimes can be non-physical and so it is not always possible to tell if someone has experienced a hate crime just by looking at them.

There is currently no specific hate crime legislation

### NOTES

What will it take for you as a policeman, a CPF member, a Youth desk member, a trade union member, a gay man, a lesbian woman, a bisexual or transgender person to create a community safe for LGBT people.

in South Africa. However, an increasing number of civil society organisations have been lobbying for law reform, arguing that a comprehensive policy approach is needed to end hate crimes. In 2010, the Hate Crimes Working Group, a multi-sectoral network of organisations, was established to spearhead the law reform campaign. Information about the Hate Crimes Working Group can be found online: [www.hcwg.org.za](http://www.hcwg.org.za).

### DID YOU KNOW...

**THAT ONE OF THE FIRST COURT RULINGS IN FAVOUR OF LGBT EQUALITY INVOLVED A POLICE OFFICER?** In January 1998, Captain Jolande Langemaat took POLMED to court because of its refusal to extend medical cover to her same-sex partner. The case was heard in the Pretoria High Court by Judge Roux, who ruled that POLMED's actions were in violation of the Constitution. This historic ruling ensured equal recognition of same-sex relationships and paved the way for the Employment Equality Act and other significant law reforms.



# PROVIDING SERVICES TO LGBT PEOPLE

Many conversations focused on the need for extra training for those who may need to assist LGBT people as part of their job. While it is true that specialist training can help front-line staff to handle such cases, it is still possible to provide great service without being an expert on sexual and gender diversity. In fact, compassion and common sense are sometimes all you need.

Listed below some easy steps you can take to make sure that the service you provide is respectful, inclusive and supportive. This advice has been adapted from the service provision guidelines produced by the National Task Team on Gender- and Sexual Orientation-based Violence Perpetrated against LGBT Persons. Copies of this publication can be obtained from the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development.

## COMMUNICATION

**Take the time to listen.** Always let the client speak first, and listen attentively while the person is speaking.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

**Respect the right to privacy.** Speak to the person in private and assure them that you will treat what they say as confidential. Do not share this information with relatives or friends, and only tell colleagues if this is required by law or for the proper delivery of services.

## RESPECT

**Do not ask unnecessary questions** about the person's private life or sexual practices. You must only discuss things that relate directly to the matter at hand.



## LANGUAGE

**Avoid derogatory or hurtful words,** or making assumptions about a person's sexual partner or their gender identity. It is important to ask a person how they would like to be addressed and to adhere to this request.

## BEHAVIOUR

**Do not touch, intimidate or assault the person.** Making funny faces, laughing or speaking loudly about someone can cause distress.

## BE INFORMED

**Be aware of services or organisations in your area.** Finding out who you can speak to will help you to provide better service. Take the time to familiarise yourself with local organisations and to research supportive doctors, psychologists and lawyers.



# ADVICE FOR TRADE UNIONS

Trade unions can play a big role in shifting attitudes towards sexual and gender diversity. This is why we were so pleased to have representatives from the labour movement at the World Café. On their advice, we have included here some tips for labour organisations affiliated with the criminal justice sector. These are just a few of the steps that trade unions can take to better support LGBT people, and we encourage you to brainstorm other ideas with your comrades.



- Offer diversity training for union staff and members, with a higher level of training for shop stewards and others handling grievances.
- Lobby for LGBT sensitisation modules to be incorporated into official training programmes.
- Support social crime prevention initiatives and undertake public education campaigns on hate crimes targeting LGBT people.
- Endorse and circulate resources developed the National Task Team on Gender- and Sexual Orientation-based Violence Perpetrated against LGBT Persons.
- Develop guidelines of good practice for working with LGBT people and other vulnerable communities.
- Include LGBT issues and stories in newsletters and other official correspondence.
- Build linkages with local LGBT organisations.

If you would like to learn more about how trade unions can support LGBT rights, we suggest you consult *Equality is Everyone's Business: Eliminating Homophobia and Transphobia in South African Workplaces*. This booklet can be downloaded for free from the GALA website: [www.gala.co.za](http://www.gala.co.za).

## DID YOU KNOW...

THAT COSATU OFFICIALLY ADOPTED A RESOLUTION ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN 2014?

*The resolution acknowledges the need to tackle hate crimes targeting LGBT people. It also calls on government and member unions to take action in support of sexual and gender diversity.*

*As well as recognising the right of all people 'to be free to live their lives as they choose without fear of attack', the resolution demands that all parties in the criminal justice sector undergo sensitisation training in order to better support survivors of hate crimes.*

# HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Are you confused about some of the words being used in this bulletin? Don't worry! A lot of people at the World Café were also unsure about the LGBT acronym and related terms. In fact, many of the conversations focused on what these different words mean and how to use them correctly.

Using the right words is important. Doing so makes LGBT people feel welcome and safe, and also shows that you recognise and respect diversity. Some of your colleagues, friends and relatives may also be confused about these words so why not take a few minutes to share this information.

## TERMS RELATING TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION

**LESBIAN:** a woman who is emotionally and sexually attracted to other women.

**GAY:** a man who is emotionally and sexually attracted to other men.

**BISEXUAL:** a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to both sexes.

**STRAIGHT:** a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to the opposite sex.

## TERMS RELATING TO GENDER

**TRANSGENDER:** a person whose gender identity does not match their biological sex. A transgender person may live, feel, behave and dress in a way that is different to what is expected of them by society. For instance, a person who is born female may identify and present as male, or vice versa. A transgender person does not always undergo surgery to change their physical body.

**CISGENDER:** a person whose gender identity matches their biological sex.

**GENDER IDENTITY:** an individual's inner sense of being male or female (or both or neither). In some cases, a person's gender identity differs from their physical anatomy or expected social roles.

**GENDER EXPRESSION:** how a person expresses their gender identity – for instance, through clothing, behaviours, mannerisms, speech patterns, social activities and so on.

**GENDER TRANSITION:** the process of changing one's physical body to align it with one's gender identity. This is a complicated, multi-step process that can take years. A transition can take different forms – some people may choose to take hormones only, while others may also undergo various forms of surgery.

## TERMS RELATING TO DISCRIMINATION

**HOMOPHOBIA:** the fear or hatred of those assumed to be lesbian, gay or bisexual, and of anything connected to these persons and their communities.

**TRANSPHOBIA:** the fear or hatred of those seen to transgress or blur social expectations of gender, and of anything connected to these persons and their communities.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS...

**A number of misconceptions came up again and again at the World Café and so we thought we would address some of the more common myths about sexual and gender diversity. Knowing the facts will help you to better assist LGBT people, and this in turn will help to create safer communities for all South Africans.**

## WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE ATTRACTED TO THE SAME SEX?

It is not yet certain what causes a person's sexual orientation. It is likely to be a number of factors, including genetics, hormones and socialisation. Same-sex attraction is not an illness and so cannot be caught or cured. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are not able to influence or change another person's sexual orientation, and do not 'recruit' other people.

## WHY ARE SOME PEOPLE TRANSGENDER?

A person's gender identity is caused by a number of factors, including genetics, hormones and socialisation. Identifying as transgender is not an illness and so cannot be caught or cured.

## DO GAY MEN WANT TO BE WOMEN? DO LESBIAN WOMEN WANT TO BE MEN?

No. A homosexual person is someone who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of the same sex, not someone who wants to be the opposite gender. It is important not to confuse sexual orientation (who a person is attracted to) with gender identity (how a person understands their gender).

## CAN LGBT PEOPLE BE FIXED?

LGBT people are neither sick nor damaged and so there is nothing that needs to be 'fixed.' It is not possible to change a person's sexual orientation; it is a natural and normal part of who that person is. Likewise, a transgender person is not suffering from an illness and so cannot be cured.

## ARE LGBT PEOPLE UN-AFRICAN?

LGBT people exist in all African cultures. In fact, there is rich history of sexual and gender diversity in a number of African traditions. In many of these societies, LGBT people are celebrated and respected.

## IS BEING LGBT ANTI-CHRISTIAN?

No, it is not. A person's sexual orientation is a natural and normal part of that person. Many religious leaders, including Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, preach that all people are equal and must be treated with love, respect and dignity. In South Africa, people are free to hold their own religious beliefs, but this does not mean that they can discriminate against or mistreat others.

# USEFUL CONTACTS

## HEALTH, WELLBEING & SUPPORT

### DURBAN LESBIAN & GAY

#### COMMUNITY & HEALTH CENTRE

Drop-in centre providing legal, personal and health counselling for LGBT communities.

Location: Durban.

Tel: 031 312 7402 / Web: [www.gaycentre.org.za](http://www.gaycentre.org.za)

### GAY AND LESBIAN NETWORK

Provides free face-to-face, online or phone counselling by well-equipped and dedicated volunteers (9 am to 4 pm, Monday to Friday).

Location: Pietermaritzburg.

Tel: 033 342 6165 / Helpline: 086 033 3331

Web: [www.gaylesbiankzn.org](http://www.gaylesbiankzn.org)

### OUT – LGBT WELL-BEING

Offers direct sexual and mental health services, and engages in advocacy to promote the health and rights of LGBT people. Location: Pretoria.

Tel: 012 430 3272 / Helpline: 0860 688 688

Web: [www.out.org.za](http://www.out.org.za)

### TRIANGLE PROJECT

Runs a health clinic, helpline (1 pm to! 9 pm daily), support groups and outreach programmes, as well as public education and training!

Location: Cape Town. Tel: 021 686 1475

Helpline: 021 712 6699 Web: [www.triangle.org.za](http://www.triangle.org.za)

## WORKPLACE RIGHTS (ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT)

### LABOUR RESEARCH SERVICE

Specialises in research, dialogue-building and developmental projects focusing on labour and workplace rights. Location: Cape Town

Tel: 021 486 1100 / Web: [www.lrs.org.za](http://www.lrs.org.za)

## LGBT RESOURCES, ADVOCACY & SUPPORT

### GAY AND LESBIAN MEMORY IN ACTION (GALA)

A centre for LGBT culture and education, with a focus on education, knowledge- production and movement-building. Location: Johannesburg.

Tel: 011 717 4239 / Web: [www.gala.co.za](http://www.gala.co.za)

### FORUM FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (FEW)

Runs programmes to empower and improve the psychological, socio- economic and political situation of black lesbian women.

Location: Johannesburg. Tel: 011 403 1906/7

### GENDER DYNAMIX

Provides resources and assistance for transgender people and their employers, families and partners.

Location: Cape Town. Tel: 021 633 5287

Web: [www.genderdynamix.org.za](http://www.genderdynamix.org.za)

### TRANSGENDER & INTERSEX AFRICA

Provides support and resources for transgender and intersex people, and runs visibility and education initiatives.

Location: Pretoria.

Web: [www.transgenderintersexafrica.org.za](http://www.transgenderintersexafrica.org.za)

## ONLINE RESOURCES

### ASIPHEPHE

[www.asiphephe.org](http://www.asiphephe.org)

An online information and services database for LGBT victims of discrimination and violence



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank everyone who was able to attend the World Café. In particular, we would like to thank our comrades from the South African Policing Union (SAPU), the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) for helping to publicise the event.

We must also acknowledge the support of the Department of Community Safety, which not only provided the venue for the event but also ensured we had a diversity of voices.



Finally, we would like to thank the funders for this event: HIVOS and the Other Foundation.



As well as serving as an archive and research facility, GALA undertakes direct advocacy and outreach work. The organisation has a strong commitment in the areas of youth leadership, education rights, workplace rights and violence reduction.

GALA is an active member of the National Task Team on Gender- and Sexual Orientation-based Violence Perpetrated against LGBT Persons and of the Hate Crimes Working Group, and is a partner in the Love not Hate campaign.

GALA is committed to improving access to information and has launched two online resources: [www.asiphephe.org](http://www.asiphephe.org) (which focuses on violence and related issues) and [www.hearusout.org](http://www.hearusout.org) (which focuses on youth and education issues).

Further information and downloadable resources can be found at [www.gala.co.za](http://www.gala.co.za).



## ABOUT GAY AND LESBIAN MEMORY IN ACTION (GALA)

GALA is a Johannesburg-based centre for LGBT culture and education.

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS WHO MADE THIS PROJECT POSSIBLE

