



triangle project

Challenging Homophobia
Appreciating Sexual Diversity

Debunking Myth-making
Parliamentary Submission
17 October 2007

Same-sex marriage

I am making this submission on behalf of Triangle Project, the oldest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organization in Africa. It is currently celebrating its 25th anniversary this year and is well known for the excellent health services it provides to the LGBT community.

Using detailed empirical data, leading African scholars and researchers have proved that homosexuality and individuals' adoption of fluid sexual and gender roles have been common practice throughout the African continent for centuries predating colonialism. These scholars include Ifi Amadiume, Babere Chacha, Antonia Uzuegbunam, Salisu Abdullahi, and many more. Other African scholars, such as Sylvia Tamale (Uganda); Patricia McFadden (Swaziland/Zimbabwe) and Charmaine Pereira (Nigeria) have also been writing about the presence of sexual diversity and sexual relationships in African societies. More recently South African scholars, such as Gertrude Fester, Desiree Lewis, Yvette Abrahams, Fikile Vilakazi and Jane Bennett have been consistently questioning ways in which discourses of citizenship are underpinned by heterosexual identities and practices. Implicitly and explicitly, they therefore call for the full recognition of Lesbian, Gay, Transgendered and Bisexual citizens in a post apartheid South Africa.

For over a decade, the majority of South Africans, together with the international community, have been celebrating this country's having stepped out of a system of terrifyingly repressive social and sexual control. In the present climate of celebrating individual and collective freedoms for South Africans, it would indeed be a travesty of justice if 10-12% of its 'citizens' were again subjected to a lifetime of sexual control, policing and differentiated "citizenship". According to us, inclusive citizenship refers to the normalization of same-sex relationships; inclusive citizenship means that all citizens share the same rights, and not that groups differentiate on the basis of sexual orientation should have different rights. According to constitutional provisions for the equity of all citizens irrespective of gender, race, class *and sexual orientation*, the citizens in a secular state such as ours have the right to demand that the religious right does not hijack the agenda and change the discourse of rights into to the rhetoric of sin and redemption. Triangle Project therefore applauds religious leaders such as Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu of the Anglican Church and Reverend Moqoba of the Methodist Church who unequivocally support the right of same-sex couples.

Paranoia, hate speech and hate actions have increasingly been the source of the assault, rape and killing of young Black lesbians in our townships. Who can ever forget the killing of Zoliswa Nkonyana in February this year? Do we want to be remembered as a nation that is intolerant and homo-prejudiced? Do we want to be known as collective murderers because we wrongly believe that same-sex loving has



Caring for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community

Physical Address: 101 Millwave House, Waverley Business Park, Dane Street, Mowbray
Postal Address: PO Box 13935, Mowbray 7705, Tel: (021) 448-3812, Fax: (021) 448-4089
E-mail: info@triangle.org.za Website: www.triangle.org.za

been a colonial import? It was none other than Palesa Beverly Ditsie, a courageous Black South African woman, who placed the right to same-sex sexual orientation firmly on the Beijing Platform of Action's Agenda in 1995. It was Simon Nkoli, a Black gay man, who is seen as the embodiment of the anti-apartheid struggle who tirelessly fought that gay rights be enshrined in the post apartheid Constitution.

Thousands of citizens, as well as many beyond South Africa, know that allowing conservatives to derail the recognition of same-sex marriage would not only be a betrayal of the democracy that we have so long fought for; it would be a frightening reversion to the apartheid "rights-for-different-groups" philosophy of a previous era.