# STIMES

The GALA Queer Archive's Newsletter

## In Peace and Power

Death and Memory in the Queer Archive

## The queer archive: a site of loss and remembrance

"Death lives with us every day. Indeed our ways of dying are our ways of living. Or should I say our ways of living are our ways of dying?"

— Zakes Mda, Ways of Dying

Loss and grief are amongst the world's most universal experiences, finding expression in all languages, cultures and religions. South Africa is a land where we are well-versed in the language of loss and history bears witness to the remarkable ways in which we have sought to survive in spite of the innumerable losses that weigh heavily on our collective memory.

The inevitability of death is intrinsic to life on this planet and yet the pain that results from the loss of a loved one can at times feel utterly unbearable. Death also offers us the opportunity to reflect, celebrate and honour the lives of those that are no longer a part of this mortal world. In expressing our grief and gratitude, we share stories that keep the memory of our loved ones alive. We hold on to mementos such as items of clothing, jewellery, photographs, videos and voice notes in remembrance of those who have departed. Grief and loss can at times feel lonely and alienating. The rituals performed at funerals, memorials, burials, cremations and after tears have long existed to bid farewell to the dead, but also to provide us with a sense of togetherness, lightening the burden of grief.

The archive is a site of death, memory and remembrance. We look to the notes and boxes in the archive as a way of making

sense of our grief, loss and belonging. The voices of our queer ancestors resonate throughout the archive sharing their pain and joy, reminding us that our history endures and bears remembering. In this edition of the GALA Times, we seek to once again reignite the flames of memory of those whom we have loved and revered and have lost.



It is within these flames of remembrance that I wish to reflect on the remarkable legacy Professor Finn Reygan, a dedicated and committed member of the House of GALA who passed away in August 2022. At the time of his passing, Finn was the Research Director and Acting Strategic Lead: Identity and Belonging in the Human and Social Capabilities Division at the Human Sciences Research Council and Extraordinary Associate Professor in Educational Psychology at the University of the Western Cape.

Finn opened up opportunities for so many of us to work within communities that

2/3 2022

have long been neglected and ignored. Finn motivated us to be innovative and downright cheeky in challenging the status quo and patriarchal power structures. He reminded us that the cause for justice and freedom is to liberate young people all across the continent allowing them to be who they are...for if our youth stand tall, proud and affirmed- there's no stopping them.

Finn was able to bring those with power, be it government, academia and private sector into conversation with each other and to most importantly listen to the voices of the youth as equals, not subordinates. Finn reminded us of the importance of education and knowledge in arming our activism. Finn was always approachable and his dedication to furthering the rights of LGBTQIA+ youth was unflinching. Finn also had a wicked and delicious sense of humour and so even when things were really tough and dark, Finn possessed a talent for making one smile, laugh and heal.

We stand in solidarity with Finn's family and share in the loss of mourning one of our own fam. Rest in peace and power dear Finn.

**Keval Harie** (Director)

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### FIVE THINGS TO THINK ABOUT TO BEQUEATH ASSETS

Most people do not want to think about death, but it is inevitable. Its inevitability therefore requires us to think about what will happen to our assets after our death. A will remains a very effective way of bequeathing or transferring assets after death. If you die without having prepared a will (i.e. dying intestate), your estate will be dealt with under intestate succession as per the Intestate Succession Act and may not lead to the results you desire<sup>1</sup>. It is therefore important to have a will.

The common misconception is that one needs to be very wealthy to have a will. If you have any property that you value, you need to think about what will happen to that property after you die and then make provision for your wishes in a written will. In this article, we will look at five things to think about when you want to bequeath your assets in a will generally, but also including for purposes of bequeathing written documents, such as essays or manuscripts, video and audio recordings, photographs, items of clothing or other items to GALA or any other archive of your choice, such as a library or academic institution.

This article is not intended as legal or financial advice, but mere encouragement to think about what you want to happen to your assets after your death. Wills are legal documents and for them to be legally enforceable, certain minimums must be adhered to. Therefore, professional advice should always be sought.

#### 1. What do I want to bequeath?

For your will:

- a) you can bequeath property or things that are recognised as such under South African property law (i.e. the law of things),
- **b)** the property must be legally capable of being bequeathed,
- c) the property must be clearly described so that it can be identified,
- d) and it must belong to you or be part of your estate since you cannot bequeath something that does not belong to you.

Assets or property can be both tangible and intangible. A vehicle or a house are tangible property, since you can see and touch them, whereas intangible assets are those that do not exist in physical

or material form, such as intellectual property (IP), royalties, patents, copyright and other rights. A book or manuscript that you write or a recording that you produce is a tangible piece of property, and the IP or copyright in it constitutes intangible property. When bequeathing such an item in your will with the intention of transferring full rights to the beneficiary, you will need to consider bequeathing all your rights, title and interest in the copyright under the book or recording to the beneficiary. Please consider that if you wrote something under publication, you may have waived your copyright or so-called moral rights<sup>2</sup> via a contract with the publisher. If a recording was taken during the course and scope of your employment, the copyright may belong to your employer depending on the terms of your employment contract. If no copyright has been alienated through a contract or other legal mechanism, then the full rights in the works may be bequeathed as above. You may also direct how and for what purpose the bequeathed item should be used<sup>3</sup>.

#### 2. To whom can I bequeath?

The identity of your beneficiary is just as important as what you bequeath, if not more important. You may bequeath your assets to any person who is qualified in law to receive the inheritance. Under the law, a person can be natural or juristic. A natural person is you and me, whereas a juristic person is a company, a trust (like GALA), or other corporation, and any of them may be a beneficiary under your will. Most people bequeath their assets to natural persons, such as family members. When identifying the person you wish to inherit from your estate, always ensure they are identified in the will sufficiently to avoid any confusion.

## 3. Special conditions and directions as to use of the inheritance

As the testator, you are entitled to direct your heir to use the bequeathed asset in a certain way, for a particular purpose or for the benefit of a certain person or entity. For example, I might bequeath a large sum of money to an academic institution of my choice under directions that the money should only be used to set up a scholarship award in my name, and given to certain academically performing students from disadvantaged backgrounds on an annual basis until the money has been fully spent. The academic institution as heir will have no freedom to use the money for the upkeep of its facilities or anything else if this is not what I expressed in my will and the executor of my deceased estate

will ensure that the money continues to be used for the purpose as stated in my will. If bequeathing a piece of writing, you may want it to be mass produced and given to public school libraries at no cost or perhaps to be used for social upliftment and not for commercial reasons. The choice as testator is yours.

#### 4. Residual estate

If you dispose of certain identifiable assets in your will, the residual of the estate will be whatever is left that can be identified as belonging to you or forming part of your deceased estate, which you can then bequeath to beneficiaries in clearly allocated shares. The executor will then bequeath the residual to the named beneficiaries in the relevant shares to realise your wishes as testator. This is a good catch-all, but may lead to some results that were not foreseen or desired. To avoid this, the will must be as clear as possible in wording and leave no room for multiple interpretations that could lead to timeous and expensive litigation that will burden the estate and leave vulnerable heirs unprovided for in a situation where you were their sole breadwinner. In such situations, however, the heirs will have other avenues of recourse which fall outside the scope of this article and will not be dealt with here.

### 5. What if I do not want to wait until my death?

You are free during your life to gift, sell, lend or otherwise donate your assets to anyone you wish (within the limits of the law and common sense). The good news is that you do not always have to wait until death to decide what will happen to certain assets. Plenty of section 18A trusts, such as GALA, accept donations. For these to be considered donations in the legal sense, they must not be offered in return for some kind of quid pro quo. The donation may be documented in agreement form and need not be complicated.

**Sello Mokadikwa** (GALA Volunteer)

If you would like to donate to GALA, or just know more about the process, get in touch! Email the Archives Coordinator.

<sup>1.</sup> For more on intestate succession, please peruse Intestate Succession: If You Do Not Leave a Will, available <u>here</u> (DO&JCD: Master/Intestate Succession)

<sup>2.</sup> As per section 20(1) of the Copyright Act 98 of 1978

<sup>3.</sup> See section 3

The archive is no stranger to death. Traditionally much of what an archive houses is from people, events and organisations that have passed. Although GALA is actively engaging in 'archiving the present', through oral histories, storytelling and archiving of living organisations and movements, death is still very much present. What is present will become the past, and the aim is for the archive to survive beyond the movements, events and lives we document.

In a queer archive, it is almost impossible to escape the impact and history of HIV/AIDS. Much has been written on the South African HIV/AIDS crisis, once the epicenter of the pandemic<sup>1</sup> with one of the highest HIV/AIDS<sup>2</sup> rates in the world. However, the early years of the epidemic is always relegated to a footnote.

AIDS emerged in South Africa in late 1982, a year after it was first identified and named by the American Centre for Disease Control (CDC). The link between homosexuality and AIDS had been made by the CDC in June 1981. This link was carried over with South Africa's first cases. However, there was a further link, that of whiteness.

AIDS in South Africa struck gay men first. Racial cleavages engendered by colonialism and apartheid would assure that the epidemic would remain largely confined to gay white men for some time.

(Oppenheimer & Bayer, 'The Forgotten Epidemic, 2007)

Epprecht Historian Marc provides important context around the state of social and academic views on African sexuality at the time the AIDS crisis hit. It was not racism alone that explains why AIDS was first thought of as a white, gay disease, but also centuries of writing, from people with diverse ideologies, that homosexuality was 'unAfrican' and brought to the continent by Europeans. Epprecht also attempts to explain why, when the shift was made in the latter 1980s to seeing AIDS as more of a problem in the black, heterosexual community, that black homosexuality was once again ignored - citing issues including those of self-identification, how different people understand sex, and language. From the 1990s leaders like Simon Nkoli (and later Zackie Achmat) would attempt to dispel the myths and erasures around black gay HIV+ men, but in the early 1980s this kind of activism was yet to come.



Simon Nkoli in an awareness poster for the Township Aids Project (TAP) c. 1993. Simon Nkoli Collection.

The National Party (NP) government was ill-equipped to deal with an epidemic associated not only with sexual transmission, but with homosexual sex. AIDS, and those who were first afflicted, were treated with a mixture of hostility, suspicion, blame and denial. As a result of the state's failure to address AIDS in those early years, initial responses fell largely to community organisations, NPOs and a handful of progressive healthcare professionals.

South Africa at the time was deeply conservative, this was reflected not only in the response of the government and society, but also those who identified as gay. The fledging gay rights movement was politically and racially divided, emerging in a country where sodomy was still illegal. There were deep divisions in the newly formed Gay Association of South Africa (GASA), between those who wanted the organisation to form part of the broader struggle for democracy and human

rights in South Africa, and the larger conservative element who wanted the organisation to be 'apolitical'. As medical historian Howard Phillips puts it, AIDS was the first South African epidemic to emerge "within a context of a burgeoning human rights culture".

Despite their best efforts, South African gay organisations were at a distinct disadvantage compared to their counterparts in the global north, on which GASA modelled itself.

In North America and in Western Europe, homosexual people had already coalesced into gay communities with powerful political lobbies by the time the epidemic struck in the mid-1980s. Thus, not only was there already an appropriate gay political movement in place to lead the fight against AIDS, but this fight could actually be used as a mobilising tool, to further buttress and strengthen the gay movement itself.

(John Pegge – 'Living With Loss', *Defiant Desire*, 1995)

Amongst all these tensions and hindrances, how did the newly formed gay organisations of the early 1980s respond to AIDS? With the lack of government attention on these early cases, what services, research and public programmes were initiated from the gay sector? How much influence did the response of international gay organisations have on AIDS activism in the South African context? The archive has much to offer in beginning to answer these questions.

By analysing the services and programmes initiated from the (admittedly disparate and problematic) gay community organisations such as GASA and the 6010 Group in Cape Town, and by placing these responses within the broader context of AIDS internationally, and apartheid locally, we can see a very specific and complex local response develop. This laid the groundwork for what would become the more large-scale gay and HIV/AIDS organising of the 1990s. This is generally where most researchers pick up the thread.

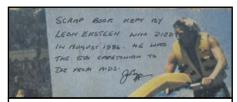
Relevant material in GALA's archive can be found across various collections of organisations and individuals. Material includes pamphlets, articles, correspondence, press, newsletters, meeting minutes, reports, AIDS awareness campaign materials and oral history interview transcripts.





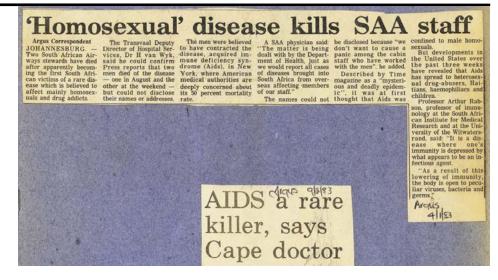
Pamphlet produced by GASA and 6010 in 1985. Triangle Project Collection.

The Triangle Project collection is an invaluable resource for the early history of the AIDS pandemic in South Africa. Documents in the collection begin with those of the 6010 group, established in 1982, and its transformation from a gay social support group to a counselling service and the first civil society organisation set up to deal with the AIDS crisis in South Africa. John Pegge, a social worker and founding member of 6010, played a crucial role in the development of gay and AIDS counselling in South Africa. As director of 6010 in the early 1980s, Pegge was one of the first openly gay AIDS activists in South Africa.



Close-up of the cover of Eksteen's scrapbook, Triangle Project Collection.

In January 1983 headlines reporting the first South African AIDS deaths were splashed over the front pages of the country's newspapers, using sensational language such as "Gay Plague!". This brought AIDS and homosexuality into the spotlight, forcing fledgling organisations to confront the coming storm. Nowhere are these headlines more hauntingly preserved than in the scrapbook kept by Herman Eksteen, one of the early victims of the virus.



The minutes and correspondence from 6010 document their response to those early headlines. Initially, gay organisations chose to play down the danger of AIDS, more concerned about increased homophobia than a health crisis (keeping in mind that very little was known at the time). The archive collection shows that by 1984, 6010 (and GASA) were taking AIDS much more seriously.

The *Exit* newspaper collection is a vital resource to anyone studying South Africa queer history. *Exit* was the primary means of distributing information to the dispersed (mostly white) gay community, and it served as an invaluable method of disseminating information on AIDS.

The collection of the Johannesburg-based Gay Advice Bureau (GAB) is a good example of a volunteer-based response from the gay community during this time. Although GAB was established before the first AIDS cases became known in South Africa, and served gay callers experiencing a range of problems, AIDS became an increasing focus of the counselling service from 1983 onwards. This can be tracked in the archival records through meeting minutes, reports and counsellor training.

These are some of the many collections at GALA that tell part of the complex, interwoven and tragic history of this time. While the 'gay community' certainly had its problems and was heavily influenced by the social and political context of

apartheid, it should be remembered that many of these men (and some women) did remarkable things in those early years, and achieved much through their community networks.

Steven Miller, one of the handful of doctors who treated early AIDS patients, and saw many hundreds die, describes the absence of writing on this period as a kind of amnesia. 'Such forgetfulness represented a profound disservice' to those who lost their lives, their loved ones, and their doctors and caregivers.

## Linda Chernis (Archives Coordinator)

\*Parts of this article have been adapted from Chernis' Master's thesis "The 'Gay Plague': Community responses to AIDS in South Africa 1982-1987", which she is currently writing towards her Masters in History at Wits.

<sup>1</sup> There is some confusion with the use of the terms pandemic and epidemic, and they at times appear to be used interchangeably in the literature. I will be using the term pandemic when referring to HIV and AIDS in the global context, and epidemic when referring to the localized spread within 'gay communities'.

<sup>2</sup> In the early and mid-1980s most sources simply referred to the disease and virus as AIDS, as HIV had not yet been named/identified.



#### GAB Counselling Service

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Telefoon Telephone (011) 643 2311

GAB letterhead - 1986. GAB/GLC Collection

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## LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD:

#### Reflecting on my time at the GALA Queer Archive

In 2017, I had just completed my MA in Fine Arts (with a focus on arts-based pedagogy) at Wits University, and an opportunity arose at GALA to apply for a position that was opening up at the organisation. GALA was looking for a project manager to complete a project that needed to be rounded off within a short time span. I heard about this opportunity through my friend, Karin Tan (GALA's current Senior Information Officer), who recommended me for the job. I am still so grateful for the recommendation because it changed my life in ways I could never have imagined.

In February 2017, GALA invited me to interview for the position. GALA's new Director, Keval Harie, and GALA's Archivist, Linda Chernis interviewed me. They provided some background on the School Management Team Training (SMT) Project, a collaborative training project that was developed by GALA and the Wits Centre for Diversity Studies (WiCDs), amongst other partners and contributors. The SMT project required a project manager to complete the project within a six-month period to report adequately to one of GALA's main donors - SAIH (The Norwegian Students and Academics International Assistance Fund). The project necessitated a training programme in secondary schools in three provinces using the Diversity Training Manual, a resource specifically developed for SMTs and written by a consultant with inputs from my predecessor Kendall Petersen, and Haley McEwen, a senior researcher at WiCDS at the time.

The new project manager position required someone to work with civil society organisations in two provinces outside of Gauteng, to implement training with SMTs around SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, Sexual Characteristics) and diversity more broadly in three provinces, using the manual. I was excited about this work due to my previous experience working at a

secondary school as an educator and my inner desire to be a queer activist working in education. I was so passionate about working in schools at the time, and took part in many arts-based training programmes in inner city Johannesburg (2015-2017) with an NGO I co-direct called Keep the Dream Arts (KTD). My friend and collaborator Puleng Plessie, founder of KTD Arts, introduced me to many school networks through our artsbased outreach programmes. I knew this would be an easy network to tap into for this project, especially for the Gauteng leg.

After the interview, Keval contacted me to tell me that I got the job. I was so excited to start this new journey as a young queer graduate. I received a six-month contract that began in March 2017. I was so grateful to receive guidance from Getti Mercorio, who was serving as GALA's Caretaker at the time. He was assisting with the induction and training of GALA's new Director, to ensure that the day-today proceedings of the organisation ran smoothly during this transitional period that GALA was experiencing. Getti was very helpful to me because he understood the facilitation aspect

of the project very well. I understood quite early on that I needed to jump into the practical element of the work in order to complete the project within the given deadline. The SMT project served as a learning curve for me as it introduced me to the complexities of project management. The project required coordination of training in the Western Cape, implemented by the Triangle Project, and in KZN by Same Love Toti. This taught me about the importance of communication, budgeting, financial management, risk management, reporting and consistent follow-ups. Through trial and error, the SMT project was completed within the given deadline and my contract was extended.

In 2018, my role was solidified into GALA's programming. It was clear that GALA's education programme required a project manager and facilitator to manage relationships with donors, partner organisations and facilitators, and be well-versed in GALA's archival work, in order to represent the organisation and to implement impactful work in communities. Due to the influence of community activists on my own journey, the education programme started to reflect the



One of Genevieve's first (of what will be many!) GALA selfies. Left to right: Linda Chernis (Archivist), Getti Mercorio (GALA Caretaker, 2017), Genevieve Jeanne Louw (GALA's new Programmes Manager), Karin Tan (Archive Assistant, 2017), Anzio Jacobs (Youth Forum Coordinator, 2017) at Getti's farewell gathering in Johannesburg, 2017.



Puleng Plessie and Genevieve, Johannesburg, 2017. Facebook caption: "Had an inspiring workshop with learners from R.W Fick Secondary School in Randburg. Look forward to tackling issues around gender identity and sexual orientation with the school management team"

lessons I learnt from them. I was learning about the plights of our community by being active in spaces that spoke about human rights and social justice, and realised that GALA had a role to play in this particular area of work. Our Director, Keval Harie, shared those sentiments, and it became important to take guidance from him and the GALA team around project ideas. This was a very driven and passionate time at the organisation. Many big dreams!

The education programme shifted its focus to tertiary education in 2018 and required working in university spaces. Thankfully, I had built strong relationships with facilitators in the sector. I am very grateful to Anzio Jacobs from Scope Facilitation (an organisation we co-founded) and Puleng Plessie for their tireless work and assistance with the development and establishment of GALA's education programme in both secondary and tertiary education. The Programmes Coordinator role would not have developed into what it is today if they were not involved. They taught me so much around positionality, facilitation methodology, race politics, intersectionality, and above all, they helped give the work a clear and focused purpose and ethos. Their influence has taught me how important it is to co-facilitate trainings, to stand with communities alongside their struggles, even if you do not experience those struggles in your own personal life, and to listen with empathy.

My journey at GALA during the 2017-2022 period allowed me to attend many conferences and facilitate many workshop programmes around the country. This introduced me to the queer feminist movement. Through those engagements, I met activists and organisations that fundamentally changed my life. I realised that GALA has a reputation in the sector and that I am carrying that with me into activist spaces. With a sense of urgency. I started encouraging activists to record their stories due to the immense loss and grief that we regularly face in the queer movement. I carry the memories and the legacies of those friends and activists we lost with mein the work, always. The archive carries many such stories, and the need to encourage young or old, gender diverse, trans, black and queer African activists to share their stories is just as important now, as it was during the historically popular period in the '90s. Some would argue, due to the recent rise of conservatism in the world, recording and sharing these stories is

more important now than ever before.

Moving forward, I am pleased to have the opportunity to continue working with GALA in a newly-focused capacity, geared towards fundraising, networking and strengthening the organisation. I hope to see the archive transform into a far more participatory resource for queer African youth in the near future, and that young people will take part in oral history projects and actively record their own stories. Upon leaving my position as Programmes Coordinator, I realise the value of retrospection. I have learned that the stories of marginalised communities, who exist within the margins of the queer human rights movement, hold immense power. I hope to see the voices of black trans sex workers, queer persons with disabilities, queer women in farming and climate justice, intersex activists addressing human rights violations, LGBTQIA+ activists in rural communities, activists responding to hate crimes, and queer people responding to homelessness, become far more visible and central to GALA's archival work. I believe in the pedagogical value of these stories, and that the process of prioritising marginalised voices in the archive, can build towards a practice that challenges archaic and colonial forms of archiving. GALA is a unique space, because it has contributed to numerous educational initiatives that have had impact in schools, universities, communities and organisations, both nationally and regionally. I hope to see the continuation of the education programme in dynamic and radical ways, in order to resist the growing powers of conservatism in the world, that seek to undo much of the work focused on inclusive and comprehensive education in South Africa and globally.

Thank you for everything GALA. I will cherish my memories of working at the archive forever. I look forward to the exciting changes on the horizon.

Genevieve Louw (ex-Programmes Coordinator)

## TIMES PARISHBYS HALLOVEEN PARISHBYS TO SHOW THE PARISH OF THE PARISH

As the month of horror dawns on us, we thought it would be an opportune moment to ask Ayabonga Ngoma to share some memories from the last 6 years of the annual Halloween party they organise in Johannesburg.

Halloween (and quite frankly horror films) has always interested and excited me. From seeing the weird and wacky costumes in American movies and tv shows, I dressed-up and attempted to go trickor-treating to unsuspecting neighbours in a small Eastern Cape hometown, where obviously no one knew or cared for such.

When I had a '90s-themed 30th birthday

party, people really showed out, dressed as Sarafina, the trio from Clueless, Aaliyah and many more creative costumes. I realised how much people love and desire playing dress-up.

Halloween was the most obvious excuse to give people the freedom and permission to come as any gender, character, celebrity, or pop culture phenomenon. All this from my penthouse apartment in Newtown.

The following images are a retrospect of what started as a fun idea to basically being the most anticipated party in Joburg and a fantastical representation of queer

#### 2016:

You never forget your first. I decided to throw it on a whim. I hired smoke machines, photobooths and went wild with decorations. Attendance was via people I knew on Whatsapp. People didn't disappoint! Barb from Stranger Things, Bring It On rival cheerleaders, dancing emojis and your standard vampires and angels. Anyone that was there may say it's the best one.





#### 2017: Friends became friends of friends and word was getting out that this was no ordinary party. It was essentially a queer party.







#### 2018:

All I have to say is... Me and my then roommate, Andrew, went as Boom Shaka. A childhood dream! Pictures were taken by Jerry Makgofe and the party featured on his blog. It was epic... The building security had to turn off the power to end the party.



#### 2019:

After getting the party shut down the year before – I decided to take it for a spin outside of the apartment and held it at The Tennis Club. We abandoned the AUX cables for a DJ line-up and sold tickets online. There was no going back.

#### 2020:

The Covid one.
Titled 'The Bunker' –
an apocalyptic refuge
from what was going
on outside. It was held
at a friend's house in

Greenside. I don't know if the term super-spreader was a thing at this point – but entry was limited, and curfew was kind of observed. The party was needed after months of hard lockdown. There were colour-coded contact armbands and hand-sanitising stations (that no one used).





#### 2021:

Held at Carfax in Newtown, just a few hundred meters from my old apartment where it all began – this one solidified FOMO Fridays Halloween as something really special. A space for high femme, queer and creative expression that always leaves everyone gagged year on year.

Ayabonga (pronouns: he/they) is the Founder of the online gig-guide FOMOFridays, which Halloween is hosted under. They are the Mother of The House of Diamonds.

Hold on to your wigs, HALLOWEEN#7 is coming up real soon!



## Introducing GALA's New Programmes Manager: $KGOMOTSO\ KGASI$

GALA is so excited to welcome Kgomotso Kgasi to the team in the capacity of Programmes Manager!



**Pronouns:** She/Her

**Short bio:** I am a Black lesbian from the township who is passionate about working for, and toward, social justice. I hold an urban planning degree and have worked in housing, media publications and education. I am an activist and organiser who comes alive in the face of injustice, and have been part of various social movement formations. Every day, I deliberately choose to move through life with kindness, generosity and compassion.

What are you looking forward to at GALA? I am looking forward to learning new and different ways of being, and unlearning conscious and unconscious negative biases and stereotypes. I hope to infect the House of GALA with my positive energy and outlook.

**Fun fact about yourself?** I like collecting different music instruments with the aim of learning how to play them. The drive fizzles out after I learn the basics.

§TIMES

## PRIORITISING THE SELF:

## An update from the GALA YOUth Forum (GYF)

At the beginning of the year GYF saw it necessary to convene on a thematic approach that would not only address what community means but also situate members at the core of its conversations. As a result, what would then challenge all of us to look from within was: Prioritizing the Self. This proved to be a better way of projecting how we would continue to navigate the changes that come as things go back to 'normal'. The one thing that the Forum needed to be reminded of is that in all that happens around us and all that we do, the only constant is the relationship we have with ourselves.

A collective understanding and exchange of the concept of love languages was this year's first Forum meeting. What we have now come to conclude as a way many have operationalised as a self-acceptance process, this conversation was a bittersweet moment. A few minutes in, just when we had gone around the room to get different understandings of the topic's definition, they went silent. Trying to figure out what occupied their mind, I realised that they had all missed the point. They were all thinking about past romantic relationships that did not work out despite all the good they did. Irrespective of how long they lasted, every moment was significant.

However, the day was set to challenge the idea that love languages are exclusively for romantic relationships and the expression of romantic commitment to a partner. While some shared personal examples of their love languages, others chuckled at the realisation of their own. Reflections include the realisation

that buying oneself a favorite item, spending one's last cash on take-out and running yourself a bubble bath are ways one can practice self-love and kindness.

As the conversation got more engaging the room grew wider in numbers, "Let me get the bill!?", "Purrr!", I got overwhelmed trying to control the crowd. The conversation was to remind Forum members that we also establish relationships with ourselves and our bodies. In addition, Forum members highlighted that practicing self-love is a sign of being self-aware and allows them to be there for themselves in ways their friends/partner/chosen family wouldn't be able to. Ultimately the discussion was a motivation for all to explore ways to strengthen the internal connection, so we can experience greater joy and harmony in a relationship with the self.

I can imagine how some who attended on the day were also overwhelmed by the number of queer people who come to just sit around and speak to each other. From that day every forum session that we've had starts with the question "How are you doing?" answered with a heavy sigh and thirty minutes going around the room with members frankly laying it all out. I couldn't imagine the stress that comes with being expected to come onto campus after one or two years of online learning. Now that I remember I've never asked them how they felt about it, but I know they always look forward to the next Forum meeting. I would get texts and bump into some of them on campus and they would excitedly greet, "Purrr!". The faces eager to engage in conversation have proved to be more involved and intentional to bettering themselves and those around them.

The Forum members have allowed themselves to learn more about who they are through the many resources that they find and continuously share with their peers in social spaces. The holiday program is a perfect example of that. Under the theme: Self Representation, Forum members were challenged with creating something that speaks to their personal overview. This was motivated by the anonymous questions members were prompted to ask when they signed up for the program, and state what they would like the program to cover. A number of questions alluded to intersectionality, race, and SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics). We would sit around the circle and try and figure out answers to questions about "Intersectionality with special focus on Black queer issues and the discourse between different races in the queer community as a result of it"; "Labels/ fluidity/ structures that support closeted queer individuals/ how to address lack of representation in schools"; "How racial activism, womens-rights activism and queer activism are all intersectionally connected."

As the conversations became more complex and thematic undertones of making a difference started to show, the program needed to accommodate this. This was also influenced by a need identified through attendees who came from Tembisa, Diepsloot, and Soweto. Introducing

§TIMES 11



Hloni at Ngwate LGBTQIA+ Parade, Free State. June 2022. Photographed by Obvious Nomaele.

After the successful Pride parade held for the student youth community in Braamfontein (JHB), and surrounding areas, GYF was invited to the Free State for a Pride celebration. Minimal information about this event was shared and as a result, we prepared a general approach, to share information about GYF and give support where needed. To honor the invitation a group of three young activists was taken along, namely: Penny, Mazizi, and Justin.

We travelled in the early hours of the morning to arrive at a small town named Vredefort based in Ngwathe Municipality. Upon arrival, we discovered that we were expected to lead the celebration with the support and resources provided by the Mayor. I assume this was because of the reputation we had set with the recent Pride celebration. We then quickly had to group together and come up with a plan of action.

themselves, they spoke about what they do in their communities and some of the challenges faced by the youth there. We had a conversation about sensitising the broader community on issues faced by LGBT-QIA+ people and unpacked why this might be the case. Figuring out the answer became the challenge of the day's program: how to strategically engage people on issues that we want to address and possibly ensure

the desired outcome. Everyone was then tasked with developing a campaign or program that addresses the challenges faced by youth in their communities.

Campaigns and programs included an educational roadshow that demystifies stereotypes around careers in the arts and culture sector and the Takashi Blue Foundation that aims to address issues faced by the queer community in Diepsloot. Others include community campaigns about sexual assault, Are Ratane (LGBTQIA+ Awareness) campaign in Thabazimbi; The birds, the bees and butterflies based in Orange Farm; Making Education interesting campaign - focusing on modern teaching ways that get students engaged; Earth Salvage awareness campaign that focuses on recycling in schools. With more where these came from, we can see how GALA YOUth Forum has grown into its own space.

What has been important up until this point is the development of awareness of the mindset and wellbeing through actionable conversations. This was only possible by creating a psychologically safe environment for all to exist. How that looks for GYF has, over time, been molded through the exchange of different groups. Making it known that people should not be afraid to speak up, take risks or make mistakes has created a healthy environment for conversation.

As we move back into the GALA library after some restricted access, I look forward to Forum members engaging with the books, not just as archival material, but also as tools to self-empowerment. I have also recently started to actively read books as continued learning for the different ways to augment my activism. A book entitled, How Do I Look? really challenged me to engage more with how I see myself in retrospect to how the world sees me. I picked it up because I was looking for something to prepare for my research work, but I ended up just reading it for myself. I hope the transition into the library fosters a spirit of continued curiosity among Forum members and a greater sense of agency that will see them create and recreate history that will help keep the archive alive.

## **Obvious Nomaele** (Youth Forum Coordinator)



The following are edited extracts from an oral history interview with Genevieve Jeanne Louw. The interview was conducted in person in Johannesburg on the 18th of July 2022, Genevieve's last day as Programmes Coordinator at GALA. Genevieve was interviewed by Karin Tan (GALA). The full transcript of the interview will be available on request.

**Pronouns:** They/Them/She/Her

Genevieve is a queer educator and activist, born in Benoni, Gauteng. They completed their Masters in Fine Art at Wits University in 2017. They cofounded SCOPE Facilitation in 2018 and is the co-director of Keep The Dream Arts. Genevieve has fulfilled the role of Progammes Coordinator at GALA between 2017 and 2022.

Karin (K): And now you are moving...

**Genevieve (G):** Now, we are moving to Sweden.

K: I've known this of you since we met, you've described it as being quite nomadic, quite adaptable. You've lived with various iterations of family and finding space wherever you go. But this is the first time you're moving outside of South Africa...?

**G:** It's the first time I'm moving outside of South Africa. I've lived in every kind of place you can imagine. If we look at my time in Cape Town as a young queer person, I've lived above bars, in dark dingy holes. I've lived with many people and I have moved around a lot, but I've never lived overseas. So yeah, It's an adventure.

K: There's a lot of interest, research and fascination with Joburg. Now that you're leaving, can you talk a bit about being queer in Joburg?

**G:** Johannesburg is a tough city to crack. I was privileged to be studying in the arts. So that's how I was introduced to the queer community here, which in itself is quite small and exists in different pockets. When I started working at GALA I realised that there's so much more to Johannesburg because of all the vast areas and spaces that exist outside of the city itself, like the Vaal or Daveyton or Soweto, or dare I say it, Pretoria? There's so much to discover in these pockets of queer communities as they're very different. There's still a lot of separation of race and class in our spaces. But Johannesburg, by all intents and purposes is an African city. You will meet people from across the continent regularly. You're exposed to different languages, cultures, and a lot more diversity. I love that about Johannesburg, I love the harshness of the city, as much as it can burn you, it will burn you. But Johannesburg has a very special place in my heart. There is still diversity, at least in in the queer community, because it's so big. It's a unique city. I'm very sad to leave, I will miss Johannesburg. I think that it has everything to do with the people. Not necessarily the city itself, but the people.

K: If you were a tiktok influencer, what's your angle? What would be your niche?
G: I would definitely make funny videos about my dogs.

## K: If you won the Lotto, what would you do with the money?

**G:** God, I literally know that if I won the Lotto the first thing I would do is go on holiday, somewhere tropical and warm

and beautiful. Then I would donate most of it to those organisations that I know are currently working without salaries. So I would be like, 'Okay, I will just become a philanthropist'. But before that I would go on holiday.

K: If you were to be reincarnated, what or who would you want to come back as? G: Hmm, I would like to be Keval Harie's cat. Any cat. I would just like to be a cat that lives in Keval Harie's home and is looked after by Keval Harie, because I will

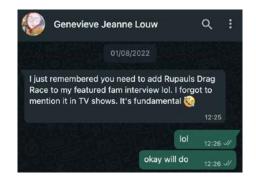
**K:** That's a good answer...

have the best life.

**G:** Ja, it would be a very soft life. Yeah?

## K: Can you tell me about any music, movies, tv shows, theatre, books, etc, that have been influential in your life?

**G:** I would say the most influential book is *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera. I'm a huge science fiction and fantasy fan. So there are a number of science fiction movies that have molded me. but perhaps the most influential series of sci-fi films that I can think of would be the *Alien* saga and the influence of the wonderful and great Sigourney Weaver. Everybody knows that I'm a huge Mariah Carey fan. Mariah is my number one diva. There are many musicians that I look up to, but most of them are women who are singer songwriters and divas.



## Featured Fam GENEVIEVE: GALA FAM FOREVER

K: Considering all the work you've done at GALA, could you please talk about your views on the current state of South Africa for queer people? And the queer activism you've been involved in?

**G:** It is important to note, we are in 2022, we are just coming out of a global pandemic. In the context of where we stand as an LGBTQIA+ community in South Africa, we are in crisis. I say this in the strongest sense of the word. Hate crimes in South Africa have spiked unbelievably in the last two years. Systemic violence has always been there, we know that, but right now I do believe we are in a space of crisis because the country is in a space of what seems to be unrest and turmoil and kind of trying- to sort of damage control.

So what happens with LGBTQIA+ people, specifically people who exist on the margins of the LGBTQIA+ community? There is a further marginalisation that occurs in a socio-political crisis, because they exist on the margins of all the problems that already exist. This includes black women, black transwomen, homeless people, transpeople and sex workers. These are people that I've deliberately worked with closely over the past number of years. So we are dealing with quite a lot of very real and very disturbing problems when it comes to accessing rights, but also just when it comes to survival.

As GALA's Programmes Coordinator, in the beginning, I was engaging school management teams, and I would see systemic violence in school spaces. Because the program shifted into a tertiary space, I started to see systemic violence in universities. In the past two years as a result of the pandemic and as a result of working in a lot of community work, I'm seeing not systemic violence, but very real gruesome violence on the ground, specifically targeting black queer folk, specifically of a lower income who do not live in urban centres.

However I'm privileged to say that I have been working with activists that taught me more than I could ever learn in any book or program. I want to specifically mention the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) because I've learned that there's community in crisis, but there are

organisations who are responding on the ground, who are forming community, who are resiliant and standing together. They are fighting against this violence in ways that we can't imagine in our privileged spaces, our ivory towers of academia, our ivory tower of the archive. That grassroots, community activism is about mobilising. It's about moving. And it's about making things happen with no resources. It's about making sure that justice is done.

If you go back in the archive and look at the work that was happening in the beginning of the gay and lesbian liberation movement in South Africa: we see protests, Bev Ditsie making a speech to the UN, big flare-ups of activism around sexual orientation, we see how Sally Gross included intersex in the [Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act]. We see how Sally Gross, as a government worker, was working on access to land in South Africa in the 90s. And then we see how in 2022 grassroots movements continue this legacy of South African activism, of not being quiet and standing on the side-lines, but taking justice into their own hands.

But I feel comforted by the fact that the space is held by people who are fighting for the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. I will mention Roché Kester, the director of the LGBTI desk of the Premier of Gauteng, has done an immense amount of work on policy and on hate crimes response. Jade Madingwane, Siphokazi Nombande, Fundi Ndaba, Steve Letsike, who, in the space of Gauteng are responding to hate crimes on a policy level and on a level of monitoring court cases and response level in order to ensure harsher sentences for perpetrators. I'm proud to say that I could play a small supportive role in some of

the protests that happened over the past couple of years that address hate crimes, and gender-based violence. This is the reality that we are in right now in a socio political context. We are responding to hate crimes.

We also have to think about this globally. We cannot exist in a South African bubble. It is a big problem for us as South Africans, we only want to look inward. Regionally, we know criminalisation laws are still in practice. We know of the issues our comrades face across the borders in Africa. Nevermind the fact that LGBTQIA+ rights are being questioned globally as a result of movements that want to erase the existence of gender and sexual diversity. It's to further the colonial and heterosexual, cisnormative project. It's to further a conservative, alt-right movement that is rising across the world and is affecting all of us.

So where do we stand now, in relation to LGBTQIA+ rights in South Africa? We are on the precipice of getting the hate crimes and hate speech bill passed on a constitutional level. At the same time, we are in an uncertain space, not only legislatively, but socially and politically we do not know where we stand in relation to our rights as LGBTQIA+ people because we do not have clear communication from government on protections. Yet, we have a very progressive constitution. It's a very difficult and troublesome space to be in.

But like I said, the resilience and care and strength of these activists - this includes organisations like Gender DynamiX, Triangle Project, FEW Vaal LGBTI, Taung LGBTI, D'Gayle Diamonds in Kimberley - these grassroots organisations that I've engaged with over the years prove that there are ways to access justice, they are just not formal ways. They will protest outside of court and make sure there are rainbows and trans flags inside of the court until there is sentencing.

There's uncertainty, but there's also hope. There's always this dichotomy in activism. On the one hand, it's very difficult. You're treading through dark waters. On the other hand, you're in a queer space so you're bound to meet resilience because that's what Queer is about. Queer community is about resilience. It's about being subversive despite immense challenges.

#### QUEERING THE SOUTH AFRICAN CURRICULUM TO PROTECT LGBTIQA+ YOUTH



GALA staff engaging St Mary's, Waverly around SOGIESC and the history of queer activist movements of the 1980s as part of the Matric History curriculum

May 1996 marked South Africa as the first jurisdiction in the world to cater to the constitutional protection of queer bodies through section 9(3) of the South African Constitution. This section prohibits any discrimination on race, gender, sexual orientation, and other grounds. The South African Constitution is notably one of the best Constitutions in the world, and the Bill of Rights is instilled in us in primary school classes. One of the founding values of the Bill is non-racialism and non-sexism wherein all citizens are equally entitled to these rights and thus making everyone equal before the law; therefore, all sorts of discrimination, directly or indirectly, are shunned. If perfectly implemented, the Constitution would be our shield. It is infuriating to know that twenty-six years post the decriminalisation and legalisation of homosexuality in South Africa, we are seemingly no different from where we were prior to May 1996.

The month of August, alone, was marred with the deaths of Lukhanyo Jonggo and Tiro Moalusi, two teenage queer bodies who committed suicide after recounting experiences of bullying. Lukhanyo was just fourteen while Tiro was fifteen. They were both so young, so one can only imagine the magnitude of their sorrow and the shame of just being they must have carried. Both allegedly experienced sever homophobia at their respective schools. The common thread that runs through these two ordeals is the notion that many educators either lack or simply do not have the necessary expertise or skill to manage queer bodies in educational facilities i.e., schools. The irony is that one of the places where they should have felt safe and protected was the cause of their torment by the very same people who were assigned their protection. Their deaths have become catalysts for the much-needed ongoing conversation. We need to know who is holding the perpetrators responsible and why no action was taken by the gatekeepers of the institutions meant to protect them.

Collectively, as a society, we have failed these two young boys by not protecting them and by not having bodies within the institutions that are equipped to look after the students' mental well-being. Our Constitution, which we pride ourselves on being among the best in the world is, for a lack of a better phrase, a 'white elephant' in the sense that it offers no real purpose for the people that it should be serving. How, then, do we counter this in an attempt of minimising its recurrence? By radically implementing extensive Standard Operational Procedures in accordance with queer education within schooling sectors; particularly from grassroots levels. Teachers need to get sensitivity training on how to handle gender, in general, but particularly queerness within the classroom. Although Comprehensive

Sexuality Education (CSE) has been part of the South African curriculum for almost 20 years, the tremendous sacrifices Lukhanyo Jungqu, Tiro Moalusi made for the LGBTQIA+ community should remind the Department of Basic Education (DBE) of the need for an emphasis on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESCs) within the curriculum. Teachers need expert training and learners are neither actively involved in the learning process nor the development of the program as they need and would like to be. Learners' voices, collaboration, cultural contexts, and needs are fundamental to the development and delivery of CSE. The teaching method and content of sex education should meet the contemporary needs of the 21st-century youth to ensure the optimal inclusion of SOGIESCs.

**Bonke Sonjani** (GALA Intern)

#### **Donate to GALA**

The GALA Archive is a living archive. This means that we never stop collecting.

Do you have documents, posters, flyers, photographs, t-shirts or other items you would like to donate? Do you want your story, or that of your organisation, recorded and/or preserved? Your stories and contributions are important. Help us document the present in order to preserve the past.

Your contribution matters.

Please contact our Archive Coordinator, Linda Chernis: linda.chernis@wits.ac.za

Donations of books with queer content are welcome additions to the Cooper-Sparks Library that is housed at the GALA offices.

GALA is a non-profit organisation that relies solely on donor funding. Any and all donations are welcome.

You can donate to: Bank name: Investec

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