

## **"Faith As A Sanctuary Webinar"**

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Facilitator: Jacqui Benson (JB)

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Moderator: Justice Edwin Cameron (EC)

Panelists: Imam Muhsin Hendricks (IMH), Dr. Anastacia Tomson (AT), and Author Siya Khumalo (SK)

Organisers: Nima Taylor (NT), Jacqui Benson (JB), Thuli Mjwara (TM), Laurie Gaum (LG), Beulah Durrheim (BD), Michelle Boonzaaier (MB) and Iman Muhsin Hendricks (IMH)

Transcriber: Wenzile Thwala

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Justice Edwin Cameron moderates a panel discussion with author Siya Khumalo, Imam Muhsin Hendricks, and Dr. Anastacia Tomson, on the topic "Faith as Sanctuary: Can LGBTQIA's trust in faith during a pandemic of violence?"

BD: Welcome everybody, thank you so much for taking the time to join us today at this webinar that is especially an opportunity for us small but mighty group of inclusive faith organisations to share with you an opportunity to have a conversation. We have march together many of us at pride events behind a banner that says "faith communities unite against discrimination" as a queer collective that is affirming we have been feeling quite devastated and really deeply concerned about the escalating violence that is happening with the LGBTQIA community in South Africa. We know as well that often a lot of these violent acts are born out of religion and they are often done in the name of religion, so this much-needed conversation has been decided to have an IDAHO which is International Day against Homophobia Biphobia and Transphobia. May you be fully blessed and engaged in this conversation and I hand over to my colleague Jacqui to introduce the amazing panelists that we have for you today. thank you so much beauty and the beast and (00:28).

JB: Thank you so much Beulah and it has been said my name is Jacqui Benson and I have the pleasure and honour of introducing our esteemed moderator and panelists for this afternoon's webinar our moderator is well-known to many of us and needs little introduction. Edwin Cameron retired as a Constitutional Court Judge in 2019 after 25 years of service as Judge he is now Inspecting Judge of Prisons and Chancellor of Stellenbosch University. He's been a queer activist for many years and we're extremely grateful that he accepted our invitation to moderate this afternoon's important discussion. Moving to our panelists in alphabetical order Anastacia Tomson is a medical doctor, author, and activist in the field of LGBTQIA+ rights. as an assigned Jewish at the birth queer woman she uses her intersection of lived experience and professional training to spread understanding and awareness. Imam Muhsin Hendricks is the world's first openly queer Imam, religious leader, and queer activist in the Muslim community. He

is also a training facilitator on Islam, sexual orientation, and gender identity and he holds the position of Executive Director for the (inaudible at 03:22) Foundation which is based in Cape Town.

And our final panelist, he looks like he's coming from outer space today but really not, based in Joburg Siya Khumalo has got this to say, after being reprimanded at a dinner party for talking about religion, politics, and sex in polite company, quite a combination. Siya Khumalo wrote a number of analysis that culminated in a book titled "You have to be gay to know God" which was published by Kwela Books in April 2018 Made the long list of the Sunday Times Alan Paton Literary award in 2019 also the shortlist for the University of Johannesburg debut prize and won the Desmond Tutu Gerard Bryant literary prize. Add to this, Siya is ex-military and Mr. Gay South Africa, a runner up to Mr. Gay World is why he is on top of the world right now. As a top 10 finest and he rounds out our panel today. Each of these extraordinary people have an incredible depth of knowledge and personal experience to share with us and it really demands more than one and a half hours and no doubt today's discussion will hopefully open the possibility of future conversations down the line, so without further ado over to you Justice Edwin Cameron.  
(01:51).

EC: Jacqui, thank you so much what a joy for joining I want to thank you and Beulah and I also want to thank someone that hasn't been profiled yet, every Reverend Nima Taylor who has taken with you as well an enormous amount of trouble for this to happen. I welcome all our participants we are absolutely overjoyed, we are about 60 people at the moment, we going to have a terrific discussion. I want to say just this about the panelists, they reflect the beauty, the fragility, and the determination of the LGBTIQ community. I Know Dr. Anastacia, I've had dinner with her it was a big dinner but nevertheless, we were privileged to sit next to each other.

I've had breakfast with Siya Thokoza Khumalo and I was involved in the production of his book. Imam Muhsin, I'm looking forward to helping with your book, having dinner having breakfast whatever is appropriate when we get to meet. So fragility, beauty I'm very glad that Beulah has already said that monotheism has wreaked tremendous destruction on queer people over the last 2500 years. So, yet we have very profoundly insightful people who are seeking to quest for truth in their lives through faith. Siya Thokoza we start with you because you are first on the program and also I think because you're youngest that that's not intended as a reprimand to Anastacia or to Muhsin. (04:50)

SK: Ok so I'm guessing at this point we discuss the significance of faith in our own lives. I think everybody has a story and this is one of the reasons when you are a writer you have lots of people mentoring and guiding you to use your story to reach out to people. I'm looking at you judge because everybody has a life story and one of the things I struggled with growing up was orienting my personal story in the story of the community I came from so I was raised in part Christian and in part traditional cultural Zulu. Sometimes there was conflict and tension between those two ways of viewing the world and in both those places I had to justify my existence in Zulu culture by growing up to find a bride, have children, lobola the whole nine yards, and

Christianity you will have a wife a house with a big a picket fence and 2.4 kids and a dog, the whole nine yards and also be part of the church and give 10% of your income and I still wonder what people are doing to be able to part with 10% of their income in churches but that's a story for another day.

And what happened instead because I understood that I didn't fit that story was I got stuck completely in my life, so a lot of things that people took for granted like going to their matric just figuring out what they want to do it the rest of their lives all of that was just on hold. Doctors thought I was depressed they thought I had anxiety issues and those I think were all symptoms of me feeling believing fundamentally that I didn't fit into it any story, so what they realised well you actually can query the stories you've been told so you can interrogate them on their own terms. So if somebody comes to me with the Bible and says this is what the Bible says, I have the right to take that Bible and say well if these are the premises you're coming with here is where it doesn't add up here are the logical consequences of what you believe and this is maybe why have things like gender-based violence.

And the same thing can be said about the culture we have gender-based violence, we have problems in politics and in society and I realised that queer people have a very powerful role to play in adjusting the heteronormative or the wife husband picket fence worldviews of straight people as they go about building the world. Because often they have their blind spots that they can't see that we can because we've stepped outside the structures they created we've looked at the world they are creating and we have taken the time to question it, because if we can't fit into it then at some point nobody can, at some point there's just not going to be enough room for everyone and then that I realised was my purpose in life, that is my story so that's my answer to that question, thank you. (06:34).

EC: Thank you Siya Thokoza, we want to hear much more from you and I'm gonna give you a punt and I'm going to give doctor Anastasia a punt as well, Imam Muhsin I don't know if you've written a book haven't found it if you have but I know both Siya's book, Siya often writes for the Daily Maverick websites and doctor Anastacia has written the most moving and informative and insightful book and I recommend them to everyone, Siya you not going to get away with such a short input I warned panelists that we gonna give you 10 to 12 minutes you gonna have to come back dutifully to fulfill your 10 to 12 minutes oh that was provocative, interesting as always but we want more of you. Imam Muhsin, you are second in the order of the advert and will come to doctor Anastacia third, Iman. (09:39)

IMH: Thank you so much, it is indeed an honour to be part of this panel today maybe I can take one or two extra minutes of Siya's time since I got such a long story and I actually made notes for the day. So I thought maybe just telling my story and hopefully, it will answer a lot of questions for people in terms of how one can possibly deal with faith and our sexual orientation and gender identities. So I was born in June 1967 into a traditional Muslim household in Cape Town and my grandfather was an Imam or the spiritual leader of our community mosque which was sort of a stone throw away from my birth house. and my childhood centered around this mosque and my life was pretty much shaped by my religious upbringing. My mother was a

teacher in the mosque, my father was a Sufi spiritual healer, and Sufism for those who don't know it comprises of all the mystical beliefs and practices in Islam where the Sufi sort of seeks through his own personal experiences a divine connection and unity with God and so Sufism from a very early age played an important role in my journey towards self-acceptance and reconciling with Islam.

So Islam became an indelible part of my identity, growing up I was constantly taunted for being effeminate, I realised that my community did not accept who I was and to protect myself and in the absence of a safety net I gradually withdrew from society to such an extent that I almost passed my entire teenage life in isolation and emotional disconnect. I had no one to whom I could share my feelings with and my experiences and my pain because at that time we didn't have that kind of support that we have today and also orthodox Islam does not allow for sexual expression and feelings outside of this heteronormative paradigm. And so for the sake of acceptance and belonging, I was hiding my true self from the world for the very long time, and the constant negative messages from my community about who I should be distorted my self-image, and because of that I was slowly developing an unhealthy relationship with God and with Islam.

I would only do good things because I feared divine punishment and I resented myself at the time for being gay and I resented God for making me gay. And then I was also introduced to god the concept of God through my grandfather's sermons and he would often talk about God is God is infinitely merciful, indiscriminately compassionate but at the same time you would also talk about a God that's very angry and a God that's ready to punish us whenever we do something wrong I didn't want my experience of God to be like this because I felt that God was always there for me in my times of loneliness. And God was also for me not the voice of my grandfather so I could not accept this contradiction and then I developed a desire from a very early age to study the Quran for myself so people thought I was gonna go to Pakistan to study to become an Imam but it was really just to get answers for myself, so when I was 21 I won a scholarship to study in Pakistan and that is where I completed my Islamic studies.

So in a desire to be loved and accepted by my family and my community I also married a woman with whom I had three children and as much as I tried to hide my true self the universe found ways to remind me of my inner authenticity and so three months down the line being in this marriage I fell in love with my best friend and slowly my marriage started to deteriorate and by the third year, I had no more desire for physical intimacy with my wife. forcing myself to have sex to please her sexually was a painful experience and still, my boyfriend also got the pressure of having to get married and his family arranged a marriage for him he had to move to the United States and his memory taunts haunted me and I just wanted to complete my studies and return back home forget about him and just focusing on my relationship with my wife and my children and so upon our return to South Africa, my wife and I decided to refocus on the marriage and the children but to no avail and after 6 years of having trying to conform to this heteronormative needs of my community.

I was suffering depression and I decided after six years to end the marriage because it was only bringing pain to both of us and it was the most difficult decision that I had to take because I knew the divorce was also meant that I was also been going to be separated from my children but the desire to free myself at that time was stronger than the need to conform to social norms simply for the sake of acceptance so I moved out of the house and I left all my belongings behind for my children and as I had nowhere to go, a friend of mine offered a small room next to the horses stable and on his uncle's farm and he said you know you can clean it out and we can use it. So I vowed to fast indefinitely for as long as I was staying there until god gave me give me some guidance as to what it is that I need to do with my life, what was my life's purpose. And in those moments of seclusion of prayer and fasting were truly the most healing and strengthening moment in my journey, after 80 days of non-stop fasting I experienced an overwhelming sense of serenity and of self-acceptance and a renewed love for creator. I started to appreciate the blessings in my challenges and I began to realise that I was being prepared to fulfill my life's purpose and at that point, I was no longer prepared to be defined by religious dictum, I needed to disconnect from institutionalized Islam and to go on this journey of self-discovery and only when I gave myself permission to challenge my limiting beliefs and the heteronormative context in which I grew up in or into, did I realise that I was not in the reflexive adherence to a religious tradition that I found my spirituality but in authentic self-expression.

religion was standing in my way at that time in connecting with God and my purpose and after having lived in seclusion on my friends' farm for almost 3 months I then decided to declare my sexual orientation publicly. There was the headlines in the Weekend Argus for those who still no the Argus it read "gay imam comes out of the closet" yes naturally I feared for my life at the time but the need for me to be authentic was greater than the fear of death and although I was prepared to die somehow I felt that this was not the end of my life but really the beginning of a new chapter in my life, one that is unrestricted and self-defined. And so I felt that my relationship with God was being strengthened and restored, I was then able to recognise that the multiple challenges that I've been through that I sometimes viewed as God's punishment for my homosexuality was actually God constantly redirecting me to be authentic with myself.

Such experiences have made me realise how limited sometimes we can be in our understanding of universal justice and of universal compassion, and as I journeyed into the unknown on a part that most people would prefer to avoid, my life's purpose became clear, I understood that my isolation my pain and my life's experiences were preparing me to help queer Muslims to reconcile their sexual orientation and gender identity with Islam. And the day I decided to step out of my comfort zone I lost my family members, some friends but I've also gained a lot of love and a lot of respect and gratitude from so many people across the globe, and as painful as it was to disconnect from those whom I loved or those who were no longer serving me I trusted that the new relationship that will be formed were relationships that were helping me to be reformed.

And so for me, the path to authenticity is a road less traveled but it's truly a rewarding one if we are prepared to face the challenges and to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of being genuinely happy and successful. So I rediscovered Islam and this time not through religious

customs and rituals but through the values of Islam through the values that was important to us in the Quran. The famous poem poet Rumi he once said that whatever you are seeking is also seeking you, and through being authentic with myself I came to discover that what I was actually seeking was already within me, but I could not receive it only once I break or broke down my walls of fear and self-delusion and if not for my authenticity in embracing my queen is I would not be there been have been able to stand in the mirror today and say very proudly, I am a multiplicity of complexities and vast ocean of possibilities and I thank God for being Queer, thank you. (10:41)

EC: Imam Muhsin I think what you and Siya Thokoza have both shown us is the difficulty of finding the courage and the determination sometimes through depression as you said I know Siya has experienced the same to assert yourself and to find your own authenticity as against the distortions imposed on you I found that very moving and I found that very moving in Siya's book and I want to thank you on behalf of the entire audience for your testimony today I think it is revelatory too many of us. Before I go on to doctor Anastacia which I'm going to do with delight in about 23 seconds, I do want to tell you that because our panelists have been so succinct, we going to have a really good time for discussion and questions please go to the q&a, I already see there's one question there about South Asian LGBTQI from Matilda, we thank you for that question, Matilda. please put your questions in Jacqui and Nima are going to monitor them and transmit them to us because it will be difficult for us on the panel to check the q&a all the time but there will be plenty of time your input and presence here this evening is an act of solidarity or an act of questioning we also very very willing to be questioned and challenged so please go to the q&a and do that. Doctor Anastacia don't it's my great joy I know too many people who are also your patients in sea point and in Cape Town so I know things about you in your therapeutic and clinical and healthcare mode which I'm very proud of but I'm also proud of your whole life please would you share some of it with us. (22:44)

AT: It would be my absolute pleasure and of course before I dive into anything I just wanna thank you Justice Edwin Cameron for the wonderful introduction and indeed the warmth and the generosity of spirit and I will extend to all the panelists here today who are standing in front of a group of absolute strangers and generously sharing some very very intimate details of their lives and their experiences. And I think one of the common threads that we are queer folk in South Africa especially if we're visible queer folk and if we take that upon ourselves to stand up and be counted and to speak out against injustice and against the abuse of Human rights. so many times where we're told that what we're doing is so brave is so courageous and I respect the intention behind the comments and I understand where it comes from and my retort is always I don't feel like I'm being brave and I think many of us will echo the sentiment.

Many of us in the community will say that we don't feel like it's bravery when the choice that we're faced with is one of life and death, it's no longer about bravery it's about you have to do this if you want to survive, it's like survival instinct and it's not just for ourselves as individuals but indeed it's for the communities that we are part of. and you know this is really the crux of the issue that has led us to this particular discussion is this wave of violent hate crime against people in this community and you know I think it's a tragedy that that's happened I think it's also

tragic that we've had to endure that in order to open the conversation about how faith fits into this framework of human identity and I think that's really important. and what it comes down to for me and I'll put it out I am a medical doctor as you've alluded to Justice and I hope that I'm a good one I'll leave that up to the jury to decide, in terms of faith and religion you know I'm not a preacher, I'm not a rabbi, I am not a duo mini I am thoroughly unqualified to speak on anything except my own personal lived experience as a queer Jewish woman.

Certainly, I was brought up in Johannesburg, I attended what was by all standards a very orthodox Jewish school and you know I know that I know that one of the first ways in which I feel like that system failed me was that we didn't talk about queer identity. we didn't talk about LGBTQIA, it was and I always say to people it's so important to understand this by refusing to speak about something you are making one of the most powerful statements of all, you are saying there's something wrong with this there's something taboo with this and you know it expands because we use all of the pejorative terms you know the word queer I wave my flag today but queer was such a horribly loaded pejorative know that there's other words that we use for people in the LGBTQIA+ community likes "faggot" and "dyke" this baggage Laden words that make you the butt of the joke, make you the target of violence and somehow it's it's seen as funny that someone might be different, might be or might be lesbian, they become a target of this emotional abuse.

And often that extends into much more tangible much more physical abuse not to say that emotional abuse isn't and of itself very profoundly damaging and of course, it's it's something that should be condemned really what I'm getting at is that growing up as a child in this environment with the kind of education and social structures that I grew up with, no one sat me down and said to me that queer people are broken or defective in this, of course, this happens in many institutions of faith this happens we practice conversion therapy and all sorts of horrible things that didn't happen to me I just carried with me that understanding that if you're different on one or more of these axes there's something so intrinsically terribly wrong with you that we don't even speak about it and I think that's where the trauma began for me and probably for many other people in these communities.

But starts from even looking into the mirror and trying to understand who you are, it makes you put all of your energy and all of your resources into trying to fit in and you know certainly so many aspects of Imam Muhsin's story resonated with me and the trauma that experience of trying to conform to a set of standards that are so far and foreign to you and so arbitrary that you never signed up for, because you know that if you don't there will be consequences to that and that consequence can be ostracisation from the community, it can be losing your home, your access to education, your livelihood, your friends, it can't be losing life or limb and for so many people it is. So I carry the baggage with me as many of us do and it prevented me from introspecting due to the lack of resources, lack of understanding, the lack of education preventing me from understanding who I was or trying to figure out what it was about me that made me different.

I knew that I was different, I knew that if I behaved in the ways that come naturally to me I would attract some kind of backlash that I had no appetite for and that I probably possibly wouldn't have been able to endure. but there comes a point when that final straw threatens to break the camel's back and you cannot, it's unsustainable, you cannot continue to live the double life and to suppress who you are on the inside and at that point of reckoning I know that I was very much just dismayed, disappointed, shocked and hurt at the reception that I was afforded by the religious community around me, now I won't go into details as Justice Cameron has said there's a book if you want to read more about it, but I didn't get to come out on my own terms I was outted against my will and the backlash from now from someone who was read by society as a nice Jewish boy who actually wasn't bad and sent a scandal and the same business that surrounded as you know I am I like to I like to use the line that after the news broke after I was outted against my will. I was the subject of conversation out on every table in Norwood and Glenhazel that Friday night though had an invitation to none of them. and it was a bitter pill to swallow and it was at that moment that I thought this proves to me beyond any shadow of a doubt that there is no way for me to reconcile my identity with my faith I have to divorce it. I said Judaism and I were done and we're seeing other people.

And for a while that was that but it left a void inside me I realised when I did finally have the maturity and enough time had passed for the wounds to not to heal but at least form a little bit of scar tissue around them. I had the introspection and I said my faith is as much a part of my identity as my queerness, as my transness, as my being a lesbian woman, as my being part of the asexual community as anything else about me, as my politics, my ethics, my principles, my career, my hobbies, it's part of who I am and to have stripped away from you is a trauma, a profound trauma even worse than nice to have your own faith weaponized against you and this is what people do, they use faith as a vehicle to couch their own prejudice instead of standing in front of queer people and saying I bring you this message on behalf of the Divine whatever deity and might be I bring you this message that there is something wrong with you that you are an abomination and these are words that have been used in reference to me I'm sure more of my fellow panelists will be able to identify with this than I would want. But words like an abomination are an affront to God and it's a couch it's a vessel to hide your own prejudice inside of

Because one of the fundamental tenets of my faith and I'm sure that as many other people are that we are created in the image of the Divine I have the Divine spark within me any kind of diversity that is manifested my identity is a representation of the diversity of whatever divine energy it is that underlies all of these experiences and I don't think that a loving divinity forces a test on anyone that makes them feel guilty and ashamed for love for practicing self-love or loving someone else. And it hurts me it brings me to absolute tears, and I'm aware that I've got two of my 10 minutes left as I'm keeping an eye on it. But it pains me in such a profound manner to see how religion and faith which is such a tool for comfort and healing in difficult times for people and we have lived through some of the most difficult times in anyone's living memory over the past 15 months now. Of how something with such a potential for doing good in this world can be turned against people and be used as an instrument and a weapon and an excuse for violence, and that people are losing their lives and I think it's so much the responsibility of

the institutions of faith to stand up and to say no more, we will not condone or allow this, not on our watch.

because we can have these philosophical debates about whether you think that is who I am and if my life is right or wrong in a biblical sense but at the end of the day you will have a hard time convincing me whether you are Jewish Christian Muslim or whatever other religion that you have the right to judge is yours, the right to practice love and acceptance and tolerance is yours. But it's not just a right it's a responsibility and it is costing the lives of our community so to everyone who sits here today listening to us and get you to take this message to heart it's not just the handle of queer folk telling you our stories we trying to make you understand that our brothers and sisters or siblings people we know and love people you know that love by dying and losing their lives because remaining silent is making the strongest statement of all, thank you I yield my remaining 30 seconds to the gentleman from Mars. (24:48)

EC: Dr. Anastacia, I knew that was going to be upsetting, unsettling, and deeply moving and I thank you for bringing that, I thank all three panelists. We have powerful questions, we're going to get to them now and I want to thank you all for leaving time for questions because we are respectful of our participants who are now 70. before I do that I want to underscore an implicit theme in everything you've said. it's the 27th year anniversary of the world breakthrough that South Africa achieved on the 27th of April 1994 when we became the first country ever anywhere on the globe to include the word sexual orientation in our founding document our constitution. and yet as you point out there is still a lot of grief, persecution homophobia, violence, even murder against us, and of course all of this is magnified enormously manifold across the African continent.

Uganda, Tanzania hope that the new President we hope perhaps, Imam Muhsin that the new president of Tanzania will listen to you, will understand better than her appallingly queer obsessed homophobic predecessor. President Lungu of Zambia who has a preoccupation with queers across Africa. Cameroon people are being beaten brutalized arrested thrown in jail and two trans women were accused in court of attempted homosexuality. So I merely underscore that and I want to turn to the questions, they are some splendid questions Frank Malaba himself a writer and poet asks about people who have experienced Bible abuse and I want to get to that because the question links into that from Beulah herself which is can we find space in the monotheistic and other religions that have so persecuted abusers who have so implanted in us internal stigma about our queerness, I grew up feeling ashamed in my adolescence when I realised that I must be all of these queer gay homosexual people I felt inexpressible shame imprinted into me by 2500 years of monotheistic faith. so can I ask the panel generally and I'm gonna start with Siya Thokoza, Beulah's question is there space within faith within faith that has been so abusive, and can you expand your answer to encompass Frank Malaba's question about how do we deal with people who have been systematically abused by the Bible and in ways that many of you have already what solace do we offer and we ask that question first Siya Thokoza, Imam Muhsin, doctor Anastacia (37:23)

SK: I love the where I can be thrown into the deep end before the other panelists. Yeah, Zulu people have done a lot to this country There are affirming churches and denominations so one simple answer is you look one of them up you attend you and enroll as a congregant and you get on with your life. The organisations are there that churches are there, but if I were to expand my knowledge I've always said I'm not the one who's looking for a space in the churches up the ones deciding whether the church even belongs either to the 21st century. I mean there's a verse in 1 Corinthians that point to the Bible you see what you've done there's a verse from the Bible that that says don't you know you will judge angels. so there's this idea that our pictures of who's in charge and who's in power have to be flipped around so just when you think it's the institutions that are judging individuals it turns out its individuals who can actually put institutions into judgement. we have far more power to do with that than we realised, as long as we see ourselves as the victims of institutions that shamed us rather than empowered by God to speak to these institutions that made the picture, once the picture gets fixed in your mind you have to at some point make a decision that you're now turning it around your owning your faith journey and you're taking along your tribe with you.

So you have to be rather bold and for me, this kind of boldness comes from reading the Bible itself and you can go to any religious scripture you'll start to get the same subversion that happens where justice falls on the side of the marginalized. if you read the New Testament it was not to theologians that the elusive Jesus for an example so the religious people I'm sorry it was theologians crucified Jesus in the New Testament so they're very religious people end up crucifying Jesus and then the very sinful people receive the holy spirit about 50 40 days later. There are all these referrals throughout the New testament so when you see an institution that claims to speak for God you have to go how how how is there this picture in the secret scripture and then in real life as a complete reversal of that picture and and and for me one of the best texts for this is the book of revelation I think more people I think it's a book word reading at least once every year because it uses a lot of symbolism to depict powerful institutions as beasts and monsters and dragons and be and and and and all sorts of violent entities. But the marginalised are lambs and they are followers of the lamb. so when does the picture and then sometimes some of these beasts pass themselves off as being on the side of Christians or people who love god generally and then when you get gaslighted by religious institutions as opposed to have to come into believing what you instinctively and intuitively know over what you been told because it's not as if they're giving them over yourself they look bigger and more powerful when you realise that God has always existed inside of you and I believe that by default human beings are capable of both god's presence in them as well as the potential for rejecting goodness, so both potentialities are born with us when you realise that god's voice has always existed as the voice of justice inside you, the gaslighting, it comes under control. (40:49)

It comes under control and when it comes under control you don't get instantly healed of everything is gone through but it does fall into a perspective where you realise we are in a war and in wars there are casualties, you are the casualty of war but you haven't been destroyed, you actually still have the possibility of winning this war. And that's the other thing I mean I don't know if I'm going too far from the question that was initially asked. I just do believe that we need to put our individual struggles in a context that encourages and strengthens us to fight on. one

of the most important things to remember about this war is God wins, God win's the institutions don't, the institutions will have to adapt or die. they will have to evolve or they will fall back into history and the only way they can keep up, this is a huge paradox that I'm about to go into and it is something a lot of queer people have said hurts too much to even think about, a lot of queer people have said religious text needs to be declared hate speech and banned into the archives of history.

I don't think that's true I think that everything that grows has a very deep roots and sometimes the roots that they are growing into have manure and so as problematic as the context of the cultures that our scriptures come from they may very well be the soil in which some of these institutions will have to sink their rules in order to grow as far into the future as they can. because we do need very progressive religious not institutions as such but maybe think tanks or leaders if we are going to be grappling with issues like the fourth industrial Revolution, bioethics everything that's now coming at us for which we have not as yet developed ethics is still grappling with issues like two people have a right to do with their bodies what hurts nobody else. so I understand the battle but once you start to put it in context answers start to realise that because you're born in love, through love, you were born on the winning side. most people don't realise is so that's why the war just seems relentless it seems completely apparent if you may feel paralyzed me feel like you're in despair until you realise actually were born in love and that you were born on the team that is going to win, God will win, by God I mean cosmic love. By hook or by crook will either extinguish ourselves refusing to learn basic lessons like how to look after one another after the world or we will learn those lessons and survive at we need institutions that are going to evolve with us so that I can say the best way other than just simply joining and affirming ministry is to is to internalize the fact that you are on the winning team and at that encourages you to be more active participative, it returns your agency and kind of diminishes a sense of victimhood relative to everything that's happened so that's my view on that. (40:49)

EC: Many thanks Siya, you are saying that one can seize ones own autonomy that one come through assertiveness claim that voyage of self-discovery that all three panelists spoken about well that that's not possible for everyone especially when in the circular world, material world people are often living in terror people are often living insubordination, but you are setting an ideal and you are setting up the inspiration for people and you are telling them to internalize the idea that there on the winning side, which is inspiring that my worry is that in the material world there's still so much enormous persecution and suffering or do we say to those two transwomen in Cameroon. and I think that you were your words would be inspiring to them and perhaps they'll be able to enact them in their lives, Imam Muhsin and Doctor Anastacia before you and Doctor Anastacia go we've got a lot of questions we also got our private WhatsApp group in which our coordinators and facilitators are suggesting who should answer the questions. I'm gonna ask you to do answer the question that I've pasted and then to deal with the other question that have been assigned to you. Doctor Anastacia I'm gonna ask you to do the same and then Siya Thokoza I'm going to come back to you. (47:32)

IMH: So I think I can just add onto to the experiences of Siya and Dr. Anastasia, and I think one thing that I would really like people to leave with today is the realisation of a different kind of faith that is emerging out of personal experiences beyond religious tradition. And I think that people should hold onto, not necessarily you know the orthodox in the traditions that we were brought up with and I also wanted thank doctor Anastacia for her contribution because it's as you rightfully said that does sound very similar to my experiences and I don't know if it could because Muslims and Jews are cousins and so we have similar experiences. but the necessity of having to leave organised religion for some time to just go and then question your own authenticity, your own faith, you somehow discover that your sexual orientation is actually a blessing you know, and for people to get to that point where they can see them embrace themselves completely as you know God has gifted me with this you know uniqueness that's almost the journey won you know. so I think people shouldn't be afraid of questioning faith or questioning the religion and even scripture and then you know sort extract from our scriptures positive messages, messages of compassion, messages of inclusivity. and we find this in all our different scriptures so I guess what I'm saying is reclaiming our faith and I wanna sort of answer Matilda's question also about representation.

At the time when I came out of the closet more than 30 years ago there was no representation for us. I was completely alone on the journey and today I can proudly say that because of my work and work with a lot of other queer Muslims around the world, there are many more inclusive spaces around the world. So getting in touch with these inclusive spaces really helps you know and access to information that can really help to reconcile with faith. Just to conclude I look at two similar experiences with the prostitute in Christianity who anointed Jesus's feet you know and other ways you know Jesus sort of included her in that practice the same happened with the prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, when he said that the prostitute who has given water to the thirsty dog has entered heaven, so its these marginalised stories about our prophets and now that sort of gives us the understanding that faith is not necessarily you know within the churches or scriptures but it's within our personal experiences and it is with the marginalized (49:11)

AT: Thanks so much for the insightful answers from the other panelists, I've come back to that original question, is it possible that there can be a space for queer people in the faith community and space for healing, and I think the answer is yes, I think the answer is yes. I know that when I found that when I reflected on that void that I felt and I realised that I'm not, I'm not willing to allow my faith to be taken from me without any agency on my part. I realised that there are spaces in Judaism that are more progressive and more focused on human rights and who apply a different lens to things on which is to say that just because this is the way that we've done things for thousands of years doesn't mean it's the way we should keep doing them I reflect on this because I'm a medical doctor if I were to treat diabetes and high blood pressure now the way that we did thousands of years ago I would be facing several lawsuits on the grounds of medical negligence. You know we have to understand the role of faith and scripture and religion within the context of society and I'm gonna pivot this and try and take a couple of questions from the box. One of the questions was around language and particularly the word queer and you know I'd love to talk about language I can talk about language for hours, I won't do it now, but

language is such a limited tool, it's all that we have to communicate with each other, this very constrained set of characters and words that we form into sentences but it's inherently limited.

And I'm trying to use language like LGBTQIA+ to describe a breadth of, an expanse of human experience more than 7 billion people on this planet, this beautiful planet that you see in the background sitting behind Siya. everyone has a different lived experience and to think that LGBTQIA+ I'm gonna encapsulate the experiences and the identity of 7 billion people with eight characters it's it's absurd. So the language has to do its best to keep up with human experience but it doesn't define the human experience and I think that's why when we speak about a word like queer is something very different, it's still painful for a lot of people I accept that I respect that but it's also important for us as people who are part of this community to say we get to decide what the language is and what it means. We get to decide what it means to take that agency back, you cannot use it as a weapon against us if we are the ones who are writing the definitions, and I think this is what needs to happen with faith and with the interpretation of faith because we have to understand that societal context has changed it continues to change. For me, the point of reflection was to say I cannot uphold to the written letter anything that tells me to act in conflict with what I know my ethics to be and such concepts as an eye for an eye or such concepts as taking your defeated enemies wife for your own if you put her ear up against the door frame and you perforate it with the chisel.

These are not concepts that are relevant to the here and now and they are not in line with my ethics. I sat through it and it was such a pivotal moment for me as I sat through a Purim service where we read the book of Esther and I read through the usually I'll just read along with the Hebrew but I read through the English answers and I was overcome at the kind of violence and brutality that was evident in the text. It prompted this crisis of faith from you that said you know is this in line with my own ethics, but I understood at a point that we get to do we get to define the lens through which we interpret it, we get to define and reconstitute these tenets of our faith is fundamental concepts which we by and large all agree on. We agree on human rights, we agree on being loving me and being inclusive me every and we agree on not passing judgement, these are the fundamental tenets, these are the philosophies that underpin our faith, and we agree on them. From our own ethical frameworks and perspectives that make sense and we can uphold them so we have a responsibility to scrutinize anything that doesn't fit into that ethical framework anything that violates it, anything that says I have a right or responsibility to impede on the freedoms or the human rights of someone else had the right to treat them with disrespect or to treat them with violence and to say is this in line with what I understand to be correct and right in the world and if it isn't we should be questioning it.

And there's a lot of theological and philosophical discussions that we can have so we know that we speak about certain acts and behaviours as being abominations in the book of Leviticus, and there's a number of scholars who have come with interpretations which are very well backed up to say that these were not prohibitions on loving same-sex relationships, these were prohibitions against sodomy, against rape, against the non-consensual sexual practice and that's just one example so if you interrogate the text and you're brought to do this by your own ethical compass that says this doesn't sound right to me then you interrogate it, and you will find a way to

reconcile that if you want to. This is how we write that next chapter of faith, this is how we create that safe space and the healing, this is how we tackle the issue of are there LGBTQIA+ people, is their existence in conflict, and I say for myself I said we're not in conflict were created with the divine spark in the divine image, this is part of human development, we fulfill a role and function in society and if I am to be judged then that's a conversation that I'm willing to have with my maker when the time comes. But I know that because I'm a queer person it doesn't make me a bad human being, it doesn't make me someone who abuses other people who ignores ethical principles who commits violence against other people. I know that I can fall asleep at night and I have not a qualm or a worry about my orientation or my gender identity because I live according to the principles that I understand from my own framework and within the context of my faith. (52:55)

EC: Dr. Anastacia, you very much indeed, and thank you to all the panelists, we're getting a range of questions that are asking about the next step, and to me that makes sense because analysts have shown us how we can assert, we can claim, we can demand, we can realise ourselves, we can enact our agency. I love the way that Siya said that God is on our side, I love the way that Imam Muhsin showed us how he reclaimed his meaning and you said there was a gap for doctor Anastacia, you came back to Judaism to find your faith within it. Those are all available means, our participants are asking what the next step is what does this mean for interfaith action and those insights for us as relatively empowered each of us, the doctor, the Imam, the author not to and the judge we are all relatively empowered. those insights, how do we make that power available to people in Cameroon and Nigeria in Uganda and also in our own suburbs and cities and townships and rural areas.

Organisation solidarity and action, those three things which Simon Nkoli taught us how do we most recently taught us about Simon who died on 1st of December 1998, organisation, solidarity, and action. Could I ask whether you would reply to that and then we've got some very beautiful questions to end with I just want to look that reverend Laurie Gaum who has played an extraordinary part of courage, integrity, faith, at huge personal cost in the Afrikaans churches how do we as queers, Margaret you ask that question in the q&a. Margaret comes from a deeply personal loving part of my own life, we have appropriated the term and we've said you're not going to hit us over the head with it, that you're not gonna shame us with it, we are calling ourselves queers as an act of celebration and joyous affirmation of ourselves. Laurie uses the term, he says, how do we write the next chapter of faith with our religious institutions going to be part of it or not, and then we have a beautiful question from Anne Bothell Peyton. What do the struggles of the community mean for the interfaith endeavour. can I ask each of you to consider those because we going to reach our conclusion in about 15 minutes' time Siya Thokoza, I am going to spare you this time, we're going to start with doctor Anastacia, we're going to go in reverse order. Doctor Anastacia, please would you look at those questions and then Imam Muhsin, then Siya Thokoza. (1:00:09)

AT: Shocked and horrified and dismayed I just spoke and now I have to speak again okay that's fine yeah. I think the question of what the next step is, is really the most important one that we need to answer at point. You know, there was a personal comment or a question that came in

the chat to say, you know how do we as members and adherents of different faith communities. How are we expecting we'll be able to work together when even the LGBTQIA+ community itself cannot always stand in solidarity. It comes back to understanding the role that diversity and diverse perspectives and different experiences has to play in finding common ground. And you know I'll come back to something that I said right at the opening of my initial address which is that it's it's tragic that it's taken such a profound loss of life in South Africa from our community over the past couple of months in order to spur us into action. And as Justice Cameron very rightly says, these are human rights abuses being perpetrated against members of our community across the region, across the continents across, the rest of the world and this is a huge problem that we need to address and I don't think that this is anything that anyone of us as an individual can do alone and I don't think this is anything that any single group amongst us as representatives of a faith community or religion can do alone.

But I do think but we have to understand you're not one of them one of the things I'd like to point out to people, we live in South Africa, we have an incredibly progressive constitution with a section on human rights that is absolutely masterful and we're very privileged in that we have one of the architects sitting here with us who played a significant role in crafting and all of that narrative around the protection of human rights. but the legislation is impotent without social values that go along with this and it is for better or worse the responsibility and the role and very much the domain of religious institutions to shape the public perception and most social attitudes. And we might live in a society that the perception is that we move increasingly further away from religion but it plays such an important role in the lives of so many people and especially in Africa and especially in the global South and we have to understand that, and I think that between us as queer people who identify as part of a faith community and a different faith communities and as straight allies research attending this discussion and asking all these very important questions. I think we have to start holding the leaders of these institutions accountable because it is their concern whether they themselves are part of the LGBTQIA+ community or not, it is their concern and we must implore them to stand up for the values and the ethics that they claim to represent when they speak from their pulpits and put their money where their mouths are, actually take that action and to spur their congregations and their communities into action. because when we all sit in shul or Shabbat or when we sit in church and we listen to this to the sermons and the addresses that are given, if that can't have addressed some of the hate crimes that are happening and being carried out in the name of religion can you imagine the outrage it would spark amongst people to realise their human rights abuse and the violence that is being carried out in their name without their agency and without their consent and I think that's very very important for us to do, thank you I will pass to the next willing panelist.(1:03:09)

EC: Doctor Anastacia thank you for that and before you do so there was a warm-blooded member of your household wanted to join this panel behind you and I think you are, you owe to all the participants there is a little black tail to bring that person into yes please yeah, Imam(1:07:43)

IMH: Great, In answering the question about the way forward I think that I just have three points and I think that I cannot stress enough the importance of understanding the power of our narratives and I think somebody in a list of questions was asking whether we could sort of compile you know these narratives, I am currently writing a book called from it's a working title from "extremist exclusion to radical inclusion" and a chapter in this book only deals with the queer narratives. And I'm trying to look at and the commonalities in the experiences and one of the things that I've already picked up is this emergence of a new faith and I think people need to embrace that you know that that would be the way forward. We must not try to find a niche you know or some acceptance within traditional faith or religion or a representation of religion. I think sometimes that is where we get stuck, the second thing that I think it's also very important is that every year I train Imam religious leaders and I take them through one or two months of training and one of the most powerful things that I experience is not you know how we argue about you know what is the meaning of certain verses in the Quran but it is complete acceptance of the reality of the experiences of quickly boba never in the future don't think that is also a way forward is that if we exposed religious leaders to the reality of our experiences and then finally I don't know how possible this is in other faiths but certainly within Islam you can even have a masjid on a field, so create your own spiritual spaces if you feel you're not being included and that's part of your claiming faith for yourself., thanks. (1:08:16)

EC: Thank you Imam, Siya. (1:10:27)

SK: Thank you, so I have several things to say and some of them are responses to what the panelists were saying. Doctor Tomson mentioned how we've reclaimed the word queer mean a few other people made it a point. it's interestingly enough that's how the word Christian Christians came about, it started out as a slur because we were the abominations as Christians we were everything wrong with the world were the reasons the Roman gods were angry, we were the reasons everyone's God was angry and then one day we got into power and then the power just went to our heads and then we formed all of these horrible institutions. And I implore Christians, I mean a lot of the social justice movements talk about colonialism and decolonization please look at how Christianity got hijacked by power, became weaponized by power, and just challenge conservative Christians with that whenever they start saying but God said this and God. said that because yeah, I think it's important for them to do that. the other thing doctor Anastacia said about the Leviticus and how gay people often considered abominations and I love the idea that we each have to figure out whether what you are learning in religion aligns with our personal values because one of the things that Luther, this is about five hundred years ago during the Reformation taught that there has to be an alignment between your own conscience and what you're reading in a scripture. if you're just saying or regurgitated what you think God said you are passing responsibility off to an invisible being nobody can question (1:10:30)

That is horribly unfair, as society as people both queer spaces and Christian spaces we have to take responsibility for what we believe, because think about this if the law, lets say that the law of Moses or religious law does in fact say you will not lie with a man as with a woman it is an abomination. let's take it at face value do you know how misogynistic that law has to assume

you are in order to think that you need the limitation in your life. it has to think that you equate sex with power and this is something we forget, this is why I believe the New Testament says that through the works of the law shall no flesh be justified and you can't be self-righteous and reach god at the same time. You can't self-righteous and be a person of justice at the same time, some of my Christian evangelical friends would have read a book titled *The Shack* by WP young William. Where God is quoted saying the mirror that shows you how ugly you in your self-righteousness cannot also clean you up. So a religious reading of religious text cannot cure you of religious self-righteousness. This is why we believe Christ died was because he challenged religion and the religious priesthood, this is really the premise of the New testament I don't know how two thousand years later we still using the New Testament as a weapon when at the center of it somebody got crucified like it boggles my mind.

To answer a question you sent Judge about what we do for the person in Tanzania, there are two things, the first is I believe one of them that I pitched this idea to the organizers of this webinar I think there is a gap for a journal of decrim theology or decriminalization theology, so that when somebody passes a law be it in Uganda or whatever else and they say a religion supports this. There has to be one space where queer affirming theologians can say well actually we would like to undermine that bill that you're trying to pass, we would like to undermine that bill that you're trying to pass. So for me, that's a very practical step that academic institutions, queer organisations, and allies can kind of come together to say okay here is an intellectual property that's going to help shape or rather subvert legislation and jurisprudence that is queer hostile in other countries. And another thing we can do that's very practical in this country at least as we can update laws to incentivise visibility and inclusiveness, so for example there's the non-discrimination clause in the constitution and then it gets repeated in the employment equity act but you would think that the broad-based black economic empowerment act which recognises people in rural areas, women, people with disabilities and youth would also recognise queer people or the LGBTI community and it just doesn't.

So I think we can lobby for our legislation including legislation to do with how we deal with other countries, so this is now the international relations that those policies need to be updated to be in line with our constitution, to give it teeth, to give it substance, to give it something that it can work with. And then finally Judge another point you made is how does my belief that we can internalize the fact that we're on the winning team, how does that help anyone. And again beyond standing in solidarity forming decrim theology journals and all of those things another thing we must remember is that many sections in books like the New Testament were written from jails. Revelations was written from a jail cell, throughout the New testament you have people either in jail or being broken out of jail by their friends sometimes with angelic assistance, so the power than this conflict, between the marginalised and people in power, has been going on for thousands of years and unfortunately when you say I'm now a person of faith or you're doing is taking on a story that puts those conflicts into perspective they don't necessarily shift it immediately but they do put you in a mental and spiritual pasture from which you can resist more effectively, survive, be more resilient and also find common ground with people who are helping me through those. I don't know if there's anything else you'd like me to

respond to I don't know how many minutes, don't I have like three minutes, like time moves faster when I talk. (1:10:30)

EC: No, I think we've come to the point Siya, thank you very much, where we are going to hand back to Thuli, and to Jacqui and to Nima, and to Beulah. Because I think some of them I've seen in the live chat that they want to answer some of the questions, but I want to pause just for a moment to ask what have we gained from our three panelists this evening. I think we've gained personal insights growing up in a traditional Zulu speaking home on the east coast of South Africa; growing up in the 1960s and 70s in a deeply conservative Islamic culture in the Western Cape and growing up in a Jewish culture where boyhood was prized and we're all three of our participants were in a sense demonized. and the second thing we've gained is that they've told us how they fought back through an assertion of their own integrity, their own truthfulness, their won being and that put them at risk I don't think any of our three participants achieved what they did without being at risk and the third thing we've gained is a look forward. I look forward in assertion and look forward in Siya Thokoza's affectionately improbable assertion that God is on our side, but a happy assertion which I think we should all embrace and looking forward to that action to the solidarity and to the organisational impetus it will take us from this webinar tonight. I'm going to turn over to Thuli and Jacqui, Nima, Beulah, you then please also come in I think you're also on the organisational platform here. And then I also want to in closing just say a profound thank you to our participants, they have been very very searching, anguished, and insightful questions, particularly I think that Jacqui has asked Thuli to answer this too about queer allies non-LGBTIQ people who are committed allies, how do we involve them, so over to Thuli and then to Jacqui and Nima and Beulah if they want to come in as well. (1:16:29).

TM: good evening, so my role was to come in with a bit of things but now that I've been brought prematurely in terms of our allies. I think one of the biggest thing and especially now as there's been a lot of murders in the last couple of days. What we would like to see is our communities coming out in full support of LGBTQI+ persons. What does this mean, it means signing the petition that is going around it means tweeting the department of justice, it means writing letters, it means speaking out and saying that this is an injustice and we're not going to accept it lying down. It means also that we also speak to our faith leaders because we know our communities because we know our communities in our church, we know our leaders, we know the one homophobe, you know who's there it's the same thing as when you need to go to church you know where auntie Mary always sits and you know if this is so and so's spot and so forth. The same knowledge when you come into your faith space of knowing who are the people that we need to have these conversations with. it's about starting the conversation it's about remembering that as we are about to join in prayer there are who cannot access the faith space just because they dress in a particular way or they present themselves in a particular way, it's about including them in the prayer, it's about inviting them to the table. so and then another step forward, I mean I know there was a thing where we say you know no matter how vocal you are on social media, at times it's not enough.

And this is why with your visibility we need action as well this action can come in forms of volunteering in LGBTQI organisations. contributions so if you do donations towards Trans-led

organisations towards movements of LGBTQI in the community that require the support. As some of them are very limited in terms of how do they keep mobilising. it's about even if it means opening up your garage to allow parents to come in to have the conversation and you inviting that organisation to lead that conversation about how can we make our space, our community, our home safe for people who are different but it doesn't just have to be different in terms of LGBTQI it could be around ableism it could be about nationality how do we make our homes our communities safe for whoever who is part of our community because we need a human first led community movement and I think that's my contribution, I'll hand over to Jacqui and Nima (1:19:25)

BD: Thuli, thank you so much I just want to say thank you to everybody who's participated today it's this event has come about because a number of us just raised our hands and said this is something we feel important and want to be having conversations about. and that's really where it start starts with the willingness and a commitment. I think Siya said in our chat you know defying the improbable and making it possible it's simply because, we said and so this has come into amazing to watch that we've had over 65 people participating in this webinar today and I hope that more people will get to benefit when it gets shared recording tomorrow there's also website information that reverend Nima has attached so kindly to the Cape town unitarians web page .where there are further resources for people to get involved and participate particularly the person who asked about finding affirming faith spaces there are links there to you some of them. and it comes together in conversation, it comes together when we come collectively and say this is what we want to share about as hard as it is difficult as it may be to actually be in these conversations and engage with each other and listen to each other and I think the biggest gift we can offer is listening to one another and holding space for listening and being heard and most importantly being seen. so really with that thank you so much and to the team has put this together, really extraordinary group of people that have had a pleasure to participate with and look forward to putting more things together in our panel, wow!, lots of tissues were used on this side thank you for sharing yourselves, it's really been beautiful (1:22:24)

NT: I think there are no words, I realised I've been tech support In the background the whole time so I just want to say thank you, I wanna say thank you to the brave and courageous panelists, our moderator but also the brave and courageous participants who have been willing to ask questions. and I will end with one dream and that is that this is the first, the first step in actually not only talking about things, hearing each other but also taking action that makes a meaningful difference in people's lives. and if we can do that then I think we'll all feel like we've done what is our life's purpose. So thank you all, there'll be a you'll get an email in the next 24 hours with the recording and lots of other information. Do reach out and let us know what we can do next to keep this becoming a movement, and so with that, thank you all, I always it's one minute over, I will lovingly say goodbye and thank you all. (1:24:24)

TM: So we move on to the important question of what now, I would like to employ you to actively participate and support activities as hosted by partner organisations in the celebration of IDAHOBIT as well as in the fighting violence against LGBTQI+ persons and specifically black

queer bodies. if you're in Cape town a memorial will be held at Monwabisi beach tomorrow starting at 5 p.m. Gender Dynamix will also be hosting an event at Bertus at 10 am tomorrow. It will also be available online via zoom and Facebook, on a national level a number of LGBTQI+ organisations will be hosting community-based activities and protests under the flagship #justice for LGBTQI SA. if you would like to show your allyship please reach out to organisations close to you to volunteer. resources in the form of media articles, videos, and publications can be accessed on organisational websites on the last slide you'll find the web links to all the organisations that have contributed to today's event. It gives me great pleasure to deliver the voice of thanks at this auspicious event. In no particular order, I would like to say thank you to our panelists Doctor Anastacia Tomson, Siya Khumalo, and Iman Muhsin Hendricks. Wishing you all good health and strength. To our fabulous moderate Sir Justice Edwin Cameron, it's always a pleasure to share a platform with you. A big thank you to Reverend Nima Taylor who has been instrumental in the design and technical support towards making this event a success. Jacqui Benson and the South African Jewish Board of Deputies thank you for your hard work and commitment. Reverend Beulah Durrheim, Laurie Gaum, and Reverend Michelle Boonzaaier thank you for your amazing teamwork. I would also like to thank all who joined us for the conversation on all our platforms we hope that today's session compliments your working advocacy in creating safe spaces that are inclusive and protective of people who are gender and sexually diverse, thank you and continue demanding justice for LGBTQI SA, thank you (1:25:53)