



# LGBTQ+ RIGHTS IN MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

17 November 2021



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

## **About the CMA**

The goal of the CMA is to help make mediation efforts throughout Africa more effective. We do so by offering academic and practical courses in mediation, researching new and current best practices, and offering support to organisations and governments involved in mediation processes.

## **Contact Details:**

Email: [info@centreformediationafrica.org](mailto:info@centreformediationafrica.org)

## **Address:**

Centre for Mediation in Africa

Humanities Building, Office 21-5

Lynnwood Road, University of Pretoria

## Seminar Summary

The Centre for Mediation in Africa (CMA) in the Department of Political sciences, University of Pretoria hosted a facilitated conversation with Dr Mariel Reiss from the Centre for Conflict Studies (CCS), University of Marburg in Germany. The seminar was held in the Old College House at the University of Pretoria. Although only a small group of participants attended, the conversation was rich and insightful.

The discussion themed “LGBTQ+ Rights in Multilevel Governance Systems”, aimed to explore the rights of the LGBTQ+ community in Botswana and the Southern African region. Overarching themes that emerged from the session revolved around the role that colonialism and religion, specifically right wing Christian Evangelical influences, played in shaping laws and societal perception around LGBTQ+ issues.

The discrimination faced by the LGBTQ+ community emanates mainly from colonial constructs that have influenced and changed African societies and their social structure. Religion served as an important tool in advancing the colonial project, which effectively utilised the ‘divide and conquer’ strategy in Africa. The exclusion and discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community is therefore a consequence of colonialism on Africa’s social and cultural fabric. Some argue that the LGBTQ+ rights campaigns are influenced by external actors that seek to enforce their foreign concepts and agendas on African countries and the people. Additionally, the LGBTQ+ question is also a human rights question. The perception of homosexuality and the queer community as being non-African, demands an inquiry on what it means to be African? Who is African? What would a decolonial approach to LGBTQ+ rights look like?

The common perception towards LGBTQ+ issues in Africa remains hostile. This has also been weaponised in most spaces and is considered derogatory. The term is used to defame one’s character. For instance, to call a man ‘gay’ or a ‘homosexual’ in Zimbabwe, where homosexuality is illegal, is often used as a political tool to delegitimise political opponents. Femininity is perceived to be a weakness and masculinity to be a strength. However, homosexuality is only a weakness or problematic when exposed and subjected to societal

expectations and norms. In prison systems and mining compounds, it is an unspoken practise but is neither taboo nor a sign of vulnerability and weakness.

### **The Way Forward**

It is important to recognize that nothing happens in a vacuum. Actors do not act in isolation. There is always a driving force and factors of influence that agitate for change. Some churches today accept members of the LGBTQ+ community. It is therefore important to understand the factors that have driven this evolution. What are the cultural norms, laws, values principles, politics necessary to influence movement in the right direction?