



**THE INNER CIRCLE WWW.THEINNERCIRCLE.ORG.ZA:
INPUT AT THE SA HIV/AIDS 2009 MSM SATELLITE CONFERENCE**

A. Who is TIC

1. Vision

Transforming society into one of inter-connectedness and inclusivity of different faiths and beliefs around gender and sexual diversity.

2. Mission

Empowering and raising consciousness around gender and sexual diversity by engaging faith and beliefs; encouraging independent reasoning and collaboration, especially with Muslims who are queer and the local, national and international Muslim community.

Queer: The word queer is controversial, but has substantially changed over the 20th Century. Many LGBTI people have reclaimed the term as a means of self-empowerment and embraced the term to describe a sexual orientation and/or gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heteronormative and patriarchal society. Hence, TIC has selected this word as its preference.

3. Values

- **Leadership (As-shhura wal Imaamah):** Ensuring accountability, integrity, mutual consultation, respect and being role models and mentors
- **Diversity (Al-Muta'addidah):** Promoting equity, justice and inclusivity
- **Patience (As-Sabr):** Encouraging humility, understanding and nurturing
- **Empowerment (At-Tamakkun):** Imparting knowledge, understanding, skills and developing self-worth
- **Authenticity (Al-Haqeeqiyyah):** Employing honesty, integrity, transparency and trust
- **Commitment (Al-'Ahdah):** Cultivating punctuality, dedication, responsibility, accountability and passion
- **Creating safe spaces (Al-Amnah):** Affirming confidentiality, support, sharing, and respect
- **Inter-connectedness (Al-Ukhuwwah wal Ittisaal):** Engaging through compassion, understanding and consciousness

4. Short background

- In existence for over 10 years
- Imam ousted from Claremont mosque on coming out
- Fears of attack from PAGAD
- Registered as HR NPO in 2004
- Silent [hush-hush] voice of the community

5. Services

- Public Education and Training
- Health
- Outreach
- Research

6. Baseline study

- Last year (2008), TIC commissioned a research study to gain insights from the Muslim community, to ascertain what levels of homophobia, homo-acceptance exist within the Western Cape Muslim community, as well as to identify in what ways the organisation can assist queer Muslim individuals.
- A sample group of 62 Muslims who are queer were questioned
- Risky behaviour

1	=	Strongly disagree	3%
2	=	Disagree	29%
3	=	Neither agree nor disagree	30%
4	=	Agree	28%
5	=	Strongly agree	4%
6	=	Don't know	2%
7	=	No response	4%

- More Queer than general Muslims claimed to be in a current relationship, and more specifically, most Queer Muslims claimed to have ever been in a same-sex relationship and almost one-fifth of them to have been in a heterosexual relationship.
- 71% Muslims who are Queer are in monogamous relationship
- Practice safe sex

60%	=	Always
21%	=	Most of the Time
7%	=	Occasionally
10%	=	Seldom
1%	=	Never

- Anal sex
 - It would appear that the general Muslim sample were more likely to agree that anal sex causes HIV, and that homosexual penetrative sex is more harmful than heterosexual penetrative sex, than were the Queer respondents: 5% yes; 69% no; 26% unsure
- Queer versus General Muslim Population Group
 - The Queer sample appeared to have a more loyal attitude to their sex partner than Muslims in general
 - Queer respondents were more likely to be in relationships lasting over 2 years than Muslims in general

B. General needs

- FINANCIAL SUPPORT
- Marginalized community
- Engagement with clergy
 - Voice of orthodoxy
 - Fatwa [pronunciation/regulation] from the Muslim Judicial Council of being MURTAD
 - Burial procedures
 - Christian burial
 - Black bag burial
- Community Myths
 - Muslims don't die of AIDS
 - Muslim M2M – No Ways!
- Programmatic needs
 - LAW VS RELIGION: Merging constitutional and moral values ALSO socio-cultural factors
 - Creating safe spaces – Is this possible?
 - Clarity – What is M2M? Married men due to socialise pressures having secretive sex
 - No VCT – It is bad to know!

C. Genesis Survey published in “The Prevalence of HIV” by Positive Muslims 2004

Of the South African population of 41, 743, 459 there are 3% that are Muslim. The Muslim population is about 834, 869 people.

The sample population was 470 Muslims individuals that were surveyed and some of the findings were:

- 33.4% stated that condoms are unnatural
- 7% believe it's a punishment
- 4.8% believe it's a curse
- 7.7% believe its caused by kissing
- 2.6% believe that AIDS can be passed on by touch
- 7.6% believe that washing after sex will prevent infection
- 10.1% believe that people with AIDS cannot be trusted

Some of the main challenges were:

7. *Sex seen as a taboo in the Muslim community*

- Extreme interpretation of religious text
- Cultural expression contrary to Prophetic

8. *STI's/ HIV/ AIDS seen as punishment from God*

- Because of illicit sexual acts and immoral behavior

9. *Closeted queer Muslims*

- It is difficult to get statistics or determine the rate of spread within the Muslim community

10. Unskilled Imams

- No education or training on social issues around SRH/ HIV/ AIDS

11. Lack of resources

- Not enough people, not enough money

D. TIC's strategy in addressing HIV/ AIDS

- Incorporating awareness around sexual reproductive health in our existing programs & activities
- Inculcate and promote moral values while emphasizing the alarming reality of unsafe sexual practices within the Muslim community.
- Continue expanding our data base of progressive organizations

E. Conclusion

- Muslims are having sex. Muslim men are having sex with men! The orthodox voice denies it!
Hence: TIC needs to take action!
- Shariah laws & HR Violations [24 – 27 April 2009]
- Anthology of queer stories