



Keynote speech

Rev. Mpho Tutu van Furth

The full speech from our keynote speaker
Rev Mpho Tutu van Furth, August 3, 2016



**PROUD TO
BE YOUR FRIEND**
world LGBT conference 2016



Wow. What a fascinating field you work in! And what a complicated area to unpack from an international perspective in a world of so many rights and so many wrongs!

Before wading in, I'd like to thank the conceivers and organisers of this 1st World LGBT Conference for Criminal Justice Professionals.

Last month we attended the 21st International Aids Conference in Durban, South Africa. Although there's still much work to be done, humanity's response to Aids today is unrecognisable from that of 21 years ago. I hope that 21 years from today the response to LGBTI rights and roles is even more unrecognisable. I pray that the taint of prejudice and stigma has disappeared from all our discussions of human dignity.

I am especially honoured to have been invited to address this 1st World Conference. This gathering meets three vital and pray that the seeds we lay here will grow into giant fruit-bearing trees.

In the global village we now inhabit, the creation of global platforms to share knowledge and best practises is critical to the maintenance of our humanity and the sustainability of our species and our earth.

I suppose the challenge confronting all of us today is: Where does one begin to address the collective rights of LGBTI communities in criminal justice systems worldwide, including in countries where anything other than heterosexual sex is considered deviant and illegal?

How does a lesbian living in the shadows of the Ugandan criminal justice system relate to her sister in Amsterdam who, at the first sign of discrimination, can pick up the phone and call the Pink in Blue Police?

I thought a good place to start would be a recent South African High Court judgment, handed down by Judge MM Mabesele in Johannesburg.



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South Africa's Constitution enshrines the rights of all citizens to equal justice, and a gay prisoner had approached Judge Mabesele's court to order the prison department to accommodate him separately from heterosexual prisoners who were harassing and intimidating him.

The judge granted the order, but the reasons I found his judgement particularly noteworthy were in its affirmation of the principle of equality, not as a favour, but as a right, and in his remarks about homophobia in Africa.

In a riposte to those who have argued that anything other than heterosexual love is un-African, Judge Mabesele stated "gays and lesbians had been part our society for many years" and were "not associated with a particular race as perceived by some members of our society".

"African people, particularly Basotho, guided by their forefathers, had been using the word 'tarasi' for many years to describe gay or lesbian," he said.

"There had not been any controversy around the issue of homosexuality in the community of Basotho. They always discouraged homophobia and had accorded respect to gays and lesbians.

"The point is that the era before democracy (which) preferred Christianity from other religions (and) promoted stereotype societal behaviour which denied gays and lesbians freedom of expression which includes freedom to express feelings.

"The integrity of lesbians and gay people was not accepted. They were subjected to emotional torture to say the least and were forced to subordinate themselves to the societal norms and values and cultural practices which only recognised heterosexuality and widely accepted definition of 'man', 'woman' and 'spouse' as explained in the bible."

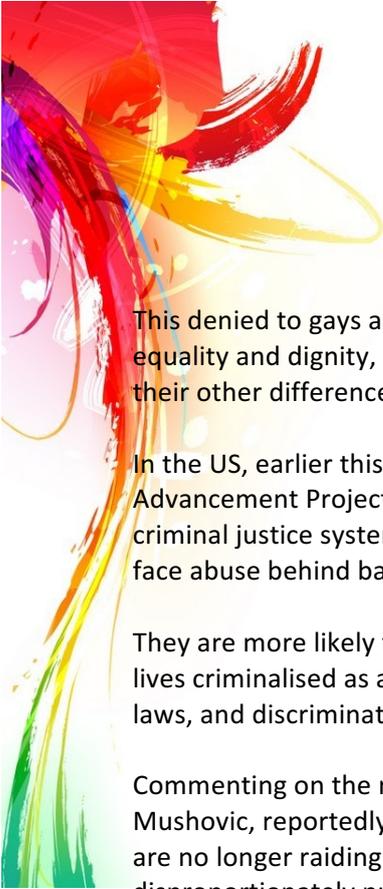
Now, put that in your pipe and smoke it, President Museveni!

But the challenge, we all know, is translating the rights some of us have – to which all of us are entitled – into actual better life experiences for LGBTIs.

It's one thing having the constitutional and legal structures in place to outlaw prejudice and discrimination. It is quite another thing to create a culture in which people are valued, respected and allowed to live lives of dignity regardless of their race, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation. As so many of us can attest.

Even in countries where laws guarantee equality and dignity prejudice wears the guise of cultural tradition or religious freedom. That which is said, and that which is not said – only felt.

One of South Africa's most eminent jurists, Judge Edwin Cameron, describes it thus: "The sting of the past and continuing discrimination against both gays and lesbians lies in the message it conveys, namely, that viewed as individuals or in their same-sex relationships, they do not have the inherent dignity and are not worthy of the human respect possessed by and accorded to heterosexuals and their relationships.



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This denied to gays and lesbians that which was foundational to our Constitution and the concepts of equality and dignity, namely that all persons have the same inherent worth and dignity, whatever their other differences may be, Judge Cameron said.

In the US, earlier this year, the Center for American Progress together with the Movement Advancement Project released a report on the treatment of LGBT Americans by and within the US criminal justice system. The report found that LGBT people are disproportionately imprisoned and face abuse behind bars.

They are more likely than the average American to interact with law enforcement and to have their lives criminalised as a consequence of “pervasive stigma and discrimination, biased enforcement of laws, and discriminatory policing strategies”, the report stated.

Commenting on the report, executive director of the Movement Advancement Project, Ineke Mushovic, reportedly said: “It used to be a crime to be LGBT in the United States... And while police are no longer raiding gay bars, LGBT people, especially LGBT people of colour, are still disproportionately pushed into the criminal justice system. They are treated unfairly within the system and in correctional settings, and face extraordinary challenges in rebuilding their lives.”

I guess all countries built on legal frameworks recognising the rights to equality of all citizens are on similar journeys to those of South Africa and the United States – with some more advanced in overcoming prejudice and discrimination than others.

What’s important about gatherings such as these is that they enable us to learn from the experiences of others traversing similar landscape, and incrementally lift our games.

Then there are the other countries... with laws that make certain categories of love illegal and governments that spew hate on LGBTI citizens.

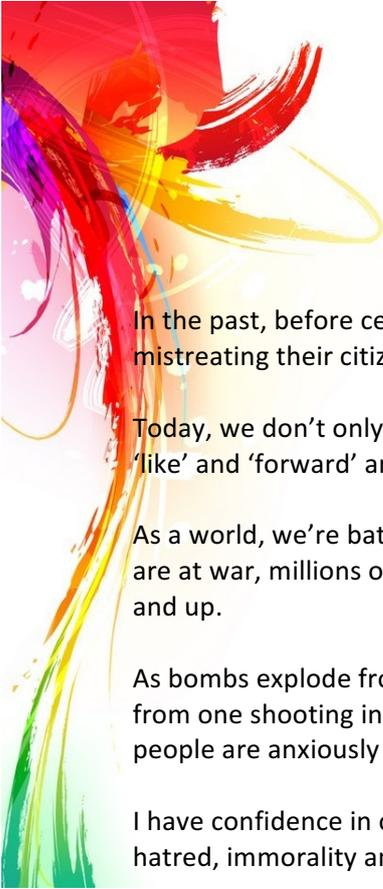
In these countries – shamefully, many in Africa,– LGBTI people are routinely harassed by criminal justice systems. Their harassment contributes fundamentally to a societal environment of discrimination and fear. It puts an official stamp on hatred.

Much more important people than myself have petitioned the presidents and governments of these countries to stop promoting hate crimes. And been brushed away.

My plea is to all members of their police forces, prosecutorial services and judiciary, those at the coalface of their countries’ criminal justice systems.

My plea to them is to understand that when we allow one form of discrimination, we enable others to follow. Those who grease the wheel of discrimination must beware it doesn’t roll back and crush them. History has a way of creeping up on us – before we can think about whether we are on the right or the wrong side.

The world is changing very fast, faster than anyone could have predicted. We have continental economic zones – whether Britain likes it or not – and are inarguably closer to the breakdown of the concept of nation states than ever before.



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In the past, before cellphones and whatsapp and facebook, some countries got away with mistreating their citizens because nobody else ever heard about it.

Today, we don't only hear it, we receive photographs and live eyewitness accounts. And then we 'like' and 'forward' and post them on our accounts – so that, eventually, all can know.

As a world, we're battling to cope with this rapidly changing landscape. Broad swathes of territory are at war, millions of people are displaced, and instances of public violence are on the up and up and up.

As bombs explode from Baghdad to Mogadishu to Aleppo to Paris, and as the United States reels from one shooting incident to the next – most recently with a racist, homophobic tinge – ordinary people are anxiously asking where it will end.

I have confidence in our species; that we will find the means to rise above the present state of hatred, immorality and insecurity. We are both resilient and very smart.

But if we are going to achieve the secure and sustainable plateau we all crave, we are going to have to stop regarding those who look, live or love differently to us as, 'other'. As long as we see them as 'other', we prevent ourselves from forming relationships and allegiances with them, and weaken our own positions. We weaken ourselves.

Institutionalised discrimination on any grounds, be they ideological, ethnic, racial, religious or economic, is a cul-de-sac. You could ask Adolf Hitler about that. And PW Botha. And Pinochet and Ceausescu. And the people of Rwanda, Serbia and Chechnya, Palestine and Israel, Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan...

If there is one single lesson we must collectively learn in this rapidly changing, shrinking world, it is that space must be created for everyone. Including – indeed, especially, the Bible tells us – for those who are marginalised by society.

My father likes to describe humanity as the human family, and he says we are all sisters and brothers in this family, God's family, regardless of who we are, where we come from or how we look.

In a very real sense, the global era is pushing disparate strands of this family together. It may look as if things are falling apart in the world right now as different groups jostle and compete to position themselves to benefit from the future. Seen differently, the mass movement of populations positions us to break down the barriers that create an "us" and a "them". Migration is forcing us to learn languages we barely knew existed. In this global village we are creating fusion cuisine as ingredients from here combine with techniques from there to introduce a new delicious.

I'd like to think that when the jostling is over we'll be able to look back with pride and say, in the end, we survived because we put humanity first. We'll consign the era of global friction and uncertainty to memory, with the dinosaurs.

There is one more crucial function that gathering fulfills. It makes visible the invisible role models in our midst.



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A few months ago I attended a church in Langa, South Africa. Langa is a black township, relic of our apartheid past. The congregation is Xhosa-speaking and, in the absence of guests, made up entirely of black worshippers. The priest knew me. We had spent a year together in seminary. He invited me to the front of the church to introduce my guests. I gestured at the tall white people standing next to me, "This is my wife, Marceline and my step-daughter, Pien." I heard the surprised pause before the welcoming applause. I don't know how many minds changed that day, or how many conversations started on topics that had previously been taboo.

A few days ago my daughter from other parents (it's complicated) came to visit me. Keke, my daughter, will graduate from a unique business school this month. The school offers the usual classes and internship opportunities. It is a small school that places an emphasis on self-examination and group learning and mutual support. As part of her curriculum my daughter went on a final wilderness camp with the women in her year. She described how the tone of the conversation has changed. Last year they had spoken of recalcitrant boyfriends and the usual teenage heartache. This year the conversation was split open...Keke's "mother", the one who married a woman had come to school for Keke's final presentation. "I have two mothers." Announced one of Keke's class-mates, a Xhosa woman from the Eastern Cape. In three years of journeying together she had never shared that information with her classmates. Out of their new openness the young women were able to talk about safe sex, sexual violence, condoms and HIV; necessary conversations that had been silenced under the weight of taboo.

When Marceline and I announced our marriage some doors of opportunity closed in our faces. In my case, I had to return my license to officiate as a priest in South Africa. That door has closed so often in the faces of so many people that although the experience was hurtful it was not surprising. Because I am who I am, the daughter of a world renowned former Archbishop, the door didn't close quietly. It slammed with a sound that reverberated around our church and the world. My prayer is that the door slammed so loud and so hard that it rattled the hinges of the ungodly prejudice that denies rightness and reality of same sex love.

My prayer for each of you in this room, and for every person for whom prejudice and discrimination shuts a door is that you don't let the door close quietly. Slam that door! Rattle the hinges until every door of discrimination is shattered.

God bless you

Source: <http://www.tutu.org.za/rev-mpho-tutu-van-furth-keynote-speaker-at-1stworldlgbt-conference>

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The Reverend Canon Mpho A. Tutu



The Reverend Mpho A. Tutu is an ordained Episcopal Priest and the founding Director of the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation. For several years prior to her ordination, Rev. Tutu was Director of the Discovery Program at All Saints Church, a weekday and summer ministry for children in downtown Worcester, Massachusetts. She also worked as the Seminarian Associate at St. Michael's--on--the-Heights Church in Worcester.

Rev. Tutu studied and taught in Grahamstown, South Africa, at the College of the Transfiguration, the Provincial Episcopal seminary of Southern Africa. While at the College, she joined the Mother's Union, and worked in both Xhosa-- and English--speaking congregations. With a grant from the Episcopal Evangelical Education Society, she initiated a pastoral care ministry for rape survivors and their families.

Reverend Mpho began her ordained ministry at the Historic Christ Church in Alexandria, Virginia. She is an experienced public speaker and preacher having addressed groups and congregations as diverse as The National Cathedral in Washington and Mother Bethel AME church in Philadelphia, and St. Georges Cathedral in Cape Town. She was the preacher for the Ordination of Bishop Larry Provenzano of Long Island USA. She has also delivered addresses at secular and multi--religious events such as The Annual World Congress of Children's Hospice International and the Women's Club of Richmond.

For five years, Rev. Tutu was Director of the Bishop Desmond Tutu Southern African Refugee Scholarship Fund of the Phelps Stokes Fund. This program provided four--year full scholarships to refugees from South Africa and Namibia. Ms. Tutu has worked as a volunteer teaching in an English as a second language (ESL) ministry in Alexandria, VA.

Rev. Tutu holds a Master of Divinity Degree from Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, she was awarded a Women Living Religion Fellowship by the MacMillan Center at Yale University in New Haven.

The Rev. Mpho Tutu is a trustee of Angola University. Rev. Mpho Tutu is the Executive Director of the Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, an organization founded by her father Desmond and mother Leah.

Rev. Tutu co--authored *Made for Goodness* with her father, and *Tutu: The authorized Portrait* with Award winning journalist Allister Sparks. They also wrote the foreword to National Geographic's book, *Geography of Religion*. She authored the foreword of *Footprints in the Sand: Caregivers of South Africa* and recently co--authored *The Book of Forgiving* together with her father.

Rev. Tutu serves as Patron for the Global Children's Radio Foundation (CRF) and Women's Achievement Network for Disability (WAND).

Rev. Tutu is the mother of two daughters, Nyaniso and Onalenna Burris.

Source: <http://www.proudtobeyourfriend.org/mpho-tutu-van-furth/>