**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**19 November 2020**

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**IRANTI FEATURE FILM TRACKING THE DECRIMINIALISATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN BOTSWANA SCREENS AT JFF**

Iranti, a Johannesburg-based LGBT media-advocacy organization, will debut its first feature film, *There Is Power In The Collar,* at the Joburg Film Festival this November.

The premiere of the documentary on Sunday 29 November 2020, will be followed by an hour-long discussion with Iranti, Lesbians and Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LEGABIBO) and the filmmakers Puo Pha Productions, as well as activists working to change their communities’ perceptions.

In June 2019, the High Court of Botswana ruled that section 164(a) and (c), and section 167 of the penal code which criminalized same-sex relations, or “carnal knowledge against the order of nature”, and prescribe a prison sentence of up to 7 years for those found guilty was found unconstitutional.

Director of Iranti and executive producer of the documentary, Jabu Pereira said the High Court Victory was also a beacon of hope for countries where LGBT persons are still criminalised.

“We understand that the road is still long for the fight for equality and as Iranti we are committed to working together with activists on the continent and around the globe,” he said.

The film is a co-production by Iranti and Puo Pha Productions which is led by award-winning duo Vincent Moloi and Lodi Matsetela, who also co-directed the film. This is the second film from their NFVF documentary slate.

In collaboration with the South African Litigation Centre (SALC) and LEGABIBO the film captures the historic case between LEGABIBO and Botswana’s government to their High Court that saw the penal codes that criminalised same-sex relations struck down last year. The filming of the documentary spans over two years and looks at the work activists on the continent are doing to repeal their colonial-introduced anti-LGBT laws.

In May 2019 a Kenya court upheld colonial laws criminalising homosexual acts between consenting adults. The court was addressing a petition filed in 2016 by three Kenyan organizations that work to protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

With this backdrop, *There is Power in the Collar* follows a young lesbian theologian, Chantel, who embarks on a mission to get acceptance in the clergy, a clergy that opposes the actions taken to repeal these homophobic laws. Faith, politics and sex clash in this intimate account of a specific queer experience in Botswana. Njeri Gateru who worked on the Kenyan decriminalisation case is also featured in the documentary.

“Making films that record historical events, films that highlight social justice issues, have an invaluable reward that isn’t always present in our fiction work. It’s a reminder to always be cognisant of the power of moving images,” said Lodi Matsetela.

Caine Youngman, the head of advocacy at LEGABIBO said the film is the tip of an iceberg on the realities of the LGBT communities.

“It shows our resilience as we tackle some of the injustices and inequalities that are thrown our way. Like always, we dust ourselves off, stand up, give love to our fellow human beings then march on for equality,” he said.

Ian Southey-Swartz from OSISA, one of the film funders, said it was important that we get laws that criminalise the sexual conduct of LGBT persons repealed.

“Not only do they turn us into criminals, but they negatively affect the attitudes of individuals and communities towards us, and embolden some people to perpetrate acts of violence against us. We have to get laws that protect us codified,” he said.

*There is Power In the Collar* will debut at JFF 2020 and will be screening on the 28th and 29th of November at Cinema Nouveau as part of their programme. For more info visit www.joburgfilmfestival.co.za

**END**

**Iranti**

Iranti is a LGBTQIA+ media advocacy organisation based in Johannesburg and takes a particular focus on trans, lesbian, and intersex persons. The organisation was established in 2012 and has since worked was on policy development with governments, litigation and engagement to help LGBTQIA+ persons access their rights in South Africa and on the continent.

**PUO PHA**

Puo Pha is a Johannesburg based audiovisual production company that makes content for broadcasters, theatrical release and corporate communications. Their work has screened at many film festivals across the globe including the Toronto International Film Festival and International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam. Puo Pha was established in 2005 is headed by multi-award-winning filmmakers Lodi Matsetela and Vincent Moloi.

**LEGABIBO**

LEGABIBO was founded in 1998 and works to defend the human rights of LGBTI in Botswana. The organisation is an all-inclusive political, social, and economic environment where human rights are core. **Please direct ALL media requests for interviews and materials to:**

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**ONLINE RESOURCES:**

[**https://www.iranti.org.za/2019/06/13/victory-in-botswana-local-lgbti-groups-celebrate-decriminalisation/**](https://www.iranti.org.za/2019/06/13/victory-in-botswana-local-lgbti-groups-celebrate-decriminalisation/)

[**https://legabibo.wordpress.com/press/**](https://legabibo.wordpress.com/press/)

[**https://africanlii.org/sites/default/files/legabibo.pdf**](https://africanlii.org/sites/default/files/legabibo.pdf)

[**https://www.southernafricalitigationcentre.org/category/focus-countries/botswana/**](https://www.southernafricalitigationcentre.org/category/focus-countries/botswana/)

[**https://www.southernafricalitigationcentre.org**](https://www.southernafricalitigationcentre.org)

EPK Supporting documents

* Poster
* Trailer (TO BE RELEASED 20/11/2020)
* Company Profiles
* Infographic on Decrim on the continent
* STILLS (photographs)
* SYNOPSIS
* Directors/Exec Producer bio’s + Crew and Cast List