

South Asian LGBTI Conference



THEMES: **MENTAL HEALTH**
SEXUALITY
RELIGION
FAITH
VISIBILITY
HUMAN RIGHTS

**ORGANISED BY BRITISH ASIAN LGBTI,
BIRMINGHAM SOUTH ASIANS LGBT -
FINDING A VOICE & GAYSIAN FACES**

MEET THE ORGANISERS!

KHAKAN QURESHI



Khakan Qureshi is an LGBT Activist and Writer, Stonewall LGBT School Role Model and Diversity Role Model. He is the Founder of Birmingham South Asians LGBT - Finding A Voice, Birmingham's first independent, multi-faith, voluntary led social /support group for South Asian LGBT men and women aged 18+ . Khakan has been recognised for his work and awarded a place on the Independent Rainbow List 2015, nominated for the MSM Of The Year Award, shortlisted for the European Diversity Award - Campaigner of The Year 2016 and nominated for the National Diversity Award - Positive Role Model 2017. He has written articles discussing homophobia and prejudices within South Asian communities, shared his personal story with Attitude magazine, Gay Star News and Pink Notes amongst other online digital magazines. Khakan highlights the existence of LGBT Muslims and raises awareness in a "creative way". Khakan has 20 years' experience of working with the whole spectrum of vulnerable adults within the field of Health and Social care, and has a passion for Human Rights and tackling social injustices. Follow on Twitter @brumasianslgbt @khakanqureshi

www.facebook.com/findingavoice

DR SIDDHI JOSHI



Siddhi Joshi founded the British Asian LGBTI online support group in September 2013. Siddhi was once listening to an Asian radio station with her mum realized that some of the more challenging university experiences she had been facing as a South Asian lesbian were faced by many in the South Asian LGBTI community. She is a marine scientist and human rights activist doing an LLM in International Human Rights Law. Follow on @BritishAsianLGB @SiddhiInGalway

Abstracts may have been shortened/edited for clarity and space

PETA COOPER



Founder of Gaysians Faces Queer Anthropology project @GaysianFaces Our project is inspired by the anthropology book called "Part Asian/100% Hapa" we will take your headshot and you write a message of who you are. It doesn't have to be linked to your sexuality, but whatever you're feeling. Our goal is the showcase the beauty and individuality of the Gaysian community.

WE WELCOME YOU TO OUR SOUTH ASIAN LGBTI CONFERENCE DAY!

British Asian LGBTI, Finding A Voice and Gaysian Faces are proud to welcome you to the first ever South Asian LGBTI Conference at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. Today, we will present a range of speakers including the first openly gay Prince in India, a charity tackling religious homophobia, and a range of speakers who have a passion about highlighting issues which affect the South Asians LGBTIQI+ Diaspora, breaking the silence about representation and visibility!

SPECIAL THANKS TO QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL HEAD OF INCLUSION, ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING, ANTONY COBLEY

The organisers would like to give special thanks to the NHS, Antony Cobley and staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for making this event happen! We would also like to thank UK Black Pride and Stonewall for support in printing.



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

PRINCE MANVENDRA SINGH OF RAJPIPLA, INDIA



The only openly gay prince in India - where same sex relations are illegal - who has thrown open his palace doors to lesbians, gays, transgender and other Indians shunned for their sexuality. The prince is building a center for LGBT people on the grounds of his ancestral palace in Rajpipla, Gujarat, India. Will speak by Skype.

NAZ AND MATT FOUNDATION FOUNDER: MATTHEW MAHMOOD-OGSTON



Founder & Trustee of Naz and Matt Foundation. In 2001, soon after coming out to himself, Matt met his soulmate Naz in a nightclub in Birmingham. Naz was 21, Matt was 23. They quickly fell in love and ran away to London to be themselves and escape the intense pressures of not being out to family. They had to keep their relationship a secret for fear of what might happen if they were found out. After 13 years together and engaged to be married, Naz (Dr Nazim Mahmood) sadly took his own life, just two days after being confronted about his sexuality by his deeply religious family during Eid. It was the first time they had heard that their son was gay, in a long-term relationship with another man, in love, and planning to get married. Their solution was to tell Naz that he needed to see a psychiatrist to be 'cured' for being gay. For 'shame' not to be brought on the family. In memory of Naz, Matt set up "Naz and Matt Foundation", a now award-winning registered charity that tackles religious and cultural homophobia. The organisation helps families learn how to accept their LGBTQI+ children for who they really are - for who they were born to be. The Foundation's mission is to "Never let religion, any religion, come in the way of the unconditional love between parents and their children." For more information follow on @nazandmatt visit <https://www.nazandmattfoundation.org>

SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHY

MENTAL HEALTH: TAIMOUR FAZLANI



Taimour Fazlani is a writer and designer based in London. Having immigrated to the UK at the age of 9 he spends most of his time trying to positively reframe life events. An advocate for mental health in the south Asian communities, his work towards bringing change range from talks, articles and even design work. You can follow him on Twitter at @talkerbearded .

SEXUAL HEALTH: MAKINDER SINGH CHAHAL



Makinder Singh Chahal has been working in the LGB&T voluntary sector in the East Midlands since 2012. He currently works for an LGB&T health charity based in Leicester called Trade Sexual Health as one of their health promotion workers. He also facilitates a group through Trade Sexual Health called Dosti, a social and support group for South Asian and Middle Eastern LGBTQ people. Prior to working in the voluntary sector, Makinder has been involved in LGBT activism since 2008 whilst he was part of the LGBT society at Keele University, two years of which where he was the co-president. During the final year where Makinder was co-president in 2011-12, the society was awarded LGBT Society of the Year by the National Union of Students (NUS). Makinder also volunteers for Stonewall.

NOT YOUR AVERAGE DESI GIRL: RESHMA JOHAR



'Not your average Desi girl'. (Bollywood song my Desi girl). Reshma is a Hindu lesbian who is married to a woman and out to her family. She volunteers and helps Stonewall and other organisations in raising the profile for Asian LGBT people. The structure of my talk would be a timeline of me growing up as a tomboy, discovering my sexuality, having the religious chat to myself and coming out to my family, friends and work. I would also discuss my Hindu wedding ceremony and what steps are still needed to further improve situations for families. The talk will cover - identity, gender stereo types, religion, work and family dynamics

SEXUAL HEALTH: PROFESSOR RUSI JASPAL



Professor Rusi Jaspal is Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, and Chair in Psychology & Sexual Health at De Montfort University Leicester. He is a Chartered Psychologist and Fellow of the British Psychological Society. He sits on the Advisory Board of Terrence Higgins Trust and is a Trustee of Saving Lives UK. Prof Jaspal's research focuses on identity, wellbeing and sexual health among gay and bisexual men of ethnic minority background. He is the author of 'Enhancing Sexual Health, Self-Identity & Wellbeing among Men Who Have Sex With Men: A Guide for Practitioners (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018).

SEXUAL HEALTH: DR RAGESHRI DHAIRYAWAN



Consultant Physician in Sexual Health and HIV Medicine at Barts Health NHS Trust. She has worked in east London for 10 years and specialises in looking after marginalised communities and raising awareness of sexual health issues amongst people of colour. She has been a member of the NAZ Medical Board for 5 years, is an Honorary Consultant at the Mary Seacole Centre, De Montford University and has written for Media Diversified. She is also an elected Trustee of the British HIV Association and chairs the steering group of the 4M Mentor Mothers project for women living with HIV. Her previous research has focused on intimate partner violence with regards to sexual health and HIV.

SEXUAL HEALTH: DR JAKE BAYLEY



Dr Jake Bayley is a HIV and Sexual Health Physician based in East London, UK. He looks after a cohort of 200 people living with HIV and is clinical lead for a large sexual health clinic in London. His interests are in HIV prevention, researching BME gay and bisexual men and how faith can affect sexual health outcomes. He also leads on national several digital sexual health projects.

INTERSEX VISIBILITY: MARTIN HASANI



Martin Hasani is a British Albanian community development worker & activist specialising in Intersex Visibility and Religious LGBTQI+ Muslims. Training with OII Europe, he has fought for legal and medical justice for the survivors of Intersex Genital Mutilation and Sexual Abuse and has been published by the Crown Prosecution Service in Hate Crimes as Experienced by Gypsies/Roma/Travellers in the West Midlands. He has also published language documentation materials for endangered dialects of Albanian and is a student of the Bektashi Order, a minority Shi'i Sufi Order. With a group of colleagues, he founded London Queer Muslims, a collective run by and for LGBTQI+ Sufi Muslims to address the spiritual needs of religious LGBTQI+ Muslims who are excluded from Heterosexist and Islamophobic spaces in the UK.

BISEXUALITY: JASPREET TEHARA



Jaspreet is a counselling psychology doctoral candidate based at the University of Roehampton, currently in the process of completing a research thesis entitled "British-Asian and Bisexual: A study of the male experience," which is a study focused on understanding the experience of second and third generation British South-Asian males who self-identify as Bisexual. Jaspreet has over seven years of experience working in mental health in various settings; He has worked for Rethink Mental Illness as a Mental Health Recovery Worker as part of their Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) service. He has worked in the NHS for five years as part of a multidisciplinary team (MDT) in acute psychiatry, and for over two years in NHS psychological services. In addition to this, Jaspreet also a registered member of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

SEXUAL HEALTH: NEELAM HEERA



Neelam is founder of Cysters. Cysters is a grassroots charity, dedicated to supporting women and improving the health, education and welfare of women living with reproductive health issues. We aim to educate the public about reproductive health issues, empower women to accept their diagnosis so that they can make informed choices about treatment, encourage and support research into these issues and challenge the societal, cultural and misogyny behind women's reproductive health. We feel that women don't take ownership of their own health, due to the gender inequality within the community. The pain associated with reproductive health has become normalised. Cysters are here to change perceptions about women's health, making it okay to put yourself first and dispelling the myths surrounding the sexualized topics of gynaecological health. On starting this campaign, as young female Asian woman, I have been met with criticism and was initially ostracised from my community. The taboos around this area are still very real. Only by coming together we can reduce the stigma. "Cysters – Because the journey is easier with your sisters."

VISIBILITY: LAKHBIR MANN



Laks Mann is a co-founder of Gaysians; an organisation created to be a platform that promotes positive visibility for South Asian LGBT+ people. His professional background includes having worked in the corporate, charitable and public sectors, as well as over 20 years volunteering with numerous community projects, including 10+ years in the LGBT+ sector. Originally from Birmingham, he relocated to London where he is now based. In addition to Gaysians, he [is/was] the Co-Chair of Pop Brixton Steering Group, [is/was] a Committee member of Lambeth LGBT+ Community Network, and is an affiliated BAME/PoC role model for Stonewall. Gaysians; an alliance of charities, support groups, meetups, activists, artists and leading voices within the South Asian LGBT+ community. Created to bring together and connect leading influencers in order to improve access to resources and services, for those that seek them, as well as to elevate our collective presence at public events such as Pride marches and in mainstream media.

FAITH AND FAMILY: SYEDA SARWAT FATIMA



My full name is Syeda Sarwat Fatima. I was born in Karachi, Pakistan and studied at Christ the King School, the University of Karachi and Leeds Metropolitan University. I was an only child and came from a middle class educated family. They were quite liberal towards religion but not toward sexual orientation. I lived in a very isolated environment where, as a child, I was not able to discuss my school life problems or other kind harassment which affected me. I stay here out of fear Fear of judgement, fear of ridicule But most of all, fear of abandonment. I'm afraid that if I come out of this lonely little closet What waits beyond will be a much greater peril Or perhaps it will be the release I've been looking for So I'll take a chance. They say the truth will set you free. When I told my family I was lesbian, I wound up in the hospital. I would like to share all my fears , threats , struggles , ignorance, emotional roller coasters with all of you, which I faced because I am lesbian. I will share how my sexuality became more important to me than what I had lost, which is most of the important things in my life, like my parents, my relatives , my friends , my job.

ACTIVIST AND DRAG ARTIST: LUCKY ROY SINGH



Hi my names Lucky Roy Singh, I'm the author of Take a Walk in my Big Indian Heels, I'm a LGBT + Activist and a Indian drag queen. So I go around to professionals hospitals the police force and schools and I educate them on there lack of understanding about honour based abuse and forced marriage from a person from the LGBT + Gayasian community. I use my personal experiences and how I felt when under these circumstances and the lack of support I was shown from professionals. In life before we are classed as a member of the LGBT+ community we are human beings we are people just like you. We want the same things as you. A carefree Life, kids, marriage... you may think well how is that going to happen your gay... there's a great many way all of them can happen today if people wouldn't be so ignorant to things around them. Whatever your entitled to the LGBT community should be entitled to. Also the Indian community need to be more aware that there are gay people trans people in the Indian community and we have a right as British citizens to live our life how we want.

EXPERIMENTAL NARRATIVES: RUHUL ABDIN



Ruhul is co-founder of the architecture and research studio - Paraa, which is based in Bangladesh. Founded in 2011, the studio has worked with UNDP Bangladesh, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Save the Children - Bangladesh, The Gandhi Foundation- UK, and many other organisations in creative and participatory research projects along with built architectural projects. He has been based London and Dhaka since 2009, and has recently been awarded an architectural prize in Bangladesh for their Bamboo Playscape project for LEEDO Children's Peace Home in Dhaka. The Queering of Spaces in Dhaka: The possibility for Modernity to help shape a new discourse? This paper seeks to explore the emergence of queer spaces in the city of Dhaka, Bangladesh through a lens of experiential narratives.

MENTAL HEALTH: NIKHWAT MARAWAT



Nikhwat Marawat, 25, Birmingham City University Student, East Midlands Time To Change Coordinator/ Co-Founder of The Delicate Mind a mental health organisation focused on examining the role of masculinity, faith, identity and how these impact mental health. We encourage submissions from all backgrounds asking people their thoughts on these questions and ask them to submit their ideas to us accordingly through art, poetry, writing or any way in which they feel comfortable expressing themselves.

HUMAN RIGHTS: ARVIND NARRAIN



Arvind Narrain of ARC International is a founding member of the Alternative Law Forum in Bangalore, India, a collective of lawyers who work on a critical practise of law and was also part of the litigation team, which argued the constitutionality of Section 377 before the High Court and the Supreme Court. Will speak by Skype.



change.org

CALL TO ACTION: SIGN PETITION TO REPEAL SECTION 377 IN INDIA

Love is Not a Crime! Protect Our Right to Equality – #Repeal377

This petition is to request to repeal Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code and decriminalize homosexuality in India. Imposed on India by the British, Section 377 is a Draconian law dated from 1860s and puts 50 million LGBTI Indians in harm's way. It has been used as an excuse for harassment, blackmail, extortion and physical and sexual abuse, multiplying existing inequalities based on caste, class and gender. The UN states that "decriminalizing homosexuality is an essential first step towards establishing genuine equality before the law."This petition therefore asks the Indian government to:

- Repeal Section 377 legislation which criminalizes same-sex sexual activity in India
- Put in place an immediate moratorium on the enforcement of any existing laws criminalizing homosexuality
- Commit to engage in meaningful dialogue with their LGBTI communities to facilitate an informed debate about the means to remove all legal and other impediments to the enjoyment of their human rights
- Commit to open and free debate across the Commonwealth on the decriminalization of homosexuality
- Support public education initiatives to inform the people of the Commonwealth about the case for LGBTI equality
- Support the right of an LGBTI Association to register with the Commonwealth alongside all civil society organizations and be free to express its views and engage in public debate.
- Fully include LGBTI people in development and other programmes on an equal basis with the rest of society.

Sign petition at: <https://www.change.org/p/narendra-modi-lgbti-in-india-and-diaspora-call-for-support-say-no-to-section-377>



SISAK FILM SCREENING



“Sisak- First Indian Silent LGBTQ Love Story” and winner of 41 international film awards!



SUPPORT LINKS

"Naz and Matt Foundation", an award-winning registered charity that tackles religious and cultural homophobia. The organisation helps families learn how to accept their LGBTQI+ children for who they really are - for who they were born to be.



<https://www.nazandmattfoundation.org/support/>

Our main social channels are

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/nazandmatt>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/nazandmattfoundation/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/nazandmattfoundation/>



See Gaysians website for list of south Asian LGBTQI+ partners:
<https://gaysians.org>



<http://stonewall.co.uk>

Support for South Asian LGBTI community



Why is this minority group so under represented and what is the common experience? This online forum aims to help unite this community and reduce isolation and discrimination faced, defend global LGBTI rights including repealing Section 377 in India and Asia, specializing in intersectionality of race and sexuality issues. This group does important work on queer visibility and aims to reduce homophobia and racism, improving understanding of South Asian LGBTI mental health issues as well as promote acceptance.



Finding A Voice is an award-winning LGBT support group which meets once a month in Birmingham. FAV is open to all South Asian LGBTIQ men and women over 18, regardless of faith, culture, religion and disability. One of the aims of this group is social inclusion for all, supports those who may be of different backgrounds and those who choose to remain silent about their sexual identity or orientation.

Venue: Lecture Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Birmingham, B15 2GW

Emails: BritishAsianLGBTI@gmail.com
Khakanqureshi@gmail.com

Website: <https://BritishAsianLGBTI.org>

Since the organisers teamed up online in 2013 with British Asian LGBTI, we realised the need to have a safe space to discuss sensitive issues affecting South Asian LGBTIQ+ individuals, families and communities, across the themes of mental health, sexuality, religion, faith, visibility, human rights. Khakan, Siddhi and Peta had a shared vision to organise a South Asian LGBTI rights conference and this has been a distant dream since 2013!