

2021

# REPORT

The UK BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET)  
*in partnership with*  
House of Rainbow and African Rainbow Family

**THEME:**

*Exploring the Vulnerability of*  
**BME LGBTQ COMMUNITY**  
**TO MODERN SLAVERY AND**  
**HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

DATE  
**17th**  
**November 2021**

TIME  
**11:00am - 1:00pm**

**CHAired BY** **NEENA SAMOTA**

*Programme Director Criminology and Sociology,  
St. Mary's University*

S P E A K E R S

**REV. JIDE MACAULAY**

*Founder and CEO - House of Rainbow*

**DEBBIE ARIYO OBE**

*Founder and Chair of BASNET*

**ADERONKE APATA**

*CEO - African Rainbow Family*

**BASHIRU SHEWAYE**

*Co-Founder - House of Guramayle*

**PARMINDER SEKHON**

*CEO NAZ*



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UK BME Antislavery Network -  
BASNET

11/17/2021

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## 1.0. Introduction

The UK BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET) established by AFRUCA is the first network in the UK and in Europe dedicated to promoting equality, inclusion and diversity in the anti-trafficking and anti-slavery space. Our Network members are registered charities or community interest companies working in diaspora communities affected by modern slavery.

Over the years there has been increasing challenges on the narratives of Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) people who might have experienced human trafficking on the grounds of their perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. We believe to some extent that these could also include some level of labour and financial exploitation. There are so many hidden and untold stories of LGBTQ folks being trafficked and or victimized by modern day slavery. The acute shame of being LGBTQ makes this a victimless crime as many people don't come forward.

BASNET in partnership with House of Rainbow and African Rainbow Family sought to explore the realities of the intersecting issues identified in BASNET's Racial Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action plan which was launched on the 15th of July 2021 and has since generated an impactful conversation around the theme to create awareness and effect change in policy and practice.

This advocacy discussion was centered on issues that plague the BME LGBTQ community members in hope that it will stir a conversation on what is going on and create an avenue to collaborate with organisations in the modern slavery and anti-trafficking sector in finding lasting solutions.

### 1.1 Statement from Seminar Chair – Neena Samota

'I was delighted to chair this important BASNET seminar exploring an under-researched subject. Not much is known about the nature and scale of the specific vulnerabilities experienced by the black and minority ethnic LGBTQ community who are also survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking. The seminar dealt with the complex intersections of sexuality, gender identity, race, nationality, and religious belief. The well-informed panellists highlighted problems in relation to experiences of criminalisation, the need to capture qualitative data to understand experiences of seeking asylum and being refugees and the types of disadvantages experienced because of implementation of policies. The minoritised LGBTQ community have the additional problem of credibility when decision-making bodies impose a further burden of proof about their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. The discussions engaged notions of homonormativity and 'homonationalist'



interpretations of queerness. To some extent the modern slavery and human trafficking apparatus contributes to and produces a racialised sexual other and creates narratives that can inform credibility assessments of decision makers when accessing support or relief as survivors. Solutions were explored using a public health framework. It was clear, however, that this is a critical area for future research and should be further interrogated in the context of modern slavery and human trafficking.'

## 1.2 Objectives

This event was organised to address the following:

- The realities and vulnerabilities of BME LGBTQ communities.
- Raise awareness on the challenges faced by members of the BME LGBTQ communities.
- Review the lack of available data and the extent to which people are at a double disadvantage.
- Shed light on the experiences of BME LGBTQ survivors of trafficking and other forms of exploitation.
- Discussed how practitioners, academics and anti-trafficking stakeholders can use shared knowledge in practice.

## 1.3 Highlights

- The need for data on LGBTQI exploitation and modern slavery.
- Awareness raising in communities and training for practitioners.
- The need to understand gender and sexuality to better inform service approach.
- The issue of marginalisation faced by LGBTQI trafficking victims.
- The LGBTQI community are victims of crimes reported to the police and Home Office.
- Criminalisation, detention and deportation of LGBTQI victims.
- The impact of community focused organisations.



## 2.0 Speakers/Panelists

### 2.1 Neena Samota - Chair



Neena Samota is the programme director for criminology and sociology and for the MA human trafficking, migration and organised crime at St Mary's University. Neena has extensive engagement with the voluntary sector through research, governance and campaigning work. She is Chair of Voice4Change England (V4CE), a national infrastructure body supporting the black and minority ethnic voluntary and community sector. She has been a member of StopWatch since it was formed in 2010 to campaign for effective, accountable and fair policing. Neena is also a steering group member of the Reclaim Justice Network which campaigns to promote alternatives to criminal justice.

### 2.2 Rev. Jide Macaulay – Keynote Speaker



Reverend Jide Macaulay is the Founder and CEO of House of Rainbow CIC. Openly gay British-Nigerian born in London, a Christian minister since 1998, Anglican Priest, inspirational speaker, author, poet, pastor and preacher, HIV Positive Activist, holds a degree in Law,



Master's Degree in Theology and Post-graduate certificate in Pastoral Theology. Jide focuses his ministry on inclusion and reconciliation of sexuality, spirituality and human rights. Currently Board of Trustee at Kaleidoscope Trust UK, Chairperson INERELA+ Europe, Patron at ReportOut, Vice Chair One Voice Network, Nominee Top 10 outstanding Contribution to LGBT+ Life by the British LGBT+ Award 2021, OSCARS Award winner 2014, 2017, 2018, Volunteer Chaplain at Mildmay HIV Hospital and Volunteer Champion at AFRUA Safeguarding Children.

### 2.3 Aderonke Apata



Aderonke Apata, Founder and Chairperson of African Rainbow Family. A charity that supports LGBTIQ refugees and those seeking asylum of African heritage and wider BAME in the UK. She is a Human Rights Activist, Feminist and LGBT Equality Advocate who has a BSc in Microbiology, a Master of Public Health and Primary Care, a Postgraduate Degree in Law, just completed studying the Bar Professional Training Course and studying Master of Laws. She's an LGBTI asylum campaigner for LGBTI people seeking asylum to stay in the UK; whom herself got granted asylum after a 13-year battle.

### 2.4 Faris Cuchi



Faris Cuchi, Co-Founder of House of Guramayle, Faris is a performance artist, PCCC standup comedian, and an intersectional LGBTQIA\* advocate who uses different medium such as style activism, video, and audio to bring social change and start a conversation change on the issues



they face while navigating day-to-day life as a non-binary Ethiopian/African LGBTQIA\* advocate/refugee in central Europe and back to their homeland Ethiopia.

## 2.5 Parminder Sekhon



Parminder Sekhon is currently Director of Programmes at NPL (Naz Project London) where she has worked since 1996 in various roles. Naz project provides sexual health and HIV prevention and support services to BME communities in London. She has worked in various roles during this time including Women's Sexual Health worker and HIV Client Support Services Manager. She set up KISS, the South Asian lesbian and bisexual women's peer support group in 1996, it is the longest serving group for women at NAZ.

## 3.0. Keynote: Exploring Vulnerabilities of BME LGBTQ Communities to Human Trafficking - by Rev. Jide Macauley

- Queer people are vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation because they come from countries that currently criminalise homosexuality. Many of whom are former British colonies.
- There is no data to confirm these realities. There is a gap in data collection making it difficult to prove that there are BME LGBTQ victims of human trafficking and exploitation which is necessary in order to influence policy changes.
- Exotic nature of LGBTQ sex workers. Perpetrators of exploitation take advantage of BME LGBTQ people to maximise exploitation.
- Shamed members of the LGBTQ community who have not come out to their families. Many BME LGBTQ people face rejection from their families and communities for coming out.
- Members of the LGBTQ community are less likely to report abuses. Those who have not revealed their sexuality to their family and friends hide abuse to avoid rejection and shaming.



- “The right to protection from all forms of exploitation, sale and traffic of human beings including but not limited to sexual exploitation... on the grounds of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity or the expression of these or other identities such measures must not be inconsistent with human rights of persons at risk of being trafficked” - Principle 11 Carter

#### 4.0 Sharing Lived experience from the LGBTQ Community: Abe’s Story

Abe studied in Lagos in the Northeastern part of Nigeria for his first degree. He became gay through consistent rape by his lecturer from the university. After he moved back to Lagos for his industrial attachment, his parents caught him with his partner and reported him to their community Islamic scholars who suggested that they should be flogged openly in the community. His parents were advised that if they wanted him to stop being gay then he had to be married off. He got married in April, 2014. Abe now has a wife and 2 children.

He couldn’t stop being gay and continued to see his partner. In 2019, they got caught by his neighbors who dragged them out naked and lynched them till the police came to their rescue. In the cell, they were tortured and not allowed to speak to anyone. The police asked the inmates to beat them. When a lawyer came to see another inmate, he got the chance to talk to him and the lawyer spoke to someone and he asked for his mother’s phone number. His family disowned him when they heard of the reason for his arrest.

The lawyer promised to take up the case because he had not been charged so he should be released on bail. He left the Southwest and moved to the Southsouth thinking everything will be fine. He called a friend from school based in Warri to ask for help and he was able to connect him to one ‘Ose’ who decided to help. At this point, he was no longer in contact with his children. Ose contacted some people and started to take him and 8 other guys to hotels.

He was with a Delta state politician, the hotel they were in got busted and he was arrested. After he gave his name, the police officer returned to say he had been arrested in Ibadan before for his sexuality and they were looking for him. The politician he was with got arrested too and arranged their bail.

This led to his transition to the UK. He was handed over to “Akpos”. He was told that Akpos would help him get a job and he would be working at whatever company Akpos got for him for 3 years to repay the money used to get him into the UK. They arrived on the 12th of September, 2019 with 5 other men. On the third day, Akpos came and took all their documents and asked who among them is gay. Not sensing any danger Abe raised his hands. After a few days, he said he had gotten him a job which was very different from what he



expected. Akpos never failed to warn them of the police and how easily they can be deported. He took them out on the bus 3-4 times a week and sometimes all through the night. On a particular night in December he took a walk to keep sane, walking until he couldn't see the buildings anymore. Nobody was following him and no one asked him to go back. He asked people where he was, he was told he was in Birmingham. He asked where Manchester City Football Club was as he was a Manchester City fan. He was told it's in Manchester. Then he asked, how far is Manchester from London? That was the next thing he planned to do. He started begging for money. He spent the night in an uncompleted building. He didn't come out in the morning because he was scared that they would be looking for him. On the third day, he came out because he was hungry, not considering the danger of being caught.

By the 5th day, he had £34. He asked where to get the bus to Manchester. He got down at Piccadilly. He saw people sleeping by the streetlights there for 2 weeks. He used to wake up to pray at the Piccadilly Mosque and one day, he heard someone speaking his local language - Yoruba. He told the man he needed help. The man asked what was wrong and why he was not fine. He told him he had accommodation problems. He said he did not have anywhere to stay. Since he is a gay muslim, he felt the man might not want to help him so he did not mention it. The man offered to assist him. He asked if he could sleep on his couch and he was happy. He lived with the man for almost a year. One day, a man he met online came to visit him in the house and when he was leaving, they kissed and the man saw them. He told him he could no longer accommodate him. At the time, he had not started the process to seek asylum because it was all through the pandemic. A friend introduced him to *Freedom from Torture*. It was there he got to know about how to seek asylum.

He sought asylum and accommodation with the assistance from Freedom from Torture. The Home Office requested a letter from the man that accommodated him and to know how he had assisted him. The Home Office did not respond to the accommodation issue. He did not get accommodation until the 1st of July. (The recording can be assessed [here](#))

## 5.0 Issues Raised

### 5.1. The Spectrum of BME LGBTQ forms of Exploitation in Relation to Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking - by Aderonke Apata

- In relation to Abe's story, the African Rainbow Family was able to help him realise that he had been a victim of trafficking. They also reached out to the police to intervene. He was referred to *African Rainbow Family* by *Freedom from Torture*.



- African Rainbow Family works with other organisations to seek out the signs of exploitation. People from Africa and other parts of the world are offered jobs and due to economic deprivation, they welcome the offers.
- Abe was not a victim because he could not find a job, he was a victim because he got found out. When these people get to the UK, they discover that the rosy job is not what they imagined. This is when they engage in prostitution or domestic servitude where they cannot get out. There is the fear of reporting and the lack of knowledge that they can report.
- The conference organised by African Rainbow Family in 2018 titled *Unreported*. Politicians were invited because they had the ability to change policies.
- It is important to note that amongst refugees and asylum seekers exploitation of members of the BME LGBTQ community is rampant especially when they cannot access accommodation through the Home Office.

## 5.2 The Impact of Sexual Exploitation, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking for LGBTQ Ethiopians and Eritreans - by Faris Cuchi

There are different realities that LGBTQ people experience as a refugee seeking asylum or migrating. There is prosecution from their home countries and the reality when they arrive in Europe.

1. **Language barrier:** The UK is inaccessible through regular migrant routes so people travel through Italy and other European countries that speak different languages which poses challenges. As a result, the migrants lack the ability to assess dangers due to the language barrier.
2. **Dangers of paying to be trafficked and the risk of losing their money:** Travelling by land and sea makes migrants vulnerable to extortion and exploitation from their traffickers and enablers.
3. **Transported in poor conditions:** The desert route is very dangerous as migrants are susceptible to overcrowded vehicles which makes breathing difficult and dehydration induced illnesses which often leads to their death. The sea route is also dangerous due to cramped boats and the inability of migrants to swim if the boat capsizes.
4. **Restrictions of international laws:** A client flew to Romania but experienced modern slavery. He worked hard labour jobs with little pay. Romania does not give LGBTQ people rights and protections so he had to move but was unable to do so due to the Dublin Law. After his visa expired he had to think about how to move from there. He struggled in Germany due to the language barrier and then moved to Belgium before arriving in the UK.



5. **Hiding sexuality from others who are trafficked.**
6. **Dealing with the UK migration system, physical and mental trauma.**

### 5.3 Modern Day Slavery and LGBT+ Communities a focus on Public Health – by Parminder Sekhon

#### Public Health Approach to Violence Reduction

The aim of Violence Reduction is to improve the health and safety of all individuals by addressing underlying risk factors that increase the likelihood that an individual will become a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Members of the LGBTQ are vulnerable to false promises of a better life at international destinations due to hostile policies in their various countries.

#### Key Steps in Identifying How to Reduce the Risks

1. **Define and monitor the problem:** Inviting people to talk about their experience working with the problem and being given a platform to share their testimonials. Monitoring the problem helps to identify what makes the problem worse and how to make it less acute.
2. **Identify risk and protective factors:** Issues including shaming in the BAME community and the importance of collective identity over individual identity, forced marriage, the burden on the LGBTQ person to fall in line because they have brought disgrace upon the family. When they arrive in the UK, they experience coercive control by seizing their passports, physical violence and social isolation. If people can get away from the risks identified, they are vulnerable to homelessness, substance abuse and commercial sex work to survive.
3. **Develop and test prevention strategies:** Third sector organisations can use projects created within their existing frameworks to support people coming forward. People feel safer because they are voluntary sector organisations.
4. **Assure widespread adoption:** If the strategies work, how can we ensure widespread adoption?
  - BAME LGBTQ people experience more discrimination in the UK.
  - Young trans people of colour are especially at risk of sex trafficking.
  - Homelessness.
  - A need for safe spaces for people to talk to practitioners.
  - BAME LGBTQ people experience mental health problems for a variety of reasons including homophobia and violence.



## 5.4. Panel Discussion

### What are the systemic challenges/ barriers?

- Remove the taboo around sex so that LGBTQ people can explore and enjoy their sexuality without it being taboo or a religious abomination.
- There should be more faith-based approaches to debunk religious stigma on LGBTQ
- There should be a collective willingness of people to change policies to protect victims and survivors.
- Protect asylum seeking BME LGBTQ people who have an added disadvantage and risk of persecution.
- Ensure LGBTQ People are not dispersed into homophobic accommodations. Replicate the system in Vienna that offers accommodation for queer people.
- Authorities should believe those that come forward.
- Appropriate training should be given to people who assess applications to understand cultures and practice it.
- Legislation needs to change to reflect that LGBTQ people have dignity and the right to determine what that dignity should look like.
- The system should catch up on existing terminologies.
- The impact of religious beliefs on LGBTQ people.

### What kind of awareness should we be creating?

- Documentation of experiences, amplifying voices and advocacy for people that have experienced trafficking. Trafficking happens because people are vulnerable and are preyed on, exploited and lied to.
- There is a disconnect between how people handle victims of trafficking and what happens in the real world. The distribution of support and research does not reflect that black and brown lives matter. The asylum process and the number of prosecutions that have been successful and those that have gone to court is proof. These things have to change.

## 6.0 Recommendations

### 6.1 Acknowledge and address systematic failures:

- In order to address this issue of LGBTQ+ communities, we must address the systemic failures which have left LGBTQ+ individuals especially vulnerable to exploitation and



abuse in the first place. This means acknowledging and counting the problem, amplifying lived experiences and advocating interventions to reduce violence.

### 6.2 Provide psychological safety

- Enable people to report and support them in their disclosures. This also means providing culturally appropriate mental health support for victims and survivors.

### 6.3 Education

- Educate communities and those in authoritative positions on the extent of the issue, awareness raising, recognizing and acting on signs.

### 6.4 Bespoke solutions

- Create environments that foster safe peer-led community spaces and opportunities for survivors to input their lived experiences into the development of solutions.

### 6.5 Decriminalise Exploitation

- Victims of Modern Slavery and human trafficking should not be criminalised for their ordeals. Decriminalise sex work and other hostile policies which further penalize people who have already endured exploitation and abuse.

### 6.6 Training Practitioners

- Practitioners should be trained on understanding LGBTQ victims of modern slavery, spotting the signs, trends and cultural implications. This should include law enforcement, solicitors, judges, social workers, health practitioners, faith-based organisations (churches and mosques etc.)

### 6.7 Accessing funding for community-focused organisations

- Organisations should be given the needed funding to expand their projects in supporting various service users who are able to come forward. There is very limited funding for BME organisations when it comes to community work.

## 7.0. Conclusion

- Academic scholarships have paid some attention to people who seek refuge and claim asylum, but there have been very few advancements in linking these issues to understand forms of exploitation.
- There is a need to evaluate the Modern Slavery Act; the single competent authority which has been refreshed. There is ongoing work to establish the link between human



trafficking and modern forms of slavery. How to apply a public health approach to create awareness and an understanding that people engage in providing advice, forms of legal advice and other forms of support services.

- Those in the charity sector need to recognise and connect the dots. There is a need to have more conversations on how to improve access and give people power to claim that dignity.

### 7.1. Pictures and Comments



### 7.2 Feedback

*Brilliant ~ Thanks everyone. Amazing session - Zoom user*

*Not a question, but just to say thank you to all the speakers today. This was such an amazing session and a pleasure to hear you all speak - Zoom user*

*Thanks to everyone. Amazing session! - Zoom user*

*Thanks to all the speakers, excellent session - Zoom user*

*Thank you. Each and every speaker was brilliant. This has been very informative - Zoom user*



### 7.3. Call for Spot the Sign Events for LGBTQ communities

If you are part of an organisation (i.e. law enforcement, the NHS) and are interested in getting a spot you can contact **Rev. Jide Macauley** on Whatsapp +447521130179, email; [jide@houseofrainbow.org](mailto:jide@houseofrainbow.org) or Naeema Ahmed [naeema@afruca.org](mailto:naeema@afruca.org). Visit [www.bmeantislavery.org](http://www.bmeantislavery.org) for more information

