

20 Jun 2011

O MAY 1997

ewelane
WHAT'S THE GOV GOT TO SAY THIS WEEK?

**Call me names, but
gay is NOT okay ...**

BILLY HARRIS SAYS
HOMOSEXUALS ARE
JEWEL LIGHTS!

"HOW PUNISHING IS
FOR YOU GUYS?"

T

Some day a bunch of politicians will muster the balls to rewrite the constitution ...

While Bullard was subsequently fired and Roberts' Bitch's Brew column discontinued, Qwelane's "Call me names, but gay is NOT okay" tirade earned him a guilty verdict of hate speech in the Johannesburg Equality Court. He has also been ordered to pay R100 000 to the SA Human Rights Commission, which took him to court in terms of the Promotion of Equality and

Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act.

Qwelane, who equated gay relationships to bestiality, has in the meantime been appointed as SA ambassador to Uganda, and has ignored repeated calls by the Democratic Alliance and gay lobby groups to step down.

Become critical case studies

However, the scandal has not gone away and the fire of outcry is still burning, as the three sagas have become critical case studies for any platform debating media ethics. Cowling said: "The outrage caused by these columns raises the question of whether they should have been published at all."

She added: "There is no such thing like complete freedom of expression because there are always limits in everything, and I find it curious when some people say 'I can't do anything because it is freedom of expression."

"There is a tension between what can be said and what constitutes stereotypes, racism and hate speech, among others. I am not advocating for rules that regulate commentary, but I firmly believe that there should be some limits in any form of reporting. So let's have some guidelines and ethics discussions about columns."

"Called editing"

Wits Prof Anton Harber said: "Making a decision whether a column has crossed the line is called editing."

Corrected at 5.03pm on 20 June 2011.

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Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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