

1)Title: Creating Safe Spaces for LGBT Refugees from Muslim Dominated Countries

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3)Request for \$10,000

4)The arrests and torture of Chechnya gay men serves as a recent example of the dangerous conditions circumscribing the lives of LGBT people living within Muslim dominated regions. Homosexual, lesbian and transgender “acts” are frequently outlawed in Muslim countries and there is a shared belief that because of religious commitments to Islam there are simply no LGBT people within these regions. Denying the reports that the state was torturing gay men, the Chechen head of state, Ramzan Kadyrov, indicated Chechnya did not have any gays. Such sentiment was shared by the Sharia judges in Aceh Indonesia which condemned two young men who were discovered together in a hotel room by local vigilantes to 85 cane lashings each in a public setting. (BBC news, May 24, 2017).

The criminalization of LGBT “acts” is not specific to Muslim dominated regions. It was only in 2003 that the United States Supreme Court finally overturned sodomy laws which had been used to punish gay men even when said acts occurred within the privacy of their bedrooms (Lawrence v. Texas, 539 U.S. 558 (2003)). More recently, Christian leaders in Uganda, led by the American Evangelical pastor, Scott Lively, lobbied for anti-homosexual legislation that included a life sentence for those convicted of homosexuality. (Blake) Though this legislation was overturned by the Ugandan courts it led to brutal police actions which included the torture and rape of those suspected of homosexuality. One key difference between Christian and Muslim based homo- and trans- phobia is that there are many branches of Christianity that accept and welcome LGBT members interpreting their acceptance within the scriptures upon which their religious ideologies are based. There are no “mainstream” branches of Islam that offer similar acceptance and welcoming; though, there are organizations such as the Alliance for Progressive Muslims and the Global Queer Muslim Network that argue the Qu’ran should be read to be more accepting of LGBT Muslims. Moreover, there are few western countries influenced by Christianity that legally ban homosexuality while the majority of Muslim dominated countries continue to do so.

instance, the International Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) based in Europe has been documenting the terrible conditions that Muslim LGBT refugees face in the centers in which they are placed which includes threats, verbal harassment, violence and exclusion from their home-based communities. However, with few exceptions, the solutions offered to resolve these issues are framed within a westernized perspective. For instance, within many Muslim communities homosexuality is not understood within an “identity” framework but is predicated on positions of power determined by status and age. Within this context men who are penetrated are vilified not because of their sexual acts but because of the ways in which they violate gender norms. Men who are sexually dominant with other men are often not at risk of being labeled “homosexual” because by penetrating another man they have maintained their status as “men.” ( Needham; Faucette). Failure to recognize the complex ways in which deviant sexualities are determined by the acts that violated the religiously prescribed gender norms will diminish the impact of reformers to improve conditions for LGBT people in Muslim dominant countries.

There has been very little research to date that focuses on developing culturally specific responses to the needs of LGBT Muslim refugees. ( Kahn). An important first step was the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) report of 2013 in which it examines the challenges LGBT refugees face. Key among these challenges is the severe isolation they face within their diaspora communities if they “come out” and the likelihood that some may choose to remain in their home countries, irrespective of the dangers, so as to avoid self-identifying in this way. (UNHCR) The report recommends a number of protocols to be implemented by refugee NGO’s to better deal with this situation. Included in these recommendations is the provision of “sensitivity” training for refugee staff which outlines questions and appropriate considerations of what

Crossman) Developing this project, then, will rely on feminist legal scholarship in comparative jurisprudence, post-colonial critical theories and histories of human rights advocacy as a basis for developing responses to the critical needs of LGBT Muslim refugees. It is hopeful that this analysis can enable immigration and refugee workers to convey a sense of safety that protects LGBT Muslims who are currently or are considering becoming refugees.

The methodology for this study will be purposive sampling through which subjects will be identified through contacts with immigration organizations in the United States and LGBT Muslim networks located in Morocco. This method relies on the researcher's judgement for choosing research subjects. Relying on purposive sampling is recommended when there are limited numbers of people who can serve as subjects of the survey being conducted.(Padgett) The following will serve as the primary criteria for selecting participants: 1) Participants must be over 18 years of age; 2) They must be fluent in Arabic, English or French; 3) They must have been raised in a Muslim-dominant country (with distinctions made for different sects); and, 4) They must be (or have been) LGBT while in their home countries. Survey questions will be designed to solicit perceptions and real threats to the safety of LGBT refugees in their countries of origin and in their resettlement countries. Survey responses will be evaluated and participants will be selected for follow-up interviews that will be conducted within at least the United States and Morocco (possible interviews may be conducted in Europe/Canada where refugees currently live).

5)The method for research will include surveying LGBT Muslim refugees currently living in the United States. At least one organization, CUNY Citizenship Now!, a legal advocacy organization based in New York City, has agreed to work with me to provide access to Muslim refugees who have settled in the U.S. I have also been in communication with other organizations like the Refugee Survival

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