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TRANSGENDER

Our Voices, Our Stories, Our Lives

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FROM THE EDITOR



Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera

Greetings our esteemed readers,

Mbalamusizza nnyo mwenna mu biti byammwe

It is with great excitement and pride that I present to you the second edition of Bombastic Magazine. The articles carried herein are not fictional- they are the lives of several Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Ugandans. People, like you and I, who have been stigmatized for so long are now opening up and sharing their lives with the world like never before.

The first issue of Bombastic, published and distributed in December 2014 and more copies given out in July 2015 evoked emotions and responses we never even dreamed of. People reached out to us to avail them with more information on LGBTI issues and noted that most were anti LGBTI simply because all the information handed down to them made our community out to be nothing but immoral and out to get their children.

We had parents asking us how best they could mend their relationships with their LGBTI identifying children and others inquiring how they could help their children cope with the stigma that comes with being a sexual and gender minority in Uganda. On the whole, we achieved what we set out to do and attitudes are changing gradually.

On the downside, we experienced a number of obstacles especially during the distribution of the magazine. The Minister of Ethics and Integrity Fr. Simon Lokodo on several occasions threatened to have us arrested and even said he would have all the published copies burnt. Some of our field volunteers were also apprehended and others intimidated but none of that stopped them from resiliently going ahead with the task at hand.

Having our goals and vision clearly embedded at the back of our minds has been one of the factors that has kept us strong to continue with this work even amidst Uganda's hostile environment. We will not stop until we have reached each Ugandan and spread the right information regarding LGBTI persons as it is not fair for them to have one sided information that is not even close to the truth.

I would wholeheartedly like to thank all the people that have worked tirelessly to have this issue out on time. The people who so generously donated their money for the development and printing of the magazine, we are forever indebted to you. The Kuchu Times team that spent sleepless nights to make sure the magazine was up to standard, thank you very much and of course all the readers, followers and supporters of Kuchu Times and Bombastic, we would not be able to do this without you.

This Edition of Bombastic covers different topics from Transgender, religion, human rights, parenting to sports among many others. We hope everyone can find a piece to relate to; one that will give them enormous hope to hang on in spite of what they might be dealing with. Times are quickly changing and we must help our societies change with them; I believe that everyone should have a right to be who they are and not be judged for it and hopefully with this magazine, more people will adapt this belief too. The online version can be accessed from our online media platform which also has a television and Radio. Join the more than 2million viewers to keep updated about our work.

I wish you all great reading and do not forget to get back to us with your reactions and comments

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

Aluta Continua

Editor In Chief

Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera

Communications Director

Jannet Lisa

communication@kuchutimes.com

Administration Director

Muganzi Ruth

muganzi@kuchutimes.com

Programs Director

Chanel

programs@kuchutimes.com

I WON'T APOLOGISE FOR BEING ME

By Cleo Kambugu

When I was approached by the Bombastic magazine team to be the main feature of this year's edition, I was flabbergasted and torn to pieces about what I would have to say to the readers or where I would get the time to write. You see, I haven't written in a long time, and that can leave anyone pretty rusty. And for me, writing is not something that I can will at my pleasure, it comes to me and the words come crushing onto the page like a wave. That's why I have been procrastinating doing my autobiography for the longest time; the time and the determination to see it through have just never come.

I have been scratching my head, trying to look for the words-so that they can come out right, so that my message could make an impact. When someone puts me on a pedestal then all of a sudden I fall into this perfectionist mode where nothing I want to say seems right or good enough. But I will tell the story of my life ... my life!

I was born in a small Kampala suburb called Bakuli, in a polygamous family of twelve children. Though my father had sired children from different women, it was his wish that all his children grew up together in one home, and knew each other. Now that I have grown up and heard about other people's experiences, I respect him for his decision, and for leaving up to his responsibilities.

We did not have much growing up; my father who had had a very successful run as a boxing promoter and travelled widely had hit a snag. But he still provided the best he could. We did

not lack but learnt from an early age to appreciate the fact that money was a visitor and ought to be respected when he came by. We were constantly reminded that the world owed us nothing and anything good that would come out of our lives would be out of hard work not because we were born with a silver spoon in our mouths. We were taught that life would be full of many ups and down, and the test of our maturity and resilience would be how we dealt with the deserts because they would come in legion.

We were taught to value and respect the people we met on our way up because we would meet them on our way down. But most of all, our father valued and he gave us an education. We did not go to the best of schools, and were not able to afford all the niceties that some kids could but we were able to go to school.

It was not an option, whether you wanted to go to school or not. At the end of every school term, we would queue up to give him our reports. It was a ceremony marked with tears and laughter depending of course on what your report card had. My father was not a violent man so he never whipped or spanked us at school or at home. He however made you appreciate and ponder hard about your performance. He was good with his word; they caressed as gently as a lover when he was pleased, and hit as painful as a leather whip when he wasn't. I guess it is from him, genetically or out of nurture that I learnt to wield the power of the tongue. We are both painfully frank people, cut out of the same cloth. I guess the apple did not fall far away from the tree when

it came to me.

However my mother made sure to clearly translate my father's sentiments into physical terms. She was a woman of the whip. She did not speak much because words served no purpose. Her sentiments could only be transcribed into painful lashes. She did not have a designated area to apply her strokes; it was all over the body. Keeping quiet as she administered her medicine meant defiance and stubbornness, the more you turned the more she whipped, so you had to scream, yell, and beg for forgiveness. It was only then that she would understand that you felt remorseful and understood your fault. It was the only way for her to understand that you felt the pain you caused her.

I was a hard headed kid growing up; they used to call me Dennis the menace. I would often find myself in some sort of mischief, and she made sure to remind me of my flaws. But she was a loving mother, and I have come to appreciate her even more as an adult. I now know that her canes were not because she hated us. My mother had three kids- me being the middle born, my older sister and younger brother. Though we weren't many, I guess it was the vagaries of a polygamous marriage, and the lack that turned her into a bitter woman. Being married now, I cannot even fathom how she was able to go through her youth sharing her husband and home with another woman. But this other woman, my step mother loved us and steps or not, our family had a bond like no other. I personally think that it is after growing up that we all

realized the oddity of our family. But it was my family. It was the family that accepted my own oddity.

I was a very girly kid growing up I remember my mother being called to my kindergarten because I refused to play with toy cars like other boys and was scrambling for dolls. That evening she bought me a Barbie doll with golden long hair and pink dresses. Very soon I would start to emulate my choice of clothes with my dolls' clothes. Oddly enough, I do not remember any one questioning my choice of clothes, and my very feminine demeanor. Every so often, I was complemented about my legs and beauty and compared with my sister. I also remember that they used to call me girl's name. It wasn't out of ridicule; they really likened me to a girl.

In Primary school, I was called a boy girl and had the weirdest of relationships with my friends who were boys. They were not sexual but they were always oddly protective of me, and I loved it. I did not have so many friends who were boys though. I relished in the company of girls, I found them easier to relate or talk to. Football was not my greatest forte, in fact none of the traditionally boyish hobbies really were. I loved playing hide and seek, salamia, round game, seven stones among other girly games. We never had a lot of digital TV growing up so we had a myriad of games to play to occupy our selves, not like today's



Photo By Eddie Mokaya None on Recnrd

kids who are glued to the silver screen. But the games we played were played by both boys and girls alike.

There was no wrong in a boy playing salamia or skipping the rope. When we played mommy and daddy I was always mommy, and looking back I do not remember it coming up even once or even being questioned about having to always take up the female role.

But then we grew up and it became distinct what roles and games girls and boys were supposed to play, things became sexual and tense, and our worlds

were divided. I guess it is at this moment that I remember my world crushing and I felt lost. The world asked me to choose. It wasn't much of an option really, as it asked me to conform more to boyhood, a gender I didn't really relate with. Though I still wanted to play my salamia and round games, all of a sudden I was considered weird and quaky whenever did.

But I was a defiant kid; not defiant for defiance's sake, but because I knew I wasn't what the world was telling me to conform to- I could not really put a finger to it, but I knew I was different. At the age of 12 while my brothers asked and scattered for separate

male lodging, I refused to move and remained in the girls' lodging and it was not contested. I now wonder if it was because my parents thought that there was less harm that would come to me, if I stayed in the girl's lodging, or if they merely struggled with raising a queer kid whose queerness they understood, and had to constantly be reminded of- you know, that it was wrong, and that the world would be hard for me because of that.

In high school, I still kept female friends for company; it was hard to go to the loos as the boys would either not let me in or struggle to undress me to check if I was male or female. I opted to only ease myself when I went back home in the evening or between lessons. High school was hard, the boys were mean but it was only verbal. I was thankfully hard headed and still stuck to my guns. I was also a class prefect and would always be required to take books to the teachers' staff room for marking; there, I can never forget the look on teachers' faces whenever I walked in. I was an androgynous kid tending to the girly side and teachers would always make comments, some in awe, some in amazements and others just questioning and not understanding.

I vividly remember this one time when I went to the staff room in my sportswear, and after handing the math teacher the books, God rest her soul, I was literally asked to stand in the middle of the room and slowly turn around for them to look at me and try to figure out if I was male or female. They all concluded that I was female, apart from my math teacher who tried to convince them that I was male because she had my student registration details. However, all her convincing fell on dumb ears and it did not help that I had the softest voice ever, and when other boys' voices broke, mine just refused. It did not help matters that I had the most feminine curves and that for me puberty

for some reason, unlike other boys, meant a huger butt and budding boobs.

I was a late bloomer and would not develop facial hair until my second year in university. Nevertheless it was not harmful- this scrutiny and I was used to it, I was always the object of amazement, the whole school, teachers and students alike knew about the girl boy who was I. But I had good grades, was never evolved in any mischief, and was an exemplary student, save for my flaw- my mismatched gender.

My father had a hostel, and earlier while all my brothers had moved into the male lodging I had stayed in the girl's. But it was not until form 3, that I was actually asked to move to the boy's lodging. I guess for me that is when my problems started and I guess they thought it would harden me into manhood; that I would learn more about being a boy if they weaned me off the company of girls, and moved me to the boys' lodging. Since my girly phase did not seem to be lifting, they thought that it would help if they weaned me off the hard way.

What they did not know, is the abuse I suffered while in that boys' lodging-those were four painful years. It was hard enough that I had to endure verbal homophobic abuse at school but at least I could go home to my sweet haven, but now I had to live with them. We were incompatible- boys, and I; they had no notion of hygiene and organisation, and the whole hostel, reeked of a mélange of putrid, pungent horrifying smells-you could have thought something had died in there. But that was to be the least of my worries. There were three types of boys that abused me. There was the type that was completely repulsed by my sight, and always asked my girl friends why they hung out with me and scolded them for spoiling me. There were the passive aggressive ones, who wouldn't say anything but would

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make sure not to talk or sit or touch what I touched; to them I was a very odd thing and they did not know how to relate with me. But those two types I could stand up to. It was the third kind I cringed from. The third kind that ridiculed me in public and made comments, yet they would come into my bed at night and sexually abuse me. This kind knew no one would believe me if I told anyone, because they always uttered the most offensive homophobic slurs at and they were also sought after by a legion of girls, some my girl friends.

They knew I would not tell, because if I did, I would be blamed for bringing harm to myself because of my girliness, and I would instead be blamed for luring them. So I endured the pain and did not tell a soul. My naivety was stripped from me at such a tender age and it was not by a lover, but through abuse- abuse that went on and on and on without ceasing. In a very pathological way, I always talk about how this abuse was the only intimacy I knew and came to live with. In the oddest of ways, it affirmed my femininity and my allure to the male kind. But like I always say it was not gay men from the west who made me queer, or defiled me into gayness. It was straight boys, sons of the land. Boys who have grown into married men with wives and kids and have since risen to high respectable echelons in society. These men would never lay a finger on me now because they know I know.

I guess to them, I was a piece of their sexual adventure; an exploration of their sexuality and perhaps an opportunity of a release and test drive, but for me it was abuse. Abuse I for a long time could not talk about. It was not that their defilement made me start liking men, no. I loved men, I was attracted to men, I just did not act on it, and in my fantasy world I dreamt of a time when someone would love me

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and propose to me openly and not keep me as a terrible secret between the sheets in a dark empty frigid room in the wee hours of the night.

But what I appreciate about my painful youth was that it helped me grow. I always say I was forged in fire and blood. Through all my experiences, I grew layer upon layer, like an onion, of resilience, confidence and self esteem. And when I finally put my foot down to the world, and said it was over, it really was. I was not to allow any more abuse from any



one, I would not expect any less or any more respect than the next person, you did not have to understand me to treat me nicely, and I was not to shrink to make other people feel good about themselves. The same privilege life accorded other people, I demanded for myself. I went to Makerere University and stayed in the most patriarchal of male halls - Livingstone Hall. It had an age old patriarchal male legacy about it, but the four years I was a resident there I asserted my full queerness unapologetically with reckless abandon.

But it flawed me, my upbringing I mean, I struggled to just exist, happiness eluded me, and I did not really know who I was and where I fitted in. In all this I asserted myself. Unlike most cis gendered or transgender

persons, our troubles start from not having a language to define one's self to disprove the abuse and questions we face both from within and from without. While most people deal with identity crises, it is usually about as trivial as a choice of career, or what to wear. But for us, it is from who you are from within and how that is incongruent with what society tells you to be or what your pubertal body is sprouting into. Without a blue print to refer to, to define one's self and with no support system to lean on, or to love and support you unconditionally, several often lose confidence and self esteem and recede into a painful lonely solitude. As a teenager, though I exuded a pseudo confidence for protection, I suffered with identity crisis and self esteem, I did not know who I was and did not like what the whole world was struggling to tell me I was or should be because I knew I was neither. But I did not have the language or knowledge to know where to put the mark.

As infants, we were free to unapologetically express ourselves the way we wanted. The lines between the genders was blurred, I can't tell if it is because kids are not sexualized or because kids' minds at that age were not yet corrupted by a system that over emphasizes and moralizes labels. But as we grow, we are in constant conversation with society, it telling us how we should or should not eat, talk, behave, what jobs we should choose, what religions we should opt for, and what we should not. I guess for me it is at that point that I realized that the labels that defined me were wrong, and immoral, alien and aberrant. It is at that point that I receded into my shell and knew that who I was would put me in harm's way. Whenever that conversation came up, I tried my level best to shield myself from it, because neither had the language nor the confidence to come out and say that this is who I was- for even

the labels that I thought I was were wrong to society.

You're never given a template, as a trans person, that explains how to define yourself, what your gender is or what a relationship and sex might look like. It wasn't until I was 23 and stumbled into a queer bar in Kampala that I began to find a community of people who were like me- it was so liberating.

People ask me about when I found out I was transgender. I know that they are trying to be respectful and that they are ignorant, but I find it a very ridiculous question. But I entertain their ridiculousness, by asking them when they realized they were boys. One does not choose to be trans, it is not a life choice. There is no moment that one can tick and say this is when I realized I am a boy. I guess the realization is that you are not what everyone expects you to be and for me that was my puberty.

But my identity growing up and to this day was not and is not delimited to a box I can tick to validate and assert my position in the diversity of humanity. I'm just me, a complexity of the many different ingredients that define me, none more important than the other and if ever I choose to elevate any over the other it is for completely political reason to educate people that nature is not as simplistic as they put it, and cannot be reduced to over simplified superficial identifiers. I also tell people that labels do not define my fate; my fate lies in my palms. I am not any less labeled than the next cisgender person and loathe being treated as a crippled charity case. Victimhood is not a color that goes well with my skin. I learnt this from a tender age. I grew up in a family of 15 and suffered a lot of abuse and struggle for me to know that I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth and the world owes me nothing, and that the world detests and tramples

on weakness. I do acknowledge that my 'transness' and blackness make me less privileged than the next cisgender person, but to reduce myself to mediocrity because of that, I guess for me that would be where I draw the line.

What I learnt from my life experiences is that we let people discriminate and think less of us when we choose to think less of our selves. We give their defamatory statements the power to break us down, when we choose to not deserve to be

to clarify my sexuality, and I guess it was then that I felt the pressure to choose my identity, and be more clear about what that was.

At some point, I thought mine were sexuality issues, and so thought I was gay. But later on when I was able to interact with the gay community in Uganda I felt that, that label did not feel right and there on started my journey to self realisation and determination, from developing the urgency and confidence to define myself.

feet and answering them will shake them up into realizing that there is no wrong in being me that I should feel any less and at least they leave with a morsel of knowledge about trans people and would never ridicule another trans person. So I speak, I talk and I question myself, to help people unlearn, learn and relearn what was socialised in them by default.

I enlighten them, for me it is that so many things are not discussed in my continent and are relegated to the realm of controversy as an excuse and justification for them



Discussion panel during Pride transday 2015

a part of the fold. The question we should always strive to ask ourselves is do they deserve you?

Though I knew I was not gay, I also knew I was not your ordinary girl loving cis gender male boy. I knew I was not comfortable in my bones and mahood or what society suggested I ought to do or not to do as an African male. Growing up, my peculiar gender expression was mostly comixed, I was often referred to as boy girl, nyabo and other several female titles.

But these were only stale jokes used by friends, family, and bullies alike. The pressure only became more real as I approached my puberty and was expected to subscribe to gender and its roles that were distinct to masculinity, and that also meant separate lodging, dressing, game and sport. It even became more real when I was confronted by family

In Uganda, there is a lose dichotomy between sexual orientation and gender identity. Most trans people in my country are pre op, and hence are just seen as very fabulous, unapologetic daring effeminate gay men or butch lesbians and are not tolerated and targeted for abuse. It is only now that some of our law makers, I guess as a result of the long AHA battle that did not go well, came to the understanding of the difference between sexual minorities and trans people. There is now a law that criminalises trans people who seek medical surgery whenever they seek their citizenship to be recognised for example when trying to get travel documents or just identity documents.

I understand that while some people ask me questions to ridicule and offend me, my confidence in standing up on my

not being discussed while many people continue to suffer and die in silence scared to talk about them. For me it is that so many technocrats, politician's people we trust with our countries are scared to ask some questions because they will be judged and called perverts and incompetent. A lot of information is relegated into common sense when it actually isn't, and what that means is that people who do not have the information will not ask for it for fear of being called incompetent or ignorant or perverts for asking such simple things.

As such our country, or system is managed by ignorant people who are too scared to ask they would rather legislate based on ignorance rather than ask for fear of being ridiculed themselves. ■

WHY CAN'T YOU SEE ME?

By Nshimi Grimmon

What did I ever do to you?

That you hate my guts you want to boil my blood

Am I really that bad to see?

When you fuck a bitch and betray your wife

And I'm just kissing the love of my life

Why am I not good enough for you?

When I live my life why do you have to have sudden control?

I'm still the same me

But once my sexuality is out you back stab me

Am I really no good?

Am I good to belong in the trash with the verbal by pass?

Do I even belong?

They say we are but we must follow one law

A piece of me is dead by living a life of lies

Saying I love girls when the other team is more cute

I lost all my faith in you creatures

I can't call you people

Cause people care for each other they don't slaughter

You choke me like death

You hold my breath

You're stabbing me with a phobic picture of me

Am I too slutty for you even though I've never been with someone?

My leader once said burn all the gays

Are we really that bad that we must be burnt at the stakes?

I thought we are supposed to love

Not hate one another

But I have finally seen different sexual phobias

A world without peace fighting everyday

With chains that are grey

Why can't you see me?

I'm just not good enough for your world of normal creatures to be.

Memoirs of a lesbian love

By Elle

I like to imagine love can pull one's essence like a red sun at dusk

Strange!!!! HUH but true.... so real and beautiful I wish I could show you

I'm a radical African lesbian feminist, she said

Me too..... From and on the outside

I remembered once when I was overthrowing my thoughts for doubts she said, I don't do one night stands, it's got to be spiritual before it graduates to physical

In that instant, my sense of urgency was lost to time

Lost in a web of feelings so indescribably strong

We did it over the sound of a television.

Surrounded by grave quiet we could almost hear our gazes their radiation so real.....so passionate.....solntense

As we practiced an art very ancient, intimate, Siamese.....

Wonderful in the present yet forever greater in memory.

The reality, so sad, I may never see her again

But I still cling to my last ray of hope because I know

I soared like a bird every time I felt her presence,

Our breaths mingling, taking turns to out

and from the core of her heart, I drew pivotal life lessons.

Inspiration, a passionate satisfying feeling of Eternity.

I will not stop here, evening. I hope I'll see her in the morning.

SCARRRED BUT...

determined to rise

Mac Illakut is my name and I identify as a transman. I was one of those people that were very skeptical to join the community let alone come out. However, while in my Senior Four vacation, I was very involved in football; a space that helped me meet some LGBTI activists. I vividly remember Nikki, encouraging us (LGBTI identifying youths that were in the closet) to start participating in community events.

I held back till I was in my senior six vacation and it was at this point that I slowly started taking part in community activities. I joined Freedom and Roam Uganda as a member and later got a job with the same organization. In 2011, one of my breasts started hurting; it got so bad that even a mere fabric brushing against it made me want to scream out in pain. When I went in to see the doctor I described my ailment but would not let him examine me.

I could not bear the thought of anyone seeing me, a man, with breasts! Eventually he decided to give me a painkiller and little known to me was the fact that he had given me a sedative. He examined me after I had passed out and later, told me to see a counselor since he believed I had gender dysphoria. I went to the see the said counselor who unfortunately quizzed me about why I didn't realize what I was doing was against human regularity. That was the first and last time I went in to see them.

Fast forward, my sexuality being revealed to my family through the media is probably one of the hardest experiences I have had to deal with. I took part in a media conference that was held in Mbale and before I knew what was happening, my name and picture were making rounds in tabloids.

One of the journalists scheduled a one on one interview where I intended to tell my side of the story without having anyone quote me out of context; unfortunately, I was scheduled

to travel to South Africa at about the same time. When he (the journalist) got into ouch to set a time for the interview, I apologized and asked for us to do it after my return.

As if the weeks before hadn't been enough torture, the journalist went ahead to publish a story that insinuated I had travelled to South Africa for a sex change operation; he even promised to publish pictures of the 'new' me upon my return. My family was very angry that I could give such information to the media and drag their reputation through the mud. I even received phone calls warning me that the elders in Teso were planning to capture me and take me back home, to teach me how to be a 'proper woman'.

Unfortunately, a few months after this incident I lost a sister and had to go back home for the funeral. I made the very difficult decision



to respect myself and stay true to who I am. I dressed in my normal clothes (like a man) and off I went. I will never forget the stress and almost silent whispers that followed me during my days in the village. I waited for people to attack me but none gathered the courage I guess. Finally my mother, tired of all the questions people were bombarding her with about my sexuality, told the crowd to address me in person as she was as dumbfounded as they were.

Only my stepfather had the courage to ask what had become of me and I simply told him I was who I was and there was nothing anybody could do to change me. While some people have since accepted my sexuality, a greater part of my family still resents me but I have also made peace with the whole situation.

I have since grown as a person and activist and one of the things I have dedicated myself to is easing the health care system for transmen. I have been working closely with Most At Risk Populations Initiative (MARPI) to sensitive medics on the challenges of transmen and it is amazing how well most of them have received this information and appreciated it as well.

Also, I am trying to raise awareness of the transition process since it is more cumbersome than most people realise. Finding doctors, psychologists and surgeons who are willing to help people transition is not an easy fete but like everything else in this struggle, I know we are breaking walls, even if it is one at a time. I am planning to undergo my first sex change surgery sometime this year and I hope my journey and struggle can help inspire someone who is struggling to remain true to themselves.

Aluta Continua. ■

BE GREATNESS, BECOME CHANGE

By Rev. Patrick Leuben Mukajanga and Roberto Malini

Be greatness, become change,
Be peace, become compassion,
Be progress, become truth.

Be a shield against the organized violence
of governments.
Become mist and surround the persecuted
fleeing their oppressors.

Be soul and instill your thoughts
Everywhere, in front of the soulless machine
That destroys hope.

Become hope and embrace
Those who are now desperate.

Be greatness, become change,
Be peace, become compassion,
Be progress, become truth.

Inspired by Mahatma Ghandi

Binding: A Transman's Reality

By Early Bird

The term “binding” refers to the process of flattening one’s breast tissue in order to create a male-appearing chest. The type of materials and methods used for successful binding will vary depending on the size of one’s chest and the overall build of one’s body.

There is no “one-size-fits all” binding method because everyone is shaped differently, and we all have different levels of comfort with our bodies. Some trans guys don’t bind at all. Some slump or hunch over to hide their chests (which can be very effective but can also cause posture problems over time). Some use different methods of layering clothing to help hide their chests. Some bind only on certain occasions; some bind all the time.

In this piece, we use pictures to vividly explain how most transmen in our community bind.

How to Chest Bind Safely

The first step in learning how to bind safely is finding out what’s not safe to do. Don’t use Ace bandages or duct tape—they aren’t meant for binding and can cause physical harm. They can seriously restrict breathing, cause fluid build-up in your lungs and other serious injuries, such as broken ribs.

Even with the right binder product it’s still possible to bind unsafely. Despite what you may have been told, don’t buy a binder that’s too small for you. Wearing an ill-fitting binder puts you at risk of the same problems as those who bind with duct tape.

Also, give your body a break: don’t bind 24/7. In fact, don’t bind for more than 8-12 hours at a time. Use the times that you’re not binding to wash and air dry your binder, which will help make it last longer. ■



Gender Affirming Top Surgery in FTMs

By Early Bird



Female-to-Male (FTM) Chest Recontouring is an extensive version of a standard breast reduction, and can be performed for patients seeking to undergo affirmation. Usually trans-men have undergone counseling for gender dysphoria for months or years before seeking to undergo the more significant step of (relatively irreversible) surgery, to enable them to fully function in the male identity.

Top Surgery involves breast removal (Subcutaneous Mastectomy) and male chest contouring, and can also include free nipple grafts, or nipple/areola resizing and repositioning. There are a few other surgical variations used for chest reconstruction, including the “inverted T” incision, the “pie wedge” method, and other combinations of incisions that a surgeon may see as the best approach for the patient. These methods are not covered in great detail here, as they are not nearly as common as the above two approaches, and because they are similar to the other approaches except for the resultant scarring. The surgical method chosen will depend on the body type of the patient and the skills/preferences of the surgeon. ■

The Pain of Passing

By SK

'Passing' is one of the most important things in a trans person's life especially in a country where people label anyone with breasts but dressed in men's clothes as a lesbian, or anyone with a beard dressed in feminine clothes as gay.

As trans men, we normally bind to pass as the men we know we are. This is my story.

I have been binding for the past three years. All was well because it at least got me closer to physically appearing as the person I truly am. I started binding out of fear of being mobbed or hurled insults at for being 'omusiyazi' after I got a job in Kawempe, a Kampala suburb.

For me binding was a fulfillment to 'pass' if I was going to live as a man. I had never seen a binder before and did not know what binding was let alone how to go about the whole process. However, I had mates who were binding so I decided to do it the way they did. I went to a pharmacy looking for the biggest and widest bandage they had. To my disappointment the biggest was very expensive so, I opted for two small sizes. I was sure they would do the job. All I really cared for was a flat chest because I had to 'pass'.

My first day experience with bandages wrapped around my chest was the worst. At one point, I almost suffocated. I remember running to the bathroom and ripping my chest bare while grasping for breath. I wondered what I was doing wrong or if my mates were going through the same.

After a few minutes of catching some air, I wrapped up again. I had to 'pass' and was ready to endure those moments. Little did I know it was just the beginning of the great pain I was yet to bear.

This has gone on for three years now. I got used to the tight grip that the bandages hugged me with; and spending long hours in their tight embrace did not really matter. It was something I had to do on a daily basis if I was going to be the man I am in the eyes of society.

But on this particular day, I spent the day in pain that I cannot dare describe in these lines. It was pain I had never felt before. It was getting to my brain but I still had to keep calm and get through my work day.

I got home that evening, tore off the shirt and started unwrapping. As I rolled the first bandage away it felt



like my chest was about to burst open. The second bandage came off with a sticky feel and the pain intensified.

I quickly looked to see what was happening under my right arm. As I raised my hand, I saw pink flesh. My bandages had betrayed me. It was a wound. One caused by every move I made, every breath I took, the bandages had sliced deep into my skin.

I wished it was a choice like they say it is. I would not have chosen to be in such pain. I wished I did not have to 'pass'. I wished I could throw away my bandages and live freely; but they now define my world and life as a man in Uganda.

I went to bed and waited to feel my pain all over again the next day. After all I have to pass at all costs. Not the pain, the bruised ribcage or the suffocation can stop me. I will 'pass' in pain with my bandages as my horrible companions. ■

FORCED TO ABANDON MY CHILDREN

By LL

I am a 32 year old Uganda female and can no longer deny that I am a lesbian. It took me a while to accept myself but I am now comfortable, proud and see no reason to run away from myself because society dictates so.

It is now 5 years down the road, I have been rejected by my family and public at large and this has really been unbearable. It got so bad that I was forced to escape, leaving my children including my then eight months old baby, behind.

My ordeal started after my mother walked in on me making out with my girlfriend; disappointed, she informed my uncle and a quick marriage was arranged. I stayed in that marriage for ten years enduring both physical and emotional abuse. There was absolutely no affection but I walked out with four of the greatest blessings I have in my life; my three boys and little girl.

During this time, I secretly kept in touch with my girlfriend and she is the only person who knew the real extent of my suffering. Having heard rumors about my sexuality, my husband plotted and eventually caught me 'in the act' with my lover. I am thankful that I did not lose my life that very day; he beat me up so badly leaving me bedridden for a longtime. Scared that he would be imprisoned if I died, he took his own life.

My in-laws rejected our children claiming they were a disgrace based on my sexuality and would have nothing to do with them. My mother became an outcast for searing a sexually 'deformed' daughter and for her own peace of mind and security, had to leave our village and start all over again at her old age.

I spent almost 3 years in hiding until I escaped to Norway where I am still seeking for asylum. I have fears of being deported but I remain hopeful that all will be okay. ■

I AM
WHO
I AM

By Shanan Shalom Navaro Powerzv

I work with you
You work with me
We discuss politics, education, laws of the
land and our children
We sleep over at each other's houses
We broke bread together
We were fine until I told you..
I was gay

I never inappropriately approached you
"By the way.. You're not my type."
Why so much hatred
I am that same person you kept company
Why must you distance yourself from me?
Look at me
I am still your friend
Why must our friendship end Because I spoke
my truth?

I am who I am
There are many of us in the closet
I will no longer hide my identity
I must stand for something
I own up to my identity
I am still that person you trusted
I accepted you as you are
"Why?" I asked, can't you accept Me
I am who I am

CRIES OF A TRANSMAN

By PN

The liquid poured into my underwear; the fluid that reincarnates my memories

Memories of my pre transition

The fluid like a valley stream flew through my “for men” labeled boxers

To my gentle trousers I felt wet

My eyes couldn't cry because I am a man

I acted a gentle man who buys sanitary ware for his woman

Deep inside me I yelled.....shall this ever stop?

Last night, as we shared a farewell hug with the woman

I woman I want to convince to accepting me as her man

The piece of bandage that hugs my breasts to binding fell out

The woman passed her fingers through my shirt

I didn't feel her caress

My worry was to the my piece of “binder”

I cried deeply; she took my tears for joy

I saw her grip me tighter

Twice or thrice, at the doctor's desk

I am questioned about the history that hurts

The history that sets me a blaze

No health provider will understand my transition

They slice deep into my wounds when they ask

So are you male or female?

The woman of my dreams left me the other night

Her last note emphasized how my game didn't meet her exceptions

No man will stand to not being man enough

But how man must I be to prove to you that I am the man you were looking for?

I am the man I ought to be

I have missed a handful of opportunities

My names don't sound rhythmical with my academic certificates

I am not an impersonator though

I am simply a seasoned transitioned man

I know I am the man I ought to have been

The world can take forever to know it

But I am a man

Even when my body never forgets to remind me of my womanhood

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LOVE AFTER THE STORM



By ALP

We desire to meet that one person, fall madly in love with them and live happily ever after. However the story completely changes when you realize the person you fell in love with has different sides to themselves. It starts to feel like there are three of you in the relationship. These people are charming, manipulative, and quite frequently, absolutely fantastic in bed. Sociopaths exist—and if you're anything like me, you may have had a relationship with one in the past. I have grown to learn that if someone isn't true to themselves, then there's sure no way will they be true to you.

Persons with this kind of personality may not always come out swinging an axe while dressed in a raincoat to avoid dirtying their well-tailored suits with your blood, but you may have found yourself neck deep in a web of lies and risky behavior that, once on the other side, left you seriously wondering what you were thinking in the first place.

When they leave your life, they take away a piece of you. Your trust for the next perfect love of your life dwindles down. Your want and desire become inconceivable standards and for many unmatchable. But yet one has to pick oneself up and move on. In life, one should learn to live-on and love-on. Losing a one two faced psycho only makes u learn to love yourself better and set the bar higher because you want and desire the best in life.

Yes even after Love, stand up and believe in love again. What doesn't kill you only tends to make you stronger. I have picked up my own, learnt to love my own and live for my own. Someday the best part of my own will join me and I will love them better.

I have also noted that love is the most overly used word in the English language. Most people use it when they want/need something; but what really blinds us is that sometimes, we choose what we want to see and hear instead of the facts at hand. To a wrong person, you will have any worth but to the right one, you mean everything. ■



HATE CRIMES; SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!

My name is Diane Bakuraira Sydney and I have come out to talk about the verbal and physical attacks towards LGBTI persons in Uganda. As a person who has grown up in a Christian family and gone to Christian schools, I feel awful that these kinds of injustices are happening.

Being from a humble background, one would normally not expect certain things to happen especially when dealing with peace, love, politeness; generally things that the Bible instructs us to uphold in order to live in a society that is well respected and for unity's sake. The reason I chose this topic is because I recently experienced a very bad attack but I would rather share previous related experiences.

As an LGBTI person, I have endured both physical and verbal attacks from schoolmates, passers-by and the community in general. This leaves one with many mixed emotions but I had everything I could to brush it off and struggle with the emotional trauma silently. However, as one grows, they begin the journey of self-discovery, trying to learn and re-learn everything about them; they are also dealing with external forces of abuse of which all these factors create conflicts in their body, mind and soul.

It is therefore a common occurrence to find mechanisms of dealing with such issues especially if they are coming from one's close friends and people that are actually supposed to be a support system.

A quick example, I was a member of most rugby clubs in the different schools I attended. Like any normal person who loves sport, enjoys going out mixing and mingling with different people in the society, I was active in rugby gatherings but was seen as an outcast among friends and people within the scope of the sport that I loved.

I was verbally abused and ashamed; an emotional attack that never goes away. I hid it as best as I could but emotionally, I was struggling. I never thought all these attacks would graduate to a physical level but how wrong I was. I have seen friends who have been beaten but never imagined it would be me.

I strongly address this because as much as one tries to hide their inner feelings and deal with physical assault in 'their own way', it is trauma that will never leave you. You could seek the assistance of professional counselors and therapists but even that will not take away the scars or memories such attacks leave behind.

I try to put up a front for my friends, family, workmates and close associates and most have bought the idea that I am coping well but the truth is I am struggling. Like most LGBTI individuals, I have mastered the art of putting up a strong front but it is a very different story behind the scenes.

I know there are many people out there who might

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relate to this ordeal and understand the mental trauma. It opened my eyes to the need for centres that address such issues for minorities' to be set up. People need safe spaces where they can openly address the trauma inflicted on them and there is also an even more urgent need for people to stop hiding and create awareness within this community.

Take for instance a person being attacked and they stay away from work or even resort to leaving the country as a healing mechanism. Would this person be compared in any way to one who stays rooted and seeks help from within a group of people that have dealt with the same issue? Why should we run from our country because we

I was verbally abused and ashamed; an emotional attack that never goes away. I hid it as best as I could but emotionally, I was struggling.

are mentally traumatized, due to the physical or verbal attacks from the people in our society?

As an individual, I believe it is my duty to stand in the gap and try to bridge it. I have taken it

upon different friends that work in Police to try and find ways to work out a procedure in order to safe guard our environment, the homesteads we live in and even alternatives ways for easy authority access. We are now talking of setting up helplines where people can reach the authorities if they need help.

Once you are physically attacked, your mental health is dismantled and your thinking process interrupted. You will pay more attention to every insult hurled your way and the beatings you have experienced will become a part of you; it is difficult for someone in this position to erase these memories or thought train.

Most LGBTI persons don't talk about these issues because we feel we are not supported and for the few who do society will most times make it seem

like it is the former's fault. I have shared my story because I have had friends who have been in this position; fellow activists as well as family that do not understand exactly why I was attacked. I hope it also encourages other persons to share their ordeals and such efforts will see hate crimes become a thing of the past.

It is still hard to talk about the details of my attack as the wounds are still fresh. What I do know however is that violence has never solved a problem; if a person dresses different, smells

different, looks different, or walks different, that does not give anyone the right to harm them physically or emotionally.

I therefore urge whoever reads my story to join the struggle and talk about these issues because it is not only affecting LGBTI persons but also cuts across to anyone that is in any way different. This explains the never ending bullying in schools.

I share with you two sets of pictures and hopefully they will paint the bigger picture of how intense and traumatizing hate attacks can be. The scars remain not only on the face but also in my mind and soul; the healing process is a journey and I will conquer mine. ■



Rising Above the Hurdles of a Hard Knock Life

My name is Hajarrah Ssanyu Batte, I am a sex worker by profession. I identify as a bisexual woman and currently, I am in a relationship with a transman.

I was born in a middle class religious family but things took a bad turn when I was fifteen. I was raped and impregnated by a relative. My father was very a strict moslem man and on finding out I was pregnant, called a meeting with the man's family and together the two families agreed that I should get married to this man who already had two wives. The only other option I was given was to leave home and never return. Long story short, I was forced to drop out of school and try to find means to fend for myself at the tender age of fifteen since I could not subject myself to being a third wife to someone I barely knew.

I even attempted to have an abortion but my pregnancy was in it seventh month at the time.

The doctor could only do a D&C and induce. That meant I had to go home with my dead child; something I could not bring myself to do.

Finally I went into labour and gave birth to a baby girl. With nowhere to take the child and barely any sources to cater to her needs, I took her to my mother and embarked on my journey as a sex worker. I was lucky to get high end clients and travelled many countries to meet various customers.

I was initially based in Nairobi but eventually settled in Namibia. Due to my past with men, I could not bring myself to have a 'normal' relationship; whatever interaction or relations I had with men were based on a monetary arrangement. At the time, I was not even aware I was engaging in sex work parse, for me it was just a means of survival and I expected money or gifts in exchange. Fortunately, after settling down in my sex trade, I started sending money back home to help with my daughters needs.

When I returned to Uganda in 2009, I got my daughter back to try and create a bond with her. I missed her first steps, and most of the major milestones in her life since she has lived with my mother and sister for the greater part.

She and I are building a strong bond and we are friends above all else; we talk about everything and I am open when it comes to sex and men. I believe my life took the turn it did because my parents and elders never openly discussed some of these issues with us and I will do everything I can to make sure my daughter has all the right information from the right source.

Many times, I am asked if I regret my life choices and my answer is always a firm NO!

On return, I also decided to continue with my sex work. My travels had exposed me to many problems within the sex work industry like HIV, assault, and many others. I had no idea there were organizations for sex workers in Uganda but over time, I was made aware of many of these that were advocating for the rights of my kind. I joined Lady Mermaid's Bureau, an organization I still serve to this day. Providentially, due to my travel experience and my exposure, I was availed many opportunities and I quickly became a peer educator.

I have also worked closely with the LGBTI community since some of them are also involved in sex work. I noticed that some of these people were in stable relationships yet they still engaged in sex work; initially the whole concept was intriguing to me. For a long time, I had sex with no feelings attached but soon, I started getting attracted to transmen. The very first two transmen I remember being attracted to were Pepe and Nikki; everything about their lifestyle and demeanor seemed amazing.

It was through community based

events that I met my boyfriend, Apako Williams and we have been together for nearly four years. At first, we were friends and the relationship gradually grew into something more serious.

Balancing my relationship and work is not the easiest thing in the world and my boyfriend does not like that I do what I do. He is human and time and again we have fought about this but I am also grateful that he understands and is committed to walking this journey with me.

Many times, I am asked if I regret my life choices and my answer is always a firm NO! I have built my capacity as a human rights activist, travelled many countries and empowered my fellow sex worker. I have also enrolled at Cavendish University because one of my life goals was to be a Bachelors degree holder but above all, being able to take care of my child tops my list of accomplishments. With all these achievements, I do not think it would be fair to regret the decisions that have provided all these platforms.

However, I must admit that I have faced a few challenges along the way. The sex workers community is not availed with information that is vital for their lives and this is something I would love to see change. I hope we can devise means to curb the rape, assault and unlawful arrests that continue to affect the industry.

My biggest dream for this industry is to see sex workers represented on all forums including parliament. It would make a big difference if minorities were on all levels of policy making to speak about their own needs instead of having people who do not understand what they want making plans for them. Hopefully, in about ten years, we will have moved on to such levels of legislation and like we always say, 'NOTHING FOR US WITHOUT US!' ■

STAY TRUE

Stay true to yourself just like you are Moody, volatile, exaggerated

Cause one day you will collect the flowers grown from the seeds you planted

Stay true to yourself and do not bend down for the transitory winds

You are wind yourself and fire and heat and water and depth combined

You are your land, the ground of your own emotions
Let go in front of them

And you will find that wind slowly becoming a normal breath inside your body

Stay true to yourself

Even if you are both fact and fiction

You plant imaginary seeds but you can grow real flowers

Think about love as a balance

The love to the world that you give and the need to feel loved

The need for heat and depth grounding your body to the wind

That is the life that you are breathing

Stay true to yourself and one day you will climb stairs

With the most elastic style of walking

You did not think you are capable of

You might be even climbing stars on a sunny day that comes after all the lunatic visions

You are both sun and moon

And this is what staying true to yourself is about.



Raped at 13 and Forced into Prostitution at 15



My name is FA, I am a Nigerian currently staying in the Netherlands. I am 27 years old. I grew up with my stepmother-a malicious woman who made my childhood a living hell.

I first became aware of my feelings for women when I was 13. I fell in love with a 16 year old girl and at the time, her love changed my life. Unfortunately our whirlwind romance did not last long; we were caught by my step mother making love. She was so furious that she grabbed me and took me back to our house, locked me in the guest room and called three strange men.

They raped me to cure me of my immorality and claimed to be teaching me exactly what a real woman should do. From that day on, I felt a lot of resentment towards myself and my step mother. I attempted to commit suicide several times but nothing seemed to work. It got so bad that my stepmother started taunting me; she applauded the way I walked and said now I had turned into a proper woman. My sauntering was due to the bruises I had attained during the

rape and to see her make fun of it further depressed me.

She constantly reminded me that I would soon join my dead mother if ever I thought of coming close to another woman again.

Soon, I realized that I was pregnant; my step mother took me to a traditional doctor who maliciously pulled out the fetus. The process was painful and life threatening, but I was determined not to have a child out of rape.

Shockingly, one of the men who raped me came home and sympathised with my suffering. He promised to help me escape and relocate; he promised to help get me job and proper living. I hated him but staying with my terrible step mother was worse, this was a simpler option.

I accepted the offer, but little did I realize I was being lured into prostitution. I was brought to Netherlands straight into a brothel. I was 15 at the time and once again, I was subjected to having sex with much older men. I prayed for God to take my life but the universe clearly had different plans. Amidst all these horrible forceful encounters with men, I

always appreciated the nature of a woman. I felt a very strong attraction to the other girls who worked in the brothel but my self esteem was terribly damaged.

I first became aware of my feelings for women when I was 13.

God finally heard my prayers and sent rescue. One lucky day, the police raided the brothel and we were rescued. I was able to tell my story and expressed my fear of returning to Nigeria to continue being treated inhumanly and forcing me into having relationships with men.

The government gave me sanctuary and here I have all the freedom to love who I love. I hope my story can encourage someone to hold on, even when times seem a bit too rough. The tides will calm down and the sun will shine upon you again. ■

When Poverty comes Second to Nature

It is no secret that Uganda's LGBTI community is greatly characterized by poverty. The majority of the affected are youth who have been forced to drop out of school and find it nearly impossible to get a job let alone hold down one. One of the people who lives in abject poverty and has resorted to sex work to put a roof over her head Rihanna, a transgender female shares what life is like for her.

Her Story

My life had not always been this way; there was a time I had a job and could easily meet my needs. However, I was outed in one of the tabloids and soon my boss and workmates started throwing mean and hurtful comments here and there. It was impossible to concentrate on a job with the people around me pointing fingers and going to great lengths to stay away from me. I could not take the psychological torture and decided to quit.

The outing came after my neighbours attacked my then boyfriend and I. We were asked to leave the village where we renting and our property was thrown out. We spent three months in jail on grounds of practicing homosexuality but luckily, the magistrate threw the case out for lack of sufficient evidence.

Returning to society without a job and with nowhere to live was terrifying. I quickly resorted to sex work to make ends meet since all my attempts at getting formal employment were futile. I got a house where I pay Shs70,000 per month but still raising this amount on top of all my other needs is a scuffle. Sometimes I have to go without food to save the little money I make. While it



was hard in the beginning, I have come to accept my reality and do whatever I can to not further complicate my situation.

Sex work is not the easiest career to have but I have to do what I must. For one, it is almost impossible to have a stable relationship and still be able to work on a daily basis. Your partner will, at some point, get jealous or refuse to put up with sharing you with other people let alone strangers. For example my last partner and I had to end our relationship because he failed to make peace with my work and besides, we were both in the same financial situation which further strained our relationship.

Currently, I live off handouts from friends to help top up on what I make. Like everyone else, I have hopes for the future and I am certain my life will not remain like this. I hope to get a little capital to set up a business to at least be able to meet my basic needs. This would also help me quit sex work and set up proper roots with a stable relationship and who knows, maybe start a family of my own! ■

WHERE LOVE HEALS!

By Blackqueen

I remember the long conversation I heard with my late father about my sexuality, longest talk of my life. My heart pumping so hard I could hear it in my ears, my hands sweating uncontrollably and I was so scared of his reaction, his disappointment and mostly his anger. See I was raised by a single father and he was your typical muganda man. It was always preached in my family that while education is important it was expected and a sign of great achievement for a girl to present a husband. I remember my paternal aunties always saying, we expect a degree and a husband the same day you graduate from university. This was always told to my bigger sisters every holiday when my aunties came home to visit.



I am the 7th last in a family of 18 children, big as my family is we all grew up loved and well provided for thanks to my father who made it a point to always see to it that we were. My siblings and I attended traditional schools and unless you wanted to get allocated the most chores during holidays, we all always came home with very good reports least you incur father's wrath for poor performance. I personally only joined a boarding school in my high school and as it happened I went to same sex girl's school. I hear the judgments "this is where she must have learnt the habit", but understand sexuality is not a habit you can learn or pick up from your peers, so, no I did not learn it there.

In my senior 5, I was 16 very shy and not much of a social person, I spent most of my time with a book as it allowed me keep to myself without having to engage in small talk with peers. I didn't date or experiment with the adolescence phase mostly because boys were more of my friends than anything else. When my mind escaped into the Mills and Boons romance novels I spent my time with, my prince charming was always Princess charming! Ooh how I dreamt and pictured her carrying me off and living happily ever after. But after the dreaming I would always come back to question what my attraction and longing for "princess charming was about". See I grew up in a setting that said sexuality and sex itself were topics we should never discuss. Those were grown up conversations. I first learnt the word lesbian from news papers, and didn't know what it meant at 17 but hell I was very intrigued and interested in understanding what and who a lesbian was and where she existed. How do I know if I am one and why? I had all these questions and no one to ask and Google did not come by easy those days.

In the period of my questioning, I don't know the exact moment it happened but during my first term of Senior six when I came back to school after the long holiday, two weeks into that term I remember some loud classmate pointing me out as a lesbian, when I asked why, she answered "don't you see your clothes, the ill fitting pants, the haircuts you wear," she retorted. (by the way, I still dress like this but I am not a lesbian, am sexually queer and gender fluid).

I was left feeling cornered and more confused about myself. I was a questioning 17 year old not aware of who I was, why I felt how I did and most times very frightened by these feelings and scared about what my strict disciplinarian father might do with such

disappointments and unknowns.

Anyway, fast forward the mean classmate continued to harass me with the, "you are a homosexual" talk way before I ever understood, accepted or even started to learn who I was. This story is not about the mean classmate, this story is about my disciplinarian father, the longest conversation on sexuality I ever had and

17 years old depressed out of my mind and scared about defending myself of something I too was not sure about

how he came to understand, accept and encourage me to overcome the prior hate speech about my sexuality and get over the depression that came with it.

So, the "you are a lesbian talk because you look like lesbians" continued and teachers joined the torment. My male teachers were always cool with me maybe because I always passed their

subjects highly so even outside class they were usually the ones to alert me "today we had a staff meeting about you and your lesbian friends." Huh...!!!

00My female teachers always retaliated with ensuring that I get belittled in class. I served time for a crime I did not do. But I refuse to empower hate by holding on to their story and how it affected me. Instead I choose to celebrate the people who chose to understand and stand by me while I discovered, understood and accepted myself.

My strict father stepped out of his anger and disappointment the day I was expelled from school, 6 weeks to my final UACE exams, 17 years old depressed out of my mind and scared about defending myself of something I too was not sure what it was or meant. I remember my father's footsteps from the moment he came home, I was so scared of what he would do, how he would react to this, I had been the first child in a family of 18 children to get expelled from school and here I was expelled on grounds of homosexuality, a subject never heard of or discussed in this family.

I guess love always wins in the end. We spent a night discussing what it was, the most profound question my father asked was "tell me what's going on?", I have taken the time to consult psychologists and am told sexuality varies but here I am, your father you are my daughter talk to me, what is going

on?" Maybe it was the fact that he took the time to understand that at 17 I definitely did not have a choice on what my body was going through or that before I understood or could come out to myself, hate had defined me and pulled me out of my sexual identity "closet". But a 10 hour conversation later, my dad told me, "You need to understand that there is nothing you can do about who your body says you are, right now you should focus on your education who you are to become lies with you regardless of your sexuality... And I went on to earn a second class upper degree in environmental science!

10 years later I am thankful to this typical Muganda single father who did not go with hate, fear and prejudice but chose to go outside of his tradition and seek counseling on dealing with a subject he had never had to deal with- human sexuality. Out of love he chose understanding. Out of love we conquered misunderstanding and hate. There is the sister who though she did not understand what I was going through she always held my hand and said "ITS OKAY". My beautiful mother that continues to hunger for knowledge on sexuality so she can understand me and my beautiful partner who has patiently let me outgrow the effects of hate speech.

The lessons I learnt, people who love you will always love you but you have to give them a chance to come to terms with what you bring to them. Let them take all the time they need. In the end, love heals. ■

Poem by Men of the Night for the International Condom Day

Thin, light, Tiny Little Rubber saved at it with doubt because I had been told it takes away the pleasure

But James! James held it with care,

And ripped it open from its wrapping with yearning, wore it with desire.

I longed for this thin light tiny Rubber on that hard dark rod of this man James

On the Love we made was finer than wine

Wrapped in the wrappings of safety

Locked in the care of protection; James and I

Did it with the knowledge

That life is precious.

We are men, but with all the temptations

In this God forsaken judgmental world

It gets reckless at times

James might be forced into bed with Ruth or he might be doing John, may be Stella or Dick and Duncan

From the Outside Looking In

By Early Bird

I recall the day I walked into the Kuchu Times offices like it was just yesterday. For the first time in my life, I was not sure what awaited me but what I was certain about was the fact that I had started a journey that would not only change me but also shape my outlook on life. This was the first time I would be working with sexual and gender minorities on a permanent basis.

Fast forward, I am very grateful that I made the decision to join the Kuchu Times team because it is almost impossible to put into words all the things I have learnt along the way. I have been challenged, I have watched myself tread fields I never thought I would, I have grown in both my personal life and career but most of all, I get to witness firsthand what many Ugandans probably never will - I get to watch bravery and courage of a marginalized group at work each day as well as demystify all the theories the government and anti gay propaganda are selling the very gullible world.

One, who says that gender and sexual minorities are after your children or want to recruit them into homosexuality? How would such a task even be accomplished? What would the strategies be or what normal thinking human being would even harbor such thoughts? I like to believe that the general society is very fixated on this notion because they believe they can turn LGBTI persons heterosexual. Therefore in their minds, if this can be done, then surely there must be a way for heterosexuals to turn homosexual.

While this is a very broad topic that would require more than month to expound on, we all must try to self educate when it comes to gender and sexuality. Look at the intersex for example, a man born with a uterus or a woman born with so much testosterone she starts to develop male features, you honestly think someone struggling to come to terms with such a situation needs more ridicule and stigmatisation?

We are who we are and no amount of cajoling or corrective therapies can change that. People so often put up a front that they have been cured of homosexuality but this is only to make the torture of these corrective therapies to stop. Pushing people back into the closet is not helping anyone. Sexual minorities are very much a part of our community; the sooner we realized that they have more to offer than we give them credit for, I believe, the sooner we will be on the road to finding joint solutions for problems like HIV and poverty.

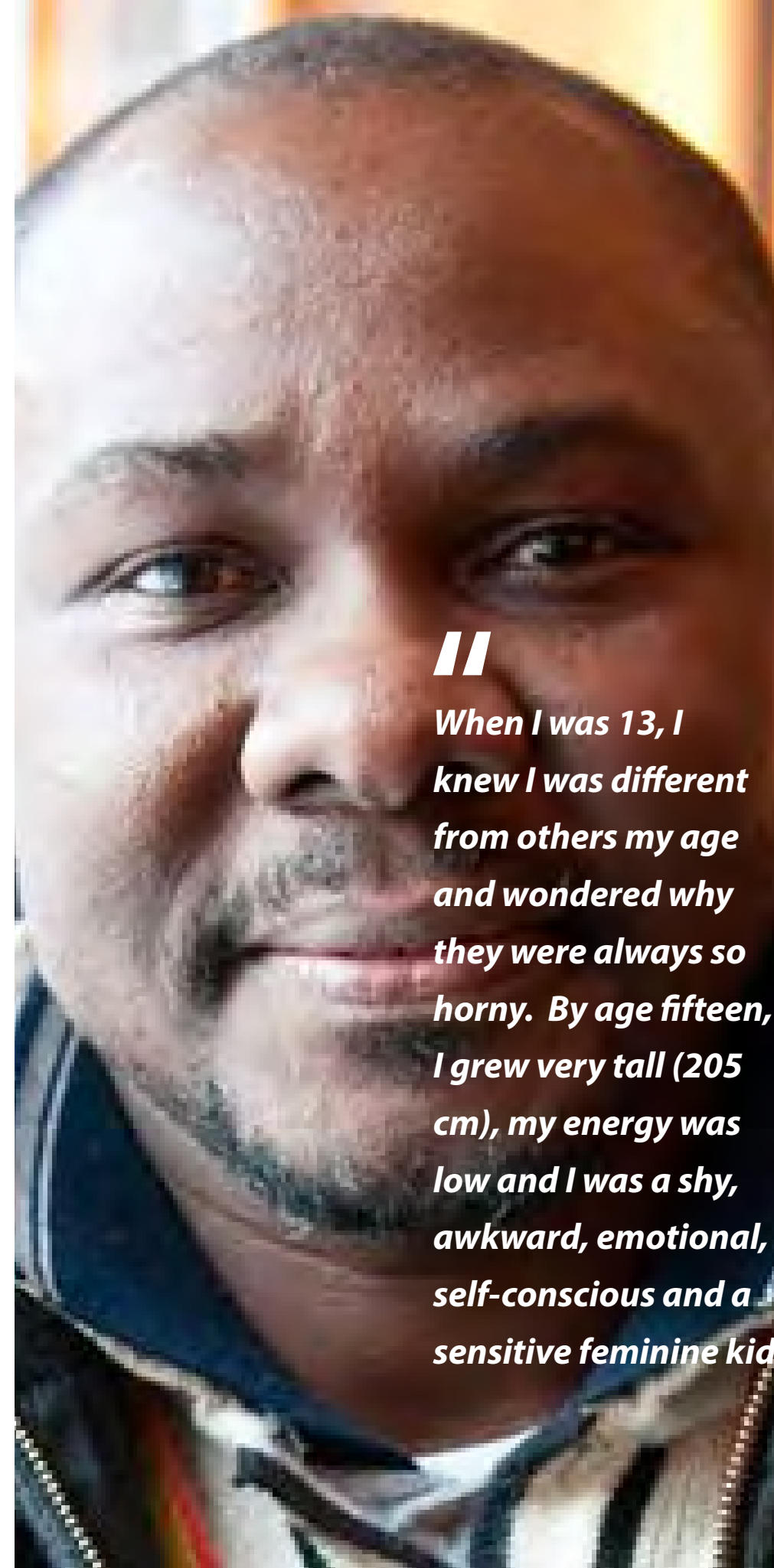
A friend of mine has always asked, I quote, why then do LGBTI persons make so much noise about THEIR rights? I don't believe this struggle has ever been about gay rights, it is a struggle to have the same rights as everyone else. Many governments criminalise homosexuality and all they would love to see is these laws and any other which might be getting in the way of their human rights dropped. Let us let them live their lives because I can't even begin to imagine if I had to hide all my differences simply because I could lose my life if people found out about them.

The donor money has always come into question as well and it has taken this job to understand what that is all about. You can all rest assured that this money is not here to be given out to your children to become homosexuals or even to spread homosexual propaganda. For people who can barely access medical care, have been forced to leave school or left homeless, there is A LOT to do to rectify this. They need economic empowerment to be able to sustain them; this is not to mean that money is handed out to such individuals, they are rather given skills that can help them survive in this harsh economy. This money is also used to provide a better health care system.

I often find myself in awe at all the free medical workshops and tests that community organizations put together for the people- how I wish the government could adopt some of these measures. If medical officials were not so discriminative and were more open to handling the problems of the LGBTI community, there would be absolutely no need for the community organizations to try and fill the gap. Why then do we hate the very people who are trying to help our brothers and sisters better their lives? In my opinion, these donors should be applauded because it is scary to think about the number of people we could have lost without their intervention.

We could all easily live in peace and harmony; there is no need for the hate. At the very least, if you can not quite grasp what sexuality and gender are, you could learn to respect them afterall, isn't that what humanity is all about- respect for diversity?

NOTE: The wrter is a heterosexual woman and ally working with Kuchus. ■



“When I was 13, I knew I was different from others my age and wondered why they were always so horny. By age fifteen, I grew very tall (205 cm), my energy was low and I was a shy, awkward, emotional, self-conscious and a sensitive feminine kid.”

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INTERSEX?

By DC Strachan

How do you define male and female sexual anatomies? How many of us actually know what their sex chromosomes are? Do you have the standard 23 chromosomal pairs of 46-XX for females or 46-XY for males? Would it be important for you to know? Most intersex people are born with sexual anatomies that are between the stereotypical male and female body types. We used to be called hermaphrodites and depending on where we have lived throughout history we were either shunned or revered. Intersex people do not legally exist and are seen by medical doctors as a ‘social emergency’ that needs fixing. Society needs to change to accommodate our differences.

There are over 30 intersex variations. Some women have androgen insensitivity syndrome (AIS), XY sex chromosomes and un-descended testes that are often removed, thinking that they could lead to cancer. These women cannot bear children since they don't have ovaries or a uterus (ovaries and testes are made from the same structures as are the penis and clitoris). Humans can have XXX, XYY, XXYY, XXXY, XO, XY/XXY and other variations and mosaicisms of sex chromosomes.

Some people have XY/XX sex chromosomes in different parts of their bodies called chimeras. Some intersex people are born with ova-testes while others have one testis and one ovary. When I was 29, I found out that mine were 47-XXY called Klinefelter's syndrome. I couldn't have children because my gonads didn't develop after my birth. They stayed tiny and were up inside of me, not producing much testosterone and no sperm.

I have often wondered why my Creator made me this way – and I like to believe it is to maybe help educate others about the 'I' in the LGBTI lineage. Not all of us were created to populate the planet (into extinction) as some religions would have us believe. Many of us are biblical eunuchs. One's anatomical sex (what's between your legs) is different from one's gender identity (what your brain dictates that you are). Both are different from one's sexual orientation (who we are attracted to).

Many males identify as men while most females identify as woman. When a child is born there is the doctor's diagnosis of who is 'male' and who is 'female.' When intersex babies are born they are often surgically and hormonally fixed to fit the 2 standard boxes. What if the doctor gets the gender assignment wrong?

This documentary, Intersexion film was originally made for New Zealand television and was later reformatted into a film festival version having been shown all over the world since 2012. There are 20 intersex people featured in the film and I am one of them.

Intersex people have been suffering for decades from the treatment they have received

- thanks to psychologist Dr. John Money of Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. Money was a professor of pediatrics and medical psychology from 1951 until his death in 2006. He asserted that gender was neutral at birth. There are many males with micro-phalluses who were traditionally turned into females and given vaginoplasties (part of their colon is reconstructed into a vagina and needs to be kept open with a wedging device).

Parents who chose this for their children had to insert the wedge to dilate and keep the vagina from closing up; something many didn't know they would need to do for their 'different' child. (This is the same surgery that male to female transsexuals want but have to pay for it since it is considered cosmetic surgery.) If one is under the age of legal consent, parents can have their health insurance pay for it.

Kristi, the star in XXXY, had such an experience but came out later in life as a man who didn't choose the body he was given but had to live with the results. Dr. Money's experiment with two twin boys; one having had his penis burned off during a circumcision accident was surgically reassigned female. Money reported in the medical journals that the gender assignment had worked but in reality it hadn't and eventually that twin re-identified as a man.

Unfortunately, he committed suicide when he was 38; not being able to cope with the trauma Money had dumped upon him. The book, As Nature Made Him was written about his life by author John Colapinto. Sadly, Money's surgical remedy had been taught to doctors all over the world and it had become

the standard of care for treating intersex babies to make them invisible. Medical books say that it is easier to dig a hole than to build a pole. Money was eventually discredited, thanks to the investigative work of Dr. Milton Diamond.

Doctors use a phallo-meter to measure the size of the phallus to determine if the child should be female or male. If a clitoris is deemed too big it was cut off or trimmed down to look normal; which causes much sexual dysfunction when the person grows up. This is partly due to homophobia, trans-phobia, and the fear of difference and the assumption that males with adequate phalluses are made only to have vaginal sex. Personally, I think doctors project their own inadequacies on the anatomies of intersex children's differences. I wish religious institutions were more tolerant, too.

When I was 13, I knew I was different from others my age and wondered why they were always so horny. By age fifteen, I grew very tall (205 cm), my energy was low and I was a shy, awkward, emotional, self-conscious and sensitive feminine kid. I had breast development, large nipples and when I got older was offered breast reduction surgery and testicular implants - but I refused. (This is what many female to male transgender people choose to have done to their bodies along with male sex hormones.)

Intersex variations are between 1 in 150 and 1 in 2000 live births, depending on the definition. With Klinefelter's syndrome, it's about 1 in 660. USA and European babies are often aborted when it is discovered that they don't possess the 2 standard sex chromosomes. When I was

diagnosed - I was very happy with the androgynous body I was born into but my endocrinologist was not. He prescribed 300 mg of synthetic testosterone to be injected every two weeks (in a glute or thigh muscle) for the rest of my life. He never told me what was going to happen, offered me no counseling, and told me to consult a medical journal for more information.

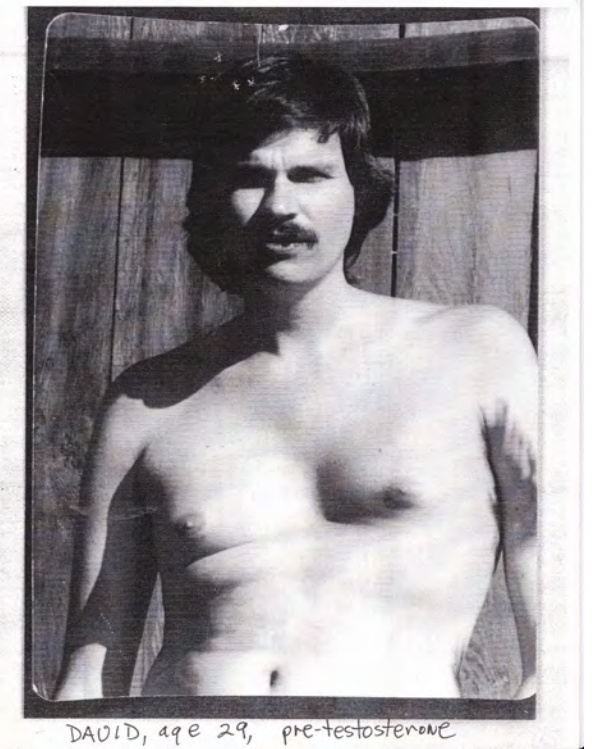
After several injections, for the first time in my life, I felt horny and went through a masculinizing puberty in my 30's. My once smooth and hairless skin started to push out hair follicles all over me – much to my disgust. I never was given the chance to give my informed consent since in those days doctors were treated like gods. I had always felt caught between the sexes and genders without knowing why.

For many years I was filled with shame and a sense of freakishness. To help me deal with this issue, I wrote Chapter 8 in Intersex in the Age of Ethics, edited by Alice Dreger, PhD. An interview with Carlos Motta: <http://gendertalents.info/portrait/david-iris-cameron-san-francisco/>, shows me reading from that chapter and the two (before and after) pictures of my upper body. It is difficult to realize that the second one is actually me.

In 1995, I learned that I actually had an intersex condition and a variation of sex development (VSD). I volunteered for the Intersex Society of North America, joined their board of directors and became a member of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission's LGBT Advisory Committee. We had an Intersex taskforce that created a 3 ½ hour public hearing at City Hall in 2004. Many intersex persons

gave testimony of their experiences from the negative medicalization of their different bodies. The Intersex Report was published in 2005, and called – A Human Rights Investigation into the Medical "Normalization" of Intersex People with Findings and Recommendations.

LGBTI people belong to many communities and we are all different. Some of us feel, by our 2 sex and 2 genders binary addicted cultures, to conform while corporations make lots of money reinforcing it. I want to be part of a healthy and caring community that sees difference as an attribute not a detriment. I hope Uganda and other African nations will embrace intersex person's differences. LGBT people need to embrace intersex persons since many of us are LGBT while some intersex persons identify as heterosexual. The religions that discriminate against us get it



wrong when they assume LGBTI means gay or same-sex. It is three separate issues. We need to educate everyone that there is much diversity in the human and animal/plant realms.

Disclaimer: The cover picture of this story is of Julius Kaggwa, a Ugandan intersex activist. ■

Correct term is Intersex

**Hermaphrodite is wrong
It is dated, offensive and
biologically inaccurate**

Shemale and heshe is also offensive

BISEXUALITY: Why Labels Continue to be the Movement's Greatest Enemy

I'm Denis Wamala, the Director of Programs at Ice Breakers Uganda. If there is one thing I have noticed, it's the fact that people don't want to understand bisexuality and it's not only the heterosexual identifying persons but homosexuals too. People want to believe and know things that they already know, they shut out anything that they don't understand or already know. I hear so many people say, "This is who I am attracted to, this is who I am, it's my right," in regards to sexuality and attraction yet this is the same rule that applies to bisexuality, you don't choose or plan who you are attracted to at a time. I am a free spirited man and do what I want, when and how I want. I have always been against 'boxing' myself as well as other persons. Sexuality is fluid in my understanding so I just flow with it.

I would like to specify that they don't have special needs; our needs cut across all groups and identities. All our needs and challenges are only special in the sense that each human being has special unique needs- from health to psycho-

Take a football team for example, we cannot identify each player to special skills, we simply use the entire team to ensure success. So many years ago before the identity boxes were in place or known to us, many trans-men used to identify themselves as lesbians and most trans- women identified as gay men. People had to first exist in groups given the space and then grow to discover and identify themselves. So instead of sexual / gender labeling, we need to continue to exist in free spaces before we can discover and identify who we are.

The biggest challenge we have faced h o w e v e r has been in the health sector mainly disclosure. Most bisexual people don't know they are bisexual; most are l e s b i a n identifying w o m e n who have to date men for societal approval, or gay men married to women for the same reasons. This has posed several health risks where one has an STI/ STD as it becomes difficult to open up to one's partners about how you got such the infection. This is what has caused many bisexuals to shy away from seeking proper treatment.



Stigma and fear also create a situation where one may want to seek medical attention with all their sexual partners and can afford to but it's not easy to walk into a doctor's office with more than one sexual partner more so outside the gender and sexual normative. There is also a problem of

social needs. The existence of boxes is the one problem that remains and hinders the growth of LGBTI persons in Uganda; we cannot have specific programs to cater for each group. That's not how unity and growth of a movement are fostered.

people not knowing where they fall. The difficulty with this you are bound to fall out completely. Back then when someone came out and said they were bisexual, it was assumed they were in it for money. Unfortunately, this was also the perception within gay spaces, where the very same gay identifying men

who were once told they were in it for money and took offence were now dishing out the same notion to bisexuals. The same fate was suffered if a bisexual identifying man started to date women, they were judged as gay men camouflaging as straight. While this still happens, society is starting to open up and become more accepting of all identities. With this, we believe that once society comes to a space of acceptance for all LGBTI persons the open minded beings shall be the ones to help even the LGBTI persons to understand themselves and accept all identities.

My dream is a society where all people are merely people without boxes, I dream of a conversation that goes "Hi my name is Denis, lets socialize," without questions like are you gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, Ugandan, Christian or Muslim; these boxes exist to further separate us. On a personal level, my biggest challenge has been the overload of expectations from the community I serve. We have created an overload of demands with very few resources at our disposal. We have a lot of important work that needs to be done with very few resources which creates a toll on the leaders and frustration or misunderstanding from the wider community.

The LGBTI community itself has excessive demands and expectations on its leaders without understanding the work that goes into what we do. Little appreciation is expressed yet much more expectations are put forward. This has pushed so many activists to abandon the movement and cut ties with the same community and movement they fought for and helped bring together.

The greatest challenge for the Ugandan LGBTI movement as a whole is the fact movement was started by very young people in an African setting that dictates that respect is first and mostly accorded to older persons. We have fought so much for a break-through that allowed for people in positions of power to listen to us. Even when we spoke from positions of being really informed on what we were advocating for, they didn't want to listen because we were considered children. It was the same with religious spaces, policy makers, family settings, health care spaces; commanding respect was a very big challenge.

This has however changed in the past few years, people are starting to listen. As the movement grew,

so have other people's appreciation of the levels of maturity expressed by the activists. There has however been growing opposition that has come with the break-through we have had. The opposition has become wider and exists in much larger spaces than when we started. Therefore as Ugandan LGBTI movement we need to redesign our working/ advocating tactics to match the opposition we are facing.

I also think Uganda is one of the most successful movements in the world despite the fact that everyone seems to think we are moving slowly. But given the resistance, working conditions and the support we have been able to garner all over the world, we are definitely one of the most successful LGBTI movements in the world. We should also always remember that this movement was started by

We should also always remember that this movement was started by five very young disorganized unknown Ugandans that have moved on to shake the world.

five very young disorganized unknown Ugandans that have moved on to shake the world. Today, we must appreciate that as a movement. We have ensured that people do stop, listen and know who we are and that we are here. At least every Ugandan has had a one minute conversation on gender and sexual minorities or homosexuality and from the denial of our existence to a nationwide debate on homosexuality, we should pat ourselves on the shoulders and appreciate the job well done. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE

- Visit our website www.kuchutimes.com and check out our forums where we have discussions on different topics and issues that affect the African LGBTI community.
- The site also has a TV and radio where you can watch and listen to documentaries, news, talk shows and other informative and educative programmes.
- You can also contribute to our talk shows, articles and other programmes by sending an email to info@kuchutimes.com or editor@kuchutimes.com



IS AN HIV FREE GENERATION A REALISTIC DREAM?



By SM

Living at the peak of one's adult life calls for a number of life plan adjustments, changes and commitments for the future and a good health plan is one of them! Among other things, an HIV test is almost compulsory. Before I queued to taking the test, I remembered the homophobic Pastor Sempa emphasizing that HIV is spread most among homosexuals; yes his sentiment holds some grain of truth and this gave me more reason to stick to my commitment.

As a lesbian, my mind first run to how many women I had undressed, whose vaginas I had licked causing them to sing melodies of excitement and how many times I had been less careful not to contract HIV. Have I been keen enough not to have the live and bare engagement that predisposes me to HIV infection?

I remembered the series of one night stands I seldom enjoyed, the short scheduled kind of relationships I entangled myself into. I wondered if my multiple sex partners were as 'playful' as I am. The hit and runs, all sorts of sex encounters that made me susceptible to contracting the virus, the fun and sweetness I derived from rubbing and thrusting my labia unto my partners' clitoris invoked carelessness; my pleasure could be the conduit to my acquiring the dreaded virus!

My memories run fresh to the number of women (married unhappily to men) who used me as their sexual satisfaction tool. I foolishly enjoyed the warmth of their thighs forgetting their husbands too did the same with other young girls. The chain of our immorality stemmed from our unfaithfulness

and lack of respect for our lives. Little did I know that I was bridging the spread of HIV between the lesbians and the married heterosexual couples!

I held my breath as I got pricked; considering the discrimination we still harbor in the health sector, where gaymen, transgenders and lesbians don't access health care services with ease especially those in regard to their ways of conjugation.

From a practical point of view; there is a gap which must be filled- incorporating the LGBTI community and the sex workers into the health care system is a back log that still hinders the development that works to viewing an HIV free generation in place.

These groups of people are a conduit to the spread of HIV to the major sexual groups. For as long as we must achieve the dream, we must claim responsibility of our sins and actions! We must talk about homosexuality however remote it sounds; yes it exists among us and it affects us in more ways than we realize or care to admit.

Efforts to cut down the new infections will keep futile if the law makers don't incorporate the sex workers and LGBTI persons into the health care systems. Free and non discriminative health services must be uniformly distributed to persons for the world to achieve the dream of an HIV free generation.

We can hide from the truth but not forever; homosexuality is a reality and we must come to terms with it! Devising means to include the sex workers and LGBTI persons into the health care systems must be made a priority. ■

Why Demanding for Accountability is the Way Forward

Moses Kimbugwe

I take this opportunity to salute the Ministry of Health, Uganda AIDS Commission, my colleagues, LGBTI organizations, civil society organizations and the media fraternity for highlighting the slow but sure involvement of sexual minorities in the health programming in Uganda.

The dialogue and engagements of key population groups particularly in decision making is very fundamental. The election of key population representatives onto the Country Coordinating Mechanism must be welcomed in this era. The CCM oversees programs and makes key decisions about requests for funding from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and finances many of Uganda's anti-AIDS efforts. Those of us who know where we started bear witness to this tremendous success.

The participation of sexual minorities in key decision making processes will improve the policy and health environment for the delivery of HIV services to sexual minorities at all levels. What is needed is to establish a baseline of the current sexual minority health services in Uganda to increase capacity to collect data, analyze and demand accountabilities.

It is high time, that as a country, we work towards building systems aimed at structural intervention that allow everyone the right to access treatment without fear or discrimination. Sexual minority groups should work around institutional capacity building and invest in systems strengthening; eventually making it possible to hold government, civil society and



// The participation of sexual minorities in key decision making processes will improve the policy and health environment for the delivery of HIV services to sexual minorities at all levels.

funding partners accountable. It's the responsibility of every one to play a part in revisiting our country health programmes and re-assessing our performances.

On June 25, 2015 Uganda signed five global fund grants worth USD 226,241, 454 million. The funds are for among other purposes managing HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis and health systems strengthening. The removal of policy and legal barriers and zero tolerance to discrimination in access to the right to health is one of the interventions.

This is the time to demand for accountability not only to be served but to also have meaningful participation in changing the health sector in Uganda. This is the only way to attain a non discrimination free health environment for all.

For God and my country ■

STATS

- 2015-2017 Global fund grant to Uganda
- HIV Grant \$17,617,922
- MoFPED HSS Grant \$14,96,562
- TASO HSS Grant \$7,163,636
- MoFPED TB Grant \$21,703,221
- TASO HIV-TB Grant \$6,804,113
- Total Grant \$226,241,55

TRIBUTE TO OUR FALLEN HEROES

Over the years, the African LGBTI movement has lost gallant activists to natural causes and hate crimes. This issue of Bombastic pays tribute to some of the people who dedicated their lives to bettering the African LGBTI community, although they might not have lived long enough to share in the many achievements achieved by the latter.

We salute you for your selflessness and continue to pray that you rest in power.

JOEL GUSTAVE NANA



Joël Gustave Nana Ngongang (1982-2015), better known as Joel Nana, was a leading African LGBT human rights advocate and HIV/AIDS activist. Nana's career as a human rights advocate spanned numerous African countries, including Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa as well as his native Cameroon.

He was the Chief Executive Officer of Partners for Rights and Development (Paridev) a boutique consulting firm on human rights, development and health in Africa at the time of his death. Prior to that position, he was the founding Executive Director of the African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHer) an African thought and led coalition of LGBT/MSM organizations working to address the vulnerability of MSM to HIV.

Mr Nana worked in various national and international organizations, including the Africa Research and Policy Associate at the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), as a Fellow at Behind the Mask, a Johannesburg based non profit media organisation publishing a news website concerning LGBTI affairs in Africa. He wrote on numerous topics in the area of African LGBT and HIV/AIDS issues and was a frequent media commentator. Nana on died on October 15, 2015 after a brief illness.

THAPELO MAKUTLE



Thapleo Makutle, a 23 year old gay and transgender South African who volunteered for gay group LEGBO was killed on 8th June 2012. He was attacked and had his throat slit by two men for his sexuality, which according to close friends, he was never afraid to show.

Makutle participated in the Kimberley Out In Africa Gay and Lesbian Festival as a drag queen under the stage name Queen Bling and also wore the crown for Miss Gay Kuruman. No arrests were ever made although it was clear the murder was a hate crime.

ERIC OHENA LEMBEMBE



Eric Ohena Lembembe was a Cameroonian activist for human rights, regular contributor to the NGO Human Rights Watch and active in the defense of LGBT rights. He was tortured and murdered in July 2013 in Yaounde at the age of 33, causing outrage and concern of his comrades as well as the international community.

According to witnesses who discovered his body, Eric's neck and feet appeared to have been broken and his face, hands, and feet burned with an iron. At his time of death, Eric was the Executive Director of the Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS.



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THE AWARD WINNING DOCUMENTARY

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"The hardest work is done by local activists like those you will see in this film. To them I want to say: You are an inspiration to me... I am proud to join in this great human rights cause."

**-United Nations Secretary
General Ban Ki-moon**



Want to screen the film and lead a discussion about LGBTQI rights with your community? Download the **FREE** discussion guide at www.callmekuchu.com/discussionguide

The Right to Health is Inalienable- IT CANNOT WAIT!



My name is Kikonyongo Kivumbi and I'm a human rights defender for LGBTI people and sex workers; my work mainly focuses on the right to health as a platform for a wider bill of rights for these minority groups. I'm also the Executive Director of Uganda Health and Science Press Association and serve in various spaces representing the key populations with a special niche on LGBTI and sex workers.

I'm a queer person and for quite some time till self discovery I didn't know where to belong. I am a journalist that has served in many publications and in 2006, while at New Vision I could no longer hide my identity and there was also a lot of hullabaloo about my sexuality. I tried to

keep a low profile and thought of ways to lessen the discrimination and stigma surrounding minorities; together with my queer colleagues in the media fraternity, we decided to focus on international issues in the hope of influencing the local audience by availing them with knowledge on what was transpiring amongst gay people out of Uganda and Africa as a whole.

In 2008, I became the editor in chief of the Guardian Newspaper; this gave us a big lee way because one, it was a born again publication and two; I had the power to determine what would run. I used this opportunity to publish pro LGBTI articles and during that time, we built a great network as queer journalists.

That same year, rumours about

the Anti Homosexuality Act picked and the only way we could make an impact was to come together. To make this work, we had to register our association/organization but we could not do that under the name Go Gay Uganda so we opted for Uganda Health and Science Press Association; this was a very safe name that would pass with the registrar.

With our certificate of registration in hand, we immediately got to work; our main goal was to use our niche in the media to bring into public discourse the rights of gender and sexual minorities, which we managed to do. Most of the information then was not very positive but we knew people were thinking about it and it opened doors for discussions on

minorities.

I have actually seen this story developing from denial that we didn't have LGBTI people in Uganda to where we are now. Some people think the environment has always been this conducive for minorities but it wasn't, a lot of work and advocacy was put in to get us where we are now and I must say, we are proud that we have created the change.

Currently, I have realized that there is a false sense of security and people have become very lax. However, people must realize that anything can happen at any time. The rumours of re-tabling the bill are not coming from nowhere; that smoke is being sparked by a fire somewhere

HEALTH

The right to health is inalienable, it cannot wait. We might continue having the discussion as a nation on whether we want minorities to be part of the social fabric but that is not as important as the health issues faced by these same people. Minorities or not, they need to access health services and our job is to make sure they are included in the policies and service delivery plans of the country.

In all my years of working for and with sexual and gender minorities, the greatest achievement I have registered is the discussion from denial to public health policy and law. In almost every public discussion, LGBTI and sex workers are now a part of the discussion; it was unprecedented for Uganda AIDS Commission, Parliament and Ministry of Health among others to mention by name LGBTI, in the services that they were offering. They now even invite us to talk to them and having them listen to us and plan for us based on our realities is a great achievement. The current climate, though it remains unfavorable, is a win for the minority community.

We have also connected the LGBTI and sex work organization to the main stream health advocacy movement; this has made service delivery faster and more reliable.

On the downside of what is happening currently, the community is undergoing tough times as funders experience donor fatigue and think they have achieved a vibrant and strong movement that can stand on its own. While we must realize they are also facing the global economic crisis, we cannot ignore the fact that they seem to have had the notion that the Anti gay bill was the only problem that the community needed help with.

The East African movement is still very fragile and could easily slip back to where we came back. I think funders need to start helping the movement to develop sustainability programmes. This way, even when they do pull out, the movement will still stand on

Minorities or not, they need to access health services and our job is to make sure they are included in the policies and service delivery plans of the country.

its own. Clearly, it is very difficult to fundraise for LGBTI rights and even if the business or political communities were willing to help, not many would want to be associated with gender and sexual minorities. Therefore, if funders could change their strategies to set up self sustenance plans, we will be able to stay strong all by ourselves. We should also have a deliberate affirmative action to identify spaces where our people can be placed to make a livelihood.

The movement also needs to pay more attention to wellness; most of the community members are depressed and this is one of the worst human conditions anyone can ever go through. It cuts at your soul and eats you up; years of continued abuse, stigma and deprivation has exposed people to chronic depression.

This is something that needs to be addressed because it is the root cause of most of the problems in the community. People drop out of school, quit their jobs and literally give up on life because of this; steps must therefore be taken to counter this problem.

If we want to move forward, we must go back and look at the causes of our problems. If we start from there, sooner than later we will have this movement move way further than we ever dreamed. ■



IF YOU CAN'T LOVE US, TOLERATE & RESPECT US.

By SM

Many a time, society has misunderstood us, attached evil to our existence and twisted our stories but we too have our side of the story; only if you could understand these:

Homosexuality is NOT learnt: It is a misconception for one to consider someone's sexual orientation, attraction and expression as a learned habit. Whether genetics explains it or fails, whether it is scientific or not, it is justly important to follow the growth pattern of the homosexuals around us. Sexual expression, identity and orientation are growth processes that stem from childhood.

People are born with a sexuality they identify with; they might more often than not shield it from their expressions because they worry how society will perceive them especially. Some schools have been labeled with tapes for spreading homosexuality. single sex schools spread homosexuality", they say! If my daughter is born a lesbian, if born and raised around the opposite sex, she will eventually grow up to who she. Not even curative rape will reverse her identity. She may fear to come out and chances are you might never even know about it but normally, such people live secret lives where they feel free to express the sexuality.

The only 'crime' the LGBTI community has committed in this respect is teaching people, both those living in the closet and the general population that there is

no shame in being who you are. We cannot apologize for how we feel.

Recruitment into homosexuality: No one is recruited into homosexuality. Sex is an emotional action that stems from the brain; the choice of who gets you to that pleasure is made by the brain. To call homosexuals hired and recruited people is correlating them to prostitution. People need to understand the dynamics of recruitment; for example it is rude to call a Transgender man who goes through the pain of binding his breasts to pass for a man a paid recruited mercenary. We have heard a number of people claiming they are homosexuals for either financial assistance, asylum or as a means to merely get ahead in life; these beings taint the images of homosexuals but if your child claims they were recruited, it's because they want to escape homophobia.

If there are people who are sponsoring homosexual relationships in young students, then that is a disgrace because anyone who accepts to be gay against their normal sexuality is insane, anyone who can accept to sponsor or get sponsored to be gay is ill. No school curriculum has homosexuality as part of their learning expectations but rather every school needs to include acceptance and tolerance as part of the learning expectations. Homosexuality comes naturally and the world must stop making us



out to be these human beings who are out to turn everyone we come in contact with.

Reproduction: Giving birth is a choice and when one chooses to pass on their genes, nature and science allows for it to occur in the most humanly acceptable ways. The fusion of the male and female gametes must not necessarily occur in the female reproductive organ through copulation; yes it must not only occur in the vagina! Not everyone has the privilege of getting to that moment, precious they call it. It is human error to call homosexuals anti children. Several children have been born and raised to gay and lesbian parents. They haven't lost their breath because they have grown up with parents of the same sex. Besides it is getting trendy to be raised by single parents, so how about being raised by two fathers or two mothers. The homosexuals too can reproduce if they choose they want to be parents and it is unfair to take this gift of parenthood away from them.

LGBTI person are not a disgrace to God; Believers need to understand the fundamentals of our faiths! To use religion as a tool to spread hate is sheer blasphemy; why then don't you stop affiliating yourselves to God whose greatest commandment is love! Whoever disregards a homosexual on the basis of faith and belief in God has lost track of what God requires of us. Homosexuals are God's creation and many of them visit the church and meet all the other requirements of the church of God. We are all sinners and we sin in different ways, if homosexuality is one of the ways we sin, then homosexuals are not the only sinners neither do they sin most that they deserve hate and death. The LGBTI deserve to be tolerated too! Have we lost our faith because we have tolerated sinners? The same Bible calls for execution of women who marry while they are not virgins (Deut 22:13-21), how come girls who are not virgins are not killed?

Being a homosexual doesn't make one less human; The potential of man is not measured by who they love or who they love to have sex with. Many more attributes define a man. It is a total disgrace to regard a human being worthless because they love people different from the norm. Homosexuals have the brains to think, the energy to work and the power to change the world; they are only limited by

peace
begins with
tolerance
and
respect
for everyone

the homophobic societies that marginalize them. Despite the hatred, LGBTI persons have maneuvered through the threats of homophobia to express their abilities. Life is not limited to sex but to ability. It is rude to undermine and disregard homosexuals because of their sexual identity. I won't tell the story of the CEO of apple, during my high school times; the girl who had never scored less than 80% in every exam we sat for was a lesbian! We can all point out the people of potential among our communities, who are homosexuals plus those who are bread winners for their families. Why then do such people deserve to die merely for who they prefer in their beds?

We must understand that coming to terms with one's sexuality is a transitional process, before you decide on calling all the homosexuals to death, worry if your child is not having physical, emotional and sexual attractions to peers of the same sex. We deserve to be loved, if we can't be loved, then just simply tolerate us. ■

STATS

- 96% of Ugandan residents believe that homosexuality is a way of life.
- A poll conducted in 2010, however, revealed that 4% of Ugandans viewed homosexual behavior as being morally acceptable.
- An estimate of 500 gay and lesbian Ugandans are seeking asylum in Kenya.

MAKING PEACE WITH MY PAST

By Shivan Pavin

Nearly five years ago, I had a son and he quickly became the reason I hated life.

His birth made me think I had lost my pride as a sexual minority woman, I cried day and night blaming God for letting all my suicide attempts go to waste.

I had tried to have abortions several times during my pregnancy, when that did not work, I tried taking my own life but still, death eluded me. It was so bad that the day I gave birth, I gave him out to the first person I could think of and only went to check on him two years later. It has taken me close to four years to accept my son and the road has not been an easy one. I had to go through counseling and do some self discovery to finally come to terms with the fact that my anger and frustration was misdirected.

The devil I once assume my son was has now turned into the joy of my life. He is the reason I wake up every day determined to work out hard and become a better person.

At the age of 23, I am proud that I can support my little boy, and we have embarked on a journey where we shall hopefully create many amazing and lasting memories.

I hope one day, he can forgive me for the pain I put him through and also understand that I was in a bad place at the time.

OPINION

Challenging the Misconceptions about USA's Support of Gay Rights

With reference to the article "U.S. Support of Gay Rights in Africa May Have Done More Harm Than Good" by NORIMITSU ONISHIDE. 20, 2015. I found the article disappointing and a misrepresentation of the situation and struggles of gay Africans on the continent. Our overseas allies are a lifeline, not a liability.

I am a gay Ugandan, an HIV and gay activist as termed by some. I have personally lived through the times that the article tries to describe, and it is wholly off.

In the early years of the HIV epidemic—the years of President Bush—when Uganda was lauded for its 'moral' engagement of HIV, I was one of the people that were incensed that we couldn't tell other gay Ugandans they were at risk of HIV. No one would touch us, no one would acknowledge us. To the authorities we didn't exist. A review of the literature from the continent then had lots about 'abstinence and being faithful' and nothing about gay men at risk of HIV on the continent of Africa.

And, there existed in Uganda an anti-gay movement, loudly led by the feverish Pastor Martin Ssempe—against an opposition that was non-existent, at least not visibly so.

When, in 2007, we gay Ugandans decided to hold a press conference and come out as gay, we wore masks. I was there. I remember, and I was wholly in favour of coming out, even if somewhat veiled, rather than dying of HIV in

silence because my countrymates believed that I was evil.

Because, silence is death for HIV. A lesson that many, many gay men have lived in the west, in Europe and the States. Being silent about HIV and the structural issues that stop us gay Africans from accessing HIV programs means a silent, invisible death.

In 2008 we held a small silent protest before an international HIV meeting—the HIV Implementors' Meeting in Kampala, Uganda. We were harassed, arrested, and it was only by the efforts of the international community that the court case against our 'trespass' was dropped.

The anti-homosexuality bill of 2009, which decreed death for 'aggravated homosexuality' and imprisonment for 'promotion of homosexuality' like in HIV prevention messaging for gay men—is all real, lived history.

And, we fought that with the help of our allies, in the west, in Europe and in the US.

We were few daring to come out, disorganized, under-funded. We were desperate, and we sought help wherever we could get it. That gay people in the west could understand and join hands with us was no miracle. Because the very discrimination that we were living in Uganda had actually been 'exported' from Christian teaching in the US and by the previous century's colonizers. My lived reality strongly refutes the article's implication that the US LGBTQ community has any

OPINION



Being silent about HIV and the structural issues that stop us gay Africans from accessing HIV programs means a silent, invisible death.

responsibility for exporting the US culture wars.

It's true. Our visibility, coming out of the shadows, standing up to be counted, was what we had to do—and it was not without consequences. David Kato lost his life. And I am living in South Africa in part because of the price of that visibility.

But that price we paid fades in comparison to what was happening: when we had no research amongst gay Africans, when we were regularly demonized and blamed for the continent's ills. Gay men were arrested after the international ICASA meeting in 2008 in Senegal because they dared come out and assert that they were present in Senegal. We had absolutely no HIV programming—just very intense country mates intent on quashing us as human beings with laws that mandated death to us, to me and my partners, as 'serial offenders'.

We could not have fought from

the shadows. From Senegal, Nigeria, Uganda and Malawi, the backlash has been notable. As we again and again noted that there was a problem with HIV amongst the gay men on the continent, again and again the reaction was that these 'evil, foreign' entities are put into prison or killed. Because we were supposedly 'unAfrican'.

But, to date, in part because of lots of lobbying and demands that the money follows the clear lines of the HIV epidemic, we are at last getting HIV programming and research. Even where we were pariahs for governments to tackle, we are winning a little space to do the programming ourselves. This is a fantastic achievement, unimaginable just ten years ago.

The US spent billions on the 'Abstinence and Being Faithful' Campaigns in Africa. Evaluation of those showed little had actually been achieved. The amounts spent on highly HIV-burdened and underserved populations

like gay men have been proportionately much smaller. The US's newly found support for our communities is essential. The yields down the line in HIV research and programming and ultimately beating this virus are only possible because of it.

From a very personal point of view, my visibility was a small price to pay to stand up and be counted as a human being. To acknowledge to myself that loving a man was not such a bad thing. That it was normal, that I need not hide it. That I could actually stand up proud and be myself. That I need not hide.

Of course, I will not be feted amongst my country-mates. Fair enough. But I continue to push for a change that I believe is necessary for me and my people, for a continent that I love with all my heart. Happy to have the US as partner.

Paul Ssemugoma is a Ugandan physician, living in exile in South Africa ■

He didn't ask for a condom... he must be HIV positive too.

He didn't put on a condom... he must be negative.

Think about it. Talk about it. Staying negative - it's not automatic

KENYATTA VS OBAMA

WAS IT MERELY A WAR OF WORDS

Most Africans applauded, praised and venerated Kenyatta. As usual, insults were hurled directly at the LGBTI and their allies. The infamous Mugabe line was repeatedly advanced 'Unless he (Obama) leaves his wife and marries another man'. Traditionally, marriage is between a woman and a man and is supposed to support the majority's claim of marriage for procreation and social affirmation for upholding a culture.

The message was simply misunderstood. It wasn't an option. It wasn't a directive either. By all intents, it was a plea to change the mindset and embrace non-violent and wanton discrimination of mentally 'healthy' and sound African LGBTI persons. It was a plea to move beyond institutionalized homophobia; a reminder that a human being is a human being.

Furthermore, it was an emphatic reminder that our differences are so many; from individual to continental level. A call to remember that differences are usually misunderstood, taken for granted, especially when the West appears to support the harmless minorities that may demand social inclusion. Each human being is born with dignity - that's one of the underpinnings of human rights and a basis on which Obama tried to engage with the Kenyans and the rest of Africa.

True, we are born into cultures that vary temporally and spatially. We have learnt over time that each culture, if harmless and advancing human dignity and progress, is worth accepting and perpetuating for healthy socioeconomic reasons. Some traditions which have been assimilated into our cultures have rightly been forgotten or discarded, as society began to differentiate the good and bad traditions.

However, some traditions have remained controversial. Simultaneously, new traditions are cropping up and assimilated into our dynamic cultures. It is on this view that Obama and Kenyatta appeared to differ. Of all cultures present in the world, which ones should we lay claim as legitimate parts of the African language and identity? Kenyatta advanced a common line that Africa be left to the majority to decide, I guess as a passive referendum-style. This means, what Africa considers taboo and sinful, should be respected as such.

The confusion has always come in, when (Western) cultures have been loosely described as socially ill lifestyles and vice versa, denigrating to human dignity.

One case in point is the uncoded dress attire. With reactionary situations producing mob sanctioning of dress codes deemed too revealing and noncultural.

In most instances, meting out justice has happened in public spaces, which are notoriously inhabited by less educated, unemployed, politically manipulated and misinformed youths. This scene has been replayed in many places in Africa including Zambia, Uganda and Kenya. Hence, we have to continuously question why African leaders at times take a back bench and remain mute. These are the voices of 'integrity' that are urgently required during mob justice frenzies in the name of defending a culture and religious beliefs. Parallels can be drawn on issues of intra-extended family incest and rape, and the now hotter topic of the decriminalisation of same-sex activities - thus discussions are prohibited.

Consequently, taboo subjects should never be questioned by the West- they are just what they are. Raising such issues in public attracts legal and religious backlash. In the end, even the most virulent speeches and statements have been carefully packaged to squash impending cultural imperialism as seen in the Obama vs Kenyatta press conference to the applause of the disengaged public. Other African presidents famed for such stances have been heralded as safeguarding African cultures and economic interests. African leaders are known for tirelessly ranting anti-gay speeches. From political rallies to UN Assembly addressing, they have earned a name. Is this revealing of modern culture differences and popularity?

The topic of social inclusion as indicative of civil liberties and progress, has garnered heavily contested and yet skewed debate, with religious backup being sort to win but a predetermined debate, on what is African (as if Africa is a homogeneous grouping of human beings).

This is an important and further reminder and caution - we are born different i.e. with different phenotypes, genomes, capabilities and capacities. Unless we leave behind 'majoritism' and populism for political score seeking, our minds remain lazy at best, to research, engage, dialogue and tap on the vast talent possessed by the LGBTI. Thus the majority will blindly fall victims to real time propaganda press conferences and speeches. It is clearly evident, that Obama and Kenyatta sought their understanding of their popularity and different cultures to appeal to their constituencies and inadvertently encroach and challenge others. ■

By JB

TO ALL AFRICANS

Dear brothers and sisters,

In the name of humanity, I am perturbed by the continued segregation of minorities be it due to their difference in gender orientation, race, religion, ethnicity or any other human aspect. The human race possesses different diversities and there is need to appreciate and protect these differences.

There must be tolerance for one another remember lack of it leads to massive violation of human rights, people's liberties and freedoms. Tolerance is so essential in human life; it encompasses harmony with one another and acceptance of the different diversities of human nature. We all have different individualities and as a society, there is need or space where each one of us can live in one accord irrespective of how different they might be. We need to forego small matters of in-group egoism that consider other groups inferior or less human.

Majority of people still think in terms of their own group belonging and forget the human race is basically non differential whether a person is straight, gay, an albino, a Christian, a monk, American, Arab, African; it does not matter, if put in one room all you will see are people before subcategorizing them.

This world belongs to all of us, we all share one commonality- our humanity. It is essential to try to find a way of treating each other as human beings first as well as acknowledge each other as possessors of equal rights and bearers of duties in order to respect each other's rights. We must try to educate ourselves in understanding others, to live in empathy and endeavor to enlarge as much as possible the understanding and appreciation of the sphere of whatever groups we feel akin to.

Being human means belonging together and it is from this notion that we must be open to appreciating the inviolability of all human beings no matter their differences, consciously appreciating that our common home does not



have borders that are too narrow.

Whenever we uphold our differences in nature, we start to acknowledge whoever might seem different as rivals or a nuisance, and this leads to marginalization, social exclusion, aggression and then violence shall be the tool of operation. This sequence eventually leads to a chain of hate and wars with inevitable consequences of tearing us further and further apart.

It is therefore my humble prayer that each one of us cultivates the virtue of tolerance. Martin Niemoller noted that: 'First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a communist; Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a socialist; Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a trade unionist; Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out - because I was not a Jew; Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak out for me.'

We might stay silent on so many issues because we are personally affected BUT that very silence when others are suffering is, in a way, to permit and contribute to their suffering.

*Yours Sincerely,
Semakula Samuel
Founder Tolerance Campaign Initiative*

The Ten Faces of Sexuality

By Dr. Syliva Tamale



Introduction

As most of us know, Sexuality is one of the most complex and politicized issues on the African continent. If Sexuality were to look in the mirror, she would see numerous faces. In these brief notes, I map out ten different “faces” of sexuality as they have been manifested in Uganda, analyzing their intersections with human rights plus the de jure and de facto rules and norms that mould and paint their features.

1. The Erotic Face

Wearing the shroud of silence and mystery, the face of Sexuality that most of us wish to focus on is the one that exhibits erotic desire and pleasure. Most Ugandans would wish—if not openly, at least secretly in their deepest fantasies—that they were free to express their sexuality freely and derive maximum pleasure from it—provided those expressions and activities involve willing adult participants. Alas, there is the legal face that squints at the erotic one, with significant implications for our right to desire, our right to pleasure, and of course, our right to love...

2. The Legal Face

The powerful legal face of sexuality wears bold rules, restrictions, regulations and prohibitions on how, where and with whom we “do” sexuality. The

face would be attractive if the rules were confined to punishing those who inflict harm through sexual exploitation, assault and violence. But they go beyond that—sometimes being patronising, at others controlling and at other points, even sexist. In the process, these restrictions step on our rights to privacy, non-discrimination, autonomy, integrity and dignity. Examples of such laws abound, including those on prostitution, criminal adultery, homosexuality, marital rape, pornography and abortion. But, like a double edged sword, this face cuts on both sides and often its other face has been deployed by marginalized groups in Uganda to challenge its restrictive twin face. Through strategic litigation, some of the stubbles and freckles on the restrictive legal face have been rendered unconstitutional. For example, in a case filed by an NGO called Law and Advocacy for Women in Uganda (LAW-U), criminal adultery that targeted wives and not husbands was declared unconstitutional in 2010.

3. The Reproductive Face

This brings me to the next face of sexuality, whose forehead wears the script of the roles of women and men in the continuity of life. That is the face of reproduction which speaks both the language of health and the language of human rights. The forehead is creased by restrictive abortion laws, and the mouth is contorted with practices which proscribe contraception. The well-being of this face is further affected by underdevelopment and the lack of political commitment to its agenda. In Uganda, the eyes of the reproductive face are generally closed most of the time or at best squinted. While therapeutic abortion is legally permitted, the access to such a procedure remains a huge challenge, rendered more confusing by government policies that are more accommodating than the law.

4. The Violent Face

The violent face of sexuality is angry and has a permanent snarl. It is smeared with thick layers of damage and often recoils in utter stigmatised shame. The violent face is typically feminine, with a lingering look of sadness that stems from loathing control. It cannot escape the hurt in public or private spaces; in offices, schools,

communities and homes; from acquaintances, from family members, from trusted individuals and from strangers alike. It is a face we see both in times of peace and in situations of conflict. This face is the ultimate persona of gender domination and it is a face acutely aware of infringements of the rights to sexual autonomy and bodily integrity. Currently, the Ugandan laws that would potentially save its life are ineffective as they are coded through a patriarchal, phallogocentric culture. Sadly, a bill that was devised to improve the situation has been collecting dust in the corridors of power since the year 2000.

5. The Cultural Face

The cultural persona of sexuality is also double faced, exhibiting both positive and negative aspects. The positive side shows African traditional values that enhance sexual pleasure while the negative side exhibits practices geared to the control of women’s sexuality. In that sense this face both enhances and violates human rights. In Uganda the traditional institution of Ssenga among the Baganda, for instance, plays a significant role in promoting the right to sexual pleasure on the one hand, but on the other, despite the outlawing of the cultural practice of female genital mutilation, it is still practiced by some communities in the country.

6. The Heteronormative Face

The heteronormative face of sexuality has big beautiful eyes that are deceptive because they hide a serious disability, that is, the fact that their central vision is exclusively binary. This visual impairment means that she tends to categorize people in absolute terms as either heterosexual male or heterosexual female. When the optometrist prescribed human rights lenses that would enable this face to clearly see diversity, the legal, cultural and religious faces conspired to conceal the prescription from her. In Uganda, not only do these conspiratorial faces possess powerful platforms to promote the heteronormative ideal, stoking hatred and violence at every turn with homophobic and transphobic rhetoric; they also attempt to obliterate the rich diversity of Ugandan faces, particularly the homosexual and bisexual ones. The draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act, which was invalidated by the Constitutional Court in 2014, was the latest attempt to reinforce legal support for this face.

7. The HIV Face

From a distance, you can only see the epidemiological side of the HIV face. However, on closer scrutiny you will notice the unmistakable gender and power wrinkle marks as well as the oppressive furrows of social class. Access

to the cheap affordable generic cream that the dermatologist recommended is becoming more and more difficult in the face of international intellectual property protections. As if that’s not bad enough, last year, the Ugandan government passed the HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act (HAPCA), criminalising the sexual life and activities of this face. The irony is that such a law that purports to be based on human rights principles in fact tramples human rights. The socio-economic and cultural sides of this face clearly expose the complex dynamics between gender, human rights and HIV. Not only does HAPCA contravene the Constitution and national policies on HIV/AIDS but it also violates several rights enshrined in international human rights treaties that the country has committed to.

8. The Political Face

The contours of the political face of sexuality serve a specific socio-political purpose of outlining the criteria of sexual citizenship. It is tinged with hypocritical rhetoric that wears the mask of “preserving traditional family values” “protecting our children” and “maintaining morality.” It has the tendency to press panic buttons, to ahistoricize and otherize faces of other sexualities and to appeal to populist sentiments. For example, the Anti-Pornography Act that was passed by the Ugandan government in 2014 emboldened vigilante groups and abusive government officials alike to maltreat women, including publicly undressing them. In short, this face instrumentalizes sexuality for political ends and in the process, disenfranchises and inflicts untold damage to diverse minority groups in Uganda. The political face, which is a close ally of the religious and cultural faces, usually rears its ugly head covered in partisan feuds, sectarian hatred, ageism, neoliberalism, patriarchy and militarism.

9. The Religious Face

Closely resembling the political face is the religious one. The message on this face tells us that sex that is non-genital, non-procreative, outside marriage, and between same-sex individuals, is sinful. Its personality is heavily influenced by the Natural Law moral principle that makes it particularly attractive to the legal face. But sexual morality is deployed based on double standards for men and women. Examples of such laws include laws that govern criminal adultery and prostitution. In Uganda, for instance, the offence of prostitution criminalizes sellers of sex (majority being women) without touching the buyers (most of whom are men). Legal positivism and feminist jurisprudence have heavily criticised this face for its moral-

based sexual laws in favour of rights-based laws. In Uganda, this face is personified by Reverend Father Simon Lokodo, the Minister of Ethics and Integrity, who polices women's sexualities with an iron hand. This face is also in constant political struggle with the next one...

10. The Subversive Face

The subversive face of sexuality wears a permanent wink! It carries an undercurrent of rebellious, unrestrained sexuality. Often characterised by great creative skills, subversive sexuality consciously breaks sexual taboos and crosses bright red lines. It ignores norms and throws prejudice to the winds; it is not afraid to use four-letter words and to relish in the embarrassment that it causes, while knowing that what it is doing is exposing the innate hypocrisies of human beings: "F-them!" it tells the world, and knows that secretly, the world actually agrees.

This face organizes and plots in radical ways, constructs counter-"truths" about its realities, in an attempt to topple the lies peddled about its persona. But the subversive face does all this at a huge price of swift and fierce backlash from the legal, political, religious, heteronormative and violent faces. These faces gang up against her to squash all her sexual rights. In fact they are not satisfied with simply plotting, but try to completely efface her image. And the tools used range from acid to the sharp knife of the traditional genital surgeon. Established in October 2009, the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law is



the most visible side of this face in Uganda, although the whole alphabet movement of sexual minorities (LGBTI), and of sex workers is really at the forefront in leading the way in this regard.

Conclusion

The diagnosis is simple: Sexuality suffers from a chronic case of schizophrenia! The prognosis is not good. Most of the time her condition inflicts huge human rights costs. It causes profound disruption not only in her life but also in the lives of Ugandans who come face to face with her. The prescription for stabilizing sexuality is to place her in a state of induced comatosis before undergoing major surgery that will provide her with a completely fresh and clean face. The new face will be constructed from unblemished diverse threads of human rights and social solidarity that weave a complex web of justice, tolerance, equality, integrity, dignity, liberty and autonomy, safety, free choice, access to health services and most importantly to pleasure. It will reflect the true complex social nature of sexuality. But the

challenge is a daunting one. The fresh, reconstructed face must not be viewed as the end of the struggle; rather, as only one battle that will have to be joined by many kin, neighbors and acquaintances of sexuality.

The face of Sexuality that most of us wish to focus on is the one that exhibits erotic desire and pleasure.

About the Author

Sylvia Tamale is a Ugandan academic and the first woman dean in the Law Faculty at Makerere University. She is the recipient of the Ford Foundation Fellowship, Fulbright-MacArthur Scholarship, University of Minnesota Award for International Distinguished Leadership and the Akina Mmama Wa Afrika Award for human rights activism in Uganda.



THE FORGOTTEN REFUGEES

The influx of refugees from the Middle East, Asia and Africa has caused a lot of debate in the EU on how to handle the crises as they call it. Due to the huge numbers of refugees arriving day by day, some European countries closed their borders and others introduced firm measures on refugees crossing into their territories.

The debate continues on how to stop ISIS and other human atrocities in the world, while heavy weapons that are meant to kill and displace millions of people are on the sale daily; eventually the poor and the weak bear the must burden side of it. Common sense can dictate that you cannot be in peace when your neighbor's house is being torn apart.

The refugees that are fleeing Africa and the Balkan countries to save their lives are now becoming the FORGOTTEN REFUGEES, when priorities are given to one particular sect than others. The last time I checked, a refugee was someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.

Today many European countries have listed the Balkan countries as safe haven while Human Rights Watch reports' on LGBTQI people and ethnic minorities are harass and denied their basic rights

within their own community. People fleeing their homes to save their lives and hope for a better future, a common ground should be place for all refugees irrespective of where you come from, the religion you belong to, your ethnic background or your sexual orientation and gender identity.

African refugees are fleeing away from prosecution, war and dictatorship; a continent that has a long history of instability, where crimes against humanity and atrocities are carried out so often by rebels and some political leaders. Boko Haram in Nigeria killing and kidnapping young girls day by day, using them on suicide missions in the streets of Nigeria, their threats continued out of the border to Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. Alshabab continues to threaten the instability of Somalia.

Countless trouble in the streets of DRC the list goes on, I could not understand why priorities are not given to such people when they all fleeing for death. I don't see why much priority is given to others than a young girl from Senegal fleeing her country to avoid genital mutilation which if done will have severe consequences. I don't see why priority is not given to a Moroccan young boy fleeing from prosecution and death due to his sexual orientation or gender identity. A democratic continent has to continue inspiring others to follow suit and no one will

wish to leave their country and family without a genuine reason.

The West has a responsibility to consider African refugees, when history reminds us that we were once used as slaves, our grandfathers were taken away from Africa to fight in wars that they have no idea about, we were colonies for the longest period of time, our rights were denied, our wealth taken away and today we are called illegal immigrants in the streets of Europe.

I call on the international community to do more in supporting African refugees that are fleeing to save their lives, in every generation the life of people evolves.

One wonders how African leaders could sleep in their mansions while their country men, women, young and old are dying in the Mediterranean Sea, when their own people are suffering from bad rules of engagement, putting people under pressure to flee their country. Don't they realize these are crimes against humanity? How would you wish to be remembered?

I call on all Africans leaving in the west to stand up in support of our brothers and sisters that are denied their right of asylum.

Written by Tijan Kande

A Gambian Human Right and LGBTQI activist. ■

Analysis of LGBTI Immigrant Dilemma in Nairobi vs. UNHCR's Role



Youth Health and Psychosocial Support Programs, YHEPP earlier this year released a seventeen page document titled Victims of a Created Suffering. The document analyses the role of the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the native LGBTQ community in addressing key challenges affecting the forced LGBTI migrants in Nairobi.

According to Emmanue Odhimabo, the Youth Coordinator YHEPP, one of the main objectives of the project was to ensure that the Nairobi based LGBTI youth aged between 18 and 27 were socially alright and had the right mindset to face the socio-economic challenges fueled by today's homophobic society.

The released document stats that Kenya is host to over half a million forced immigrants. A large number of these immigrants live in the Dadaab refugee camp in the North, while a relatively smaller population has preferred to stay in the urban center of Nairobi for personal safety, among other reasons. Among them are forced lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender immigrants from Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda –a substantial number are youth who receive partial psychosocial support from the UNHCR –Nairobi mission and some of her friends. Like several other African countries, same-sex conduct remains criminalized in Kenya despite being party to constitutional and international agreements that stand for non-discrimination and equality.

It however also notes that Nairobi, is not the safest of cities in the region as there are attacks (organized and random) against native LGBT youth. There is a substantial level of lawlessness that feeds abuse of rights by authorities; where LGBT youth, and those perceived to be, are often arbitrarily arrested, extorted and locked up beyond constitutional time.

In a detailed section of the document is what YHEPP has termed as Ugandaphobia- which is a fear or dislike fro LGBTI immigrants from Uganda. Today, many LGBT immigrant youth still have issues with the emergency response lines. The system still remains

generally ambiguous as more immigrants arrive for protection; some LGBT immigrant youth reported that when they called and identified themselves as of Ugandan origin, they noticed a change of attitude and tough talk from the receiver's end –with an expression cynicism.

Worthy of noting however is the fact that LGBT immigrant youths from Uganda have been more outspoken about their challenges. Generally speaking, the Ugandan immigrant community is relatively more informed on the asylum system, fluent in English and outgoing. It is therefore easier to understand them and respond to their challenges even faster. But, Uganda is not the only country where LGBT immigrant youth come from. Others include Somali, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, and South Sudan among others. Of all these, the Congolese LGBT youth stand out as relatively shy, with their main language being French among other native languages like banyamulenge. The practice of these two languages in Nairobi neighborhoods is rare and so, LGBT youth of Congolese origin have limited access to information and live a systemically challenged social life.

It should also be realized that the asylum regime in Nairobi led by the UNHCR has done a lot to protect asylum seekers and refugees who; are fleeing persecution on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. It is also true, that there has been an influx of those seeking protection on this ground(s). This has destabilized parts of the protection system and both sides (the asylum protection system and a section of the LGBT immigrants) live in a situation where, they do not know what comes next. We have seen and experienced this during arrests, demonstrations, through open protest letters, warning letters and systemic adjustments. For too long the UNHCR and some of her allies have reiterated that most of the most outspoken immigrants are; either not realistic, too much or not appreciating the privileges that come with their protection needs. ■

Aderonke Apata: The Ugly Truth about Gay Rights in the West



During the last century, gay rights seemed to have gained momentum worldwide. There has been an increasing trend towards the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships particularly escalating in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, LGBT rights are currently protected by various legal instruments. For example, in the European Union, LGBT rights are guaranteed by both the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Homosexuality is legal in all EU member states and there is a growing acceptance of same-sex marriage. As of March 2015, same-sex marriage is legal in all parts of the UK except Northern Ireland and same-sex couples in the UK may apply to adopt children.

LGBT rights in Nigeria

On the other side of the coin, there are millions of people who continue to live in places that outlaw same-sex relationships. In five countries and in parts of

two others, homosexuality is punishable by the death penalty, while a further 70 imprison citizens because of their sexual orientation. One of these countries is Nigeria where the maximum punishment for same-sex sexual activity is death by stoning. Nigeria's anti-gay law is so radical that it includes a provision for a 10-year prison term for anyone who "administers, witnesses, abets or aids" a same-sex marriage or civil union ceremony.

Imagine being born in a country that treats you like a criminal for being gay. Imagine growing up and being forced to marry a man to hide a long-term relationship with your girlfriend. Imagine getting arrested, tortured and extorted by the police simply because you are gay.

Imagine being forced to endure the murder of your family members and girlfriend because you are gay. Imagine being sentenced to death by stoning because you are gay. Imagine having to flee your country for fear of your life. This is not a fictional story; it is the story of Aderonke Apata.

Apata's asylum claim

Ms Apata moved to the UK from Nigeria in 2004 and, in 2012, after being caught with a false visa, she tried to apply for asylum. Following two failed asylum claims, she has now sought a judicial review. The reason she is challenging the government's decision not to grant her asylum is because she rightly fears that deportation to Nigeria would compromise her safety. After all, she has been sentenced to death in Nigeria. Nonetheless,

the Home Office has refused to recognise her sexuality, arguing that she cannot be classified as a lesbian because she has children from a previous heterosexual relationship. To quote the Home Secretary's barrister Andrew Bird: "You can't be a heterosexual one day and a lesbian the next day. Just as you can't change your race."

LGBT asylum seekers

Under international and UK law, people who fear prosecution on the basis of their sexual orientation can claim asylum in the UK. But in order to be eligible for asylum, they must prove that they are gay. Certainly, this is not an easy task. It demands extensive interrogations that end up invading those people's privacy as they are required to reveal their deepest and most intimate memories.

Ms Apata has provided the government with evidence that her former girlfriend, brother and three-year-old son were killed in vigilante violence relating to her homosexuality. She has also explained to the Home Office that her previous marriage to a man was a sham intended to cover up the fact that she was a lesbian. In a desperate move to prove her sexual orientation, she even submitted photos and videos documenting her sex life with her current fiancée, Happiness Agboro. Despite this, the Home Office has refused to change its decision.

As reported by <http://www.legalscribbler.com/> ■

STANDING UP FOR OURSELVES: The SMUG Vs SCOT LIVELY CASE



SMUG v. Lively is a federal lawsuit on behalf of a non-profit umbrella organization for LGBTI advocacy groups in Uganda against Scott Lively, a U.S.-based anti-gay extremist, for his role in the persecution of LGBTI people in Uganda, in particular his active participation in the conspiracy to strip away their fundamental rights.

Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) filed the lawsuit in 2012 against Scott Lively, a U.S.-based anti-gay extremist, alleging that his work with other key anti-gay leaders in Uganda to deprive the LGBTI community of fundamental rights constitutes persecution, a crime against humanity in international law. SMUG brought the case to a U.S. court in the state of Massachusetts

where Lively lives. In 2013, the court denied Lively's request to have the case dismissed and affirmed that persecution on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is a crime against humanity.

That decision allowed the case to proceed to the discovery stage. "Discovery," in U.S. law, is the phase where the parties exchange their evidence, including documents and testimony through depositions, in which witnesses are questioned by the other party's lawyers outside of court.

Since that important ruling in 2013, SMUG and Lively have exchanged thousands of documents and taken the testimony of the parties as well as some witnesses. For example, members of SMUG's staff and board gave testimony in full-day depositions, where they were questioned by

Lively's attorneys.

Lively was also deposed by SMUG's attorneys over the course of nearly two days. During this process, numerous filings were submitted to the court by both SMUG and Lively to address disputes that arose

between the parties on various issues regarding each party's evidence. Throughout the entire process, one of SMUG's primary concerns has been, and will continue to be, ensuring the security, safety and protection of the community in Uganda as well as allies and supporters, as it pursues this case.

The Ssempe subpoena

In early 2015, it was learned that Martin Ssempe is a U.S. citizen which means he is subject to the U.S. court's jurisdiction. In May, SMUG requested that the court issue a subpoena, which

is a command by a court for a non-party witness to give testimony and produce documents relevant to the issues in the case. With this subpoena, SMUG seeks to question Ssempe under oath concerning his work with Lively and his involvement in the persecution of the LGBTI community. It is important to emphasize that Ssempe is not a party to this case. He is not himself being sued; SMUG is only seeking his testimony.

The court updated the case schedule with the next major court date being 14 September 2016, for a hearing on a motion for summary judgment, which will determine whether the case should proceed to a full trial before a jury or will be decided by the judge without a trial. Before then, however, there will be a lot happening: Lively must produce his expert reports by 15 March 2016; and all depositions of both parties' experts must be taken by 15 April 2016. Between May and July, the parties will be submitting their written arguments on the question of summary judgment, which will serve as the basis for the arguments that will be presented at the court hearing in September. ■

REWRITING THE HUMAN RIGHTS- ORIENTED BILLS

By SM

My nation is in labour; her waters just broke! But a while ago, she nursed a miscarriage; the underdeveloped and immature "kill the gay bill" was brought to table before it met the full nine months of anti body nourishment by the mother, consequently, it was aborted!

The same uninformed people (undernourished mothers) have passed yet another bill which is mimicking under the shelter "regulating the activities of the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)". This bill is indirectly targeting the few existing organizations which have sought to address the issues of the sexual minorities and the key populations with listening and understanding ears; a warm blanket for the LGBTIs. There is no form of knowledge, however, that has been sought by the misinformed statesmen whose judicial positions give them the mandate to draft a bill that convicts innocent people to life time imprisonment. The arguments based on culture, religion and western influence are rather too raw and inhuman with uninformed thinking. If the following sentiments are understood, I doubt my nation shall find these bills relevant:

The binary model of sex: For so long a time, LGBTI activists have tried to create an understanding about sexual orientation and gender, although society is still centered to defining someone's sex by male or female; conforming to the anatomical tests rather than the hormonal tests. The spectrum of sexuality exists, however, for example; when a child is born with both the male and female anatomical features (intersex); do they confer to being called male or female! In addition, in some men the urethral opening

is on the underside of his penis rather than at the tip! All these and many more disorders of sex development are limitations to the binary model of sex. This is evidenced in the anatomy of sex development between five and six weeks of embryo development where the embryo has the potential to form both male and female anatomical plans.

Trying to upload the science into the faces of the uninformed, I am sure the vibrant parliamentarian Doctor, Medard Bitekyerezo will find this true, at the end of the second trimester of pregnancy, the gonad switches on the developmental pathway to become an ovary or a testis. In situations where the testis develops, it secretes testosterone, which supports the development of the male ducts. It also makes other hormones that force the presumptive uterus and Fallopian tubes to shrink away. If the gonad becomes an ovary, it makes oestrogen, and the lack of testosterone causes the male plumbing to wither. These hormones too play a critical role in the development of the external genitalia, and climax their action at puberty, triggering the development of secondary sexual characteristics such as breasts or facial hair. Changes to any of these processes can have dramatic effects on an individual's sex. Gene mutations affecting gonad development can result in a person with XY chromosomes developing typically female characteristics, whereas alterations in hormone signaling can cause XX individuals to develop along male lines. Credit to Claire Ainsworth

To put it more politely, some men have vaginas while some women have penises. This is the gap that the team of scientists the

president of Uganda appointed to make an exclusive report about homosexuality forgot to document! Ideally these scientists committed treason; for their ignorance of basic science costed the nation not just a handful of dollars but also innocent Ugandans who by the passing of the "Kill the gay bill" were most affected. It is ironical that, the would be most informed sect of people turn out to be ignorant of what seems quite obvious! The understanding and adoption of the spectrum of sex rather than the binary model of sex should be the genesis of acceptance of the intersex, understanding the transgender persons and for the most obvious reasons, the gays and the lesbians. Claire Ainsworth

// *For so long a time, LGBTI activists have tried to create an understanding about sexual orientation and gender*

just summarizes it all "if you want to know whether someone is male or female, it may be best just to ask".

The genetics of same sex behavior: It isn't far away from yesterday when the gallant parliamentarians were gifted with I pads! I want to be sure they are in adhesion with the recent developments in science. To begin with, whereas this may seem unreal just like homosexuality seems too many! The fly *Drosophila Melanogaster* is a potent animal model in the modern science based research but most importantly the study of genetics. Whereas the genetics

Uganda Report of Violations Based on Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

July 2015

of same sex behavior in humans is not understood fully, genetic models of co dominance and sexual antagonism have proved to bring light at the end of the tunnel.

"Researchers may have just found a benefit conferred by homosexual sex that could offer an explanation as to why this behavior has persevered, at least in one species. According to a new study in fruit flies, not only does same-sex sexual behavior seem to be heritable, but females with a genetic makeup associated with this trait actually display higher reproductive rates, which is an evolutionary advantage. These fascinating findings have been published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B.

If a certain trait or behavior is detrimental to the reproductive success, or fitness, of an organism, you wouldn't expect it to persist in the population as natural selection should get rid of it. After all, the aim of the reproductive game is to keep your genes going. Why, then, do members of the same sex cop off with each other in so many species? The scientists concluded that Males (fruit flies) with a genetic makeup associated with high levels of SSB (same sex behavior) produced female offspring with higher rates of reproduction,

or fecundity. This suggests that genes associated with SSB could be persisting in the population because they actually confer a fitness advantage in females, despite being reproductively harmful to males". Credit to I fuckinglovescience.

This trails in at a point when studies on cannabis sativa have confirmed that it cures a number of health hazards, needless to say factual science seems to be an antagonist to ordinary socio-cultural beliefs. Over 15,000 species of animals exhibit same sex behavior, therefore, it is not out of western influence or the world coming to an end (most believers say), that we have sexuality wars but it is a humanity value that has existed since the Biblical times. I predict that if similar studies were done in humans, then the scientific evidence would be more relevant but it still stands that homosexuality is a form of sexuality that exists in animals (humans belong to kingdom animalia too) and could actually have an evolutionary advantage.

Homosexuality and Africa: New studies by the influential Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) – on the science of human sexual diversity have found out that there is "no evidence that orientation can be altered by therapy or that being gay is contagious." The report also

rubbishes the idea that individuals have adopted homosexuality because of Western influences. It states: "There is no basis for the view that homosexuality is 'un-African' either in the sense of it being a 'colonial import', or on the basis that prevalence of people with same-sex or bisexual orientations is any different in African countries compared to countries on any other continent." This serves in interest of the LGBTI persons whose love is considered illegal (against canon law of nature). The myth of considering homosexuality as western attire forced on Africans was recently elevated by the UN which called for the decriminalization of homosexuality.

But it's the UN which reminded us that women need to be lifted up; they are no longer secondary citizens like they used to be nowadays, the disabled too have rights now, people living with HIV too today have rights but when they remind us to give the LGBTI persons rights we call it impersonification. We must realize that most of the trendy developments especially about the human rights have always been backed by the western world. We have simply not understood our culture and beliefs and that's why we celebrate the Uganda Martyrs with heavy smiles. ■



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ANALYSIS OF UGANDA'S NGO BILL

Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)

The Parliament of the Republic of Uganda passed into law, The Non Governmental Organisations Bill, 2015 in November of the same year. The Bill now only awaits Presidential assent to become an Act of Parliament.

The memorandum shows that the need for the Bill is due to gaps in the existing law. It therefore seeks to streamline NGOs and their activities to ensure that they work within the precincts of the law. While the Bill has noble intentions, it also had some very controversial provisions that if passed into law, would violate the rights to freedom of conscience, expression, movement, assembly and association for both organisations and individuals.

HRAPF at that time published an analysis on how the provisions of the Bill; would if passed into law disproportionately affect organisations working on socially blacklisted issues concerning marginalised groups. These organisations include those working on: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) rights and issues; sex worker rights and issues; access to safe abortion issues; those protecting religious minorities; and those working with persons charged with terrorism and other serious crimes.

After the First Reading, the Bill was forwarded to the Defence and Internal Affairs Committee of Parliament, which invited civil society organisations and the general public to give their views. This was done and the Committee came up with a report that was largely reflective of civil society positions. At the second reading, the Committee Report was discussed and most of its provisions adopted, and the Bill was passed into law.

Though most of the amendments suggested by the Committee were taken into consideration, the final Bill as passed still has issues that are going to disproportionately affect groups working with marginalised groups. HRAPF has therefore put together this commentary, which shows how the issues raised initially as regards organization working on issues of marginalised groups were addressed in the passed Bill.

In summary, the Bill as passed addresses most of the concerns that HRAPF had raised. However, three thorny issues remain which concern: the refusal of registration of organisation on the basis that that the objectives are 'in contravention of the law'; the provisions on 'special obligations of NGOs'; and 'grounds for dissolution by court.'

1. Mandatory registration of NGOs

Under Clause 31(1), 'An organisation shall not operate in Uganda unless it has been duly registered by the NGO Board.' Mandatory registration would require all organisations to register, but this is a limitation on the right to freedom of association, which covers unregistered entities.

For those organizations working on issues concerning marginalised and criminalised persons, the requirement for mandatory registration with the NGO Board would make it difficult for them to operate at all, since they have to reserve a name which may be rejected due to the criminal laws, and the objectives may also be rejected leading to the organisation being denied registration

The Act partly does away with the requirement for mandatory registration for a person or group of persons or those entities that do not want to get incorporated as organisations. This would therefore allow entities working on issues that are socially blacklisted to continue doing their work even when they cannot be registered.

2. Registration and Incorporation of organisations

According to clause 31(4), an organisation will not be registered where its objectives are in contravention of the law, or where it is in public interest not to register it or for any other reason that the Board may find relevant.

The Bureau can refuse to register where: 'the objectives of the organisation as specified in its Constitution are in contravention of the laws of Uganda; where the application for registration does not comply with the requirements of the Act; where the applicant has given false or misleading

information in any material particulars. This provision was passed in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee.

The provision as passed takes away the arbitrariness of the earlier provision. It now means that the Bureau has to consider the objectives and if they do not contravene the law, or there are no misleading statements and the application is in line with the Act, then the organisation must be registered. The only concern is about 'where the objectives are in contravention of the law' and the interpretation this will be given as regards objectives for organisations working on issues concerning criminalised conduct like sex work and same sex relations. The denial of registration to Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) on the basis of the term 'sexual minorities' by the URSB gives an indication of how Ugandan institutions may interpret 'in contravention of the law.'

3. Broad and Undefined offences

Clause 3(10) (a) of the bill stipulates that any organisation which contravenes any provision of the Bill commits an offence. This is a broad and undefined offence that unfairly makes organisations dealing with issues that are disapproved of by the general public susceptible to criminal liability, since the Bill organizational activities that are prejudicial to 'public interest'. This provision was recommended for deletion. Provision is not part of the Act.

The decision to delete the provision was good as it leaves organisations protected from criminal liability arising out of undefined contraventions of the law.

4. Dual liability of the organization and its directors

Under Clause 31(11), the Bill creates dual criminal liability for an organization and its officers when the organization commits an offence. This provision is contrary to the principle of corporate personality, which is to the effect that an organisation is separate from its members and directors, save in circumstances of fraud. It would give lee-way for the arbitrary arrest and prosecution of directors and officers of organisations that are deemed to commit offences, simply because they engage in work that involves issues relating to persons whose acts are criminalized. This provision was deleted. Provision is not part of the Act. The decision to delete the provision was good as it leaves organisations protected from criminal liability arising out of undefined contraventions of the law.

5. Revocation of an organisation's permit

According to Clause 33(1) (d) of the bill, an organisation's permit shall be revoked if in the opinion of the board, it is in the public interest to do so. This threatens the right to freedom of association of organisations dealing with issues that are unpopular among members of the public, since the board has the discretion to arbitrarily revoke their operating permits on the premise of it being in 'public interest' to do so.

The term 'public interest' is not defined in the Bill and it is therefore subjective and subject to abuse. This provision was recommended for deletion by the Committee.

The provision was not adopted.

The decision to delete the provision was good as it leaves organisations protected from having their permits revoked on the basis of undefined 'public interest.'

6. General Powers of the NGO Board to inspect organization premises

Under Clause 37 of the Bill, an officer appointed by the board is given discretion to make an unannounced inspection of the premises of an organisation, and to ask for any information that appears to be necessary for the purpose of giving effect to the Bill, and also gives them the power to prosecute any person for an offence alleged to be committed under the Bill. Such unannounced investigations would be a violation of the right to privacy for organisations.

This clause was proposed to be amended by: designating inspectors from the NGO Bureau whose names shall be gazetted; requiring notice of at least seven days stating the time and purpose of the inspection; reasonable time was defined as the hours of 8:00am to 5:00pm; and by creating offences for obstruction of an inspector, presenting false documents or making false statements; or failing to comply with reasonable orders or directions of the inspector which shall be punishable by a fine not exceeding 24 currency points or imprisonment not exceeding one year.

The Committee recommendations were generally followed but the notice period was reduced from seven to three days. The provision as adopted is okay except that it gives the inspectors a lot of discretion by giving them powers to ask for any information that

they deem 'necessary for purposes of giving effect to the Act.'



7. Special Obligations of organisations

Under Clause 40(d) and (f) of the Bill, organizations are prohibited from engaging in any

activities that are prejudicial to the security interests and laws of Uganda, as well as the dignity of the people of Uganda. These obligations expose organizations working on criminalized conduct to arbitrary prosecution due to their work being regarded as causing insecurity as they are regarded as 'foreign agents'.

Since these terms are undefined, these organisations are likely to fall foul of them. These sub clauses were proposed to be deleted. These clauses were included in the final draft of the bill that was passed. This provision makes it hard for organizations dealing with issues that are considered by the majority of the general public to be detrimental to national security and cultural identity of Uganda to operate smoothly as it subjects them to warnings and even criminal prosecutions.

8. Dissolution of organisations

Clause 44(3) (d) gives the NGO Board power to dissolve an organisation for any reason that the board considers to be in public interest. This provision threatens the right to freedom of association and

assembly for members and officers of organisations dealing with socially unpopular issues, since they can easily be wound up in pursuit of 'public interest.'

The committee proposed to amend this clause by divesting the power of dissolution of an organisation from the board, and vesting it in the court on specified grounds which include: 'threatening national security', and 'gross violations of the laws of Uganda' both of which concepts are not defined. However, the provision on threatening national security is left undefined, and due to the connection of national security with 'serving foreign interests' it may be prejudicial to the smooth operation of organisations dealing with issues that are related to criminalized conduct.

9. Appeals to be made to the minister and powers of the minister

Clause 45 of the Bill makes the Minister of Internal Affairs the only forum before which an appeal from a decision of the Board can be presented. It implies that if the Minister is interested in a particular organization being denied a permit or being closed down, he can direct the Board to do so, and yet appeals have to go to him/her. The committee proposed to amend the clause and to introduce a new section 46. These proposals were to introduce a hierarchical mechanism of appeal, from the Sub-County Non-governmental Organisation Monitoring Committee (SNMC) to the District Non Governmental Organisations Monitoring Committee (DNMC); and from the DNMC to the Bureau.

The clauses on appeals were passed as per the committee's recommendations. These provisions guarantee the right to a fair hearing since they provide for an appeal mechanism right from the SNMC to the High Court. The only concern is that for appeals from the Bureau, a representative of the Bureau also sits on the Adjudication Committee. ■



TURNING THEIR HATE INTO FAITH

By Waza

I am a 31 year bisexual man that comes from a very strong religious background (Roman Catholicism). In Africa, most religious leaders have taken the mantle to advocate against homosexuality saying it is unafrican and a threat towards family values.

As both a father and advocate for LGBTI rights in a country like Uganda, I know how hard it is for one to maintain the passion for his/her religion because all religious leaders have nothing but venomous messages to pass on about LGBTI issues. This makes it hard for LGBTI identifying persons to go to places of worship due to fear of being the focus of each oration; in essence this has reduced the number of community members that have kept their devotion to their religious beliefs.

Despite such challenges, I have never thought of abandoning my faith or throwing away my rosary just because religious leaders target me and my colleagues in their sermons that preach how unworthy we are to be at the altar. I believe Jesus' gospel runs on the core doctrine of Love and the Bible further emphasizes this. Those who nurture us spiritually have many times diverted from the main course by spreading messages of hate with intent to push members of the LGBTI community away from serving their faith since according to them, they do not deserve God's sanctity. I do however believe that God created us all and if He really didn't want a certain category of people to exist because of their sexual orientation or gender identity then he wouldn't have created them in the first place. I'm one of those members of the LGBTI community who believes that this hateful propaganda being spread by anti-gay crusaders shouldn't

drain us spiritually; we ought to keep our faith despite these demoralizing sermons always thrown at us.

If you're an LGBTI identifying moslem, keep your faith in Allah, if you are a christian, no one has the right to crucify you. These religious elders, especially the priests grooming us into strong Christians never say that specific sacraments are for heterosexual people yet we do receive these sacraments together as the body of Christ. I do believe that even among those who admonish us are some who are LGBTI but don't come out.

No one can separate me from the love of Jesus Christ, no mere man can dictate on who I have to worship. I believe that some of those preaching such gospels of hate against the LGBTI people have more skeletons in their closets. I don't think a mature man consenting with a fellow man is a sin. What people don't realize is the fact that LGBTI persons do not support acts that deviate from biblical teachings such as pedophilia, rape, murder or any other acts that bring harm to others.

We are God loving people who don't need any diversionary gospel but what we need is a gospel of hope and comfort, especially considering the social climate in which we live. My call to my fellow brothers and sisters in the community is simple; don't let anyone interfere with your faith and beliefs, we are all created in the image of God and we are all masters of God's creation left with the sole responsibility of caring for God's creation not any other deviant role. Keep your faith in the almighty God/Allah and your life will have a strong foundation of faith and hope; after all, salvation and faith are individual virtues. ■

WHERE LOVE IS ILLEGAL

My eyes bled to her sight
The rupture of emotions took
scene
With our compatibility worn on
our fore heads
We were too young to take
cover
We were in love

With our hands too far away
from the sight of our touch
Our memories still shaped our
hearts

The space between our
hearts narrowed steadily as
we grew too different
The timing of our desires
didn't change
We loved each other

At the mountain top, our fore
fathers laid their hands onto
our milk pots
But the rains eroded the
painting

Down to the valley where the
white man planted his God
The God whose dogs bark
and tear apart our existence
Our love isn't served to His
diner alas the table is evacuated
when our guests arrive

Our wombs are bare
Thick and fertile but our
minds never collide with our
bodies

We chase to love than to
reproduce
We fight to have our meal
served but we won't be at the
table

The table where love is
served
We love yet our love is illegal

Adequate Language to Farther LGBTI Narratives Can No Longer Be Overlooked

By Cleo Kambugu

One cannot underestimate the power of media, and what it unleashes when people and communities start talking. There is power in communities speaking for themselves. It is however arguable that this new found attention over queer people has been more of a blessing than a curse.

While a lot could be said about the newly garnered media frenzy over queer persons and how it has gone several leaps in filling a huge information void and creating a new found visibility about a community whose existence had for long time, been but shrouded in myths and mystery, it is still arguable that this new found visibility has been a blessing other than a curse. While the potential of media in terms spurring debates, and shaping public discourse and attitudes cannot be ignored, a lot currently still remains wanting if this visibility is ever to translate into some sort of tangible attitudinal dynamism and societal acceptance.

To repeat the powerful timeless words of Arundati Roy "There is no such thing as the voiceless minorities, there is only the "deliberately" silenced, the "preferably" unheard, and the "selectively" heard and portrayed minority".

A lot still remains wanting in terms of who owns queer narratives and who dictates over if and how queer people have their narratives and identities are portrayed. It is true there ought to be nothing about queer people without queer people themselves

not just for defiance's sake but for the plain fact that to retain the authenticity and untainted wholesomeness of their narrative; they ought to be at the fore front in making these decision on how their lived realities are portrayed.

Currently, it doesn't help that the wide spread ignorance about queer people has been educated by a biased uniformed narratives that are rather invasive and intrusive, and only serve to further the policing and dissecting of queer lives wit reckless abandon leaving them damaged, delegitimized, invalidated, misrepresented, exploited, abused and further ostracized.

Whether by ally or foe, this kind of recklessness to be called out should not matter; leaving such voiced nuzzled and muted has only served but to further violence against queer people. A lot could be said about language and its centrality in defining

queer identities. Currently the language that is used to define queer people is one that strops them of the multiplicity of their identifiers and reduces them to trivialized, sexualized, and pathologised versions of their genders and sexuality. The current narrative has served to moralise discussion in effect reducing queer person to sexual pariahs and oddities of nature and at best sexual fantasies to be policed, or victims to be pitied.

It is language or the lack and misuse of that that has served but to misconstrue, and distort queer narrative. Often queer narratives are first rated and validated against their heteronormative equivalents. It doesn't help things of course that queer persons themselves often lack the language to define and validate them selves

It is language or the lack there of that robs queer people of the urgency to define themselves and

Equality



Equity



To repeat the powerful timeless words of Arundati Roy "There is no such thing as the voiceless minorities, there is only the "deliberately" silenced,

validate their existence or have the confidence to negate these narratives.

Owing to the fact that most queer persons are socialized into an exclusionary sexist and patriarchal system, with selectively rigid boundaries of normalcy- one that sees queer people are nothing more than deviants, queer people are often locked into an apologetic stance, where they seek to normalize their existence and identities by perpetuating and imposing upon them selves the language of a system that alienates them. Indeed there are several fissures of heteronormativity in the language used to explore queer identities and lived realities that have become common place.

It is therefore important to call out the subtleties in which language or the lack there of affects queer narratives, and how in reclaiming the queer narrative it is of utmost importance to explore language and identities as it is and as it ought to be. ■

MY KIND OF GIRL

By SM

I don't want a 'pure' girl
I don't want a girl that the world wants
I don't want a girl that's fake
I don't want a girl who's anything but herself

I want a girl who is careless, gypsy, crazy, adventurous or rebellious
I want to love her, trust her, set her free, fuck her, look into her eyes
cuddle her, caress her body and love her
I want to get drunk, travel the world, do crazy things and share my pain with her
That's the kind of girl I am after

My girl is someone who is not afraid to tell the truth

She is a fighter

She is always ready to take on the world

She dreams big dreams

She believes in herself

She laughs out loud

She would wear denim jeans for a wedding

She will have her mood swings

She is cute but not stupid

She feels but she is not an emotional fool

She is an inspiration

And that's my kind of girl.



SPORTS: Standing Up To The Bigotry Towards Minorities

Adebayor Chris is most known in Uganda's Lesbian Gay Transgender Bisexual and Intersex community as the 2015 winner of the Mr. Pride Contest. Having spent an afternoon with the recent graduate, I walked away with the impression that this young man was destined for greatness; his humility, love for service and selflessness all stood out as he talked to the Kuchu Times team about his plans for his tenure and life as a transgender man in Uganda.

Adebayor recently graduated from Makerere University with a Bachelors Degree in Sports Science and dreams of starting a sports academy that focuses on LGBTI individuals. His collection of various medals and trophies is aligned before us as he explains his love and passion for Sports. He has been awarded in several sports fields including soccer, pool, volleyball and swimming. Adebayor says that right from a young age, he knew he was ordained to be a sportsman. He further explains that his talent in sport has been a God send; ie went through most of his higher education on merit of this, something that took a great deal of financial strain off his parent's shoulders.

Being a Transman

"I guess I figured out my gender identity and sexual orientation at a very tender age. At five years old, I was attracted to my cousin sister and I never really understood why. I also did not like wearing girly clothes like most children my age' instead I would steal my older brothers' clothes and I honestly felt more comfortable in those," Adebayor says of how and when he discovered his identity.

His sister started suspecting he was queer and out rightly questioned him about it. Although tough, Adebayor was truthful and explained his identity to her. This incident encouraged him to come out to his brothers and shockingly, they were more embracing and supportive than he had anticipated.

However, he says he has still not come out to his parents although they have heard rumors and questioned him several times. He says he plans to tell them the truth after he has attained full independence and is supportive of himself.

As a sportsman, Adebayor's greatest challenge has been deciding which teams to identify with. While he has won most of his accolades in the women's categories, he says he dreams of a day when he can participate in the men's categories without any interruptions.

"It is very hard for me. I am shunned by organizers when I play on women's teams because they are not sure if I am male or



female yet the men will also not allow me to play on their teams. For now, I have been forced to take part in the ladies groups but I am hopeful that soon or later, I will participate in the category that I truly belong to," Adebayor reckons.

He reminisces about a time he was participating in a swimming competition and after taking his position on the board, the MC pointed at him and shouted for all and sunders to hear that a man was trying to sneak into the women's category. Adebayor says he has faced many days like those but has learnt to hold his head up and keep focused.

He also explains that he has not thought about going through full transition because he is comfortable in his skin although nothing is off the table for the future.

Winning Mr Pride

Adebayor decided to take part in the 2015 Mr. Pride contest after realizing that it was dominated by the G and B of the community. "Transmen were not very well represented and I went into the contest to make a mark for the transmen," he explains.

During his tenure, Adebayor hopes to influence the community through sports. One of his biggest dreams is to start a football league within the community, he also hopes to influence the youth to start self help projects to curb the problem of unemployment.

Like all positions of power and prestige, being Mr. Pride has come with its perks and downsides. The girls have been flocking him and in his own words, he is yet to pick one. While he is in no rush to get into a relationship, Adebayor says he hopes to find a beautiful down to earth girl who will be supportive of his dreams. ■



UPCOMING EVENTS



21st International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2016)
Durban, South Africa | July 18-22, 2016
Durban International Convention Centre (ICC)

<http://www.aids2016.org>



13th AWID International Forum: Feminist Futures: Building Collective Power for Rights and Justice

5 May 2016 to 8 May 2016

Location: Costa do Sauípe, Bahia – Brazil

See more at: <http://www.awid.org/get-involved/13th-awid-international-forum-feminist-futures-building-collective-power-rights-and#sthash.JnVqchma.dpuf>



ILGA is an umbrella organisation of more than 1100 member organisations presented in six different regions including: Pan Africa Ilga, Ilga-Asia, Ilga-Europe, Ilga-LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean), Ilga North-America and Ilga-Oceania (Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia and Pacific Islands).

ILGA announces world conference

The event will be held in Bangkok, Thailand, between November 28th and December 2nd, 2016

UNDERSTANDING THE THEORY OF ADVOCACY

By Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera and Moses Kimbugwe

Introduction

This chapter introduces the basics of advocacy. It defines advocacy, discusses the benefits of advocacy and the nature of advocacy.

Definition of advocacy

In simple terms advocacy is when someone or a group of people speak out, act or support a particular cause either on their behalf or on behalf of some other person or group of persons.

As regards LGBTI issues, advocacy means acting, or speaking out on issues affecting LGBTI people. This can be done by LGBTI people themselves or their allies.

Advocacy is not adversarial; it is more of a cooperative strategy where someone engages firmly on the issues without necessarily fighting the person whom one wants to influence.

Types of Advocacy

There are many different types of advocacy but the most common ones are

Self-advocacy

This is when one takes action to advance one's own interests. In the context of LGBTI rights, this would mean LGBTI people speaking out or taking other action on their one behalf.

The advantage of self advocacy is that one speaks and acts from a point of knowledge and experience which someone who is not part of the group may not

necessary have. Again, people who do self-advocacy seem to be more committed and more willing to exert themselves to achieve their aims than those who are simply advocating on behalf of others. Self-advocacy also empowers the members of the particular group who are involved in the advocacy, for it builds their confidence and fosters their understanding and articulation of the issues.

The downside of self-advocacy is the possibility of one being too emotional to the point of being overwhelmed. This is due to the fact that the issue affects them directly. This may lead to a failure to properly articulate the issues, or a feeling that the other party simply ought to understand the issue. As such there is little room for objectivity during self-advocacy.

Nevertheless, self-advocacy is the best way of doing advocacy because that way one speaks for one's self and one is fully in charge of the outcome.

Peer advocacy

This is the opposite of self-advocacy. It involves taking action to represent the rights and interests of someone other than oneself. Such persons may be simply persons interested in the plight of a particular group, or experts who have studied the particular issues.

Peer advocacy brings on board skills and expertise that may be lacking within the group. It also brings on board people with experience and power to access areas that may not be easily accessed by members of a

marginalised group.

However, such people may not deeply understand the issues especially where they are not experts, and where they deeply understand the issues, they might not be very easily believed since they have not experienced the issues themselves.

Systems advocacy

This is about taking action to influence systems. The systems may be social, political, or economic systems. The impact of such advocacy is usually structural changes, and it affects large groups of people.

Whereas it leads to broad structural changes, systems advocacy may do little to change the life of the individual members of the group.

Legal advocacy

This is advocacy that is done through lawyers. Lawyers have the mandate to legally represent people who are affected by legal issues. Lawyers are usually specialised in a particular area and therefore have the expertise to present the issues in a legal way.

The advantage of this type of advocacy is that the lawyers speak the same language as the judges or the people sought to be influenced. They can thus easily articulate the issues and cause the desired goal.

The downside of it is that in most cases the lawyers are not members of the community that they represent, and even if they were, they would usually be very detached from the day to day

suffering and life of the other members of the group.

Again, legal outcomes may not necessarily be in the form that the group wants or understands them.

Advocacy Strategies

Advocacy strategies can be divided into two: informal and formal advocacy strategies.

Informal advocacy strategies

These are those that involve direct engagement with the decision makers. One directly reaches out to the decision makers and engages them on the particular issues. Sometimes it can be surprising how much informal strategies may create change. For example if a landlord tries to evict you on the basis of your sexual orientation or gender identity, making an appointment to meet him/her and explain your point of view may go a long way in making him/her change her mind. Informal advocacy mainly works for less serious problems.

The advantage of these strategies is that they are less technical, require less time and money. The disadvantage is that they may not provide lasting and durable solutions.

Formal advocacy strategies

These are typically those that involve third party interventions, usually in the form of a lawyer, a court or an arbitrator. These are preferred where the problem is serious or urgent. Examples of these strategies are: following grievance procedures, taking court action or arbitration. Using the example above, if the landlord insists on evicting the person, the person can go

to court to seek a court order stopping the landlord from evicting him/her. Once this is done, the landlord has no option but to comply. There is usually no room for negotiation.

One of the advantages of using formal strategies is that they send a serious message and they are usually backed up by force of law. Another advantage is that these procedures give someone who was not involved in the dispute of the issue a chance to investigate and decide on the issue and come up with an unbiased opinion.

The disadvantages are that these procedures are usually technical, need more investment in terms of money and/or time. They are also adversarial and tend to permanently damage the relationship between the parties, where the issue is interpersonal.

The benefits of Advocacy

There are many benefits that accrue out of advocacy. The main ones are

Putting issues on the agenda: When an issue is raised through advocacy, the status of such an issue is raised and it becomes one of the discussion issues. For example it was LGBTI activists' decision to stand up for their rights that brought the current discussion on homosexuality to the forefront.

Increased visibility: It is only when one takes action that one is noticed. Advocacy thus helps to ensure visibility for hitherto unseen groups.

Promotes understanding: Most people are ignorant about what is unfamiliar. As such bring out the issues makes people to understand more about the issues and perhaps change their attitudes.

Skills acquisition: Involving in advocacy makes one acquire many more new skills especially

as regards communication, writing and documentation. It also makes one more confident.

Building networks and allies: Advocacy is key in building networks and creating allies. One meets many people and groups during the course of advocacy. These groups greatly expand one's networks and allies, who may come in handy for other causes.

Disadvantages of advocacy

Advocacy has many benefits; however it also comes with a few disadvantages especially to the individuals involved. In this regard LGBTI advocacy is notable for a number of disadvantages due to the high levels of homophobia. Most of these disadvantages accrue to individual activists. As such LGBTI persons have to be careful before deciding to get involved in advocacy work. These disadvantages are:

Risk of bodily and emotional harm: Advocacy work usually comes with risks of personal harm. Issue like LGBTI rights greatly polarise and LGBTI activists are at risk of getting physically or emotionally attacked or hurt.

Long-term results: Advocacy sometime takes a long time for its impact to be realised. Usually a person with a challenging issue needs an immediate solution which advocacy may not be able to provide.

Conclusion

Advocacy is simply about taking action to create change. Any one can engage in advocacy. Strategies and options depend on situation. LGBTI persons are encouraged to carry out self advocacy and also to recognise the role of peer advocacy in order to create the desired change. ■

Frank Opinion on Same Sex Parenting

BM: Briefly tell our readers about yourself

RA: I am Reeney, a 34 year old Ugandan. I am happily married to the one person who loves me so dearly and unconditionally. We have a one and half year old son. I am pretty much a person of so many genres; corporate, self-employed and a lover of soccer and music.

BM: When did you first explore your sexuality?

RA: I always felt different from childhood i.e. from my choice of games and association. The games were pretty much boyish though most times we innocently thought of this as merely a part of the growing up process. Normally, I just had crushes on people but never acted on it and eventually the feelings would fade.

However, when I joined campus the story changed; I felt more confident and my first move was on a complete stranger; I gave her my number and as fate would have it she did call me. I believed this worked out on the resonance principle; being able to identify my own kind. Fortunately, she was very knowledgeable about minorities and was already in the community into which she introduced me.

BM: How has your sexuality affected your life i.e. immediate family, lifestyle and work?

RA: Immediate family

One thing that must be noted here is the fact that I have not really come out to the public about my sexuality. Therefore, my immediate family has been as close as ever more so with the arrival of our son, they want

more interaction with him. They believe me and my partner are just close friends. Apart from that, all seems well to me though we can't read people's minds. None has ever posed the question; the usual questions asked are about when I intend to get married since am the only sibling who is still single.

Lifestyle

By my standards, my lifestyle has never changed and this might be a different story if I decided to come out openly, may be then would I experience that impact. Secondly, I think my job might be an active factor towards this too; I really don't have much time to engage with the outside world since it takes up most of my time; one has to hustle hard to make ends meet. What is left of my time is what I use to bond with my family and then engage with the community when the need arises.

Work

The organization that I work for recognizes the rights of LGBTI identifying people i.e. they have the diversity and inclusion value that seeks to support my kind from discrimination at workplaces.

Secondly, the position that I hold could be another reason I have never had any challenges relating with colleagues. It might be an intimidating factor for my workmates to start asking if they ever had such questions. Thirdly, I don't really discuss my private life at work apart from two colleagues whom I felt I could trust with my real story. They have been supportive, non-discriminative and never stigmatized me. Our relationship has been a normal one. I however believe all these

might have changed slightly or significantly if I openly came out.

BM: As a Parent, how open are you to your children especially with issues concerning sex, gender and sexuality?

RA: Ours is still a young family. Like the old adage goes, "We will cross the bridge once we get to it." But this has not stopped us from preparing for that time and therefore this would be my view; openness with children about sex, gender and sexuality can only be proper once they come of age or unless they get discriminated against, teased due to their family orientation that is same sex family.

BM: Do you worry that your children will be discriminated against because of your sexuality?

RA: We try to live a straight life as much as possible. With the arrival of our son, extremism is avoided ie there are no cozy or intimate moments in the presence of the child as they tend to imitate everything that they see or hear once they get to some age. We wouldn't want to innocently decide our child's sexuality, we wish to allow him make his choices independently. Creating an ideal family environment for our son is paramount but he is aware he has two mummies at the moment.

Worries about discrimination only come about when we expose the children to the truth at a very early stage. Most times, children are hit so hard by such news and they end up looking for a shoulder to lean on. In so doing, they innocently end up opening up to the society through a teacher or peer end up exposing

themselves and the family to the homophobic society that they live in.

For every occurrence, we need to be proactive and find solutions as soon as possible. We are not worried about these for now, for instance we have agreed that when he comes of age we will tell him about his donor father's origin. May be this will help him fit in the community easily.



BM: What has been most challenging for you as an LGBTI identifying parent?

RA: Parenting in all aspects of life is a challenge that is faced by both heterosexual and same sex marriages. One of the biggest challenges we face is the lack of legal recognition as a same sex relationship. Things like being on the same Medicare card, small things that people take for granted. If they could legally recognize our marriage and child within the relationship, things would be much simpler.

The society we live in is homophobic. People find difference a challenge and this bars us from openly coming out. However, involvement with the community is active.

There are situations where one partner walks into the same sex affair with a child from a previous heterosexual marriage. In such a situation one stands to lose the child to the heterosexual parent simply because the society doesn't

Parenting in all aspects of life is a challenge that is faced by both heterosexual and same sex marriages.

support same sex marriages. Losing a child has emotional effects on a parent and the child too. Children born through donor insemination start wondering at some age who their fathers are. In our case, we chose not to get the details of the donor. However, we know the donor's Nationality.

Adolescence/puberty also has so many effects on children; they start wondering how their peers perceive their same sex families. Their peers from heterosexual families will usually make the situation tricky. As an LGBTI parent, you start worrying about your child's welfare while interacting with the outside community.

On a personal level, same sex families face prejudice i.e. the lack of support groups, services and legislation. The non-biological parents always feel they don't get enough recognition as being "the other parent." Bullying, teasing and singling out of children by their teachers and or peers. There are those traditional aspects in our African culture that worry me. First, a boy child belongs to his paternal lineage; we worry about what will happen the day he comes of age and requests to know his father. Secondly, a son will need a place he calls home or where he can start off his family from. Plans have to be made to soothe the future such that he won't be left wandering about and feeling abandoned.

Segregation of duties in same sex marriages can also be a challenge if not handled properly from the onset of the relationship. This might look a trivial matter but you know the human mind betrays us at times for instance in a lesbian relationship both feel they are women and should get to do chores and contribute to the

welfare of the family. Therefore, it is best if each one gets to know their stand in the relationship hence responsibilities.

As LGBTI identifying parents we are faced with conflict of exercising conjugal rights freely once the children are involved. This is worse in a state like ours where we are not recognized in that caution has to be exercised in all we do around children and all other members of the society we relate with. At times you are forced to live in separate rooms just for the sake of the children. This kills intimacy between partners since they have to sacrifice lots to make sure they raise their children as upright citizens and so as not to influence their sexuality choices.

BM: What would your advice to a parent with an LGBTI identifying child be?

RA: My advice might not be so transparent and or objective but I would say as parents we should not influence the choices our children make most especially concerning sexual orientation. Acceptance is usually a hard pill to swallow but exercising patience with a child so as to understand and know them better would be a better way for them.

Treat your children equally regardless of sexuality. An LGBTI identifying child is not possessed, mental and or running kuku as most people would love to believe; they are born not made. Help your child to explore his/her sexuality.

We should learn to live with all members of the society. I ask people not to segregate against the minority groups but rather live in harmony with them. We are just human like any other human being. Judge not for you won't be judged. ■

EVENTS

BEACH IDAHOT



CAMPING



EVENTS

IDAHOT FREEDOM AND ROAM UGANDA



SEXUAL MINORITIES UGANDA(SMUG) GALA



THERE IS HOPE

Naliyo esubi
Mugume eeehhh aaahhh
Naliwo esubi
We are moving slow coz of society
Everyone is pinning the wrong man
Little do they know we are a family
And nothing can stop us right now

Dear brothers and sisters,
Discrimination should stop
Let's come together
Coz in the end we will win

CHORUS
There is hope x2
Don't despair coz there is hope
We shall overcome x2
All the hate towards us
If we come together and fight for our rights
We shall overcome coz there is hope

My dear comrades
Never give up the fight
Coz there is hope in what you do
Fight and fight for what belongs to you
Aluta Continua
They will realize we are here to stay
And never going back
We are going stronger with every moment

CHORUS
RAP: Listen to me now coz you know I gat hope
See what I do, I'm never gon stop
I let nobody pull me with the rope
If you try to put me down I say NO
I believe in myself i don't let myself own
Let me be me, that's who I am
I stand strong the journey is too long
I keep moving coz I gat hope

CHORUS
There is hope
Mugume x 12

-Brayo Brians and TUK band

The KUCHU Anthem

LGBTI x4
What are we x12
Yeah
We are the Children of the Rainbow Flag
We are KUCHUS around and Proud
No one is gonna stop us
We are here to stay
We are the Kuchus of the Rainbow Flag

We are moving Forward
Moving On and On
Never Never going back x2

We keep fighting
Fight Fighting On and on
Never never gonna stop x2
LGBTI x4

We are freedom fighters
Fighting for the rights
The rights of the children
The children of the rainbow flag

What are we fighting for
We are fighting for our rights x2
Tell me what are we fighting for
Fighting for our rights
Fighting for our rights to be

LGBTI
We are here to stay x3
And we're never going anywhere
The children of the rainbow flag
We are proud to be x3

LGBTI 4
We are the Children of the Rainbow Flag
We are KUCHUS around and Proud
No one is gonna stop us
We are here to stay
We are the Kuchus of the Rainbow Flag

We are moving forward
Moving On and On
Never Never going back x2
We keep fighting
Fight Fighting On and on
Never never gonna stop x2
LGBTI x4
What are we x12

-Brayo Brians and TUK band



KUCHU TIMES

CONTACTS:

WEBSITE: kuchutimes.com

Email: info@kuchutimes.com

editor@kuchutimes.com

Phone: +256 (0) 778830168

TWITTER: [@kuchutimes](https://twitter.com/kuchutimes)

FACEBOOK: [Kuchu Tiimes](https://www.facebook.com/KuchuTiimes)

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