

EDITORS NOTE

Mbalamusizza nnyo mwenna mu biti byammwe,
I greet you all distinguished readers.

By Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera



This publication is to give you an insight into the lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) persons of Ugandan society. The stories you are about to read are real life stories of your parents, brothers, sisters, teachers, clergymen, and friends.

Public support for LGBTI persons in Uganda is rooted in fear, harmful myths, and lack of education about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people. Policymakers and the media have shown an eagerness to harness and exploit this bias and thirst for retaliation born out of ignorance in order to build populist political support. This comes at a great cost: affecting constitutionalism, human dignity, media freedom, community security and public health. Targeted, informed and principled analysis from Ugandan experts, in the field of LGBTI is lacking among elite and public figures and grassroots constituencies across the country.

The print media is a very important tool for communication not only because people read it every day but also because it's a tool for education. Ugandan newspapers reach individuals across all socioeconomic divisions and are deeply influential. You cannot undo the impact that the media can create; be it positive or negative.

Since 1999, the media has been routinely exposing people perceived to be LGBTI, publicly humiliating and degrading them, and sometimes even publishing person details about their homes and workplaces. We have patiently hoped that one day this will change so that the media can start reporting objectively. But because of the media bias, many members of the LGBTI community have been subjected to forceful evictions by landlords, illegal detentions and arbitrary arrests by the police, extortion and blackmail, sexual abuse, physical and mental abuse by members of

society, unemployment, and expulsions from schools to mention a few. It is because of the hate that has been instigated by the media that we have decided to undo the myths, lies and hate that have been portrayed throughout the years by publishing our own news source (BOMBASTIC MAGAZINE).

With this magazine we hope that people will get a chance to live the life we live by getting a feeling of what it means to be discriminated against by your own people.

It is our hope that the stories and information shared in this magazine will open up the eyes of many who think LGBTI persons are recruited for money. As a community under attack it is our duty to inform, raise and create awareness about issues concerning and affecting us.

Using peaceful means to educate, inform and advocate for our inalienable rights enshrined in the constitution of Uganda, we shall continue to use the judicial system to bring about justice, respect and dignity for all members of our community. We shall continue to build a strong community through trainings in Human Rights, Leadership, Health, Advocacy and Entrepreneurship, among others. In the past, our freedom of assembly and associations to empower ourselves were trampled upon by government officials who abused their power but that will not stop us from fighting for our rights regardless.

It is our desire that this publication will enlighten many Ugandans and people around the world who have been indoctrinated into believing that there is only one kind of sexual orientation and gender identity by religious persons and politicians who have conservative values. We also hope that state-sanctioned homophobia via the laws that are being proposed will come to an end, and that instead we will be included in the national health policy. Driving LGBTI persons underground only continues to impede the fight against HIV/AIDS in Uganda and worldwide.

BOMBASTIC will speak for the many voiceless LGBTI Ugandans, and the many who are brave enough to share their personal stories.

I want to thank all those brave Ugandans who have gone out countrywide to distribute the magazine, the many who have worked tirelessly to see the success of this project and to our friends and allies around the world who have contributed in many different ways to make this a success.

I wish you great reading and please call and email for any comments.

*FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.
Aluta Continua.*

PROUD UGANDAN GAY MAN

I don't intend to offend anyone with due respect of all the comments shared, I will say this as a proud Ugandan Gay Man. I am a Mugisu and took the rituals of Imbalu initiation (circumcision) into manhood. We are all people of intelligence, learned and educated. I have read all that has been shared. I was raised in a Christian family, Catholic and Protestant. I am a father of a 16 year old daughter and a care taker of 8 orphans from my 2 late brothers and I am also God fearing. I am a Teacher and Travel Consultant by profession and today a successful businessman in Kampala.

I struggled with accepting myself until the age of 20 when I totally gave up and listened to my heart. I prayed and asked God to change me. There is no price one can pay to stand being called names, being seen as an outcast, discriminated and isolated from society and it's the reason we come out and ask to be respected and accepted as any other Human being in society. One thing is we have to accept that sex is in the brain and how or where you put it or how you do it will lead you to results of your pleasure.

We talk of culture and religion; we talk of protecting the family. Yes, many questions have been asked adultery, fornication etc. Some religious fanatics have lost it so much that they are now misguiding their flock. Even the Bible says 'I have given you wisdom and Knowledge.' Why spend a lot of time building hate and promoting hatred among Ugandans? Do we want genocide in Uganda? Is this the Uganda you want where murders will be supported and ordered by the state? For goodness 'sake, 50 years since independence we still cling on to laws that were introduced by the colonialists. While they have moved on to amend and develop we are still struggling to bring laws that will kill or call for life imprisonment, laws of how people should engage sexually, dress, what to read and not ? What has this got to do with lack of drugs in hospitals, corruption? Poor service delivery and Poor infrastructure!

The same donors you are condemning have supported our budget for many years. Many roads, schools and hospitals have been funded by the western community. A lot of donor funds have been embezzled. All that the western countries are calling for is respect of human rights. Today the state wants to control how people should dress. But again let's not act out of ignorance. Some of us hustle to travel to these so



called ill-mannered countries and when we get there, we do not want to return home. Or perhaps should we go back to wearing bark clothes all in the name of culture? Why can't we focus on development? Homosexuals have contributed to the development of this country and are hardworking. The members of parliament and government can afford to send their children abroad to live there. When you point a finger at someone, be mindful of who the other fingers are pointing at. For once let's stop speaking falsely against homosexuals.

Lastly my sexual orientation hasn't in anyway affected the way I am raising my children. As homosexuals our sexual preferences may differ but our thinking is the same. How we love and live is no different from what the majority call normal or acceptable. We are all Ugandans and pay taxes, we are employers and employees. My advice is to put more emphasis on one's credibility and capacity to deliver instead of what they do in their bedrooms or who they are. What would you do supposing your son/daughter came out to you as gay? These are your children and it's difficult to understand why you are condemning them mercilessly. ■

HOMOSEXUALITY IS NOT A DISEASE THAT CAN BE SPREAD, HATE IS

By Angel

Edited by Miles Tanhira

I am the youngest in a family of three. As a child, I got everything I needed. My parents gave me what they could and went over and beyond what I required. So imagine how I could have still felt like something was missing from my life.

At 16, I realised I was a lesbian and my life finally made sense to me. It did not make sense to my family and I hid it from them for the longest time, until I just simply could not take it anymore. The blackmail was especially terrible: people feeling like they could use my secret against me to get their way. People who were very close to me. Being gay has taken me on a journey that has not been easy. From coming to accept myself to learning to understand that not everybody would be accepting of who I am. If I had a choice, I would never be a lesbian. The look the whole family gives you: no matter how good you do, you are forever the black wicked sheep of the family.

Coming to terms with the fact that maybe you will never be able to bond with your family like your heterosexual siblings do. I have noticed that my heterosexual friends when they get married, even the ones that were considered sluts in school, they suddenly become their family's pride. They are no longer condemned. Yet I will forever be all because I love other women.

I have been suicidal, and I have tried to take my own life a couple of times. I battle depression everyday and life is not easy. But now I stand and say, I do not care. I am a child of God and he knew me from before I came unto this earth. Surely, he did not design a life of suffering for me. So one day I will overcome all this stigma and hate.

By taking me out of society, you are doing a great injustice to the country as a whole. Living abroad has not been easy at all, missing my friends and family is the worst, getting accustomed to a new life has not

been easy but at the end of the day I can sleep easy at night and not worry for my safety.

That is all I wish for my fellow LGBTQ community and denying a safe environment goes against every basic human right and need. Nobody recruited me to be gay, if anything I went in search of the community to find like-minded people that could understand me. It's not easy being a teenager and realising that you are going through changes and yet have no one to talk to and ask questions and simply understand and not judge you. I would never wish for my son or daughter to go through anything like this alone and for so many years.

And why should it matter? It is amazing to me to see my friends now with their families here (Iceland) being celebrated for their achievements and not condemned for their sexuality. It is such a breath of fresh air, one that's taken me a while to get used to. At events, I am still waiting for that uncle that will start pointing fingers at his niece for being gay and that has never happened, not even once in all the 2 years I have lived here. And before anyone says 'She must have picked up this habit from abroad,' I want you to know that is not true. I have always known that I do not see boys in the same light as other girls, from an early age I never quite saw the fuss of why girls were attracted to boy. I do not hate boys, I have not been harmed by them in any way that made me change my feelings towards them. I would like to get those stereotypical questions out the way and point out to you that I do know and believe 100% that I was born gay. I grew up with a loving father and brothers, I am just simply me. And who am I? A proud African lesbian born and raised in Uganda who looks forward to having a family of my own someday with my Mrs Right!

My hope is that by sharing my story with whoever is reading this, you will realise that I am the same as you - the only difference being who I love. Who I love will not affect you, rub off on your children or yourself for that matter as homosexuality is not a disease that can be spread. Let's stop the hate and the violence towards our own people. Love, Peace and Unity should be the code we live by. All the hate and injustices must stop. ■

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

By DBS Human Rights Activist in Uganda

As a Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) person, I have faced persecution from family, friends, at work, school, and in the community. Actually, growing up in a country with a majority population opposed to LGBT persons has presented a lot of challenges; life has not been so easy. There are times when I reflect on my life as an activist and as Diane and it is all very complex; there are times when I feel the battering and harassment of LGBT persons in Uganda is not coming to an end, but then I pick the courage to move on.

Apart from LGBT spaces in Uganda, which are also limited, I have not had a good open chance in life to freely express my feelings or thoughts.

Even in my own family; especially my mother who did not accept my being a lesbian. When she realised I was a lesbian, we always argued. I tried to prove to her that I still remain the same daughter; but she tries to prove to me that I am wrong and not fit to be her daughter anymore. She argues that this is not how she envisioned my life. She wants me to get married or get pregnant. No one would wish for their own mother to subject them to corrective rape. I would not wish my child (lesbian or not) to go through the trauma I have experienced in my life. Waiting in vain for love from my family, my own mother subjecting me to 'corrective rape.'

Today my mother at least talks to me after realising I remain a lesbian and I will not give in to any of her pressure. We have come a long way. From her consulting pastors to pray for me so the demon could set me free. At one point my mom handed me over to police so they could imprison me as punishment for my being lesbian. The insults, the pain, drive my activism. I believe no LGBT person deserves such treatment especially from because of their sexual orientation. To my siblings I still remain in the closet, although they suspect and question, even attempting to have my partner and me arrested alleging that we are taking drugs.

Even my school experience was a rough one. When I joined the first secondary school in Jinja Kamuli District in Uganda, some students were spying on me because of my enthusiasm in the sports, which were branded boy's sports. Most of the times I was isolat-



Credit: EaVisualartists

ed and had no friends. Consequently, rumors passed around school that I was a lesbian and in senior five I was expelled from school without explanation, just a verbal recommendation that I could not be allowed in the school with my lesbian tendencies.

Life became so hard for me, especially when my parents and family members tried to get me into another school. Finally my mom secured a day school for me, deciding that I needed to be closer to home so I could be monitored and encouraged to reform from my lesbianism.

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When I finished my A levels, I managed to secure a job with a courier company. Life at work was hard, my male supervisor was making sexual advances at me, and when I refused, colleagues began rumors that I was a lesbian. As if that was not enough, during that period an article in the Red Pepper tabloid which labeled me as a lesbian, and gave details of the courier company I was working

for. A week later I was given a termination letter from the company. The bosses said this was part of a company restructuring process. After five years of working for this company I was laid off just like that. At this point I got so disturbed after figuring out that life was only going to get tougher living in a homophobic environment after having been outed in the media, I had no option but to face reality and fight against discrimination of LGBT persons. To those who are suffering silently in different parts of the world. I say; ALUTA CONTINUA To activism. ■

I HAVE HAD IT

We as young Ugandan's need to step up and boot out these old politician's so we can deal with real issues affecting our country.

No porn. No miniskirts. No gays...
...but they continue to secretly sign our oil wealth away.

No porn. No miniskirts. No gays...
...but thousands graduate from University and have no jobs.

No porn. No miniskirts. No gays...
...but they continue to divert funds meant for ARV's and malaria treatment programs.

No porn. No miniskirts. No gays...
... but countless names are taken off the pension scheme.
People go to withdraw their money they have saved all their lives and find nothing on their accounts.

No porn. No miniskirts. No gays...
...for Christ's sake, what are these politicians doing debating anal sex, women's legs and pornography?

I don't care if we live in a country with gays, short skirts and porn...so long as our oil wealth is safe, senior citizens have some pension and children don't continue to die from malaria because the money was diverted.

I've had it.

We as young Ugandan's need to step up and boot out these old politicians from politics so we can deal with the real issues this country faces.

– Charlie Denzel

MY STORY AND EXPERIENCE AS A LESBIAN.

By Mirian (25 Years)

Am called Miriam and am 25 years of age, Am a lesbian. I realized that I am lesbian when I was in my O level because I used to have feelings for my fellow girls.

When I finished my A level during my vacation, my parents realized or got to know that am a lesbian because they used to hear rumors from people and they used to see my partner visiting me. When they asked me I denied so what they did, my brother got me his friend to be my boyfriend I did not like it but I accepted and started to pretend just to take away what they heard about me because I still wanted my family and to study.

Time came when my so called boyfriend wanted sex and I refused, I played him around all the time when he asked for it or when he brought up that topic until he got tired and he went and told my brother about it. My brother went and told my other family members and this is when I started experiencing hell on earth.

When my results came back I had performed well but they refused to pay my tuition at the university so I had to tell them the truth about my feelings for the same sex.

What they did they organized a family meeting to device ways of making me straight and I come out of that horrible behavior. The family decided to organize a collective rape and I did not know about it, they wanted it to look as if it was done by other people. They did not want me to know that it's them who had organized it. My brother was the ring leader and my mother did not know about this because she was always on my side.

I was raped and the bad thing I got pregnant but I thank God that I was not infected with HIV. They got to know that I was pregnant and they knew that I will abort so what they did my brother took me to my uncles place because if I stayed home my mother would help me abort because she was not in support of it. My uncle made sure I do not leave home until I gave birth.

I gave birth to twins and so they thought they had cured me. My partner was there for me and she supported me very much during this period until I gave birth. She would come at my uncles place to visit me and bring for me something's to use so after giving birth, one day my brother found her at my uncles place she had come to visit me, my brother told them that I was still a lesbian she told them that me and my girlfriend still see each other.

They confronted me and asked me whether am still lesbian and I told them point blank that I will never have feelings for men and I will never love men. I told them I have someone I love and she loves me too.

They decided to dis own me and they threw me out of the house and told me to leave with my kids. They said that am a bad omen to the family.

I don't know the father of my babies but I love them very much though one of them is asthmatic and this scares me a lot, I did not manage to finish my education and yet I passed my exams well.

NEVER GIVE UP IN A STRUGGLE

By Moses K.

Discrimination, victimisation, harassment, abuses was all i was getting from every gay person especially in Bwaise area years back when I had graduated from Makerere University, i was working at one of the petrol station as station manager were I interacted with many people and having great time working in very fragile environment.

I used to party at very popular club where i met many gay boys who narrated all sorts of problems they go through.

With a social work academic background, I started counselling them. I could not do much as I needed resources. I eventually lost my job and later joined a friend of mine - a prominent lawyer in Kampala. We started joint businesses and later on I met one of the

respected gay activist that had got information about me and my help of gay boys in areas of Bwaise. He introduced me to many colleagues of his and later started my formal volunteering at an organisation.

During the course of my activism I was called by my mother that one of my friends went and told her how I am gay and I travel out to teach homosexuality in Europe.

I love my mother because she told him that if (name withheld) is your friend why didn't you come with him. What he does is none of my business. I know my son he is a social worker, farmer and committed to God.

I have been able to reach out to over two hundred men who have sex with other men (MSM) with HIV/AIDS/STD prevention, treatment, care and support services in Kampala the capital of Uganda and many other areas of our country.

I have been able to reach over 90 friendly health-care providers so that referral linkages to health services among sexual minorities are increased. With involvement of peer educators, I have established bi-weekly Safe Space gatherings for youth as a platform for HIV prevention through sex educational talks, experience sharing and health consumables (lubricants, condoms and pieces of mosquito nets have been given out).

Collaborations with other partners in laying out legal aid referral systems, issued press releases, petitions, media and community engagements to understand laws and bills that fuel discrimination and stigma of LGBTI persons."

This reminds me of when my late father (rest in peace) used to narrate how the born again (balokole) used to go underground or in the closet during the Idd Amin regime. And as I speak now everywhere you find them shouting or and now agitating for killing of innocent people, forgetting that at one time they were the minorities

I know one day gay people will get their liberty and be part of a society in which all people are treated with dignity.

I bet in the upcoming elections in 2016 many politicians will be trapped by the same gay bill provisions if they don't think twice. ■



Photo Credit: James Farmer

By Aaron (Not real Names)
From Kawempe

Am biologically a girl of 23 from Kawempe my name is Aaron (not real name) and a Ugandan by Nationality. This document is about my life experience which goes to all people out there who discriminate the homosexuality community not only in my country but in the world at large.

Since 10 I wore my brother's clothes and if anyone would give me a dress or shirts then I would be naked the whole day. so in 2006 at 15yrs I developed some changes like internal feelings to my fellow girls though I could not say my heart out. i won't say I have never dated a boy before I've ever but believe me I didn't have a reason as to why I did it. One might ask again why because I did not feel anything at all.

One day I boxed a boyfriend to my best girlfriend out of the blue because I felt jealous when I saw them together .so in 2008 I realized that my hormones of being a girl were low but boys hormones were high which I accepted till today and today I have a reason to tell as to why I call my self gay.

Being an orphan was not easy for me and after 2008 while in my senior four vacations I had to look for tuition to upgrade on my studies so I joined a group of company that produced maize flour. now this is what I called hell on earth I and other boys we had

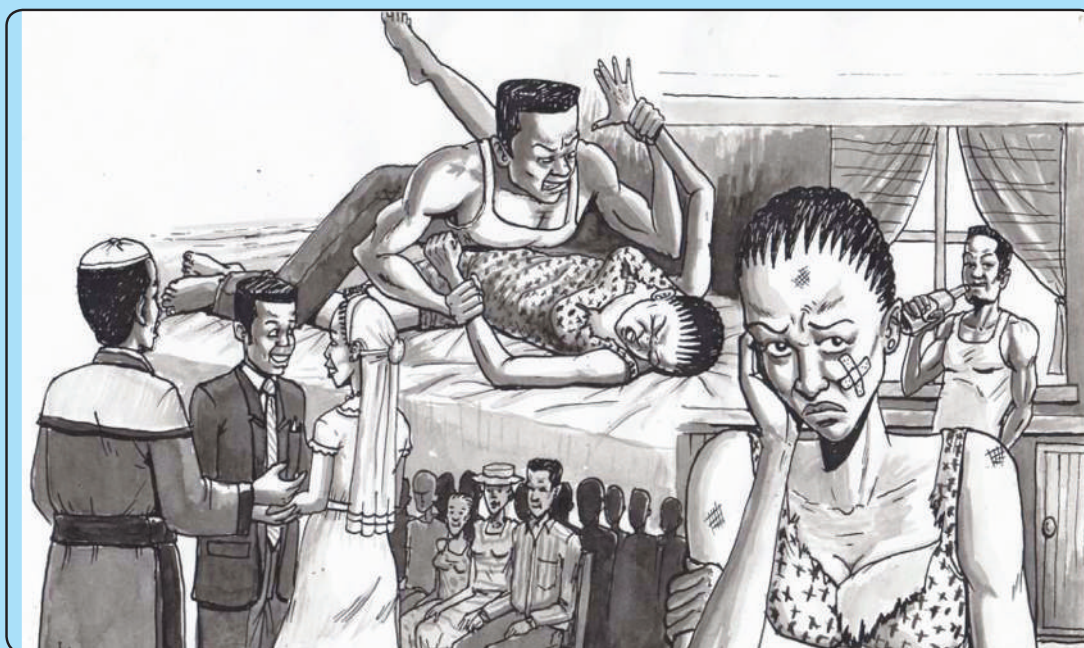
to carry a 100kgs bag of maize flour but I divide it to 50kgs which was still heavy but without minding about my life, I carried it in shifts take 50 then come back for the ramming 50 to make 100kgs for a sum of 200,000 per month.

At my place of work I picked a boy of 3years whose father used to drink from morning to don and the mother divorced when he was a baby so I took him to police asking for permission to take him as my responsibility. I did not have much but I could but I used the little I earned and took him to a cheap school for a year till my step mother through him out of the house and that marked the end of him because I had no home to keep him in.

I quit the job after developing chest pain so I couldn't carry heavy loads anymore but what mattered I got the tuition in that way I finished studies and now a professional journalist. One can ask why is she telling all this? I want you people to understand that being gay doesn't mean you're meaningless.

To everybody who is reading this it's not that we are coping homosexual manners from the whites but we were created this way you just find your self born with boy's jeans /girl's jeans or attracted to the same sex. Tell me if a woman gives birth to such a child should they be killed, is that so?

Am still in the Closet. I have never come out to my family members.





COMING OUT

BIBLE SAYS: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF. ARE YOU?

By K. Meiko

I was born and raised in Uganda, I am in my twenties and I am gay. Contrary to religious, cultural and traditional beliefs, I do not believe that being gay is a taboo. I did not just wake up one morning and decided: voila! I am gay.

Ever since I can remember, I have been sexually attracted to men. Trust me, I acknowledge that women are attractive, with their hips, lips, hair, the way they walk, the way they talk, the way they dance. Women are attractive. I just am not attracted to women.

I tried hanging out with heterosexual guys, and when they are having conversation about women being hot, sexy and all that, I concur but I realised I was not sexually attracted to women.

That feeling that gets men sexually attracted to women and wanting to be with them, I just don't have it. I cannot be defensive, I cannot give excuses, I am not being slow nor am I being a rebel or an evil being.

I am not a bad person, I don't cause anyone pain deliberately. I have many friends, and I am not a thief, I am not a killer. I don't believe I am the devil or possessed with evil.

I find men attractive and I am drawn to them physically, emotionally, spiritually and sexually. I have nothing against people who are attracted to women in the same manner. I would never kill, force, hate or hurt those who do not feel the same way I feel.

For many to sit down discuss, plan and pass laws against the way I feel and imprison me, is utterly ridiculous. Why should someone else's private life offend you and drive you to such anger and hatred?

For all we know the gay or lesbian person could be your brother, sister, child, mother or father. As Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people we live in fear, we cannot even talk to our parents. Who then is supposed to give us advice on relationships, guide and protects us?

It is really hard living with a secret and in constant fear of family or society finding out. It can be very paralyzing both physically and mentally.

Leaders should promote peace and unity because LGBT people have a lot to offer to society too. I am Ugandan. Ugandan blood runs in my veins. What ever happened to the most important bible teaching: love your neighbour as you love yourself. ■

I LOST MY REFEREEING AND COACHING JOBS FOR BEING TRANSGENDER

By: Jay Muk

I have been violated many times but let me talk about the recent one. It was too much.

I am a basketball player and coach. In April of 2010 we went for a residential schools tournament but this time I went not as a player but as a referee.

I was chosen as chairman in charge. When we arrived there were many schools and among them a certain school where a close friend of mine (who calls me sister) goes.

The games stated well and every day after games, during dinner, I would meet this girl and we would chat then later I would escort her to where she was staying, where she shared a room with her teammates.

We didn't know that there were people who decided to follow us and that these were female teachers who had accompanied the students. The third day of the tournament after supper, the female teachers came to the room where the girls were sleeping and they found me there.

I was sitting on the girl's bed helping her with her holiday work and she was standing close by.

The next day she was sent home

I called her parents and I told them the whole story. I was summoned the following day by the organizers, paid off and told to return to Kampala. The girl was later expelled from school. We reported the case to police. I was stopped from refereeing and lost my coaching job

My name is Joan. Close friends call me Jay. I guess the former doesn't sound like me. I was born 26 years ago to Langi parents up in the north of Uganda in a small town called Lira. I have 2 handsome brothers, Joe and Joshua and unfortunately I am the only girl.

I am my dad's prized daughter. Though I have step brothers and sisters. I also think I am the most dis-

appointing of all. The reason being that I am a lesbian. Despite my sexuality, I have done everything possible to please him and other family members and to make them understand me because being lesbian doesn't make me any less human. I know I had a lot of potential to do many things.

My sexuality should not make me an outcast in the community. I live amongst my family members and relatives. I believe that if they accept me as one of their own, others would do the same.

My elder brother wants nothing to do with me because I am a lesbian. He even tried to convince my father to disown me adding that I am a disgrace. Sometimes I wonder what my mother would say if I told her I was a lesbian. I strongly believe she would be mad but would eventually understand and accept me. But just like they always say, good people don't live long. She died over 15 years ago when I was 12yrs old.

You may ask when I knew I was a lesbian. Okay it all started when I was in boarding school and we played many games. But I didn't enjoy games the same way girls used to enjoy them, though I enjoyed watching them. I don't know whether I was watching or admiring. I was more drawn to football and other such rough games.

I never participated and didn't seem interested at all, and I kept on asking myself why?

Later everything fell into place; they were beautiful girls and whenever they walked around the compound, in the showers, changing room and most especially when we went swimming, I was drawn to them. There was this particular girl who was four classes ahead of me. She was prefect and really liked helping those of us who were in lower classes and always came to our rooms to check on us. I think my room was her favorite for reasons best known to her. And that was me. She became very close. I came to logger heads with the teachers who wanted a piece of my girl. It lasted for four years before we painfully broke up due to irreconcilable differences.

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It did take me quite some time to recover from the break up. I remember during my campus days I took a break from serious dating though there were occasional pick and plays which also came with a lot of drama with gals and with guys because of their girlfriends.

I have also had lots of stigma and harassment from men. Imagine a situation where wherever I went, heads would turn and fingers point at me. At my place, when you finish school you are supposed to get married regardless of whether you have a job or not. So three years past and some relatives started asking questions why I wasn't introducing them to someone. But by then I was in my third relationship with a woman and we were living together as friends. As fate would have it, my Dad was operated upon and it was on me to take care of him in hospital so my girlfriend, under the pretext of being a friend, was very helpful and supportive. So much so that she earned the love and trust of my father and an invitation to our home in Lira.

We did arrange and went home with her. I remember we reached Lira at 11:30pm and there was a heavy down pour but my father braved the rain to pick us up. Three days later we started hearing rumors that I had

brought my wife home. Some people even came to my father. We were then kicked out of home, fuelled by my step sister who even called into the radio and our names were mentioned on air. Since the whole town found out, wherever I go someone felt threatened when I was in the company of their women and even warned me off as if I were some kind of alien.

It used to hurt me a lot but not anymore.

I remember one time a guy pounced on me from the bar and beat me up. It left me puzzled but later some guy walked in and said I was lesbian that was why I was beaten to teach me a lesson and dared me to report them.

Just like I mentioned earlier, it's not a pleasant path because within the relationship itself there are lots of fights. For instance in 2008 when my girlfriend stabbed me in the back with a knife and pierced my right lung. I spent a month getting treatment and trying to protect her from her from going to jail. My family got to know, though I had told then I was stabbed by a thief.

There were very angry with me and my elder brothers suggested to my father that I be left to die. Thanks to my father who wouldn't let me die, I am still safe. ■

MY LIFE STORY AS A LESBIAN IN UGANDA

By Ray Rachel

I remember after school in 2002, I was determined to find a job. I searched and in the end the one I found was good for me because it was my profession. Unfortunately some of my workmates didn't like me due to the fact that they were suspecting me to be Lesbian, so they talked to my boss about it but he didn't care because all he cared about was my good work. They planned to have me fired and they started blackmailing me until I decided to leave on my own in 2004.

I went back to Makerere University to further my studies. I had friends I used to hang out with and most of them were girls so some boys used to mock as they were interested in me. When I told them I was not interested in guys, they decided to take it out on me and whenever I got to the computer lab, I was left with no space to sit. My grades deteriorated and my lecturer was mad because I was brilliant.

I tried to explain to the lecturer but all in vain so I left class and was constantly bullied at campus because many students already knew that I was a lesbian. With time the lecturer called me and talked to me. I proved to him that I was a lesbian and not ready to date gays. He was bitter but said he was sorry.

As a football player, there was a time I was denied the opportunity to join a certain football club because of being lesbian. They said we (my friends and I) would recruit the rest of the team members into homosexuality.

In 2009 I decided to have a child but after conceiving, I had misunderstandings with the father of my daughter at 6 months over my sexuality. He told me to never see him for anything. I had huge bills at the hospital and with the rejection I had to face I felt all alone in the world. I have lost many contacts and jobs because of being a lesbian due to my dress code. It's not an easy life since I have a child to feed. ■

WHAT MY LIFE IS LIKE AS A LESBIAN LIVING IN UGANDA

By Tina

Forget the Geneva Conventions and all those important instruments. Forget the constitution of Uganda and its almost nonexistent 'rights for all'. Heck, forget the legal implications of the AHB or the political and economic ties Museveni must have on this Bill; The Anti Homosexuality Bill.

This has been my life, for a while now as I've known it and I will attempt to spill some raw emotions here before some Muzungu journalist comes to ask me that dreaded question I hate so much: "so tell me about the Anti Homosexuality Bill" they inquire with a sigh of relief that lets u know they couldn't wait to get to this part.

The thing is I have not had a single good night sleep since 20th/12/2014 when the dreaded anti homosexuality Bill was passed. It has been terrible, fitful nights but last night was particularly nightmarish. I slept off on the couch only to awake at 12am covered in sweat and terrified. I dreamt that the police and a gang of boda boda cyclists came to our office (an LGBTI organization) and they raped us (my colleagues and i) as the police men (and women) cheered them on. I went to bed, curled up in a corner and wept quietly that my son may not hear.

There has been a series of arrests of suspected homosexuals. Some have been bundled up from the streets on to police trucks whereas some have been snatched from their homes as they lay around in boxer shorts watching movies. The suspects have been paraded in front of the media and subjected to body searches to ascertain if they have had anal sex re-

cently...Please!!! The Bill has not been signed into law by the president but such incidences are already happening. This kind of charade instills hatred in the general public; so much so that it has become risky for some of us to move around freely or even go out to work. The trick is to buy groceries and just lay low in our homes. Kasha always says that's exactly what the anti gay pushers want, which has come to pass. Their motive is to have us panic and go underground. But what happens when a person is backed up against the wall??? We shall see more suicides, blackmail, and breakups in same sex relationships. Need I say more?



My best friend (the most bold, masculine woman I know) and I were moving on the streets yesterday when a boda rider asked if he could take us to the office (mentioning the area where our office is located). It would take the slightest provocation for them to actually gang up and lynch us let alone rape us. It's just not safe anymore.

After over 3years of battling for custody of my son at several clan meetings and children's courts, I finally have him. I should be celebrating but I am terrified. It is hard enough raising a son as a single mother; single handedly, but fear engulfs me constantly as I question if having him at this time is safe. I may be arrested anytime. I am afraid that he will be bullied at school... "oh there goes the kid with the lesbian mother."

I have to double check the window and door locks every night just in case the police decide to stop by. I nearly slipped and fell in the bathroom as I shoved some of my organization material in the ceiling. I want to spend nights in the closet (literally) only I can't fit. So first the president said he wouldn't sign the Bill un-

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til he had done thorough investigations into it. Then he sent it to the NRM caucus where it was agreed that doctors be consulted to prove that homosexuality is an abnormality which would guide due recommendations to the Bill. Then a letter manifested in which the president blasted the speaker for allowing the bill to pass with no quorum in the house. In the said letter, he 'mercifully' stated that homosexuality should be treated as an abnormality and that gays deserve a lesser sentence than death and life in prison. Funny bit is he said lesbians are sexually starved women who have failed to get men to marry them.

I would hate to get into the politics of things but would love to tell Museveni that I, A LESBIAN, was married to a man who on average could give very good sex but fortunately (key word Fortunately) men just don't do it for me. So as a sexually liberated woman, I would at times leave my husband in our bed and go out to meet other women. Believe me it happens. Maybe Uganda needs to rethink the whole HIV strategy along those lines.

Uganda is not yet the worst place to be gay but I can say we are headed there; full throttle. When times are as hard such as this, I go and lie on my mum's lap and talk and feel better but my mum is one of the people who believe gay people should be shot... to death. My friends, just like me have their burdens to bear.

What can we do now????

We wait!!!

It feels like being on death row not knowing when you are going to be killed. We may be out of cages but we are prisoners of our fear, of this uncertainty, of the threats, of the derogatory remarks wherever we pass, of having to constantly look over our shoulders just to be sure. It is sickening!!!

No Museveni...We are not crazy but this situation is surely driving us crazy.

Yours,
Tina

A Lesbian mother ■

WHAT NEXT?

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has advised that the issue of homosexuality should be resolved in a manner that serves the best interests of the country, taking into account its foreign trade ties.

Museveni urged Uganda not to open up wars with trade partners recklessly over the issue of homosexuality, saying this would be irresponsible. Museveni made the comments in the current issue of Andrew Mwenda's Independent Magazine this week in a paper titled: The way forward on homosexuality. Should we involve Uganda in endless wars with our trade partners on account of this?

The article was initially a presentation to the NRM parliamentary caucus after the Constitutional Court nullified the Anti-Homosexuality Act.

In the article, Museveni gives his candid thoughts on the controversial subject but concludes with the question: What is the way forward?

"The issue now, therefore, is not what other governments are telling us. It is about us deciding what is best for our country in the realm of foreign trade, which is such an important stimulus for growth and transformation that it has no equal," he stated.

Parliament passed the Anti-gay Bill in December 2013 and the President assented to it in February 2014 amidst protest from the country's Western development partners.

The law, Uganda's first comprehensive criminal one on offenses related to homosexuality, prescribed various sentences such as jail for a number of homosexual acts.

A few months after the anti-gay law came into force, the Constitutional Court declared it unconstitutional on the grounds that Parliament lacked quorum at the time the Bill was passed.

The nullification both embarrassed and angered MPs, who quickly signed a petition for the retable of the Bill. Subsequently, the NRM caucus set up a committee headed by Vice-President Edward SseKandi to review the provisions in the Bill that caused concern to the international community and human rights activists before it is retable in the Parliament.

The committee, which includes Deputy Attorney General Frederick Ruhindi, Maj. Gen. Jim Muhwezi and Ndorwa West MP David Bahati, is yet to present its report. ■

INTERVIEW: POSITIVE LIVING



Stosh Jovan Mugisha is a 30 year old transgender man with exceptional boldness and sincerity. Having been positive with HIV virus for the last 5 years, she is arguably the first Ugandan lesbian rights activist to openly come out about her status. Kasha Jacqueline talked to her.

How and when did you discover that you were sexuality attracted to women?

It's now 22 years since I discovered myself as a woman who is sexually attracted to women and I have lived 10 years of disclosure about my sexual orientation. When I first discovered my sexual preference I thought I was just acting childish. I did not know what those feeling meant until I had a twist of feelings with my cousin sister.

Is your family aware of your sexual attraction to fellow women?

They have accepted me the way I am but I think that is because they don't really know that I am a lesbian. But once in a while I hear people murmuring about me sleeping with women. Some of my sisters and brothers know that I am a lesbian. But I have kept it secret from my foster father and elder siblings. This has helped me bond with them and get the same privileges as my other siblings do.

What is your opinion on violence and hate crimes against lesbian women?

I am a victim of verbal assault because of the way I dress and that makes people believe that I am a lesbian. We still have a lot of work to do in the LGBT community. Our people have to be sensitized and educated about their rights as sexual minorities.

At what point in time did you discover that you were HIV positive and what was your reaction?

It was in 1996 while I was doing my diploma in marketing. At first I never took it seriously because I didn't have any signs of HIV positive people that I had seen before. The doctor who had taken the tests kept giving me vague explanations about my status. He said I was a carrier and not a victim. When I asked him what that meant he said it

meant that I would be able to live with the virus without infecting anyone even if I had unprotected sex. I guess he just feared to tell me the truth because now I know that he misinformed me.

Would you be bold enough to disclose your HIV status to a woman you are attracted to?

Since I came to terms with my status and started receiving professional counselling I have always been open about my status with every woman that I have been in a sexual relationship with. I am also trying to share my life story with several gay people around me. I hope they can use my experience to live healthier lives.

With that kind of openness, is it easy for you to find a partner?

It is easy for me to find friends but not partners. After disclosing my HIV status to a woman it becomes hard for her to be in a relationship with me. Sometimes they give excuses but at the end of the day I realise that what they actually mean is that they cannot go on with me. It has not been easy for me to get a partner who understands that there can be trust in playing safe sex.

What in your view, do you think lesbian women should know about HIV/AIDS?

First of all lesbian women must stop thinking that AIDS is not for them. [That they cannot catch it] They need to know that as long as you have unprotected sex with an infected man or woman the HIV virus does not discriminate. Lesbian organisations should also take the initiative to sensitise our community about safe sex.

Are you receiving any treatment for your health condition?

Yes I am on Anti Retroviral Treatment (ART). It took me time to learn that accepting your HIV positive status is part of the treatment until I had a long chat with a female doctor at the hospital where I was getting my treatment from. I was uncomfortable about the counselling they were offering there because all they talked about were condoms! She understood my situation but said it was impossible for the clinic to start accepting homosexuals openly. She instead sat me down and educated me on how to practice safe sex with my girlfriend.

What law reforms would you want the government of Uganda to implement in favour of HIV positive gay and lesbian people?

If only our government woke up and realised that homosexuals are also rightful citizens of this country who deserve the same treatment, recognition and access to health care as heterosexuals. The struggle against AIDS cannot be successful when a certain group of people are left out of the national AIDS policy.

Anything else you would like our readers to know?

We don't have to be afraid of living our lives the way we want or be discouraged by the trials of life. You can choose to live a happy life. ■

MARRIED TO A STRANGER



I have Julia Roberts' movie *Sleeping with the Enemy*, reminds me of so many things about my love life. It is a bitter-sweet relationship story about a middle-aged woman who blindly falls in love with a seemingly loving man. He is violent and a perfectionist, the type who wants to find his bath towel in the same position as he left it or else she gets a beating if it's found in a different position. She is a dear house wife who believes in love but no matter how much she tries to please her husband everything seems to fall to a dead end. He is a different man from the one she fell in love with.

I spent the closing months of 2007 struggling with a relationship I couldn't really place. In the beginning it was all bliss, caught up by the heat of the moment to make a rebound on love after another short-lived relationship. Naturally, adventuring is not my piece of cake but when I got into this relationship, I wanted every bit of it to last, with disregard to what everyone said about us.

LESSON 1:

TAKE HEED FROM PEOPLE CLOSE TO YOU . THEY COULD BE HELPING YOU AVOID A TRAP.

For all the months I spent in this 'four and a quarter months' relationship, I never knew who I was. I literally lost myself and became someone else. I have a life-sized ego that sometimes terrifies people around me and yet I am not necessarily paramount to them per se. But for the first time in my love life, I found myself trapped in a

I literally lost myself and became someone else.

My relationship turned sour and violent. It happened the first time and I convinced myself that I was to blame.

relationship that imprisoned the real me. Deafening myself to the emotions of life I found myself sacrificing my personal interests. I love going to the movies with someone I love. I feel most comfortable going out to quiet and serene places where everything seems almost perfect but this relationship made me stop most of my interests. I still find it hard to believe that in a period of four months, it's not until last week that I went out to the cinema. And even if I had no complaints with how much love I was receiving from the relationship, the interests of my partner were totally different to mine and many times we hated being out together. There was no communication in this relationship and we were never the best of friends. We were strangers in love.

LESSON 2:

WHEN YOU CAN 'T FIND COMMON GROUND ON WHERE TO HANG OUT OR WHAT TO DO, YOU ARE SIMPLY LOVERS WHO HAVE NOTHING IN COMMON.

My relationship turned sour and violent. It happened the first time and I convinced myself that I was to blame. And then it happened again. But what happens when your partner falls out with your relatives? Mine was a case of a money deal between my partner and my brother. The deal went bad after my brother's expectations were not being met. It left me caught between a rock and a hard place, I had to choose between losing a brother or a partner. There is no way I was going to let down a brother. Retrieving my brother's cell phone from my partner got me a thorough beating, a day in a police cell, and shs.150.000 on charges of 'theft'. I am a lucky girl in so many ways but there is always the unexpected. I am wiser now.

LESSON 3:

WHEN YOU SEE WARNING SIGNS, ITS TIME TO MOVE ON. ■

THE MIND OF A UGANDAN GAY

By K. Meiko

It's definitely an abomination in Africa and particularly Ugandan culture for one to be gay. Never the less, It has always been told, that famous king of Buganda, Kabaka Mwanga, the main man behind the prestigious Uganda Martyrs of the Faith I proudly confess was gay...whether naturally or by choice, a gay in African communities is regarded as a paid mercenary, an ill mannered hooligan who stripes naked for money, uplifts a Whiteman's culture against his! Homosexuality in Africa freshens the memories of pre independence, colonialism and is evidence that the mzungu came to kill Africans. It is therefore an alarm, loud enough to call for help, not just from neighbors but even the passersby. No wonder the anti homosexuality act was passed by noble, gallant parliamentarians without quorum, I only feel pity, for my tax they plunder, the tax that pays them to discuss my life imprisonment for my being who I feel i am.

As a country, where women emancipation has just got to its dawn, the women in and with power have acquired manly behaviors and attitudes in order to command respect whereas the mighty men, as so called, still think and behave as their grannies "submissiveness is to woman". Mixed with the white man's education, a highly educated woman finds it hard to find a man to marry, "who is there to cough big behind such a successful mind, indeed no one?" I cannot forget to remember, the element of sex for pleasure, unlike the sex for co creation as it used to be. In Africa, it used to be very prestigious for a man to brag about the twenties of the children he has and the tens of the wives he owns! Apparently it's not just family planning but family killing; I easily find it convenient to have a same sex relationship where the "risks" of child birth are to their minimal levels. All these coupled together; define the art of living in the 21st century. As a product of a century where not knowing how to read or write are the forms of ignorance but rather failure to learn, relearn and un-

learn is the issue about ignorance, then I subscribe to the school of thought that the gay community deserves the right to live. Let me remind you that, as the ink on my transcript dried out, society expected me to have a partner for marriage, not a bad idea though, but who shall that be, having sentenced myself to death by accepting to homosexuality! I am actually risking way too much,

since the nullified anti homosexuality act is actually being retabled. But then, why am I gay? Is it by gender expression, tom boy they call it, hmmm.... Nasty, isn't it? Then if all or only the tom boys are gay, who are their partners? Believe me or not, it's not about gender expression. Having gone through the pain of a lady so girly enough, that likes my attention but doesn't want to admit they are sexually attracted to me, it is a good story to the listeners, ooh, it was a

nose powdering situation, most people are actually not sure of their orientation "you love my attention, then it's much more than the friendship, if we were of different "sex", then, it would be a typical definition of attraction" but you call it evil... in this case, who and what is evil? My attention you are addicted to or I who completes you with you happiness? Fine, let's bring God in this, who said heterosexuals are saints? The angels who believe I deserve to die! I have not murdered, not any one, not terrorized any nation, not anywhere, I am not a family planning pill, not at all, I am just different from you, whether naturally or by choice, I am God's chosen one... I am gay. I hear, they call me "a paid homo", how I wish!! A cold coca cola is my addiction, had I been paid to be who I am for 24 years now, I would have owned a coca cola depot by my cave.

I respect you for who you are, so respect me for who I am.

Think of killing me after making your Will

Think of judging me on your way to heaven

Think of hating me only if you know the meaning of love

...who said heterosexuals are saints? The angels who believe I deserve to die! I have not murdered, not any one, not terrorized any nation, not anywhere...

It hurts knowing that well consenting adults want to live together happily but someone wants to be nosy enough to know what happens in their closed and wall sealed bed room. Someone wants to be mindful of what you wear as if they do your shopping. For a country like mine, which I am proud to belong to by the way, does not take her responsibility to feed her malnourished children, put in place standard health care and education services but wants to care so much about the length of the cloth I wear and the person I share a bed with. They blame it on culture; one wonders why every language in Africa has a translation version of the word homosexuality! Of course this couples up with so many other unending challenges, it is evident people are getting evicted from houses by landlords for being suspected to be gay, children are punished both at school and at home for coming to terms with who they are, whereas most others fail to come out and prefer to live under the shell due to fear of stigma. The hardest part is finding a partner; if most of us fear to come out! The Ugandan gay still has a lot to figure out. Though seeking asylum may be the best option, we must live and fight to be understood for we are who we are naturally and not by choice.

As a young and youthful Ugandan, born to a staunch catholic family, I know it's quite obvious to consider homosexuality as evil! Biblically; the Sodom and Gomorrah issue, the aspect of child bearing, besides God created woman for man, it's therefore factual that same sex relationships and marriages are intolerable in church and communities that are church based. Unfortunately living in the 21st century brings along the element of diversity that leaves every one with a right to live peacefully and besides, being a heterosexual doesn't make you a saint nor an angel. I surveyed some of the outstanding situations that will inevitably make a Ugandan woman a lesbian;

1. Mind set change among the females; generally, irrespective of whether straight, bent or gay (English has run short of words); females have been engulfed in the emancipation era. Gone are the times of "a woman's office is the kitchen". Women are in power. Such women have tended to have manly features in order to command the respect they deserve. It's pretty tricky for such a woman to get along with the woman chores at home, which are not limited to submissiveness. The emancipation era on the contrally, has left the men behind, just like their coats, they still think the same;" women, children and elderly share the same level of vulnerability". It's such an annoying situation " that a woman CEO with her outstandingly informed and earth moving opinions goes home to a" king" who expects attention much more than his kingdom requires, the big baby of the home"! In such a scenario, women are forced to opt out of marriage, since they can take a good care of their damn expensive lives, along



with their one or two children. Funny, it may sound, but it is simpler for such a woman to engage in a same sex relationship where her work dynamics, love interests and freedom are understood. With such a trend, it easy to predict that successful women will opt for stress free relationships, given that the men are taking forever to adjust to living with emancipated women.

2. Education and schooling; at 24 years of age, I have just completed my under graduate, annoyingly my people expect with mouth pouring happiness a man I call I my own, a man, I will dearly give in my hand for marriage. On other side, I am too much of a serious academician, barely one year out of school; I have already enrolled for my masters! Here the question sets in, when am I supposed to get married? PhD waits immediately after my masters!! Kindly help me figure out the space I have to squeeze and fix in a damn demanding man. Just as it may sound obvious, as the calls of nature ring their bells, a simple; less tedious, romantic and happy relationship, same sex relationship suits the description of my menu.

3. Pregnancy and children bearing; having put it right that I don't have space to squeeze a big baby of a man in my tight academic schedule, goosh! Figure out how babies can set in this! The only most reliable relationship, where the worries of unwanted pregnancies don't add up to my school stress, is the same sex relationship. I am not convincing you to subscribe to my school of thought but this is the 21st century we are living in. women are on the move, I barely see time for them to settle down for costly heterosexual relationships.

4. Born naturally gay; science needs to cushion my back here, look, some individuals among us have unique gender expressions that justify their sexual orientation. This guy in my high school was extremely more woman than I am, the attention he gave to his body and looks passed the test of being feminine. I always felt his testosterone and estrogen levels needed to be measured. Politely, there are a number of things

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I wouldn't do naturally, for I feel they are too woman for me. It is undisputable, one can be born gay.

5. Culture; Culture, is not part of us, neither are we part of culture but we are the culture and culture is us. As my mother grew, she knew, pregnancy before marriage was evil. The mighty lake Bunyonyi of Kabale Uganda has an island which served the murderous purpose of killing girls who got pregnant before marriage. Now days, this is history. The Sebei of Uganda did female circumcision, however modern Uganda has struck away this practice. In some cultures babies born with disability were killed. Today the disabled have rights. I think the culture we are applauding, we have already eroded it. Females wearing trousers, men with plaited hair first became an alarm; Biblically and socially but now it's trendy. Watch the space; slowly we shall get a violence free society for homosexuals. This may earn me a curse from my ancestors but I already put it right, I am the culture, living now, means, I live by my own culture.

6. Religion and faith; God forgive me if I do blasphemy, but look, what do we believe in? The weaknesses of the religions we belong to, are quite overpowering and homosexuality is just too minor and negligible. Uniting against homosexuality is uncalled for, besides we individually have our weaknesses, "before we see the speck in another's eye, have we removed ours from our own eyes, have we forgotten, we need not to pass judgment?" Does being a heterosexual make you a saint? It's important that we let church be rehabilitation centers not abusing centers. I prefer to keep a gay catholic until God sees me eye to eye and explains to me why I am gay, not any of my fellow sinners. When

we learn to mind our business in God's matters, we shall start to generate gay saints.

7. Marriage; wooh, this is the epitome of the journey. Apparently most Ugandan marriages are terribly sinking in the sand. The rocks have been completely mined. My closest uncle confessed to me "Jesus should have taken a hand in marriage; he would have changed his opinion about for better or worse with a woman who is not my relative" The man and woman dynamics are too tricky that the pastors, the mighty men of God, are failing the test too. Heterosexual marriages are troublesome, we just need to give something new a try and that's none other than the homosexual marriages. I already said it; these marriages suit every one's menu of happiness in marriage and life. I can't wait to say I do to her.

8. Population control methods; hey, has anyone been to Uganda, the pearl of Africa? Children on the streets, anywhere and everywhere! Family planning is not just a necessity but a basic need! Abortions are happening everywhere simply because someone out there, just had an unwanted pregnancy. Pills, injections, condoms, name it, are the cheapest commodities, someone wants to have fun but not a child. There is a simpler version of having the fun restricted to just fun and excludes children. I hope you thought of it already. When need arises, children adoption will set in. The fun filled population control method has no side effect, can be used by both adults and adolescents and is hormone tolerant.

I rest my case, rest in peace David Kato. I strongly believe, someone out there thinks the same; you need not to be many but two or one. As time passes by, we shall reach the finishing line, despite how long we take to get there. Whether through activism, wars, awareness or silence, it shall stand the test of time, the gay must live. ■



MY STORY AS BOTH A GAY MAN AND A GAY ACTIVIST IN UGANDA

LOSS OF FAMILY LOVE FOR BEING A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

By Wazabanga Mukiga

I begin with a wonderful bow to the Great Almighty for access to such a platform to share my life experience as an LGBTI person with the outside world since such stories kept to ourselves keep mounting more stigma thus wearing us out. Had it not been with the help, mentoring, support of some enthusiastic activists, I would not have gained all this confidence to face the world. With their nurturing spirit, I have been transformed into a zealous human rights defender.

I am the 9th born from a polygamous family of 14 children hailing from the hills of Kigezi (Kabale) but born and raised in Mbarara district where our family migrated to in the 1970s. I was born on the 2nd of October 1984 from a strong Roman Catholic Church background. It has been a great journey of self-discovery, from my childhood, to puberty and up to this time. In three decades of existences, it has been a journey of self-questioning and self-hate, with many questions to myself: 'why me?', 'why these feelings?', 'am I alone?' and many other troubling ones with hard undiscoverable answers that have made me to think that I am not a real true Mukiga. A real Mukiga man is perceived to be such a strong African and has to marry a wife for his societal reputation, so my thoughts were all not in line with my tribe's definition of a true man.

Since the early 90's right from primary school, I enjoyed the company of fellow male peers while playing some games like tapo (hide and seek) and playing soccer. While at some point I would see these same peers chase after girls which I never enjoyed. In a nutshell I discovered the real me in senior one, even though as a kid I was still caught up in a dilemma of self-discovery. Secondary school changed my life a lot. I started interacting with boys from Kampala schools who were exposed to many other things and this connected me to things like internet research about homosexuality. Later I found a light when I joined social media platforms - wow this was the thing I had missed the most for many years! I got

to know a lot about myself, I got to know that I am not alone, I got to meet some top activists. I really saw and discovered life beyond my inner closeted tormenting thoughts.

I cannot forget this queer I fancied so much, he was from Masaka and had come to spend time at his aunt's place in Mbarara. He became close to our family and really liked my brother very much. I really liked his boldness, he was so brave to express who he was. There were many questions around my family members who always went around asking why he behaves like a woman. But he was brave, always telling them he liked it that way. However much I was dying inside with the love for fellow males, I feared getting close to him since this would expose me to my conservative family. Years went by and I really treasured memories of when he spent time at our home in Mbarara.

Life as a gay activist transformed me totally into a person who fears nothing especially coming out to be a mouthpiece for those who cannot come out. After the death of David Kato, I was forced to come out of the closet since the story touched me very much. I really cannot talk much about the late (David Kato) since I never got a chance to work closely with him, though I always heard my fellow LGBTI friends tell me about his great works defending rights of sexual minorities in Uganda. It was my dream to meet and work with him some day. Indeed this great blow forced me to come out since I saw that once we keep quiet, hate crime cases would be on the rise and that would be a threat to Ugandan sexual minorities.

I have read many articles and watched many documentaries about the Ugandan LGBTI movement building where I usually come across stories about David, most especially the "Call Me Kuchu" feature film. This documentary indeed makes me weep for my country and for the loss of a great personality and I know he is in the right place since he did his work to embrace God's love for all. May his soul rest in eternal peace. Indeed my love for the LGBTI

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movement grows day by day despite the loss of love from all corners I turn. My family members, most of them have created a gap between us due to my work for LGBTI activism. Many straight friends have left me, but this has not stolen away my love for the Ugandan Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender community. I have been called all sorts of bad and irritating names by my friends but all in all I found a new family that gives me hope for a better tomorrow, hope for a free Uganda for all its citizens despite their sexual orientation and gender identity. I could not enjoy my closeted life when I saw many people on TV being exposed in papers for being homosexuals.

When I watched activists in masks holding campaigns and people being arrested for being gay, my determination was to see a transformed society where every individual is respected despite his or her sexual orientation and gender identity. I have been able to learn many things ever since I became an LGBTI activist: composure to address a large congregation, approaching high profile offices while in advocacy, HIV/AIDS campaigning - all have made me stronger than I ever thought I would be. I never imagined I would be a strong enough person to stand for what is considered an abomination by the majority of the Ugandan population.

I wonder why many religious fundamentalists with the likes of pastor Ssempe and Male come out and say that gays and lesbians are using money to recruit children into homosexuality. That is a total fallacy since no one would wish to speak out for something that is strongly opposed by the majority. Fellow Ugandans should know that gays and lesbians are born not made, I have never seen an academy myself that trains Ugandans to be gay. Let these pastors preach the right gospel, the gospel that Jesus emphasized: "LOVE". Jesus never preached hate, he embraced all mankind and I think this fundamentalism distorts the true gospel. Let the lies stop. Before I was born, I believe homosexuality existed and I will die and leave it on earth, so when they tell me that me and my friends adopted a western culture, then I don't really believe that since history has it that some of the African cultures in pre-colonial times used to practice homosexuality. History has examples of some prominent African chiefs who were homosexuals. Homosexuality is as old as mankind but I believe homophobia is the imported phenomenon with the likes of religious anti-gay crusaders like Scott Lively.

I am happy for having worked with great personalities of the community in various initiatives such as the health campaigns, advocacy campaigns, social events, public sensitization campaigns and many

more. I have gained a lot of confidence; I have made and interacted with many friends. I will always remember the first gay Pride (Beach Pride Uganda 2012) of which I was part of the 7 member organizing committee. It was history in the making and I saw a dream come true, one conceived by the brave Kasha in a small hotel room on her travels to Europe. This event brought many activists and members from all parts of Uganda and other parts of the world to come and witness a history in the making, thus enhancing unity. The first one was mega and again we did it in 2013 and it was still just as fabulous.

I cannot end this without talking about the draconian anti-gay bill tabled by my fellow Mukiga who irritates me a lot and that is David Bahati. This bill has done a lot to bring lives of many LGBTI people in Uganda to a fragile situation since people have lived in fear for their lives forcing some to flee the country. Tabled in Ugandan parliament in 2009, the bill has been a threat to the lives of sexual minorities in Uganda since many Ugandan illiterate city suburbs dwellers don't know how to interpret the laws and they have attacked some transgender people in the community even before the bill became a law. It has affected accessibility of services for the sexual minorities especially within the health sector where many doctors and nurses ask many questions. In most cases when they are confused about whether one is male or female, sometimes they call their fellow workers to come and look at a homosexual. Such humiliations have hindered health service delivery for all due to fear of public exposure and safety. It's such a disgrace that our legislators are introducing laws to cage innocent gays and lesbians. I guess the country is diverting from the main course, turning a blind eye to the issues that affect our country, to talk of corruption, rape, defilement, increased murder cases, robbery and much more. I don't see what crime two mature consenting adults commit in having sex, as long as it is consensual and right. I myself condemn pedophiles and rapists whether gay or straight.

On 20th December 2013, the parliament passed the anti gay bill which was awaiting assent from the President to become law. I cannot express the situation after the bill passed because it's so horrible. But we shall keep faith in God. Since the bill was passed, within a short period we have seen many members being arrested, many media exposures, many activists living in fear and so on. I conclude by saying, thank you to my mentors, especially Kasha and may the Lord continue blessing you. Thank you to my close friends Didi and Biggie - keep the love up, thank you all and I will always love all my fellow community members.

"ALLUTA CONTINUA"

Yours

Wazabanga Mukiga ■

OPINION:

VK'S DIARY: I WOULD RATHER HAVE FRIENDS THAN LOVERS

By VK

I am almost embarrassed to admit that I have had a crush on nearly all my straight girlfriends. I once had a crush on my best friend while at high school. She called it insanity and tried to counsel me but my feelings for her persisted. Luckily, eight years later, we are still best friends. The other day I picked up a crush on a pretty girlfriend of mine who writes for one of the local newspapers. And there is a dazzling musician friend of mine who once got me head over heels. Am I a spoilt brat? I met this musician in 2005 while chasing for one of those press interviews. I didn't have prior intentions of being passionate about her but I gradually did and before I knew it we were buddies. I was involved in almost everything to do with her career. I attended her concerts, compiled her press articles, and sometimes did her public relations work. My colleagues in the newsroom had named me her official P.R.O until I was banned from writing articles about her. One of my editors thought the musician was paying me to write about her. There were allegations that we were lovers but people were just making up stupid stories. I mean, the woman is as straight as a rod. You probably know who she is, but that's not the point.

After reviewing the benefits of having friends I have dropped my infatuation with the musician. I find friends more useful than lovers. Friends are less demanding and they are not so full of crap. For instance, when I told my musician friend that I am a lesbian, she said it's ok to be so if it makes me happy. Lovers are selfish. They want to have you all to themselves and keep you caged as if they own you. The last time I saw my partner, she browsed my phone message inbox without my permission. Now, those are lovers you should get rid of.

LESBIAN WOMEN VS STRAIGHT WOMEN

What's your flavour? Participants of the 5-day strategic planning meeting which took place between January 21 and 25 at FARUG offices initiated a controversial topic about their individual dating experiences and

why some of them prefer dating straight women to lesbian women.

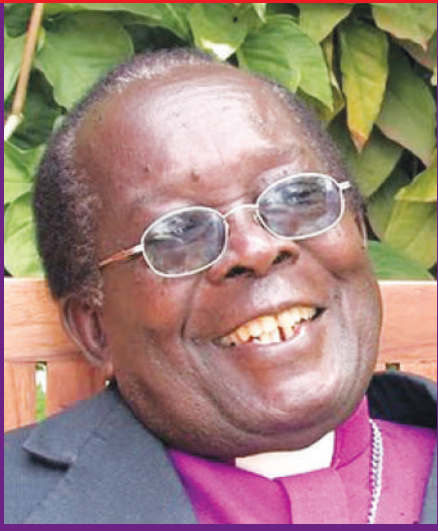
One of the participants argued that she prefers straight women to lesbian women because it is fun watching them learn and get used to the new lesbian lifestyle. She argued that straight women are more loving and committed to a relationship since they are first timers in lesbian relationships. She also argued that it is most likely to happen that every lesbian woman you meet has been in a relationship with someone you know or even your friend. Another participant shared the same opinion. She said that she has dated straight women for most of her love life and found it fun.

While we may all disagree with changing women from being heterosexual to becoming lesbians, we need to draw a clear cut line between lesbian sex and lesbianism. Several experiences indicate that some heterosexual women have sex with lesbian women for fun. Other women are simply bisexual and like living life from both ends. Psychologists believe that sex between two women is more captivating. They reason is that unlike sex between man and woman, when two women are in a relationship they are bound to have more things in common. They easily connect and understand each other and that brings the magic to lesbian relationships.

'Recruiting' people into homosexuality is absolutely unacceptable. If we want the straight people to stop telling us to 'change' then we should also let them be. It is one thing helping someone out of the closet and it's another making them change their sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is not changeable and this is why some straight women, after being in lesbian relationships for some time, eventually fall out and return to their old heterosexual selves.

Sex is fun and having it with someone who is doing it for the first time can be very interesting. But if we must prefer straight women to lesbian women, let us remember that there is nothing like changing a straight woman into a lesbian and the reverse is true. ■

RELIGION



THE RT. REVD DISANI CHRISTOPHER SENYONJO

I was born on December 8, 1932. I am married to Mary Senyonjo and we expect to celebrate our Golden Jubilee Marriage Anniversary on December 28, 2013. I graduated with a Master of Divinity in 1966 and in 1967 I also graduated with a Masters of Sacred Theology from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Later in 1983 I was awarded a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. In the same year, I was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Yale Divinity School-New Haven Connecticut. My education and calling has been instrumental to widen my understanding that Human sexuality is both heterosexual and LGBTQ.

I was Diocesan Bishop of West Buganda Diocese for 24 years. After my retirement in 1998 later I became an active Advocate and Counsellor of the LGBTQ people since 2001AD. I am the Founder /Executive Director of St. Paul's Reconciliation and Equality Centre, Kampala (SPREC). The Centre unreservedly advocates for Human rights of all People.

His role in advancing Human rights for all and the inclusion of LGBT persons

In 2001, his life changed forever when he met several gay and lesbian young people who had been rejected by their churches. "They had lost jobs and been expelled from school. Some of them were on the verge of committing suicide." Senyonjo gave them a radical message for their time and place: "If you are gay or lesbian, God made you and loves you that way, and you should accept yourselves."

Once word of his compassionate advice reached his successors in the Anglican hierarchy in Uganda, there was a firestorm. Senyonjo was asked to "condemn" the

people under his care "and convert them to something else." Senyonjo said he would not. "I cannot see God where there is no love," he said, "I would rather go with the truth."

In reaction, he was expelled from the church he had served for 34 years. More significantly for his own survival, the church stripped him of his pension. "The cost has been great," Senyonjo said of his post-retirement ministry. "It is by the grace of God that I have been able to survive. By the strength of God I have been able to stand."

He insists "The missionaries have been trying to preach the gospel, but the way they have been preaching, one wonders whether it is really good news," Senyonjo said. "Gospel means good news, but when you tell people that if you don't change being what you are, you are going to destroy the country, like Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, you cause a lot of hatred." Senyonjo said churches around the world should speak out and tell followers that being gay is not a sin.

"Many people think being LGBTQ is in itself a sin, whereas you cannot say being heterosexual is a sin. It's the way you live your life," he said. "If God has created you like that, you have to use what God has given you in the way you think will give glory to you and to your God."

"The revelation is still going on!"

Asked about the view of revelation and the Bible, Bishop Senyonjo told an audience at Pacific School of Religion, the day before the San Francisco event, "What is the real Word of God? The Logos? Christ is the Logos. And even Jesus said, 'There are many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them.' So the revelation is still going on! A lot of discrimination against LGBT people is due to ignorance about human sexuality." Senyonjo encouraged seminaries around the world to begin to offer courses on human sexuality.

Asked what Americans could do to speak out about the bill being considered by the Ugandan legislature that could end the work he is doing, Senyonjo suggested contacting elected officials in the United States and asking them to express their disapproval of the bill to members of the Ugandan parliament. Mentioning President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton's condemnation of the bill, Senyonjo said, "The United

States is an important country. Some people in Uganda will say, 'Why are they interfering? We are an independent nation.' But deep down, they know if the United States is saying it to them it's important."

Senyonjo sees his extended ministry as working to decriminalize LGBT people around the world. "Along with heterosexuals, LGBT people are a human phenomenon. Human sexuality is a beautiful thing, if you understand it. The real problem is a lot of ignorance about human sexuality. God has created diversity, and we should embrace it as we embrace the rainbow, because the rainbow is beautiful."

Addition notes from his Interview with Richard.A.Lindsay for the RD Magazine during his trip to California.



"A person once asked me, in a provocative manner, if I approved of homosexuality," he told La Civiltà Cattolica. "I replied with another question: 'Tell me, when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?'"

"We must always consider the person," Francis continued. "In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy. When that happens, the Holy Spirit."

Canon Gideon Byamugisha, Founder, African Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV/AIDS.



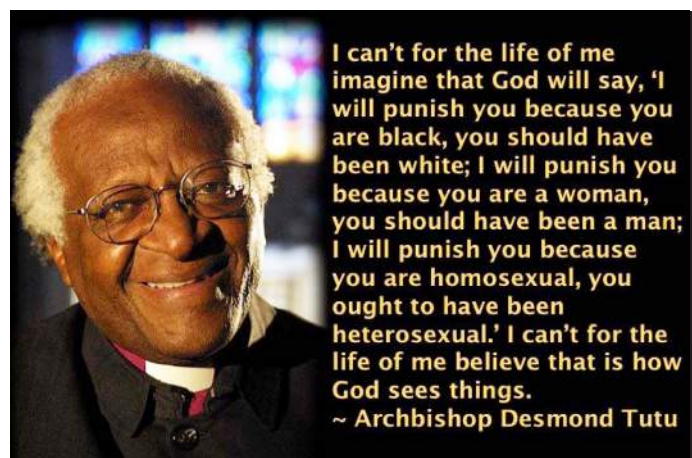
"What makes this proposed law truly distasteful is the amount and level of violence that is being proposed against suspected, rumoured and known individuals who are gay, and their families and community leaders in their places of worship, residence, education, work, business and entertainment."

"I believe that this bill [if passed into law] will be state-legislated genocide against a specific community of Ugandans, however few they may be," he said in December 2009 to The Gaurdian Newspaper.

Desmond Tutu: 'I'd Pick Hell Over an Anti-Gay Heaven.

"I would not worship a God who is homophobic, and that is how deep I feel about this," Tutu said at a United Nations' gay rights campaign function in Cape Town, South Africa. "I would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven. 'No,' I would say. 'Sorry. I mean, I would much rather go to the other place.'"

Tutu likened gay rights to the civil rights battle for blacks and apartheid.





By carlton pearson

I'm not preaching false doctrine, just exposing it while dealing with some 2000 years of entrenched and mostly erroneous indoctrination. I love Christ and so- called "Christian values" but those taught more by Christ than most Christians.

It both amazes and amuses me that so many Christians simply cannot believe that someone loves unconditionally in the way they like to proclaim Jesus taught and did. Most so-called "people of faith" actually have more fear than faith or more faith in their fears than in God. Or perhaps when I say God as it relates to fundamentalists, it is commensurate to fear of God or faith in their fear of his wrath, in effect is their worst fear. Their God, in order to keep them from sinning, something they presumably would prefer and habitually do, threatens to send them to an eternal customized torture chamber.

I once feared that god and his hell too, but I no longer do and I don't even believe in that manmade and presumably bible supported god or his hell. Even the heaven I believe in is not the one in the Christian bible. That one is too gaudy for my taste.

I never liked the streets of gold thing. Reminds me too much of my old TBN (Trinity Broadcasting Stage). BTW, my dear 84 year old mother keeps one of the 3 TVs in her bedroom tuned to TBN 24/7 Lol! . I actually prefer sands and beaches to walls of Jasper and topaz as the book of Revelation describes and prescribes. And why would heaven need walls anyway? Moreover, as I close, most gays I know are much more like Christ than many of the Christians I know. And most of my same gender loving (SGL) friends, both male and female, seem to be better (not bitter) and more responsible and loving Christians than most common fundamentalists. Same is true of many of the non-Christian SGL people.

I could say the same thing about several of my atheist, Jewish and Muslim friends as well. Again, this is not a criticism, but an observation and an important one that must not be ignored. Being in church or a church no more makes you Christ like than being in a garage makes you an automobile. What say ye?

I am not gay, but wouldn't apologize nor be ashamed if I were. I love my wife dearly and have been married to her for over 20 years. We have scores of married and single gay friends we love and respect. You don't have to be gay to love gay people and even hang out with them. You don't have to be a divorcee to love, support and respect them. Neither do you have to be Muslim or Jewish to have friends from those religious disciplines.

As Inclusionists, we teach that we don't have to go along to get along and that we can mind many of the same things without necessarily having the same mind about everything. Inclusionists believe Peace is possible, both individually and globally.

Jesus was accused of eating with "sinners" (Mark 2:15) and protecting prostitutes and adulteresses from the stones of the religious right of his day, called Pharisees. The word Pharisee translates "separatist" or "separated" in both Hebrew and Greek. I am an Inclusionist and proudly so.

Many of my self-righteous detractors accuse me of being gay because I am so outspokenly supportive of gays. Next to the Jewish community, the same gender loving (SGL) community were the first to reach out to me after hearing my Gospel of Inclusion. Do these same people, suspicious of my sexuality, also say I am atheist, a Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Scientologist because I hang with, love and accept them all and others, including those hypocritical so- called Christians who hate themselves and everyone else?

LETTER TO ANTI-GAY PASTOR

Dear Mr Stephen Langa,

With deepest respect and regard for the incredible work you do, thank you for the email below on mobilising for the passing of the Anti-Gay Bill.

I am a scholar of the Bible and a Born Again Christian too. I have prayed about the anti-gay bill and my convictions are quite different from the ones you shared with me for the reasons below:

We have seen very serious reversals in Governance and leadership in our country. The anti-gay bill is an admittance of this reversal in my view. I have noted with grave concern that the Church is very loudly silent on related legislative issues that are destroying our nation.

You do agree that Socialisation and upbringing determine how children are raised and by extension the choices they make.

Is upbringing something you decide by law? For instance, People do not have time to talk to their children any more. Our fathers leave home at 6:30 am and mothers return at 8pm in time to connect to their study groups for their master's degree. DSTV, house helps, music and bad news at 9 of leaders stealing money for medicine meant for hospitals have become our parents. Are u surprised that increasingly, homosexuality is a problem?

Should we then Push for laws on pro present parenting? Shall we say Mothers with children below 6 years should be banned from working past 12noon and Fathers the same because they should go home and raise their children to make good choices? Sounds ridiculous does it not? So does the AHB .

A bill cannot solve social problems and historically, it has never done so.

Further, the bill will never be consented to for the reasons you give. President Museveni knows that it is a, winning ticket to keep religious Leaders and fanatics of his regime like many of the pastors that received this email on his side.

He has come under attack from serious church leaders for condoning corruption and how it affects people. So to avert this he will pass the bill so that the church will sing his praises for passing the bill into law into the next elections.

If the AHB is passed, it is a tradeoff for the church to challenge any governance challenges ahead, including the likelihood of a highly militarised election in 2016 if trends are anything to go by. Can't we use our eyes to see these things? Think about it. Can the church really remain silent in the future even after the Catholic Church recently issued an apology for its silence during the Nazi holocaust of the Jews?

The parliament that has passed the bill is the same parliament that is debating the GMO bill. The same one that took bribes to exonerate corrupt ministers!! Like the bible asks, Can fresh and salt water flow from the same source?

God loves gay people too. It's a sad truth but he loves them too. Very deeply. Homosexuality may be a sinful act. But so is adultery, corruption, and alcoholism, fornication, lying and cheating. The alcoholic is as guilty as the lesbian. That is why, when you broke one commandment, you broke all 10. Sin is sin.

Last, Year Uganda came top on the list of the country that consumes the highest amount of alcohol in the world.

Today, at 500 ugx you cannot buy a plate of food but you can buy a tot pack of gin. Even at 200 ugx you can buy a sachet of gin. Is a generation of drunkenness heterosexual fathers really going to have solid families? But also, can the same leadership that permits such realities really be interested in enabling strong, solid families?

Is a country that is starving its citizens and having an unemployment rate at 78% really justified in pre occupying itself with gay bills?

Are we not being too simplistic and taking the easy way out by pushing for Laws to deal with social crises? Think about it. When shall we start taking the power of Christ in us to start dealing with the real issues! When will the Church start having honest, intellectually sound, edifying discussions?

Paul was a philosopher for God's sake! God chose a Philosopher and scholar of the law to write over 5 of the most powerful books in the bible. And it is this Paul who condemns the same laws he used to kill to protect!! Are we too blind to see the sense in this? Why are we so obsessed with laws!! LAWS are not GIVEN to HELP PEOPLE! The AHB will destroy the same families you are claiming to protect!!!

Suddenly sisters can't cry on each other's shoulders because they will be accused of being lesbians. Suddenly brothers can't hug one another because they will be seen to be gay. Isn't this too huge a price to pay?



If we have the bill assented to (and by the way Uganda is known for having the best laws and policies in the world)..Can we guarantee that families will be restored yet the conditions that enable destruction of families remain? Apart from ramming and throwing God into people's faces like the Martin ssempas of this world do, presenting arguments full of sentimentalism and completely void of reason, wisdom and understanding ...embarrassing the legacy of intellectual men of God (David, Paul, Daniel, Deborah, Solomon, Joseph, JESUS the Christ) who the Bible records were full of wisdom and understanding (and may God forgive us for this misrepresentation of who He is to the world) what will this bill actually achieve that is useful for this country now in tatters? The crisis facing families and this Nation is bigger....much bigger than the AHB and the sooner we wake up, the better. Uganda is in a Social and Political crisis.

Rather than dismiss other views. From pastor Male, Ugandans or NGOs, or the international community. I propose that you prayerfully, courageously and with wisdom and understanding engage with them. you don't have to agree...but at least UNDERSTAND and thereafter I challenge you to present sober, well thought through, biblically correct, logically sound and convincing arguments for this bill for the sake of our Nation. Let's reason together.

And before I am accused of being gay and supporting homosexuality as is the tendency with those who do not agree with your views.. Let me put my position very clearly. I love people because God loves me. I love justice.

I will not condone any law that seeks to condemn people to death or its equivalent because of a view they hold. It is the same spirit that caused Kabaka Mwanga to kill the Uganda martyrs-they simply believed different. And today you and I ascribe to the same faith they were killed for.

The love of Christ compels me. I personally do not think it is ok to be gay. I do not think fornication is ok. But I seek to understand in context and respect the choices of even those I do not agree with.

It doesn't make gay people bats or dogs or the awful names church leaders are legitimising or giving to people who God loves very deeply and cares about because they are gay!! The Church must love people above all else. Not laws, not titles, people. People. People. People.

The Church must fight for a world in which people are loved and celebrated regardless of whom or what they are. That's what Jesus died for. For all men to be accepted and included regardless. For dignity

May God continue to fill you with more wisdom and understanding to restore families. And our great, beloved Nation through your ministry.

Thank you once again for the email, please keep them coming and Happy 014!

Your sister in the faith
Helena

CONFESSIONS OF A NAIVE GAY CLERIC

“I FED AND SCHOOLED BAHATI”

By The Rev. Canon Albert Ogle

I watched the video of the passage of Uganda’s now infamous Anti-Homosexuality Bill and particularly of its author, David Bahati, bouncing on his seat and slapping his hands in glee when it passed.

Poor David, in that very public moment, reverted to being a 7-year-old in school once again! When he found out his little bill had the votes it needed to pass, it was as if the chamber of the parliament (which appeared remarkably sparse of fellow members that day) became a scene from a school playground where the children danced with glee.

The Prime Minister left in disgust because he realized that this Christmas present, promised a year ago to the Ugandan people from the very ambitious Speaker Rebecca Kadaga, was not in the best interests of all Ugandans.

I am not surprised the bill has finally passed and the American evangelical theocrats, who have been grooming and funding Bahati and his sidekick, pastor Martin Ssempe, for years now, have “called in their chips.”

With all this marriage-equality nonsense in the USA and Europe, they needed the year to end on a happy note, and Uganda was the last finger to fag-loving America and the decadent western Europe. First Russia, then India and the last but not least, Uganda needed to send a clear message to the U.S. State Department that human rights are certainly not about gay rights. Hilary Clinton’s bubble has been totally burst. U.S. LGBT foreign policy has just been gutted.

I just spent a week in Northern Ireland in close proximity to unsuccessful peace negotiations led by Dr. Richard Haass of the U.S. State Department, and Northern Ireland is a close second to failure by the U.S. State Department to get in touch with reality on the ground ... so this may be good news to LGBT people ... it’s not about us entirely! There is some-

thing definitely flawed about U.S. foreign policy right now and it’s not simply a gay issue.

Bahati’s pedigree: Turn to the source.

Long before they came on the scene and adopted Bahati as their poster boy, gay and straight Episcopalians in Orange County, California were writing checks to support Bishop William Rukirande, who was bishop of the region where AIDS orphan David Bahati grew up.

William was a very holy man and a good friend. We worked together in the early years of the AIDS epidemic and held a couple of reconciliation conferences following the Rwandan genocide when the remnants of the Anglican church who had not fled or been killed came to William’s diocese to learn how to rebuild. When it became unsafe for me to return to Uganda in the late 1990s because of the negative influence of American anti-gay rhetoric, William would come to my congregation in Orange County and preach about how he needed support for many of his AIDS orphans. I learned later that one of the orphans we supported was David Bahati.

So when he was really a 7-year-old (and not behaving like one in parliament last week), gays and lesbians from Orange County and our straight allies dressed him in his school uniform, put food on his table and bought books to educate him. Later influences would expose him to the evangelical movement in the USA and in Wales, where he attended university.

The notorious Washington-based “Family” adopted him and trained him in the art of public speaking and theocratic politics, allowing him to become one of the most internationally famous Ugandans, other than President Yoweri Museveni and Idi Amin. (If you don’t believe me, simply recite the names of three Ugandans you know).

David is a hard-working member of parliament and I have heard about all the good things he has done

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for this largely neglected southwestern region of Uganda. I am sure that losing both parents in the AIDS epidemic severely damaged him emotionally, but this was soon to be transformed by that scary Christian certainty that knows exactly what God wants: political connections and monetary reward for carrying out the unofficial (social engineering) policy of American evangelicals.

“God Loves Uganda” epitomizes this faithless certainty and this theocratic political agenda, and I just know the film is going to win the Oscar in March, simply because David got his bill passed. Hollywood and the international media will speak. So poor David was seduced by something much greater and much more strategic than the basic human emotional response from some of us living in Orange County, so long ago, that his stepfather got from us. It is ironic that a gay man helped David Bahati survive an early trauma of deprivation and loss, and yet David went on to become the author of such a frightening narrative, where parents and caregivers are now expected to turn on the very people who put bread on his table.

Selling your soul to the devil.

Dr. Faustus was a character dreamed up by Christopher Marlow, one of the 16th century’s most famous gay men, and he is characterized as smart, ambitious and eager to go beyond the normal limits of his profession. So he makes a pact with the devil for knowledge, power and longevity of life. In the end the devil claims him and he literally sells his soul to the devil for contemporary fame and popularity.

The David Bahati story is a modern day version of Faustus, and it is going to be interesting to see what Bahati now does with his ill-gotten gain. His political challenge to the Prime Minister and indeed to President Museveni himself will play itself out, and if American evangelical theocrats can have their three wishes, it would be having Bahati close to the succession to the throne of Uganda when Museveni finally meets his maker.

There is a special room in the afterlife for Ugandan leaders, and Museveni will most likely sit next to Idi Amin. We are not sure who killed more Ugandans, Congolese and East Africans, than Amin or Museveni, but God knows. There is a strange, un-

spoken folklore in Ugandan culture that the man who kills more is the most powerful and is someone to be feared and ... respected.

It is likely Museveni will either send the bill back to parliament, for economic and practical reasons, or play along with the Religious Right, knowing that the bill is totally unenforceable. The bill, if it is signed into law, will make Uganda one of the most infamous and consciously anti-human rights nations in the world. There are many other worse places, including North Korea and Iran, but the bill, thanks to Bahati, has put Uganda in the international “Hall of Shame.”

The cost of gay annihilation

There has not been a significant cost analysis by any Ugandan parliamentary committee on what it might mean to arrest, interrogate, try and imprison 2% to 5% of its population.

The Prime Minister walked out of parliament that day because he simply knew his fellow parliamentarians had not done the math. With 33 million Ugandans, a very low and rough estimate of imprisoning 2% of your total population would cost \$2 per day times 365 days times 660,000 people. Ugandan spends less on health care each year, so never mind on locking us all up. The bill is totally impractical.

Secondly, the remarkable statement on World AIDS Day by Archbishop Cyprian -- that the Ugandan Catholic health-care system was now going to serve everyone, including LGBT people, and they were not going to discriminate -- now puts the faithful Catholics at loggerheads with the Ugandan Parliament, bought by American “born again” Christians (as the Catholics refer to Bahati and his ilk). Museveni knows that Archbishop Cyprian (and his boss Pope Francis) has a direct connection to 13 million of his citizens and it would not be good for Catholic doctors, nurses and social workers to find themselves in court or in jail because they were trying to do what Francis, Cyprian (and Jesus) told them to do: Serve everyone in need. World Vision, the largest Protestant development agency in the world, has opposed the bill from the beginning for precisely these reasons: they don’t want their staffers, who have promised in their contracts to serve everyone without discrimina-

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tion, to be persecuted for doing the Lord's work. The bill is simply unworkable from a financial and moral perspective, but it has highly symbolic overtones.

Watch what you pray for

I have no regrets that gay and straight allies sent checks to support a vulnerable child who has turned into something that is unrecognizable, perhaps even to his own people. The bill, if signed into law, will force people to decide to do what is right and Christian and be fired or go to jail, or to turn on their own families and communities – a kind of infanticide.

Uganda is on the brink of a madness it has not seen before. There is nothing Christian about reporting your own children or family members to the authorities simply for being the way God made them to be and for Bahati, a double-bind of conscience, that the people who simply helped him, long before the evangelical “fat cats” turned up, he is now ready to send to jail for life!

What is wrong with this picture? I believe deeply in a God who shows love and compassion, even when that love and compassion is rejected and misunderstood. We are not loving less simply because Bahati and the Ugandan Parliament passed a very bad piece of legislation that hurts Uganda. Bahati is simply losing his soul, and we must pray for his conversion. Historically, we can prove that we gays and lesbians supported his stepfather to allow him and his many orphaned brothers and sisters to simply survive. There is still time for him to recant the evil he wishes upon us in the name of a God I do not know. The British Prime Minister Harold Wilson once said, “A week is a long time in politics.” I predict God and Uganda are not quite finished with this journey to justice, equality and a deep compassion for all of God's children, even our little David.

RGOD2, written by the Rev. Canon Albert Ogle of St. Paul's Cathedral in San Diego, looks at faith and religion from an LGBT point of view. Ogle is known around the world for his work in support of LGBT rights and HIV-prevention efforts. He is president of St. Paul's Foundation for International Reconciliation. RGOD2 appears on SDGLN and GLBTNN. ■

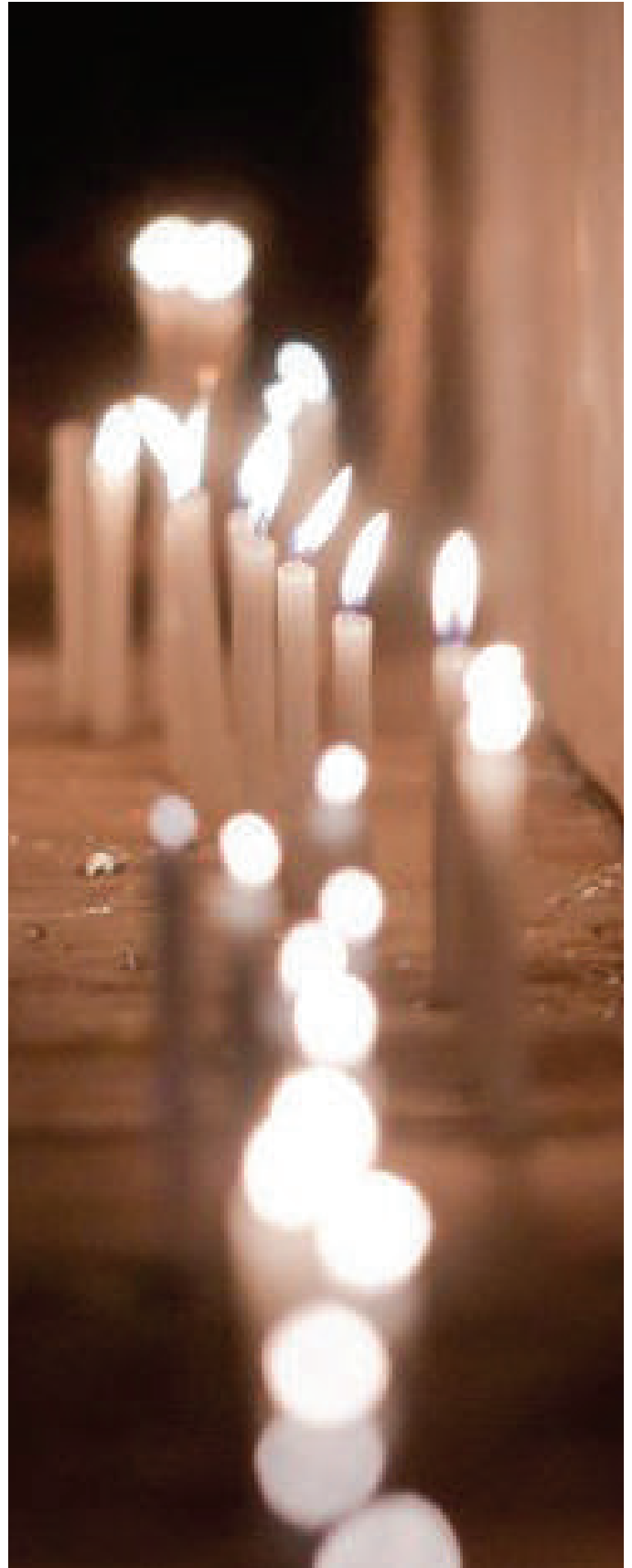


Photo Credit: Alexandra Martins

MY STORY

By Diana

I come from a staunch born again family. I must say I was practically raised in church (Thanks to my mother). At a tender age, I don't quite remember exactly when, I found myself attracted to girls my age in my primary school. I didn't know neither understand it or why and it was never sexual for me at that time. I found myself drawn to the same sex naturally. I had never been kissed or intimately touched by any female as a youngster. Being raised in church, I heard the term for it, "Homosexuality/ Sodomy", defined as oneself being attracted to a person or people of same sex. I listened to the gospel of how it was abominable in church, criminal by law and punishable in all aspects, I heard of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, how God destroyed both these cities for homosexuality.

The more I grew up, listening to all these teachings, the more I came to a realization considering my feelings for the same sex, I was gay. I had to do everything I could to get rid of how or what I felt. I did all I could do to fight it. I started to mess around with boys; I prayed and cried myself to sleep almost every night because as far as I knew, I was an abomination. I cursed myself to die simply because of what I felt. I withdrew so much, kept to myself and barely had any friends because I didn't want to be found out. I could never talk or confide in anyone because of the homophobia and the hate talk at each turn I made. I went to church all the time to be prayed for, believing that if a pastor laid his hand on me, I'll be free from "gayism" as people put it. But nothing in me ever changed. The more I went to be prayed, the more hopeless and helpless I got. I started to think that God didn't love people like me from whatever I heard being preached in church. No one ever did. I could never open up to anyone about exactly what I was going through. I had a very unhappy childhood even if I was blessed with a great family.

This followed me into my puberty. I was an emotionally troubled teenage girl, confused and psychologically traumatized. The hate teachings and condemnation sermons in most of the churches I went to made me stop going to church because



of the guilt, shame and self hate that this gospel had instigated inside me. My kind was unwanted in these places of worship. I lost faith. I lost hope. In high school, I became hardly social because I felt I didn't belong. Society made me believe I was not worth being part of it since it had no place for people like me. I actually believed I was the only lesbian out there. I continued to fight against the feelings I had by trying to channel my emotions to the opposite sex, but still, they never went away. Instead, I became more messed up emotionally and mentally. Physically, I put on a good show being in the closet but inside, I struggled with a lot of depression and self hate. I made up my mind nev-

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er to act on what or how I felt. I vowed to myself that I would rather go to my grave with it.

In my form 3, that's when I first heard of two out-of-the-closet lesbians ever in Uganda via the media. That was Mukasa and Rachael. I saw how brutally immoral and abominable the media portrayed them in the eye of the public. The hate talk and insults spat at the sound of their names, how society shunned them by having them thrown out of their houses, the rampant house raids, their in and out woes in courts of law all because they chose to come out of the closet as lesbians. I heard of the police beatings and arrests against the gay community at that time, and it all broke my heart. It made me more determined to never come out of the closet. The discrimination, homophobia and the hate I saw by the public made me so frightened and afraid to live that I attempted suicide two times. I was taken for counseling sessions, family meetings were made to find out what was influencing me to cause myself harm, but I still never told a soul. I struggled in silence with all I was going through inside for a long time.

Until I made a choice to accept who I was, a lesbian, because I was slowly but totally starting to go insane fighting a losing battle against my own self. I needed to set me free and I had to help myself since I knew that the society itself was not going to help me. Even knowing there were other people like me who were not afraid to be who they are for example Mukasa and Racheal, I finally knew that I wasn't the only gay person out there. There were others like me. Slowly, I grew out of my fear. Self acceptance opened my mind to a lot of possibilities. I never felt angry at myself anymore, I embraced who I am. Gone is the self hate and depression I suffered for years. With time, I got to understand that God loves me no matter what, completely the way he loves you, him and her. If Jesus didn't love me, he wouldn't tell us all to come as we are, he never drew any boundaries or make any exceptions of who is meant to come to him or not hence no one is inferior to his love.

With time, I got to understand that God loves me no matter what, completely the way he loves you, him and her.

No one is ever recruited to be gay, just like no one is recruited to be straight. At least as far as I know, no one is paid to be gay or recruit straight people to turn gay. I was never recruited to be lesbian, neither am I paid to be gay. I got a job from which I earn through my hard work to make a living and I was raised from a decent, Christian family even if I have not come out to them. It is only our sexual preference that tells us apart but we are still human beings like anyone else. Falling in love with the same sex is not entirely about sex or money, its just the same way the straight people do, it transcends from the physical attachment to psychological, emotional and spiritual parts of our lives.

Killing us, homophobia, hate campaigns, condemnation sermons, the discrimination all these are not the answer. They could scare us but they can never change us or who we are. Even in these prisons or mental hospitals you might assume can rehabilitate us from our sexual orientation will hardly rid us of what or who we are and choose to be in love with because we are not coaxed, persuaded or paid for the way we feel. Neither are we recruited, influenced, forced or imposed upon to be gay. Death, too, is not the solution. Gays could be threatened by mob justice, engulfed with fear via the hate talk and shunned away through the discrimination hence being forced to scatter, but even when we run to the furthest ends of the earth; it won't kill how we feel inside.

Let's quit blaming single schools for people being gay. I personally went to one single-sex school in my entire education background but all the rest were mixed schools. I know most of the people who went to these single-sex schools and are actually very straight; they have never even had any gay thought cross their minds. To add to that, those who to be blamed for "promoting homosexuality" (whatever that means) in our society, look at the media and the churches because they just can never stop talking about it and this is what is making your children and the rest of the society get curious about this homosexuality and opt to try it out. And we all know what curiosity does to the cat... (Just saying!) ■

PATRICK'S STORY

By Patrick

I grew up in a village setting in Kiruhura district with my family. My family had a very concrete religious foundation that never tolerated anything against the normal African family setting. My mum (the late Naomi) was a very loving and caring mum who taught us a lot of things as we were growing up. I grew up with a feeling for fellow boys which was contrary to what they expected since all other boys used to play with girls, but I would instead enjoy to be around boys most of the time.

This personality/character inside of me grew as I developed into a mature man. It has failed to disappear despite the hate and troubling life I pass through among my friends and family since I later came out to be gay.

My house was a very religious one with a good foundation of Christianity in our neighborhood with loving parents and a friendly neighboring environment.

My friends were fellow boys and they are the ones I enjoyed playing with when I was growing up. I have never enjoyed the company of girls, though I respect them as my sisters. I enjoyed having fun with men.

I was bright during my school years and I used to be in the Christian Union because I liked serving God. I am a teacher by profession with a certificate in education. My passion since I was young was to teach children who didn't have enough parental support, and I thank God who has fulfilled my dream since now I fundraise and take care of my orphans in my district with a school. Through my online pool of friends across the world I am able to fundraise and get material support to fund and accelerate their education.

I can describe myself as a gay man who likes fellow men. I am a compassionate person who likes helping the needy children and the elderly. I like dressing like a queer with skinny jeans and designer t-shirts but sometimes I like to be professional

We fear being arrested and attacked by the homophobic public members that could lead to murdering individuals because of the hatred of non-heterosexual people.

as a gentleman. My favorite music is gospel music and I like to hang out on beaches. My favorite stars are Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sylvester Stallone as John Rambo, Jean Claude Van damme and Bruce Willis. Lastly my favorite authors are Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi Wathiongo, Charles Dickens who wrote Oliver Twist and Joyce Meyer.

I first came out in 2004. I received harsh and rude reactions from people, which have led me to losing most of my straight friends and some family members plus hate from many people in my area. I was so terrified when I first heard of the antigay bill because of knowing that I could be beheaded at anytime. The death penalty scared our Ugandan LGBTI movement and that pushed many members back into the closet, though some of us were resilient enough to lobby with international allies to make sure this measure is withdrawn from parliament. I didn't protest but wrote many petitions to our Ugandan and other international leaders. I believed the death penalty was a serious issue which needed to be fought with a very strong force as it was encroaching on the rights of Ugandan LGBTI people.

As a teacher, I run an orphanage school in Kamwenge district. I am a church minister with affirming Pentecostal churches and I am a passionate

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LGBTI activist. I like taking care of the needy children or the orphans since it was my dream as a child and I thank God who made my dream come true. I love my job and I thank my international allies in Europe and the USA who help me in fund-raising and providing scholastic materials as well as school fees for these children.

I trust my sister and a few friends. Above all, I used to trust my Mum but she died last year. She will forever remain the greatest Mum and may God rest her soul in eternal peace.

Yes I chose to partake in this strategy to tell people about my life knowing that the reactions would be cruel, knowing that Uganda is so homophobic.

Ever since I came out of the closet, I developed much love to serve fellow community members with all my passion. I decided to dedicate my life to activism which has exposed me to many great friends both locally and globally. I was not forced to come out, I was willing to come out but I was still waiting for the right time. After coming out, some of my gay friends and I came together through our love in serving God and began to offer a spiritual rehabilitation to the stigmatized LGBTI members with our vision to form St. Paul's Voice Centre (SPAVOC).

On a local level, the press in Uganda has turned to outing people, especially after signing of the law that was meant to instigate violent attacks on LGBTI individuals. This leaves the community members to live in fear, since most of our faces, names and other details were published in the "Hello" and "Red Pepper," tabloids leading to many evictions and families disowning many of LGBT individuals. The majority of the Ugandan media is homophobic, with a very small number of sympathizers in the media fraternity.

No I don't have a partner but I have a couple of friends I have protected since the bill was signed. I have helped many to relocate to safe places, get them food, given them counsel at church and even helped some to move to European countries like Netherlands for asylum and for their safety.

Since the bill was passed, my life and the life of some of my close friends have always been lived in fear due to the harsh environment. We fear being arrested and attacked by the homophobic

public members that could lead to murdering individuals because of the hatred of non-heterosexual people.. The situation has changed a lot and many friends have gone back to the closet due to the rampant media outings which caused problems for many of my fellow members and made them feel like criminals and prisoners in their own homes.

Things have changed a lot in relation to my activism since February, there are no safe places to conduct meetings and socialize, no more workshops for learning and education, and there are some diplomatic missions with individuals who are distancing themselves from us by denying some members visas, fearing they won't come back. All I can say is that life after February has been very demoralizing for me and my fellow members of the LGBTcommunity.

As a person, I dream about one day living in a country with total respect, dignity, liberty, equality and freedom to all its citizens despite their religious, cultural and sexual orientation differences that is built on tolerance for those to express their individuality. I would like to have re-united strong LGBTI movement before the passage of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in February of 2014.

I dream of having equality, justice, and freedom for a liberated Uganda by embracing rights of all citizens and not discriminating LGBT individuals that is my vision for the future of Uganda.

I dream to have a peaceful, stable, united and strong LGBTI movement in Uganda. I wish to see LGBTI people happy and free enjoying their country like other citizens. My happiest memory is when I won Makwan award and when I was confirmed as reverend under APCI (Affirming Pentecostal Church International).

My biggest fear is being arrested, sentenced to prison for life or being killed as I have so much to offer in educating individuals regarding the LGBT movement, that we are not criminals nor do we "recruit" children to become gay. We are people who wish to live in peace and have the freedom and dignity to be ourselves without being harassed, arrested without cause, and shunned from the public.

I would send my message to Pope Francis and Queen of England by making a call to them in advising Uganda to repeal the Anti-Homosexuality Act. ■

EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

INTRODUCTION

Modern declarations on human rights have often proceeded without reference to the cultural content of rights, the existence of rights in African indigenous backgrounds, and the embodiment of certain key rights in the community itself. Our historical and colonial legacy of multicultural systems and multi-religious traditions holds both advantages and disadvantages; the number is further multiplied and problematized by the many combinations of religious beliefs and the evolution of culture. It becomes even more complicated, Uganda is religiously diverse nation with Christianity and Islam being the most widely professed religions. (2002 census).

RELIGION IN UGANDA:

85%	of the population is Christian,
12.1%	of the population adheres to Islam (Sunni)
41.9%	Catholics,
41.9%	Anglican
4.6%	pentecostal
1.5%	seventh-day Adventist
0.1%	Orthodox Christian
1.2%	other Christians
12.1%	Muslim
1.0%	African Traditional Religion(ART)
0.15%	Bahia faith
0.9%	None
0.7%	other non-Christians

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LGBTI PERSECUTION AND DISCRIMINATION AND RELIGION?

The relationship between religion and LGBT people vary greatly among different religions some authoritative bodies and doctrines of the world's largest religions may view this negatively.

This can range from quietly discouragement, explicitly forbidding same-sex sexual practices or sex/gender reassignment among adherents, actively opposing social acceptance of LGBT identities, to execution of people engaging in homosexual acts while tolerating sex/gender reassignment in specific cases.

Historically, some religions accommodated, institutionalized, or revered same-sex love and sexuality. Opposition to same-sex marriages and LGBT rights is often associated with conservative religious views. The American Family Association and other religious groups have promoted boycotts of corporations whose policies support the

LGBT community; on the other hand, the Unitarian Universalist Association supports the freedom of LGBT. The problem is not religion but individuals who serve their personal interests.

Since 1999 prominent Ugandans no doubt emboldened by politicians looked to Bible teachings to condemn Ugandan homosexuals; but the bible is subject to interpretation and biblical teachings have evolved over the years in recognition of the world's changing realities. In Leviticus (18:22:23) St. Paul (Romans 1:26-27) homosexual acts are variously called detestable, abomination and against nature, but in Leviticus 11 exactly the same language, we should not make religion our enemy but let it be our friends because many people have strong beliefs in religion, we should strategize and engage religious leaders to be open learn and unlearn.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The debate on Homosexual rights in Uganda continues to provoke strong emotions, not least from religious leaders. The consensus among them seems to be that since homosexuality is deemed to be against the Devine law of any regional homosexual rights can or ought to be opposed by all with good conscience. I beg to differ from this view. It is a view which seems both absurd and dangerous; Many LGBT persons hold strong religious beliefs and simply find themselves targeted as the worst sinners for having an orientation they did not choose.

Religious leaders Judge homosexuality as sinful, since it appears to be opposed to God's plan as revealed by natural law(the supposed fact of male-female complementarity) and by a number of selected passages of the Christian scriptures which are considered to be God's ultimate self-revelation to mankind on the subject. Difficulties with arguments from natural law are that they tend to end up as general statements about observed nature, for which expectations can always be found since nature is thankfully full of surprises. There is also the fact of artificiality as being decidedly human; often deliberately opposing nature, or manipulating it, to suit a particular goal or purpose. There are difficulties with arguments from scriptures, mainly ones to do with interpretations and methods of interpretation. Quoting specific passages for or against homosexuality (both could be found, have been found) is not always helpful. The veracity of Gods words does not depend on the frequency or force with which it is used but rather the manner and the moment in which it is communicated. Scriptures can be used simply to re-in force prejudices.

Fundamental or literal interpretations tend to void it of its power, while seeming to offer an immediate answer to the problem. It is the Pharisees and the Devil who mostly use scripture in this way to test or antagonize Jesus while wanting to appear knowledgeable or authoritative; Jesus uses scriptures to answer but more importantly to expose hypocrisy.

A faith tradition which stands against reality makes faith unbelievable. Good Tradition adapts and grows

in order to survive and by so doing clarifies itself. For instance, up till the time of the second Vatican council in (1964,) the sexual function was commonly understood to be for procreation. Only it was "discovered" by the fathers of the council that the church also believed that sexual function could also be for non-reproductive purposes ie, to build love in a marriage.

The other concession the church makes is that any kind of harassment or deprivation or discrimination towards LGBT persons which would harm basic human dignity is unacceptable and must be rejected by all. But is it not naïve to think that the language of moral condemnation including terms such "intrinsically disordered" will not become grist to the mill of those who are pathologically homophobic within and outside the church?

What is needed in Uganda today is to seek more education on human sexuality, find out what was the really sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. No human being should be deprived of love and religious leaders need serious course on human sexuality; such courses would go a long way to inform the church about genuine findings about Human sexuality.

We need to be acquainted of religious supremacies; many parts of the world have dominant religious customs and not to blame entire world-wide religion and all of its adherents for things which we find obnoxious but to work as a team and focus on raising awareness to the public, so that believers who are objective are not left out.

We welcome and work with religious individuals, in Uganda we have strong religious individuals who have stood out and fight for LGBTI issues (Retired Bishop of west Buganda Diocese, Fr Anthony Musala). People may differ as how to deal with homosexuality, but this difference should not lead to animosity among Christians and LGBT persons, in Uganda today LGBT persons seek God and guidance and they are helped when religious leaders come out to offer support. ■



WHAT IS HIV/AIDS?

HIV refers to Human Immune-Deficiency Virus.

- ▶ Human means it attacks only Human beings
- ▶ Immunodeficiency means that HIV causes deficiency in the immune system by destroying the white blood cells, which produce anti bodies that fight diseases.
- ▶ Virus means that it is a Virus and therefore like any other viruses it has no cure. And also it is an infection and not a disease meaning that one can have it without necessarily being sick.

AIDS refers to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

- ▶ **Acquired** means you get it from someone or somewhere.
- ▶ **Immune** relates to the immune system of the body.
- ▶ **Deficiency** means that it leads to lack of efficiency in the immune system.
- ▶ **Syndrome** means a collection of diseases, signs and symptoms that a person complains about. This implies that HIV that the person acquires makes the body prone to a collection of diseases.

The differences between HIV and AIDS.

- ▶ HIV is a virus; AIDS is a disease.
- ▶ One can live with HIV without signs and symptoms unlike AIDS where symptoms show after a certain stage.
- ▶ HIV is an infection and AIDS is the outcome.

Ways of how HIV is transmitted.

- Un protected sex with an infected person.
- ▶ Transfusion of blood products from an infected donor.
- ▶ HIV infected mother to unborn baby or newborn
- ▶ Sharing unsterilized, HIV contaminated skin piercing instruments.
- ▶ Breast Milk.

Which body fluids transmit HIV?

- ▶ Blood
- ▶ Semen
- ▶ Vaginal fluids.
- ▶ Breast milk
- ▶ Other body fluids containing blood.

Factors that facilitate HIV transmission.

- ▶ STD, which cause genital ulcers/sores and inflammation through which HIV can easily pass.
- ▶ Chronic illness like cancer and TB, which break down the immunity of the body.
- ▶ Rough and dry sex which can cause trauma/bruises thus providing a direct entry for the virus.
- ▶ Sexual intercourse during menstruation.

MAIN THEME: UNDERSTANDING SEXUALITY. (Commonly asked questions)

Qn. What is sexuality?

- ▶ We need to know that this is a very broad question. Many define it in their own ways. However, it refers to the sex attributes that make up a human being.
- ▶ The female or male organ is not a definition of sexuality.
- ▶ The biggest percentage that makes up one's body is what determines ones sexuality.
- ▶ Your gender might be female but if your biggest attributes are masculine then you can be transgender. It's your right to decide what to be.

Qn. What are the different forms of sexuality?

- ▶ Some people have always thought that there is one form of sexuality i.e. man having sex with woman. This is called heterosexuality. However this is not the only form of sexuality. The following are also normal forms of sexuality basing on our definition of sexuality.
- ▶ Homosexuality; this refers to a man being sexually, emotionally and physically attracted to a fellow man. It is normal since many men admire and feel more comfortable in company of the same sex.
- ▶ Lesbianism; this is where a girl is sexually,

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emotionally and physically attracted to a fellow girl. It is in the same case as homosexuality.

- ▶ Bisexuality; refers to a person who is attracted to both the opposite sex and same sex.
- ▶ Intersexuals; these are people who were born with two reproductive parts. They have a choice to belong to any sexuality and gender.

Who are the transgender people?

- ▶ These are men or women who have their sexual attributes more to the opposite sex.
- ▶ In the same sex relationships they take on the role of the opposite sex.
- ▶ They are aware of their situation and love to be identified as such.

Qn. Are people who aren't heterosexual normal?

- ▶ The answer to this is YES.
- ▶ It's only that their sexual organs are determining their gender. But we need to know that one's sexuality is determined by the ratio of sexual attributes in that person's body.
- ▶ Many people are a hundred percent gay (homosexual and lesbian). Equally others are a hundred percent heterosexual (attracted to opposite sex.) this is a natural thing.
- ▶ You can be highly female but get attracted to a fellow female. The same applies to the males. This is normal and not states of confusion, insanity or abnormality as many think.

Qn. How can I tell that am homosexual? (Gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual and intersexual).

- ▶ You feel so much sexually and emotionally attracted to people of the same sex. You will begin wondering whether that's a normal feeling. The answer is you are still normal and you can even seek help from a counselor to help you understand your feelings.
- ▶ You feel more comfortable while in company of the same sex.
- ▶ You admire sleeping and touching people of the same sex.

- ▶ You may begin to feel like the opposite sex is a put off to you.

NB: All the above feelings are normal.

Qn. Why do people look at gays as abnormal, insane or confused people?

- ▶ Those people have been brought to think that heterosexuality is the only form of sexuality.
- ▶ It's because some gay people look at themselves as such too.
- ▶ People are generally not familiar with such people. Those who do, do it in hiding.
- ▶ The laws also contribute to people's negative attitudes towards Homosexuals.

Qn .Can homosexuals be cured?

This question suggests that homosexuals are sick, which is untrue. In the past some psychiatrists and doctors tried to show that homosexuality was a mental illness, but they failed. From 1973 onwards, being homosexual is no longer described as an "illness" by the medical professions. However some people still wrongly send their homosexual children to clinics, psychologists or witch doctors to be "cured". If being homosexual was accepted by everyone, no one would feel the need to "cure" it. The only need here is to accept that homosexuals exist among us.

Qn. Is homosexuality legal?

- ▶ In Uganda it is apparently illegal but many countries including African countries have legalized it. However it is your human right to a sexuality of your choice.
- ▶ However, many Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexual (LGBTI) Organizations are pushing for the legality.

Qn. Are there any organizations that help people like that in Uganda?

- ▶ Yes, they are there but due to the illegality of these practices some are invisible.

Qn. Can gay people get HIV/AIDS?

- ▶ The answer is yes if you have sex with an infected person.
- ▶ If you use the same sexual organs with an infected person.



President Museveni

President Museveni: 'We want to protect our children from homosexuality, but we do not want to kill our trade opportunities.'

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has expressed second thoughts over proposed anti-gay legislation, saying 'the possibility of trade boycott' could harshly impact the nation's economic growth.

On Friday, in an editorial carried by a leading national daily, President Museveni said he supported a bill which would tackle the "promotion" of homosexuality to minors, but also said Uganda needed to take stock of its national interests before making a decision.

He wrote: "I supported the idea of punishing harshly those who lure minors into homosexuality. We should also punish harshly those who engage in homosexual prostitution."

"Our scientists argued that all homosexuality was by nurture not nature. On the basis of that, I agreed to sign

the bill, although some people still contest that understanding."

However, he added, "it is about us deciding what is best for our country in the realm of foreign trade, which is such an important stimulus for growth and transformation that it has no equal."

President Museveni said he feared "the possibility of trade boycott by Western companies under the pressure of the homosexual lobbies in the West."

"It is now an issue of a snake in a clay cooking pot. We want to kill the snake, but we do not want to break the pot. We want to protect our children from homosexuality, but we do not want to kill our trade opportunities.

"That now forces us to disassemble this whole issue."

Edwin Sesange Director African lgbt organisation Out and proud diamond group told PinkNews: "We welcome the President's second thought regarding the anti-gay law 2014, however we urge him to consider repealing all other anti gay laws in Uganda. The President should not only use the argument of foreign trade as the reason why he has to re-think about the anti gay law as this will send a wrong message to the Uganda community. He knows that this these anti gay laws have claimed innocent lives of Ugandans, many have been tortured, discriminated against, fled to exile, among others. We urge the President to tell fellow Ugandans that these anti gay laws are against the Ugandan constitution and other international conventions to which Uganda is a signatory."

I AM NOT ALONE

By Shay

I am a 27 years old Ugandan female, right from my childhood; I have been having same sex attractions. I never knew or thought it was homosexuality or even what it meant or what people's perception was about it until went to secondary school.

My attractions towards fellow girls and women increased, as I grew older. This included my female teachers and friends.

At some point I Googled about homosexuals in Uganda hoping to find out if there were other people like me. I later joined Facebook where I happened to find some of them and I felt so comfortable that I was actually not alone.

However the passing of the anti homosexuality bill has affected me in a number of ways such as bad dreams, restless nights, living in fear, headaches, losing some of my friends and so many others. This is resulting from homophobia and intolerance towards homosexual community.

Homosexuality is not something I called for or something I would wish to be. If I had choice I would change my sexuality to heterosexual. It emotionally breaks me down to see homosexuals being killed or discriminated for something they didn't wish for because I know some day I may encounter these violations.

Sexuality is nature not nurtured. I have been hearing that people are paid to be recruited into homosexuality but I testify, no one has ever paid or recruited me. My same sex attractions started as early as primary two.

The fact that we cannot open up to our families about our sexuality or gender identity for fear of losing them, really impacts on our lives. Those who open up to families are thrown out or isolated which affects them psychologically.

Homosexuals are not made, they are born. We are therefore requesting for a positive change of the laws criminalising same sex relationships, as we are also human beings entitled to human rights. ■

Ugandan Gay Law to Halt HIV/AIDS Programs Among Sexual Minorities

By SPUGIN

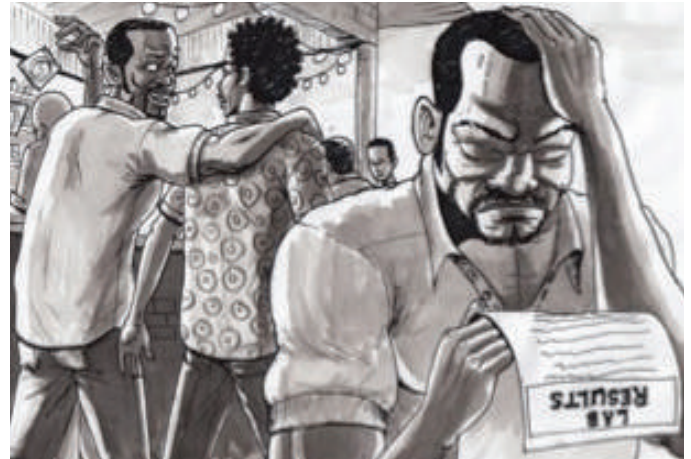
Last year 2013 SUI reached out to closely 500 Men who have sex with other men (MSM) with HIV/AIDS/STD prevention, treatment, care and support services in Kampala , Wakiso , Mpigi , Entebbe, Mukono, Busia , Bududa , Arua and Hoima districts. A significant number of up country community members have also benefited from our outreach projects through social networks, an avenue that the peer educators have exploited, as an organization we have oriented 89 health care providers in Kampala city, Wakiso and Mukono districts so that referral linkages to health services are increased.

The peer leaders engage in sensitization workshops for health, which they facilitate ably, mobilize health care providers for an insightful discussion on the unique needs of the community interfaced with policy makers and advocate for the noble cause of a non-discriminatory health, legal and political environment; move around to identify friendly health service provider institutions and individuals, securely obtaining their contacts so that referral linkages for health services can be made.

In the struggle to combat HIV/AIDS among sexual minorities in Uganda SUI established Partnerships with mainstream health service providers (names withheld).

ANTI- HOMOSEXUALITY BILL

On 20th December 2013 the Ugandan Parliament passed the Anti-Homosexuality Bill which entrenches hatred and discrimination against those who are, or who are believed to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI). The



Ugandan Penal Code already prohibits 'carnal knowledge against the order of nature'. This Act goes on to criminalizes "promotion" of homosexuality, compelling HIV testing in some circumstances and further includes a range of different people who could be targeted for arrest for "aggravated homosexuality" – an offence that would carry a punishment of life imprisonment.

FUTURE FOR HIV-AIDS STRUGGLE

The severe impact of this bill has started eroding way the efforts to combat HIV-AIDS and STDS among sexual minorities in Uganda. Health service providers are steadily pulling out in this struggle for fear of their lives and jobs.

Threats, hate speeches and discrimination from religious leaders and politicians are worsening resulting into insecurity to our peer educators, staff and LGBTI community which is hampering health service delivery.

As an organization we do continue and commit to deliver health services to our members despite this terrible and trying period

EX- UGANDAN LAWMAKER SPEAKS OF 'REGRET' AT EXCLUDING GAYS FROM AIDS CONTROL LEGISLATION

A former Ugandan legislator who tabled the controversial HIV/Aids Control Bill 2010 in Parliament which excluded homosexual rights to access HIV prevention and treatment has said she now "regrets the oversight."

Beatrice Rwakimari told a meeting of homosexual and sex worker activists in Kampala on Friday that if the bill she presented in parliament is passed in its current form, it will not be helpful to scaling down HIV infection among Ugandan minority groups.

Rwakimari, now the Vice Chairperson of the Aids Information Centre (AIC) in Kampala said "But I hope they [parliamentarians will now] include homosexual rights to treatment." Rwakimari was a legislator during Uganda's eighth Parliament but lost her seat at the general election early this year. The HIV/Aids Control Bill 2010 has kept Ugandan human rights act busy most of this year as it seeks to criminalise HIV spread and to impose mandatory disclosure.

The activists contend that mandatory disclosure will fuel domestic violence against women and that the bill

policies and laws commissioned by the AIC. The study examines various public health policies and laws and how they promote or curtail minority access to health. It will form a basis for intervention and designing specific programmes and interventions by AIC on minorities in Uganda. AIC has a presence in districts across the country offering HIV support, care, treatment and prevention work. Rwakimari's change of heart was received by some activists as a welcome shift in a rigid homophobic attitude to homosexuals in various health policy making circles. Gay right to health advocacy group, Uhspa Uganda on April 8, 2011 presented a petition to Ugandan parliament by LGBTIs contesting the non-inclusion of homosexuals in interventions proposed in the HIV/Aids Control Bill.

Many LGBTI activists have also been actively engaging with Rwakimari and legislators to include homosexual rights to health in HIV programmes in Uganda. Although minority groups have been mentioned in Uganda's public health policy under MARPS (the Most at Risk Population groups), homosexuals are discriminated against even under MARPS arrangements.



seeks to control the 20 per cent of Ugandans who have tested and know their status. Rwakimari said although there were still punitive laws on Uganda's statute books regarding homosexuals, there were signals the situation would change for the better. Rwakimari was officiating at the review of a legal audit of Uganda's

"Keeping homosexuals in the otherness all the time in policy planning is detrimental," Beyoncé Tushabe an activist with Uhspa Uganda said at the meeting. Kabumba Busingye, the lead consultant on the survey and head of Development Law Associates said the study shall also advise stakeholders on the policy and legal remedies in Uganda and how they pertain to homosexuals and minorities rights in Uganda. Uganda has only one policy that recognizes homosexuals as a group for targeting in sexual health, the National Policy Guidelines and Service Standards for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. However, there are no activities or budget lines from the government to undertake activities towards homosexuals well being on sexually transmitted infections and HIV/Aids interventions.

All HIV/Aids prevention messages in Uganda are heterosexual based, making many gays believe its only heterosexual sex that can lead to contracting the HIV virus.

UGANDAN TRANSGENDER WOMAN PENS COURAGE LETTER TO PARLIAMENT

Dear Honorable Member of Parliament:

I greet you all in your distinguished capacities. I have never even for a second thought that I would ever have to write a letter to parliament, that my words would even have to be read by a people as you. I find myself, though, at a point in my life, where fate — if you believe in it — has bestowed upon me this duty to speak for the many voiceless out there, who like myself, find themselves at a point where your decision will determine if they will get to take another breath in this country, as free citizens or not. I pray then, that my words may not be in vain, but that they may appeal to that humanity that I know lies at the core of each of you.

I go by the alias of Cleo. I am a 26-year-old transgender person. With my ambitious persona and insatiable thirst for knowledge, I've managed to see myself through school to the post-graduate level. I am a public worker, a scientist and a researcher to be specific, and earn an honest living from that. I am a Pentecostal Christian, loving God, though with my own liberalist and realist values. I respect other people's sentiments, however divergent they are from my own.

I was born a biologically male child to two very loving parents, Batooro by decent. Despite the love and care that they bestowed upon me, my childhood was tainted with a lot of misery. Being a transgender person, with my atypical behavior and dress code that seemed to clash terribly with the stereotypical gender requirements of my society, I was faced with a lot of rejection from friends and family alike.

My family and friends have — with time and a lot of patience and struggle — come to understand my situation and not to judge me. A few months ago, when I made a monumental decision to fully transition into a girl, they have shown me so much affection and support, especially psychologically.

I consider this one of the biggest successes in my life; that my family and friends, despite our divergent values and their earlier negative sentiments, have finally managed, through a very strenuous process — that I should say, was not without wounds and tears — to understand and accept me, as a person, as their child, as their friend, as their sibling. Because that is



Cleo K. is the first Trans woman to openly transition in Ugandan society.

the basic essence of what brings us together.

Being a transgender person is not about who I am attracted to sexually. It's about what gender I identify with. Being a trans girl means that I was born biologically male, but with the physiology and PSYCHOLOGY of a girl. At puberty I experienced a pubertal development that left me very confused and rejected in all my social circles, for I was the black sheep. My parents did not know whether to protect me from boys or girls, but finally it so happened that I was brought up in a girls' HOSTEL up to the age of 15.

Growing up a transgender person meant that I had to deal with my teenage burdens alone with not a soul to tell — not my parents or peers or siblings — to disclose my darkest secrets. To cry myself to sleep every night, wishing I was dead, to battle with depression and suicidal tendencies — that's all I remember in my teenage life.

I wonder then, why people say it was my choice to be this way. Why would anyone choose a life as lonely as this, a life of misery, pain, rejection, abuse and depression? And though I made it, many haven't, be-

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cause their self-esteem, their confidence, and their vitality, fails them in light of all the negativities that surround them. It's not the disgustingly abusive world that the media paints of us.

I ask myself, how someone can judge me, before they even knows me. I understand this though, because for so long I was hated by people before they even knew me. Being transgender, like being gay or lesbian, is not a choice. What is a choice is accepting it for a fact. What is a choice is if you — at some point in life — decide to not live a masked life, under the guise of a straight, or asexual person like I did, and restrain yourself, from everything that you know you are from the core of your being.

It is very hard living your life through other people's eyes; trying hard to make them happy while you restrain yourself from who you are, or even demonize your actual being because of their negativities. It's a strange reality that I can loosely liken to solitude in a crowd, for even though there were so many people around me, none of them knew me for who I was — for I deliberately concealed a part of me that I considered a flaw to my being.

At some point though, I realized, just like everyone does in life, that I could not live entirely on other people's perceptions of who I was, battling to make other people happy at my own life's expense. For we all have but one life to live. I came to the realization that I alone knew better who I was, and that I had a rare opportunity to let people know who I was, and not let them tell me who I was. It had been a sad existence, but not quite living, of living a lie, trying to convince myself — and ultimately others — what I was, what I wasn't, and I was determined to end that cycle.

As a transgender person, I envision a utopia of gender neutrality, where all the genders in all their entirety are able to coexist together, and live in utter harmony and mutual respect of one another. So that, if not to accept, they might tolerate each other, just like we have tried to do as people of different tribes, colors, religions, value systems and races; it's the measure of our maturity as a civilization.

I believe then, that in the same regard that all diver-

sities — racial, tribal, religious, sexual, and gender alike — instead of being criminalized and demonized, should be celebrated and empowered, so that rather than to condemn a sect of a few people to social redundancy, all the HUMAN RESOURCES that Uganda boasts of can be fully tapped.

Let's not then condemn ourselves, so that when people in the future look back at us, they will do so, just like we do at our ancestors, and exclaim how inhuman and selfish they were to disregard the existence of a few people because of their color and race. Gender diversity and sexual orientation is no premise to crucify someone, just because you do not agree with how someone dresses, what they act like, or who they sleep with.

What then, I ask myself, are we teaching the future GENERATIONS? Morality even at the expense of life?

Morality in the eyes of a few self-righteous people? That all people aren't the same, if they are different? That it is okay to be selfish?

But being transgender — as much as it is my gender identity — does not holistically define who I am.

As people, like facets of a gem, we are complex in our ambitions and aspirations. We are unique in our personalities, talents, and value systems. It is these things in their entirety, but none of them in unison of others that defines us. The BINARY reductionist paradigm of looking at life as being ei-

ther black or white — rather than as a continuum of several shades — fails to address the issues of life as it is.

I am only different because I am transgender, but other than that, I am human, with red blood coursing through my veins just like you, with family and friends that care for me deeply, with personal sentiments and feeling like you do. I cry and laugh like you do, but I cannot be reduced and labeled as transgender, as an item on a supermarket stall, because that's not all I am. As a person, I am more than that.

Being transgender and having been rejected most of my life has taught me serenity in the storm. It has taught me perseverance, even when the storm wails



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on. It has taught me to respect other people despite their differences, and it has taught me to be patient. It has taught me that life is not about being perfect, because in our flaws, in all our insecurities and in our inadequacies, we all have something to offer on the table. And that we are meant, as humans, to shine together, but not in solitude. And that we must help our brothers and sisters to shine, but not to trample upon them. To exist and live together, that is what humanity was meant for. For no man or woman is an island. For alone we burn out, and fail, but together we flourish.

Finally, we must not forget our ultimate calling and obligation. For by virtue of our humanity, we ought to love others like we love ourselves, and treat them with the same delicacy and sensitivity that we wish be accorded us.

I pray then, that in your deliberations, by the power VESTED in you, you may not forget our concerns — as humans, as Ugandans, as your brothers, sisters, mother and fathers.

With respect,
Cleo. K. -The first Trans woman to openly transition in Ugandan society. ■

COMMENTARY

UNETHICAL JOURNALISM

Think of it as no longer journalism, and I won't blame you. In true honesty, the media in Uganda has gone to the dogs, tearing up every piece of flesh that they know will bleed streams on money right back to their pockets. And one of their lucrative preys is the Ugandan LGBTIQ community. Journalism is the practice of investigating and reporting events, issues and trends to the mass audiences of print, broadcast and online media such as newspapers, magazines and books, radio and television stations, blogs, social and mobile media.

The main intention of those working in the journalism profession is to provide their readers and audiences with accurate, reliable information they need to function in society. There different types of journalism which include: Advocacy journalism, ambush journalism, (articles, attribution, background, byline, feature stories) checkbook journalism, celebrity/people journalism and investigative journalism amongst others.

However, one is left to only but wonder whether we have fully university accredited journalist hitting the keyboards behind the computers or laptops of these media houses or just individuals with "big dreams". Point in question, the likes of The Daily Monitor and The New Vision (Uganda's biggest media/print houses) and The Observer, never rush out to print stories. I think this is what it should be, sit back, analyze, take your stand, and then write out professionally!

However, other print media houses like the Red Pepper & Hello tabloids have taken on the gay issues

as a money making venture for their companies. It's such a shame. Red pepper is a big Newspaper, in Uganda, actually, I must say, one of the most read papers in Uganda. But it hurts one to see the way they write. One wonders whether these are professional journalist. So immature and un researched. And yet, at the end of the day, this information is accepted and believed.

Being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Intersex is nothing anyone chooses. People are born that way, and as they grow, (the gay – lesbian, bisexual, gay), they are on a journey of self-discovery. Some realize themselves as early as in their teenage years or even younger, while others go as far as even dating the opposite sex and, amidst failed relationships, suffering with denial, emotional, spiritual and physiological torture, they finally embrace themselves for who they are. It's not an easy journey, several have committed suicide because of this, confusion, pain, name it!

Transgender (transgender men or women) are not gay, it's just a case of gender identity. But because we both fall all under the same challenges we are LGBTIQ. However, transgender people are usually seen as gay, and face the worst homophobia because they dress and act like the opposite gender. This is an insight to journalists - before u publish your stories first understand who LGBTIQ persons are and what they go through rather than making money out of their suffering. ■

ONCE UPON A TIME

Once upon a time before the hurricane A.H.B. (Anti Homosexuality Bill) swept through, I Noah, a transgender man, would walk around in town, being me for who I am. There were a few ridiculing statements thrown at me, jokes made about me, and some empty threats but it was not until 2009 that things took a big turn.

This is why I would like to believe that Ugandans are not hateful people. They are peaceful people, but thanks to the propaganda spread by the politicians, religious leaders and the media, this stirred the brew called the Anti-Homosexuality bill.

Being on the ground and speaking from experience, and having had a chance to be around most of our communities' transgender persons, I can attest to the fact that every time the topic of the AHB came up, since 2009, there was a spell of chaos.

In 2012, we witnessed on National TV the arrest, harassment and assault of our transgender sister 'Shanyce' (name withheld). When taken to the police station she was stripped for cross checking, still harassed as both male and female prisoner's rejected her in the cells questioning her sexuality or sanity. After this there was a series of public harassment of transgender persons.

The A.H.B. was a whistle blown to prompt all this chaos. Shanyce was lucky to be put into safe keeping, given some support, emotionally, psychologically and financially. She was lucky to have had the support of a trans-woman heading the only trans-women organisation with support from all other activists.

There was panic everywhere. In 2012, for fear of being raided, some organisations wrapped up all things that could be used to incriminate them in case of a

raid. This was mostly those organisations with drop in spaces frequented by LGBT people for services such as free medication, consumables, internet/Wi-Fi etc. And a noticeable drop in the number of people

willing to show up whenever community members are called upon e.g. for VCTs, gay prides, seminars etc.

And even recently in 2013, just after the bill came out, it was a transgender woman to be arrested first, she heads the same trans-woman organisation. So one can clearly see how, throughout the whole year,

there is peace and quiet, and then when this happens, there is chaos everywhere.

However, this previous year the activists and people stood calm and the activists even held a press conference, although still the future is uncertain regarding the process of this becoming a law.

The Ugandan masses have been incited to be hateful towards the LGBTI Ugandans and the media is worsening it and so is the Church.

If only we could have more Desmond Tutus, to preach messages of love and tolerance. It's going to take a long time for things to change.

At least for now Shanyce now works in a local restaurant in a Kampala suburb. Her boss knows, but keeps it secret and expects all others to do the same. She knows that Shanyce is transgender and this may be proof that some individuals in Uganda will try to protect LGBTI people, but who knows for how long this will last.

Ugandans are tired of corruption, bad roads and poor medical facilities and are uninterested in these constant attacks on a minority group. There is room for success, in achieving equality for the LGBTI Ugandans. We can only hope this change will come soon. ■



Credit: EaVisualartists

WHY WE HAVE TO LIVE A LIE TO SURVIVE

By Shawn

On 2013/12/22, TSIU held its first AGM, and it was on the same day at 12:45 that we received news that the infamous Anti-Homosexuality Bill had been passed by the Parliament of Uganda even amidst the attempts of the Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Mbabazi Amama to block it, raising the issue of a lack of quorum.

This was a shock to the Trans community and I believe a great shock to the whole LGBTI community. It has raised fear and uncertainty and the question "what next" has since never left our minds.

Well, we have tried to console ourselves that the AHB doesn't affect the Trans community, but the harsh reality is it affects the Trans community more than the rest of the LGB community. There have been very many incidents where trans people have been ridiculed abused and had their rights violated because they are seen as Homosexuals, and with the passing of this bill I strongly believe this is going to worsen since our communities are very ignorant about the existence of trans people and in most cases, some people find it even safer to call us homosexual for fear of thinking outside the box.

This really worries me a lot: if people were already being paraded in the media, what is going to happen to us now that the bill was passed? Trans people have now been subjected to living a lie with many of them now changing how they appear and even maybe completely cut any ties with the community, and I believe this is going to affect our service and program delivery to the Trans community.

As an activist I feel that all the efforts we made to block the passing of this bill have gone to waste. But as was said in the press conference early this week, we will fight till our last breaths.

And this means the beginning of serious advocacy on trans issues: we need to stand up and spearhead transgender advocacy in our communities, with policy mak-

ers and religious leaders. And also stand strong with the LGB community in advocating against this heinous bill.

Lastly, to the Ugandan Community, the A.H.B. affects almost all of us as Ugandans, because we are your sisters, brothers, relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbors. So don't be blinded and deafened by the political propaganda of some of our parliamentarians. In your jubilation of the passing of the bill, think twice and imagine what would happen if anyone close to you told you they were homosexual.

To our religious leaders, I was so angered when most of you made it your lead sermon the whole of this festive season, thanking the parliament of Uganda for passing the A.H.B. You were called to preach love and acceptance, not spread the gospel of hate and

discrimination. Do not drive us away from the church but draw us even closer. To our Parliamentarians, I am aware we are fast approaching the election period and many of you want to retain your seats in the August House, but please represent us as Ugandans and as your constituents.

To the LGBTI community, guys I know this is one of the most trying times in this movement, but I ask that we keep calm and keep together: let's join hands together to fight these injustices and human rights violations our legislatures have bestowed on us.

To our allies and friends, be strong for us and keep with us, like it was once said "we shall overcome someday." Thank you for the continued support and standing with us. To our President, we have faith in you and your leadership. When you lead Uganda to be a signatory to the various Human Rights treaties, I believe you knew what is best for our beloved country, and I am sure you do have faith in them. Please help us stop this madness, we are citizens of this country and we don't want that to be taken away because of an uninformed bill. I call on you for the protection of the basic human rights of the LGBT/I people in Uganda. ■



LIVING AS A TRANSEXUAL LESBIAN IN UGANDA

I grew up like a boy. I used to do all the heavy work at home like cutting down trees, fetching jerry cans of water and riding bicycle. When it came to role play while playing with my mates, I always liked playing dad. I went to a village school and I never heard of the word 'lesbian' until I became 18. People at the village said I was different from the other kids. My grandmother used to call me her 'little boy'.

At 14 I started experiencing changes in my body. I started menstruating and I hated it. During my Senior Four I fell in love with a girl called Emily. She was two classes behind me but we were close friends. We did everything together. We were inseparable friends for close to three years until I revealed my feelings for her. I wanted her for more than just a friend. She took it for a joke but one day I made a seductive move and she responded positively. We had a sweet affair for two years until things changed. She started sleeping with men.

I was heartbroken. One day she came up to me and said she couldn't love me the way she loved men. This is when I realized that I had to do something about my body. I started smoking and drowning myself in alcohol. She was my first girlfriend and she broke my heart. During my Senior Six vacation I worked for a research organization near our home area. It was through this organization that I met a European woman who became very involved in my life. We were sitting somewhere at a bar reviewing our day's work when she asked if I had a boyfriend. I boldly told her I didn't have any. I told her I didn't have feelings for men and I couldn't love them. I told her I wanted to change my sex organs and become a man. I thought she would find it strange but she was understanding. After what Emily told me, I could have done anything to change into a man. Emily triggered all these thoughts I had about becoming a man but by this time, I was doing it for myself and I knew it was something I was not going to regret.

My white friend went back to Europe but we kept in touch. She kept asking whether I had changed my mind about having a sex change and I insisted that I wanted to do it. In 2003, she invited me to Europe. I spent a week at her home before I was taken to hospital. She had arranged everything during the two years we spent communicating. When I was admitted to hospital, my blood samples were taken and a male doctor counseled me. I wasn't even scared. The following day I was taken to theatre and they carried out what is called Total Vaginal Hysterectomy. It is the removal of the uterus and part of the vagina. They used spinal anesthesia which makes the lower body paralyzed but leaves the

upper part functioning. I could talk and see what the doctors were doing but my body couldn't feel the pain. The opening of my vagina was sealed. The only part left open was the urethra, where urine passes.

I spent five more days at the hospital after the operation and three weeks later I recovered from the effects. I remained on a heavy dose of Testosterone (male hormone) injections until I was changed to tablet prescription.

The Sixth week after my operation my clitoris started elongating. I stopped menstruating. My body became masculine. My breast reduced. My voice also changed. I felt like a man and I was very happy. I came back to Uganda in August 2003. I was supposed to go back abroad in 2006 for a second operation but the embassy denied me a visa.

The doctors said I had to undergo two more operations for my body to become completely masculine. After those operations, they told me I would develop a penis. What I have now is a long and enlarged clitoris. I was left with one ovary because the doctors said they couldn't remove all my organs at once. The rest of the changes had to go through a gradual process. I tried applying for a visa to go back to Europe for my second operation but I have been denied thrice. If I got the opportunity to have a second operation I would take it but I feel comfortable with the changes I have now.

Socializing with other Kuchus has helped me to gain self-esteem. I don't regret my sex change but I know that if I had had the self-esteem that I have now, maybe I wouldn't have had a sex change. Emily made me feel like I couldn't sleep with women if I didn't have a penis. I think it generally comes from being frustrated by what society says about homosexuality.

Some transgender people get sex changes out of frustration and lack of self-esteem. I still find trouble approaching women because I am scared they will find me strange. It is not easy to openly be a transsexual person, especially in a country like Uganda.

Organizations like FARUG should start openly addressing transsexual issues. There are many lesbians who don't even know what being transsexual means. There is need to build self-esteem among transgender, intersex and transsexual people. It is a big challenge but we have to address it and very urgently.

Our same-sex partners, have a lot to teach us about living life from both ends. ■

A BELT FOR A BRA

By Juliet Victor Mukasa

This article was first published in 2007

My name is Juliet Victor Mukasa, a 32 year-old transgender lesbian. It was someone's story that liberated me. So I share my story here hoping it will liberate someone.

Fifteen years ago, I woke up feeling pain in one of my breasts. I sat on my bed wondering what had happened to this breast of mine but I ignored it and continued with my day. About 2 days later, I realised that it was swelling. I was so scared that I rushed to the sick bay. I told the school nurse that I had a problem with my breast. As she carefully examined it, a lot kept running in my mind. What if I have breast cancer? What if I die? As I contemplated, she began running me through a number of questions. How and where it hurt, when it had started hurting, when I had started realising that it was swelling, and so on. I had my facts right and I gave her all the answers but to my surprise she broke out into laughter. I looked at this cruel woman in disbelief. How could she just laugh at me while I was there with a serious problem? I asked her what the problem was with my breast and she calmly said, "Juliet, you are developing into a woman". I was puzzled. What had this to do with my sick breast? She went on to explain that my breasts were finally growing and that I was going to begin experiencing a lot more strange things on my body.

As I walked out of that sick bay, I got lost in another world. A dark world engulfed me. I lost all joy inside me. What I had dreaded all my life had finally attacked my nice body. I was growing breasts. I was no longer going to be the 'boy' that I had always been because boys don't grow breasts. Before this incident I used to walk around with a bare chest on all mornings. I was in an all-girls' school. All the girls would walk around with towels tied up high to cover their breasts or with blouses on. I used to feel sweet that I was not like them. My nickname those days was Julie Tyson. It came from the great legendary American boxer Mike Tyson. I was a real Tyson. I would do body building exercises and that made my chest sporty. I loved sleeveless tops to show off my small biceps. I was never going to see these things again in my life.



Eventually my other breast began to swell and now I had real women's breasts. I started behaving like I had a hunched back, bending my chest inwards all the time. I had my cardigan on all the time. I would lock myself in the bathroom to dress up for class while the other girls did it openly in the dormitories. I lost my self-esteem. I became a dull student. The bigger the breasts grew, the sadder I became.

In 1993, when my breasts became fully-grown and noticeable, I said to myself, "I have to find a way of suppressing them." And Indeed I did. As I was dressing up for class one morning, I realised that my school skirt belt was perfect to bind my boobs such that they would not be noticed. I pulled it out of my skirt and

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tied it around my breasts. Once done, I put on my shirt and sweater and to my surprise the breasts had disappeared. I didn't need my belt - after all my skirt fitted perfectly and I always pulled my sweater over the belt area of my skirt. The use of the belt brought back some of my self-esteem. My chest was flat once again but now I had to hide even more when dressing up. With my flat chest I seemed confident but deep down I was suffering from immense pain from binding of my breasts everyday.

Soon the belt started cutting through my flesh. But for my self-esteem I continued binding the breasts. I would wake up in the morning to clean my wounds and replace the belt. Sometimes I would place clean pieces of cloth on the strips of wounds first and then the belt. I could not stand my schoolmates noticing that I had breasts. The wounds became deeper and septic. They smelt horribly. I told my classmates that I was sick and that I would not be attending classes. They continually made that excuse for me during class lessons. I tried letting my breasts free for two days but caught a fever instead. I became helpless in there. I called a friend to find painkillers for me because the pain was worsening. The stench from my wounds was unbearable. My vest was wet with secretions from the wounds. She felt my temperature and realised it was higher than normal. She advised me to report to the sick bay.

At the sick bay the nurse examined my temperature and found that I had malaria. I was put on treatment. Two days later, I was even weaker due to the added effects of the chloroquin. She had called on a group of girls to thoroughly clean the sick bay from the stench oozing from my body. Once the place was clean she came in to check on other patients awaiting treatment. The room still smelt so bad. This is when she told me that there was something wrong with me and that she needed to do a thorough check-up on me. I knew what was on her mind. She suspected that I had done an abortion. Previously, some girls had done abortions and had developed complications. They smelt because of the heavy bleeding. I hesitated to the check-up but had I no choice after all. As I lay on a stretcher she pressed my stomach. The look on her face showed it was evident that the stench from my body was too much for her. She seemed to find nothing but asked me to take my shirt off. She was horror-struck the moment I took off my shirt. In shock she asked what was happening to me. I told her the truth but begged her to forgive me. She was annoyed that I had kept this a secret from her while she was busy treating me for something that was not the real problem. She asked the teachers on duty to rush me to hospital. The doctors there could not understand why I would intentionally treat myself to so much pain.

I explained why but they saw it as a stupid excuse.

I was discharged from hospital and reported back to school. I promised the nurse and some of the teaching staff that I was never going to bind my breasts again. But that was a lie because soon I had again got a nice strip of cloth to serve as my new saviour. I even made several of them such that I was clean all the time. After all, cloth did not harm as much as the belts did. I kept this way for many years until I left school. Outside school I had more freedom to do what I wished with myself. I made myself nice 'boob closets'. My brain was at work full time. I used these and bandages too for about eight years. As the years went by, I came up with better inventions.

Today I wear binders. A binder is a very tight vest made for actresses when playing roles that require them not to have breasts. No more belts, strips of cloth or bandages. I have the scars from the continuous wounds although they are now fading. I had difficulties breathing when I first wore the binders but I am now used to them. I have these breasts but at the same time I don't have them. I do not enjoy looking at myself in a full mirror. I avoid it. I love to look at myself once fully dressed. In the near future I will completely get rid of these breasts. I hope to go for a mastectomy. This is surgery where one can have their breasts taken off. That will be real liberation for me and I believe that day shall come.

I always thought that I was alone in this world of binding breasts. Half my liberation came when I saw one of Zanele Muholi's photographs. Zanele is a South African lesbian activist who does her work mainly through photography. In a way that photograph saved me. It is that of a young woman binding her breasts with a bandage. When I first looked at that photograph at the Gay and Lesbian Archives in South Africa, I calmly went down on the floor. It was as if I was looking at myself. It brought a feeling of "I am not alone" within me.

Having met many transgender lesbians who bind their breasts, I still ask myself why I continued harming myself for all those years. Why I got those wounds and still didn't take off that belt. But I am a transgender. I am not exactly what people think I am when they see or look at me. The real me has no boobs. I do not conform to traditional gender norms either. For instance I hate calling myself a man, even if I am not a conformist woman either. A transgender person is one who does not fit into the traditional gender stereotypes. Many times, these people feel and act in a manner that does not match with their biological sex. I am only a biological woman in the sense that I have a vagina and boobs. I also have a beautiful pair of legs but not even what people have done to me in the past can change who I am or how I feel. I was created this way. I was, still am, and always will be. ■

MY LOVE LIFE AT ITS TWIST

Illustration by Alexandra Dean Grossi

I was born out of love to this earth alone; driven to happiness, for my parents made everything look pretty simple! I grew up knowing life was just a melody I needed to dance to. I only knew it was out of love that wind blew to my direction of presence! As I grew up, I wasted every piece of love I had, they called it 'hooliganism'. My sexual orientation was unnatural they say! "My gait is intolerable, my handwriting confirms my intentions while I try to mask myself in poetry, my speech and ideas sound pretty organized but they appear from a 'wrong' body and my voice confirms it. It's not by choice that several and most of the habits that define the ladies don't actually apply to me despite my hilarious figure...hmmmm! I must brag, God made me perfectly well". The world started pointing fingers at me; I lost the love....i gained the hate.

I miss those days when I was pampered, when I was as innocent as a lamb, sinless like a virgin, I miss the trust and integrity I held, up high like a wild guava, I long to once more have the tenderness every one gave me, for they made it look like it was for a life time. The loneliness of my being single has pressed me too hard on the wall, I have wished I had someone to share my agony with, someone I could share my blame with, someone that can blend with my misfortune though I am not worthy for any one's piece of heart for I am not myself qualifying enough to love myself! The hardest part is finding a partner; for most of us fear to come out! As a Ugandan lesbian I still have a lot to figure out! Though, i must live and fight to be understood for I am who I am naturally and not by choice. As i clocked 25, i met the turning point of my life; forever is such a short time, for me to talk about the beauty in her; may be for eternity!



The long wide fingers beautified with rings; the one I planted on her as our engagement, the diamond piece on her thumb which reminds us of the 5th of May, the Friday we met, each story is told by the shining metals on her hands. I love to talk about her hands, but she won't let me, as she constantly slides her fingers into my hands calling for a firm grip, the grip that weakens my speech! As I write my first page of our love story she holds me tight into her arms, with her hands scratching my back ,whispering that she already completed the first chapter, she calls it the work of her hands, our love story; the story that once or twice powders our noses in disbelief. She counts the hair on my head with her long, tender and thick palms as she stretches my chics with her teeth. This feeling makes me run helpless, only to reside on her thorned apples of her chest. I can barely remember the number of break ups we have sustained like the footballer's injuries but her tattooed arms remind me of the hardest fights we have had. Having failed to carry her bag or open for her our car door or having not called her" baby"!

Her hands lead me to her hairy body especially the stretch of thin hair that appears below her navel flowing like the source of the Nile, as I rub my tiny babyish hands on her tummy, she grasps my head and leads me to her piercing apples! Her hands give me the navigation key to her soft, warm body. As we sit out at the balcony, holding each other's hands, counting the stars in the sky, her firm grip makes me get butterflies in my tummy, I swear the beauty in her hands is stronger than the tide; it waves out my breath, irrigates me with electric sparks, makes my toes dance and leaves my eyes kneeling down.

I can't forget to remember, the fateful day, the dark rainy night when we met! It was such a holy tragedy, the lightening and thunders echoing in the night! Her

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hair was wet like that of a wild cat, she shivered like a newly born, she was truly helpless! It couldn't wait to strategize my mission of letting her fall into my chest. Gently I walked towards her as I sighed in imagination, having her in my hands. As she opened her eyes to me, they produced the green light that signaled me to go ahead! I tremblingly offered her my hand as I panicked to say a word. She took my hand into her beautiful, well made finger spaces, which had been cold infested like ice packs. I gave her a firm grip, my heart melted in dismay, I felt like Heavens had swallowed my soul. In her hands I found the warmth to sweat. I tried to open my damp lips to say a word but the panting couldn't let me...i stammered as I asked her to allow my chest be her new home. I lifted her up, as she dripped like a down pour, I comfortably held her by her narrow bottle like waist, she killed me by placing her long woolen wet hair on my chest. As we walked towards my cave, I saw us walk down the aisle. It was a like a miracle, an answered prayer, a dream come true...an inexpressible event of my life!

Again and later we were inseparable love birds, but the beauty still lies in her hands. The magic that she portrays as she slides her nails over my bear chest, throws a hell of demons out of a possessed pig! You know I need eternity to talk about her beauty! The light emitted out of her eyes is stronger than the sun rays, it weakens my eye balls as I take a glance at the

beautiful piece of creation God spent a little more time creating! And damn it, it's all mine! God saw it wanting to complete His piece of work with a set of dental formula; white, planted on an African gum; you can now imagine the freshness her breath showers me with! Her breath sows a garden of goose pimples all over my body. I sit back and sigh in disbelief, but I am confident she is all mine. This woman has thick complete lips that drain my saliva as I endlessly cleanse them with my rolling tongue. They take me to bed just like a baby on the mother's breast. Her hands once more direct me to the epitome of her pleasure; her chest!

I won't promise you Heavens with its story told paradise, neither roses with their sharp thorns nor will I promise tenderness, all I will promise you is myself! Having tasted the sweetest of your hands, paradise can wait; the scent of your breath only makes me imagine that you are not just human but an angel. You are the piece of creation God forgot to keep in heaven and I am proud to share my sinfulness with an angel for I then know that Heaven doesn't just await me but I am in Heaven already. I can never get enough of your beauty that's why I can unendingly talk about you my possession! You know forever is such a short time for me to talk about the beauty

of your hands, yet the rest are not yet touched, I need eternity to completely draw your beauty on paper! I passionately love you. The beauty in you has refreshed my memory, with you I am born again. ■

TRANSGENDER

THE PAIN AND SURPRISING TRIUMPHS OF BEING TRANSGENDER IN AFRICA

By Audrey Mbuga

First published October 2014

My name is Audrey Mbugua.

I was born thirty years ago in Kenya and assigned the male gender. After birth, I was named Andrew Mbugua. I was then named Eddy, though the name Eddy was never entered in my official documents.

At the age of nineteen I began being mentally conflicted because of my male gender – I just hated the male gender role and identity, and I didn't know what to do.

I thought it was something everyone went through. I plaited my hair and my parents went berserk. Indeed they flatly refused to pay for my university fees because I was "gay". So I shaved my hair and thought with time things would clear in my head and the confusion would go. However, the confusion and conflict never went away; it only gripped me further and never let go.

I thought maybe I was gay but then after introspection I knew that was not the case. Then I thought I was losing my mind and I sought help from a medical officer

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in our university clinic. She reached out for her Bible and started reading some versus. My first break through came in my Sexual and Reproductive Health class during my third year in the university. The lecturer, a Dr. Abok, wrote the words "gender identity disorder" on the white board and explained what it was. Everyone turned at the back of the class where I was seated and a roar of laughter shook the class. The lecturer asked what was happening and they pointed at me saying "that is Barbara" - apparently my classmate used to call me Barbara.

IT GETS MORE DIFFICULT

I went to the library, on the internet and through my mother's medical book, and in three months time I had a trove of documents about gender identity disorders. Eventually I decided I would be who I really was inside.

My hope was that I would not develop facial hair, and my voice would not break further. I didn't have money for hormone therapy (oestrogen shots) and I knew it would be impossible to get them from the university's clinic. I found a cheaper "treatment" option - contraceptive pills.

I only managed to receive the proper treatment after I got the diagnosis in a government hospital. Though the hospital discontinued my treatment (at the age of 25 years, they asked me to get parental consent), they had treated my bouts of depression and I was back on my two feet.

In 2008, I graduated from the university and began looking for a job. It was hard – not because I had poor graduation grades, but because some of my certificates indicated I was male and my name was Andrew Mbugua.

I thought of a plan to get myself out of the rut but the lawyers I met and requested to help change my name said it was impossible. They even doubted those academic testimonials were mine.

In 2010, I wrote to the Kenya National Examination Council (KNEC), Kenya's national examining body, and they told me they could change the names and gender mark in the certificates of people who were undergoing or who had undergone gender change. Additionally, they gave me a list of the documents they needed to effect that change. In August 2012, I visited their offices and handed over

my application for change of details (deed poll, affidavit and gazette notice). The officer who received me requested me to prove that the certificate I handed over to her was mine. I told her that was the reason I wanted KNEC to change some details because I was not getting jobs because of the very same issue. She told me they would not change the details because they suspected it wasn't my certificate. I requested her to consult their legal department and went home.

RUNNING INTO MORE WALLS

After eight days, KNEC informed me that they would not change the names and gender mark in my certificate. I wrote to them in March 2013 (this time I copied the CEO of the KNEC) requesting them to reconsider my application. The officer who had handled my application earlier requested me to resend it (apparently she threw away my application documents). I resent the documents, and they never got back to me. I discussed the matter with a human rights advocate and he wrote to the KNEC. The KNEC wrote back to him and flatly refused to change the name and gender mark in the certificate, claiming it might lead to fraud.

In early May 2013, I filed a court case seeking orders to have the KNEC change the name and for them to remove the gender mark in the certificate. The news of a man who became a woman, and who then sued the government to be re-issued another certificate spread like wildfire. We had anticipated reactions from across society but not at the levels we were witnessing.

There was huge condemnation from a minority of Kenyans but support from Kenyans from all walks. It was tough, especially with a group of hardline Christian lawyers requesting the case to be thrown out because "it would lead to legalisation of homosexuality and lesbianism".

INSIDE TRANSPHOBIA

Additionally, there were all the trolls in social sites trying to bully me and the people who were supporting the transgender cause. It became apparent the KNEC were not taking the case seriously – instead of them responding to our court documents they were responding to media articles. The viciousness of the haters was well demonstrated when someone wrote some profanities and threats on my gate.

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Above: Audrey Mbuga
Below: Audrey growing up as Andrew



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Having been in transgender activism for some time, I knew transphobia - and even physical harm of transgender activists - was a reality rather than a mere concern.

I chose to soldier on since it was more honourable to die trying to solve the real challenges of transgender people rather than of hunger, suicide and other leading causes of deaths in the transgender community. I shook off the frustration and prepared myself for the worst.

It didn't take long for something to happen. The Non-government organization (NGO) Coordination Board refused to register an organisation I founded, Transgender Education and Advocacy (TEA). I implored them but they refused. And, this is after they took the equivalent of \$350 from me as registration fee. Additionally, the Attorney General and the Kenya's Ombudsman wrote to me informing me that public hospitals in Kenya were not obligated to provide me sex reassignment surgery.

A BETRAYAL

The final blow was the hostility some mainstream NGOs directed towards me.

Years ago, we had approached these NGOs for legal assistance but they arrogantly spurned the transgender community.

My sense too was that many in the NGOs sector don't want solutions for what is ailing Africa – they want to enjoy huge salaries and allowances for protecting minorities such as transgender people. I felt a massive weight on my shoulders and I was fast running out of gas.

But then I remembered the days I slept hungry because I was unemployed and my parents no longer supported me because they blamed me for not getting a job. I remembered when I tried to kill myself because I did not see a way out of the woods. I recalled the days I used to hide from my peers because I didn't want them to see the failure I was. I remembered the nasty comments and humiliation I suffered in boardrooms when I went for job interviews.

These memories and experiences told me there was only one thing I could do - develop a thick skin and a very tough mind. Suddenly the storm blew over and everything calmed down. I began to see through the fog and fought on. Some of the people who were resisting the work we were doing reached out to us. I saw the levels of confidence in the transgender community rising.

FINALLY, A VICTORY

In July of 2014, the court ordered the NGO Coordination Board to register our organisation and to pay us the legal fees we used in the case. And on October 7, 2014 the KNEC was ordered to reissue me with a new secondary

school certificate with my name Audrey Mbugua Ithibu and with no gender mark.

I knew then that we had threaded the eye of the needle. Two days later, I held that judgment in my hand.

I know some people might appeal the ruling, and they are entitled to, but I remain more confident than ever that we have the capability to overcome any hurdle that lies ahead of us.

I am aware that there are thousands of others out there who are going through hard times because their environments are not sensitive to the challenges transgender people face. I am aware that there are parents who do not know how to handle gender confusion in their children, and wish they could beat these children to bring them back to their senses.

MOVING ON

There is nothing very complex I can say. Only that I would encourage transgender people and their families to be part of the solution. To seek information from progressive health workers. Parents need to stop demoralising their transgender children. I remember my father at one time asking me; "How can I walk with you? What will I tell people?" It was the most hurtful thing he ever said to me.

Yet, in some ways, I understand where he was coming from. I don't know whether I would have handled the matter better if I had been him. He didn't have any information about gender identity disorders and I never shared with my parents much about what was happening to me.

Also, there must be an expiry date on blaming parents for their mistakes. I have made mistakes. I have regrets about some of the things I did to cope with my problems. I drowned myself in alcohol and smoking. I was hostile to people because I was suspicious and thought they meant me harm. I disrespected myself and self harmed myself with negative PEERS (people who encourage errors, rudeness and stupidity). I became promiscuous and resentful. The transphobes were treating me like garbage and I did it to myself ten times worse. I regret because I know I had a choice of making better decisions and I didn't. I do not regret being a transgender person – it is not a choice I made. I had no control over it.

Luckily for me, though it seemed like eternity, it was only two years and I managed to salvage much of what I lost. I reconciled with my family and myself. And, this is why I am doing this work. I believe transgender people should not be thrown in the dustbin. There is redemption out there but we have to search for it and hold on to hope when self doubt, transphobia and hatred encounter us. We need to learn to shake off the frustrations that we face and have faith in our abilities. We do not have to be only the poster children of human rights violations in Africa ■

WHERE IS OUR HONESTY?

By Professor Morris Ogenga-Latigo

This article first appeared in The Weekly Observer Thursday, 13 December 2012

When Hon David Bahati introduced the anti-homosexuality bill in Parliament in 2009, the country was abuzz with excitement and loud support for the bill. Then, I, Andrew Mwenda and few other Ugandans, urged understanding and caution, and COUNSELLED against legislating with emotion, prejudice and blunt insensitivity.

Given the violent hostility shown towards homosexuals as a result of the bill, we had hoped that, with sobriety, the bill would be left to die in the 8th Parliament. This, unfortunately was not to be!

When the Speaker of Parliament, Rt Hon Rebecca Kadaga, defended Uganda's right to legislate on homosexuality at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) meeting in Canada this October, passion for the bill erupted as never before.

Ugandans told off the western world, arguing that homosexuality was alien to our culture and that we were ready to forego their foreign aid and even die defending our cultural and religious purity.

On her return, Speaker Kadaga was welcomed as a national heroine. In an unprecedented prayer in Parliament, MPs joined hands with Christian fundamentalists such as Pastor Ssempe ? an avid campaigner for the bill ? and Muslim sheikhs in praise of God for the gift of Kadaga.

On her part, the Speaker promised that Parliament would enact the anti-homosexuality law "as a Christmas gift" to Ugandans. Of course, in defending UGANDA's position on the bill in Canada, Speaker Kadaga was absolutely right and her stand was that of a true Ugandan patriot.

However, taking the prayer to Parliament by religious proponents of the bill and her promise to them raised obvious disquiet. Also, looking at the vitriolic response of some Ugandans to the compassionate appeal by Archbishop Desmond Tutu ("Tutu urges UGANDA to drop bid to jail homosexuals", The Red Pepper, Decem-

ber 9, 2012), one must worry for our country.

Rather than this bill being an objective and considered response to a national challenge, the process is now one of BLIND emotion and prejudice driven by fundamentalist Christians- with their Pharisaic claims of unblemished religious goodness and holier-than-thou attitude.

More importantly, it has become a real national tragedy - of denial and hiding of our moral guilt; of hate campaign against unfortunate members of our society and of exposure of Parliament.

With accusations of homosexuality against prominent Christian preachers in Uganda, pedophilia amongst Catholic priests and ordination of homosexual Protestant bishops and priests in Europe and America, inauguration of a mosque to serve homosexual Muslims in France, etc, and our sad failure to prevent and actively rally against permissiveness (kimansulo, prostitution), witchcraft and corruption that now pervade our country, who amongst us has the moral or religious standing to "throw the first stone"?

The truth is that homosexuality is a social phenomenon that hinges on both a person's genetic constitution and the social environment to which one is exposed, and is as old as humanity. Contrary to the lies peddled by defenders of the bill, homosexually-oriented people have always been part of our African society.

In my Acholi community, they were never outrightly rejected but were instead quietly helped to cope. Even the story of Kabaka Mwanga and his martyrdom of Christians has a homosexuality twist to it.

It must also be made clear that homosexuality is completely different from sexual abuse by perverted and mentally deranged men who sexually molest babies, lure and sexually abuse young girls and boys (the Mubiru way), rape fellow men, or even practise bestiality. Rather than the compassion, love and care in normal same sex relationships, theirs is abomination

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Professor Morris Ogenga-Latigo



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and heartache that no culture on earth tolerates. Secondly, the bill as it is - "Anti-homosexuality Bill" - is no more than a piece of hate legislate on.

If we had recognized the genetic basis of homosexuality but sought to minimize its spread due to changing social environment, our approach and bill would have been different. A "Prevention of the Propagation of Homosexuality Bill" would be the right bill.

Thirdly, the promotion of any bill, no matter how urgent it is, must not undermine the standing of Parliament and the neutrality of the Speaker. In this particular case, where the speaker already promised the outcome of the bill before due process and parliamentary debate, how will Parliament avoid being labeled a mere "Rubber Stamp" and how will the image of the speakership as being neutral be SUSTAINED?

Lastly, we should enact laws that truly address our challenges and can be effectively implemented without societal disruption. We must stop deluding ourselves that the Anti-homosexuality bill is our God-approved contribution to the world's fight against moral decay. For, we are but a tiny and largely inconsequential part of this world with no capacity to swim against its tide. Yes, Parliament can enact the anti-homosexuality law but it will not be a "Christmas gift" to this country. For, Jesus Christ who was born on Christmas day was a Christ of compassion and love, a sacrifice for sinners, and a Christ to heal and redeem but not condemn and sow hatred.

Merry Christmas to you all.

The author is the former Leader of Opposition, 8th Parliament. ■

POETRY SPOTLIGHT

I DO NOT RECOGNIZE YOU MY UGANDA

My sister, my brother
My brother, my sister
My uncle, my aunty
My nephew and my niece
My father and my mother
I do not recognize you

Mr. Police man, Mr. Politician
My teacher, my doctor
My neighbor, my driver
My media, my church
My country, my people
I do not recognize you

Once upon a time
So loving so violence free
But after two thousand nine
You were turned into hateful people
It changed you, turned you against me
Made you hateful made you cold
My country my people
I do not recognize you

– Miss Pride 2013



IMAGE: Andrew Regan/Wikimedia Commons

“Ugandan Members of Parliament have recently revived efforts to pass a new ‘anti-homosexuality law’ as a “Christmas present to Ugandans”; this comes a few months after the Constitutional Court of Uganda struck down the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014 (AHA) on grounds that it was passed without the quorum required by the constitution,” writes Godiva Akullo.

Uganda: New Unnatural Sexual Practices Bill – the Anti-Homosexuality Act reincarnated?
December 7, 2014 By Godiva Akullo 0

“Ugandan Members of Parliament have recently revived efforts to pass a new ‘anti-homosexuality law’ as a “Christmas present to Ugandans”; this comes a few months after the Constitutional Court of Uganda struck down the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014 (AHA) on grounds that it was passed without the quorum required by the constitution,” writes Godiva Akullo.

The AHA, right from its introduction as a bill in 2009, created an international uproar. Many governments and international NGOs condemned the bill as a ‘draconian’ and regressive law due to the proposed death penalty for ‘repeat’ offenders.

The new bill, titled The Prohibition of Promotion of Unnatural Sexual Practices Bill, 2014, which is yet to be tabled before parliament does not explicitly mention homosexuality. However, it bears a close resemblance to AHA. Hon. Latif Ssebagala, a Member of Parliament,

has recently, with permission of the Speaker of Parliament, put on the Parliamentary record a collection of signatures of 261 MPs who support the immediate tabling of this new law in order to ‘protect the values of Uganda.’ In light of its imminent passing, it is important to consider key features of the bill.

While the law does not explicitly mention homosexuality, it defines ‘unnatural sexual practice’ as: a sexual act between persons of the same sex, with or between transsexual persons; a sexual act with an animal; and, anal sex within the meaning of section 145 of the Penal Code Act. Section 145 of the Penal Code — currently the only law that prohibits homosexual acts — criminalises ‘Carnal Knowledge against the order of nature’. The definition of unnatural sexual acts in the bill lumps persons in same-sex relationships together with people who practice bestiality. A new feature of the bill is that ‘anal sex’ is explicitly included in the definition. If passed, the bill will criminalise not only anal sex between persons in same-sex relationships but also anal sex between heterosexual couples.

Another distinct feature of the bill is that it criminalises persons on the basis of sexual orientation as well as gender identity. The bill includes sex with transsexual persons and sex between transsexual persons in the definition of unnatural sexual acts. A transsexual person is defined as ‘a person born with the physical characteristics of one sex but who has undergone or is preparing to undergo sex- change surgery’.

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An optimist might argue that since there is no mention of transgender people who have no intention of undergoing gender re-assignment surgery, such people are not criminalized. However, the ignorance of issues surrounding gender identity portrayed from this blanket criminalization of 'transsexuals' indicates that the gender identity of transgender people who do not go through surgery is not recognized and they will be treated as homosexuals.

Section 2 of the bill is particularly wide. It prohibits any person from promoting or aiding and abetting the promotion of unnatural sexual practices. Among other things, the bill makes it a criminal offence for any person to lease or sublease premises for purpose of engaging in unnatural sexual practices. It is difficult to imagine the kind of questions a landlord would have to ask in order to conclude that this is the purpose of the lease. Not only does this section invite landlords to pry into their tenants' private affairs, it gives landlords a license to arbitrarily evict tenants on suspicion of 'unnatural sexual practices' in order to avoid arrest and prosecution.

Many LGBT Ugandans are currently facing such arbitrary evictions. The bill will make it lawful for landlords to evict tenants who they suspect of being LGBT, regardless of whether or not they are engaging in 'unnatural sexual practices' on the premises. The evicted tenants have no recourse in law. It seems that the intention of the Members of Parliament is to ensure the homelessness of as many LGBT people as possible in a country where there is no public housing system or homeless shelters.

Because of the gap in the provision of social services by the government, many individuals depend on family for support. For instance, if one can no longer afford to rent a house or raise their children, the next available option is to move in with a family member until such a time as you are able to provide for yourself. At the same time, family members and other relatives remain one of the biggest threats to LGBT people in Uganda. There are reports of LGBT individuals being subjected to exorcism exercises, corrective rape and lynching at the hands of family members.

LGBT organisations and health providers to be prohibited?

Section 2 effectively criminalises the work of all the LGBT organizations currently operating in Uganda and many HIV/AIDS service providers that support them. It makes it an offence to publish, advertise, print, broadcast or distribute any information intended or likely to facilitate engaging in unnatural sexual practices.

Organisations like Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG), and Ice Breakers Uganda (IBU), regularly disseminate information on safe sex practices for LGBT people. IBU recently opened up a clinic where it provides basic sexual and reproductive health care to members of the LGBT community in Uganda. If the bill is passed in its current form, all the people involved in carrying out sex education campaigns or providing medical assistance will be liable to imprisonment for 7 years.

Section 3 makes it a criminal offence for any person to fund or sponsor another person with intent to promote unnatural sexual practices. LGBT organizations in Uganda, like many NGOs, receive funding from donor organizations to run their programs. At first glance, it appears that this section is intended to criminalise such funding. However, the penalty created for the offence is imprisonment for 7 years, which does not apply to other 'legal persons' such as corporations that fund the activities of organizations doing LGBT work.

One interesting aspect of this law, particularly considering the actions of many anti-gay campaigners in Uganda in the past, is that it makes it an offence for any person to make any representation of a person engaged in unnatural sexual practices. This prohibition applies to publication, exhibition, cinematography, information technology or any other means. This offence, which carries a penalty of imprisonment for 7 years, would also cover the conduct of some anti-gay campaigners in Uganda who show fetish gay porn in public places such as churches in order to 'educate' the masses on the 'dangers' of homosexuality or local tabloids that publish pictures of people engaged in homosexual acts in order to 'expose' the vice.

Section 7 of the Bill provides that any person convicted of an offence under the law would be ineligible to apply for adoption, custody, guardianship or fostering of a child in Uganda. This creates a problem for LGBT Ugandans who have children, putting them at risk of losing their children simply because they are LGBT. It may also motivate parents, relatives and ex partners to challenge the parental rights of LGBT people by accusing them of homosexuality.

The bill prohibits trafficking in persons for purposes of engaging in unnatural sexual practices – this language is similar to that used in international anti-trafficking laws. The offences of trafficking in persons and inducement to commit unnatural sexual practices specifically mention that the use of force, fraud or coercion is necessary for the offence to be committed.

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Section 8 of the bill states that consent is not a defence to any offence under the Act, which means that it criminalises private consensual sexual conduct between adults as well. This bill, just like AHA before it, presents an uphill task for any person charged with enforcing it, particularly the sections relating to the use of information technology and match making.

The Anti-Homosexuality Act reincarnated?

The concerns raised with the AHA – its impact on freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of assembly and the right to privacy – apply equally, if not more so, to the PPUSP Bill. The prohibition of publications, broadcasts, printing, or publishing any material ‘intended to promote unnatural sexual acts’ shall, depending on how it is enforced, affect journalists, academics, health workers, LGBT activists and basically anyone who may write or disseminate information around any of the practices that the bill defines as unnatural.

If this law is passed in its current form, LGBT people and allies will not be able to freely meet and organise because any discussion would likely be criminal. LGBT organising in Uganda has already been pushed underground because it is frowned upon.

A few years ago, the Minister for Ethics and integrity interrupted and closed down a workshop organized by LGBT activists to discuss project planning and advocacy. He claimed that the workshop was illegal, which it wasn't. Some members of the LGBT community

sued him. The case, which was decided by the High Court after AHA was passed, has now been appealed. The new bill, if passed, will sanction such conduct by government officials, allowing them to shut down meetings on suspicion that ‘unnatural sexual practices’ are being discussed.

The bill defines ‘promotion’ as ‘recruiting, encouraging, soliciting, or inciting a person to engage in unnatural sexual practices by providing premises, distributing textual or visual material or any other means to interest a person in unnatural sexual practices.’ This definition is very wide and might include a university providing a platform to discuss issues surrounding homosexuality. It would capture, for example, a hotel providing a conference room to people who intend to discuss sexual and reproductive health issues, which of course include ‘unnatural sexual practices’; it would also include bloggers writing about homosexuality. The definition places an unnecessary burden on hotel owners and managers to question anyone booking a space on the content of the discussion they intend to have on the premises.

Like AHA before it, the bill has the effect of criminalising people who wish to provide much needed services like health care to LGBT Ugandans. It places lives at an even greater risk.

The inclusion of anal sex in the definition of unnatural sexual practices means that many of the provisions of the bill apply to heterosexual couples who engage in anal sex. If the bill is passed into law, it remains to be seen whether it would be enforced against both homosexual and heterosexual Ugandans.





Dr. Sykvia Tamale

Public Dialogue 18 November 2009, Makerere University.

I would like to thank the Human Rights and Peace Centre (HURIPPEC) for inviting me here this afternoon to share my views on this bill. It is great that HURIPPEC organised this to be a dialogue and not a debate because debates have a tendency to polarise and divide along irrational gut-level responses. A dialogue, on the other hand, usefully sets the stage for people to listen to each other with understanding, tolerance and helps build bridges. I hope that this public dialogue will mark the first stepping stone for all of us to embark on a rewarding journey of mutual respect, simple decency and fairness.

Mr Chairperson,

My brief talk this afternoon is divided into four sections:

First, I will address issues of mutual concern that I share with Hon. Bahati; Secondly, I will open the window of history and offer us a glimpse of the politics of hatred

and discrimination that has affected the struggle for human rights over the years;

Third, I will highlight the social meaning of the bill; and Finally, I shall put on my legal hat and outline the legal implications that this bill holds for our country if passed into law.

I. COMMON ISSUES OF CONCERN

I have scrutinised the bill thoroughly and the Honourable Member of Parliament David Bahati will be surprised to learn that I share some of his convictions. For example, Hon. Bahati I share your desires as expressed in the preamble to the bill:

1. To strengthen the nation's capacity to deal with emerging internal and external threats to the family unit. It is nevertheless important to point out that most of these can hardly be realised through the regulatory mechanism of the law.
2. To protect the cherished culture of the people of Uganda, particularly the positive aspects of it.
3. To protect Ugandan children and youth who are vulnerable to sexual abuse and exploitation—whether the abuse is hetero and homosexual.

I do not have the time and space this afternoon to engage in a detailed sociological discussion of the concept that the bill refers to as the 'Traditional African Family'. However, it is my humble opinion that the concept needs to be unpacked and scrutinised. Mr. Chairperson as you very well know, Africa is a vast continent with an extremely rich and diverse cultural history. Indeed it would be next to impossible to mark a particular institution as the one and only 'Traditional African Family'.

I will cite just a few examples to demonstrate that matrimonial relations among various African communities have differed a great deal:

a) While marriage between first cousins was traditionally taboo among the Baganda, marriages among blood-related kin were considered the best unions among the Bahima here in Uganda;

b) There is the phenomenon of 'chigadzamapfihwa' where the family of a barren wife among the Ndaus of Zimbabwe would 'donate' her brother's daughter to her husband to become a co-wife and bear children on behalf of the barren woman;

c) Practices of non-sexual woman-to-woman marriages among various African customs e.g., the Nandi and Kisii of Kenya, the Igbo of Nigeria, the Nuer of Sudan and the Kuria of Tanzania for purposes of coping with various reproductive, social and economic problems; and

d) Levirate marriages where a man inherits his dead brother's wife were a customary requirement in many African communities. While these may have been cultural practices at some point in our history, it is also important to recognise that family institutions all over the world are undergoing rapid transformation. The changes that we see in this basic unit of society are the result of many factors including, economic crises, an increasing number of working mothers, technological advancements, armed conflicts, natural disasters, globalisation, migration, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, etc. Many of these changes and indeed the evolution of culture cannot be halted, certainly not through law.

Perhaps the undisputed value that is a common denominator in all traditional institutions of the family in Africa is the group solidarity that we have embedded in our extended family networks.

Unfortunately, the support, stability, love and respect that were the hallmark of this family model are rapidly being eroded and will soon become history.

Thus, while I agree with you Hon. Bahati that we must seek ways of dealing with issues that threaten our families, I do not agree that homosexuality is one of those issues. Mr Chairperson, Ladies and gentlemen, what issues currently threaten our families here in Uganda? I will name a few:

a) Blood thirsty Ugandans and traditional healers that believe that their good fortune will multiply through rituals of child sacrifice.

b) Rapists and child molesters who pounce on unsuspecting family members. Research undertaken by the NGO, Hope after Rape (HAR) shows that over 50 per cent of child sexual abuse reports involve children below 10 years of age, and the perpetrators are heterosexual men who are known to the victims.[1]

c) Sexual predators that breach the trust placed in them as fathers, teachers, religious leaders, doctors, uncles and sexually exploit young girls and boys. A 2005 report

by Raising Voices and Save the Children revealed that 90 per cent of Ugandan children experienced domestic violence and defilement.[2]

d) Abusive partners who engage in domestic violence whether physical, sexual or emotional. The 2006 national study on Domestic Violence by the Law Reform Commission confirmed the DV was pervasive in our communities. 66 per cent of people in all regions of Uganda reported that DV occurred in their homes and the majority of the perpetrators were – male heads of households. [3] The Uganda Demographic Health Survey of 2006 put the figure slightly higher at 68 per cent. [4]

e) Parents who force their 14-year old daughters to get married in exchange for bride price and marriage gifts.

f) A whole generation of children who were either born and bred in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps or abducted by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in the northern sub-region of Kitgum, Gulu and Pader districts.

g) The millions of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. The Uganda Aids Commission puts the cumulative number of orphans due to AIDS at 2 million. [5]

h) The all-powerful patriarchs that demand total submission and rule their households with an iron hand.

i) Rising poverty levels and growing food insecurity which lead to hunger, disease, suffering and undignified living. Figures from the latest report from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics show that over 60 per cent of Ugandans living in rural areas live below the poverty line.[6]

I do not see how two people who are in a loving relationship and harming no one pose a threat to the family simply because they happen to be of the same sex. The argument that homosexuality is a threat to the continuity of humankind and that it will lead to the extinction of human beings in the world simply does not hold water because there are too many heterosexuals in the world for that to become a reality. How many of you in this room would convert to homosexuality any time soon? So, just as the priests, nuns and monks who are sworn to a life of celibacy will not cause the extinction of humanity, homosexuals will not either.

II. LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Anyone who cares to read history books knows very well that in times of crisis, when people at the locus of power are feeling vulnerable and their power is being threatened, they will turn against the weaker groups in society. They will pick out a weak voiceless group on whom to heap blame for all society's troubles – refugees, displaced populations, stateless persons aka illegal immigrants, minorities with no status, children, the poor, the homeless, commercial sex workers, etc. I will offer a few examples to illustrate this point:

In Uganda, colonialists at various times blamed traditional chiefs and elders as well as Muslims as the main impediments to progress and civilisation.

Dictator Idi Amin blamed Asians for Uganda's dire economic problems and expelled all Indians in the early 1970s.

When Milton Obote's political power was threatened during his second regime in the early 1980s he embarked on a deliberate campaign of hostility towards refugees in Uganda, particularly those of Rwandese extraction. Obote's persecution of the Banyarwanda in Uganda and the whipping up of anti-Rwandese sentiments included the constant reference to his political opponent, Yoweri Museveni as a foreigner from Rwanda.

In the 20 years that northern Uganda faced armed conflict, the NRM administration pointed fingers at Kony and the LRA was blamed for all the atrocities and suffering of the people in the north.

The transmission of HIV/AIDS at various points in our history has been blamed on different — weak constituents including commercial sex workers, truck drivers, young women aged 15-23, and mothers to babies.

When native South Africans faced dire economic crisis they turned against black foreigners, blaming them for the high unemployment rates and sparking off brutal xenophobic attacks against helpless immigrants/migrants and refugees in May 2008. The lesson drawn from these chapters in our recent history is that today it is homosexuals under attack; tomorrow it will be another exaggerated minority.

Homosexuality has troubled people for a very long time.

Some religions find it distressing and there are many debates around it. Mr Chairperson and distinguished participants where did the idea of destroying homosexuality come from? As his excellency President Museveni pointed out at the inaugural Young Achievers Awards Ceremony last weekend, homosexuals existed prior to the coming of Europeans to Uganda. According to the President: 'They were not persecuted but were not encouraged either' (Daily Monitor, 16 November 2009, p2). The idea of destroying homosexuality came from colonialists. In other words, homosexuality was not introduced to Africa from Europe as many would want us to believe. Rather, Europe imported legalised homophobia to Africa.

Homosexuality was introduced as an offence in Uganda directly through laws that were imported from Britain during colonialism. And what did these same colonialists think of the African traditional family in Uganda? They certainly did not introduce sodomy laws in order to protect the traditional African family. In fact they believed that the traditional African family was inferior to their nuclear monogamous one and considered the former barbarous and 'repugnant to good conscience and morality.' This colonial attitude was well exemplified in the infamous 1917 case of R. v. Amkeyo, in which Justice Hamilton dismissed customary marriages as mere 'wife purchase.'

Today, with all the economic, social and political crises facing Uganda, homosexuals present a convenient group to point fingers at as the 'biggest threat' or the 'real problem' to society. Mr. Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, the re-criminalisation of homosexuality is meant to distract the attention of Ugandans from the real issues that harm us. It conveniently diverts the attention of the millions of Ugandans who have been walking the streets for years with their college certificates and no jobs on offer. Ladies and gentlemen, homosexuals have nothing to do with the hundreds of thousands of families that sleep without a meal or the millions of children who die unnecessarily every day from preventable or treatable diseases such as malaria, diarrhea, measles, pneumonia, etc. Homosexuals are not the ones responsible for the lack of drugs and supplies at primary health care centres.

III. THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BILL TO THE AVERAGE UGANDAN

You may think that this bill targets only homosexual individuals. However, homosexuality is defined in such

a broad fashion as to include touching another person with the intention of committing the act of homosexuality. This is a provision highly prone to abuse and puts all citizens (both hetero and homosexuals) at great risk. Such a provision would make it very easy for a person to witch-hunt or bring false accusations against their enemies simply to destroy their reputations and cause scandal. We all have not forgotten what happened to Pastor Kayanja and other men of God in the recent past.

Moreover, the bill imposes a stiff fine and term of imprisonment for up to three years for any person in authority over a homosexual who fails to report the offender within 24 hours of acquiring such knowledge. Hence the bill requires family members to spy on one another. This provision obviously does not strengthen the family unit in the manner that Hon. Bahati claims his bill wants to do, but rather promotes the breaking up of the family. This provision further threatens relationships beyond family members. What do I mean? If a gay person talks to his priest or his doctor in confidence, seeking advice, the bill requires that such person breaches their trust and confidentiality with the gay individual and immediately hands them over to the police within 24 hours. Failure to do so draws the risk of arrest to themselves. Or a mother who is trying to come to terms with her child's sexual orientation may be dragged to police cells for not turning in her child to the authorities. The same fate would befall teachers, priests, local councillors, counsellors, doctors, landlords, elders, employers, MPs, lawyers, etc.

Furthermore, if your job is in any way related to human rights activism, advocacy, education and training, research, capacity building, and related issues this bill should be a cause for serious alarm. In a very undemocratic and unconstitutional fashion, the bill seeks to silence human rights activists, academics, students, donors and non-governmental organisations. If passed into law it will stifle the space of civil society. The bill also undermines the pivotal role of the media to report freely on any issue. The point I am trying to make is that we are all potential victims of this draconian bill.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr told us many years ago, 'Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love.'

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights instructs us: 'All Human Beings are Born Free and Equal in Dignity and Rights.' Many great people that

we respect and admire have spoken out for the rights of homosexuals. These include international award winners and champions of freedom and humanity – President Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Barack Obama. Just yesterday, it was reported that former president of Botswana, Festus Mogae added his voice to those who have come out in opposition to the Bahati Bill (Daily Monitor, 17 November 2009, p10).

We must remember that the principal message at the heart of all religions is one of LOVE ('And now these three remain: Faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love' – 1 Corinthians 13: 13).

All religions teach the virtues of tolerance and urge their followers to desist from passing judgment. Ladies and gentlemen, this bill promotes hatred, intolerance, superiority and violence.

Even if you believe that homosexuality is a sin, this bill is not the best method to address the issue. It is valid to have religious and spiritual anxieties but our jurisprudence has a long history of separating the institutions of religion from the law. The law, Mr Chairperson, does not seek to ally any legal principle with a particular religion. Mr Stephen Langa is free to deliver his lectures on morality but it is unacceptable to reduce what he is preaching into law. In my final submission I want to turn to a legal analysis of this bill.

IV. THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BILL

Mr Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen, the Anti-Homosexuality bill has a total of 18 clauses. 12 of these 18 clauses (i.e., 67 per cent) are not new at all as they simply replicate what we already have on our law books. So the first point I want to highlight is that Parliament has been given a bill two-thirds of whose content duplicates existing laws.

So, let us examine the content of the remaining six clauses that introduce new legal provisions.

Clauses 6 provides for the recognition of the right to privacy and confidentiality for the victim of homosexual assaults. This is a procedural issue that no one can dispute and it can easily be inserted in the Penal Code provisions that criminalise rape and aggravated defilement.

Nevertheless, the remaining 5 clauses are extremely

problematic from a legal point of view. They violate Uganda's constitution and many other regional and international instruments that Uganda has ratified.

The interpretation section (Clause 1) replicates several definitions that are provided for elsewhere. Its novel provisions lie in the attempt to define homosexuality and its related activities. I have already alluded to the potential danger that Ugandans face in the threatening and broad fashion that the bill defines a 'homosexual act'.

Clause 13, which attempts to outlaw the 'Promotion of Homosexuality', is very problematic as it introduces widespread censorship and undermines fundamental freedoms such as the rights to free speech, expression, association and assembly. Under this provision an unscrupulous person aspiring to unseat a member of parliament can easily send the incumbent MP unsolicited material via e-mail or text messaging, implicating the latter as one 'promoting homosexuality.' After being framed in that way, it will be very difficult for the victim to shake free of the stigma. Secondly, by criminalising the 'funding and sponsoring of homosexuality and related activities', the bill deals a major blow to Uganda's public health policies and efforts. Take for example, the Most At Risk Populations' Initiative (MARPI) introduced by the Ministry of Health in 2008, which targets specific populations in a comprehensive manner to curb the HIV/AIDS scourge. If this bill becomes law, health practitioners as well as those that have put money into this exemplary initiative will automatically be liable to imprisonment for seven years! The clause further undermines civil society activities by threatening the fundamental rights of NGOs and the use of intimidating tactics to shackle their directors and managers.

Clause 14 introduces the crime of 'Failure to Disclose the Offence' of homosexuality. As I have noted above, under this provision any person in authority is obliged to report a homosexual to the relevant authorities within 24 hours of acquiring such knowledge. Not only does this infringe on the right to privacy but it is practically unenforceable. It dangerously opens up room for potential abuse, blackmail, witch-hunting, etc. Do we really want to move sexual acts between consenting adults into the public realm?

Clause 16 relates to extra-territorial jurisdiction, and basically confers authority on Ugandan law enforcers to arrest and charge a Ugandan citizen or permanent

resident who engages in homosexual activities outside the borders of Uganda. This law enforcement model is normally used in international crimes such as money laundering, terrorism, etc. The Ugandan Penal Code already provides for crimes that call for extra-territoriality. All these touch on the security of the state e.g., treason, terrorism and war mongering (see S.4 of the PCA).

When it comes to offences committed partly within and partly outside Uganda, the Penal Code provides:

'When an act which, if wholly done within the jurisdiction of the court, would be an offence against this Code is done partly within and partly beyond the jurisdiction, every person who within the jurisdiction does or makes any part of such act may be tried and punished under this Code in the same manner as if such act had been done wholly within the jurisdiction. Section 5.'

Note that clause 16 of the Bill employs the disjunctive 'or' which gives it wider reach than S.5 of the Penal Code that uses the conjunctive 'and'. Therefore, what the Bill proposes to do is to elevate homosexual acts to a position of such importance that they appear to be at an even higher plane than murder, rape or grievous bodily harm for which no such provision is made. It is difficult to see any rational basis for such inordinate attention to homosexuality. And how exactly will they enforce this provision? Is the government going to storm the bedrooms of consenting adults, or deploy spies to follow them when they travel abroad in order to establish who they have slept with and how they did it? Does this include heterosexual couples that engage in anal sex? What about our constitutional right to privacy? In short, this provision of the Bill is a gross abuse of the principle of extra-territoriality. But more importantly, the bill carries hidden venom that is bound to spread beyond persons that engage in homosexuality.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of this bill is Clause 18, which requires Uganda to opt out of any international treaty that we have previously ratified that goes against the spirit of the bill. Article 287 of the Constitution obliges Uganda to fully subscribe to all its international treaties obligations ratified prior to the passing of the 2005 constitution. We cannot legislate or simply wish these obligations away. Indeed, international law prohibits us from doing such a thing. Article 26 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties clearly sets out the *pacta sunt servanda* rule which requires that 'Every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it

and must be performed by them in good faith.'

Article 123 (1), a provision deliberately placed in Chapter Seven of the Constitution (dealing with the powers of the Executive) says: 'The President or a person authorised by the President may make treaties, conventions, agreements, or other arrangements between Uganda and any other country or between Uganda and any international organisation or body, in respect of any matter.'

This is a wide power that can only be limited by express language under the Constitution itself. A major procedural limitation is found in the next clause of the same article, which provides: 'Parliament shall make laws to govern ratification of treaties, conventions, agreements or other arrangements made under clause (1) of this article. (Art. 123.2)'

Another substantive limitation is to be found in the Bill of Rights found in Chapter 4. In effect, the President cannot by the mechanism of Article 123(1) sign treaties whose effect would be to amend the Constitution. Indeed, any such treaty would be, as a matter of municipal law, null and void to the extent of such inconsistency, in terms of Article 2 (2) of the Constitution.

Parliament therefore has only a procedural role to incorporate treaties into Ugandan law – and that is the full extent of its powers. It cannot purport to proscribe *ex ante* (before the fact) the limit of the President's treaty making powers. Nor indeed, can parliament bind its own future action by purporting to exercise in advance its power to scrutinize treaties signed by the President and determine which of them to ratify. All that Parliament can do is to either ratify or refuse to ratify a treaty after it is signed, and in the latter case such treaty does not become part of Ugandan law.

This is the balance of executive power and democratic input achieved by Article 123, and one that clause 18 of the Bill is incompetent to amend.

Mr Chairperson, distinguished participants, I wish to end by appealing to members of parliament and all Ugandans that believe in human rights and the dignity of all human beings to reject the Anti-homosexuality bill. I am imploring Hon. Bahati to withdraw his private members bill. Do we really in our hearts of hearts want our country to be the first on the continent to demand that mothers spy on their children, that teachers refuse to talk about what is, after all, out there and that our

gay and lesbian citizens are systematically and legally terrorised into suicide? Ladies and gentlemen, you may strongly disagree with the phenomenon of same-sex erotics; you may be repulsed by what you imagine homosexuals do behind their bedroom doors; you may think that all homosexuals deserve to burn in hell. However, it is quite clear that this Bill will cause more problems around the issue of homosexuality than it will solve. I suggest that Hon. Bahati's bill be quietly forgotten. It is no more or less than an embarrassment to our intelligence, our sense of justice and our hearts.

Thank you for your attention.

RESPONSE AFTER THE Q & A SESSION

Mr Chairperson, in the interest of time I will respond to only three issues:

'Mad people', 'like bats seeing the world upside down', 'animals', 'wicked'... These are some of the words used to describe homosexuals by the audience. All the heckling and vicious jeering... Mr Bahati you commenced your talk this afternoon by saying, 'We are not in the hate campaign'. Well, if you were in any doubt about the fact that your bill is whipping up hatred and violence against homosexuals, just reflect back on the discourse that transpired in the room this afternoon.

Secondly, Mr Chairperson I think it is the height of paternalism and arrogance for Hon. Bahati and Mr Langa to stand here and say they are legislating against homosexuals because they love them, they feel sorry for them, they face the risk of cancer, their lives are reduced by 20 years, etc.

Homosexuals are not asking for your pity, love, approval or redemption. They only want you to affirm their humanness and their right to exist and be different.

Finally, Mr Chairperson, Hon. Bahati asked the question, 'Tamale, do you support homosexuality?' I would like to tell Hon. Bahati that I am a simple woman that recognises all human beings as worthy of dignity and rights and I am not obsessed with how people have sex in the privacy of their bedrooms. I support the rights of all human beings regardless of how and with whom they have sex as long as they are adults and are not harming anyone. So, the question should not be whether I support homosexuality, or heterosexuality for that matter.

Thank you very much Mr Chairperson.

The Dream

By Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera

They say be very careful what you wish for. I was hit by an epiphany in October 2011, seated in a small hotel room, next to the queer square that is right opposite amnesty international office in Amsterdam.

I was overwhelmed with mixed emotions. Feelings of admiration, anxiety and anger...I was angry because of the freedom I was enjoying in this place and as I was listening to the history of the gay movement in the Netherlands, I began to reflect on the possibility: the possibility of freedom and what it would take to achieve it. I was overwhelmed with the need to see change and just like that, the dream for a pride in Uganda; known to some as "the worst place to be gay" was born.

3:00am the following day and I am still awake thinking about this idea of "Freedom". I continued working on my laptop, chatting with fellow insomniacs back home, while going through my Facebook pictures and realized I had many pictures from prides, some of which I attended some

that I was just tagged in. Minutes later, my Facebook status went something like this:

"If YES, why NOT PRIDE? We are not going to wait for the traditional street pride march. Instead we are gonna have pride in Uganda. Some of us have attended pride in the movies, on telly, mini prides after world conferences and (for some, pride is too big for them to imagine) some one too many...there are those who don't know what pride mean. I am bringing pride closer to you. YES in the worst place to be gay. Come 2012 we shall be having BEACH PRIDE in Uganda. If you are

proud of who you are why not join others and celebrate your pride together? If you are interested in volunteering and I mean volunteer...inbox me and we will make this happen and I am sure we can. Let's have Pride in Uganda. If YES why not... Bill or no Bill we are here to stay."

I posted this without much thought of how it was going to be possible but I said the only way this can come true is when the community is supportive. The enormous support the team and I received was overwhelming.

The support from around the world, the local

community, friends and family cannot go unnoticed. Both the organizing and the fundraising committees did a tremendous job to see Pride happen in Uganda. My colleagues at FARUG had to go outside of their schedules and daily programming just to do Pride work.

I want to meet the young guy who wanted to chop off his hand because it was painted rainbow colours and also the one who told his family they had to go for my dad's funeral just to be able to attend Pride. I can't place their faces now.

Turn with us these pages and get a first hand, raw narrative of events stories, pictures, and testimonies, fun, hilarious, sad, scary reflections from individuals who dared, risked, toiled, gave their all to be a part of this historical event for the gay community in Uganda.

Pride is a time when all people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, family, friends etc join to celebrate themselves, their pride to be who they are. It's a week full of activities, like gay parades, film festivals, theme parties, workshops and merry making. - Kasha

I began to reflect on the possibility: the possibility of freedom and what it would take to achieve it. I was overwhelmed with the need to see change and just like that, the dream for a pride in Uganda; known to some as "the worst place to be gay" was born.

MY PRIDE STORY

By **Pepe Julian Onziema**

Everyone outside Uganda is clamoring about Pride in Uganda. Why don't we ever get that excited about our own 'firsts' like others? What is this Pride thing anyway? Well whatever it is to you, I remember my jubilation and writing about my first public Pride parade. It was in the summer of 2008 during the World Out games in Copenhagen, Denmark. I did not participate in any sport though I'd have loved to. I was invited to speak at the Human Rights cluster where I presented three panels; Transgender, MSM/HIV and the Bisexual panel. When all business was done, it was time to seriously play. The Pride Parade! Streets were filled with police to keep the roads clear of cars for the parade. Huge placards with country names on them were displayed my country mates and I went in search for Uganda we found it, so proud to see UGANDA listed! I picked it up with excitement, waved my flag proudly, I felt so free to express myself as a Transgender Ugandan. I was proud.

I secretly promised myself that my next public pride would be in my country. It would make a difference, heavens of change. I didn't know when and how this would happen, but I envisioned it would be within 5 years. And yes it did! One boring day while on Facebook, I opened a notification with an invitation to the Beach Pride Uganda 2012 page, an invitation by the creator of the page Bombastic Kasha. I read the description of the page and I was secretly whooshed away.

I thought for a minute "Wow, imagine that! An opportunity to show the world this isn't the world's worst place to be gay." My beautiful thoughts were soon eroded by what it really would mean for us as Ugandans, Africans considering that my colleague and coordinator of the Beach Pride, Kasha had the idea while in Europe. Thoughts of insecurity, about funding and other minor not so positive thoughts. I didn't comment on the page for a couple of months but observed the activities and progress being made on the page by the volunteers, the fundraising drives, pledges of resources from around the world. I was simply AM-AZED! It went without saying that I'd offer my services to document; photo, video, tweet the event.

My second public Pride festival happened in my country Uganda, the place that a British journalist called "the world's worst place to be gay". This Beach Pride Uganda 2012 finally came to full life after months of preparation, Uganda's LGBT community, my community planned events including a film festival, theme parties [Trans, Funk, Hangover] and beach parade. Call me Kuchu made it among the films screened - I couldn't watch it the

third time because it is a very emotional film that features David Kato's journey. As jet-lagged as I was I couldn't miss any event for sleep or rest. At the movies, Talented Ugandan Kuchus [TUK] performed the Kuchu anthem. I attended the Trans party where we danced, drunk, flirted, laughed, simply good times no one was thrown out of the bar. It was a good day

1 of Pride events. Of course day 2 was a challenge when jet lag enhanced by hangover kicked in.

On Saturday, I woke up feeling good ah! Nice sunny day, good for the beach. So excited I couldn't wait to wear my black cloak, rainbow sash and Ugandan flag. Who cares that it's a hot day and beach pride, all I want is to wear my costume. Secondly, I couldn't wait to use my newly acquired camcorder from my Provincetown buddy Tim McCarthy. My BFF picked me up; he was clad in white sailor's costume and rainbow sash. We were both looking and feeling the part, good. Picked up a couple of friends along the way and hit the road for pride parade in Entebbe.

On arrival at the Botanical Gardens, I was impressed with what the pride committee had done. The stage, trucks were pimped up with rainbow thingies. Activists, community members and friends all had something rainbow to show off socks, T-shirts, armbands, caps, shorts, flags, stickers, teddy bears, name it. The atmosphere was so gay [happy]. The parade began a couple of hours after the scheduled time but when it officially kicked off by the Grand Marshall Maurice Tomlinson DKVVA laureate. Everyone wanted a piece of the huge rainbow flag as they marched to the beat of the music playing on the moving truck, even marched to a homophobic song. Lol!

This event was very significant success. It is one of the

This event for me was about celebrating who I am – a transgender person together with my family. I was celebrating courage, strength and solidarity.

CONTINUED TO NEXT PAGE

historic events of my time. David Bahati's is seeking support on the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda's Parliament, the Minister of Ethics and Integrity, Fr. Simon Lokodo is on a 'rampage' shutting down LGBTI workshops and threatening Civil Society Organizations working on LGBTI issues with closure. Secretive amendments are being proposed for Section 145 of the Penal Code, Evangelical hate is everywhere. I still can't walk on the street without some random person calling me a 'musiyazi' or 'mugay'. This event for me was about celebrating whom I am – a transgender person together with my family. I was celebrating courage, strength and solidarity.

All was not merry. As the event climaxed we had uninvited guests to the party. Armed men in Uganda Police uniform and some plain clothed surrounded us with a couple of pick up trucks. Three cross-dressed professional dancers with TUK were arrested and detained, one of the dancers was beaten and his passport confiscated. They exerted their authority and ordered the event to stop immediately [my camera still rolling]. Activists defied them for a while, rushed to the stage and danced their last dance before some where ordered

onto a police pick up as Frank Mugisha, myself and others drove behind the truck to the police station. Pride drama at the police station for those of us who refused to be taken in made calls alerting our partners and friends of what had happened and ensured that no one slept in detention. Indeed after a couple of hours the three dancers, one English photo-journalist, one South African journalist and five other activists were let free. No charges, in fact the police returned some of the activists back to the beach to find transport back to the city for the after-party. Duh! Of course there was an after-party.

Maybe the timing was wrong as my sentiments before, but it sure felt so right - I have no regrets. As much as I am filled with joy and gratitude in being part of East Africa's first ever pride, I concede that there was a void I felt. Through misty eyes behind the camera I wished I could see my comrades: Victor Mukasa, David Kato [RIP], Val Kalende and Crystal. The Beach Pride in Uganda a month ago was a simple showcase of solidarity demanding our right to peacefully live as Ugandans. We shall keep exploring impossibilities and turn them into possibilities of freedom for Lesbian Gay Transgender Bisexual and Intersex Ugandans. ■

COMMENTARY

PRIVACY & "TRADITIONAL FAMILIES"

By Joanne Nanyange

Now that everyone has sent messages about the president signing the bill and how I am doomed...here is what I have to say. My position is clear...what two consenting adults do in the privacy of their bedroom is and should be none of any one's business. Deep down in your hearts you know this is a hatred campaign and it is absurd that we as a country have sunk this low...to a point of legislating on how two adults should have their sex and with whom.

The bill defines homosexuality as a sexual act. But identifying as a homosexual goes beyond just having sex. It is a way of life. It is someone's identity. How can you throw someone in jail merely because you don't agree with the way they choose to live their lives? It's not like they're harming you in any way! This business that gay people are paedophiles is very uninformed and silly. Your children are at a higher risk of being sexually abused by heterosexuals than by homosexuals. Go check police records! Over 97% of sexual offences are committed by heterosexuals, but I don't see people rushing to criminalise heterosexuality.

Religious fanatics, if we're to make laws based on

what the bible condemns, we would all be in jail. All of you are hypocrites behaving like the biblical Pharisees. If Jesus could let a prostitute wash his feet with her hair, who the hell are you to think you can judge 'sinners' and condemn them? Just because I don't like men with piercings doesn't mean I should ensure they're thrown in jail! If you're worried about the world population, go have sex and give birth to as many kids as you want. Don't make it an obligation for people to have kids when they don't want to. Or better still, start by banishing the Catholic Church and pro-family planning organisations.

If you're worried about the traditional family, you're stupid! We no longer have 'traditional families' in Uganda! All of you are letting your minds be corrupted by neo-colonialism, by the white man's idea of sex and love and marriage! The one introduced by religion and you're pretending to be protecting African values! So all those worried that I am doomed, and celebrating because apparently 'we' have been defeated...you're wrong. Our spirits are not broken and we shall fight this kind of nonsense to wherever it takes us.

To all gay rights activists 'ALUTA CONTINUA' ■

UGANDA PRIDE AND MY DETENTION



By Maurice Tomlinson

I had the privilege of being the Grand Marshall for the first ever Uganda Pride held in Entebbe today, August 4, 2012. As a result, I got my first ride in the back of a police van! This happened when the festive event was broken up after a police raid and I was detained for assisting a 60 year old woman climb into the back of the police van after police officers refused to help her!

The march, dubbed Uganda Beach Pride, was held on the grounds of the Botanical Gardens on the banks of the majestic Lake Victoria. There was a wonderful party atmosphere and apparently one of the beach goers complained to the police that we were conducting a gay wedding(!).

After a very confusing and utterly disgraceful performance at the station by the police (including the officers insisting we all sit on the bare floor until we were processed, one officer pushing a young female to the floor and another verbally abusing the 60 year

old female anthropologist from Makerere University) we were all released without charges or an explanation. The police also detained a female British photo-journalist covering the event. She was only released after a UK army officer came to the police station.

The Pride March had a truly carnival atmosphere and was spoiled by the arbitrary action of the police. None of the other beach goers complained about the events at the march as there was nothing to complain about! Everything was done very tastefully as the organizers were aware that it was a public beach and many young children were around. Many parents even brought their kids over to hear the music and listen to the few speeches and share in the jubilant atmosphere. The Pride organizers even shared food and drinks freely with the onlookers.

I commend the excellent team of Frank and Kasha for pulling off a brave event against all odds. This first-hand exposure to the Ugandan police system gives me even greater respect for the tremendous work these guys do under seemingly impossible odds. Apparently, this kind of arbitrary police action is regular. ■

CLEO'S MOMENTS OF PRIDE

By Cleo

In a candlelit auditorium, people I now call family, flocked in, and in masses. I arrived at the venue at 7:30 to a room full of people-people I now call family, and friends. If you could take a snap shot of this Kodak moment, you would think these people did not have a worry in the world, and wow, how wrong you would be. On the contrary, these people have stared in the face of evil itself, utter hatred so much it would darken the sun at noon. But even then, they still laughed, they still giggled, golden candlelight dancing on their faces.

Earlier on as I had raced through Kampala, on a boda boda, I had said to myself, I would understand if I had found an empty auditorium. I thought it would just be the organizers, and I thought that, that would still be okay, I would still feel accomplished.

But to my utter amazement, as I opened the door to an auditorium packed with these beautiful people, my jaw dropped. I had completely underestimated the deep courage, love and coherence that my family had. As my eyes widened and scanned through this auditorium, flocked with people giggling and laughing and recounting tales of the day that was, with golden candlelight dancing on their faces, my heart couldn't help but sink to a place, a place so deep it made my eyes water, with emotions that mere words fall short of expressing.

These are the people that I have come to -over time - call family, and not just because we all are social pariahs, in our own country, but because since the time I joined this movement we have come together to gain a deeper understanding of who we are. We have discovered ourselves in each other's lives, we have held that hand for that brother who was dying and still carried on with our

lives, we have cried burning tears together. We have run in high heels (for us transwomen) with our brothers running away from police raids, we have fought and made up, life has tried us in all sorts of ways, and found us not wanting. Like a blacksmith forges iron in fire, we have been forged in the reddest of fires into these people that even then retain their humanity.

And when we jubilate, and dance and sing, we do so because we fully appreciate it, having been to the bottom of the abyss and back, we do so like there is no tomorrow, because there actually may not be a tomorrow for us-the parliament and police forever

devising new means of sending us to the gallows - yesterday's anti-homosexuality bill is now today's 145th penal code amendment. Different people trying out ways on how they can kill us in different ways- yesterday it was Hon. Bahati, and today its Hon. Fr Lokodo. I ask myself, who next? What next?

People chanted at the parade: We are here! We are here! It was not just any three phrases, for us, it was a story of what was, what we have made

it, and what we will make it. It was a deep proclamation to the people out there that we actually are here - not past tense, not future tense, but present tense, we are here! And not in singulars but plurals, we are here! We were telling our selves that despite the big guns that they have pointed square in our chests we are still here, standing, fighting , not moved by the storm.

I admire the sheer resilience of the Ugandan LGBTI movement. To say that I am proud to be apart of this formidable force is an understatement. These are ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the darkest of times. In times when people only dared to whisper things in the confidentiality of their pitch

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POETRY SPOTLIGHT

THE WHIRLWIND

Whirlwind of two thousand nine
Sweeping across my nation
You tear us apart

What was once a home
Is now a distant memory.
Daddy and Mummy kicked me out

What was once my job
Is now a bitter memory.
No recommendation letter
No hope for the future

What was once my key
Is no more.
School thinks I don't belong

Whirl wind of two thousand nine
you decided to stay
returning at every end of the
years.
One day, the storm will halt
and the sun will shine bright
upon the Ugandan LGBTIQ.

– Miss Pride 2013

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black locked rooms, they dared against all odds to take a stand and shout it for the whole world to hear under the warm golden rays of the Ugandan sun by the bank of lake Victoria: We are here! We are here!

A new Jewish acquaintance that I met at the pride, asked me, 'What motivates you to do all this?' I delved deep into my heart and asked myself, What really motivates us? Life has dealt us bad, and told us it is not yet our time. Most of us do not have the luxury of saying 'East or West, home is best' because even that safe haven has been swept from under our feet, constantly traumatized and physically abused by people we call family.

But what motivates us? Kasha answered that question for me, when the police attempted to raid us again, one sentence that summed all our life-long stories- Tukoye! The Luganda equivalent of We are tired! And she said this, simple 6-letter word, with so much emotion, that it suddenly sprung all my senses to life, and I finally came to the realization of why I and all my brothers and sisters were doing what we were doing: we are tired! That is what makes us risk our lives every day for this movement. We are tired! That is what keeps us awake when we ought to be sleeping!

I then remembered a lesson I learnt from my mentoress: she said in life you have to be tired enough to move out of your pseudo comfort zone, you have to rid yourself of that complacency, that mediocrity, that thinking that you do not deserve as much as the rest, that you do not deserve it now. She said in life when you reach a point when you are finally tired, then and only then can you finally get off that pity potty, flush it, and fight like your life depended on it, and for us it actually does. She said, only then will that will find a way.

So I am thinking to myself, this was not just any Pride, we made a statement. If most of you had not realized, Uganda is celebrating 50 years of independence as a sovereign state. So the fact that this Pride coincided with this jubilee is a major statement that will forever go down in history, that Uganda, at 50 years of independence on August the 4th, ordinary people, like you and I, dared to do extraordinary things, and marched on the first ever LGBTI pride in Uganda, and pretty much in East Africa.

And like Frank said, next time we march from police, next time we are matching PFLAG(PARENTS & FRIENDS OF LESBIANS & GAY PEOPLE)!!!! AL-LUTA CONTINUA!!(and please say it like you mean it, say it swagger, coz you guyz jus' made history!!!!) Hurray!!!! ■

AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a disease in which there is a severe loss of the body's cellular immunity, greatly lowering resistance to infection and malignancy. The cause is a virus (the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV) transmitted in blood and in sexual fluids.

Androgyny

Not having clear masculine or feminine physical characteristics or appearance.

Asexual

Lack of (interest in and desire for sex) sexual attraction

Bisexual

Is a type of sexual orientation and identity. Bisexual people have an attraction to people of the same and opposite sex on various levels (emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually, and sexually). Not necessarily at the same time and not necessarily an equal amount of attraction.

Cisgender

People whose gender identity matches their sex at birth. The Latin prefix cis stands for 'on the same side,' while the prefix trans stands for 'on the opposite side.' This term has a more positive connotation than 'normal' or 'non-transgender.'

Gender identity

Refers to a person's persistent and consistent sense of being male, female or androgynous, an internalized representation of gender roles and an awareness from infancy which is reinforced during adolescence.

Kuchu

Term used by LGBTI community to identify themselves with out the general public knowing

Coming out

A term describing the complex process where an individual realizes they are not heterosexual and the process of resolving related conflicts due to

heteronormativity (where heterosexuality is being internalized and viewed as the norm). Coming out is a process of how one wants to be identified.

Condom-compatible lubricants

Water and silicon-based lubrications which do not increase the risk of a condom tearing

Dental dams

A latex sheath (square) that serves as a barrier of protection against the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) during oral sex or tribalism (where genitals rub directly against each other).

Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people on the grounds of race, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender and gender identity and presentation

Female condom (Femidom or Woman's condom) A device that is used during sexual intercourse (worn inside the woman's vagina) as a barrier contraceptive and to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections.

FTM/Trans man

A transman, or female-to-male, starts his life with a female body, but his gender identity is male. Always use male pronouns in reference.

Gay

A male same sexual identity and orientation. Attraction between two males on various levels (emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually, and sexually).

Gender

Socially constructed characteristics assigned that may vary according to the times and the society or group one belongs to, and which are learned or assigned to women and men. It is a broader concept than the mere biological differences between men and women, and includes masculine and feminine traits. More power is afforded to males.

Gender-based violence

GBV encompasses various forms of violence directed at women, because they are women, and men, because they are men, depending on the expectations of each in a given community. For LGBTI people the violence is directed towards them because of their challenging notions of sexuality and gender identity and presentation.

Gender dysphoria

The medical diagnosis for someone who experiences a disconnection between their assigned and preferred gender. Some transgender people disagree with the categorisation of gender dysphoria as a medical condition because it relies on an understanding of what "normal" gender is.

Gender equality

A social order in which women and men share the same opportunities and the same constraints on full participation in both the economic and domestic realms.

Gender identity

Refers to a person's persistent and consistent sense of being male, female or androgynous. An internalised representation of gender roles and an awareness from infancy which is reinforced during adolescence.

Genderqueer

An umbrella term for gender identities other than man and woman that are outside of the gender binary (male and female) and heteronormativity. Genderqueer people may think of themselves as both man and woman (bigender), neither man nor woman (agender), moving between genders (genderfluid), and/or third gendered.

Gender role

Socially constructed or learned behaviours that condition activities, tasks, and responsibilities viewed within a given society as "masculine" or "feminine".

Hegemonic masculinity

This is the 'normative' ideal of masculinity to which men are supposed to aim. It is not necessarily the most prevalent form of expression, but rather the most socially endorsed. It is supported by the heteronormative model.

Heteronormative

A social construct that views all human beings as either male or female with the associated behavior and gender roles assigned, both in sex and gender, and that sexual and romantic thoughts and relations are normal only between people of opposite sexes and all other behavior is viewed as "abnormal".

Heteronormative model

The typical heteronormative family consisting of a father (male bodied person), mother (female bodied person) and offspring (+ a dog and cat and white picket fence).

Heterosexual/Straight

Attraction between two people of the opposite sex on various levels (emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually, and sexually) where the sex of the attracted person is the key to the attraction.

Homophobia

Irrational fear of homosexual feelings, thoughts, behaviors, or people and an undervaluing of homosexual identities resulting in prejudice, discrimination and bias against homosexual individuals.

Homo-prejudice

Prejudice against people of diverse sexual identities.

Homosexual

Attraction between two people of the same sex on various levels (emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually, and sexually) where the sex of the attracted person is the key to the attraction.

Human rights

The basic rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to regardless of nationality, sex, age, gender, health status, sexual orientation, nationality or ethnic origin, race, religion, language amongst others.

HIV Human Immunodeficiency Virus

A retrovirus that causes AIDS by infecting helper T cells of the immune system. The most common serotype, HIV-1, is distributed worldwide, while HIV-2 is primarily confined to West Africa. It is one of many sexually transmitted infections.

HIV prevention

Various ways of preventing HIV transmission, e.g. new technologies, condom and lubrication use, abstinence, PEP (Post exposure prophylaxis), PREP (Pre exposure prophylaxis) etc.

Internalized homophobia

When a homosexual individual internalizes (make it their own) the shame and hatred projected onto gays and lesbians by a homophobic society

Intersex

Born with ambiguous genitalia, or sex organs that are not clearly distinguished as female or male.

Lesbian

A female sexual identity and orientation which is an attraction between two females on various levels (emotionally, physically, intellectually, spiritually, and sexually).

MTF / Trans woman

A transwoman, or male-to-female, starts her life with a male body, but her gender identity is female. Always use female pronouns in reference.

MSM

Men who have sex with men. A sexual practice irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity. An MSM can be hetero-, bi- or homosexual or trans. This term is more technical and is not necessarily an identity.

Patriarchy

A system of society in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is traced through the male line. The wives / females are viewed as dependant. Roles assigned to men are considered superior and valued above females' roles. Patriarchy forms the basis of discrimination against minorities like LGBTI people.

Serodiscordant couples

Refers to an intimate couple where one partner is HIV positive and the other HIV negative.

Service providers

In this handbook, service providers refer to anyone who could come into contact with sexual minorities accessing services for prevention, treatment and care. This could include nurses,

doctors, and counsellors providing voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) and/or HIV counselling and testing (HCT) or supportive services. It also includes the management staff responsible for designing and monitoring the services. It could also include those who provide an indirect service, e.g. secretary, whom the LGBTI client will have contact with.

Sex

A biological construct of a human being. "What's in the pants?" Male genitals - penis, testes, testosterone and genetic make-up and females' – breasts, vagina, estrogen, progesterone and genetic make-up.

Sexuality

How people experience and express themselves as sexual beings, within the concepts of biological sex, gender identity and presentation, attractions and practices. Culture and religion have a huge impact on how individuals see themselves as sexual beings, especially within relations of power.

Sexual fluidity

Sexuality varying across time and situation, particularly for women. Fluidity offers a more inclusive definition than the more limiting conventional labels we have become accustomed to using to define sexual identity. Sexual fluidity, quite simply, means situation-dependent flexibility in women's sexual responsiveness. This flexibility makes it possible for some women to experience desires for either men or women under certain circumstances, regardless of their overall sexual orientation. In other words, although women—like men—appear to be born with distinct sexual orientations, these orientations do not provide the last word on their sexual attractions and experiences.

Sexual identity

The overall sexual self identity which includes how the person identifies as male, female, masculine, feminine, or some combination, and the person's sexual orientation.

Sexual minority

A group whose sexual identity, orientation or practices differ from the majority of the surrounding society.