





# **Same-sex Sexualities and Gender Diversity: African Perspectives**



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## Preface

Where a community is the target of social, political and state-sponsored crimes, the tendency is to become defensive and hold inwards. As a result, most mobilising on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights is reactive rather than proactive in respect to the various human rights violations. For Africa, the situation is most alarming, as LGBTI and human rights defenders regularly deal with raw violations and abuse of human rights through hate crimes, persecutions and state-sponsored violations that are most pervasive. For these reasons, the 2<sup>nd</sup> *African Same-Sex Sexualities and Gender Diversity* (ASSS&GD) conference, convening in Nairobi in March 2014, was a timely gathering of scholars and activists. Their most profound contributions, brought together in this volume, focus on the material and lived realities as experienced by many activists and scholars living on the continent. The diversity of topics and coverage in each scope is phenomenal. The research work that has gone into each topic covered in this book bears witness to the fact that much information is available and needs to be shared. That ASSS&GD takes the lead to document and assemble these insightful pieces is remarkable. This book is an acknowledgment that African sexualities and diversity are insufficiently explored. By setting key terms of the debates, this volume ensures that challenges are vigorously discussed and engaged publically, and that the debate is taken forward. The book brings together a great divergence of ideas and makes firm statements that the time has come to alter the agenda of LGBTI politics from violations to a celebration of our diversities and recognition that in our diversity the world becomes real. In essence, this book moves and shifts conversations from civil and political rights to a new set of issues that might revitalise the LGBTI movement all over the world but especially in Africa, with a global democratic vision that cuts across gender and gender expression and other identities.

I hope that this collection of ideas will gain a large readership among people of diverse sexualities: heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transgender and intersex. I also hope that this volume will create new perspectives and impact on policy makers, legislators in their legal reforms and human rights activists and defenders in forging new partnerships toward the respect, protection and promotion of human rights in Africa and beyond. Finally, I hope that informed by this work judiciaries will make firm assertion of rights by holding those responsible for human rights violations and abuses accountable to the persons violated by the society that experience and purge of rights. We have a collective duty and responsibility to labour for justice, agitate for rights, and work for freedom, as that is the purpose of the Law. Let us celebrate our rich diversity.

Monica Mbaru



## List of Contributors

**Lucill Ebong** is a community health worker at Health & Rights Initiatives, Uganda. Her research focuses on access to health care by LGBT, including HIV/Aids care and treatment, sexual reproductive health and laws that deter them. She continues to sensitize health professionals and other service providers on creation of friendly environment at health facilities that encourages LGBT persons to benefit from health rights.

**Irene Fubara-Manuel** is a prolific researcher originally from Nigeria, with interests in migration, race, sexuality, gender and media. She graduated with a BA (Double Honors) in Gender Studies and Psychology from the University of Manitoba in Canada. Following her addition to the hosts of university's feminist radio show (The F Word) in 2012, she successfully curated two art exhibitions featuring black student artists. In collaboration with her mentors – professors from the University of Manitoba – she works on a wide range of projects, including a multimedia project documenting the experiences of LGBTQ newcomers in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Irene is currently enrolled in the Master's program at the University of Sussex.

### Mark Gevisser

**Chiedu Chike Ifekandu** is a Health-communications researcher. He currently works at Population Council Nigeria Office in Abuja. His research focus is on the use of social networking sites by adolescents and young people as well as key populations. He has made oral presentations at various international fora including the IAS Conference 2014 in Melbourne.

**Godfrey Kangaude**, a philosopher and lawyer is a 2013 UCLA – Sonke Health and Human Rights Fellow, and currently works with Sonke Gender Justice, and is co-Founder of Nyale Institute for Sexual and Reproductive Health Governance in Malawi. His area of expertise is sexuality, gender and human rights. His current interest is in working with adolescents to transform gender inequitable attitudes and practices through educational institutions.

**Juliet Kushaba** is an ardent feminist scholar and aspiring researcher born and raised in western Uganda. She holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Education from Makerere University, Uganda and is pursuing a Masters Degree in Women and Gender Studies at the same institution. Juliet lives in Kampala with her 7 year-old daughter.

**Daniel Jack Lyons** is an American born photographer. With an MPH from Columbia University, he is also a trained researcher in the fields of Public Health and Human Rights. He specializes in a community-based participatory research methodology known as photovoice, and has conducted photovoice research with populations such as MSM Dominican immigrants in Northern Manhattan, Survivors of gender based violence in Liberia, and asylum seekers in New York City.

**John McAllister** is a senior lecturer in the Department of English at the University of Botswana. He is broadly interested in the interfaces between Western and African cultures and has published a number of articles on colonial and post-colonial travel writing and memoirs in addition to his work on lgbt identities and activism. Along with teaching and research, he has worked extensively as a strategic communications consultant with African human rights organisations and is currently engaged in a study



of homophobic and transphobic bullying in Botswana schools for Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) and UNESCO.

**Ato Malinda** was born in 1981 and grew up in the Netherlands, Kenya and the USA. She lives in Nairobi, Kenya. She studied Art History and Molecular Biology at the University of Texas in Austin, and has a Masters of Fine Art (MFA) from Transart Institute, New York. She has exhibited at Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK) in Berlin (2011), Townhouse Gallery in Cairo (2011), Salon Urbain de Douala in Cameroon (2010) and the Karen Blixen Museum in Copenhagen (2010).

**Monica Mbaru**, a Kenyan lawyer and human rights activist, is since 2012 a judge in the Kenyan Industrial Court. Mbaru has been a vehement advocate for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and sex workers in Africa. She has worked with organisations such as the Centre for Legal Empowerment (Kituo cha Sheria), the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Hivos), the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, and the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK).

**Kevin Mwachiro** is the Communications Officer with the Hivos' East Africa office in Nairobi. A journalist by profession, Kevin is passionate about LGBT issues. He recently launched his book *Invisible*, which is a collection of stories from Kenya's LGBT community. Kevin was one of the organisers of the second African Same-sex Sexualities and Gender Diversity Conference.

#### **Njoki Ngumi**

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**Kehinde Okanlawon**, MA, is a Nigerian LGBT rights activist and social worker who has worked and volunteered in different capacities for various LGBT-rights organizations and groups in Nigeria over the past five years. He coordinated the Human Rights Education and Counselling Project of the House of Rainbow. He is committed to promoting the sexual health and employment rights of Nigerian LGBT persons.

**Vasu Reddy** is Executive Director at the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa and Honorary Professor of Gender Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Durban). His research focus is on non-normative sexualities, feminisms and gender, including HIV and the humanities. He has conducted research among men who have sex with men (MSM) and women who have sex with women (WSW) in sub-Saharan Africa. Together with Theo Sandfort, Paul Jansen and Monica Mbaru he took the initiative for the first African Same-sex Sexualities and Gender Diversity conference, and co-organised the second.

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## **African Same-sex Sexualities and Gender Diversity: An introduction**

Theo Sandfort, Fabienne Simenel, Kevin Mwachiro, Vasu Reddy

## Homosexuality and the Global Culture Wars

Mark Gevisser

In November 2013, IKEA withdrew a page, from its online Russian catalogue, depicting a family of two women and their baby in their happy home. The image was part of a global campaign by the Swedish mega-homestore that re-imagines the kind of families inhabiting its warm, Nordic interiors. It was a timely reappraisal, by the company, of its market. But, in a neat illustration of the way new global trends come up against local realities, IKEA felt it had to keep its Russian families traditional, for fear of being exposed to charges of ‘gay propaganda’ – now illegal in the Federation – and, perhaps, of antagonising a homophobic market.

At the same time that IKEA edited its Russian campaign, a television programme was aired on federal television, purporting to be an investigation into ‘LGBT Rights’<sup>1</sup> but actually articulating, in very crude terms, the Kremlin’s position on the matter. The programme, hosted by Arkady Mamontov, was called ‘Play Actors’, suggesting that LGBT activists were playing their role so they could draw their salaries from their Western paymasters. As part of its ‘investigation’, the programme bugged – or, more likely, used the state intelligence service’s recordings of – a private meeting of LGBT activists in St Petersburg, hosted by George Soros’ Open Society Foundations. The meeting, which I attended, was in fact convened to strategize how to make the most of the Sochi Moment, and of the unprecedented upsurge of interest, particularly in the United States, in the plight of Russian LGBT people.

At one point in ‘Play Actors’ we hear a Russian LGBT activist at the meeting thanking western donors for their support; at another, someone talks about possible ‘actions’ at Sochi, including that of LGBT-sympathetic athletes holding hands in the opening ceremony. Listening to this, the St Petersburg deputy Vitaly Milonov – a studio guest on the programme – explodes into rage. Milonov, a member of Putin’s United Russia party, had been the first to suggest gay propaganda legislation; he is perhaps Russia’s most outspoken homophobic elected official. If athletes held hands at the opening ceremony, he fumed on air, “I am not going to let my children watch the Olympics on television!”

This drew a very sharp response from Maria Arbatova, the celebrated feminist writer, the only voice of reason on the show: “*Throw your TV away!*” she jeered. “*Let your children remain completely ignorant about the world!*”<sup>2</sup>

In this interchange is encapsulated the terms of a battle currently being fought: in Arkady Mamontov’s studio, in IKEA’s advertising department – and globally: Arbatova, the cosmopolitan intellectual, has embraced the inevitable process of globalisation; Milonov, the fearful provincial, is

trying to protect his children from the consequences of this process.

On one level, this conversation is as old as the Oscar Wilde indecency trial, or the moral panic against homosexuals in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, when Stalin recriminalised sodomy after a raid on several homosexual venues in Moscow. Explaining the move in *Pravda*, the Kremlin's lapdog intellectual, Maxim Gorky, described homosexuality as a symptom of the "capitalist disease", along with adolescent violence and the opening of the first pet-food store in England. While homosexuality was understood as "the corruption of youth" and duly punished in the Soviet Union, it was allowed to run riot in the capitalist west: the proletariat needed to "crush, like an elephant", this "immoral minority", so as to be able to set up "a truly ethical system" (Essig, 1999, p. 6)

How different is this language, really, from that of people like Vitaly Milonov, or the African leaders who, in the last few years, have seek to criminalise homosexuality even further? Listen, for example, to David Mark, the leader of the Nigerian Senate, and the man responsible for that country's Anti Same-Sex Marriage Act, passed in early 2014: "There are many good values we can copy from other societies but certainly not this one," he said: his legislation would "prove to the rest of the world, who are advocates of this unnatural way, that we Nigerians promote and respect sanity, morality and humanity."<sup>3</sup> Both Gorky and Mark are setting themselves up, across the expanse of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as custodians of tradition and morality, against the juggernaut of Western liberal capitalism.

Nonetheless, what makes the conversation new, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, is the very reach of globalisation, and the speed with which ideas blow across this planet: not just the ineluctable spread of human rights culture and advocacy, but the information revolution and the social media explosion; unprecedented urbanisation and industrialisation, economic migrancy and global tourism; global commodity culture and multinational corporatism (Appaurai, 2001). The conversation about sexuality has thus, itself, become global, and it is changing the world dramatically, as it compels people to talk about things that have traditionally been hidden from view or unspoken: the range of sexual practises beyond that of heterosexuality and the range of gender identities beyond, or between, the male-female binary. As the global debate about Russia's treatment of LGBT people demonstrated in the run-up to the Sochi Winter Olympics, this conversation has opened up one of the deepest, and most unanticipated, ideological clefts of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The conversation is a global one, although – like IKEA's campaign – it has local, or regional, accents. In countries like the United States and France, it is about what a family looks like and who has the right to make one. In countries like Russia, and in many African states, the conversation is about more basic rights to freedom of association and safety from violence and discrimination. In much of

South Asia and Latin America, the conversation now encompasses discussion about gender, and about a person's rights to change the categories of male and female, or to live between them. In the Arab world, the conversation is just beginning, as a budding LGBT movement attempts to change language itself with new value-neutral terminology, while Islamists suggest that same-sex marriage is the inevitable consequence of secularism. Meanwhile, in countries like South Africa and Brazil, where same-sex marriage is legal, the conversation is about the gap between legal rights and social acceptance. In all these places, precisely because the conversation is new, it is vibrant and often violent, as conservative forces in many societies blow back against the inevitable consequences of globalization. It is a conversation sparked by IKEA and Google, by *Will & Grace* and Facebook, as much as it is by the policy-makers in the US State Department, the technocrats at the UN High Commission for Human Rights, and the activists on the frontline. Policy advocacy and activism is just one part of the puzzle – and perhaps an even smaller part than it was in previous major global social revolutions, such as the Women's Movement or the Civil Rights Movement – precisely *because* of the power and reach of globalization.

One of the sharpest examples of this dynamic is offered by the small central African country Malawi, where – in December 2009 – two men performed a public engagement ceremony, which hit the local press under the heading 'Gays Engage!'<sup>4</sup> One of the two, Tiwonge Chimbalanga, actually identifies as a woman, but because she and her fiancé, Steven Monjeza, were both born male, the state felt compelled to prosecute them, using the anti-sodomy provisions of the Penal Code which had been inherited from the British, and which had never previously been used against two consenting adults. In a sensational trial that all but brought the country to a halt, the two were found guilty of "carnal knowledge against the order of nature" and sentenced to fourteen years' hard labour. An international outcry ensued, with threats of the withdrawal of development aid; the country's president, Bingu wa Muthairika, eventually pardoned Chimbalanga and Monjeza after a visit by the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon. Still, rather than decriminalising homosexuality, his government chose to extend criminal sanction to women, too. This action played the key role in prompting the United States' Millenium Challenge Corporation, which disburses US Congress money, to suspend a \$3 billion power-infrastructure grant to the country. The grant was reinstated when Muthairika died in 2012, and his successor, Joyce Banda, promised to review the legislation, and declared a moratorium on prosecutions.

Even as Muthairika pardoned Monjeza and Chimbalanga, he was uncompromising in his disapproval: "These men have dishonoured our culture, and dishonoured our religion, and acted against our laws."<sup>5</sup> A few months later, addressing an audience in his native chiChewa, he said unequivocally

that Western donors had “sent” the two to get married, to test Malawi’s laws.<sup>6</sup> Both the prosecution and other government ministers had levelled this claim, but there was no evidence to substantiate it: the two celebrants had nothing to do with Malawi’s gay community or its budding LGBT rights movement and were acting entirely independently, spurred by their own longings and by having internalised some of the messages of liberation and possibility abreast in the world, possibly through South African television, which is broadcast by satellite in Malawi. But these messages had clashed with another set, being beamed across the continent by Pentecostal Christian missionaries, referring increasing back to the Bible to condemn the ‘abomination’ of homosexuality: leading the charge against the accused were clerics who – like Muthairika himself – were calling homosexuality ‘ungodly’ and ‘un-African’ in the same breath, conveniently forgetting that the sanction of homosexuality had been brought to the continent by the double-act of Christianity and colonialism.

Much of the content in the African Christian condemnation of homosexuality was, in fact, shaped and formed in the United States, where, for three decades already, conservative politicians have been using the Bible and deploying such messages in the quest for political power. This triggered what was known, in the United States, as the ‘Culture Wars’. Political Christianity has its roots, specifically, in right-wing Republican Party politics, from the McCarthy witch-hunts through Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush; the Tea Party is its latest incarnation. This political movement found its political foothold as a function of the Cold War, as a bulwark against ‘godless Communists’ abroad and their fellow-travellers back home. If American political Christianity was instrumentalised against countries like Cuba and the Soviet Union in its first wave, it was domesticated in the second, against the liberal ‘bleeding-heart’ establishment, which – particularly in the 60s eras of John F Kennedy and Lyndon B Johnson – seemed set on the course dismantling not only racial supremacism but gender supremacism too, with its seeming embrace of feminism: employment equity, the pill, abortion rights, and finally gay rights.

These would become the signal issues of a right-wing political Christian agenda, a counter-trend to what might be called the ‘Harvey Milk impulse’ of the same era: the way ‘special interest groups’ such as women and gay people or ethnic minorities such as African-Americans or Latinos began to use their voting power. If political Christianity exerted itself on the conservative Republican Party, then identity-politics exerted itself on the liberal Democratic Party, and the United States cleaved into ‘red’ states (the colour of the GOP) and ‘blue’ ones (the colour of the Democratic party). Thus began the American ‘Culture Wars’, and the division of the United States – seemingly intractably – into a ‘blue’ crust along the coasts and the Great Lakes district, and a ‘red’ hinterland everywhere else. As is evident in today’s Tea Party rhetoric, the ‘reds’ cast themselves as outsiders, holding on to ‘family values’, manning the



barricades against a godless urban liberal establishment, characterised by Hollywood on the west coast and the Washington bureaucracy and the *New York Times* on the east.

In 2009, the Zambian theologian Kapya Koama wrote a path breaking study of what he coined ‘the Global Culture Wars’: the way that the American religious right was making up for lost ground back home by taking its mission abroad. Koama demonstrated, convincingly, how American religious leaders such as Lou Engel, Rick Warren and Scott Lively were behind the vicious anti-gay legislation in Uganda (Kaoma, 2009).

If the second wave of American rightwing political Christianity was the domestication of its agenda, then its third wave has been in the export of these ‘values’ globally again, now that political conservatives have lost the war – have lost souls, in their language – at home. All evidence in the United States points to the clash over LGBT rights – and marriage equality in particular – to be a generational one rather than an ideological one: the Republican Party’s own polling has shown that a majority of its own young supporters are in favour of marriage equality. In such a world, argue Kaoma and others, the ideologues have needed to do exactly what the Victorian missionaries did in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century when the Industrial Revolution seemed to be drawing people away from church: seek souls elsewhere. And so, writes Kaoma, this second wave of missionaries is “globalising the culture wars”: as the West liberalises, they are bringing a new ideological code to the developing world – and particularly to Africa

It is no coincidence that the notion of ‘LGBT rights’ is spreading globally at the exact moment that old boundaries are collapsing in the era of the digital revolution, global commodity culture and mass migration. The collapse of these boundaries has meant the rapid global spread of ideas about sexual equality – and, at the very same time, a dramatic reaction by conservative forces, by states and religious groups, who fear the inevitable loss of control that this process threatens.

The ‘LGBT rights’ movement is itself a vector of this globalisation. For the Indian elites in the entertainment and business sectors who rallied behind the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, this was something to celebrate: by shucking off the legacy of the British Penal Code many years after the former colonial master itself had done so, India would declare its status as a global player; supporting ‘LGBT rights’ became nothing less than a fetish of modernity. Similarly, in November 2013, the Vietnamese government urged legislators to consider, objectively, how the world’s mores were changing when voting on whether to allow same sex marriages.

For Russians of the Milonov and Mamatov ilk, on the other hand – as for Bingu wa Muthairika and many other Africans and Afro-Caribbeans – a rejection of ‘LGBT rights’ has become the standard with which to fly all one’s grievances about contemporary global iniquities, cultural and economic. It has

become the global rallying call for a retreat, back, into the comfort of ‘the family’ and ‘the nation’ and ‘traditional values’ at a time when all seem under threat.

Thus has a troubling new global equation come into play: the more rights are gained by sexual minorities in some parts of the world, the stronger the backlash against them in others. In the very week that Queen Elizabeth II signed into law the Same Sex Marriage Act in July 2013, making the United Kingdom the thirteenth country to do so, the Nigerian Congress passed draconian anti-LGBT legislation, also called the ‘*Same Sex Marriage Act*’. The act prescribes mandatory sentences of fourteen years for any kind of ‘homosexual behaviour’, and compels neighbours, colleagues and family members to turn in homosexuals. No activist in Nigeria has so much as mentioned wanting same-sex marriage: the act was cynically pre-emptive, drawing a rhetorical line in the sand against the West as it claimed to inoculate the society against future ‘infection’.

By the end of 2013, seventy-six countries still outlawed ‘homosexual conduct’, most doing so with the old colonial British Penal Code, and six punished it with death. Fifteen countries legalised same-sex marriage, or were in the process of doing so. At the same time, at least ten countries – including Russia and Nigeria – were looking to strengthen their legislation, or recriminalise homosexuality, in reaction. The US Supreme Court may well rule, during the course of 2105, that states do not have the power to ban gay marriage; if this does not happen, pollster-pundit Nate Silver has predicted that Mississippi will be the last state of the union to legitimate same-sex marriage, in 2024. No-one is willing to make such predictions in Eastern Europe, or Africa.

If agents such as the American religious right are, indeed, ‘globalising the culture wars’, can we say, by extension, that the ‘Culture Wars’ have gone global – that the world is dividing into ‘red states’ and ‘blue states’, much as the United States did in the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century? Is there a global blue team and a red one, each with its own shock-teams and advance troops: militant Christian and Muslim missionaries in red, and development-aid agencies and global human rights NGOs in blue? And if so, are these ‘Culture Wars’ proxy-wars in the way the Cold War was in a previous era, being battled by actors from the Global North over the bodies and territories of people from the Global South?

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It is useful to look at the way these ‘Culture Wars’ have played out, in the African context specifically, as a consequence of the AIDS epidemic. Conservative American evangelicals gained a foothold in some African countries thanks to the policies of George W Bush’s President’s Emergency Plan for Aids Relief, which prioritised ‘faith-based’ HIV-programming, including the preaching of abstinence over the distribution of condoms. This gave American evangelicals an entrée into countries

such as Uganda and empowered an entire generation of conservative Christian organisations in East Africa.

In contrast, the largely-liberal establishment aid agencies—particularly those from Northern Europe—strongly pushed an agenda of LGBT rights. This was not just for reasons of equality, but because of the growing evidence that one of the major vectors of HIV-transmission in African societies is ‘men who sleep with men’ (MSM): precisely those men who do not call themselves ‘gay’ but who practice homosexual sex. This empowered gay communities in many African countries, who were able to use the public-health portal to begin organising and mobilising.

The Aids epidemic only heightened many African countries’ dependence on the West and in this context there was a new impetus to fight the ‘neocolonialism’ of development aid. And so, as many Africans become increasingly uncomfortable with their countries’ dependence on the West, they looked to find a place to put their pride; they might be poor, but at least they have values! In all the world’s global indicators of well-being, they can at least lead one: morality. What better way to maintain popular support than through the scapegoating of an unpopular minority in the name of a battle against Western decadence?

Western threats to withdraw aid if the rights of sexual minorities were not respected only seemed to fuel such indignation, and the debate reached something of a fever-pitch on the continent when the British premier, David Cameron, said in November 2011 at that year’s Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that continued aid to African countries would be conditional on “adhering to proper human rights” and that respect for LGBT Rights was “one of the things that determines our aid policy.”<sup>7</sup> Shortly thereafter, the American president Barack Obama issued a presidential memorandum that set the advocacy of LGBT Rights as a major foreign policy objective. In the case of Malawi, donor pressure had a clear effect on the lives of Chimalanga and Monjeza, and the suspension of aid had the beneficial effect of President Banda’s government’s declaration of a moratorium on prosecution and a review of the legislation (the latter never happened). But at the same time, it further tainted local LGBT activists with the slur of being ‘foreign agents’, more interested in their own well-being than the health of the country.

In Eastern Europe and the countries the former Soviet Union the battle-cry against Western ‘neo-imperialism’ might be similar, but the terms are different. Here, the ‘pro-gay’ bogeyman is the European Union, which requires countries wanting to join the club to commit to Western European human rights norms, including equality for sexual minorities. In Poland, the Kascynski twins who ruled their country from 2005 to 2010 built their anti-European, nationalist Law and Justice Party in no small part through

the demonisation of that country's budding LGBT movement. In Hungary, long considered one of the more tolerant of the Eastern European nations, a 2012 constitutional amendment that outlawed same-sex marriage was a sop to nationalists who blamed European accession for the country's economic crisis. And in 2013, as Ukraine wrestled with whether to join the European Union or Russia's new customs union – the prelude to the 2014 Ukraine war - LGBT rights became one of the primary political footballs. Billboards appeared all over Kiyev showing same-sex stick figures holding hands: "Association with the EU means same-sex marriage", the slogan read. Most recently, in Central Asia, Kyrgyz has adopted anti-gay propaganda legislation that mirrors the Russian laws.

Both the Ukrainian anti-EU campaign and the Kyrgyz anti-gay propaganda lobby were funded by a Russian proxies, and seem to be part of a Kremlin foreign policy agenda that the commentator Owen Matthews (2014) has dubbed a 'Conservative Comintern': an attempt by Russia to re-establish its international influence by setting its value-system against that of the decadent West. The Russian president Vladimir Putin made this agenda explicit in a December 2013 *'State-of-the-Nation'* address, in which he asserted Russia's defence of "traditional values" against the liberal Western trend of recognising "everyone's right to the freedom of consciousness, political views and privacy", a trend, he said, which accepted "without question the equality of good and evil." If a defence against this perversion was "conservatism", Putin was willing to own that tag: "the point of conservatism is not that it prevents movement forward and upward, but that it prevents movement backward and downward, into chaotic darkness and a return to a primitive state."<sup>8</sup>

Putin seems to want to apply social conservatism as an adhesive to bond the countries of the former Soviet Union together again, in a new sphere of Russian influence. In the Russophone world of the former Soviet Union, the levers being pulled are both the soft ones of propaganda – Russia's formidable state-run federal media, for example, which has a reach all over the former Soviet empire – and the harder ones of threats to withhold trade and, particularly, energy resources.

If the regional battlefields of these 'Global Culture Wars' have been sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe, they have been rehearsed on a global level at the United Nations. In 2008, France and the Netherlands proposed a resolution to the UN General Assembly on the LGBT rights that was sponsored by 96 member-states and opposed by 57, led by the Arab nations. At this point, neither the United States nor Russia voted. Since 2000, the General Assembly's terms of reference for a Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial Killings had included the words 'sexual orientation' as one of the categories to be investigated, but in 2010 the Arab nations successfully led a motion to drop these words. Since then, pro-LGBT rights nations have twice tried, unsuccessfully, to get the words re-inserted.

But it has been in the Human Rights Council of the General Assembly, a 46-member structure which sits in Geneva, where the debate has been most intense, and contentious. Precisely because the difference of opinion on LGBT rights seemed to cleave into a 'West versus the Rest' divide, the European and North American states stepped back at the HRC, and the lead was taken by South Africa and Brazil, both of which have very strong domestic protections for these rights. After initially leading an African initiative to prevent the issue from being discussed at the HRC in 2011, South Africa bowed to internal pressure from the human rights community back home, and proposed a resolution that noted with 'grave concern' the violations of human rights due to 'sexual orientation and gender identity', mandating the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to conduct further study into matter.<sup>9</sup>

The HRC is an eccentric structure: UNGA member-countries rotate annually through its 46 seats, and so it is by no means an accurate bellwether of the full global geo-political breakdown. But in July 2011, the South African resolution co-sponsored with Brazil resolution, was passed by 23 votes to 19, with three abstentions. In the 'yes' camp were the United States, the United Kingdom, several other European countries (including Ukraine), many Latin American countries (including Cuba), and two Asian countries, Thailand and South Korea. Apart from Russia, the 'no' votes came entirely from Muslim and African countries; China was one of the abstentions.<sup>10</sup> Navi Pillay, the High Commissioner, reported back the following year, affirming the gravity of the situation, globally, for sexual minorities: at the core of her report was a reassertion of the Vienna Declaration of 1993, adopted by consensus by 171 member states, which subordinates local or regional cultural or traditional norms to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Russia's retort to the Declaration 17/19, and to the Pillay report, was to propose a counter-declaration mandating the council to reappraise the relationship between traditional values and universal human rights: this, too, was passed.

The issue seemed deadlocked. South Africa retreated, surprised by the fervour of its fellow-African states, and nursing its own geo-political ambitions in a very 'red' part of the world. Brazil, too, backed off, perhaps because of the growth of rightwing political Pentecostal Christianity in the country, and so the 'LGBT rights' mantle seemed to fall once more to the West, and specifically to the United States, which under President Barack Obama and his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton – and no doubt spurred by domestic politics – replaced the smaller northern European countries, just by virtue of its size – as the leading global exponent of LGBT equality. Global consciences were pricked, particularly, by the trial of Stephen Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga in 2011: towards the end of that year, Obama told the United Nations General Assembly that "no country should deny people their rights because of who they love, which is why we must stand up for the rights of gays and lesbians everywhere",<sup>11</sup> and at the end of

that year Clinton told the Human Rights Council that “LGBT rights are human rights, and human rights are LGBT rights”.<sup>12</sup>

Six months later, in June 2013, Russia passed its federal anti-gay propaganda law. International protest grew, in the run-up to the Sochi Olympics, as protesters in the West protested the new ‘evil empire’, and Americans began to speak of Russian gays and lesbians as the ‘new refuseniks’, needing Western intervention as much as Soviet Jews had in a previous era. Putin, in turn, responded with his December 2013 State-of-the-Nation address, and his media proxies ran programming such as Arkady Mamontov’s ‘Play Actors’, which alleged that Russia’s LGBT activists were ‘playing’ at being gay so they could draw foreign salaries from the West. Thus did the global Culture Wars seem to edge closer to being a new Cold War as Russia and the United States squared off, once more.

In early 2014, the presidents of Nigeria and Uganda, Goodluck Jonathan and Yoweri Museveni, respectively signed into law their countries’ anti-gay laws. Both had been expected to veto the laws, but neither seemed able to stand up to the ‘Western stooge’ slur that would have been levelled against them by many in their constituencies. At the UN, the western nations – and the United States in particular – seemed more determined than ever to pass a further resolution on sexuality and gender identity. This time, they found very strong allies in a quartet of Latin American countries – Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Uruguay – who drove a resolution condemning violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, which was passed by 25 votes to 14, with 7 abstentions. Once more, all the ‘no’ votes – with the exception of Russia – came from African or Muslim states. But the ‘yes’ camp now included not only all the Western and Latin American countries sitting on the Council, but four Asian countries too: the Philippines, Viet Nam, Korea and Japan. (Although it stepped back from leading the initiative, South Africa was the only African country to vote ‘yes’). Equally as significant, Russia – no doubt having done its own polling - chose not to reintroduce, and reinforce, its ‘traditional values’ initiative.

The resolution was mild: it did not set into place any kind of regular report-back mechanism on the status of LGBT rights, but simply mandated the High Commissioner of Human Rights to compile another report. This was done to ensure South Africa’s ‘yes’ vote, and – very significantly - India’s abstention. China abstained too, as it always has on the issue. As long as its citizens remain economically productive and politically passive, it does not care how they met their libidinal needs. And as long as China’s African clients continue to provide markets and resources, it does not interfere – as the West is perceived to do – with the way these countries see fit to control their own citizens. Still, ‘Confucian Family Values’ governs China, and even if millions of young people are moving to the city and joining

vast new gay communities away from the strictures of the family, they are still expected to marry and procreate. Given China's one-child policy, the pressure is particularly intense: you might be gay or lesbian, but you are your family's only route into the future.

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The dramatic growth of urban gay communities in China, as in India and in Russia, further proves a thesis that was argued two decades ago by the American historian John D'Emilio: that western industrial capitalism enabled the development of gay and lesbian communities, by uncoupling individual workers from family and fealty (D'Emilio, 1993). As people moved out of feudal society and into the economy of the city, they began practising a form of personal autonomy. They became valued as much for their productivity as their reproductivity, and they earned the space – literally as well as figuratively – to assert their rights to privacy. This seems to be, almost precisely, what is happening in Asia's mega-cities today, even if not, yet, in Africa's ones, outside of South Africa.

If Western European sexologists first established the categories of 'heterosexual' and 'homosexual' in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, these became not only fixed into identities but politicised during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It was in this bourgeois milieu, with its liberal democratic system, that that a profound shift took place: sexuality stopped being simply a form of behaviour ("I sleep with men", "I sleep with women") and became a mark of identity ("I am gay"; "I am straight"). With such an identity-marker you could not only gather with others like you, as in Oscar Wilde's day, but you could claim rights on this basis, as in Harvey Milk's: if enough of you banded together, you could even wield political power, in the way that other minorities and special interest groups already did, particularly in the United States.

Nativists from Africa and Eastern Europe might be misguided – or simply disingenuous – when they claim that homosexuality is a western import. But the concept of 'gay identity' is indeed a western construct, the result of the capitalist development and liberal identity-politics of the Western 20<sup>th</sup> century. When the Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni signed his country's anti-gay legislation into law in February 2014 (it was subsequently struck down, on procedural grounds by the Ugandan Constitutional Court), he was thus not incorrect when he said that the difference between the West and Africa is that 'we keep quiet about it'.<sup>13</sup>

Museveni's formulation is more sophisticated than that of brash African homophobes, such as Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe or Gambia's Yehya Jammeh, who deny the very existence of homosexuality



in African society. The Ugandan president acknowledges that homosexuals exist – and even always have – in his domain, but that they do not talk publicly about it: in this context, any attempt to encourage them to speak out and claim communal identity or rights on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is a form of ‘social imperialism’.

When Museveni said these words, to the media, in February 2014, the American ambassador Scott deLisi shot back: “Keeping mothers alive, helping people with AIDS, dealing with food security — that’s all about our values as Americans... And if that’s cultural imperialism or social imperialism, [then] I’m a social imperialist.”<sup>14</sup>

Certainly, there is a level of cultural imperialism – or at the very least, cultural supremacism – in much of the global LGBT-rights discourse. Listen to a gay American soldier on active duty in Afghanistan, participating in a ‘Kandahar Pride’ event organised by the US Department of Defence at the US base in July 2013: “I think it’s very important that we are here representing the United States of America, and we hope that when we leave here, we have left all positive qualities, and what America is like, and that we are an equal country, which treats all our citizens equally.”<sup>15</sup> The scholar Jaspir Puar (2007) has coined the term ‘homo-nationalism’ to describe such a world-view, and to capture the way that homosexuals have become part of the establishment by gaining the rights to marry and serve in the military.

In recent years, an increasing number of scholars are beginning to examine the ‘homonationalism’ phenomenon, and the way that people in the West might use support of sexual minorities as way of justifying both imperial ambitions and racism. The sharpest example of the latter is the right-wing populist politics of the gay Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn, who rose to immense popularity, on an anti-immigration ticket, before his murder in 2002: Fortuyn campaigned to bar migrants to the Netherlands, particularly from the Arab world, because of their cultural homophobia and the threat they allegedly posed to the rights gained by LGBT people. Israel, too, stands accused by its critics of a form of homonationalism: of ‘pink-washing’ its human rights record with respect to Palestinians, by promoting itself as a gay-friendly country and a gay-friendly tourism destination.

The conventional LGBT Rights narrative plots the gradual but ineluctable extension of human rights for sexual minorities from the liberal West outwards to more repressive societies. This liberal paradigm measures regional social and political customs and practices against a universal standard of human rights. Such rights, of course, are necessary and essential. But many scholars and activists, particularly from the global South, are beginning to question the relevance of the above paradigm – and thus the efficacy of a rights-based approach to the extension of sexual freedom - in parts of the world

that do not have the same liberal Western tradition that spawned the contemporary 'gay rights' movement, and that have their own histories and customs for accommodating sexual and gender difference.

These critics of the global 'LGBT Rights' phenomenon – many from the Arab world - claim that the movement actually makes things worse for sexual minorities, in the way it imposes fixed, binary western categories of sexuality upon the far more fluid environments that traditionally exist in other cultures. The most eloquent proponent of this view is the Palestinian academic Joseph Massad, a professor Arabic literature at Columbia University, who has written that the global LGBT movement has become a proselytizing neocolonial 'Gay International', provoking unnecessary cultural conflict in the Arab world by imposing its Western 'orientalist' definitions of gay identity on societies they are deeply misunderstood. Such provocations, he maintains, exacerbate rather than ameliorate matters, because of the backlash they provoke. They shut down space, rather than open it up, because homophobic customs which provided cover for homosexual activity, such as holding hands in public or washing one another in a *hamam*, become suspect.

Massad (2007) uses the term "incitement to discourse" to explain the way Western actors trigger social crisis which profoundly alters society in ways not expected, or anticipated, by introducing a discussion on LGBT rights into societies where different sexual and social orders are at work. Although he published his book *Desiring Arabs*, in which he explained "incitement to discourse", in 2007, subsequent events in the Muslim West African country of Senegal could well illustrate his point:

The first epidemiological research demonstrating that 'men who sleep with men' ('MSM') were key vectors of the African AIDS epidemic came out of Senegal. As a consequence, French donors helped set up an organisation named AIDES Senegal with the express intention of providing health services and education to the 'MSM' population, but also as cover under which gay men could begin organising and mobilizing themselves and their community, given that homosexuality is illegal in the country. In December 2008, after an anonymous tip-off, nine members of the organisation were arrested in the apartment of their leader, Djadji Diouf, while holding a meeting. Some of them were tortured while in custody, even after having confessed to being gay; they were tried, and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, after the judge found that their organisation was a "cover to recruit or organize meetings for homosexuals, under the pretext of providing HIV/AIDS prevention programmes" (Amnesty International, 2010). A Court of Appeals overturned the sentences in April 2009, and the men were released, but the damage had been done: the sensational coverage of the case in Dakar forced a budding gay community to dive underground, and the age-old community of *godijen*, cross-dressing

men who performed special rituals in the community, evaporated almost overnight. The *godijen* are transgender, but not necessarily homosexual: the sudden emergence of a discourse about homosexuality into the public domain rendered them instantly identifiable – and vulnerable – as the most visible manifestation of this new ‘gay’ identity-category, and they simply disappeared.

Five years later, in July 2013, while on his first state visit to Senegal, Barack Obama held a press conference with the country’s new president, a liberal named Macky Sall. The American president had recently come out strongly in support of same-sex marriage in his own country, and was, in turn, playing to his domestic constituency, given that the Supreme Court had just overturned the Defence of Marriage Act, which prevented federal recognition of same-sex marriage. He celebrated the ruling, and added that gay people should have equal rights in Africa too.

Sall responded, in effect, that Africa was not ready for this, and offered the oft-cited canard that Africans do not preach to the West about polygamy. Sall subsequently defended his position, to Germany’s *Die Zeit*, by speaking about how “it takes time” for cultures to change, and that the West was expecting change from Africans too quickly: “You have only had same-sex partnerships in Europe since yesterday, and yet you asking for it today from Africans! This is all happening too fast. We live in a world that is changing slowly!”<sup>16</sup>

But the problem with this argument is that – like the Massad critique or the worldview of Arkady Mamontov’s ‘Play Actors’ – it is nostalgic, in that it imagines a world where national or cultural boundaries are still intact enough to be protected against the vectors of globalisation. These arguments have not come to terms with the contemporary world, where where actors in the Global South (or ‘Global East’) might be subject to all manner of influences, but make their own decisions, much as Tiwonge Chimbalanga and Stephen Monjeza did – or, for that matter, the Senegalese men who accepted donor funding to do MSM outreach - and have their own agency.

The defence of patriarchal African leaders that, as Museveni puts it, “we keep quiet about [sexuality]” no longer rings true, anyway, in the post-AIDS African environment: indeed, one of Museveni’s own greatest achievements was that he understood that, to combat the AIDS epidemic, his country needed, precisely, to talk about sex and sexuality, and he played a key role in starting that conversation, and in jump-starting his country’s response to the epidemic. There is a disingenuousness, too, to Macky Sall’s complaint that the West is asking for recognition of same-sex partnerships in Africa before the continent is ready for it. LGBT activists are demanding something far more urgent, and immediate: basic respect for their human rights; a respect which is, in the context of the AIDS epidemic, not only life-saving but good public health policy too. In the Senegalese example, then, the formation of

AIDES Senegal was not – to borrow Massad’s framework – an incitement to discourse itself, so much as a response to the incitement of the epidemic; a response to the incitement, too, if you like, of all the vectors of globalization impressing themselves upon a mid-sized, mid-income African country in the early years of the millennium.

This is the problem with the ‘Global Culture Wars’ paradigm, when trying to understand the new global discussion around sexuality and gender identity. It assumes that, as at the height of the Cold War, there are actors (Washington, Moscow) and there are proxies (the Global South), and, in so doing, it denies the agency of people who live in countries like Uganda and the Ukraine, in a world where there are, now, as many sources of information as there are ideas. In a country like Uganda or Malawi, some of these ideas might be influenced by right-wing Christian missionaries from the United States, and others might be influenced by liberal human rights discourse. Those of you reading these words might have the strong opinion that the former are wrong and the latter are right, but in the end, both sets of ideas are African ideas, because they are articulated by Africans and act upon the African context. Our mistake in trying to deal with the challenges we face as human rights advocates, would be misinterpret one set of ideas as ‘foreign’, just because we disagree with them. This is what the other side does, and why, ultimately, it will lose the ‘Global Culture Wars’, such as they are.

President Sall’s assumption, in his statement to *Die Zeit*, is that outsiders are impressing change upon Africans, and are wanting Africa to change quicker than it is able. But listen, in conclusion, to Olena Sevchenko, one of the leaders of the LGBT movement in another part of the world caught up in the ‘Global Culture Wars’: the Ukraine. Certainly, she said to me,

*Ukrainian society is not ready for LGBT rights, this is true. But Ukrainian LGBTs, themselves, they cannot be restrained anymore. They go online. They watch TV. They travel. They see how things can be. Why should they not have similar freedoms? Why should they be forced to live in hiding? The world is moving so fast, and events are overtaking us in Ukraine. We have no choice but to try and catch up.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> ‘LGBT’ stands for ‘lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender’, and has become the conventional acronym. I have followed this convention in this paper where appropriate, but not in the title, as this paper does not deal specifically with gender identity or transgenderism. I have not used “LGBTI” (including ‘intersex’), because this is a specific, different set of rights issues, which the current “LGBT” movement does not yet address.

<sup>2</sup> 'Play Actors', Rossiya 1, 13 November 2013. Translated by Evgeny Belyakov.

<sup>3</sup> vanguardngr.com, 8 January 2013

<sup>4</sup> The Nation (Malawi), 28 December 2009

<sup>5</sup> The Nation (Malawi), 30 May 2010

<sup>6</sup> Video footage in 'Two Men and a Wedding', directed by Sara Blecher, SABC-TV, 2010

<sup>7</sup> bbb.co.uk, 30 October 2011

<sup>8</sup> Putin, V, "Address to the Federal Parliament", 12 December 2013, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6402>

<sup>9</sup> See [www.arc-international.net](http://www.arc-international.net) for all information on LGBT issues at the Human Rights Council.

<sup>10</sup> *In favour*: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Guatemala, Hungary, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay

*Against*: Angola, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Djibouti, Gabon, Ghana, Jordan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Uganda

*Abstaining*:

Burkina Faso, China, Zambia

(34th meeting 17 June 2011 )

<sup>11</sup> Reported in Power, S., "We Must Stand Up For The Rights of Gays and Lesbians Everywhere", <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/09/22/we-must-stand-rights-gays-and-lesbians-everywhere>

<sup>12</sup> Clinton, S, "Free and Equal in Dignity and Rights", 6 December 2011

<sup>13</sup> See [www.cnn.com/2014/02/24/.../uganda-anti-gay-bill/](http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/24/.../uganda-anti-gay-bill/)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.humanrights.gov/2014/02/26/ambassador-delisi-interview-with-bbc-world-service-on-the-uganda-anti-homosexuality-law/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSocCj4Wbf0>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-04/macky-sall-senegal/komplettansicht>.

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## At Home but Homeless: Queer African Migrants Critically Reflect on 'Home'

Irene Fubara-Manuel

On that bridge  
between the rock  
and the hard place  
is home,  
where wingless birds  
place their eggs  
in raffia baskets sewn  
for a congregation  
of weak bones  
and their comfort women  
too faithful  
too naïve  
to run.

*Immigrant Blues* by Tokini Irene Fubara

It was the summer of 2011 and after years of denying my queer sexual identity, I chose to make a statement by attending the annual Pride Parade in Winnipeg, Canada. This was my first encounter with the gay community in Winnipeg and it became the inspiration for my research topic. As I looked through the pamphlet handed at the parade, I could not help but stare at the map of the *Lesbian and Gay Rights in the World*. In the context of the parade, the map was presented as a sobering device to make people more appreciative of the rights they had as residents of Canada by remembering that many countries still persecuted gay people. Try as I might to enjoy the frenzy of the colourful crowd, I could not appreciate these rights, as I saw my own country—Nigeria—in red and orange, indicating extreme persecution of sexual and gender minorities.

Remembering all the gay and affirming people I had met in Nigeria, I cheered up and began to interact with more gay people at the parade. As my gay Kenyan friend fended off the aggressive advances of several white men and I politely ignored offensive questions about Africans, I realized that being a queer black African in Canada multiplied my hardships. I began comparing my options. In my country I would have the privilege of being an upwardly mobile middle-class citizen, although I could be



jailed on public knowledge of my sexuality. Whereas, in Canada I would have the right to be open with my sexuality but I could also be discriminated against on basis of my race, citizenship and my sexuality. Similar to Nigerian-British photographer, Rotimi Fani Kayode, I was an outsider on several accounts (Huffington Post, 2012).

I would begin my undergraduate thesis in September of the same year but I was preoccupied with the question of where I would call home. I did not belong in Canada, or its gay community, neither did I belong in my own home country. As I could not shake the thought from my mind, I decided I would interrogate the concept of 'home' and what *finding*, *moving away* from and *being at home* meant to same-sex loving Africans in Canada.

Researching sources, I found my thoughts articulated by Ann Marie Fortier. She describes the long-held notion of home as the 'white-picket fence, one man-one woman, two and half kids', poster family (Fortier, 2003). This concept of home, built on heterosexual ideals provides limited space for queerness—the closet. This narrative of home-building makes an interesting transition to a migration story as queer people 'come out' of the closet and leave their homes in search of a queer community. Fortier, on the other hand, sways from the usual linear direction in which queer people have to move out of their heteronormative family homes in order to find safety and the comfort of home. Home can be found in leaving, returning and finding home inside of one's original home.

As I had just begun slowly meeting the small community of queer Africans in Winnipeg, I decided I would ask the people I knew and encourage them to ask others. As my thesis was just a pilot study for a larger body of work I intended to create in time, I decided that one or two interviews would suffice. I ended up interviewing only one young gay man from Zimbabwe in his early twenties. He and I chose the name Darego for his pseudonym. I anticipated that he would have a fresh outlook to share as he arrived in Canada within the past year and had already been involved in the gay community. As the map had provoked strong emotions within me, I thought I would make use of it in the study.

We sat in a private room and began the interview. I handed him the map and asked him to trace his route from his home to Canada. He traced his map from Zimbabwe to Canada and I traced mine from Nigeria to Winnipeg and began the interview. Darego responded to my question whether asking him what he understood about the map saying:

*"Well, what this map basically shows is the geographical locations and the risk of degree to your personal property and self in terms of your sexuality. So I guess the green zones demarcate the places where it is safe for you to be gay and you get married, which I guess is the highest form of*

*protection and it moves down hierarchically to the most dangerous zone, which is the red where the death penalty is enforced. And it seems like the largest zones where the death penalty is enforced is in Africa and then the gray areas just means that the legislation is not clear and... there may or may not be doom awaiting you there."*

*What of Zimbabwe, what does it show there?*

*"Zimbabwe is orange. So we are talking about imprisonment between one month and ten years; though from personal experience, I can say that the individuals within that society are not quite sure of what that law states about homosexuality... so it could then range from a yellow, unclear to as extreme as a lifelong sentence because the country itself is not really stable."*

*Stable in what sense?*

*"Stable in the sense that there's a high degree of corruption and ..."*

*Are you talking about the grey area here?*

*"No, I'm talking about Zimbabwe specifically and how it is labelled orange. But that's why I have a question... I raise a question when you... when a certain area is labelled grey because just because the certain area is labelled a certain colour doesn't mean that the individuals with that society and the law within that society may defend that. Like South Africa for example, while legally it is rendered green, it might not, it does not necessarily mean that the different tribes within that culture react to homosexuality the same. They range from extremely violent to not caring at all [...]."*

*What of Canada? How would you explain LGBT rights in Canada? Or how would you describe it? Do you think people can feel free to marry everywhere, people are not persecuted because it seems like it's just green. Canada is just green. There is no yellow, there is no red...*

*"Canada is not just green and you don't need to be gay to tell that there is a stigma held about it. Yes you may feel free to marry someone anywhere you please but it doesn't mean that among certain people... certain people won't like it. Certain people will have their voices heard. I can't really say from the Canada that I've experienced that everyone is out there holding a pitchfork, throwing a bible at you, but you do feel I guess the mirror image of what sexism is."*

*How?*

*"It's nice to throw a sexist joke here and there for certain people. So when people throw a sexist joke, you get the same thing for homophobia; you find people who are trying to conform to the expectation that it is okay to be gay in Canada, so it's ok for us to accept gay people but internally they haven't dealt with their own prejudices, they are extremely biased and unfair but it is not out of the ordinary, it is not something that you wouldn't expect."*

We spoke about our experiences in Canada as black people and the expectations placed on us due to our race. Darego explained that his race and ethnicity facilitated his blending into mainstream Canadian community. Due to his race, they never assumed he was anything but heterosexual. To some extent, this would mean that his race was linked to the heterosexism he experienced. He also added that in the gay community, he found it hard to make connections as he was exoticized as a black man, in such a way that attractions towards him were based almost entirely on his rareness as a black man. He added that, although he had met some well-informed Caucasian men in the gay scene, most white gay men only wanted him as a sexual object and had no space for him other than in that role. Darego explained this describing his experience in a small town in Manitoba:

*"Well in the small town, my experience is tainted because of the fact that I'm black. It's not very common for them to see a black person and when they do see a black person they get all excited and they want to be very hospitable and all that, so it is tainted by that, so I cannot really speak for homosexuality in that sense, but I did find it interesting and I did use it to my advantage that as a black individual, or as an objectifiable minority, I could get away with certain things that may be the average teenager would write off as 'gay' and 'weird' and they would write it off as 'no, he's black, he's from another culture', which I found very useful and extremely entertaining, I guess, something I was playing with from time to time but [...]"*

*What's been happening there [in the gay community]?*

*"Well, I'm not necessarily a fan... I can only speak for gay men but they happen to be ex... or the ones that I have met and... or the ones that do most of the representing in... not necessarily in the media but in the public sphere, or in the night life. They tend to be extremely shallow, and racist, and full of themselves, which is the best way I can put it... They are just that. That for itself poses in—which is quite unique to Canada or in my experience being in Canada and Zimbabwe*

*comparatively. Back home I would worry about heterosexuals and how they would treat me, in Canada I'm more worried about the homosexual males whom my attraction is directed to and how they treat me."*

*Why?*

*"Because, I guess now, here it's no longer the fear of identifying as a group of people, it's the fear..., it's identifying as an individual and you find, I guess, some individuals whom might have been hurt by the system, or might be bitter, or maybe have different priorities—they find it very easy to be shallow or racist or sexist or whatever it is maybe because they have experienced it themselves too. [...] My race is attributed to my sexuality a lot and it's attributed... Like I was saying, the bitterness then attaches itself to gay men who have certain expectations about very rare, black gay men. It can be intimidating and somewhat annoying."*

*I know what you're talking of. I think I've been meeting a lot of lesbians that have sex with me because I'm a Nigerian lesbian or because—even my ex. I think she liked me because I was a black lesbian in Canada. You get a lot of people—even black people or white people—who want to have sex with you based on your race. Even me too, I know fully well I want to have sex with a black...*

*"There is no.... There is no problem with initial attraction because of superficial reasons. I am yet to meet someone who claims that they don't do that. Liking someone because they are an exotic rare fruit is no problem whatsoever. The problem arises when you then want to minimize that person as all that they are. 'That's all that you are. You are going to be this rare fruit that I'm going to enjoy once and then dish you aside as what I conceive as normal.' That's where we have the problem. In the minds of some people, you can only be a rare fruit and that's that – I'm going to go to what I conceive as normal later. [...] then there are some people who realize that you are a black person who acts white in quotations. Immediately they realize you act white they are like 'mmhmmh'. 'I wanted that rare fruit and if I'm not going to get it then I'm not going to even try'."*

*Exactly. Exactly. It's just that "Ohh... she's not really that black." It's very silly though. I think... I've basically been like having this idea that you can't be black and gay basically because black*

*people are 'stronger,' they are more 'masculine'. Black people are more 'homophobic'. Does that even make sense, saying that black people are more homophobic?*

We finally spoke about our ideas of home. While, I wished to return back to Nigeria and be as open as I could be, I also saw this as an opportunity for activism. For Darego, returning home permanently was not a viable option. When I asked Darego whether he thought of going back to Zimbabwe, he responded:

*"Visiting, yes. I don't know of permanently, if I'll do that."*

*Explain why.*

*"Because, I don't know, I guess I won't be able to live my life the way I may want to at the time with the openness that I have awarded or I chose to award myself from time to time [...]"*

*So, do you think you'll stay here, you'll go elsewhere?*

*"I may stay in Canada; I don't know if I'm going to stay in Winnipeg but probably in Canada. I plan on getting residency."*

*Why do you want to stay in Canada then, why not U.S. or U.K?*

*'Because the United States is broken, the United Kingdom is too small... and ... I'm yet to find a very good competitor.'*

*So, you're not even thinking of going back to Africa? Not even South Africa?*

*"I may, I may. It's uncertain [...]"*

*Yes, that's the same thing with me. I think I want to go back to Africa. I want to do something there but I'm not sure which place in Africa I would go to and if I should stay here. I'm not sure if I want to be in Winnipeg or not. I'm not sure if I want to be... I would love to go to the U.K. I don't think I actually want to have a place to stay [permanently] because, I don't know. I feel like I like to travel so I wouldn't mind being in the U.K., Morocco, Brazil, Japan... I don't mind learning a new language. [...] So, what does 'home' mean to you then?*

*"Home is where I... where I feel safe."*

*Where you feel safe... Can you explain 'safe'?*

*"Safety is financially, socially and in terms of security."*

*Like you don't get beat up?*

*"Yes... that's where home is."*

*Hmmm... That's interesting. So do you feel at home in Winnipeg?*

*"Sometimes, not all the time."*

*So, could you say 'home' could be a moment too?*

*"Yes. Definitely."*

*So, do you think your idea of home has changed since you came to Canada?*

*"Hmhmhm... [approving]"*

*How so?*

*"First of all home used to be a building, now it's more a feeling back in Africa or a feeling of nostalgia. It's not necessarily a place or one specific place but it's a collection of places around a collection people."*

*Around a collection of feelings?*

*"Hmhmhm... [approving]"*

My idea of what home meant differed from Darego's. I did not see home as safety. I wished to travel the world and make homes wherever I was. This made apparent that *home* for queer denizens of the diaspora is always a questionable site. Darego did not feel safe in Zimbabwe. Therefore, his home country would not truly be home. On the other hand, as a foreigner, Darego would have to endure the long process it will take to be a Canadian citizen. There is a possibility that his application for permanent residency may be denied and he would be forced to leave Winnipeg, which was his momentary home. His status as foreigner, therefore, impedes on his acquisition of this new Canadian home. We were both in an ironic situation in which we had acquired more homes than the average person but were

ultimately homeless.

This homelessness is not entirely negative, as in the words of Rotimi Fani-Kayode:

*On three counts I am an outsider: in matters of sexuality, in terms of geographical and cultural dislocation; and in the sense of not having become the sort of respectably married professional my parents might have hoped for. Such a position gives me the feeling of having very little to lose (Huffington Post, 2012).*

As Ann Marie Fortier, I intend to sway from linear narratives of migration and sexuality, in which I have to leave my home or home country in order to find myself and live openly. I enjoy Darego's concept of home being a collection of places. Also, as Rotimi Fani Kayode, 'I being an outsider' means I do not have the nationalist loyalties tied to my citizenship. As queer Africans who have experienced both geographic sites of the debate on gay rights—people who have seen the racism and homophobia in the Global North and homophobia in Africa, Darego and myself, understand that persecution of sexual minorities is not confined to the Global South. We also know that the gay communities in the Global North need to critically reflect on representation, citizenship and race, understanding that there are 'outsiders' within.

### **Author's Note**

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## **‘Coming Out’ of a Straight Man: Reflections on a Personal Journey toward Self-Acceptance**

Godfrey Dalitso Kangaude

One day I was giving a talk on sexuality to students of Stella Maris Secondary School in Blantyre, Malawi, who were completing their final year of school. At the point where I talked about sexual feelings, the girls wanted me to share more about my personal experience and how I handled sexual feelings rather than remain talking in the abstract. I had not seen this coming. In any case, I summoned courage and told them about my first crush and what happened thereafter. Since that talk, I have gained some courage to share my story with others because I realised that it reflects how my passion for sexual rights advocacy is intertwined with my own life experience. In this article, I share this experience and how I came to believe strongly that we ought to accept sexual diversity and respect sexual rights of all persons without discrimination.

### **Sexuality education in my formative years: Girls are ‘bad’**

When I was 10 years old, my parents put me in a catholic minor seminary in Malawi to train to become a priest. It was a full boarding school with classes from standard 6 to 8. The training was overseen by a priest who went by the title ‘rector’. One of the rules of the school was abstention from any relationship with girls. Writing to or receiving letters from a ‘girlfriend’ was strongly prohibited. All letters were supposed to be posted through the rector’s box. Incoming mail was screened to make sure that, amongst other things, we were not communicating with girlfriends. The rule about seminarians and girls communicated the message that somehow girls were bad for us. At 10 years old, I did not really appreciate what this meant. I did not even have a girlfriend at that time.

However, amongst the students, it was a totally different story. We exchanged information on girls and sexual relationships. This sharing of information amongst ourselves was in fact our informal sexuality education. I therefore acquired a great deal of information about sexuality such as *how* to have sex, *how* to masturbate and so on. Stories about ‘sexual’ experiences with girls were commonplace. Students circumvented the rector’s mailbox and exchanged letters with girlfriends. I also learned, from peers, that a woman who used to visit our rector was actually his girlfriend. Therefore, while officially, sexuality and girls was a taboo topic, unofficially we learned a great deal about sexuality through informal exchange of information amongst ourselves.

To a 10-year old, who did not even have a girlfriend, these messages about sexuality and girls in the seminary were ambiguous and confusing. On the one hand the official messages demonized girls and were very negative about sexuality. On the other hand, we talked so excitedly amongst ourselves about sex and girls. Further, the rector himself had a girlfriend! There was a great deal of information about girls and sexuality I could not yet fully comprehend. This set the stage for the event that was going to have tremendous impact on my life.

### **The first attempt to 'coming out': Sexual feelings are 'bad'**

When I was about 11, and still in the seminary, I experienced my first crush on a girl. The crush hit me like a sledgehammer. The strong feelings of attraction to this girl literally came out of nowhere and overwhelmed me. I vividly remember how I could not stop fantasizing about her. I could not understand what was going on. I just wanted to be with this girl and I could not stop thinking about her. I do not remember the details exactly, but I decided to write to my dad that I liked this girl, and that I thought it was okay for me because even our rector had a girlfriend. In my naivety, I had no problems posting this letter in the rector's box.

I did not have the faintest idea of the chain of events that my, apparently innocuous action, was going to trigger. The next thing I remember was being summoned to the office to faceing one very furious rector. He reprimanded me and threatened to dismiss me from school. I was so afraid because he was this huge and bulky priest, so visibly angry and I thought he was going to hit me. I was even more terrified of the dismissal because I knew my dad was going to be equally angry with me. The rector told me to leave and pack my bags. However, while I was packing, he followed me and told me he would punish me instead. The punishment was heavy manual labour for some days.

The impact of the event was so devastating. I blamed myself for having written the letter, and I remember being depressed for several days thereafter. Though I did not understand this at the time, I began to associate sexual feelings and attraction to girls as evil. The event imprinted in the depth of my being the notion that sexual feelings were bad. From then on, I resolved to rid myself of these evil feelings and attraction to girls by engaging in pious activities including the sacrament of confession. I only realised this in retrospect some years later because it was not a conscious choice.

### **The 'closeted' years: The emotional exile**

Years following the event, I continued to repress my sexual feelings. This had an impact on my relationships with girls, especially whenever I met a girl to who I was physically attracted. Even though

down the track I entered into sexually intimate relationships with girls, I was all the time uneasy with my own sexual feelings. The more I found a girl attractive, the more anxious I became. A silent battle raged within myself. On the one hand I wanted to go out and relate to girls, but on the other, I held myself back from intimacy, thinking that the feelings I was having were evil. Even years after I had left the seminary and was studying medicine in Australia, the emotional tension within myself was still so high. I had this girlfriend who was in Malawi, and naturally I missed her while we were apart. I however interpreted the feelings I felt as bad, and that she was the cause of my having such feelings. I wrote a letter terminating the relationship. I thought this would rid me of the feelings.

Of course, ending the relationship with the girl did not solve the problem. I continued to struggle to disconnect from my sexual feelings, but the more I did that, the more I engaged in erotic fantasies and they frightened me. I tried to use the prayer, confession and engage more and more in pious activities to the point of fanaticism. I started to have the idea that perhaps I should go back to the seminary. In my thinking, this was the place where I would best work on my sexual feelings and become holy.

### **The second 'coming out': The homecoming**

After 4 years of medical training, I quit studying medicine and applied to join a catholic seminary. In 1997 I joined a catholic seminary run by the Missionaries of Africa, in Uganda. Unknowingly, this was indeed going to help me with my problem but in a way I had not imagined.

The Missionaries of Africa had a completely different philosophy from the seminary I had attended earlier in my life. Training for the priesthood included training in self-knowledge and self-acceptance, including about our sexuality. We were introduced to exploring our sexual story through the book *Your Sexual Self: Pathway to Authentic Intimacy* (great book!) by Ferder and Heagle (1992). They write about sexuality from a psycho-spiritual perspective and affirm that our sexual feelings are a God-given gift that draws us toward authentic intimacy.

For the first time in 13 years, I heard that sexual feelings were in fact good and lead us to authentic existence and holiness! When I read this book, it sounded so out of my world that I could not comprehend it. I had to read it a number of times to come to terms with the truth about sexuality, and the truth about my own experience. I began to realise that I had been living in a crisis, which for me was like being in the closet. The shaming by the rector had continued to exert emotional influence so that even after the event had long passed, I continued to be ashamed of accepting my sexual feelings. The condemnation by the rector had been internalized, and I had become, as it were, auto-condemning.

While I was 24 year old in age, I was stuck at 11 years in terms of sexuality development.

Noteworthy is the fact that even if I repressed my sexual feelings, I still had had sexual and intimate relationships with girls. However, I came to know that the quality of the relationships were deficient of the authentic intimacy that I sought but could never attain under my predicament, because they were based on a self that was imprisoned in anxiety and shame.

It had been overwhelming for me to deal with the emotional upheaval resulting from confronting this truth about my past experience. Fortunately, I had found myself in an environment that was supportive especially through counselling. Through the combination of intellectual and emotional support, I gained the courage to begin to explore and deal with the event that had damaged me. This included dealing with the anger I then felt toward the rector (who had since died), and the system that led me toward hatred for sexual feelings. It was like being an adolescent again and starting to befriend the sexual feelings that I had thought were an evil part of me. I had to grow up emotionally from where I had left off 14 years ago. This was my second coming out.

### **Toward appreciating sexual rights**

From the time I first laid my hands on the book by Ferder and Heagle, I became an avid reader on sexuality, and read extensively on the subject. I learned that sexual feelings are about *who* we are and stem from the core of our being. I also learned how repressing sexual feelings can lead to various emotional problems. I also learned about the importance of affirmation, that is, about positive messages about sexual feelings especially in the formative years of childhood and adolescence. In order to accept ourselves, we need mentors to accept us as we are, and to communicate positive messages about our sexual feelings.

The intellectual revolution that was initiated by my encounter with the Missionaries of Africa was the beginning of my quest for truth about human sexuality. At that time, I had no idea where it would take me. By the time I left the Missionaries of Africa in 2000, I was pretty saturated with the philosophy and psychology about sexuality. This would help me continue reflecting on my own experience. Some of the questions I wrestled with included: Where do sexual feelings come from? Can we will what we feel? Why am I attracted to that girl and not another? Why should I be attracted to anybody at all? What is the best way to live one's sexual life?

Later on, I graduated with a law degree and I went on to specialise in sexual and reproductive rights. I began to appreciate, from reading the works of authors like Rosalind Petchesky, Sonia Correa, Carol Vance (who I was so excited to have met personally at the 2014 CREA Sexuality, Gender, and

Rights Institute in Istanbul), Barbara Klugman, Alice Miller and others, the politics of sexuality in the international human rights discourse. This is when I began to engage issues of sexual orientation and diversity, but also understand sexual relationships as gendered and experienced through the mediation of social and cultural norms.

### **Acceptance of diversity in sexuality**

I have never had much difficulty accepting that persons that have same-sex sexual feelings are as normal as myself and everyone else. Perhaps this is because in my life experience, I have undergone rejection pretty much analogous to what persons of homosexual orientation face in my society. I had been punished for revealing sexual attraction. It was in the same sense that the Catechism of the Catholic Church describes homosexual feelings: a disorder. Persons of homosexual and other orientation are made to think that their sexual feelings are not normal.

When therefore I started inquiry into sexuality and human development, I realised that everyone experiences sexual feelings the way I did. We do not will ourselves into being attracted to a particular person. Conversely we cannot will ourselves not to be attracted to someone. Sexual feelings have a life of their own, and reveal themselves to us as we interact with the world of people. Some people are sexually attracted to the opposite sex, others to same sex, and yet others to both sexes. It is nature's diversity. I believe that no amount of training or repression can change the sexual feelings that well up from the depth of our innermost being, from one orientation to another.

Through the negative childhood experience and its resolution, I developed a strong conviction that generally, our sexual feelings, whether they be heterosexual or homosexual or other when they do reveal themselves, cannot in themselves be bad. It is wrong to think that sexual feelings are bad. When the priest scolded and punished me for being attracted to a girl, he shamed me at a time I was most in need of affirmation. The consequences led to failure of self-acceptance. This need not happen to anybody.

### **Culture and suspicion about sexual feelings**

Sexuality tends to be heavily regulated by social and cultural norms. This regulation is imported into and reflected in public policy and discourse. Regulation of sexuality has many forms. For instance, in my Chewa culture (Chewa is the largest ethnic group in Malawi and predominantly found in the Central Region), there are elaborate initiation ceremonies for girls and boys. At these ceremonies girls and boys are taught how to behave sexually and in sexual relationships. However, social regulation can

sometimes be unjust, and go against the principles of human development. It were philosophers like Sigmund Freud who began to show us that regulation of sexuality through laws, policies and norms can be counterproductive to human development and negatively impact sexual health.

In my formative years, I had encountered the epitome of patriarchal culture in the seminary, which was very anti-sexuality and misogynistic. Girls and women were demonized, and our sexual feelings were seen to be a part of our sinful nature, which we needed to control and manage if we were to become holy. While the seminary was an extreme environment, it however reflected how the society to which I belong viewed sexuality. Sexuality and sexual feelings continue to be perceived negatively. This fear of sexual feelings and shrouding sexuality in shame and secrecy does not prevent persons from engaging in physical intimacy. However, what is perhaps not appreciated is that these relationships may be shame-based to the extent that we have not fully accepted and integrated our sexual feelings.

My own philosophy about sexuality which I also express in an article I have published (Kangaude, 2014), resonates with Technical Consultation on Sexual Health convened by the World Health Organisation and World Association of Sexology in 2002. I believe that sexuality must be approached respectfully and positively. This means that our sexual feelings should be respected and accepted as something positive for our being human.

#### **“I have feelings towards same sex”: An encounter with an adolescent in search for truth**

The motto of the Nyale Institute for Sexual and Reproductive Health Governance (Nyale Institute; an organisation I have co-founded following my fellowship with Sonke Gender Justice) is to foster sex and gender equality in development. In one of our project activities we conducted sessions with adolescents and young people in various secondary schools in Mchinji. We included discussions on sexuality and sexual feelings. Following the open sessions, we gave an opportunity to students who wanted to talk about their issues. A male student approached one of our male facilitators and wanted to understand about same-sex feelings, and whether it was okay to have such feelings. We were surprised that this was brought up, because it is a strongly stigmatized topic which we had not directly addressed in the open session. But then, it was also not surprising because adolescents hunger for truth, and given the chance, they do ask such questions. We counselled the student based on the principles of approaching sexuality respectfully and positively, which was that our sexual feelings are good and we must accept them as we are, whether they reveal attraction to people of the same sex or opposite sex. Sexual feelings can be expressed in a variety of ways, and how we express our feelings is within our choice. However, expression of sexuality is very much regulated by social norms and expectations. We are cognizant of

the fact that Malawian society has negative views about persons being in intimate relations with persons of the same sex. But we as the Nyale Institute, and many others, believe that all persons whether they are attracted to the same sex or opposite sex are fundamentally equal and should be treated equally with respect.

### **Concluding thoughts: Toward fostering a culture of respect for sexuality and rights**

It is important to affirm sexual feelings as a prerequisite for sexual health and respect of sexual rights. One of the best foundations in life toward sexual health we can give to adolescents is this affirmation that whatever their sexual feelings, they are okay. Affirmation of sexual feelings, leading to self-acceptance is the basis of personal freedom.

While I believe in freedom that comes from accepting one's sexual feelings, I simultaneously understand that we operate in an environment that stigmatizes expression of intimacy between persons of the same sex. I continue to advocate for decriminalization and positive acceptance of same-sex intimacy. However, this should be premised on accepting our sexual feelings in their diversity. This is the only gateway to the freedom that allows us to relate authentically with others. We therefore need to educate our young people about the truth of being human and sexual.

While I work with other advocates and organisations through Nyale Institute to challenge laws and policies that discriminate against homosexual intimacy, I realise that a more fundamental challenge is to encourage society to approach sexuality respectfully and positively. Adolescents should be affirmed with positive messages about their sexual feelings.

The term 'coming out' is a concept used to describe the point at which persons of non-heterosexual orientation self-disclose is about their orientation. In this paper, I have used the term analogously to show that the challenge is for everyone. We normally take it for granted that persons of heterosexual orientation have no problems with affirmation or self-acceptance. Even for a heterosexual, it is possible to enter into physically intimate relationships, and yet fail to achieve intimacy because we have not really 'come out'. Coming out is about connecting to our sexual feelings and relating to others based on a fundamental inner personal freedom which comes from self-acceptance.

We all seek companionship and friendship, love and intimacy, in its many forms; physical, emotional and spiritual. It is not only about the way we relate to the person or persons we are intimately connected with at a particular point in space and time. It is also about how we relate to the world of persons around us. We cannot be free to love if we fail to accept ourselves. In order to achieve self-acceptance, we need the affirmation of significant others such as parents, adults and other role-



models. Treating children or adolescents in such a way that they should deny their sexual feelings – heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or other – is to condemn them to one of the most painful prisons of the self. We do not have any justification for this; at all. Yet, in order to affirm the adolescent, we (adults) need to be comfortable with our own sexual feelings, whether they be heterosexual or non-heterosexual.

Finally, my story is very personal and unique. I do not claim that any person who passed through the seminary system ended up like myself. However, I hope that I have in telling it, encouraged others to approach sexuality positively and respectfully, and to accept diversity in sexuality.

### **Acknowledgment**

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# LGBT Activism and ‘Traditional Values’: Promoting Dialogue through Indigenous Cultural Values in Botswana

John McAllister

## Introduction: Opening doors

In July 2013, LeGaBiBo, Botswana's national LGBT organisation, made history in this normally unnewsworthy southern African state by participating in the country's first meeting between LGBT activists and *dikgosi* (traditional ‘chiefs’). In what was calculatingly billed as a *pitsô* (traditionally, a public consultation called by a clan or village leader), *dikgosi* from all the administrative districts of Botswana met LeGaBiBo activists and discussed the experiences and needs of sexual minorities in their communities.

In the atmosphere of state-sanctioned homophobia that, to judge from the media, appears to have swept across Africa in recent years, it may seem surprising that a consultation between LGBT activists and traditional leaders should take place at all. That the meeting was respectful and constructive will perhaps seem shocking. Yet it not only went off without incident but ended with the majority of the chiefs requesting follow-up meetings.

To be sure, the *pitsô* was not a love-in. Officially, the convener was the Botswana Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS (BONELA), the legal ‘umbrella’ for LeGaBiBo, which has been repeatedly denied registration as an NGO, and the agenda was given out simply as ‘minority rights’. Some of the chiefs were uncomfortable to find themselves in a meeting on *sexual* minority rights, but their response was nevertheless polite and attentive. This surprised even one of the organisers, who later admitted he had worried “there might be tension, resistance and ... backlash by these reservoirs of our culture and tradition” (Ndadi, 2013). Instead, as the LGBT participants at the *pitsô* spoke about their experiences of discrimination and rejection and made the case for fairer treatment, “the *dikgosi* were visibly touched ... and wanted to hear more” (Ndadi, 2013).

The *pitsô* was not a one-off. It was the latest, and arguably the boldest, move in an ongoing LeGaBiBo strategy to leverage the potential of indigenous Setswana cultural values as an approach to LGBT activism. Since 2008, the organisation has held a series of *dipitsô* with teachers, nurses, public health officials, police and legal officers, ministry of labour officials, and others to explain LGBT issues and lobby for non-discriminatory policies and services.

Although it may seem a small point, simply calling the meetings *dipitsô* is a not unimportant part

of this strategy. Labels invoke values and conventions; a meeting is just a meeting, but, in Setswana, a *pitsô* is something more. Traditionally, it is convened by a *kgosi* or some other authority figure—the term derives from *go bitsa*, meaning to call or summon – and therefore implies a certain duty to attend and pay attention (Bolaane, 2014). More important, according to tradition, “in a *pitsô*, every person is allowed to speak and every person’s opinion is respected ....” (Mosweu, 2013).

### **Traditional values and the ‘un-African’ argument**

African ‘traditional values’ are usually seen as obstacles to LGBT rights, indeed as enemies of freedom, progress and ‘modernity’ in general, but LeGaBiBo’s strategy is based not just on a conviction that these values can *promote* as well as obstruct LGBT equality, but that neglecting them is counter-productive. As the facilitator of the chiefs’ *pitsô* explained:

*Batswana traditional leaders are often viewed as conservative [and] unaccommodative ... [but] thinking this way ... has only encouraged keeping them ... in the dark. ... [B]elieving that traditional leaders are unable to understand more controversial challenges in their community [discourages] ... dialogue (Mosweu, 2013).*

The idea of leveraging traditional beliefs and practices for seemingly untraditional objectives addresses the key challenge facing African LGBT activism at the present moment – just getting a fair hearing. There is simply not much space for constructive public discussion of LGBT issues. In government departments, policy makers are often privately sympathetic but live in fear of politicians and public opinion. The media meanwhile distort and sensationalise anything about sexualities, while marches and demonstrations, if they are even permitted, are more about group solidarity and symbolic defiance than two-way communication. In workshops, film festivals, or art exhibitions, we are mostly preaching to the converted. The result is an echo chamber that struggles to make headway among the general population and leaves the movement vulnerable to moral panics.

The underlying reason for this vulnerability is the perception that ‘gayism’ is a neo-colonial Western import inimical to authentic African values and cultures. Ironically, this attitude is itself an import. Many pre-colonial African societies had their own ways of accommodating sexual and gender non-conformity, as numerous studies have shown (Epprecht, 2008), and the criminalisation of ‘sodomy’ was a colonial innovation. The roots of contemporary African homophobia are nineteenth-century European prudery and racist fantasies of ‘primitive’ black sexuality, yet, despite this irony, the power of the ‘un-African’ argument seems undiminished.

Since the 1980s, the liberal discourse of universal human rights has enabled African LGBT communities to recognise themselves as oppressed minorities entitled to equal citizenship, created a powerful sense of distinctive LGBT cultural and social identities, and empowered dynamic, outspoken LGBT activism throughout the continent. However, outside South Africa, there has been little concrete progress towards either formal or actual equality. The resilience of the un-African argument has been a key obstacle, and human rights discourse is not, in itself, capable of addressing it. As a discourse originating in the West, the concept of human rights is vulnerable to the same reactionary nationalism. Homophobic appeals to 'tradition', 'African culture', and the 'rights' of communities take their power from well-founded resentment of a long, and continuing, history of Western cultural imperialism.

The phenomenal growth of LGBT activism in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years has had a tremendously positive effect on the pride, confidence, and assertiveness of African LGBT communities. In many countries, Botswana included, the tiny, underground groupings limited to large cities of ten or fifteen years ago have grown into dynamic national organisations with sophisticated networks and highly developed theoretical positions and political skills. However, the new visibility and boldness of LGBT activism in Africa – together with intense publicity around military 'don't-ask-don't-tell' policies, same-sex marriage, and other LGBT issues in the West – have transformed the LGBT question in Africa from a largely private matter into a hot-button political issue connecting with intense post-colonial anxieties about social cohesion and public morality.

Under the guise of protecting traditional African values, politicians and moral entrepreneurs have quickly learned how to stoke and then exploit these anxieties to their own advantage. In a predictable feedback loop, the backlash is sensationally reported on in the West, and NGOs, politicians, and celebrities – often without consulting African activists – respond with angry public statements and even threats of aid boycotts. This highly publicised outrage, sometimes tinged with neo-colonial or, arguably, racist talk about the civilised vs. the primitive, gives many Africans the impression that 'gay rights' are a Western pet project, especially when other human rights abuses in Africa fail to provoke such outrage. The effect is to reinforce the perception that LGBT identities are foreign intrusions and that LGBT activism is a new form of neo-colonial bullying. African activists feel the counter-productive effects on their work and, in many cases, their own security.

Meanwhile, as the African LGBT movement matures theoretically, Western self-righteousness is increasingly seen as part of what Teju Cole (2012) calls the 'White Saviour Industrial Complex'. For Cole, Western indignation and threats, no matter how sincere or well-meant, convey an assumption of civilisational superiority, yet the West's enlightenment about LGBT rights is itself only a few years old.

More and more African activists are, therefore, coming not just to reject Western interventionism but also to question the value of Western strategies of activism and even, as the Ugandan activist and legal scholar Sylvia Tamale argues (2011), the concepts of sexual identity and social self-understandings on which these strategies rest.

### **Rethinking traditional values: The case of Botswana**

But what are the alternatives? A constructive way forward, especially after the most recent setbacks in Uganda and Nigeria, is not easy to imagine. However, since the backlash is driven by misguided nationalism and an African version of reactionary culturism, the alternatives need to be *African* ones. This is where a rethinking of tradition offers a possible way out of the impasse, especially in countries, such as Botswana, where the leveraging of certain indigenous values has already been a factor in postcolonial nation-building.

There are three key terms in modern Setswana social-political culture: *botho*, *morêrô*, and *molomo*. *Botho*, literally ‘human-ness’ (better-known in its Nguni form, *ubuntu*), is an indigenous southern African philosophy of what it means to be a social being. It is far too subtle and complex to try to define here, but the important thing for my argument – and for the Botswana state's historical deployment (or appropriation) of the term – is its emphasis on the individual's social obligations to the community and vice versa. *Morêrô* is *botho* as a political principle. It refers to the obligation of the state, community, and extended family to make decisions through consultation and consensus. *Molomo* (literally ‘mouth’ but, in this context, usually translated as ‘dialogue’) is the process of consulting and building consensus.

During the independence movement and early years of nation-building, these concepts were essential in constructing the perception of a single Setswana national identity and have continued to be used both to justify progressive public policies, such as the 2001 national rollout of free ARV treatment (the first programme of this kind in Africa), and to provide the ruling elite with a claim to authenticity. As a result, *botho*, *morêrô*, and *molomo* are seen by Botswana as the foundational principles of an indigenous and authentic Setswana form of governance and cultural cohesion. Formally, Botswana is a Western-style adversarial, majoritarian democracy transplanted into Africa with some concessions to pre-colonial polities, such as a dual Roman-Dutch/customary legal system. However, its comparative prosperity and social peace since independence, which Botswana are very conscious and proud of, are widely, if often uncritically, accepted as the rewards of staying true to *botho*, *morêrô* and *molomo*.

Successive governments have made the most of this, and over the years have tailored these

values into a sort of official state ideology touting cooperation, social responsibility, dialogue, and consultation as national virtues. Thus, all Batswana ‘know’, for example, that *ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo* – ‘the highest form of war is dialogue’ – and *mafoko a kgotla a mantle otlhe* – ‘all words are beautiful in the *kgotla*’, (the traditional community council or town meeting) – and there are many similar proverbs and catchphrases that promote the virtues of listening, consulting, and respecting difference.

In daily life as well as in politics, these principles may be more honoured in the breach, but they *are* honoured. Their prestige can therefore be used to pry open doors that would otherwise stay shut and to create space for dialogue that would not otherwise be possible. Thus, despite the fact that sex ‘against the order of nature’ remains unlawful and that LeGaBiBo has been repeatedly denied legal registration, the organisation has been able to use the concept of *morêrô*, in particular, as a kind of open sesame to coax respectful hearings from a variety of community leaders, opinion shapers, and policy makers. The strategy is undramatic and has not made any headlines – avoiding headlines is part of the point – but is probably responsible for the otherwise incongruous protection of sexual orientation in the new Employment Act (2010). It has probably also helped prevent the backlash against LGBT activism seen in many other African countries, enabling LeGaBiBo and newer LGBT organisations to operate freely and an open LGBT social and club scene to thrive in Gaborone.

### **Traditional values and the way forward**

Anyone familiar with the situation of African LGBT communities only from reports in the Western media could be forgiven for thinking that African societies are uniformly and fanatically hostile to sexual and gender nonconformity, or even, as National Public Radio's political correspondent casually asserted at the height of the furore over Uganda's anti-homosexuality bill, “innately homophobic” (Hockenberry, 2014). Yet, despite the criminalisation of same-sex relations in most African countries, many African LGBT, not just in Botswana, live more or less openly, while African LGBT organisations are increasingly vocal and visible, and consultations between activists and government officials take place even in countries with the most homophobic reputations. Without downplaying the anxiety and suffering caused by oppressive laws and political and religious demagoguery, the reality is that African LGBT cultures and activism are growing, diversifying, and making progress, slow and patchy as the progress may be. The current wave of homophobia is, after all, a reaction against these successes.

To presume, however, that African societies are – or ought to be – on an inevitable path toward contemporary Western understandings of what it means to be sexually different would be both arrogant and counter-productive. Human rights may be universal, but the sexual identities constructed in the

West over the past century or so are not, and the popular misconception that ‘gayism’ is a neocolonial Western phenomenon is probably the single most formidable barrier to the acceptance of sexual difference in Africa. Thus, although the LGBT movement in Africa has had great success developing itself and building a sense of community using Western models of sexual identity and activism, it has made little progress in terms of mainstream public or political acceptance. Progress beyond LGBT communities and allies depends on finding ways to harmonise Western-style demands for sexual ‘minority rights’ with indigenous concepts of family and community obligations and in particular on a recognition that reactionary homophobic appeals to ‘tradition’ and ‘African culture’, oppressive and totalising as they may be, are based on deep-seated – and well-founded – anger at Western arrogance.

Leveraging positive and tolerant examples of traditional values in order to open doors and create space are just the beginning of a process that can only be incremental. And although no progress can be made until the doors *are* opened, there will be problems harmonising even inclusive and humanistic traditional concepts such as *botho* with the idea of universal human rights. The modern Western concepts of privacy and individual autonomy on which the human rights system has been built are at odds with *botho*'s emphasis on the centrality of the community and one's obligations to it. From this emphasis, proponents of *botho* typically extrapolate a duty for the individual to conform to community standards in order to be entitled to protection, respect and acceptance.

In this interpretation, the community has a legitimate interest, and a ‘right’ to interfere, in matters that in Western human rights discourse fall absolutely under the individual's right to privacy. In Canada in 1968, Pierre Trudeau famously declared that the state had no business in people's bedrooms, but in *botho* the community, and by extension the state, arguably have precisely that right. In traditional society, of course, there had to be ways of accommodating individuals who for one reason or another did not conform to sexual norms, but acknowledging an out-and-proud LGBT identity was not one of them (Epprecht, 2013). Thus, no matter how many doors the leveraging of traditional values opens, the same values could still prevent any further progress from being made.

In some ways, *botho* is a more subtle and flexible philosophy than that of universal, ‘inalienable’ rights and autonomous individuals. For one thing, the complex, negotiable interplay between individual autonomy and community obligations in *botho* is arguably more realistic about human nature and the ways societies work. It is also less subject than human rights discourse to an abstract absolutism that can impede social justice in practice. However, by adopting the modern Western concept of sexual *identity*, seeing themselves as a minority, and moving from sexual non-conformity to sexual *dissidence*, African LGBT communities have rejected traditional forms of tolerance based on mutual pretence and

‘keeping up appearances’ for an open political contest over legal recognition and rights.

The problem is that the rules of engagement in this contest have been based largely on a Western model of identity politics. However, the social codes and relations of power in post-colonial African societies, though they may superficially resemble those of Western modernity, have been shaped by conflicts between indigenous norms and colonial and neo-colonial innovations into quite different things. We need to be very cautious about assuming that African LGBT communities are on an inevitable path towards Western liberal multiculturalism.

Ultimately the goal of full citizenship for LGBT Africans will depend on reconciling adopted Western concepts of personal identity, individual autonomy, and innate sexual orientations with indigenous ways of thinking about personhood and community. Western ways of talking about sexuality feel foreign, inauthentic, and threatening to many in Africa who might otherwise be open to the idea that their sexually different fellow citizens belong in the community and deserve acceptance and respect. The struggle for equal sexual citizenship in Africa is typically seen by Western activists as a conflict between individual rights and state oppression. But African leaders would not be able to use ‘gayism’ as a whipping horse if LGBT *rights* were not opposed by most citizens. Politicians know very well that they can rely on the issue to create politically convenient moral panics. This is why Western denunciations and threats are counter-productive and Western-style activism invites a dangerous backlash. An approach that builds public support incrementally by leveraging and reinterpreting locally meaningful cultural values may be the only way to make progress for the time being.

Neither traditional African values nor ‘innate’ African homophobia accounts for the extreme reactions against LGBT self-assertion we are now seeing in some countries. Rather, it is postcolonial modernity that is responsible, with its anxieties about nationality, citizenship, and gender, and its contradictions between individual and collective self-understandings and between individual and community rights. I am not advocating that African LGBT communities settle for traditional reticence and invisibility instead of full citizenship rights. Epprecht (2013, p. 16) is obviously right that *“going back to a village life where a certain amount of sexual diversity could happen under cover of a fictively universal heterosexual[ity] ... is not ... realistic ..”*. The challenge that African LGBT activism poses to traditional forms of tolerance is unavoidable. But so is the backlash, unless African LGBT communities can develop strategies that do not inadvertently feed this backlash *and* that satisfy the legitimate desire of both gay and straight citizens in a postcolonial society for forms of social and cultural practice that are fully modern yet do not feel alien or imposed.



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## **Subaltern Speak: A Photovoice Project with Participants from the Conference on African Same-Sex Sexuality and Gender Diversity**

Daniel Jack Lyons and Theo Sandfort

What does your life as a LGBT person in your country and your community look like, and how is that affected by social, cultural, and political circumstances? These were the questions that five gays and lesbians from five different countries in Africa answered through a unique photovoice project. '*Subaltern Speak*' refers to a narrative of one participant who describes a photo taken at a queer action event on a college campus. In his description of the photo, the participant observes, "we received no adverse effects, but I'm not sure if the people were listening to us. The subaltern can speak, but can the oppressor listen?" The result of this project is presented in the following pages.

### **Photovoice**

Photovoice combines photography with grass roots social action. Participants of a photovoice project are asked to represent their community or point of view by taking photos, discussing them together, and developing narratives to go with the photos, which provides unique insight into how people experience public health issues or human rights abuses. It helps to conceptualize their circumstances and their hopes for the future. By sharing experiences through photovoice people discover what they have in common, which can lead to social action to address issues identified during picture taking and discussions, and improve their situation. Pictures taken and the descriptions of those pictures form the concrete product of Photovoice that can be shared with others, in print or online.

The Subaltern Speak Photovoice project differed from more traditional photovoice projects. Since the participants of this project all live in different countries, some in different time zones, we conducted the project over the Internet. Instruction and conversations about the pictures took place via Skype and email, and in person when the participants came together for the presentation of the project. At that moment participants met one another for the first time, and were able to share and discuss their photos as a group.

### **Process**

Future participants to the Second African Same-Sex Sexuality & Gender Diversity Conference were invited to participate. In order to be able to participate, persons should have Internet access and a

camera (or smart phone!) to take pictures that could then be downloaded. Participants received an orientation packet that described the goals of the project. The orientation packet covered the photovoice method in detail and presented the research question being asked. In addition to the research question, we provided three framing questions to help participants identify topics and themes for taking photographs that would accurately represent their life within the scope of the study. These framing questions included:

In what places or situations do I as an LGBT person feel 'safe' or comfortable and where or when do I feel unsafe or uncomfortable? What are signs that tell me that I have to be on guard in order to be safe or not draw negative attention? And, as an LGBT person, how does my sexuality impact decisions in my life with regard to my health, including my mental health and sexual health?

### **Findings**

As the pictures and narratives illustrate, the most prevalent theme of the participants' narratives and photos related to safety. Many of the photos and narratives documented spaces that were unsafe to reveal one's sexual identity, such as public spaces, as well as those where it was safer to be known as gay or lesbian, usually in private settings such as parties. When presented, the photos and narratives provoked discourse with conference attendees around issues of representation and authorship of LGBT people in the global media. All pictures and stories are owned by the persons who produced them and they gladly share them here with you.

### **Acknowledgment**

This project was facilitated by Daniel Jack Lyons and Theo Sandfort, and made possible by Hivos. The findings of this project were presented at the Second African Same-Sex Sexuality & Gender Diversity Conference, held in Nairobi in March of 2014.

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## Burundi



This image illustrates a very rough road on a mountain in southern Burundi. It is a road that must be traveled carefully in order not to put one's life in danger. I present you with this image to draw a parallel to what it's like being a homosexual in Burundi. In short, to be a homosexual in Burundi is to put one's life in danger, and is a path that must be traveled carefully. It takes a lot of prudence not to be stopped by the police, to avoid discrimination and to risk social exclusion.

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## Burundi



This is a photo of myself. It gives you the impression of an individual who does not want to become known by everyone, hiding the face. Showing myself in an identifiable way would run the risk of jeopardizing my life and dignity. This is to show how delicate it is to unveil one's sexual orientation. I must protect myself due to the fact that we are not legally and socially accepted in our country.



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## Burundi



As long as homosexuality is illegal and socially prohibited in my country, then my individual space takes precedent above everything else. We are safest when we are in control of my surroundings. For that reason I always keep a high fence around my home, like the ones shown in this photo. It should be noted that hotels are not safe places for the practice of homosexual acts because they are often stopped and searched by police.

## Burundi



Like any human, it is normal to get sick. In Burundi, discrimination and stigmatization of Homosexuals prevents our community from accessing care. By law, a homosexual can be denied medical care if they disclose their sexuality. This only adds to further discrimination and the rise of stigma. Homosexuals therefore avoid discussing sexual matters with the doctor, which makes worse the state of gay health, contributing to higher rates of STI's.

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**Nigeria**

Indifferent situations

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**Nigeria**

Deciding what to tell her parents

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**Nigeria**

Decision to conduct HIV test

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**Nigeria**

Feeling safe in the mist of peers



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## South Africa



I went out for a drink after facilitating a workshop with a group of queer people in Maseru. The bar was called Public Bar and was just outside the city centre. I was with a group of trans men. We ordered beers and played pool. People expect this to be transphobic/homophobic space, one says. This reflects a prejudice— don't we often associate homophobia with impoverished areas, migrant communities, and liberation with money, the global north?

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## South Africa



I was co-facilitating a workshop in the North West province of South Africa. The guest house myself and a colleague stayed at was owned by a gay couple, and they hosted queer parties once a month in the lapa (thatch roof entertainment area) on their farm. Most of the people present at the party were white and from the surrounding farming community, and many people were cross dressing. There was a black drag queen, Tina Labelle, who performed. She had been a student a university in the neighboring town. I loved the way she owned that white (masculine) space with her black femininity.

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## South Africa



This photo was taken at a recent protest outside the Ugandan High Commission in Pretoria. It was a protest against the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. In fact the protest happened 3 or 4 days before Museveni passed the Bill. I am always excited by how passionately we protest. I am always anxious at how quickly the police arrive. I also noted a lady peeking out the second story window of the commission. She was hidden in the shadow.

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## South Africa



Not many people showed up to our action on campus. This campus has been accused of being conservative both with regards to transformation. About 25 people showed up in the public amphitheatre. We recited poetry, we put up posters – the campaign's slogan was '*Sexuality Uncensored*'. We received no adverse effects, but I'm not sure if the people were listening to us. The subaltern can speak, but can the oppressor listen?



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## Togo



Private parties like these provide the only opportunity for LGBT people to express themselves without being judged or punished. For security reasons, the location is kept secret until 1 hour before the start of the evening. Transgender people arrive dressed according to their biological gender and only change once inside. Most of these evenings end well. But some end in disaster with homophobic assaults from young people who physically attack and break the equipment. Sometimes stones are thrown.

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## Togo



A man walking on the beach. But in reality he is a Young gay man. He walks every Saturday on the beach, a public place, under the eyes of hatred and criticism. But he is a one of a handful of young gays here who have unusually high self-esteem, even as people throw insults at them. According to him homophobia in Togo comes from all aspects of the country, and should it bring death, at least he would die being exactly who he is.

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## Togo



Here is a Togolese LGBT activist participating in a pride march held in Montpellier, France. He never imagined that such freedom existed for LGBT people in other lands. Freedom was simply impossible for these eyes until he saw it himself. This kind of freedom is unimaginable in Togo, where legislature supports the punishment of homosexuals. But even if this law did not exist, social homophobia would be sufficient enough to be a major obstacle to facilitate freedom.



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## Togo



Miss Gay, held annually in Togo by an LGBT association, is an opportunity for the LGBT community to celebrate the beauty of LGBT people. Photos are discouraged during these events since there is no control or regulation of them. Some photos have unfortunately made the headlines in Togo, causing sharp controversy around the issue of homosexuality. Individuals appearing in the photos have given their lives as a result. Some have lost everything: family, friends, work, even medical care.



## Uganda

This participant has requested to be removed due to concerns of personal safety.

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## Zambia



Through my walk in life, I feel like I walk in a parallel direction. This photo shows how I feel I walk against the tide of the population with most people not being able to see eye to eye with me where my sexuality is concerned.

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## Zambia



The future scares me. It is pretty bleak and I spend countless times thinking about what I can do to change people's perception of my sexuality.

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## Zambia



I am most insecure in my job as I am sometimes put in a spot where I am supposed to answer questions based on a life I do not live. I am made to answer questions on heterosexual sex and attractions based on my experiences. I fear that someday, my inconsistencies will catch up with me.



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## Zambia



It is in the queer spaces that I feel free to fully express myself without the need to edit my life out. It's in the queer spaces that I feel a sense of freedom of existence.





## **One step forward and so many back: Access to health care for LGBTI Ugandans**

Lucill Ebong

The Ugandan HIV epidemic being generalized, affecting all population groups, the government's policy response is focused on health care for all. Health care for all is, however, hard to reach due to the ailing health sector with its problems such as few health workers at facilities, lack of funding, poor facilities and infrastructure, as well as outdated equipment. Because of prejudice, stigma and discrimination, deeply ingrained in the society and service provision, the situation is even worse for LGBTI persons. Their situation is further exacerbated by proposed laws that criminalize LGBTI people, supported by homophobia among Ugandans which is widespread and is embedded in virtually every service sector. Uganda does, however, not differ from many other African countries as suggested by a study conducted in 2013 by the Pew Research Center. African countries represented some of the least tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality in the world (Dramé et al., 2013). A total of 92% of over 8,000 sub-Saharan Africans surveyed stated that homosexuality should be 'rejected' and the study said the percentage reached 97% for Senegal (Kohut, 2013). These negative attitudes are carried into the health and other service sectors, hindering appropriate service provision to LGBTI persons.

Health care providers (HCP) have, for instance, less or no interest in taking detailed medical histories of LGBTI persons. As a consequence, they miss out on important health information about this population and will be less able to deliver appropriate care. The other effect is misdiagnosis of diseases. Again sexual and reproductive service provision is very difficult for LGBTI persons, because they are unable to access health services and facilities as couples. This has led to poor use of these services by lesbians and transgender men; often resulting in unwanted babies and unsafe abortions. (Freedom and Roam Uganda, 2013).

Because the Second Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-II) is still used to train health care workers, they continue considering homosexuality as a mental disorder. This produces HCPs with negative mindsets about LGBTI persons. It would be beneficial to use DSM-V, the latest version of the manual, especially in regards to gender identity. When they encounter LGBTI persons, most HCPs are consumed by their prejudices, biases and beliefs instead of the medical code of ethics. The use of outdated criteria instead of more current ones suggests that authorities intentionally choose to ignore vital pieces of scientific evidence that would enable the provision of appropriate health care services to this group.

Another challenge that LGBTI persons in Uganda face is continuous disruption of access to health



care due to the homophobic environment. This sometimes involves harassment by the police and other authorities at health facilities. Lack of confidentiality and restrictive laws compound the problems (amfAR, n.d.); it prevents this population from benefits to health rights. Violations by the HCP is not easily recorded because LGBTI persons either have given up on their health rights or because HCPs treat even the heterosexual the same way; thus they see it as something normal. The effect is that clients who seek care are unlikely to return for check-ups and follow-ups, while others are forced to remain silent or pretend to be something they are not to fit into the heteronormative environment.

HIV treatment and care, mental health, STI and cancer screenings are available to LGBTI populations as long as they do not reveal their sexuality. Because of their physical appearance that is of course very difficult for transgender persons. The HCP will always determine inquiries on physical appearance and the moment they realize that someone who presents as a man, but actually is biologically female, their attitudes toward the client change. This could result either in police custody, removal of the client from the facility, and possible physical harm. These experiences run contrary to claims that health care providers in Uganda never discriminate when providing services (Hladik et al., 2012).

The Anti-Homosexuality Act exacerbated the marginalization, fear, discrimination and exclusion of people known to be or suspected of being homosexual. After years of success in the fight against HIV, Uganda's incidence has been rising since 2005, contrary to the trends of virtually all other sub-Saharan African countries with a high HIV burden. Thus driving the LGBTI people away from services endangers not only them but also the Ugandan population at large, since bisexual men also have sex with women. Discrimination undermines their health as well as the public health of the population of Uganda as a whole. Research shows that laws and policies that increase stigma and discrimination among groups of people have as a consequence that those people are less able to access services because of fear of arrest, intimidation, violence and discrimination.

Parliament again passed the controversial HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Bill, and several clauses in the Bill permit medical workers to reveal the status of HIV-positive people without their consent in circumstances where other people's lives are endangered (Mulondo & Musoke, 2014). The HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Bill has been opposed by health professionals and rights activists. They believe the Bill will not serve its purpose because of clauses that will deter people from testing and seeking other HIV related services. More important, the Bill seeks to punish people who wilfully infect others when they are aware of their HIV status. The impact of this law will be even more negative on the LGBTI population who already suffer societal and cultural prejudice. From a public health perspective,

the implementation of these provisions increases the risk of an escalation in the recent surge in the number of new HIV infections, which over the past 5 years have increased from 6.4 to 7.3% (Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum, 2014).

The sharpened criminalization has further hindered LGBTI people's access to health care. For example, some non-governmental organizations that deliver basic sexual health education and service, including HIV prevention, and testing and treatment, are often at risk of harassment, closure, and arrest of staff. That happened to the Walter Reed Project, a project funded by USAID which offered services to all Ugandans without discrimination (Kafeero & Ayebazibwe, 2014). As a result of the raid on the project, the United States Embassy took the decision to shut it down, consequently depriving many Ugandans of access to anti-retroviral medication and safe protection consumables, such as condoms and lubricants. But for the LGBTI population the consequences of the closure were worse. Thirty of the HIV-positive LGBTI clients, who were receiving support from the project, had been evicted from their houses, and are now suffering without access to medication. The law has also contravened the policies and plans of the government of Uganda to implement government-funded clinics designed to reach MSM and sex workers (IRIN, 2013).

While government and parliament are taking steps that affect the rights to health care, training HCPs on the specific needs of the LGBTI persons and community in general is a strategy that has proved to enhance supporting access to health care. There are a few HCPs who are non-discriminatory, progressive and who believe in equal service provision for all. However, they work under very difficult circumstances and suffer the same fate of discrimination, stigma and isolation by their colleagues.

There is ample evidence that there are programmes which have worked to reach this group and these should be replicated for other service provisions to this group. Even though our society is not tolerant of the sexual practices of LGBTI people, denying them health care services will bring more health risks to the society in general. It would be imperative for the Ministry of Health to direct focused attention to these groups so that health systems are strengthened with the capacity to coordinate and manage the response to HIV/AIDS and other infections impacting the LGBTI population.

There are also many HCPs who are unaware of existing human rights treaties and thus training and education on the treaties is crucial for them. Items of importance to be highlighted should include the right of equal access to adequate health care related services regardless of sex, race or other status. This would improve access to information relating to general wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health and rights, family planning and other infectious diseases that might be specific to this group.

The government policy in the National HIV Prevention strategy (Uganda AIDS Commission, 2011),

which included MSM among the most at risk populations, indicated that there was insufficient information on MSM as a population group. The strategy excludes WSW altogether and concluded that there is need to keep an eye on this group (MSM). What then does 'keeping an eye' mean when the Crane Survey programme (<https://sites.google.com/site/cranesurvey/home>)—an HIV and health-related risk surveillance project in Kampala targeting MSM—has information that is available and can inform government strategy on the data gaps to improve services provision to the groups.

The recently released HIV and AIDs score card results by the Uganda Network of AIDS Service organizations (UNASO, 2014) shows that HIV services provision in Uganda have greatly improved over the years. That many persons living with HIV are accessing life-prolonging antiretroviral medication and as a result many lives have been saved. In addition, many new HIV infections have been prevented through interventions such as increased condom use, abstinence campaigns and the elimination of mother to child transmission drives.

However, the same study found that the health care system that is believed to deliver improved health services is not strong and sustainable. Most of the HIV services are delivered by HIV specific programmes and projects such as The Aids Support Organization (a Non-Governmental Organization providing a comprehensive package of HIV prevention and AIDS care and support services in Uganda), the Joint Clinical Research Centre (a research and training facility providing equitable and sustainable HIV/AIDS care and other health care services), The Mildmay Centre, which provides care and treatment of HIV and other health priorities using a family-centred approach, and the 'STARS'; STARS stands for '*The Strengthening TB and HIV & AIDS Responses in East-Central Uganda*' (STAR-EC) project is focused on increasing access to and coverage and utilization of quality comprehensive HIV/TB prevention, care, and treatment services within district health facilities and their respective communities and is funded by the United States Agency for International Development. Often the service either stops or deteriorates once these projects close. Many of them are not well integrated into the health care system, i.e. government health facilities which in many districts are very weak, poorly funded and lack suitably qualified and well-motivated personnel to run them. If these programmes were in the government facilities then LGBT persons in those districts would access services from there rather come to the cities where the projects are.

Most of the HIV and AIDs projects are run by funding from organisations such as the Global Fund and others linked to the United States government. The future for improved and sustainable health care in Uganda therefore lies in increased investment in health by the government, so that the poorly equipped health facilities in terms of infrastructure and personnel keep improving even as the

population increases. These strategies could stimulate a healthy and productive population in addition to being able to fight epidemics, which attack us from time to time such as the AIDS, Ebola, Marburg epidemics.

If HIV is confronted with a robust health system, it would have not caused as much havoc as it has done in the last three decades in Uganda. We need to learn from this bitter experience. Yet the effects of our media with its salacious articles instil fear in service providers, because private facilities do not want to destroy their image.

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## **The Fallout of Nigeria's Anti-Gay Law and Opportunities for the Future for LGBTI Persons and Communities**

Chiedu Ifekandu

Homosexuality is presently criminalized in 38 out of the 47 African countries, with sentences ranging from fines to imprisonment (3 months to 14 years); in some Islamic states homosexuality is even punishable by death. In parts of northern Nigeria, where Islamic Sharia law is enforced, gays and lesbians can be legally stoned to death. Over the past decade an increasingly visible community of activists from across the continent has aggressively pursued the rights of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons and decriminalization of same-sex relationships.

In Nigeria, LGBTI persons are still far from having social recognition, just as in most sub-Saharan African countries. Religion-induced homophobia remains a factor that cuts across the ethnic disparities and prevails whenever homosexuality or transsexuality is broached. Nigeria is a highly religious society, with its 167 million people roughly divided in half between Christians and Muslims; however re-united by homophobia.

In Nigeria the situation deteriorated in the past few years by the introduction of a new law that further criminalized homosexuality and included the prohibition of same-sex marriage (legalpedia, 2014). According to this law, "a person who enters into a same sex marriage contract or civil union commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of 14 years imprisonment; a person who registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies and organisation, or directly or indirectly makes public show of same sex amorous relationship in Nigeria commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of 10 years imprisonment; a person or group of persons who administers, witnesses, abets or aids the solemnisation of a same sex marriage or civil union, or supports the registration, operation and sustenance of gay clubs, societies, organisations, processions or meetings in Nigeria commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a term of 10 years imprisonment."

Given that Nigeria already had one that criminalized homosexual sex, it is not clear why this new law was introduced. Till date, the Nigerian federal parliament cannot provide any bill submitted to the National Assembly requesting for same-sex marriage in Nigeria. The Nigerian senate who came up with the bill were overzealous based on the grounds being gained by the LGBT in Europe and America and came up with the Law to make categorical statement that they would not entertain such talks should anyone rise to speak in favour of gay rights. Gay people were also not demanding to be married in a

country where being gay can get a person lynched by a mob. Despite a clear need for this law, Nigerians from different religions have continued to commend Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and the National Assembly for enacting the new same-sex Marriage Prohibition law. This new draconian law was in part catalysed by the increased international support for LGBTI persons in Nigeria and the Western pressure to decriminalize homosexuality; Nigerian government enacted the law to show that Nigerian is above Imperialism.

In this paper I present an overview of the current LGBTI situation in Nigeria and will answer three overlapping questions: What are the current implications of the law on LGBTI persons in Nigeria? How has the LGBTI been coping with the challenges they face? What more can be done?

### **Public violence**

Since the Nigerian President signed the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMP Act; popularly called anti-gay law) in January 2014, brawls and violence have continued to trail the law. Five days after signing of the law, the Associated Press (Saulawa, 2014) reported of the first conviction of a gay man in Nigeria. In the city of Bauchi, 28-year-old Ibrahim, an unemployed artisan, pleaded guilty to having committed one act of sodomy seven years ago. He said he was misled into the act by the principal of the high school he was attending and has not committed a homosexual act since. The Judge spared him the death sentence by stoning because the crime occurred so many years ago and because the young man had shown 'great remorse'. The twenty lashes, that he was sentenced, were administered in the public court. Ibrahim also was ordered to pay a fine of 5,000 naira (\$30).

Similarly, Thisday newspaper (Adebowale, 2014), one of Nigerian leading print media, reported on January 25, 2014, that eleven young men were arrested in a gay club in Bauchi and arraigned in court. As the accused arrived in court, thousands of protesters appeared, throwing stones at them, while demanding for a 'speedy trial, conviction and execution'. Because of the rowdy scene, the Judge abruptly had to close the court.

Nicholas Akpaki, an Abuja-based human rights activist, reported on an incident that happened on February 9th 2014 in the Nigerian capital city of Abuja. A group of people, armed with wooden clubs and iron bars, screaming that they were going to cleanse their neighbourhood of gays, dragged fourteen young men from their beds and assaulted them. Four of the victims were marched to a police station, where officers allegedly kicked, punched and yelled pejoratives at them. These are few of documented cases of violence in urban cities. LGBTI persons in rural areas, where there is no access to telephones and the Internet, are left to their fate, helpless puns in the hands of their homophobic neighbourhood.

The message from the general population to the LGBTI community is clear; from northern to southern Nigeria ‘repent or we fish you out!’ Families of some the victimized men in Abuja affirmed that they deserved what happened to them and have also come out to disown their wards.

### **Deteriorating health care**

Even before the introduction of the anti-gay law, LGBTI were suppressing their health care needs. It took many years of hard work to create the enabling environment for HIV and other STI management to thrive in Nigeria (Sylvia, 2012). The incursions made within the seven-year period since the start of these activities have almost been brought to the zero level by the anti-gay law. Three months after signing of the law, the few strong efforts that have been made to curb the HIV pandemic among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Nigeria have been crippled (Ibanga, 2014).

HIV prevalence among MSM in Nigeria is 17.2% (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010), which is five times higher than the national prevalence among the general populations. Most of the health interventions in Nigeria targeting LGBTI are funded by international non-governmental organisations. One of such is the Population Council Nigeria office. This institution runs two MSM-community based clinics in two of the most populous cities of Nigeria. These two health facilities reach as many as two thousand MSM within one calendar year. Over a quarter of these men are HIV positive and on anti-retroviral treatments. With the advent of the anti-gay law in Nigeria, the figures at these clinics dropped to by 10% (The Economist, 2014).

The men in the big cities of Lagos, Abuja and Kaduna are afraid of seeking healthcare at these facilities, well-trained to provide MSM-specific services. These men are worried of being apprehended by law enforcement agencies that have become ‘gay-hunters’. To them, the community clinics that used to be a refuge now seem like a dead-trap. Men seem to prefer to die in silence rather than patronize these facilities and risk imprisonment. Those attacked are in hiding and too scared to speak to reporters or seek proper medical treatments. Outreach events designed to encourage people to get tested have been scaled back due to concerns that authorities might interpret this effort to aid the gay community. International non-governmental organisations have modified their approaches from having group meetings to one-on-one interpersonal communications.

### **Disappearance of the physical LGBTI hotspots**

The signed bill is already being used by individuals and state institutions, including the police force, as a license to intimidate and harass citizens based on their actual or suspected sexual orientation. The



passing of this bill legitimizes the harassment of sexual minorities. Before the signing of the SSMP ACT in Nigeria, LGBTI persons socialized in spaces that primarily they and a few others knew the existence of. There were quite a number of LGBTI-friendly spaces, ranging from bars, nightclub, healthcare facilities, and non-governmental organizations to residential homes. A World Bank mapping and size estimation in Nigeria's Federal capital territory Abuja reported over 175 hotspots for MSM (Strengthening HIV/AIDS Prevention Services, 2013). In March 2014 only 25 of those spots were validated as functional. Dozens of allegedly gay people and gay-friendly hotspots have been raided by either the law enforcement agencies or homophobic-residents. The few remaining 'stubborn' gay-friendly clubs still exist in major cities like Lagos, Abuja and Port Harcourt, because they enjoy the backing of a high-profiled person in government. Most of the LGBTI persons have become fugitives in their country of birth and are desperately sourcing for asylum with South Africa, Europe and America, which they consider as safe havens. This option is rather at the disposal of the upper middle class, who can readily afford the visa requirements (a fat bank-account, valid international passport, and visa processing fee) and flight tickets to the above-mentioned countries.

### **Virtual space: The new safe spaces**

While Nigerian law enforcement agencies are seriously cracking down on individuals suspected to be gay, health and other social facilities that are poked by the general population to be gay-friendly, LGBTI persons have adopted another medium that, for the time being, law enforcement agencies have not given a thought of their exploitations. Nigerian youths are caught in the age of the Internet revolution, just like their global counterparts. Social media have become a trend among the teeming young populations in Nigeria and the LGBTI are not left out from this emerging social networking culture. Ifekandu and colleagues (2014) estimated that one in every four MSM in urban cities of Nigeria is an active user of social networking sites via their smartphones and other handheld devices. In view of the political, legal and religious context, the Internet has emerged as a viable option for LGBT persons to communicate, network, gain visibility, and express what cannot be expressed in public. Social networks, blogging platforms and forums are growing rapidly in Nigeria, and this is even made more popular within the LGBTI community in Nigeria since the introduction of the anti-gay law, as the safe spaces where LGBTI persons can have a voice, organize themselves, formulate their emotional and social discourses around their issues and fight to associate.

The massive interest in social media among LGBTI, just like in the general population, is being propelled by wide-range affordable wireless Internet connections. The social apps for mobile phones-are

less complex to join, which makes them accessible for gay Nigerians with lower incomes. The Facebook group page of the MSM Nigeria Sexual Health Department grew from 114 members before the signing of the anti-gay law to 599 members after the signing. More still, the gay-peers social networking group pages created from January to June 2014 on 2go, WhatsApp, and Blackberry messenger are five times higher than the same figures for the period of 2010 to 2013 together.

Apart from the social networking sites that are popular among the general public, gay people in Nigeria also utilize the specific gay chat apps such as gayromeo, gaydar, BLK, and manjam. They use pseudonyms on these apps and usually present shirtless but faceless profile pictures to attract friends of mutual interest. Chat rooms and group pages have also been created by some of the gay key opinion leaders in Abuja, Lagos, Enugu, Calabar and Port Harcourt; these men are usually LGBTI community members whom other peers look up to as role models. These chatrooms are highly revered by the gay community. They only accept new members if they are endorsed and certified by an existing member of the group. Nowadays, the community not only depends on social networking on the Internet for finding sexual partners, but also for finding out about the latest happenings around them. The issues discussed in these chatrooms range from gay-bashing, blackmails, HIV/STIs, but also include gossip about peers. Social networking has enabled gay users in Nigeria to broaden their network of friends beyond their immediate environment. In this age of intense homophobia, social media have become one's most reliable and dependable companion. One can even initiate meetings to come together in person. This has proven to be effective even in other homophobic countries such as Uganda, Saudi Arabia or Vladimir Putin's Russia.

In the present LGBT environment in Nigeria, gays are more comfortable to reach out to their peers through social media platforms, because the physical spaces are death traps. This situation is helped, at least for now, by the lack of censorship by government - and the poor tracking of all Internet activities. Surveillance malware and phishing of social media accounts are still at its embryonic stage in Nigeria.

Social media also seem like the light at the end of the tunnel for institutions running health and social interventions reaching MSM in Nigeria. These institutions have begun to modify their approaches. Projects specifically for MSM in Nigeria such as the Walter Reed Project have introduced e-Behaviour change and maintenance, and e-support groups for MSM, and e-Counselling. The internet is also used for scheduling appointment with the staff at the clinic either for picking up drugs, CD4 counting, or other major issues that require the physical attention of a healthcare provider.

### **Community mobilization through social media**

The new legislation has limited the voices of LGBTI persons, but social media can also take on an advocacy role, hoping that via greater transparency repression is ameliorated and local support for LGBTI issues ultimately can be build. The use of social media for community mobilization by Nigerian LGBTI groups is still in its infancy, though. Most of the registered organizations of sexual minorities have Internet presence through a website, but the content is fairly minimal—limited to their organizational profiles—and, in most cases, has not been updated for years. The most vocal statements in favour of the LGBTI movement on the Internet have come from local and international Nigerian icons, including Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, the writer Chimamanda Adichie, the artist Charles Oputa (Charly Boy), and a few others, via their social networking accounts. But these statements were made in the periphery and are indeed few in number. As a result of this, these celebrities have received commendation as well as condemnation.

Sadly, what is true for the LGBTI movement does not apply to the Nigerian anti-gay campaigners. Homophobic-slurs from Nigeria went viral just after the bill was into law. In January and February of 2014, the Anglican youth fellowship of the church of Nigeria (with over 18,000 Facebook members) devoted their Twitter account and Facebook page to anti-gay campaigns. And this is one example of the several institutions that utilized social media platforms in drumming up support for their homophobic agenda.

In the current situation, social media provide the most conducive space for Nigerian LGBTI persons to interact and address a wide range of peculiar issues such as discrimination, harassment and bullying on grounds of sexual orientation and gender diversity. Twitter and Facebook could be utilized in this regard as powerful tools to communicate breaking events, gathering data and monitoring hate crimes, as well as organizing scheduling workshops. The example of the anti-gay campaigners should be used how the Internet could be used to promote acceptance of sexual and gender minority persons. Let us not forget that emancipation of LGBT persons in the west never came on a platter of gold, it was never an event; but a process that goes hand-in-hand with a huge price tag. Further researches should be conducted on how best to utilise the social media in the LGBTI struggle in Africa.

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## **Doomed if They Do, Doomed if They Don't: Sexual Health Implications of Homophobia among Married Lesbians in Uganda**

Juliet Kushaba

As is the case in most African countries, homophobia is a real problem in Uganda. Homophobia is a major factor responsible for various social challenges that LGBTI persons on the continent face. Homophobia manifests itself in various forms, including rejection by friends, banishment from families, exclusion from education institutions, discrimination in other public places including places of worship, denial of job opportunities and dismissal from jobs, vandalism of property, physical assault, being 'outed' by the press, and mass rapes or 'corrective' rape. Sexual Minorities Uganda - SMUG (2013-2014, p. 9) summarized the situation as follows:

*Out of the 162 cases [of homophobia] recorded between 20th December 2013 and 1st May 2014, 24 included reports of physical threats. The individuals concerned faced substantial risk of an immediate physical attack. Of those 24 cases, ten people reported that the threat of physical violence occurred following exposure in the press. Three members of the Ugandan LGBTI organisation 'Hi 5' were exposed as gay by the Media. They were evicted from their property and compelled to leave the country following concerns for their safety. A further ten of those 24 people reported being evicted from or forced to leave their homes.*

Because of its negative impact, it is logical that homophobia also has far-reaching sexual health effects on the LGBTI peoples in Uganda, and on lesbian women who are married to men in particular. Our research focused on the sexual health implications of homophobia for lesbian women married to men in Uganda. We took particular interest in this group of women because the existence of gay men is generally acknowledged by society, but people rarely think that lesbian women exist in Uganda. The reason for this is that in Africa, the general societal expectations of how women should perceive or/and use their bodies, and particularly sexual bodies, are highly linked to the norms in their particular cultures. Most of these norms, however, regard the female body as a taboo and so very few people ever dare to talk about them or even do research on them. Right from birth women are conditioned not to talk about sexuality matters:

*Women in this culture live with sexual fear like an extra skin. Each of us wears it differently depending on our race, class, sexual preference and community, but from birth we have all been*

*taught our lessons well. Sexuality is dangerous. It is frightening, unexplored, and threatening... Many of us become feminists because of our feelings about sex...* (Hollibaugh, 1996, p. 64 as quoted in McFadden, 2003).

Sylvia Tamale (2003) attributes this lack of acknowledgement for lesbian existence to a patriarchal ideology which assumes women's sexuality to be limited to reproductive functions and not to include sexual pleasure which she may seek to attain for herself or even talk about their sexuality.

This qualitative study therefore sought to explore how such a state of affairs would impact on the sexual health of married lesbians, especially considering the fact that very few people in Ugandan society acknowledge their existence. Given the sensitivity of the study, the women were recruited through the snowball method; the researcher first spoke to one woman who self-identified as lesbian who then recommended another person in her network of friends. We conducted face-to-face interviews and focused on the women's lived experiences as lesbians who also doubled as wives in heterosexual relationships. The study sought to establish *why* lesbians in Uganda get married and *why* they continued to have sexual relationships with their girlfriends once married, and to understand *what* these experiences transform to in terms of their sexual health.

We interviewed four younger women (between ages 21-30) and six older women (between ages 31-50). Three of these women had primary school education; four of them had secondary education; and three had university education. All women identified as lesbian and had been married to men for at least three years. Six of the women were married in church, one was Muslim and the second wife of her husband's three wives, and the other three women were co-habiting (cohabitation is a form of marriage in Uganda, generally accepted by society but not legally accepted). Nine of the ten women each had at least one child with their husbands. All respondents were living in Kampala, the Capital City of Uganda.

All these women, especially those with higher education (university education) were only open about being lesbian among people that they were very close to. These people were mostly their LGBTI friends. Only one of the ten women - one of the three with university education - had come out (as lesbian) to a family member. She said that her older sister always discussed sex and sexuality issues with her and that this made her feel comfortable with her sister to the extent of 'coming out' to her, despite her heterosexual marriage; the latter being public knowledge.

### **Why do lesbians in Uganda marry men?**

As is clear from their answers, lesbians marry men for a variety of reasons. Seven of the women confided that it was to distract themselves from the feelings they had for women, living in a community

that would never understand them. Five out of these seven women said they had had girlfriends for about three to four years. No matter how much they enjoyed being in these relationships, these women knew that they never would be able to live under one roof with their female partner without fear of being attacked by neighbours or the police. As one woman explained:

*I was aware of the fact that I would live in self-denial after sometime. That it would be difficult for us to keep in love if we did not think twice. Yah, when the relationship is still young, it is easier to hide. But once you get deeper in love and want to be together as often as can be, you just know that you will give yourselves away. That is what I feared.*

All the women however said that despite their heterosexual marriages, they were still emotionally attached to their girlfriends, and eight of them said that they were maintaining both relationships. Another woman explained:

*When you are a girl and you are of age, let's say thirty, and you don't marry, everyone starts asking themselves. Some people actually come to you or your mother and ask what is wrong. I was 29 years old when I decided to get married. I had even never slept with a man but age caught up with me.*

This statement expresses the pressure that society exerts on women once they get to an age that is generally considered the right age for marriage. For girls and women who belong to groups where their own friends are already married, this pressure, may prove unbearable. Based on this scenario, it is plausible to claim that the pressure is more unbearable for lesbians because they do not want to exceed a certain age without getting married. They fear of being discovered as lesbians by their parents or even the whole community since most women who fail to get married are perceived as such. They just do not want to provide the space for those people that are policing sexuality to discover their sexual orientation.

Two of the older women concurred with the respondent above; they married because that was the norm for girls of their age and they knew that was what was expected of them. As one of them explained: *"For me I finished studying and my degree was there, pooh! So the next thing for me was to get married. I knew that my parents wanted me to get married because I had even got a job."* Another woman argued: *"You see, when a girl finishes school and she starts working, the pressure from the people around her is unbearable. Everyone wants you to get married. You get it? But for me it was quite easy because I do both."*

In a society like Uganda where homosexuality is perceived as an entirely un-African and un-Godly act, where homosexual tendencies are assumed to be behavioural [not innate], it is expected that every 'normal' and 'mannered' human being would marry someone of the opposite sex.

It was evident from the interviews that the participants did not get into heterosexual marriages because they believed this to be the kind of life they were destined to live, but rather because they wanted to disguise themselves as heterosexual women and avoid being marginalised and harassed like other homosexual people in Uganda are. One of the women clarified this by saying:

*Being lesbian is viewed as going against God in this country. Although I know that God views me as His child – since He created me this way – I was not ready to defend the many accusations that come with proclaim[ing] being gay. You see, the biggest challenge besides being lesbian, or gay generally, is that many of the people will not come to you and ask you 'how it is like'? They will either ex-communicate you, or rape you. You get it?*

There were two women who self-identified as bisexual and said they married men because they knew they would be comfortable in relationships with men just as they had been with their female partners before getting married. They said that if they would have a choice to marry women, they would. But because it is the norm for women to marry men, it was the better option for them to take. *"I knew I couldn't wed a woman and we stay under the same roof with her, so I decided I would have a man,"* one of the women explained. Even with these respondents who identified as bisexual, their extramarital relationships with women remained confidential, as was the case with the women who identified as strictly lesbian.

One of the women said that she married a man in the hope that her situation and her sexual orientation would change. She said she always felt unsure of who and what she exactly is. She indicated that she always felt an attraction towards women. But because it is a common belief in Uganda that homosexuals are made and not born, she thought that if she got closer to a man, she would become sexually attracted to him. This woman, who was 34 at the time of the interview, had attended a girls' school and she strongly attributed her attraction to girls to being around them for so long at this school. Marrying a man did, however, not change her attraction to girls or her sexual orientation.

As Sylvia Tamale (2003) argues, because of the repressive conditions of state- and religion-inspired homophobia in Uganda, homosexual persons find it difficult to 'come out' of their closeted lives or to be open about their sexual orientation. *"Most blend with the wider society and even live under cover of heterosexual relationships"* (p.3). The tendency is to construct comfort zones. The situation was



not any different for the women interviewed, as six of the respondents said they married men to conceal their identity and sexual orientation, and continued to have sexual relationships with their girlfriends. Women fear aggression should they be caught, with the most common in Uganda being vandalism of property, robbery, physical assault, and job discrimination. These crimes remain a key challenge, as they go unreported for fear of double jeopardy at the hands of the police who also have no respect for human rights. The respondents said they preferred 'playing it safe' by getting into heterosexual marriages so that no one would suspect them of being lesbian.

### **Why do married lesbians continue to have relationships with their girlfriends**

The women had various reasons for maintaining their previous relationships with women or girls. Six of the ten women explained that the sexual relationships with their husbands were not fulfilling. To illustrate this, one woman said: *"My heart is never in it when I am with him, like it is with my girlfriend."* The effect of this, the woman explained, is that the man also feels that there is something missing in the relationship and so he seeks 'redemption' elsewhere; the outcomes are disastrous for all parties involved.

Five of the ten women said that they did not get into heterosexual marriages because they did not love their lesbian partner or because they thought their sexual lives with men would be more fulfilling but because they wanted to live without being questioned. They were decided on maintaining their same-sex relationships as long as they did not get discovered to be in it. One of the five women explained: *"So for me, I knew I was getting married to this man, but my heart would remain where it belonged and that was it; I loved Annet"* (pseudonym).

### **Homophobia and its relationship with the women's sexual health**

The participants shared that they rarely sought medical care. Being closeted and relatively unaware of LGBTI support initiatives, the women had little information about lesbian health issues and actually were sometimes misinformed. This affected their healthcare-seeking behaviour.

Most of the participants explained that they did not take any precautionary measures for safe sex in the same-sex relationship because they were not aware of any risks involved. Instead, they spent most of their time with their 'heterosexual families' and did not associate with other lesbians and LGBTI groups for fear of being labelled 'gay'. They suffer twice: they oppress themselves by being married to men and at the same time they put their lives at a risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI).

Three of the lesbians expressed fear of meeting doctors for STI, which they continuously referred to as 'shameful diseases'. Even when they get STI, they are afraid of seeking medical care because they perceive such diseases as rather shameful. *"You see, when you hear people talk about STI, the statement you are likely to hear is that it is a disease for homos (homosexuals). I don't want to give myself in. Even if it became serious. For me, I think, I would rather stay with it than being talked about by everyone,"* a participant said. All three women who presented this argument were not aware of the fact that such infections could also be contracted in heterosexual relationships with their husbands; but the women largely feared for mouth-related infections such as candida of the throat.

The other participants either did not think of themselves as decent citizens deserving of medical attention or they never had any sexual illness that necessitated medical care. Those that admitted to having suffered from an STI [seven out of the ten respondents] said these were minor and less irritable; so they ignored them. Women in Uganda, as in most third world countries, are socialized to provide care to others so much so that they rarely prioritize their own needs, including health needs. The women confided that they never manage to put themselves first because of societal expectations on them (as may be the case with heterosexual women. This, coupled with heteronormativity discourses in their communities and in the country as a whole, fuelled by the violence, harassment, discrimination, and detentions made thinking about the self in terms of health rights as lesbian women a remote concern, removed from their daily lives and subsequently alienates them from themselves.

All ten women had never visited a doctor or a gynaecologist together with their girlfriends and only three had gone for an HIV tests with their husbands. When asked why they did not visit doctors with their female partners, women simply expressed shock that the researcher would expect them to dare do such a thing: *"You just can't be serious! How do I even start thinking about that? Ahhh, Doctor, I have come with my... (Laughs) It's ridiculous'.* Another woman stressed the argument further and said: *'That is unheard of. I love myself and I would want to be as healthy as possible but there are things which are impossible.'*

Whenever a need to see a doctor arose, the women would visit the doctor individually, and had the doctor diagnose their sickness and prescribe treatment. But this was not meaningful since their partners seemed not to visit doctors. Some participants said they suffered from the same STIs day after day. Only two of the ten respondents said that they had a discussion with their female partner on the issue. It is important to note right here that the respondents who had attained university education were more assertive compared to their other counterparts. However, there were limitations as to what degree of self assertion they could get to; they were so aware of the homophobia and its implications

once one is discovered to be lesbian. Others said they were aware of the fact that their female partners would not want to deal with medical personnel at all because of the discrimination that their homosexual friends have faced. This happens quite frequently and deters even 'new' patients from seeking medical attention, as evidenced by a report from the Danish Refugee Council (2014):

*LGBT individuals are sometimes refused health care, and often do not have access to specialized treatment [p.36] There are several reasons why medical staff refuses to treat LGBT individuals. It could be due to religious views, often medical personnel relate their profession with religion and see homosexuality as sinful behaviour, and also because awareness about LGBT issues is not part of the medical training.*

Women also expressed the need for confidentiality since they wanted to protect both themselves and their marital homes and said they feared the doctors were as homophobic as everyone else around them, something that subsequently affected their healthcare-seeking behaviour. The heterosexual marriage, which they confessed was difficult to sustain only functioned as a cover within which they hid from the numerous forms of torture faced by other homosexuals, such as being 'outed' by the media, discrimination, and 'corrective' rape. But at the same time, this fear of the outside homophobic storm exposed them to sexual health risks; these women deal with two partners who might be having other partners elsewhere. When they are lucky and stay safe with one partner, the other may be in another sex line and bring to them diseases such as HIV and AIDS, candida, and syphilis.

## **Discussion and recommendations**

As indicated earlier, this research is relevant because it shows how homophobia affects married lesbians' health by forcing them into positions where their choices are limited to living double lives. With the signing of the anti-homosexuality bill into law in March 2014 by the Ugandan president, their situation might even have gotten worse, but we cannot claim that all is lost for the lesbians and the LGBTI community in the country in general. This study can encourage other researchers to further examine the lives of married lesbians in light of the contemporary circumstances in Uganda and to explore how their situation could be improved.

The study highlights that the lesbian women we interviewed felt secluded, still experienced fear of being discovered to be lesbians, lacked information relevant to their health concerns and had high risks of contracting sexual-related diseases and infections. This is because of the prevalence of compulsory heterosexuality in Uganda, where homophobia has taken root firmly in the cultural context, and which

subsequently denies this group of people the freedom to be who they are, to open up about their sexual orientation, and to seek information as and when they need it. There is therefore an urgent need to recognize the importance of sexual rights in people's lives and provide them with information relevant to their sexual and reproductive health needs.

Health care providers need to enable and facilitate room for every individual to access medical services without discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. There are a number of LGBTI organisations in Uganda. There is need for such organisations, especially those that offer health-related support to seek to reach out to this sexual minority group and provide them with relevant sexual health information and care.

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## **A Lost Chapter Found. An Interview with Binyavanga Wainaina**

Kevin Mwachiro

The thing that strikes you about Binyavanga Wainaina is his colour and how he flaunts it with a sly confidence. His hair could be colourful, his attire most definitely is colourful and so is his speech. He writes as he speaks. Colourful. Another thing that strikes you about him are his eyes. Eyes that seem to look and see and these eyes also add to his persona.

The Kenyan writer has been described as, “playful, generous, robust spirit, and with an irreverent, rambling intelligence that comes through clearly in his writing”. He was recently named as TIME magazine 100 influential people of 2014. It seems that the world is now waking up to appreciate his colour.

A good number of the participants at the conference were already aware of Binyavanga the writer. This was an opportunity to engage with Binya (as he is commonly known), the man who recently came out with his essay, *‘I am a homosexual mum’*. This ‘lost chapter’ as it is known went viral and helped add a new layer to how African sexuality is perceived. Binyavanga Wainaina has been described as the continent’s most high profiling coming out, hence adding a new colour to Africa’s ‘queer’ space. I had this interview with him by way of introduction to the session.

### **KM: Is Africa ready for a gay revolution?**

**Binya:** (laughs) Sometimes when I look I say yes. When you look at the facts and figures, you’d tend to say no. But we are living a very peculiar time, a dangerous time, but an extremely rapidly changing time. It a mixture of technology, political turmoil and where young people are able to see themselves better, especially with individuals in urban Africa. People are now able to commit an identity and live within that identity, with confidence and that identity is irrevocable because, there are networks and resources to help build themselves within that space. The law of course is still miles behind, but you can start to feel the push and pull of the change. It doesn’t have numbers yet, thought they are essential.

Secondly, I think urban communities in the world for years are machines of new people. Queer people have also been part of this urban making machine and they are recognised as such and participate in many roles. And in my experience, gay Africans are recognized as such even in traditional structures like the church, state and law and have shown themselves to be essential in many ways.

As a 43 year old in the scene on the continent, it is the rate of change that I find astonishing. Each year there are more numbers and varieties of 'queers', consequently, the economic world that queers live in is now so broad. In urban life, there are straight people who now know queers and don't have a complicated language of understanding it.

More importantly, you know something is dangerous when it is attacked. The fact that you have state after state choosing coming up with homophobic laws is proof that these governments feel that they are losing control of a mediocre narrative that they are trying to superimpose on themselves. So they use the gay issue as a wedge to win other battles. They know it is a wedge issue and it is battle, but what they are telling us that there is currency in the cause that we are trying to push forward.

**KM: Looking at the months since you released the 'lost' chapter, has Binya changed?**

**Binya:** Hmmm...Yes and no. It feels like when you are new in a class when you don't know anyone else. Earlier on I felt exposed and you are always anticipating people's reaction to you, but I was able to overcome it rather quickly. Not because of me, but because of the grace shown by an enormous amount of people in very many ways. I have embarked on a process I set out a while ago, of being a gay man in Africa and not to be apologizing about it. I can say the road to be myself fully is on the way. More importantly for me, I felt I had to come out to be useful. In the closet I could not be useful. I could not think of myself as a writer in the closet while harbouring queer concerns. I see the person who I like. I like the adventurer and I try placing myself in vulnerable situations exposing myself to hard questions, which is hard, very hard. That is the hardest part. Being gay in Africa for me involves being behind a wall, or involved me behind a wall and I'm not behind the wall, which makes one uncertain about certain things. That is harder, but all in all I feel good!

**KM: What has the reaction been to your coming out both here in Kenya and on the continent?**

**Binya:** I'll tell you something very funny, there are a group of people who've invited me to Nigeria every year and they, were like 'just come'. I had to trust them and I went to Nigeria. It was amazing! Nigeria has a law and being gay in Nigeria is not safe. But what really shocked me was the friends and members of the artistic community, both gay and straight had gone ahead and indoctrinated their friends and prepared them for my arrival by creating safe spaces. I was nervous at the event where I had to address the public that also involved government officials. But not a thing happened and I think that is really important. People had many private preparations, which is radial, it may seem that the space was safe, but people had done lots of work to create this safety.

Here is Kenya, there have been a few small issues, where I was on a news programme, where I was part of a panel, but the other members who were a mix of pastors and politicians who ganged up on

me. I walked out in the middle of the broadcast! I was surprised that the media house called me up later on to apologise for the incident. There have been a few negative messages on social media, but they were not threats to my life. The fact is that I had come out to the situation, pre-insulated, that didn't mean the situation was 100 percent safe, but I was relatively pre-insulated. I have not been stopped from any reading events.

I was shocked to have been invited to Uganda for an event, I was like 'are you people mad' to the organisers! But all this was giving me 'software' for the work that I hopefully want to do.

All in all it has been humbling, very humbling.

**KM: Since you have found yourself being welcomed in Uganda and Nigeria, do you think Africa is changing its perception towards the gay community?**

**Binya:** The time we are living in is the greatest opportunity to be queer and it is almost the most dangerous time because everything is up for grabs. If you want to call it Africa raising, political change or that fact there are more mobile phones, social media and even roads, has just cleared the way and given people room to organize, create space, but also at the same time made them vulnerable to be attacked and threatened. So things are two-fold right now, you must create the mad push and you must create impenetrable walls of safety. The queer community in Nigeria for instance, existed and thrived only because of the existence of the Blackberry and its security. They did what was necessary for their own security.

What is astonishing is that globalised technology, like Whatsapp and Viber, really gives a lot of leeway to negotiating spaces and to keeping one's identity. So people are able to be more receptive as a gay community to be part of an environment that is going to challenge the law. Change is coming much faster than I thought. I mean, who would have thought that the Ugandan, Anti Homosexuality Act would have become practically illegitimate in such a short period of time?<sup>1</sup> I find that very interesting!!

**KM: What advice would you give to young Africans who are grappling with their sexuality?**

**Binya:** Firstly, always seek knowledge, we live in an age of knowledge. Always seek knowledge, because self-understanding also has to do with information. Information about sexuality, sex, the language of your sexuality and options. This is important because you'll be living in a world where people will be giving you a language for what you are. It is important to take the power of the language to have acceptance of it. To me that is what coming out is. I came out ten years ago, I didn't have to wait that long, and I came out to myself, you know. I went and learnt myself.

Secondly, it is very important for one person to know what you are struggling with because there must be someone who can take in what you feel or anything that you can say. From there, you can find your way to negotiate in the world.

Finally, anonymously or not, do find ways to participate in the networks of queers that exist because that may be your safety net. Not just the activism but the social networks. And learn about the political situation. These networks could end up being your family, we at times underestimate how many queers don't have family and how they struggle alone. Bridge the gap between you and the community.

**Binyavanga Wainaina** won the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2002 for his short story, *Discovering Home*. His satirical essay, *How to write about Africa*, received global critical acclaim and in 2011, he released his memoirs, *One Day I Will Write About this Place*. He is the founding editor of the literary journal Kwani?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A ruling in July 2014 by Uganda's Constitutional Court, rendered the Anti-Homosexuality Act unconstitutional. The law was enacted in February 2014 though it was passed by Parliament in December 2013. The contentious law allowed for life imprisonment for 'aggravated homosexuality' and banned the 'promotion of homosexuality'.



# **Resisting the Hypocritical Western Narrative of Victimhood and Celebrating the Resistance against Homophobia in Nigeria**

Kehinde Okanlawon

## **Sexual diversity, historical tolerance and the recent shift**

Nigeria and many other African countries have had a history of tolerance for diverse expressions of same-sex sexuality and gender diversity in their communities. Anthropological evidence for example shows that the ‘yan daudu’ enjoyed tolerance in many communities in Northern Nigeria, ever since pre-colonial times, in spite of the fact that these men were gender non-conforming and that some of them engaged in same-sex practices (Okanlawon, 2013). Some of the reasons for the tolerance they enjoyed include the fact that they expressed their sexuality clandestinely; they never advocated for their sexual rights and they conformed to the Nigerian patriarchal culture by marrying women and having children (ibid). Thus, they were never seen as a threat to the society.

However, the discourse has changed in recent years. Affected by globalization and what I call *anti-neo-colonialist disgust for homosexuality*, and fuelled by Western foreign policies on LGBT rights in Africa, many Nigerians now label homosexuality as ‘un-African’ and ‘a foreign imposition’. As a result of these post-colonial factors and other internal factors, such as the more practical implementation of Sharia law, the prominence of patriarchy, and heightened religious fundamentalism in Nigeria in the past fifteen years (ibid), there have been several cases of human rights violations of Nigerian sexual minorities. Additionally, new draconian anti-gay laws have recently been introduced in Nigeria to counteract the alleged imperialistic call for sexual rights by Western leaders.<sup>1</sup>

## **Homophobia and the hypocritical Western Narratives of Victimhood**

Recognizing this reality, the Western media have attempted to raise awareness about the human rights situation of African LGBT persons. In itself this is quite commendable. However, due to their frequent narratives of victimhood, African LGBT persons have tended to become one thing in the minds of many – *vulnerable, paralyzed and oppressed* persons. The problem with this representation is that even though the journalists may have good intentions, they often focus largely on negative narratives of African LGBT persons. In my opinion, these narratives are deficient. For instance, a British BBC journalist, Scott Mills, titled his documentary on Uganda as “*the world’s worst place to be gay*”. First, I consider this an unfair representation considering the fact that homophobia has not always been a problem in

Uganda; homophobia was exported to Uganda in recent years by American Evangelicals who are fighting the global culture wars. Secondly, while homophobia may be a problem in Uganda, the BBC reporter's home country, the U.K., is equally not a perfect ideal for LGBT persons as it can be a site of serious homophobic abuses.

For instance, in the year 2011-2012, the British police reported 4,252 homophobic hate crimes and 315 transgender hate crimes in England and Wales alone (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2013). Secondly, several studies reveal that LGBT students in schools in the U.K. are confronted with diverse forms of homophobic bullying including death threats from fellow students (UNESCO, 2012). Thirdly, research evidence from a survey in the U.K. revealed that as high as 40% of the LGBT workers studied reported facing homophobic discrimination at work (Purton, 2010). Furthermore, the widely reported homophobic assault experienced by a British gay couple in May 2013 in the Betts Park in Bromley, London, where both men sustained head and neck injuries (Pink News, 2013) reveals how U.K. can equally be highly unsafe for LGBT persons. It is therefore shocking to me that Scott Mills whose country, the U.K., is a site of gross LGBT rights violations can label Uganda as *the world's worst place to be gay*. To me this representation is hypocritical and denigrating as it portrays Uganda in a depressing manner. Even as homophobia is a problem in Uganda, there are many heterosexual Ugandans who are not homophobic, which I think deserves to be celebrated.

The words of Thijs, a kind-hearted and concerned 19-year old Dutch gay friend of mine in The Netherlands, spoke volumes about how people have become immersed in the often negative media coverage of African LGBT persons by the Western media. He told me: *"I heard they kill gays in Nigeria and Uganda. I heard it is not safe for gays there."* My immediate response to him was *"It is an exaggeration, my dear. Things are not as bad as it is being reported in the media."* This conversation made me realize the harm caused by the often singular narrative of negativity regurgitated in the Western media about African LGBT persons. This narrative presents a stereotypical image of 'abject people who are often under attack' and who probably need asylum support in Europe or the U.S. These media representations are unfair to many Nigerian LGBT persons who are resilient, courageous, hardworking and ambitious, and who do not deserve their dignity deprived as a result of these sad repetitive stories which inspire a patronizing well-meaning pity from the West.

Even though some Nigerian and other African LGBT persons sometimes experience discrimination, many LGBT persons in Western countries also experience discrimination. The hurtful transphobic bullying experience of a 'white' teenage transgender girl in Oklahoma, in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> is a good example. Similarly, I am aware that homosexuality is not celebrated in the Bible belt or Moroccan communities in

the Netherlands. Western leaders and scholars who often condescendingly condemn homophobia in Africa therefore ought to realize that the West is not a sanctuary of perfect safety for LGBT persons. I consider it surprising, for instance, that an estimated 320,000 to 400,000 LGBT youth in the U.S. face homelessness each year due to rejection from their families thereby exposing them to different forms of abuse and victimization (Quintana, Rosenthal, & Krehely, 2010).

My problem with many Western constructions of African LGBT persons is that they are not only often biased, they also mirror the privileges of the writers who are often 'white'. For instance, a Western scholar, Saskia Wieringa (2010), describes same-sex loving women from the Global South in general as being "*among the most abjected people*" (p. 53). From the Nigerian perspective, I consider her portrayal an exaggeration and a misrepresentation which mirrors her 'white' privileges. She portrays our societies as highly intolerant towards same-sex loving women without acknowledging the major role the West has played in contributing to this heightened homophobia in the past and in recent years. The West has done so through its colonial politics and its culturally insensitive foreign policies, often perceived by many Africans as culturally imperialistic. It is these current policies which subsequently incite anger against LGBT persons.

These portrayals also show no awareness of the way some Western countries, particularly the U.K., often mistreat African LGBT asylum seekers in their countries. Examples of such mistreatments include a Ugandan lesbian who died in the process,<sup>3</sup> a Zimbabwean lesbian who faced emotional trauma<sup>4</sup> and a Ugandan gay man who faced physical and emotional abuse.<sup>5</sup> Also ignored is the role played by some European racists in further oppressing African LGBT persons living in Europe. Instead, it is primarily the African leaders that are being blamed for their homophobic statements without realizing the emotional and mental oppression the West cause these leaders by trying to control and belittle them through their culturally insensitive foreign policies. One example of such insensitivities is the threat by David Cameron to cut aid to some countries because of the lack of recognition of gay rights. The result of these Western insensitivities is the structural violence that many African LGBT persons are being exposed to. Sadly, this has also been fuelled by the anti-gay gospel of American Evangelicals in recent years.

In several articles, we often see the framing of African LGBT persons as vulnerable, paralyzed, oppressed and abject. Those on the frontline know that African LGBT persons are more than the negativity often regurgitated about them through the one-sided narratives. African LGBT persons do not need pity or to be portrayed as 'abject' by privileged outsiders, who by labelling them this way exaggerate their vulnerability and societal rejection. As a Nigerian LGBT rights activist, my message to

Wieringa is that *things are not as bad as she portrays*. Instead of portraying us in the Global South in ways some of us do not appreciate, it would be helpful if the Dutch scholar would study the vulnerabilities of LGBT persons in the Bible belt or Moroccan communities in the Netherlands, which many people know little about.

I don't blame my Dutch gay friend, Thijs, for caring about his African LGBT brothers and sisters. In fact, I am thankful to him. However, his perception of African LGBT persons, I believe, is a product of the frequent narratives of victimhood which he has repeatedly been fed with by the Western media to the extent that victimhood had become synonymous with African LGBT persons in his mind. As an activist, I must confess that at a point, I got tired of reading those depressing news reports online every day on diverse western media outlets such as *advocate.com*, *erasing 76 crimes*, *gay star news*, *the empty closet*, among others. Some of us African activists are also guilty of regularly posting those depressing news reports from the Western media on our walls on face book and further disseminating it. Some Western journalists may argue that their frequent stories of arrests, attacks and discrimination against African LGBT persons are true stories which intend to create awareness about their situation.

I agree that these stories are true but they are often incomplete and biased since they tend to overlook the positive stories such as the achievements, progress, innovation and resilience of African LGBT people. I believe the courageous efforts of African LGBT persons in trying to transform their situation deserve equal focus. For instance, it is incomplete to report that a gay man was arrested and beaten by the police in Nigeria without reporting the role of activists who hired a LGBT-friendly lawyer, bailed him, and subsequently provided him counselling and support while strategizing to prevent future occurrence. This would be a more complete representation which can inspire African LGBT persons and also remind them to show appreciation to the kind-hearted Western donors such as Hivos who provide them funds which they use in touching people's lives.

### **Stories of Triumph**

I would like to counter the single negative narrative often disseminated about African LGBT persons. My argument utilises a case study of the struggles of Nigerian LGBT activists to illustrate and motivate a set of perspectives. I would like to present the blessings of Nigerian LGBT persons by sharing their stories of triumph, which we often forget to talk about. I would also share some strategies that have worked over the years in contributing to make a change for Nigerian LGBT persons. In addition, I will celebrate the voices of courage in the Nigerian LGBT community, their achievements and other inspirational stories as a motivation for their future work. I write as a Nigerian LGBT rights activist who seeks to describe the

strength and humanity of Nigerian LGBT persons. My perspective in this article is an attempt to break the silence about the experiences of Nigerian LGBT persons who are not only identifying themselves in positive ways but who are refusing to be undermined by confronting their obstacles.

### **Signs of Hope for Nigerian LGBT Persons**

Regardless of the homophobia in Nigeria in recent years, there are several signs of hope for LGBT people. One of these signs is their enlarged visibility, as opposed to widespread denial and invisibility, which has not helped the movement. Nigerian LGBT rights advocates and allies have been advocating for LGBT rights by presenting their cases at public hearings of anti-gay bills in parliament where they sometimes remind Nigerians about the historical tolerance for sexual diversity in Nigeria (Okanlawon, 2011). Some Nigerian media outlets and courageous heterosexual journalists have been involved in this resistance by conducting unbiased interviews for Nigerian LGBT persons on television and newspapers.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This has helped to put Nigerian faces to homosexuality and challenge the myth that *'homosexuality is a white man's disease'*. Courageous Nigerian LGBT persons such as Bisi Alimi, Yemisi Ilesanmi, and Reverend Jide Macaulay granted such interviews, some of which were conducted by renown Nigerian journalists Funmi Iyanda and Mosunmola Abudu (Moments with Mo). These heroes were interviewed in *This Day*, *NTA*, *Sahara TV*, *CNN*, among other media outlets.

Several dedicated Nigerian NGOs such as The International Center on Advocacy for the Right to Health (ICARH), House of Rainbow, The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERs) and Women's Health and Equal Rights (WHER) are actively engaging in human rights activism, organizing and providing services for LGBT persons. Younger activists who were trained by the older LGBT-rights organizations are emerging and starting new initiatives. Organizations such as the International Centre for Sexual Reproductive Rights (INCRESE) and TIERs have built alliances with foreign Embassies in Nigeria, Nigerian lawyers and other allies, some of whom have been speaking out through television interviews and journalistic articles against homophobia by criticizing the anti-gay bills as being unconstitutional.<sup>7, 8</sup> The number of Nigerian heterosexual allies of LGBT persons and relatively tolerant persons is therefore gradually increasing.<sup>8-11</sup> Additionally, an advocacy toolkit was developed by INCRESE a few years ago for the repeal of the draconian anti-gay laws and this targeted more potential allies of LGBT persons.

Notwithstanding the homophobia, LGBT networks still exist clandestinely around Nigeria, even in the most conservative Sharia implementing States (Zamfara, Kano, Kaduna and Bauchi). LGBT persons consistently organize gatherings such as secretive gay parties which serve as a safe space where they socialize, celebrate and exchange ideas. The improvement of technology and the advent of social media

avenues have made physical and online LGBT organizing easier in Nigeria these days. It is noteworthy to mention that many LGBT parties are always organized and funded by self-sacrificing Nigerian LGBT persons, some of whom do not have much education or belong to any NGO. This local networking and solidarity of Nigerian LGBT counteracts the wrong notion of many Nigerians who perceive their organizing as being copied from the West.

Some Nigerian LGBT-rights organizations and independent researchers are carrying out studies and needs assessments targeting LGBT persons and utilizing the findings to design targeted interventions. This is worth celebrating as some of these intervention efforts are self-funded by some Nigerian LGBT persons and groups who are committed to solving the problems confronting their community. The most inspiring example I know of is a lesbian organization in Abuja, Nigeria which organizes programmes for same-sex loving women and which funds these programmes themselves. These women have not received any funds from foreign donor agencies but they remain determined, passionate and aggressive to make a change. What if these women receive support from donor agencies, would they not change the world? I think they certainly will with their big hearts.

Nigerian LGBT persons may be facing legal disapproval in the Nigerian society but they remain committed to each other as their brother and sister's keeper. In terms of religion, a Christian LGBT group called House of Rainbow is combating homophobic voices from conservative churches by helping LGBT persons reconcile their sexuality and religious beliefs. The House of Rainbow has also provided educational resources for Nigerian LGBT Christians and has organized conferences on human rights education and counselling for Nigerian LGBT persons. In addition, they have organized training programmes for gay men in Ibadan, Nigeria to acquire marketable skills for livelihood (Okanlawon, Adebawale, & Titilayo, 2013). Moreover, INCREASE has resisted negative prejudiced media representations about LGBT persons in Nigeria, which obviously contribute to homophobia, by building alliance with journalists and reporters about LGBT rights, to encourage responsible and ethical journalism, as part of efforts to achieve social justice in Nigeria. These are signs of hope even though progress may be slow.

Nigerian LGBT persons and groups have been raising awareness about their human rights situation and their struggles by designing websites and blogs such as<sup>12</sup> and producing documentaries such as SAGBA<sup>13</sup> and Veil of Silence.<sup>14</sup> These documentaries portray the challenges confronting the community, how these communities are fighting for their rights, growing in their activism and benefiting from the support of allies. Some celebrated Nigerian NGOs such as TIERS and INCREASE have also written ground breaking books titled *Unspoken Rights* and *Sexual Diversity and Human Rights in Nigeria* as part of this

resistance. Social media have provided an avenue for debates about LGBT rights in Nigeria with courageous Nigerian LGBT activists in the diaspora such as Yemisi Ilesanmi and Davis Mac-Iyalla often engaging in heated debates on Facebook with Nigerians back home, which has caused controversies and increased awareness.

Similarly, Nigerian LGBT groups at home have made efforts to stay safe and resist being silenced by inventing sexual slang and codes in Nigerian local languages which they use in communicating with each other confidentially to resist the silence. One such word is *SAGBA* meaning *the struggle* which origin is explained by Bisi Alimi.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Nigerian LGBT activists in the diaspora are speaking out against homophobia and the social injustices against LGBT persons happening back home. Some examples of slogans used by Nigerian LGBT activists in the U.K. and the U.S. are *'Stop turning us into refugees and asylum seekers abroad. Repeal sodomy laws now'*, *'Stop persecuting your sons and daughters'*, *'We are not illegal'*, *'We are full citizens'*, *'Decriminalize same-sex acts'* among others. These Nigerian activists gain solidarity of European LGBT activists who often participate in protests with them in Nigerian and other African Embassies abroad.

Nigerian LGBT people may currently not be where they would like to be in the human rights struggle and in terms of general societal acceptance, but one unquestionable fact is the progress that has been made in this struggle over the years. That these changes take time is to be expected in a post-colonial setting which inherited harsh anti-gay laws from the British and anti-gay Evangelical Christianity from American Evangelicals. This brings into bold relief the expression that *'Rome was not built in a day'*. Nigerian LGBT persons will hopefully get to their destination someday, which is when they will have equal access, rights and opportunities to education, health, employment and more societal acceptance. I believe their passion, hard work, solidarity, commitment, prayers, self-sacrifice and partnership with allies including the diaspora will help.

I strongly believe that Nigerian LGBT persons have relentless efforts to succeed. They have organized several secretive LGBT human rights and health programmes, even after the signing of the new anti-gay law in January 2014, to extend their kindness to their peers without fear. Some have travelled to Sweden to acquire LGBT-rights training and have returned home to contribute to the movement using the knowledge they acquired. These efforts of Nigerian LGBT persons deserve to be shared to underscore how far they have come. They have benefited from the support of gay lobbyists in the West and admired European celebrities such as Elton John who have made compassionate calls on Nigerian and other African Governments to show tolerance towards LGBT persons. Additionally, Nigerian LGBT persons have benefited from the solidarity of thousands of allies in the West who signed

online petitions against the anti-gay bill in Nigeria.

Nigerian LGBT persons have, over the years, utilized several strategies in this struggle. They have taken advantage of culture and religion as an asset to undermine violence rather than as a rationale to support violence by pointing to historical tolerance of sexual diversity in Nigeria and tolerant Biblical messages (Ilesanmi, 2013; Okanlawon, 2011). Some Nigerian LGBT-rights NGOs have networked and built alliances with mainstream human rights organizations, lawyers, journalists and service providers about LGBT rights. They have embarked on different sensitization and skills building efforts to empower LGBT persons. Additionally, they embraced collective activism in building solidarity with allies through dialogue and creating a strong platform in attempting to defeat proposed anti-gay bills in parliament. They have documented human rights violations against LGBT persons over the years and demanded their fundamental human rights to freedom and justice.

### **Voices of Courage in the Nigerian LGBT Community**

I commend five outstanding voices of courage in the Nigerian LGBT community who have dedicated their lives to advancing LGBT rights in diverse ways over the years as shown through their several efforts illustrated above. These heroes have sacrificed their privacy by coming out and demanding acceptance for LGBT persons in the Nigerian society. Some of them experienced unnecessary media infringements, including the publishing of their photos in newspapers as a result of their speaking out. These courageous voices who are undoubtedly role models for many Nigerian LGBT persons are Bisi Alimi, Yemisi Ilesanmi, Reverend Rowland Jide Macaulay, Ade Adeniji and Davis Mac-Iyalla. Three of these five champions have also written inspirational books about homosexuality.

In her book *Freedom to love for all: Homosexuality is not un-African* (2013), Yemisi Ilesanmi raises awareness about the human rights situation of Nigerian and other African LGBT persons and debunks the unfounded claim that homosexuality is un-African. She emphasizes the need for tolerance for Nigerian LGBT persons by pointing to historical tolerance and highlighting negative influences which are driving homophobia in Africa. Davis Mac-Iyalla's book is titled: *Fiyabo: The Story of Nigerian Gay Christian Davis Mac-Iyalla* (2014). In this book, he tells his compelling story of being victimized as a Christian gay man in Nigeria and how he transformed his experiences into greatness through resistance. He speaks out against the victimization of LGBT persons and identifies the role of the church in fuelling the homophobia. Jide Macaulay's book is titled: *Pocket Devotional for LGBT Christians* (2009). In this book, he shares experiences about the love of God for LGBT persons as an encouragement to promote their self-acceptance and the freedom to enjoy the love of Jesus Christ.



Nigerian LGBT persons deserve to be proud of their achievements over the years. Some prominent ones such as Bisi Alimi, David Mac-Iyalla and Reverend Jide Macaulay have been recognized internationally for their great work. Some closeted Nigerian LGBT rights advocates and heterosexual allies who are working underground also deserve to be applauded for dedicating their lives to promoting the health, rights, and overall well-being of Nigerian LGBT persons. Nigerian LGBT persons are therefore not as incapacitated or abject as they are often being portrayed in the Western media, as if they are only persons who deserve to be pitied for their abusive circumstances. Instead, they are of great worth because they are tackling their problems themselves, confronting their foes and developing confidence. They have shown that they have the insight and the abilities to improve their lives and that of others if given the opportunity. They are benefiting from the support of heterosexual allies back home and from European and American allies.

Because of the great work they are doing, Nigerian LGBT persons are acquiring marketable skills and becoming increasingly aware of their sexual, mental health and their human rights. It is therefore time for Nigerian LGBT persons to make their voices heard by showing the world what they can do. This is important to promote their dignity and human-ness and also to make the entire world see why they are deserving of their human rights as lovely, compassionate, kind-hearted and hardworking persons. Avenues are needed for Nigerian and other African LGBT persons to tell their stories as honourable as they can to counter the negative portrayal by outsiders. These stories cannot only repair their dignity, they can enable them to visualize a future with honour by imagining themselves out of their current challenging circumstances.

## **Conclusion**

As Nigerian LGBT heroes such as Bisi Alimi and Ade Adeniji begin to tell their stories (13), it is important for people to learn about their challenges, struggles and successes. Celebrating their successes can give them the energy and the motivation needed to continue their work. To move forward, rather than spending too much time complaining about the imperfect situation, Nigerian LGBT persons should refuse to be discouraged by counting their blessings, learning from past mistakes and attempting to track their progress so as to be able to demand that more be done to improve the lives of LGBT persons. I look to the day when Nigerian LGBT persons can have equal rights, opportunities and access to employment, education and health in Nigerian society. I believe in the encouraging words of the popular song by the celebrated Late African American musician, Sam Cooke titled *A Change is Gonna Come*. I believe this desired change will someday come for Nigerian LGBT persons as desired by Bisi Alimi<sup>6</sup> and as

envisaged by the great Nigerian journalist and LGBT ally, Funmi Iyanda.<sup>15</sup>

I believe Western sexuality scholars and Organizations would do African LGBT persons and other Africans a great favour by acknowledging their *white privilege* and helping to challenge racism against Africans and other ethnic minorities in their countries. They are also advised to challenge the mistreatment that many African LGBT persons face when seeking asylum in the U.K.<sup>3-5</sup> As a black African man who has previously been subjected to racism while I was a student in the Netherlands, I would greatly appreciate this. Additionally, I believe it is hypocritical that the U.K. which threatened to cut aid to many African countries on the grounds of LGBT rights is also responsible for mistreating African LGBT asylum seekers in their country.<sup>3-5</sup> It is also shocking to me that the Canadian Government which has been an energetic supporter of Ugandan LGBT persons would also be responsible for the denial of Canadian visas to some Ugandan LGBT activists in 2014 due to the fear that these activists might choose to seek refugee status in their country. The West urgently needs to make a change especially since their foreign policies were responsible for the structural violence African LGBT persons are exposed to. It is therefore unfair for the West to refuse them assistance when they need it.

How nice would it be if my compassionate 19 year old Dutch gay friend, Thijs, also knew about the resilience and the fighting spirit of Nigerian LGBT persons in addition to the several stories of victimhood he has read in the media? How nice would it be if Western leaders such as Barrack Obama and David Cameron embrace culturally sensitive foreign policies which would not expose African LGBT persons to structural violence? How nice would it be if many Western organizations refuse to be distracted by the polarization and instead concentrate on touching the lives of LGBT persons as Hivos has rightly done for African LGBT persons over the years? How nice would it be if Western countries and organizations including the International community continue to support the rights of African LGBT persons in challenging the homophobia they face at home? Since many Western countries remain influential in their ex-colonies in this globalized world, they are strongly advised to consider their unintended roles which fuel homophobia in Nigeria and other African countries. Western countries have a moral responsibility to help make the desired *change come* as sang by musician Sam Cooke. African LGBT activists also need to be mindful of their style of activism by being culturally sensitive to enable this *change come* easily.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Reps pass same sex bill on second reading. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vky8Tyb1vA>

<sup>2</sup> Trisha Show 10 03. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adoQz7-hShs>

<sup>3</sup> A Ugandan lesbian asylum seeker died as a result of sustaining injuries after being violently manhandled by some United Kingdom Board Authority (UKBA) security guards during her forceful deportation from the U.K. Jackie Nanyonjo demo short; Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ep50gGrTp3c>

<sup>4</sup> A Zimbabwean lesbian reported being emotionally traumatized after experiencing serious mistreatment by officers of the Home Office, U.K. when she demanded for asylum in the U.K. None on Record 'Seeking Asylum': Skye Tinevimbo. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Q0FHHWPCNk>

III. A Ugandan gay asylum seeker reported being detained for some months and also facing physical and emotional abuse in the process of being forcefully deported against his wish by the U.K.BA (5).

<sup>5</sup> None on Record Preview. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1VjLj71UuYA>

<sup>6</sup> Bisi Alimi On NewDawn. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5Ajjmc0bUE>

<sup>7</sup> Sogunro, A. (2013). With apologies to my gay friend. Retrieved from <http://ayosogunro.com/2013/06/11/with-apologies-to-my-gay-friends-an-epistle-by-ayo-sogunro/>

<sup>8</sup> Same-sex marriage has been illegal in Nigeria since 1949.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAETtc9rDcg>

<sup>9</sup> Same sex marriage debate with Bisi Adegbuyi Pt.1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L-5YrIOx3G>

<sup>10</sup> Joe Okei Odumakin on same sex marriage. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWmn8FI137g>

<sup>11</sup> Same sex marriage debate with Charles Umeh Pt.1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6Wiqpyv\\_yg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6Wiqpyv_yg)

<sup>12</sup> The Initiative for Equal Rights. [www.tiers4equality.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.tiers4equality.blogspot.co.uk).

<sup>13</sup> SAGBA. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZwO3RwBnYg>

<sup>14</sup> Veil of silence official trailer. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8akVLYR\\_EIA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8akVLYR_EIA)

<sup>15</sup> AfroPoP: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange (Seeking Asylum: Bisi)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a69Vy6jjbpY>

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## Kenyan Queer Identification as a Globalized Endeavour

Ato Malinda

This photo series captures a performance for camera. I developed this photo series as a sketch performance. It is part of a longer performance entitled, *'Untitled derivative of Mshoga Mpya, or the New Homosexual'* and comes at the end of my research on queer space in Nairobi.

I am interested in modes of performance that obstruct the senses. So indeed the viewer has to work for the information. My previous performance on Nairobi's queer space, of which this performance is a derivative of, included me placing obstructions in my mouth as I told stories about a queer Kenyan public. I am dealing with a highly sensitive and controversial issue of non-heteronormativity in Kenya. Non-heteronormativity still remains illegal in eastern Africa and most of the African continent. These performative obstructions become a necessity in order to ensure the safety of myself and the participants in my new research, as well as work as a metaphor for the proverbial closet one must step out of in order to declare one's sexuality. I work hermeneutically, reading queer theories, queer histories, performance theories, and performance history. I am also inspired by other queer practitioners. Rotimi Fani-Kayode, a gay Nigerian-born photographer who died in 1989 at the age of thirty-four, remains a formidable inspiration as he paved the way for queer African artists. Rotimi's blend of African paganism and subjective sexuality exposes black (homo)sexuality to a dialogue that remains pertinent today. As a pioneer photographer, he spoke of indigenous culture as a global identity that remains present in the identifications of young queers in contemporary Kenya. This is an interesting site of contestation for me, as through my art I work to avoid epistemologies of authenticity and fixed identifications. I am interested in identities that lie in the in between spaces created by the inconsistency of a past, present and future globalized world.

This performance also marks the beginning of my research into Nairobi's urban space and the influential elements of western media in the identification of queer Kenyans. This new research questions and investigates the role of western media in the everyday performances of daily activities and sexualities by queer Kenyans. I am yet to embark on the ethnographic element of this research; however my research methodology through art practice has begun. Within the coming years I will interview queer Kenyans who dwell within Nairobi's urban boundaries. The leading question driving my research is: How do queer Kenyans relate to queers from different geographical sites; through which global media specifically: Are there popular T.V programmes, magazines or internet sites, and what

social factors are determinants; how are urban spaces of survival incorporated into quotidian performances that identify them as queer (and African) and how are local identities in Kenya affected?





















# **Knowledge Is Requisite Power: Making a Case for Queer African Scholarship**

Stella Nyanzi

## **Introduction: The paradoxes of existent knowledge about queer Africans**

African queers are largely misunderstood. Often, easily available and thus widespread public knowledge about people of same-sex sexualities and non-conforming gender identities in different African contexts is not only erroneous, but also mythical. Existent scholarship about non-heteronormative Africans is deeply polarized as either pro-gay or anti-gay. The labyrinth of available knowledge contains stereotypes that either claim that African queer persons are antithetical anomalies or else sketches that caricature queer Africans as traditional spirit mediums floating between the spirit world of ancestors and present-day society. Non-heteronormative Africans are either alienated for their non-indigenous practices, or thrust deep into customary African psyche through possession by multi-gendered ancestors who deny individuals any agency.

Fronting the hypothesis that African queer persons are an antithetical anomaly, histories of bodies of knowledge assert that homosexuality is un-African; and thus a foreign import from either the decadent powerful West or the exotic spiritual East (Epprecht, 2008). Powerful African men (including presidents, religious clerics, cultural leaders, and public media workers) resound across the continent with proclamations of the un-Africanness of homosexuality (Nyanzi, 2013). This rhetoric diffuses into public policies, national programmes, legal reforms, service delivery and everyday practices of individuals as well as groups of people. The alienation and invisibilisation of African homosexuals is apparent within African knowledge generated by many African scholars living, studying and teaching in diverse countries of Africa. As politicians parrot that queer sexualities and alternative genders are un-African, many scholars reiterate that queer theory belongs to post-structural and post-modern Westerners. Queer African scholarship is side lined as an anomaly, just as African queer knowledge is marginalized as alienating.

The alternative hypothesis which stereotypically posits African homosexuals and people of non-conforming gender identities as possessed of ancestral spirits is evident in bodies of knowledge that invoke the culturalist explanatory framework (Nkabinde, 2009). Delving deep into the histories and cultures of diverse groups of African peoples, knowledge producers within this school of thought premise excavating mystical and ritualistic explanations believed to render the Africanness of queer individuals and communities. Deep retractions back into precolonial Africa are undertaken to find the African bodies that engaged in same-sex practices before the advent and penetration of foreigners into

our continent. Macharia (2009) highlights that in debates about the (un-)Africanness of homosexuality, “...precolonial Africa becomes a foundation point of reference in adjudicating the status of contemporary attitudes and policies toward homosexuality” (p. 157). Thick descriptions based on ethnographies conducted in local languages and extinct vernaculars explore so-called traditional customs, rituals and everyday practices which evince same-sex desire, relationships, and sexualities. *Sangomas, tsangomas, waganga, abasawo b’ekinansi* and other spirit-possessed mediums are interviewed for their culturalist explanations rooted within a distinct African ethos and cosmology. African languages and literatures are studied for words, metaphors, euphemisms, riddles, proverbs, insults and other linguistic symbolism that possibly connotes an awareness and conscious articulation of same-sex possibilities and non-gender conforming options (Dunton, 1989). Queer Africans, pro-gay rights activists and advocates, and queer academic researchers reclaim a particularly reified form of Africanness through appropriating these pre-colonial histories, social cultural rituals, and African Traditional Religious (ATR) practices (for details see Nyanzi, 2013). Appealing to the evidence of a pre-colonial queer presence or else mystical ritualistic African performances represents specifically primordial forms of queer Africa. While acknowledging the significance of these forms of knowledge, I also insist that they are at best limited caricatures which do not represent the diverse and multi-layered complexities of current queer African realities.

This paper makes a case for formalizing a multi-disciplinary body of Queer African Scholarship. Rather than facilitating the deep rift between African Studies on the one hand and Queer Studies on the other, I reiterate the urgent appeal for a political convergence that strategically forges the synchronized zygote of Queer African Studies, or else African Queer Studies. This project necessitates a two-pronged approach, namely queering African Studies on the one hand, and Africanizing Queer Studies on the other hand (Nyanzi, 2014). After giving my justifications for the urgent need for this academic and pedagogical project, I discuss important ingredients for such a sub-specialization. Although widely under-utilized, I insist that Queer African Scholarship is a powerful structural strategy that can be undertaken to undo the fortress of homophobia in Africa which is informed by ignorance, misinformation, misconceptions, myths and lack of home-grown empirical evidence or grounded theorizations about diverse aspects of queer African realities, subjectivities, experiences and issues. Most of our public leaders in Africa (including presidents, legislators, state administrators, cabinet ministers, members of parliament, officials of the judiciary and enforcers of law and order) underwent training for years within formal education systems. However, the bulk of them who formulate and implement homophobic national policies and programs were never exposed to queer bodies of

knowledge about our African continents. Queering formal education and the knowledge creation industry in Africa is an important requirement for the advancement of the recognition of the equal citizenship status, full human rights and dignity of same-sex loving individuals and communities in our continent.

### **Why the need for queer African scholarship?**

Why is there a need to undertake the project of establishing a program of Queer African scholarship? After all, powerful stakeholders invested in the business of knowledge generation about Africa highlight that the study of non-heteronormative human sexualities and non-conforming gender identities is neither a priority subject of inquiry, nor worth apportioning the attention of limited financial, human, academic, and other resources. Three examples stand out, namely the development machinery, human rights movement, and feminist theorists and activists. Firstly, the development industry trivializes the important role of human sexualities and alternative gender identities in addressing hindrances to the development of countries and societies in less developing parts of the world. Secondly, mainstream advocates of human rights argue that sexual orientation is not specifically mentioned among the grounds for non-discrimination in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, thus it is difficult to advance the human rights of sexual and gender minorities. In fact, similar to homosexuality, human rights are widely regarded as foreign to Africa, making the human rights of sexual and gender minorities a doubly alienated topic. Thus it is not uncommon to find individuals and organizations that simultaneously claim to advocate and work as defenders of human rights on the one hand, while publicly declare their opposition to the legal and social protection of homosexual Africans against discrimination on grounds of their sexual orientation. Thirdly, African feminists are sharply divided, with the bulk majority resistant to challenging heterosexism and homophobia in their praxis against patriarchy. According to Amory (1997, p. 9):

*[...] women in the academy and in African Studies are too vulnerable to risk their careers on 'controversial' topics. African women have argued that their feminism centres not on sexuality, but on the economics and politics of mere survival in present-day Africa.*

Only a few radical African feminists address heteronormativity, while a much smaller corpus of individual queer African feminists incorporate non-essentialist fluid and dynamic understandings of gender that digress the fixed binary opposition of men and women, male and female. For example, the vibrant scholarship of Sylvia Tamale, Ugandan feminist professor of law at Makerere University is an

example of the rare but critically important radical departure from the dominant mode described above. Premised upon a combination of African feminism and human rights, Tamale is renowned for leading the way towards a possible Queer African Studies within Ugandan academy.

These examples of the development industry, human rights advocates, and African feminists highlight the widespread existent covert and overt resistance towards a conscious focusing on the establishment of Queer African Scholarship. Amory (1997) describes it eloquently as “the studied avoidance of research on homosexuality and the downright heterosexual panic concerning the issue (p. 5). Given this resistance to prioritizing Queer Studies in Africa and African Studies about queer folk, as well as the widespread denial of the indigenusness of same-sex sexualities and non-conforming gender identities, why do I insist on advancing an argument for the formalization of studying this terrain? Kopano Ratele (2006) “asks whether issues of sexual superiority are actually worth our serious attention or whether they should be left to women’s and men’s magazines, the back pages of newspapers, and living rooms. If questions about sex deserve any seriousness, even if it is only because many people around the world still find inter-racial, inter-cultural, inter-religious, or inter-ethnic coupling irritating or at best titillating, should critical scholars and activists not come out and advocate inter-group sex education as part of gender-conscious antiracism, multiculturalism or religious and ethnic tolerance?” (p. 139). Following from Ratele, I make a case for African and Africanist scholars seriously working on the political project of Queering African Studies and Africanizing Queer Studies.

### **Limited local African knowledge produced by African queers based in Africa**

In spite of the steadily growing body of knowledge generated about same-sex sexualities and gender diversities in Africa, generally there is still a glaring gap that is evident through the limited availability and accessibility of local knowledge produced in Africa by local scholars who are based in the continent. Macharia (2009, p. 157) identifies and names proponents of studying Queer Africa as “...queer-friendly Africanist academics and activists”. The bulk of knowledge producers working in this field are neither queer nor African. Often the queer person is not African, and the African is not queer. Whether they are assimilated foreigners or xenophobic imperialists on the one hand, or whether they are heterosexual allies or homophobic haters on the other hand, the vast majority of knowledge producers about Queer African realities are either non-African outsiders or heterosexual others. The dominant foreignness and outsidersness of scholars producing the bulk of existent knowledge about diverse aspects of queer Africa reinforces widespread erroneous claims that homosexuality is a foreign practice imposed through Western or westernized agents of neo-imperialism. The rare individuals embroiled within Queer African



Scholarship that are both queer and African are to be lauded. Often African queers with potential to undertake academic research and scholarly knowledge production prefer to distance themselves from Queer African scholarship.

However, it is also important to reiterate the oft made critique about the bulk of Queer African scholars based within the continent as being located within South Africa. According to Amory (1997) “it is predominantly white male scholars based in Southern Africa” (p. 6). As a geographic site, the South African nation is important for Queer African Scholarship particularly because of its progressive constitution which both names sexual orientation within its bill of rights - as one of the grounds upon which citizens must be protected from discrimination - and also upholds same-sex unions. This African country is also important because of the publicly acknowledged roles played by same-sex-loving and gender non-conforming individuals in the anti-apartheid liberation struggles that bore the present day rainbow nation. Furthermore, the contradictory oppression and violence meted out against sexual minorities – particularly the rape of lesbians and the marginalization of transgender persons – regardless of the protections offered them within the Constitution highlight the importance of taking multi-pronged research that exceeds the disciplinary confines of only studying the law and human rights. The importance of contributions from South Africa notwithstanding, it is important that Queer African Scholarship extends to include all the other countries and contexts within the African continent. Elsewhere, I succinctly capture this complex challenge:

*The dominant role of predominantly white South African queers is as empowering as it is also colonizing because queer Africa is much larger than this one nation. Miniscule articulations of alternative South African queers as only Black raped lesbians, or brown coloured effeminate men are important, but also gagging of varied ways of being queer and African. South African lenses cannot be the only frames through which queer Africans from the other fifty-five countries make meaning of our queer lives and realities (Nyanzi, 2014, p. 65).*

While my diction of ‘colonizing’ could be interpreted as an intentional act, the idea is not to accuse queer South Africans (particularly the powerful male white ones who are most prolific), but rather to unwaveringly raise the politics and power inequalities involved in queer knowledge production within the African continent.

Interestingly, in the last two years, three bold edited books that appropriate a combination of the labels ‘Queer’ and ‘Africa’ have all been published within South Africa. Importantly, although the editors were either located within South Africa or diaspora, they brought together the queer knowledge

productions of diverse Africans located all over the continent. Published in 2013 by Fahamu's Pambazuka Press, the *Queer African Reader* which is edited by Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, is a combination of forty-two writings, analyses and artistic works of individuals in Africa and diaspora that engage with the struggle for LGBTI liberation and inform sexual orientation and gender variance. Published in the same year by MaThoko Books, *Queer Africa: New and Collected Fiction* that is edited by Karen Martin and Makhosazana Xaba (2013), is a collection of eighteen rich pieces of creative writing that eruditely tackles diverse queer subjects. And lastly, published in 2014 by Modjaji Books, *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities* that is curated by Zethu Matebeni is a bold exploration of form that combines the narrative voices of fourteen writers and the artistic productions of nine queer artists of diverse genres whose works were curated by Jabu Pereira during the seminal *Critically Queer* Exhibition held at University of Cape Town in 2014. Clearly, South Africa is leading the way for broader Queer African Scholarship.

### **High rates of attrition from school among African queers**

While the ideal situation is to grow a cadre of queer African scholars drawn from among the insiders who are both queer and African, there are several contextual and political factors mitigating against this. My on-going ethnographic research among self-identified LGBTIQ individuals in rural and urban Uganda highlights the fact that the majority of people who are same-sex loving or gender non-conforming drop out early from formal education. Out of 320 individuals interviewed between 2009 to early 2014, 14 (4.4%) had attained three or less years of primary education, 63 (20.0%) completed primary education, 98 (30.6%) completed O'levels, 31 (9.7%) completed A'levels, 52 (16.3%) held collegiate diplomas, 48 (15.0%) had completed the first degree, 12 (3.8%) had post-graduate qualifications and 2 (0.6%) had doctoral qualification. "*Ffe ba Kuchu tetugenda wala nakusoma*" (meaning 'for us same-sex loving people, we do not go far with education') and "*Abakuchu tetusoma nnyo kyetuva twagala okutulabirira*" (meaning 'Same-sex loving people do not study hard; that is why we want to be taken care of') were common sentiments in interviews, focus group discussion and empowerment workshops.

Given the high early school-dropout rates among same-sex loving Ugandans, it is highly unlikely in the short term that they will form the bulk of human resources engaged in advancing the Queer African Scholarship project. Challenges of personal safety are also real, particularly in national or academic contexts where homophobia is institutionalized and homosexuality (or its promotion) penalized through legislation or societal proscriptions. Until a reversal of the contextual and structural factors that contribute towards the high dropout rates from formal systems of education among same-sex-loving

Africans, unfortunately they will continue to lack the requisite qualifications to undertake considerable high quality knowledge production through research, teaching, and study. Thus it is important to also think about developing alternative avenues of creating queer knowledge outside scholarship. Examples such as the fine arts including music, poetry, fiction, short stories, the novel, biographies, painting, comics, modelling, textile art, graffiti, drama, performed word, fashion, sports and the public media offer alternative avenues for queer self-expression in Africa.

### **Deeply heterosexist and heteronormative university education systems in Africa**

Formal education systems in Africa are largely inherited from colonial legacies. The structures, processes and contexts of primary school, secondary school, college, undergraduate, post-graduate and doctoral education systems generally reinforce oppressive hierarchical social orders such as patriarchy, heterosexism, heteronormativity, classism, neo-liberal capitalism, and other hegemonies of power. Access to institutions that offer higher quality of education at whatever level is often restricted to pupils and students from the higher echelons of society. In spite of nation-wide campaigns (such as Universal Primary Education (UPE), Universal Secondary Education (USE), and the 1.5 affirmative action points awarded to female candidates enrolling for undergraduate university education) aimed at increasing the admission and retention of pupils and students from the lower brackets in society, formal education systems are still highly elitist and classist.

Oppressive binary polarisation between girls and boys, male and female are the order of the day within formal education systems. This reinforces patriarchy. Furthermore it denies an acknowledgement of the complicatedness of fluid genders, multiple gendered persons, gender benders and gender blenders. Consequently, heterosexism and heteronormativity thrive in the thinking, practice and praxis of formal education systems. For example within schools and universities in Uganda, toilet facilities, dormitories and roll call lists are narrowly restricted to gender divisions between male and female. The transgender, transsexual and intersex pupils, students, teachers and other staff members are forced to either conform to this binary thinking about gender or else transgress the neat classificatory binaries at their own individual risk. This invisibilises non-conforming gender identities. Alternatively gender-benders and gender-blenders are set up for ridicule, teasing and punishment within such hetero-patriarchal systems.

Beyond the physical structure of formal education systems at all levels, the content of diverse materials, information and knowledge transmitted to pupils and students uncritically reproduces the oppressive hegemonies of patriarchy, heterosexism, heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinities.

Course curricula that do address gendered and sexed issues tend to heavily rely on the above described binary dichotomy between girls and boys, men and women, male and female. Female masculinities, male femininities, butch women, tomboys, effeminate men, sissies and all other forms of non-conforming genders are ignored and thus erased from existence within formal education systems. The curriculum in biology classes that focuses on sexual and reproductive health, for example, solely focuses on heteronormative fertilization, pregnancy and delivery of babies; thereby excluding all else. Transmitting knowledge about the reproductive organs of human beings is restricted to males and females. Sex education focuses strictly on heterosexual penile-vaginal intersex between men and women. This runs from primary school through secondary school and all the way to university level of education.

### **Narrow focus of existent scholarship**

Unfortunately, even in the area of available research, there is too narrow a focus on specific queer African bodies. Due to the specificity of systematic scholarship, scoping research communities often leads to excluding many others. I discuss two examples here, namely the HIV/AIDS industry and the minority rights movement.

The HIV/AIDS research industry comprising the faculty members of universities, researchers within research institutes, corporate investigators based within pharmaceutical development industries and independent researchers advanced its bodies of multi-disciplinary knowledge by focusing on communities of homosexual men. The wealth of scholarship generated within this field notwithstanding, the HIV/AIDS research industry splintered up the queer African communities by choosing to focus on essentialized biological bodies identified as high-risk, vector-born, bridging-population, or key populations for the epidemic. For example formulating the catchphrase label of Men-who-have-Sex-with-Men (MSM) aimed at avoiding westocentric identity politics, as well as including biological men involved in same-sex practices but not identifying as homosexual. However, it necessarily generated problems for transgender women who resist being labelled as men although they may qualify for interventions targeting MSM. Furthermore, by focusing their research on HIV/AIDS, they contribute to the continued pathologization of same-sex sexualities particularly for men. It is as though scientific research about queer bodies can only be meaningful if it is about disease, illness and pathologies. Pleasure, wellbeing, desire and erotics become side lined in the production of knowledge about disease-carrying queer African bodies.

The human rights movement is based on advocacy and activism. It prizes laying strategies to lobby powerful factions of society to relinquish their hold over the human rights of oppressed sub-population groups. Thus the language of minoritizing the individuals and communities who are at the centre of human rights struggles is widespread. Queer Africans are conceptualized, projected and represented as sexual minorities or sexual-and-gender minorities under the oppression of the heterosexual majority in society. To effectively enhance their advocacy, human rights advocates and activists capitalize on the minority status of same-sex loving individuals. While this strategy may be effective in the struggle for human rights of same-sex loving and gender non-conforming individuals and groups, it is also alienating for those who may not want to or fit within the umbrella label of minorities. Thus butch lesbians, transmen, top gay men, macho homosexual men, insertive or dominant same-sex partners, and intersex persons may all be excluded from imaginings of sexual minorities, gender minorities or sexual-and-gender minorities. The exclusion is ably effected because these social categories do not neatly fit into a gender minority status because they are masculine. Likewise, dominant or insertive partners can easily slip off the minority radar because of simplistic patriarchal imaginings of the sexual power they hold within their partnerships.

### **Re-imagining Queer African Studies**

Curriculum development that queers African scholarship in multiple and diverse disciplines is urgently required. While theories and methodologies must be drawn from the pluridisciplines of Queer Studies, Post-Colonial Studies and African Studies (Macharia, 2014), the pivotal hinge must necessarily focus on being loyal to Africa-centred inquiries – in their diversities, ambivalences, contradictions and complexities. The contexts, ideas, values, thought patterns, languages, symbolism, epistemology and assumptions of Queer African Scholarship must be premised upon excavating African modes of being, knowing, enactment and meaning-making. It is essential to radically create and build a formalized Queer African Scholarship program. Macharia (2009) suggests that this program must be “...deliberately calculated to introduce queer studies to African Studies and vice versa. Africanists who are novices in queer studies need not fear that infamous obscurantism of queer studies. Simultaneously, queer scholars who know nothing about Africa need not fear that they will be disoriented” (p. 163).

A major departure from widely available courses on Gender Studies, Gender and Development, Gender Mainstreaming, or African Feminist Studies, the treatment of gender within Queer African Scholarship must address the gendered, ungendered, multi-gendered and flexi-gendered dimensions of both conforming and non-conforming gender identities. Transgenders, MtF, FtM, transsexuals,

transvestites, cross-dressers, intersex people, gender fluid, gender diverse, gender queer, two-spirited, three-spirited, four-spirited... people must be explored, investigated, examined, analysed and documented in systematic and scholarly ways that make emic sense to those studied rather than to scholars set up in ivory towers of the university. Complex queers must be identified such that multi-disciplinary studies including ethnographies, longitudinal studies, phenomenological inquiry, linguistics, demography, historiography and history, theology and philosophy are conducted about them on their own terms. Contemporary cross-dressers including drag queens and drag kings, as well as drag queers must also be studied on their own African and emic terms. Gender studies in Africa must be thoroughly queered in order for the knowledge produced therein to be meaningful and representative of diverse African queer realities. The dynamic potential for Gender Studies in Africa to be radically critical and inclusive of Africa's queers is rendered impotent by a dogged determination to subscribe to polarized gender binaries framed by patriarchal thinking and heteronormative social orders. This shortcoming of Gender Studies that is evident within universities and centres of academic research in Africa is heavily replicated within several national Ministries of Gender, gender-based community organizations, as well as gender activism. This is not only ironical, but also disappointing and disempowering. Wouldn't it be queerly empowering to have Trans and Intersex Departments within our different Ministries of Gender in Africa?

Reading silences, rereading denials, deciphering edited out materials and actively poring over existent African Studies scholarship about intimacies, erotics, sexualities, pleasure, desire, and friendships is critical. This would avail the skills, methodologies and theories to unmute, unsee, and unlearn the outright erasure of multiple forms of evidence of queerness. It is important to open up spaces that facilitate thinking about same-sexness within diverse African locales, contexts, ethos and possibilities. Boldly working with what is currently considered to be taboo, crime, abomination, obscenity, lewdness, un-African, madness, alien, pathology, psychosis, demon-possession is an important feature of creating radical knowledge within the field of Queer African Studies. Art, fiction, dance, fashion, music, the novel, poetry, biographies, historiography and other creative modes of knowledge production are important avenues of inserting queerness within scholarship because they allow the crossing and transgression of boundaries.

The artificial yet existent concrete gap between academic knowledge production and everyday queer activism in Africa must urgently be quashed. Scholars and activists of Queer Africa must bridge the gaps between their worlds through partnerships and collaboration. Queer activists located in diverse African countries are advancing a vibrant queer African movement that combines militant

revolutionaries who radically oppose the status quo and diplomatic reformers who work within and with the oppressive systems to cause change from within. Africa's queer activists have allies and networks forged with actors within the human rights movements, the radical feminist movement and international developments partners who are non-African outsiders. Largely funded and supported by foreign funders from North America and Western Europe, local African LGBTIQ activists are making advances in articulating nuanced expressions about diverse queer African realities and subjectivities. The great challenges of lack of systematic documentation, an absence of theorization, and disjuncture from recognizing these processes as credible sources for knowledge generation are augmented by an obstinate and homophobia-inspired reluctance of the mainstream academic institutions in Africa to embrace the noble task of producing Queer African knowledges. However, it is important to consciously begin a movement for the formal creation of Queer African Scholarship within Africa's vast academic bodies, universities, research institutions and think tanks. The knowledge generated by graduates of these programs will diffuse into the African continent, African psyche, African race, African politics, African legislation and infuse multifaceted forms of queerness therein, thereby undoing the ignorance that firmly holds homophobia in place within our lands.

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## **Can You Tell?**

Daniel Lyons



Alan Miller – Kenya

██████████ – Botswana

██████████ – Kenya

Mutheu Mbondo – Kenya

██████████ – Uganda

Gabriel Hoosain Khan – South Africa



Michael Mhando – Tanzania

██████████ – Canada

██████████ – Malawi

██████████ – Nigeria

Onthatile Oleri Moeti – Botswana

Fabienne Simenel – Netherlands



Stella Nyanzi – Uganda

██████████ – Kenya

██████████ – Uganda

██████████ – South Africa

John McAllister – Botswana

Jackson Otieno – Kenya



██████ – Uganda

Sarah Mitchell – South Africa

██████ - Zambia

Kevin Mwachiro – Kenya

██████ – Togo

Sekoetlan Phamodi – South Africa



David Kuria Mbote – Kenya

Theo Sandfort – United States

Akinyi Ocholla – Kenya

██████████ – Burundi

██████████ – Kenya

██████████████████ – Namibia



Vasu Reddy – South Africa

██████████ – Uganda

Njoki Ngomi – Kenya

██████████ – South Africa

Mark Gevisser – South Africa

██████████ – Uganda

## **Abstracts of Conference Presentations**

*L. Atokena Abe*

### **Claiming the void: Same-sex intimacies in Nairobi**

The project that I am currently researching is for my Master of Fine Art degree with Transart Institute. I am collating experiences from LGBT individuals in the urban spaces of Nairobi and Dakar. I will then map the spaces that individuals visit with the help of a Nairobi architect. This project is a visual arts project that will culminate in an art installation in July 2014 in Berlin, Germany. What I intend to present at this conference is my progress up until then. This will include hand-drawn maps that discuss the sociality of the places visited by LGBT individuals, as well as my research findings from my interviews. The issues this project will discuss are the popular notion that same-sex intimacy is un-African, in particular in reference to President Obama's last visit to the African continent at the height of the legalization of same-sex marriage in the United States; an understanding of how LGBTIQ individuals identify as both African and queer, as often these two identifications prove conflicted. In the interviews I have already done, Christianity as well as traditional African beliefs appear to be hurdles in the lives of my interviewees. They have either relinquished their beliefs or found personal medians. The influence of Western cultures also plays a big role: The notion of a postmodern, post-colonial Africa is very present; globalization is ever-present. I will also discuss experiences of homophobia and public trauma. The scholars I am researching are Henriette Gunkel, Neville Hoad, Sylvia Tamale, Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, and others. I believe this project is of interest to the conference as it discusses public and social attitudes towards same-sex intimacy as well as gender diversity on the African continent.

*Samson U. Ani, John Marnell, & Muzi Muthembu*

### **We are here! LGBTI migrant experiences in South Africa**

There is a silence – both socially and in research – around LGBTI migrants in South Africa, particularly how their daily struggle for survival impacts on their lives, their mental and physical health, and their sexuality or gender identity. This presentation will examine the xenophobia, stigma, discrimination and human right issues facing LGBTI migrants in South Africa and the consequences on individuals' lives and wellbeing. The paper draws from data collected during a four-day Art for Advocacy workshop with fourteen LGBTI migrants. As well as allowing participants to develop new skills, the workshop provided a space for attendees to creatively share their experiences of marginalisation and oppression. The findings highlight the intersecting nature of xenophobia and homophobia, and the lack of human rights protection provided for LGBTI migrants in South Africa. Key sites of oppression analysed include police brutality, workplace discrimination, issues around documentation and exclusion from safe and supportive spaces. The paper will be presented from the perspective of a gay Nigerian national who participated in the workshop, thus providing a unique insight into the lived experiences of LGBTI migrants in South Africa. By reflecting critically on his own experiences, the author confronts the near-total silence around LGBTI migrant issues. The findings speak to the need for serious and targeting interventions that not only acknowledge the multi-layered oppressions faced by LGBTI migrants but that also protect individuals from abuse, exploitation and emotional/physical harm.

*Christophe Broqua*

### **The construction of homosexuality as a public problem in Senegal**



Background: During the first half of the 2000s, Senegal was seen in Africa as a 'model country' in the fight against AIDS among MSM, in spite of the fact that 'unnatural acts' are illegal since the decolonization. It was the first African country where a quantitative survey and a prevalence study among MSM were done. MSM were quickly added as a priority target in the AIDS national program and several organizations were created. But the situation deteriorated in 2008, with media controversies, arrests, and mobilizations against homosexuality.

Methods: (1) Analysis of a corpus of media articles. (2) Ethnographic observations from 2011 to 2013 during meetings about MSM in local organizations. (3) 40 semi-structured interviews with AIDS organizations members, medicals, journalists, political and religious leaders.

Results: To explain how such a crisis developed in a 'model country', it's necessary to take into consideration the progressive construction of homosexuality as a public problem, made possible by five main factors. First, the long-time accepted *góor-jigéen* (man-woman) category was progressively resignified from a category based on gender to a category based on sexual orientation. Second, the increased visibility of homosexuality during the 2000s reinforced its stigmatization. Third, the media coverage of homosexuality evolved from a neutral to a condemning form. Fourth, religious groups took part to the fight. Fifth, the disapproval of homosexual rights in the West and the fear of western imperialism explain the recent public controversy surrounding the decriminalization of homosexuality.

Conclusion: To understand the appearance of public controversies about homosexuality in Africa, it's important to consider the long local history that precedes the facts. That understanding is important to help avoiding new controversies in the same place or elsewhere.

*Egidio B. S. Canuma*

## **Unconstitutionality of the prohibition against marriages between persons of the same sex in Mozambique**

Background: Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic, 2004, expressly enshrines the principle of the equality of citizens. However, Article 7 of the Family Law defines marriage as "a voluntary and exclusive union between a man and a woman (...)". Article 53(e) of the same law prohibits marriage between two persons of the same sex, and deems such marriage to be non-existent, in the Mozambican legal system. This study intends to discuss the constitutionality of the position adopted by the said Family Law, in relation to homosexual marriages.

Methods: Comprehensive legal research. Focus on bibliographic research, doctrinal articles and reported national and foreign jurisprudence.

Findings: The arguments in favour of the prohibition against marriage between persons of the same sex in Mozambique, have been inspired by conservative legal doctrine, which has been superseded. Some of these arguments have been inspired by religious norms (of the Catholic Church), despite the fact that, in terms of Article 12 of the Constitution of the Republic, Mozambique is a secular state.

Conclusion: The position adopted by the Family Law, in relation to homosexual marriage, is unconstitutional, because it violates the principle of equality between citizens, set out in Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic, which, in our opinion, does not permit the law to discriminate negatively against citizens because of their sexual orientations.

Recommendation: (1) To amend the concept of marriage contained in the Family Law, (2) To revoke Article 53(e) of the Family Law, (3) To add the words '*sexual orientation*' to the wording of Article 35 of the Constitution of the Republic, so as to render the prohibition against discrimination because of sexual orientation, explicit.

*Bonne Ciza, J. Bisimwa, & E. Kwizera*

## **Surveying social acceptance/perception of same-sex sexuality: A semi-structured interview comparing rural and urban communities in Makamba/Rumonge Southern Burundi**

Background: Same-sex sexuality is practiced in different countries world over; but there have been various reactions in regard to this sexual orientation depending upon cultures and social values. In Burundi, same-sex sexuality practices exist even though not tolerated/accepted by local community for acceptance and perception around this practice differ. Our survey was done to analyse the social acceptance and perception of same-sex sexual practices between rural and urban community.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were performed by July 2013 in rural and urban areas of Rumonge and Makamba Southern Burundi. Views, acceptance and perceptions in regard to same-sex sexual practices were investigated using our framed questionnaire. Data were entered then analysed using STATA 2012.

Results: 110 participants were interviewed, of them 69 (63%) females and 41 (37%) males. Interviewees were from various backgrounds (skilled, unskilled, believers, unbelievers, community health workers) and 50% lived in rural areas whilst the rest lived in urban centres. On question about if homosexuality is or should be accepted/tolerated in the community, 99 (90%) said 'no' versus 11 (10%) who said 'yes'. How people feel with homosexual, more than 81% said they feel uncomfortable and disappointed. Should homosexuality be legalized: 108 (98%) said 'no'. Unbelievers showed more acceptance/tolerance than believers and urban and skilled people were more likely acceptors/tolerant than those in rural settings. Approving responses were few as of around 10%.

Conclusion: Same-sex sexual practices in these communities are not well accepted and tolerated. This practice is regarded as unsocial due to culture ruptures (imported culture from Western countries). We suggest further studies to help our community understand this practice.

*Natalie Donaldson and Lindy Wilbraham*

## **"But, that's exactly how they are!": Responding to representations of black lesbian women on South African television**

With the politicization of sexuality and sexual violence in South Africa, recent academic research and news reports on the 'corrective/curative rape' of black lesbian women often results in black lesbian women being positioned predominantly as helpless victims. Specifically, research has argued that the stereotypically masculine gender performances of many black lesbian women has resulted in black lesbian women being the primary targets of violent heteronormative hate crimes. This paper will present aspects of the analysis of discourse from two focus group discussions that were conducted with 'black' and 'white' lesbian-identified women around their reception of the black lesbian characters featured in the South African television programme, *Society* and how the politicisation of sexuality and sexual violence influenced their interpretation and talk. Wetherell's method of critical discursive Psychology was used to examine: (1) the subject positions made available in/by these representations; (2) the interpretive repertoires used by the audience in negotiating with these subject positions; and (3) the ideological dilemmas experienced by participants in this negotiation process. Participants' discourse on representations of black lesbian women works to position black lesbian women as in positions of vulnerability and at high risk of violence and, therefore, interpretive repertoires of survival are used by participants in an attempt to explain why black lesbian women are masculine and 'butch'. This paper examines these interpretative repertoires of survival used in negotiating these racialized subject positions and the ideological dilemmas that arise around stereotypes of black lesbian women.

*Lucy Akello Ebong*

## **Creating accessibility to health care for the LGBTI persons in Uganda**

The HIV Program is an initiative of St. Paul's Reconciliation and Equality Center. The program encourages gay persons seek primary medical care and ancillary services from government health facilities. This program is very crucial in linking other HIV positive closeted gay people to form support groups where they are comfortable to get support mostly for eventualities like sickness, in cases where one might not have access to anti-retroviral drugs when one is down with other complication or incarcerated in jail or in a safe house. This would lead to preventing transmission of the spread of HIV/AIDS and/getting the support, treatment and care that one needs in a community context. The program also documents best practices which can be used to improve on the service provision to the key population. This project is in three districts. The peer educators who themselves are gay persons have undergone various training mobilizes MSM/WSW for Support Group Meeting in safe spaces where health education, VCT, treatment and other supports are provided. This meeting is also used as avenues to create demand from the groups so that they can seek treatment from health centres. Health service providers from government health centres and hospitals and private health care centres are mobilized and sensitized about the unique needs of the gay persons and issues that prevent them from accessing medical services from health centres or hospitals. We respect the fact that healthcare providers are professionals, and we leave it up to them to reflect on how they can meet their non-heterosexual patients with knowledge, skills and empathy. We have a Posttest club exclusively for gay persons at our centre. We have since August 2011 sensitized 406 service providers and 2044 persons.

*Kene C. Esom*

## **Eschewing exoticism: A case for the incremental and intersectional approaches to SOGI advocacy in Africa**

This paper discusses the recent interest in sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) advocacy in Africa especially by institutions and organisations in the global west and the approaches that these interventions have taken. It argues that sexual orientation and gender identity issues in Africa has become an exotic theme for international actors and has led to flurry of uncoordinated advocacy projects, programmes and interventions which often have not involved the communities in their design, implementation and evaluation. These have resulted in confused messaging which have negatively affected the LGBTI communities in Africa by feeding the rhetoric that 'homosexuality is un-African and a Western agenda' and alienating SOGI human rights defenders from mainstream human rights civil society. By comparing the approach to SOGI advocacy elsewhere in the global South, the paper concludes that successful advocacy interventions must focus on a incremental approach which emphasis the intersectionality of SOGI issues with other human rights and social justice themes. Only through this approach will the public understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity be improved and the rights of LGBTI individuals respected and protected.

*Irene Fubara-Manuel*

## **A place like home: The ideological position of queer racialized immigrants**

Queer immigrants from Africa are situated in an ideological homelessness in which the legitimacy of their sexual identity and nationality is constantly argued. Therefore, this position as outsiders-within becomes a vantage point from which one can see ideologies of the global north and south, and create a critique of global LGBTQ human rights. This ideological homelessness, to be explained in this presentation is based on social constructions of citizenship and nationality, race, gender and sexuality, which may be defined in such simple terms excluding intersectional identities. This presentation will

explain the experiences same-sex loving immigrants face away from home, in the process of finding home, or being at home. This is due to the ideological construction of homosexuality as un-African and the culturalisation of homophobia in Western countries that causes restless movements in search of a safe space. Using qualitative research, in which two queer immigrants from Canada discussed their experiences in a semi-structured interview, this presentation will theorize on diasporic homes of queer African immigrants, highlighting this as the safe space from which discussions of LGBTQ rights in Africa should be discussed. This safe space is based on feminist, transnational, and postmodern conceptions of sexuality.

*Akua A. O. Gyamerah*

### **Print and digital news media coverage of same-sex sexuality and sexual health in Ghana**

**Background:** Same-sex sexuality in Ghana is unaccepted socially and culturally. Local media particularly play a significant role in the formation of meanings of same-sex sexuality. The purpose of this paper is to examine what ideas, representations, and meanings of same-sex sexuality and sexual health are discussed in the Ghanaian print and online news media.

**Methods:** Articles were searched for on [www.ghanaweb.com](http://www.ghanaweb.com), an online database of articles from major Ghanaian news media, using the following terms: 'homosexuality', 'gay', 'lesbian', 'sexually transmitted diseases/illnesses', and 'HIV/AIDS'. The search was restricted to articles from 2011-2013. Content analysis was conducted on 30 articles. Additional analysis will be completed for the presentation.

**Results:** Ghanaian news coverage of same-sex sexuality isn't neutral and portrays a negative image of same-sex sexuality generally and in relation to sexual health, with a few divergent views. Same-sex sexuality is reduced to sodomy and male same-sex sexual activities while female same-sex sexuality is less written about. 'Homosexual' men are characterized as sexual predators (paedophiles), criminals (rapists, prostitutes), abnormal (mentally ill), and demonic, while children and women are depicted as their victims. These men are portrayed as transmitters of STIs/HIV and specific statistics, high-profile incidents, and statements by public figures are referenced to uphold such characterization. Moreover, Western forces are identified as drivers of homosexuality and relatedly STIs.

**Conclusion:** Ghanaian news media are representing homosexuality as sexually violent and as driving the HIV epidemic/STIs through biased reporting, which poses the risk of fuelling more attacks against same-sex sexuality. Further research is needed on the impact of these media depictions.

*Chiedu C. Ifekandu, Bala D. Abdullahi, B. Oladejo, Sylvia B. Adebajo, & Ogechukwu Agwagah*

### **Thinking new media: The need to incorporate social networking into MSM-specific health intervention; lessons from MSM mapping in Abuja**

**Background:** A national survey (IBBSS 2010) in Nigeria shows that 36.7% HIV prevalence for men who have sex with men (MSM) in Abuja. The recent anti-same sex bill rage in Nigeria has driven MSM in Abuja into serious hiding; making it difficult for MSM-HIV programming. In April, 2013, MSM Site Estimation and facility mapping was conducted in Abuja to identify MSM hotspots.

**Methods:** A qualitative research was conducted in May 2013 in Abuja. The study involved structured focus group discussions and key informant Interviews of MSM recruited through key opinion leaders and social networking site pages of hidden MSM in Abuja. They were assured of their confidentiality through advocacy and signing of consent-confidentiality forms.

**Results:** The mean age of the 20 MSM recruited for the study was 23.4 years +/-SD. All of the respondents have smartphones. Most of the MSM reported that they rely on the virtual hotspots such

as the social networking sites to seek for sexual partners. More than half of the MSM admitted having sex with 4 or more partners met on the internet in the last 12 months and reported inconsistent condom use. A fraction of them sold sex to both male and female sexual partners. The MSM preferred the virtual hotspots to the physical for the fear of stigma and law enforcement agency's harassment

Conclusions: From this study, increasing use of virtual hotspots which are now the preferred medium are likely factors that may increase the vulnerability of MSM to HIV and other STI in Abuja metropolis.

*Godfrey Dalitso Kangaude*

### **Aligning LGBT rights advocacy with elimination of gender-based violence: A Malawi case study**

Introduction and Objective: Constructions of the ideal man as heterosexual and dominating the 'feminine' create a hierarchy of masculinities and perpetuate intersecting gender-based and sexual violence against men, women and LGBTI persons. In Malawi, civil society and government tend to avoid issues of LGBTI in efforts to eliminate gender-based violence. The objective of the paper is to suggest how LGBTI rights advocates could persuade civil society and the government to include LGBTI in efforts to eliminate gender-based violence.

Methodology: The paper uses media and internet sources to follow the development of LGBTI rights advocacy in Malawi especially following the incarceration of two gay men in 2009. It describes how gender equality advocates in the civil society as well as the government have perceived efforts to eliminate gender-based violence as separate from violence against LGBTI persons. It analyses this using the feminist gender theory of intersectionality to show how patriarchal traditions create intersecting forms of gender-based and sexual violence against all persons that are perceived to be 'non-masculine'.

Results and Conclusion: When civil society advocates of gender equality and government leave out issues of discrimination and violence against LGBTI in advocacy or programs to eliminate gender-based violence, they fail to address the problem of gender-based violence in a holistic and integrated manner. Since homophobia is rampant in Malawi, advocates for LGBTI rights must find creative ways and use gender arguments to advocate for elimination of violence against LGBTI persons. LGBTI advocates must persuade civil society and government to include LGBTI persons in gender programs on elimination of gender-based violence, based on the argument that it is part of efforts to achieve a violence-free society.

*Gabriel H. Khan*

### **"Love is not a crime": Narratives of queer community workers in southern Africa**

While discrimination against queer people is present in southern Africa, community workers navigate this harsh environment in creative and inspired ways. Even in environments where the threat of arrest is present, queer community workers not only survive but build relationships and resist oppression. In this paper I draw upon my own as an activist and facilitator working for the organization GALA (Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action). I aim to unpack the use of a participatory visual art workshop methodology dubbed Art for Advocacy to engage queer community workers to reflect on their work and experiences. The workshop was implemented in Lesotho (Matrix Support Group) and Zambia (Friends of Rainka) - and will be implemented in Zimbabwe (Galz) in October 2013. My analysis is based upon my own written reflections, workshop plans, recordings of workshop sessions and feedback. The paper aims to unpack three critical questions: (1) what possibilities does Art for Advocacy offer to queer community workers? (2) What are some of challenges experienced by queer community workers in southern Africa? (3) What are the strategies used by queer community workers in advocating for their rights? Two preliminary

themes have emerged: including a reflection on how the use of art might be useful in engaging community but might delegitimize organizations in professionalized civil society spaces. This linked to broader narratives of conflict between creative activism and funding constraints. The second unpacked how resisting oppression within their work and personal lives might conflict with the desire to assimilate. The closely linked to ways in which participants negotiate personal relationships with the ever-present threat of systemic violence complicating both work and social circles. This critical question being: how can we better support queer community workers in southern Africa?

*Yves K. Kugbe*

### **In Togo, homosexual's gender identity expression corrupted by an unfavourable environment**

Background: 37% of male homosexuals in Togo identify themselves to the female gender. Therefore, many of them adopt behaviors and ways that do not correspond to the social expectations of their biological sex. But in a repressive legal environment for same-sex relationships and a society very closed on gender social environment, the daily life is not easy for transgender people in Togo. It becomes apparent that many of these transgender people are trying, in spite of themselves to adopt the kind of gender that corresponds to their biological sex.

Methodology: Monitoring the lifestyle of some transgender and focus group with nine of them has been made. Participants were selected on the basis of how they identify themselves in relation to their gender identity and experiences on the issue.

Results: All participants reported, in spite of themselves, dramatically change of their habit and lifestyle related to their gender identity in order to preserve their physical safety and avoid acts of stigma / discrimination to which they are constantly given their victim gender identity. They also reported feeling like 'dispossession' of their own lives and many have the impression of being deprived of their freedom. Others are forced to live in hiding or only go out at night because to avoid insults or looks.

Conclusion: Togo to the socio-legal environment requires transgender people to change their way of being and living to adapt their social equality than on their biological sex to survive. This has huge impact on the psychological development and quality of life of those affected.

*Juliet Kushaba*

### **"Doomed if they do, doomed if they don't": Sexual health implications of homophobia among married lesbians in Uganda**

Introduction: Uganda is one of the most homophobic countries in Africa, a major factor responsible for the various sexuality challenges faced by women. Drawing on the qualitative stance of a research conducted on ten married Lesbians in Uganda, the study illuminates sexual health vulnerabilities among the women.

Findings: The study reveals that the Lesbians got married to men to hide their identity and sexual orientation but they continued to have sexual relationships with their girlfriends. However, they explained that they did not take any precautionary measures for safe sex in the second relationship because they were not aware of them; they spend most of their time with their 'heterosexual families' and do not associate with other lesbians for fear of being labelled 'gay'. They suffer twice; oppress themselves by being married to men and at the same time, put their lives at a risk of contracting HIV and AIDS, STIs, and other sexually transmitted infections. They expressed need for confidentiality on their part since they want to protect both themselves and their marital home, something that subsequently affects their medical-seeking behaviour. The heterosexual marriage, which they confessed was difficult

to 'keep', only functions as a cover within which they hide from the numerous forms of torture faced by other homosexuals like the media 'outing', 'corrective' rape, discrimination. But at the same time, they are exposed to sexual health risks because of this double life.

Conclusion: The study illustrates the need for more studies, conscientization and for more advocacy for the human rights of sexual minority groups.

*Richard Smith Lusimbo*

### **Homosexuality in the public debate, the media and public opinion in Uganda, Botswana and Kenya**

Evidence shows that homosexuality has existed in Africa throughout history just as it existed in any continent. However, homosexuality is seen by society as 'un-African', 'immoral', 'non-religious' and an 'import from the West'. The real import is homophobia, as laws criminalizing homosexuality were actually put in place during the colonial era. As the crime of sodomy is already in place, the anti-gay bill wants to go further by introducing death penalty for 'aggravated homosexuality'. The media takes part to the polemics. Some tabloids turned into dangerous machines which published pictures of homosexuals, with their names, addresses and so on, thus committing infringement to human rights such as the right to privacy and aiming at ruining those people's lives in the manner of witch-hunting. Historical evidence shows the existence of homosexuality among Maasai men, still present nowadays. However, the media has covered negatively homosexuality issues, reflecting on public opinion. Botswana appears more progressive. The media tends to adopt a more objective point of view and the debate goes further, as shows the public discussion about decriminalizing same-sex sexual practices. This presentation aims at giving a comparative analysis of the public debate, public opinion, and the role of the media on same-sex sexuality in Uganda, Kenya and Botswana. This is a documentary research which includes press articles and scientific literature.

*Ingrid Lynch*

### **Men who have sex with men in township communities in Cape Town: Navigating notions of culture, sexuality and masculinity**

In predominantly isiXhosa-speaking township communities in Cape Town, South Africa, men who have sex with men (MSM) negotiate their identities and sexual practices alongside heteronormative cultural scripts of what it means to be a man. Such idealised notions of masculinity are predicated on the selective appropriation of tradition and culture in order to preserve (heterosexual) male privilege and power. Further to this, in the recuperation of post-colonial African identities, the construction by traditional leaders of black identities as exclusively heterosexual has contributed to a reassertion of patriarchal traditionalism, often bolstered through public claims of homosexuality being '*un-African*'. This qualitative paper is based on individual and group interviews with MSM, including self-identified gay and bisexual men, who form part of '*safe spaces*' in townships in and around Cape Town. Using a poststructuralist analysis, I explore how MSM in townships negotiate homophobic cultural and gender scripts positing an idealised heteronormative masculinity. I specifically attend to how such cultural and gender scripts are drawn on in participants' talk about their sexual practices, relationships and health-seeking behaviour. The findings suggest that through their expressions of identity and sexual practices, MSM treat notions of culture and gender in dynamic and contradictory ways, at times reinforcing heteronormative binaries and at other times supporting the slow 'bending' of locally produced notions of masculinity to create opportunities for differently gendered selves. The paper concludes with recommendations for advocacy, policy development, and sexual health interventions for MSM in Southern Africa.

*Miriam S. Malunga*

### **Safe sex interventions needed for WSW in Zambia**

For a long time, Zambia, like many other African countries, has not included same-sex practicing people in the fight against HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. This has had an adverse impact on women who have sex with women (WSW). It is becoming apparent that there is urgent need for interventions in this area. A study carried out by PANOS revealed that only a 1% of the WSW use protection and the use is not consistent. The HIV prevalence rate among WSW is also alarming as it stands at 20% (PANOS study) in comparison the overall country's prevalence rate which stands at 14.3% (National AIDS Council). With one on one interviews conducted with the WSW's, it became apparent that the idea of safe and safer sex is not one WSW's entertain. Negotiations on the engagement of safer sex rarely come up when the WSW are about to engage in sex and the rate at which WSW's change sexual partners is quite high with most reporting to have had at least five sexual partners within a year. The reasons for not engaging in safer sex among the WSWs included: They thought they were 'safe enough'. For those who understood the dangers of unprotected sex, they reported to have not had information on how to go employ safe sex in their practices. Another reason given was that despite being knowledgeable, it was almost impossible to find protection tailored to the WSW's needs. With a number of STI cases going either untreated or self-treated, it is becoming obvious that the WSW's cannot be ignored anymore. There is need to scale up on safer sex information and services such as STI screening and provision of dental dams.

*Zethu Matebeni*

### **Talasi - black female gender identity in South Africa since the 1950s**

South Africa, as the rest of the continent, has been flooded with Western notions of gender identity and sexuality. While these have liberated many people who found themselves marginalized because of their non-normative stances, Western vocabularies have also overlooked locally nuanced expressions of gender non-conformity or gender variance. In local vernacular, the Nguni word talasi was popularly used to refer to any person who was thought of as odd, ambiguous or whose gender and sex were curios. This term has lost its traction for more Western terms such transgender, queer or even bisexual. This paper is interested in the versions of black female gender non-conformity such as talasi that have been in circulation in rural and township settings in South Africa. Through archival data, participant observation, oral histories and other interview material, the paper argues that local expressions of female gender such as unongayindoda and umjendevu have paved way for contemporary forms of butch, fem or female queerness. The paper uncovers the different ways in which female persons have lived and expressed both femininity and masculinity during apartheid. These are translated to current staged performances of gender as well as everyday lived realities of butch, fem and queer that have become pronounced in post-apartheid South Africa. Re-appropriating these old existing vocabularies is an attempt to show continuities in gender over time, as well as illustrating the particularities of female gender non-conformity now. Many butch, femme or queer persons find themselves at odds with their local cultures and contexts, this paper, using a decolonial approach, is an attempt to narrow that distance.

*David K. Mbote, K. Beardsly, & R. Olson*

### **Decision model: Policy analysis and advocacy decision model for services for MSM and transgender populations**



Men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender persons (TG) face challenges that affect their ability to access HIV and health services and to be properly informed about quality health care. They are typically left out of decision making bodies and processes because of their marginalized status, stigma and discrimination and criminalization. Access and availability of health services including HIV/AIDS to MSM & TG are directly affected by various policies, including laws, guidelines, statutes directives and operational procedures. Policies have opportunity to either benefit or hinder the environments that determine health outcomes and human rights for MSM & TG. The Decision Model is a policy and Advocacy analysis tool to assist different stakeholders working with MSM & TG, including the government, MSM & TG activists, policy makers and development partners identify policy gaps, policy barriers and benefits certain policies have in improving the health outcomes for MSM & TG populations. The Decision Model provides analysis of where to intervene, but also in the process builds the capacity of local advocates to understand advocacy options that are most appropriate for their circumstances. The Decision model also provides a way for civil society organizations to organize and address specific areas of interest related to the health of MSM & TG persons. The Decision Model helps local advocates and stakeholders identify feasible advocacy priorities to improve access to services, even in contexts of overarching human rights constraints. This paper seeks to present the Decision Model analysis report for the analyses that were conducted in Kenya, Togo and Burkina Faso.

*John McAllister and O. R. Mosweu*

### **Culture, tradition, and sexual citizenship in Botswana: Using indigenous values to promote dialogue and build support**

The growth of LGBTI activism in sub-Saharan Africa in recent years, together with highly publicised victories for equal rights in the West, have made the rights of sexual minorities a hot-button issue in many sub-Saharan African countries. In the process, there has been increased harassment and persecution, and extreme new laws have been proposed or adopted in some countries. This backlash has been widely, often sensationally, reported in the West. Western organisations, leaders, and public figures have responded with condemnation, petitions, and threats of aid boycotts, often without consulting African activists. Many African activists find these interventions neo-colonial and counter-productive. Their disquiet is fuelling an important debate over the future of African LGBT activism. The Western-style confrontational approach is increasingly seen as inappropriate, as it ignores indigenous African culture and values and under-estimates African tolerance. Meanwhile some African LGBTI organisations have been quietly pursuing strategies using indigenous styles of networking and consensus-building. In Botswana, LeGaBiBo has adopted a strategy based around the traditional Setswana values of *botho* (humanity) and *morero* (consultation). Appealing to the deeply-rooted Setswana culture of consensus and conciliation, summed up in the popular saying *ntwa kgolo ke ya molomo* (the highest form of war is dialogue), LeGaBiBo has reached out to health workers, teachers, police, faith leaders, and traditional leaders through traditional *pitso* meetings. The approach, though new, is proving fertile. The dialogues are subtly building an inclusive environment where LGBTI people and key professions can engage together in the spirit of *botho*. This presentation evaluates these initiatives in detail and suggests how they might be replicated elsewhere.

*Michael Mhando and John Kashiha*

### **The use of ICT on accessing to the health services**

Many researchers in Tanzania have shown that sexual minorities are more at risk of contracting HIV than the general population. The increased vulnerability to HIV among sexual minorities has been associated with lack of correct and comprehensive information, uninformed decision making, stigma and

discrimination from themselves and general community, and language barriers. Moreover, information communication technology (ICT) commonly intervenes with sexual practices of the sexual minorities. Findings will be presented on how to plan and deliver actual services for HIV prevention intervention targeting sexual minorities which reflect the starring role of ICT. This paper will describe the unique impact of ICT on improving access to health services among the sexual minorities. It can enable education to be delivered free of charge and makes sexuality and human rights education available to most sexual minorities in Tanzania. The organization uses the different opportunities and multiple entry point to intervene in the behaviour/practices change to reduce the prevalence of HIV through outreach intervention in personal and online social networks. Moreover, the organization uses animation, games, translated articles, testimonies, legal and sexual right books, referrals and access to quality HIV/AIDS prevention services. Depicting our experience and lessons learned, we strongly urge that the use of different ICT is very paramount for intervening on the behaviour practices and will stipulate the access to health care, and increase the knowledge among sexual minorities.

*Sarah Mitchell, Geoff Jobson, Andrew Tucker, Glenn de Swardt, Helen Struthers, & James McIntyre*

### **Your guess is as good as mine: Sero-sorting, sero-positioning and sero-guessing among men who have sex with men in South Africa**

Background: Men who have sex with men (MSM) in South Africa have a high risk of contracting HIV, with prevalence rates of between 10 and 34 per cent (Rispel, Metcalf et al. 2009; Baral, Burrell et al. 2011; Lane, Raymond et al. 2011). While several surveys have identified factors that act to increase HIV risk in this population (Dladla, Struthers et al. 2008; Lane, Mogale et al. 2008; Baral, Burrell et al. 2011), there is a lack of research on the strategies that men may use in order to reduce the risk of contracting HIV.

Methods: This paper is based on data collected through an anonymous online survey. Participants were recruited through placing advertisements on popular gay and MSM websites based in South Africa. A total of 1466 respondents completed the questionnaire in part or in its entirety. Data were analysed using STATA12.

Findings: Although 28% of men reported engaging in URAI, many also reported using a range of risk-reducing strategies to decrease the chance of contracting HIV. These included masturbation, avoiding unknown partners and opting for oral sex over anal sex. The most commonly-reported strategy was looking for sero-concordancy, with 56% of men reporting doing this. However, 41% of men were not sure of the HIV-status of their last sex partner (n=742), indicating high levels of 'sero-guessing'.

Conclusions: Although many MSM do engage in 'bareback sex', they appear to be using behavioural strategies to reduce their risk of contracting HIV. Health messaging aimed at this group should encourage men who engage in 'barebacking' to employ such strategies only if they know their partner's status. This would require men knowing their status themselves and being willing to disclose it to their partners.

*Onthatile O. Moeti*

### **Reconstructing the place of sexual minorities in traditional Botswana: Setting the human rights tone**

Sexual minorities' issues remain controversial in Botswana. As a result of the societal perceptions, they are subjected to inhumane treatment. They do not have recourse to the law because the law entrenches their discrimination. The Botswana Penal Code prohibits sexual intercourse between people of the same sex and dubs it an unnatural offence. The Constitution excludes sexual orientation as a ground for non-discrimination. The courts found in *Kanane v The State [2003] 2 BLR 67* that Botswana is a society too conservative to accept sexual minorities. The courts were not ready to make a ruling which would

contravene the cultural perceptions. Botswana still adopts a position that sexual minorities should exist in an ivory tower so that the population remain oblivious to their existence. Reports disclose that sexual minorities suffer abuse; one disclosed that a transgendered was raped and killed in December 2011. Nelson Mandela opined “to deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity”. This means despite conflicts and dilemmas that mark issues of sexual minorities and impede discussions on the subject, there is an urgent need to recognise and protect their rights. Botswana is still lagging behind in this regard and the common justification is that sexual minorities offend cultural perceptions. We challenge such an approach as it is repugnant to a democratic Botswana we wish to build for the generations yet unborn. A democratic Botswana should nurture diversity and not condemn the different as shameful. This paper considers the effects of cultural perceptions on sexual minorities. It discusses how Botswana can nurture a tolerant nation and reconstruct a place for sexual minorities within her traditional society. It will provide tentative findings on how recognizing sexual minorities’ rights can serve the greater good in terms of the HIV scourge and the overall human rights status.

*Barbra W. Muruga*

### **Addressing the health needs of transgender and intersex populations in Africa**

**Background:** Little information regarding the recognition and availability of health interventions for transgender and intersex populations exists, especially so for those who transition. Currently, the only known country to have positive laws and policies governing the health needs of transgender persons is South Africa with their Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act that allow transgender persons to apply for their sex description on their birth documents altered. This also means that the medical fraternity has the available resources to cater for both transgender and intersex populations seeking transition.

**Methods:** The author/consultant/sexual and gender minorities worker conducted research online, conversations with transgender and intersex individuals across Africa (Ugandan transman and transwoman, Botswana transwoman, Zambian transman, Kenyan transwoman and transman) as well as her own experiences as a queer transwoman.

**Findings:** It was clear that in many African countries, there are no specific laws or policies governing transition and gender affirming therapies. Many respondents who had undergone some form of surgery admitted to having done so via private institutions and some even reported having to travel to safer countries to do so (e.g., a Ugandan transman travelled to Kenya to have his top-surgery). Many said that they access hormones through chemists ‘over the counter’ which is not allowed by the laws of these countries.

**Conclusions:** Transgender and intersex organisations spread across Africa must continue pushing for recognition of gender dysphoria and intersex conditions in legal and medical policies and laws so as to have their needs met in a proper and legal way. A lot of research is required in the field of health needs for transgender and intersex populations in Africa.

*Neo S. Musangi*

### **Trans(ag)gression: Experiences of public space for trans\*, intersex and gender non-conforming persons in Kenya**

Sexual and gender minorities continue to face hostility and violence in Kenya. These violations include, but are indeed not limited to: verbal abuse, ridicule, physical assault, exhortation, rape, street harassment, murder and rejection. While these forms of abuse definitely seem to affect individuals across the umbrella acronym LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex community), this paper explores the very specific experiences of Transgender, Intersex and Gender Non-Conforming persons in

an attempt to understand how cisgender privilege continues to mark particular bodies not only as a transgression of what is permissible but also as a dangerous aggression within public space. While focusing on the experiences of members of the Nairobi-based ITGNC organization, Jinsiangu, this paper seeks to explore the varied ways through which these individuals experience public space especially in Nairobi. Through interviews with at least ten members of this organization, the paper shows that while ITGNC individuals tend to experience heightened internal dysphoria especially in public restrooms, their experiences of restrooms are also complicated by the responses they are likely to get from cisgender and supposedly-heterosexual persons with whom ITGNC individuals often find themselves in these same spaces. Central to this inquiry is the supposition that pre-surgery and sometimes pre-hormonal trans\* individuals as well as Intersex and Gender Non-conforming individuals in Kenya are at a higher risk of being evicted from public facilities, being undressed by members of the public and being accused of fraud than most cisgender members of the LGBTI community. This paper is an invitation to rethink dominant masculinities and femininities in a way that enables an African Feminist reading of gender binaries as in the service of patriarchal subjugation.

*Basile Ndjio*

### **Kill them before they grow: Homosexuality and the state violence in contemporary Cameroon**

Background: In Cameroon, the nativist vision of sexuality has led to the (re) construction of racializing sexual typologies which define Cameroonians as fundamentally and naturally heterosexuals. As a result of this conception of bodily pleasures, men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women are seen as a threat to the very foundation of the nation's moral and social order. They are also viewed as potential destroyers of all that is considered or imagined as the African way of life (Ndjio 2012:606-31).

Research aims: This research aims to answer two main questions: (1) Why have the postcolonial political elites in Cameroon dedicated themselves since 1972 to 'discipline and punish' sexual inverts, notably LGBTI people? (2) What are the different procedures deployed by the representative of the state power in Cameroon to deal with unconventional eroticism?

Methods: This study is essentially based on observational work and intensive field research conducted in the LGBTI milieu between 2008 and 2010, as well as in different state courts of Douala and Yaounde where we followed a number of trials for homosexual offenses.

Findings: Four strategic devices mark the sexual policy of the postcolonial Cameroonian state: (1) the regime of secrecy and hypocritical silence about LGBTI people; (2) the age of suspicion and mistrust of gay people; (3) the age of criminalisation and juridicalization of LGBTI people symbolized by the enactment of various anti-homosexual laws by 1972; (4) the age of homophobic violence and anti-gay campaigns after 2005.

Conclusion: Since 1972, both administrative and juridical authorities in Cameroon have been categorizing, naming, stigmatizing, indicting and prosecuting people branded as gays or lesbians. Yet local LGBTI people have been very creative in devising various tactics enabling them to evade state's surveillance and repressive sexual policy.

*Humphrey M. Ndondo, Sian Maseko, Samantha Ndlovu, Mojalifa Mokoete, & Nombulelo Madonko*

### **A needs assessment study of LBT women: Sexual orientation, gender identity, health seeking behaviours, and perceived access to HIV services in Zimbabwe**

Background: While it has been documented that the HIV epidemic in Zimbabwe is pronounced among heterosexual populations, it is also known that lesbian, bisexual and intersex (LBT) women are not

immune to HIV/AIDS. Several studies about same-sex sexuality and HIV/AIDS in Africa with special focus on men who have sex with men have been published but studies on HIV/AIDS among LBT women still lag behind. This study reports results of a quantitative survey conducted with LBT women in Zimbabwe.

Methods: An analytic cross sectional study was conducted in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. LBT women identified using responded driven sampling methods were interviewed by their trained peers using a pre-tested questionnaire. Epi-Info™ was used to generate frequencies and measures of central tendency and spread.

Results: 82 LBT women were interviewed. The majority, 98% of women were black and identified their sexual orientation as lesbian 68%, bisexual 15% and woman loving women 17%. The median age of respondents was 23 years. 75% of respondents perceived LBT women to be at a lesser risk of HIV infection than their heterosexual counterparts. 39% of respondents had been tested for HIV in the preceding 3 months. Only 28% of LBT women that had ever been tested for HIV disclosed their sexual orientation during voluntary counselling and testing. 65% of LBT women worried that they may be ridiculed by health workers upon seeking HIV and STI screening services. Transactional sex was reported to be very low with only 9% of LBT women having ever received money and/or goods in exchange for sex.

Conclusions: Addressing the research gap in HIV/AIDS among LBT women should be prioritized by the government of Zimbabwe. Health services should be tailored to be accessible to LBT women so as to improve health seeking behaviours in this sub population.

*Stella Nyanzi*

### **Queer African scholarship: Queering African modes of knowing, Africanizing queer frames of thinking**

Powerful African men (including presidents, religious clerics, cultural leaders, and public media workers) resound across the continent with proclamations of the un-Africanness of homosexuality. This rhetoric diffuses into public policies, national programmes, legal reforms, service delivery and everyday practices. The invisibilisation of African homosexuals is apparent within African knowledge generated by African scholars living, studying and teaching in Africa. As politicians parrot that queer sexualities and alternative genders are un-African, many scholars reiterate that queer theory belongs to post-structural and post-modern Westerners. Queer African scholarship/African queer knowledge is side-lined as an anomaly. This paper interrogates essentialism of African bodies as rigidly composed of only masculine men and feminine women, and homogenization of African sexual relations as innately heterosexual in nature. By juxtaposing the queer and the African, I destabilize the notions that queer studies is antithetical to African scholarship, and queer scholars are conduits of recolonizing Africans into decadent Western (im)moralities. I discuss possible aesthetics of queer African scholarship(s). Knowledge can liberate or oppress: For Queer African scholarship to be liberatory and radical, it must revolutionize and decolonize the queer African movement so that local activism is relevant to the needs and realities of same-sex loving individuals and communities living at the grassroots. It must yield the conscious generation of a radical anti-colonial framework that questions the genesis of ideas, history of political consciousness, the historicity of queer concepts appropriated, and the authorial authority of those who speak, think and act on behalf of everyday queer folk in Africa.

*Akinyi M. Ocholla, Sidra Zaidi, & Pauline Abuor*

### **The status of Kenyan women who have sex with women**

Background: Criminalisation of consensual same-sex sexual conduct has provided legal justification for egregious human rights abuses against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people in Kenya.

Almost no studies are available on the sexual, reproductive, and mental health, economic status, and experiences with discrimination and violence of Kenyan women who have sex with women (WSW).

Methods: (1) Desk research; (2) Dissemination of 300 surveys to WSW living in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu; (3) Dissemination of 23 questionnaires to health care providers in Kisumu and Nairobi.

Findings: *Demographics*: Most WSW respondents were aged 18-29 and earned less than 10,000 Kenyan shillings per month. *Sexual and reproductive health*: Most women did not disclose their sexualities to their physicians. However, almost all surveyed health care providers expressed positive interest in WSW patients. WSW in Kenya often have both male and female sexual partners. Very few WSW reported using safety mechanisms with female partners, although a majority said they used condoms with male partners. Despite this, more than 10% of WSW in Kisumu and Mombasa were HIV-positive, higher than the national average of HIV prevalence in adult women. *Mental health*: A majority of WSW in Kenya indicated feelings of depression; many attributed depression to their sexual orientation(s). *Discrimination and violence*: Several WSW detailed their experiences with family discrimination/abuse. Many WSW reported school expulsion or job dismissal due to their sexual orientation(s). Moreover, a large number had experienced discrimination, threats and/or violence. Almost none reported threats, abuse or violence to the police or any authority.

Conclusion: Kenya's government must address its track record of violations against WSW by first decriminalising its anti-sodomy laws. Criminalisation creates an environment that allows state and non-state actors to persecute WSW with impunity. Failure to decriminalise same-sex sexual conduct violates Kenyan constitutional law and international human rights law.

*Kehinde O. Okanlawon*

### **An exploratory study of LGBT discrimination in the work place in Nigeria. How does homophobia play out and affect LGBT at work?**

Homophobia and social oppression are huge challenges confronting LGBT in the workplace in the highly patriarchal, conservative and religious country, Nigeria, where laws also criminalize homosexual acts. Yet, there is absence of research on homophobia in the workplace in Nigeria and its effects on LGBT. Media reports; reports by LGBT to NGOs; and conversations within the LGBT community reveal that this is a serious problem, yet, this issue has been neglected. This paper therefore seeks to fill this gap. Snow-ball sampling was utilized in recruiting participants. In-depth interviews were conducted with 17 LGBT in cities around Nigeria. Informed consent was sought and interviews were tape recorded after which they were analysed thematically. Pseudo names were used to protect respondents' identities. Respondents were given chocolates brought from Netherlands, some were given airtime on their phones and their transportation fare was reimbursed. Participants' experiences were diverse, from being teased, bullied and ostracised due to suspicion of homosexuality, stigmatized and unnecessarily interrogated about their sexuality, to being ridiculed by religious and homophobic colleagues and customers, fired or choosing constructive discharge. For some, experiencing homophobia and leaving a job was instrumental to making career progress and getting better jobs. Many remained working in abusive working environments since they had no other job opportunity. Some self-employed LGBT lost customers and staff. Almost all participants didn't seek legal redress after facing violations due to financial challenge to pay legal costs, probable delay of justice, fear of stigma and losing a case due to state-sponsored homophobia. Findings reveal the need to provide labour rights education for LGBT, encourage reporting of LGBT-related labour rights violation at work, partnering with LGBT-friendly lawyers who can help defend LGBT's constitutional rights and providing sexual rights education to educate colleagues in the workplace about LGBT rights to promote tolerance for LGBT.

*Lame C. Olebile*

## **Strategies and realities: Exploring sexual rights health funding and its implications**

Organizations working on sexual orientation and gender identity issues have been forced to miss several steps in advocacy and community sensitization on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-diverse) issues in order to incorporate a worldwide shift towards using HIV/AIDS as a strategy in negotiating the inclusion of sexual minorities in health care policies and subsequently in broader human rights issues. This has led to many LGBT organizations and LGBT-friendly governments overlooking the fundamental, social and legal environment and structural adjustments that enable these organizations to continue to implement their work and achieve rights for LGBT. And further, this has created a negative image of sexual minorities as only sexual beings and thereby generating more homophobia towards these communities. This trend is aggravated by the increase in HIV and AIDS funding directed towards MSM (men who have sex with men). Findings from a desk research on donor preferences and LGBT organizations programming have indicated that this approach is not only harmful to the development of a society's perspectives on LGBT and their sexuality but it goes further to dismiss the necessary developmental steps that any human rights campaign would aim to achieve. It is imperative that the societal, structural and political impediments to the inclusion of LGBT be tackled as a first step to ensuring not only sexual health rights but also civil, social and political rights. This has implications for funding directions as well as inter-governmental conversations and priorities. This is a recommendation for a comprehensive approach to LGBT advocacy and human rights achievements which starts with a focus on creating a legally, societal and structurally enabling environment to facilitate advocacy.

*Nomancotsho Pakade*

## **The power of belief: Intersections between cultural and religious beliefs and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, and gender-variant women**

In South Africa, like other countries in the region, social and political leaders espouse a hateful rhetoric that positions homosexuality as un-African, amoral and ungodly. These dominant narratives contribute to prejudice against same-sex attracted and gender-nonconforming people by fostering hostile social contexts that condone violence and oppression. This paper critically engages with the relationship between cultural and religious beliefs – that is, beliefs that are discursively constructed, reinforced and naturalised – and the ways in which discrimination is experienced within particular communities. This research is located within an on-going Art for Advocacy project that creates a space for participants to reflect on their experiences through visual art (body maps, drawings, silk-screening, etc.) and participatory methods (role-play, group discussions, etc.). The applied multi-method approach also includes in-depth interviews – to date, eighteen out of thirty-six participants have been interviewed. The research focuses on three communities – Alexander (Gauteng), East London (Eastern Cape) and Ermelo (Mpumalanga) – and aims to capture the experiences of black working-class lesbian, bisexual and gender-variant women. The women category will be used in this paper to explore how sexual orientation and gender identity makes women vulnerable in very specific ways. The paper will also explore structural oppressions that play out within certain institutional contexts; in many cases, institutions that are meant to protect and advocate for the rights and freedom of black working-class lesbian, bisexual and gender-variant women in fact perpetuate discrimination and exclusion. As well as examining specific experiences of discrimination, this paper will link such oppressions to broader cultural and religious beliefs.

*Sekoetlane J. Phamodi*

## **Correcting 'corrective rape' discourse - reviewing normative media narratives of sexual violence against gender non-conforming women**

The term 'corrective rape' has gained particular prominence in the South African media and social imaginary as a normative framing concept signifying the incidence of sexual violence against gender non-conforming women. Despite its normative deployment and exchange by and through the media in an endeavour to draw public attention to this violence, little has been done in the way of interrogating the term, the media frames used to situate it or their adequacy in explaining sexual violence against gender non-conforming women. This paper seeks to locate the emergence of the term 'corrective rape' and construct an etymology of its shifting meanings in contemporary public discourse. Further, through a critical content analysis of media reports covering incidents of 'corrective rape' in the Mail and Guardian and City Press in the period 2007 – 2011, this paper demonstrates that the term not only constructs in the social imaginary a new and distinct phenomenon of sexual violence removed from the context within which sexual violence occurs, but also reproduces a range of rape myths and stereotypes about both victims and perpetrators along racially and hetero-patriarchally articulated lines. This paper calls for a critical review of 'corrective rape' discourse and argues that violence against gender non-conforming women be situated within an understanding of homophobia, sexism and racism as interlocking systems of oppression which operate together to control and police women's bodies, through violence and terror.

*Graeme C. Reid*

### **'Traditional values': Code for homophobia**

'Traditional values' has emerged as a dominant discourse for those opposing the rights of LGBT people: manifest at the level of the nation-state, as well as in regional and international fora. At a country level, 'traditional values' are often evoked to bolster nationalist sentiments and oppose the encroachment of so-called 'foreign values'. In this way 'traditional values' are used as a way of excluding people from rights claims based on sexual orientation or gender identity. But it goes further than that: by attempting to exclude LGBT people from the terrain of 'culture' and 'tradition' it also serves to place them outside the ambit of humanity. 'Homosexuality', in this rhetoric, becomes a question of morality not rights. This has particular resonance in sub-Saharan Africa where claims to a timeless, unchanging tradition is one of the ways that have been used to push back against women's rights and to dismiss LGBT rights claims as foreign and un-African, an import from the West. At an international level, Russia has become the champion of an attempt to introduce 'traditional values' language at the UN Human Rights Council. These debates around traditional values at local, regional and global levels go to the heart of contemporary contestations around LGBT rights claims. This paper will analyse the language of 'traditional values' as it has been used recently at the UNHRC, as well as the rhetoric of 'tradition' evoked in many parts of the world in opposition to LGBT rights. It will also look at some of the ways in which LGBT activists have developed counter-narratives to this exclusionary discourse.

*Finn Reygan, T. Msibi, C. Hemson, & C. Potgieter*

### **Combating homophobia in schools through teacher education in South Africa**

Emerging research indicates that homophobia remains widespread in South Africa. The violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in general in South Africa appears to be mirrored in the discrimination faced by sexual and gender minority learners in schools. However, while school based homophobia is widespread, teachers and school managers are often ill prepared to challenge this homophobia and to teach in an affirming way about LGBTI identities. Therefore a project, funded by the US Government, developed a training module and resource materials for pre-service and in-service teachers on how best to challenge homophobia and teach about LGBTI identities in South African schools. The training was grounded in social justice, anti-oppressive pedagogy



and employed participatory methodologies. Approximately 800 pre-service and in-service teachers participated in the module. Data drawn from participant programme evaluations suggests that the majority of participants found the training useful for their teaching practice, would recommend the workshop to their colleagues and would be interested in future training in the area. Participants also reported that they found the following particularly useful: the presentation on research and theory; the role of language use in relation to sexuality and gender; the video on the experiences of sexual and gender minority learners; class discussions around sexuality and gender; and role plays on ways to challenge homophobia. The positive responses from this module have several implications for teacher education, not least the need to proceed beyond fear by equipping teachers with appropriate professional skills to address homophobia as it arises in the classroom. Such skilling needs to be conducted by appropriately trained individuals, able to address both resistance and misunderstandings as they arise in the teaching process.

*Agbaje H. Olatunde, Abdulrahman K. Lamid, & Abati A. Samuel*

### **Family rejection of negative health result on lesbian, gay and bisexual people in northern and southern part of Nigeria**

**Objective:** Using a data collection to examine family rejection reaction to sexual and gender orientation among adolescent as predictor of current problem in health for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Nigeria.

**Method:** On the basis of data collection analysis, we develop quantitative scale to assess people of parental and care giver reaction to lesbian, gay and bisexual. Sexual orientation during adolescent stage, our data survey instrument also included measure of 12 negative health indicator including mental health, substance abuse and the sexual risk, the data collection was administered to a sample of 80 southern and northern identified lesbian, gay and bisexual people between age of 19-24 year of age, the participant completed self-report questionnaire by using data collection method.

**Result:** Higher rate of family rejection were significantly associated with poorer health result on the basis of odd ratio. Also lesbian, gay and bisexual people who reported higher level of family rejection during adolescent were 9.6 time more likely report having attended suicide, also 6.3 time likely to report high level of depression 4.6 time more likely to use illegal drug and 2.8 time more likely to report having engage in unprotected sexual intercourse also compare from family that report no or low level of family that reported low level of family rejection. The northern men reported the highest number of negative family reaction to their sexual orientation in adolescent.

**Conclusion:** The study was clear link between specific parental and caregiver rejecting behaviour and negative health problem in lesbian, gay and bisexual people provided who sure this population should assess and help educate family about impact of rejecting behaviour and refined family for counselling and support can help making a critical difference in helping decrease risk and increasing well-being for lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Nigeria.

*Elizabeth Shoyemi, Babatunde Ahonsi, Sylvia Adebajo, & Olusegun Sangowawa*

### **Sexual risk perception and HIV vulnerability: Experiences of men engaged in transactional sex with other men in urban Nigeria**

**Background:** In Nigeria issues surrounding risky sexual behaviours, social stigma and denial of male homosexual behaviour have resulted in HIV prevalence rates among men who have sex with men (MSM). The HIV Integrated Biological Behavioural Surveillance Survey (IBBSS) conducted in Nigeria estimated HIV prevalence to be three times higher among MSM than the national adult prevalence.

Methods: Qualitative research consisting of two focus group discussions with 8 respondents and in-depth interviews with 21 respondents was conducted in Kano and Lagos. Participants who were men who 'sold' sex to other men or worked as intermediaries and some who paid for sex were drawn from personal networks and snowball sampling method.

Findings: All participants believe they can transmit HIV from their sexual partners. The majority of the participants believe that anal sex is riskier than vaginal sex. In Kano, the belief that sex between men carried no risk of HIV transmission (or a small risk relative to heterosexual sex) was pervasive. Male sex workers who play insertive roles do not see themselves being at risk, receptive partners do not see themselves purchasing condoms as roles played by partners are different during anal sex. "...Especially if the person can go like one hour with me, I will offer myself raw" (Lagos interview respondent).

Conclusion: The existing misconceptions and clandestine nature of male sex workers makes the adoption of safer sex practices more difficult; the gender role assignments classifying either as 'active (i.e. top)' and 'passive (i.e. bottom)' also interferes with the negotiation between male partners regarding condom use. Implementing targeted behavioural interventions to emphasize sexual health, risk reduction, promote safer sexual practices with all sexual partners will go a long way in reducing HIV spread.

*Bheki N. Sithole*

### **HIV prevention needs for men who have sex with men in Swaziland**

Background: Swaziland bears the burden of the highest prevalence in the world, 26%, for the adult population, but interventions and research towards men who have sex with men (MSM) are limited. The study explored the HIV prevention needs of MSM in Swaziland.

Methods: In exploring the prevention needs of MSMS, a mixed-method of qualitative and quantitative design was used to collect data from 50 men, who reported to have sex with other men: 35 for the quantitative and 15 for the qualitative research. All participants were selected through snowball sampling method. In addition, six key informants (services providers) were engaged in a qualitative research.

Results: Of the 35 MSM in the quantitative research, only 13% had disclosed their sexual orientation to a healthcare worker or family member. Condom use was not common with a casual sexual partner. More than 25% were not involved in condom-use decision-making. 89% of the sample knew their HIV status and 77% reported to prefer NGOs and private facilities for HTC. Only 25% reported to have done couple-based HTC with male partners. Acceptability of PrEP and Rectal Microbicides was high with 76% stating they would uptake them. Qualitative research found that perceived and experienced stigma was common and often led to alcohol abuse which led in casual unprotected sex. Multiple concurrent partners and frequent short-term sexual relationships were common. MSM suggested that there should be strengthening of peer educators; a safe space should be provided; behavioural change messages provided; public awareness on MSM needs increased; public health facilities improved from being hetero-normative.

Conclusions: There was limited health services provided to MSM. There was a gap between the MSM's HIV prevention needs and the current services provided. MSM themselves have recommendations on how their prevention needs could be met.

*Leigh Ann van der Merwe and Barbra W. Muruga*

### **Policing gender: Perspectives of African transgender women in the feminist movement; the 1 in 9 case**

S.H.E, social, health and empowerment feminist collective of transgender and intersex women was engendered from a need to bring transgender and intersex identified women's issues into the feminist perspective. This has been no easy task with mainstream women's groups appearing to police gender and feminism. There has been a sense of exclusivity from feminist groups about the qualification of '*who is woman*' and '*who can be feminist*'! There has long been tension between feminist activists such as Janice Raymond, Sheila Jeffreys and Mary Daly, and transgender feminist activists like Julia Serano, Raewynn Connell and Emi Koyama. This is only the international tip of the iceberg forming a small part of a much broader, hostile context displayed between feminist and transgender female activists. S.H.E has undertaken to address this context on the African continent. This presentation will present one of the few documented cases illustrating the rampant transphobia in women's movements on the African continent: the case of exclusion by the 1 in 9 campaign.

The presentation seeks to create a dialogue with the audience of their understanding of feminism to illustrate how those not typically female born or do not conform to female/women and/or feminist behaviour are excluded from feminist discourse. Further, it is about raising a critical dialogue to the question of what is femininity, who is woman and who is female, and who qualifies the label, feminist? An illustration of how feminist and women's movements have long been policing gender and in so doing, perpetuating the same patriarchal values they have been fighting for years and a discussion of the feminist movement's tendency to exclude sex workers from feminist discourse and looking at what it means to exclude these identities from feminist conversation. Finally, the presentation will present a model for engagement of alternative identities in feminist conversations.