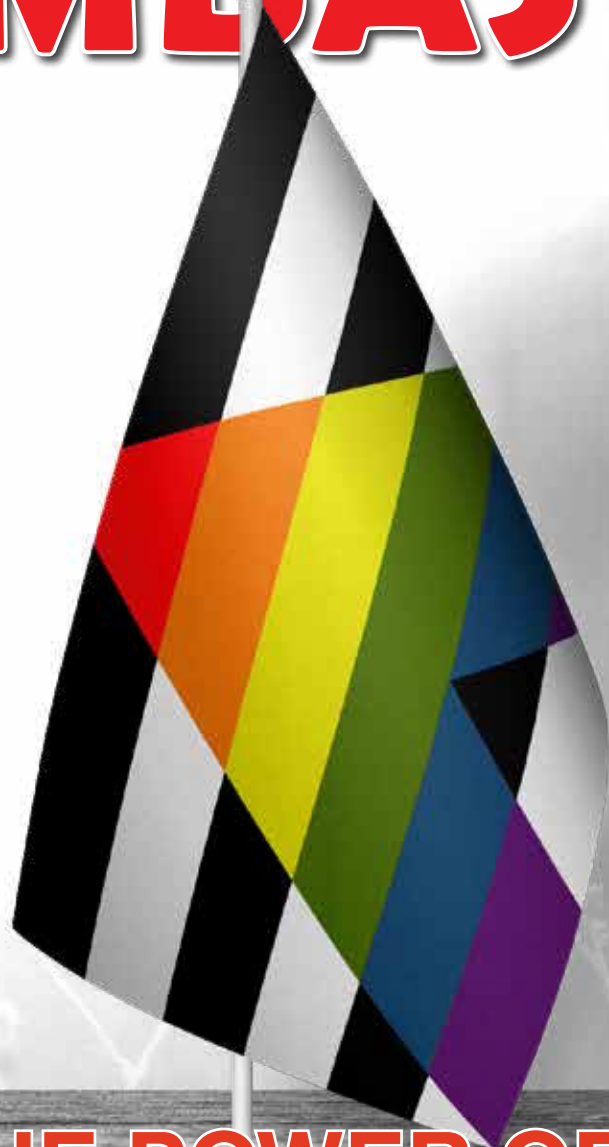


# BOMBASTIC

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## THE POWER OF **ALLYSHIP**

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH WINNIE BYANYIMA,  
NICHOLAS OPIYO AND OTHER STRONG ALLY  
VOICES**

**OUR VOICES, OUR STORIES, OUR LIVES**

# FOREWORD



**Kasha Jacqueline  
Nabagesera**

There is at least  
one thing worse  
than fighting with  
allies, and that is to  
fight without them.

- Winston Churchill

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Greetings our dear readers,

I greet you all in your different capacities and protocol. Mbalamusizza nnyo mwenna mu bitibwa byammwe.

20 years ago, we were young and full of ideas- we thought finding ourselves was enough for us to fight, defend and protect our rights and freedoms. This turned out not to be the case. I discovered that the journey we had embarked on needed more than just fellow community members.

Being new to the NGO craze, I really didn't understand how they operated- something I am still trying to learn to this day. My peers and I had, by way of joining activism, become a part of this world and we quickly had to figure out how to move our minority fight forward. We needed to find allies that were willing to stand up and fight for us! That was the only way our fight for equality was going to go mainstream in the human rights space.

We didn't know where to start, neither were we well prepared for what lay ahead. Once, while speaking to a commissioner at Uganda Human Rights Commission, he looked us straight in the eye and said, "Maybe because you are ugly that's why you cannot find boyfriends, I can give you one of my sons so that you stop this nonsense." This is just one of many dehumanizing incidents that followed.

In 2007 when I joined the feminist movement, some women packed their bags and left a workshop we were attending because they couldn't stand being in the presence of a lesbian woman; to them I was less of a woman. I cannot write here, how many of such situations I have had to deal with over the years!

Today, I am very proud to say that our efforts were not in vain; the ally community has grown tremendously. And with these warriors by our side, we are moving in a promising direction with wider and firmer strides.

In this particular edition, you will get to see the journeys that many allies have trodden. For some, it was a question of humanity, for others it was an experience that changed their stand and for some, it was a journey of unlearning and relearning. Every single story has its uniqueness but the one thing that stands out, the voices herein agree that once you have made an effort to first and foremost look at LGBTIQ persons as deserving humans, the rest quickly falls in place.

I am eternally grateful to all our sponsors, volunteers and my KTMG team that worked through the pandemic to produce this edition! I cannot put into words how grateful we are to the people that shared their stories with us and continue to hold our hands through this journey that is life, history will remember you and the community celebrates you.

Please visit our website and leave a comment, subscribe and also give a generous donation which helps us in running our day to day work.

# JOANINE NANYANGE IS ON A MISSION TO BETTER THE LIVES OF LGBT UGANDANS

**KT: Who is Joanine Nanyange?**

**JN:** I am a black African feminist. A Muganda – Munyankore – Mutooro. I was born some decades ago in Kampala, within the colonial borders of Uganda. I am currently a human rights activist, lawyer, researcher, writer and consultant. The story of my childhood is long and complex, one I tell very rarely and selectively. The little I can say now is that like many of us, my childhood is a period I survived. A time I need to heal from and sort through. It was not all bad to be honest, but it is not a time of my life I look back at very pleasantly.

The story of my education is interesting, as all the schools I attended for my primary education do not exist anymore, except one. But I promise they really did exist. I went to Rwamuhigi C/U Primary School for my Primary One (I do not remember studying pre-primary. I am also told that I did a stint at Rukanja Primary School but I have no recollection of that). I then went to St. Joseph Primary School in Kawempe for Primary Two to part of my Primary Six. I completed my Primary Six at St. Expedict in Kawempe, before joining Zion Children's Centre, Maganjo for my Primary Seven. I did my 'O' Level at Mugwanya Summit College in Kyengera, and my 'A' Level at St. Augustine's College, Wakiso and

Nakasero Secondary School. I then joined the Makerere University School of Law for my undergraduate degree, and finally the Law Development Centre in Kampala for my Post-Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice.

**KT: Growing up, had you ever thought about sexuality and the differences in sexual orientation and/ or gender identity created in society? What were your thoughts or feelings to people that identified differently from what we've always perceived as right or normal?**

**JN:** As I recall, I started hearing and thinking about sexuality in my late teenage years. I was almost finishing High School when the Anti-Homosexuality Bill was tabled in Parliament. It caused quite the wave of discussion and talk and I think that was the first time I heard people talking about homosexuality. I grew up in settings and with people that normalized cis-heterosexuality so much that I do not remember ever hearing about homosexuality as common parlance, let alone as a sexual orientation. When I did finally hear about it, it was within the context of debate and argument: whether the Anti-Homosexuality Bill was justified or not. I, of course, did not know what the



Bill said, except that it was to throw homosexuals in prison and kill some of them.

I do not remember the exact moment of my understanding of what homosexuality means and what I felt and/or thought about it. I do not remember whether I was shocked or indifferent. What I do remember though is that after understanding what it meant, I was not sure why it was causing such a fuss, to the point of a law being debated to throw people in prison or kill them. I just remember thinking 'why is everyone so bothered that people are having sex with each other? Is that not what everyone is doing?' Sex was not new to me at that time so in and of itself, it was not a strange



thing. I just wanted to know, however, why this particular brand of sex seemed strange and problematic to people. Of course, I now know better than to ask such de-politicized questions but at the time, there was no one to sensibly have such a discussion with. Everyone I knew was in support of the Bill. Thankfully, I soon joined the Law School at Makerere University and I met teachers like Dr. Busingye Kabumba and Prof. Oloka Onyango in my First Year Constitutional Law classes. They encouraged debate around issues of sexuality and this prompted me to read more and learn more. That was the starting point for me, and I am still on that journey of learning, un-learning and discovery.

I similarly do not remember the exact moment I first met a person who identifies as Queer, even though I am certain it happened when I was already at University and should have been old enough to remember. It must have been quite unremarkable for me to meet them, so much so that I do not remember. This kind of indifference could mean different things to different people, but speaking for myself, I wish I could have done a better job at remembering them and that moment!

**KT: How did you end up working with LGBTIQ persons?**

**JN:** At Law School, I took a Course in my Third Year called Clinical Legal Education. It is offered and managed by the Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC). As part of the Clinic and University requirements, students in their semi-final year

do internships. The common practice is that students each identify places to do their internships and apply there on their own, with a support letter from the University. For PILAC students however, at least in our time, the Clinic would identify particular organizations that centered the public interest and social justice values the Clinic sought to inculcate in their students, and they would present those organizations to us, along with the organization profiles, and we would choose where to go. I deliberately chose to go to Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), because of their work as a Non-Governmental Organization running the first (and at the time only) specialized legal aid clinic for LGBTIQ persons in Uganda. I did my internship there and stayed long after the internship was done. That is how I started and I have never looked back.

**KT: Why did you choose this route in your career?**

**JN:** At the beginning, my biggest driving force was that people were being unnecessarily hurt, and someone needed to do the job of advocating for them and their humanity. The narrative and hatred against LGBTIQ persons was simply overwhelming and for the love of me I still could not understand why. Considering that not many people could do that kind of work, I felt duty bound to. Someone has to do the work. As I grew further in my activism and subsequently my feminism, I realized that the problem was much larger and more complex than I thought. You learn about the political and power dynamics of queerphobia, and the systemic and structural nature

of it, and there is just no way you cannot advocate against it. I also discovered and continue to discover things about myself that make this work pertinent. So, for me this is no longer a 'route in my career'. It is my politics. It is my religion. It is my life. I am just privileged that the labor I invest in it is also paid for, so I get to do it full time.

**KT: How did you come to a place of complete acceptance and respect for LGBTIQ persons?**

**JN:** To be honest I do not remember being in a place where I did not 'completely accept' and respect LGBTIQ persons. From what I state above, the place I was in before, was a place of ignorance, misunderstanding and indifference. The place I am at right now is continued learning, un-learning and discovery. It is a continuum. A journey. And it started, largely, in my first year of Law School. At the risk of sounding dismissive, I think I have always 'accepted' and respected LGBTIQ persons, from the time I encountered the concept of sexual diversity. I just needed more learning, experience and feminism to turn my initial naivety into a sophisticated understanding of sexuality and gender politics. So, when I think, act or speak about gender and sexuality now, it is from a point of knowledge and understanding, not from a point of intuition and gut reaction.

How I have come to this place is largely through humility: humility that I do not know and I need to learn from those who know. And those who know are not our Bible wielding pastors or

politicians looking for political capital. It is not our value imposing parents or judgmental friends and so-called elders. It is Queer people. It is Feminists. It is Queer Feminists. I listen to them. I read and learn from them. It is humility that will remind you that people's sexualities and genders are not ideas for you to debate and score points; they are lives for people to live. Humility will teach you to de-center yourself, your intentions and opinions, and instead center the impact of those things and people's experience of you, your intentions and opinions. And I am not talking about humility in the oppressive sense in which we usually use it, I am talking about humility that is not laden with the trappings of privileges and power. The humility that reminds you that thinking that it is up to you to 'accept' and 'respect' LGBTIQ persons, that it is even a choice that should be left to you to make is simply unacceptable. That is a good place to start.

**KT: Have you ever experienced incidents of stigma or discrimination as an ally that supports or works with the LGBT+ community?**

**JN:** I will answer this question not as an ally, but rather as someone who has worked and continues to work with allies – institutions – of the LGBTIQ community. Yes, I have faced incidents of stigma and discrimination in my work, including brutal beatings from the Police and arrests. There is also the blatant stigma from friends, families and colleagues, and then the micro-aggressions. All these are prevalent and they do take their toll. Some are easier to deal with and navigate than others. Sometimes, many times, I have made – and I know

*I think I  
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I will continue to make – bad decisions as I try to navigate the violence that comes with doing this work. What I mean here is that sometimes I will choose a person/relationship/comfort/peace/safety/self-preservation/ the easy thing, over what my politics/experience/knowledge/ feminism tell me is right. What I know is that this is the life (like I said it is no longer just work) I chose. So, I do not see myself waking up one day and saying I am quitting it because of the violence it has and continues to expose me to. That is not a choice for me. The choice is in making better choices for myself and the work as I continue on this journey.

**KT: We've seen people that have questioned their perceived sexuality or explores it more while working closely with gender and sexual minorities, have you had moments like these and how did you deal with them?**

**JN:** Yes, I have and I continue to explore myself and who I am. I think this happens because doing this work opens up the world for you and creates so many possibilities. I mentioned before that I grew up in settings and with people that normalize cis-heterosexuality so much that you do not even know that there is living beyond it. In Luganda, we say Omuto

gy'amanyi, enkuba gy'etonnya. Very loosely, it translates into 'it only rains where a child knows'. There is a box we are raised in, where what we know is what we know. We cannot conceive any possibilities beyond that. So, in the case of sexuality, you grow up heterosexual not because it is who you really know yourself to be, but because it is all you know and anything else simply does not exist. Anything else is so impossible your mind cannot even imagine or comprehend it. Then you start doing this work and a world of possibilities presents itself. You start learning that cis-heterosexuality is not what is normal. It is just what is common. You start looking at your past and present sexual identity and experience, to reflect on whether it represents you, REALLY. The revelations will shock, confuse, liberate, astonish or maybe even please you. Or maybe there will be no revelations at all.

So yes, this questioning is bound to happen. And my sincerest hope is that everyone gets the privilege to experience this, so that we can all live as who we authentically are. One of the things I am thankful for, for choosing this work is that freedom and comfort. The freedom and comfort to stop and question. To reflect and discover. To know and experience. How I have dealt with it is by exercising a lot of patience and kindness. I have been gentle and understanding with myself, and I remain very careful about how I show up in spaces. There is a risk of being bruised and misunderstood and I do not think I am ready to brave those. So, I am allowing myself the time and holding I need, and living my truth in a way that feels safe to me.

**KT:** What lessons have you drawn from the LGBTI community in Uganda that have greatly impacted your life choices?

**JN:** Resilience is one that stands out. I do hope and work for a world where no one has to be resilient to survive, but until then, I continue to be inspired and in awe of the resilience of Uganda's LGBTIQ community. Against so many odds, this community refuses to give up on itself. It continues to show up, to exist, to resist, to hope, to be joyful and to simply live. It is incredible. We all have moments when it would honestly make sense to just do the easy thing. And I have many of those moments, especially in this work. But you look at – for example – the Trans\* Women that continue to exist and show up so fiercely in a society as brutal as Uganda, and you realize you just cannot give up or give in. The community has taught me to show up for myself and for what I believe in. To bet on myself and my kind. And this is not a way of romanticizing the struggle. We know how brutal and un-forgiving it is. But the lesson here is to not have the choice to back down, but to simply find ways of surviving the harshness.

**KT:** Why do you think it is difficult for people to accept LGBTI individuals and how can we change this? (Practical steps to break societal beliefs derived from culture religion etc)

**JN:** This is a very complex question with no simple answer(s). People's reasons for non 'acceptance' are very varied: for some it is belief in what their religions teach, for

others it is because sexual diversity is a threat to their power, others will use it for convenience and political/social capital, others have believed homophobic propaganda like Queer people are pedophiles, others simply have not been exposed to anything other than cis-heterosexuality and so they do not think this is even possible, for others it is sheer stupidity etc. The reasons are many, and so are the ways in which this can be changed. Different solutions will work for different people. What I can say is that there is need to address the root causes of these perceptions/values. As varied as they are, their roots are the same: patriarchy. A system that prescribes, among other things, what sexuality and gender should be and look like. The starting point should be to demystify the patriarchy and what it teaches us about the world, life and who we are. This is a herculean task but there is no way around it. Thankfully feminists have extensively taught and theorized about it.

When this is done, the movement can then start tackling the symptomatic problems through which the patriarchy manifests like religion and so-called culture. This can be done by presenting counter narratives in faith circles, political circles, schools, the health system etc. This is already happening and just needs to be scaled up or improved in a way that creates impact. The problem is that the movement is being too unkind to itself. It wants to uproot a system that has been entrenched from as far back as human history can document, in a matter of years. I believe change is actually happening and the movement is just not seeing it. This is either because such change is hard to

see and document, or because the movement is choosing not to see it. And this is not to excuse people's insistence on being queerphobic, it is simply to say that some of the things the movement is doing are working. The movement can try and scale them up, but let it not lose sight of what is working and the chance to learn from it.

Lastly, I also think there is need to revise what the ask is. I think it is unrealistic – and sometimes unnecessary – to ask for work that will make people 'accept' LGBTIQ persons, whatever that means. For now, in my view, what is needed is work to improve the lived experiences of LGBTIQ persons i.e. reduced violence, reduced discrimination, repeal and reform of laws and policies etc. In other words, a Queer person should be able to sit at a bar and enjoy their drink with their partner(s) without being beaten up and/or arrested. It might not necessarily mean that everyone at the bar 'accepts' them, but it would mean that the place is safe enough for them to not be attacked.

**KT:** What do you think the LGBT+ movement can do to better itself?

**JN:** The movement needs to invest in knowledge creation and consumption. A lot of the work being done now is reactionary, intuitional and gut based. We are dealing with an organized and entrenched system, one with high stakes. So many people have so much to lose. The stuff being fought by the movement is taught in schools, in families, every Sunday in churches etc. From when a child is born, this hatred is what they are fed, some inadvertently. The

patriarchy has invested in a bank of information and made it accessible and acceptable. The movement needs to do the same. It is a lot of work, but the system being fought has also put in a lot of work, for millennia. There is therefore need to approach this work with the seriousness and aggressiveness it deserves. There is need to work towards being as ubiquitous, systemic and pervasive as the system being fought is. The movement should do research into why people think the way they do, instead of working with assumptions. Let us invest in practicing evidence based solutions not things we manufacture and think might work, because they sound like good ideas in our heads and team meetings. Let us research. Let us write. Let us read. Let us know what we are talking about and doing, instead of being superficial.

**KT:** As an ally, what do you think should be done to tackle the in-house bickering that is tearing the movement apart?

**JN:** Again, I will answer this not as an ally, but rather as a person working with institutions that are allies. I think 'bickering' is expected in a movement. People are not homogeneous, not even in the LGBTIQ movement. Different clusters of people in the movement will have different needs and demands, because while the root cause of Queer oppression is the same, it is experienced differently. Cis-gendered lesbians do not experience oppression the same way cis-gendered gay men do. Classed lesbians do not experience oppression the same way non-classed lesbians do. The movement needs to acknowledge and honor these

differences. One of the biggest problems that I have seen is the assumption that everyone in the LGBTIQ movement wants the same things. Ultimately the goal is liberation and freedom, but that looks different for each group. So, there is need to go back to the drawing board and talk to each other. There is need to understand the distinct oppression of each group and what each group's aspirations are, and be ready to allow each group to chart their own path. In other words, respect the autonomy and aspirations of each group, but as a movement, agree on a common agenda that brings everyone together.

Audre Lorde teaches us in *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* that difference must not be merely tolerated, but it must also be seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark. That we should not ignore our differences or view them as causes for separation or suspicion but rather as forces for change. Specific to movement building, Lorde tells us that community must not mean a shedding of our differences, or the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist. This is very good guidance for the LGBTIQ movement in Uganda. Most of the 'bickering', in my view, is a result of people failing to organize and build across difference. Instead of celebrating the autonomy of different groups, autonomy is instead viewed as threatening and this has bred suspicion. This perception needs to change.

The movement has also allowed the available scarce resources to cause hatred and unhealthy competition,

forgetting that donors come and go, but comrades in the struggle remain. Lastly, many so-called leaders are replicating oppressive power structures within the movement. They feel entitled and do not want to be held accountable by those they feel are below them on the power ladder. The so-called leaders feel the need to control the movement and any group or person that tries to chart their own path is considered as tearing the movement apart. There is need for self-reflection and for agreeing on what kind of movement is needed and what its manifesto will be.

**KT:** If one day your child came to you and said they were gay or trans, what do you think your acceptance journey would look like?

**JN:** I do not know. If I am ever to have the honor and responsibility of raising a child, my hope is that I will raise them in an environment where they do not feel the need to come to me and tell me they are gay or trans, in a process that has been termed 'coming out'. My hope is that they can simply just be and live, without needing to explain themselves to me. I hope that the only times they come to me on issues of sexuality and gender, it is to ask questions they need answers to and to feel safe. And I hope that when they do come to me with questions, I will have answers. That when they do come to me to feel safe, I will provide the safety they need. And that if I am unable to, I will have the humility to tell them so and request their partnership as we learn together. At this point, I do not know for sure. I can only hope. ■



# NICHOLAS OPIYO: A PASSION FULFILLED



“...oftentimes bullets and bombs would fly over our classrooms and dormitories.

**M**y name is Nicholas Opiyo. My twin sister and I were born on 15th Nov 1980 to Mr. and Mrs. Ochola in Gulu. I come from a very large family - my father had three official wives and more than 30 children and we all lived in Gulu at the height of the civil conflict in northern Uganda.

## **Gunshots, abductions, a rebellious boy in the middle...**

I went to several primary schools because we were moving frequently due to the insecurity caused by the war - many of these schools, sadly, no longer exist today. I started my education at a catholic church school in Amur district where my parents sent me to live with an uncle. At this school, I remember we had to write on the sand floor and we were taught the basics like housework and brushing teeth. My uncle was unfortunately abducted by rebels in 1987 and I had to go back to Gulu town. I joined Prisons Primary School but I didn't stay there long. I was a pretty curious child and one day, I removed a manhole cover because I had always wondered what was inside. Little did I know that it was a septic tank. To make matters worse, I accidentally dropped the cover inside as I tried to put it back and the sewerage stench came

flying out. The kids in the school started chasing me and I ran out of the school. I never told my father why I didn't want to go back but simply said it was a bad school.

I then joined a different school where my dad was a part-time teacher before enrolling in Gulu Public Primary School for Primary Four in 1990. The following year, the first private school in Gulu opened. It was meant to take in kids that had been orphaned by the war. My mother was offered a teaching position and my father was on the management board, so I was enrolled here. When most people think of private schools, we think of the modern international or high-end education facilities of today which are a far cry from the establishment I enrolled at. This was a school for the poor and we were studying in grass-thatched huts. Whenever the wind blew, the dust would swirl and we would have to vacate the classrooms. I finished Primary in 1993 and went to St Joseph's College which was a missionary school. At that time, it was one of the best schools in Northern Uganda although it didn't have the best facilities.

St. Joseph's was one of the biggest schools in Gulu and because of its vast space, it was turned

into a training ground for the army. These were called mobile troops who followed the rebels. Because it hosted the army, it quickly became a target for the rebels, oftentimes bullets and bombs would fly over our classrooms and dormitories. Mortars would land in the school compound and I remember us running for cover on several occasions. Growing up in war was difficult: gunshots, bombs, dead bodies were a daily occurrence.

### Fast-forward to 1996...

Lady fortune knocked at my door when my cousin who was a Member of Parliament brought me to Kampala and enrolled me at Wairaka for my Advanced level education. From there, I joined Uganda Christian University where I did a Bachelor's Degree in Law. I graduate in 2004 and became an advocate in 2005.

Initially, I wanted to be a journalist. Growing up, my father forced us to listen to BBC -picture a village boy listening to Robin White who was then the news anchor and news editor of Focus on Africa. We were supposed to listen to the news daily and recount it to him. Then there was a journalist called Anna who frequented Gulu to report on the war. Seeing her on the streets with her microphone and crew made journalism look fancy. Even though I had a stutter, I was determined to become a journalist. I knew this was a profession that would help me tell my experiences vividly. Eventually, I ended up doing law because, from the very beginning, I was very interested in human rights.

Human rights, always!

During and throughout my years at the university, I focused mainly on advocacy for human rights. Every single year, the university tried to dismiss me. In my first year, I staged a hunger strike because the Dean of Students had misused funds that were meant for sports kits. In my second year, I protested against the policy of dismissing pregnant students yet the boys who were responsible for these pregnancies were left to study with no penalization.

I wrote to the Minister of higher education, the National Council for Higher Education, and the house of Bishops protesting the dismissal of girls from school on the basis of getting pregnant. I led several other protests including one against increment of tuition.

I started my work with the LGBT community because whenever people got arrested, they would call me, and even though they had no money, I would still show up and do my very best. While working with SHRI, Adrian Jjuko was a law student and did internship with us. I supervised him and he wrote a piece about LGBT+ people at the time and the organization wasn't that happy about his choice of topic. When Rwakafuzi handled the Victor Mukasa case, I worked closely with him. That briefly summarizes how I garnered interest in the LGBT issues.

A lot of what I do is based on my past and my childhood. I could have been an angry kid but I channeled that anger into doing whatever I could to help other people. After law school, I got an amazing job offer to do commercial law but that's not

where my interest was. I knew I could only find fulfillment in practicing human rights law.

Most people that I work with have gone through complicated and traumatizing situations so whatever prejudice I have suffered pales in comparison. I have lost several friends and some of my family members

I could have been an angry kid but I channeled that anger into doing what I could do to help other people.

have boldly told me they are ashamed of me and do not want to associate with me because of my work. I have had challenges on social media especially in 2014 when we were working on the Anti-Homosexuality Act. I have been insulted in the worst possible ways and even been threatened. I was ditched from a popular talk show on Radio One because the host did not agree with my views, and I've often been asked to remove my rainbow apparel.

Normally, my response is if you want me anywhere, you take me with all my beliefs and opinions which include safeguarding the rights of LGBT persons.

A passion, fulfilling...

There are fulfilling moments in my line of work. Once I was in a supermarket minding my shopping and a lady came and hugged me. She told me I had saved her son's life. Heartwarming moments like these affirm to me that I'm pursuing my life's calling – to bring joy, justice, and comfort to people in the only way I know how.

One of the most outstanding moments for me, and I believe for the LGBTQI community as well, was winning the case against the Rolling Stone tabloid. This newspaper had outed so many people and on their front page, called for their hanging. Together with several other lawyers, we took on the case and the judge ruled in favour of the community.

The nullification of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) was another big win for us legally and as a community. In that case, the entire community came together, the coalition put in a lot of work, the different embassies that supported us and so many

other partners stepping in showed solidarity that deeply unifies this community. The case also marked a change in tide in the way sexual health matters are discussed, it was a very defining moment.

If there's one thing I have learnt from Uganda's LGBT community, it is courage. I will never be able to fully understand how the members of this community wake up every day to face homophobia but yet they still hold their heads high and refuse to give up on themselves. Their resilience to be a part of the process of change is very humbling and inspiring. ■

## DECODING THE ALLY FLAG

The **Ally flag** is made of combining the heterosexual flag and the LGBTQ Pride Flag. It's a symbol of unity and support towards members of the LGBTQ community.



The Letter A stands for ALLY

The colors of the Pride Flag are seen in the letter A



The Black and White stripes are the heterosexual flag



# WHEN TRAUMA IS PART OF THE PACKAGE

**M**y name is Justine Balya, the third child of my father's four children. My mother is an activist and has done a lot of work around HIV/AIDS since the 1990s. I went to Nalubiro Primary School in Wakiso, Maryhill High School for O'Level, and Kings College Budo for High School. From there, I went to Makerere University School of Law before joining Law Development Centre.

After graduation, I joined Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF). I did not have a lot of knowledge on issues of key populations especially gender and sexual minorities but I kept an open mind, something that helped me grow my passion for what I do. I was willing to learn and from the onset, I chose not to let their differences or who they were attracted to define my opinion of them.

I have experienced my fair share of questions about the work I do. My brother constantly asks why I don't have a problem working with homosexuals and why at 29 I am still unmarried. Lucky for me, I don't get offended that easily, so I have always kept my cool. Friends too, ask if I am queer because of my work, but I've come to realise that not all people who ask are trying to be offensive, some are just curious.

My journey as an ally to Uganda's LGBT

community has seen me provide legal counsel. I've also offered as much support as I humanly and professionally can in cases of security threats. One of the best feelings as a legal practitioner is handling a case and you get to its conclusion with desired outcomes, knowing that someone is safe and their lives are better off. This has been a very rewarding and fruitful journey for me on both personal and career levels.

There's a case that struck a chord in my heart; a woman was fighting for custody of her children. Her ex-husband was using her sexuality to argue that she was unfit to have full custody of their children even though all evidence showed that he was the unfit parent of the two. Winning this case and having a lesbian take full custody of her children within the Ugandan system was such a huge win for me and I believe for the community as well.

One of the things that broke my heart as an ally was watching a transgender girl, Brian Wasswa breathe her last. We had been celebrating our Executive Director's birthday when I received a call informing me that someone had been beaten and left for dead. The next morning, I left for Jinja where I found Brian struggling for her life. We tried everything we could -quickly raised funds for a CT scan and an ambulance to rush her to a better facility but all this was not enough to save her life.

*The mortician showed us the injuries that she had sustained and it was horrifying to say the least. I think this is one of the most traumatizing experiences I've ever gone through in life.*

Her mother was unbothered and kept saying she had been a victim of human rituals.

We decided to rush her to Kampala only to receive a phone call as we were approaching the Jinja bridge that Brian had passed on in the ambulance. This left me very shattered, I had hoped that Brian would pull through and live to see his tormentor get served the justice they deserved.

What was even more frustrating was the fact that besides myself and the HRAPF team, a few community members, and the lady who had taken Brian in after her parents abandoned and threw her out, no one else was even coming forward to provide facts for the case. We then drove to the

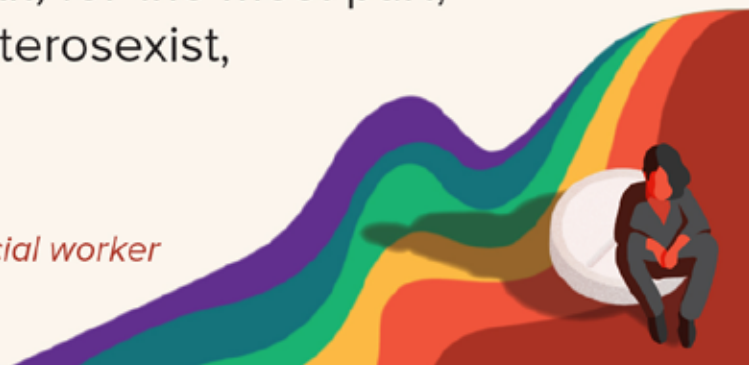
hospital and the doctor asked us to remove the body from the ambulance because apparently, he and his team are not mandated to handle the body. Brian's adoptive mother, myself, and a good Samaritan carried the body onto the stretcher. Inside the mortuary, the mortician showed us the injuries that she had sustained and it was horrifying, to say the least. I think this is one of the most traumatizing experiences I've ever gone through in life.

As far as the lessons that I've learnt from the community go, what stands out the most is just how LGBTI people are willing to go against all odds to sustain themselves and give themselves well-established lives. This is something I have witnessed firsthand with most of the people I have interacted with yet it is very rarely acknowledged. It is widely believed that LGBT persons are lazy yet not many people are willing to give them a chance to prove otherwise. ■

“

The pain associated with the social stigma of being LGBTQ, of living in a culture that, for the most part, is homophobic and heterosexist, is traumatic.”

**- Craig Sloane**  
psychotherapist and clinical social worker



# HETERONORMATIVITY MUST BE SHATTERED FOR A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

**KT:** Briefly tell us about yourself

**TB:** My name is Twasiima Bigirwa, most people know me as Tricia. I am a Ugandan feminist lawyer and organizer currently working with Akina Mama wa Afrika. I was born in 1993, the firstborn of five. I come from a very close-knit family who I completely adore. I had a great childhood. My parents were very deliberate with how they raised us. I remember being introduced to books very early on and always being encouraged to believe that I could be limitless. I went to Little Angels for nursery, Greenhill Academy for primary. I did a short stint in Bweranyangi Girls for a year before moving on to Hillside and eventually Makerere College. I have an LL.B from Makerere University and an LL.M from Georgetown University - Law Center.

**KT:** Growing up, did you ever think about sexuality and the differences in sexual orientation and/ or gender identity created in society? How did you regard people that identified differently from what we've always perceived as right or normal?

**TB:** I don't remember having that awareness until I was much older, in my late teens perhaps, but my consciousness began to take hold in my early twenties. But that's exactly how heteronormativity works - by conditioning our minds to the binary only. It was much later when I became aware of just how deeply conditioned to that I had been. As someone who also grew up in the church, a lot of my understandings about sexual orientation and sexuality in general for the first half of my life was premised on those religious narratives. I was most privileged than most in the sense that I had room to begin to question and unlearn earlier than most people.

**KT:** So, how did you end up working with LGBTIQ persons?

**TB:** Grounding myself in feminism, I would say, opened the door to all the work I do now and to my deep understanding of what kind of freedom and world we must aspire to live in. That world vision



doesn't come full circle without undoing the systemic violence of cis-hetero homophobia and transphobia.

**KT:** Is there a particular incident that led you down this path?

**TB:** That's a really long and interesting story. My mother says she always knew I was destined to be a lawyer, but there was a period in my life just before university where I wasn't too sure law is what I wanted to do. At that time, I was writing for SWAGG the pull-out in New Vision Newspaper, and actively considering a career on TV. The universe aligned I guess, and I got into law school, on government sponsorship and human rights law was the only type of law that I truly gravitated towards. In many ways, I know now that this is exactly what I was meant to be doing so I guess things have a way of working out after all.

**KT:** Please share with us how you came to a place of complete acceptance and respect for LGBTIQ persons

**TB:** Many of us grew up in the same society; patriarchal, homophobic, transphobic. The

**I have to be willing to do the work continually, even when it hurts to hear, even when it is not convenient.**

difference is "when you know better, you do better". I have had to unlearn so many things and so much of how I viewed the world. It is a never-ending journey. I have to be willing to do the work continually, even when it hurts to hear, even when it is not convenient.

**KT:** Have you ever experienced incidents of stigma or discrimination as an ally that supports or works with the LGBT+ community?

**TB:** Nothing compared to the lived realities of LGBT+ people in this country so it isn't even worth mentioning really.

**KT:** We've seen people that have questioned their perceived sexuality or explored it more while working closely with gender and sexual minorities, have you had moments like these and how did you deal with them?

**BT:** I think everyone needs to be able to explore their sexuality and work on coming into their true selves, outside what the binary has dictated. That's why this work is so important. We must continue to undo the institutionalized violences that make it punishable, criminal, and impossible for people's full humanity to be recognized and celebrated.

**KT:** Why do you think it is difficult for people to accept LGBTI individuals and how can we change this?

**TB:** The systemic-ness of oppression makes it so difficult to undo. When you think about how deeply conditioned we are, right from the cartoons you watch as a child; everything is set to normalize binary understandings of sexuality and gender. These are reinforced by all institutions; cultural and religious institutions, the State, the media, etc. How we change it – we resist, continually and loudly. We also teach where we can. We collectively reimagine and work towards a world that is safe and allows us all to thrive.

**KT:** How do you think you'd handle having your child coming out to you as gay or trans?

**BT:** I hope that the work we are doing now will be able to ensure that in the years to come, any child who is gay or trans doesn't have to go through the usually horrific experience of wondering whether their parent will love them for who they are. ■

# "WHY DO YOU WORK WITH THOSE PEOPLE?" THEY ASK!

**W**hy do you work with 'those people'? I can't even count the number of times I have heard this particular question in relation to my job! Everyone seems to think working with an LGBT focused organization brings a lot of cash your way but this couldn't be farther from the truth, at least in my case. I have worked with Kuchu Times for the past six years or so and what I take home at the end of the month can't even cover all my basic needs.

So why do I do what I do and how did I get here?

I will start at the very beginning. I was in senior two and my best friend Angela was in senior five; our close friendship seemed to make everyone uncomfortable but she was the first friend I had that I could truly be myself with. She was later expelled for allegedly having a relationship with another girl from her class. We lost touch for a while and rekindled our friendship when I joined University. One evening she took me out to a karaoke bar and came out to me. I was thrown aback! I went home feeling betrayed and angry and over the next couple of days, I came to the realization that I wasn't mad about her sexuality. If anything, I loved her just the same but I couldn't understand why she hadn't trusted me enough to open up about her feelings then! Yes, selfish of me I know to somehow turn her situation into this dramatic pity party about my feelings of betrayal! I am still thankful that we went through this process because it's what started me on a journey to understand and educate myself about all things LGBT! I read whatever books and articles I could find, I sent Facebook requests to as many queer people as I could identify-it almost felt stalker-ish!

Around this time, the Anti Homosexuality Act was passed into law and I was devastated! I couldn't begin to imagine how someone was a criminal just by being themselves. My now boss, soon said she was looking for someone to help her edit her foreword for a magazine that the community was publishing in retaliation to the bill! I was impressed that they were countering this legislative hatred

and quickly offered to help! A few weeks later, she posted looking for an editor for a community media platform and I knew that was my one opportunity to contribute my two cents to the movement. Just like that, I walked out on my paying job and started volunteering and I'm still here six years later.

While this journey has had its tough moments, some of the lessons I have learnt from the community will stay with me for a lifetime. I am a story teller and believe this is one of the most effective ways to convey a message, so allow me to share the moment I started thinking of this community as a family.

We worked on a cross country project in 2018 where we documented stories from LGBT persons living upcountry. Theirs are the saddest tales; I remember coming back to Kampala and staying up late on many nights wondering how the subjects of our interviews were fairing! Being alienated by family, friends and society and going off to fend for themselves at such incredibly young ages! Going days without food, moving from house to house hoping someone would offer them shelter even if only for a night, offering themselves up for sexual use in exchange for a meager 1000 Uganda

**I could not help but put myself in their shoes. What if my life story hadn't panned out as it has, and I found myself in their situation?**

shillings- these stories tormented me for days and the knowledge that this was their daily reality was heartbreaking! Yet by day, they were so full of life especially in the company of people they could identify with. On most days during the trip, I sat back and watched in amazement as they laughed and danced and simply wondered how they were capable of that level of joy only to go back to the unknown by night. And this isn't the reality for all, but for most, it is all they know!

I could not help but put myself in their shoes. What if my life story hadn't panned out as it has, and I found myself in their situation? What would I have wanted for myself, how would I have wanted my loved ones to react, so many what ifs that still

linger in my head to this day! From this up-close experience, I resolved to offer this community more than just my skill and in the process, I have made what I'm sure will be lifelong friendships.

I have also purposed to educate the people closest to me about LGBT persons, I am intentional about how I am raising my four children because I want them to be loving, compassionate, tolerant and respectful human beings and I will have no bigots in my circle, let alone my home! My husband who initially thought I was insane for taking on this job is now one of the most knowledgeable people on LGBT rights and that is my only goal when it comes to sexual minorities- to change perceptions, one person at a time! ■

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## DR. ADRIAN JJUKO'S JOURNEY FROM BICYCLE MECHANIC TO ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE



*Dr. Adrian Jjuko is the Executive Director of Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF). He is one of the few names that quickly come to one's mind when they think of LGBTI persons and the law in Uganda. We sat down with him, as one of the most consistent and dedicated allies of the community, and he revealed what drives him and some of the key defining moments in his journey as an activist.*

## BACKGROUND

I was born in Masaka and raised by a single mom who unfortunately passed when I was 12 years. My father also dies within a month of mothers passing. After my parents' death, I moved to Hoima where I lived with my uncle. It was a complicated situation with so many issues; I remember frequently witnessing domestic violence. Soon, I started fendng for myself by taking on odd jobs. I hawked tomatoes by the street side and started assisting brick makers for a little pay. By the time I was fourteen, I was a bicycle mechanic living on the streets.

Because of the circumstance, I matured quite early and learnt the value of hard work. Fortunately, I was bright student and through the ups and down, I stayed in school and made it through on bursaries.

## HAD YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A LAWYER?

My mother wanted me to be a doctor but I personally, didn't have a specific dream; I just wanted to go through school, acquire a bachelor's degree and get a well-paying job. During my form six, I had not put law as any course choice but the Director of Studies put Law on my application forms and that's how I ended up doing the course at University.

Although law was never a dream of mine, I had always had a deep sense of injustice around me; I never wanted to see people experience any form of marginalization or injustice. Because of this sense of duty, I knew that whatever I ended

up doing, I would be upholding the rights of the marginalized because I strongly believed in a fair justice system.

Dr. Sylvia Tamale had a strong influence on me, her work and reputation was something I looked up to and going to School of Law where she was a dean confirmed that I was in the right place. With joining law school came the quick lesson that the law was not just about court cases and could also be used to defend and protect the marginalized.

## HOW DID YOU END UP WORKING WITH LGBTI PERSONS?

I never set out to work with LGBTI persons. I was all kind of accidental. We grew up hearing about homosexuals and like most Ugandans, I was unbothered about what this truly meant. I heard never even given it much thought and the first time I actively thought about homosexuality was when I was admitted into a program that Dr. Tamale was coordinating. This sparked my curiosity.

I was later given internship at the Foundation of Human Rights Initiative where they had a few programs centered on sexual and gender minorities. During this same period, I wrote an opinionated piece in the Daily Monitor which basically stated that it was not anyone's place to judge or critic what was going on in the privacy of people's bedrooms as long as they were adults and consent was mutual.

I was still a student, with limited knowledge on homosexuality and had never met even a single gay person but I was accused

**my classmates didn't even want to associate with me because in their opinion, I was writing about and defending homosexuality.**

of being gay and some people approached me via inbox and said I was sale out who was promoting homosexuality.

From the reactions that the article had garnered, I started to question why people felt so strongly and negatively towards LGBTI persons. That is what got me started on the research path! I decided to teach myself everything I could on the subject.

My law dissertation was on homosexuality; we were required to have a maximum of 50 pages but I had to explain to my supervisor that there was no way I could reduce all my research material to a mere 50 pages and eventually I submitted a 150-page dissertation. I contacted a number of LGBTIQ identifying persons during this particular period and the discrimination they were suffering soon became obvious. But what also became even clearer to me was the huge gap in the availability of spaces where LGBTIQ persons could access legal help. I often think of this as my very first involvement in activism.

I had my first taste of fire with LGBTI related issues during a workshop where I was to address the legal aspect of

LGBTI rights in the country. Victor Mukasa, the late David Kato, Dr. Frank Mugisha and a few other activists were also in attendance. As soon as David introduced Victor as a he, the students protested.” We are medical students, someone is born either male or female and you will not tell us about transgender people,” many of them justified their beliefs. The entire meeting got rowdy and we had to run out. I went straight to a car only to realize that the tyres had been deflated. Victor Mukasa handed me 5000UGX and asked me to jump on a motor cycle and head back to my hall of residence.

At the University, my classmates didn’t even want to associate with me because in their opinion, I was writing about and defending homosexuality. All these experiences cemented my passion to create a just world for LGBTI persons.

I put most of the attitude and perceptions that people hold against LGBTI persons to ignorance of the law, which explains why the organization I founded was named Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum, I believe that everyone should be aware of the law and it is the duty of those who already know the law to promote it.

I pitched the idea of the organization to a colleague; we collected money and immediately after University we had it registered. HRAPF as an organization focuses on all forms of injustices towards key populations not just those experienced by LGBTI persons but with the passing of the

Anti-Homosexuality Act into law and with the formation of the coalition, I got actively involved in the efforts towards opposing the bill and soon I was appointed coordinator of the coalition.

### **HAVE YOU FACED ANY KIND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED OFF OF YOUR WORK WITH LGBTIQ PERSONS?**

I have learnt that when you work with the marginalized as closely as I do, you quickly become marginalized yourself. I believe what I face is double stigma because so many people find it strange and are offended by someone who identifies as heterosexual dedicating their life’s work to bettering the life of gender and sexual minorities. I have been working with key populations for over ten years and have now built up my mental muscle that I do not pay the detractors any mind. I keep focused on what we are trying to achieve and that gets me through many of these situations where I personally come face to face with the very injustice that I am fighting against.

### **WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR DEFINING MOMENTS AS AN ALLY?**

There have been many moments that have left me feeling proud of the work that I do but I will share a few that stand out distinctively.

Being appointed as the coordinator of the coalition was a very big deal for me. I was fresh out of University. HRAPH was also such a young organization and balancing the two opened me to a whole new world of professional ethic and commitment

The second moment that comes to mind is when in Canada Ontario, the Speaker announced that they had a visitor from Uganda. He stood up and introduced me and the work I was doing in fighting the legal injustices against LGBTI Ugandans and the entire parliament got up in a standing ovation. It was humbling having the entire Canadian Parliament recognizing not just me as a person and activist but also the work that I was doing back home.

Another day that will forever be etched in my mind is when the anti-homosexuality Act was nullified. We had put in so much work to have the bill repelled and I will never forget the feeling of euphoria as it was declared null and void.

The most recent one was when HRAPF officially opened the doors of its permanent home to our clients. With all the break ins we had suffered in the past, it was so relieving and such a moment of pride as we finally launched HRAPF HOUSE.

### **WHAT LESSONS HAVE YOU DRAWN FROM WORKING UGANDAS LGBTI COMMUNITY?**

I like the mantra that the community so often uses, nothing without us without us, because it is important to recognize that the community is now well aware of not just their rights but their validity as human beings and they will not sit by and wait for others to advocate for them without getting involved. I now view my role as one where I hold the door open and the community walks in. ■

# FROM HOMOPHOBIC TO ADVOCATE:

## Susan's Journey to Tolerance and Acceptance



**M**y name is Susan Atuhura Abwoli, I was born in a village called Tolo in Hoima district. I was however raised in Kabale after my sister, who worked with Kabale Hospital, at the time, stepped in to help cater for my education since my parents couldn't afford to from their meagre income.

While in Kabale, I went through a series of schools and had the typical big-headed and adventurous teenage escapades. I was caught up in several disciplinary issues including escaping school, alcoholism, and general bad behaviour typical of teenagers when they taste a bit of freedom.

After secondary school, I went to Uganda Christian University, Mukono where I did a Bachelors in Business Administration.

Upon graduation, I worked with a microfinance company for three years, then I joined Effort for Safety Environment before settling with Spectrum where I

am now handling HIV and LGBT-based work. The transition to Spectrum was a shock to me because I had never interfaced with a person who was openly HIV positive or identified as LGBT. I had never seen a sex worker who speaks openly about their experiences and advocates for their work with such passion and drive.

One of the stories that changed my perception towards LGBTI

I didn't even think I would handle working with LGBT people because they were everything I stood against,

people was one of a young girl I met during our induction meeting. She had just been chased from home after her parents found out she was in a same-sex relationship. She confided in me that while she and her partner were in love, they were not sexually active - a decision they had arrived at mutually. Her mother who was a high-ranking

official in Namirembe Cathedral at the time would have none of that and threw her out of their family home. Unfortunately, she (the mother) died shortly after and the entire family blamed her for her mother's passing. This story broke my heart. She had nowhere to live, her mother had thrown out, her family had ganged up against her and she now had to live with the guilt and burden of believing she had caused her mother's death.

I have also had a fair share of insults leveled at me because of my association with LGBT persons. I remember the very first time that Kuchu Times published my story, I could not believe the insults that were hurled at me on social media. Many people started spreading stories that I was looking for quick money to relocate to USA.

My brother, a parliamentarian, called me when the story was published. He was very angry and demanded to know



if I was a part of the LGBT community. I had to convince him that the work I do is mostly based on HIV and there was no way to effectively get it done unless we involved gender and sexual minorities since they make up a huge part of the key population group.

I have also had conversations with my family who continually elude to my not being married and not having a child as a clear sign that I am a lesbian. I have tried to convince in vain and I am now at a point where I have become a pariah. I can't show up for a family gathering, because I spend the entire time defending my life choices.

One of the biggest things I have got out of working with the LGBT community is the opportunity to represent them at an international level. I was recently in Durban where I made a presentation on HIV and I know this job is still opening up opportunities for me.

**Below is the story that was published on [www.kuchutimes.com](http://www.kuchutimes.com) in 2017**

Susan Atuhura, a professional monitoring and evaluation specialist working with Action Group for Health, Human Rights and HIV/AIDS (AGHA) Uganda is one whose journey from homophobia to acceptance of sexual and gender minorities is worth sharing.

Though she is now passionate about humanitarian work, it hasn't always been this way; Susan started working closely with LGBT persons in 2015 and at the time, was nothing but closed off to the idea of closely associating with LGBT persons as well as sex workers.

"I couldn't understand how one can leave very beautiful women and choose to go after a fellow man or why someone would wake up one day and choose to sleep with several people for money. I couldn't understand that at all. Had I been given a gun, I would have willingly pulled the trigger on one of these people," Susan recalls.

At the height of the anti-homosexuality bill, Susan was among the cluster of Ugandans who were in support for "hang them" clause but three years later, after unearthing the myths and misconceptions usually told about LGBTI people, attributes her previous attitude to lack of

knowledge about sexuality and gender identity.

"When I started out at this job, like many other people who don't differentiate between promotion and advocacy, I found myself wondering why God had placed me here. I didn't even think I would handle working with LGBT people and sex workers because they were everything I stood against," says of her first impression when she got the details of her new job.

What Susan realized later was she had never met an LGBT identifying person or sex worker in person and during residential project orientation; she interacted with several MSM and AWs.

"During this first day of the training, I didn't learn anything; I was pondering where the world is heading with the 'craziness' that surrounded me. By evening I hadn't checked in and the only available room was next to a sex worker. I didn't sleep the whole night because I was scared and thought 'these people' would attempt to conjure me into sex but somehow daybreak came and my fears were put to rest."

The following day, Susan resolved to make an effort; she sat next to a sex work activist who narrated her life experience as an out-sex worker and activist. Through the conversation, Susan discovered that the sex worker was the core pillar for her family's survival and had educated all her siblings and built a house through the earnings from sex work.

"During the training, I interacted with several other people including transgender persons and within a few months, my attitude started to change although deep down, I was still uncomfortable with the idea of people of the same sex being sexually attracted to each other."

She has now resorted to using social media to create awareness and advocate for the inclusion of LGBT persons and sex workers. This advocacy has however caused conflict between her friends and family, something she says she views as an opportunity to sensitize the people closest to her.

Susan has boldly explained that she doesn't need to be a lesbian to fight for the human rights of LGBTI persons because even if she is not one of them, she understands they have a right to live.

I have also  
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with LGBT  
persons.

As an M&E specialist who works with an organisation advocating for equal access to health services, Susan has discovered that discrimination against LGBT persons is still part and parcel of the Ugandan health system. She cites the need for sensitization of health workers about the issues regarding sexuality and gender identity. Many health workers forget that besides one's sexual orientation or gender identity, his/her access to health services is a basic need.

Susan believes that the anti-gay agenda has been fueled by propagandists who have branded sexual and gender minorities as promoters of western culture with many alleging that they are after financial gain and are after recruiting children.

Susan says that from personal experience, all these allegations are fallacies designed to ruin their reputation in society and make people hate them more.

"If these people allege that LGBT persons have a lot of money, why have I seen many struggling to get what to eat, or even rent. Some are very sick and can't even afford treatment. So what money is it that they are always talking about?" Susan now questions. ■

## YOU AND I

You and I--

We meet as strangers,  
each carrying a mystery with us.

I cannot say who you are.

I may never know you completely.

But I trust that you are a person in your own right,

Possessed of a beauty and value that are  
the Earth's richest treasures.

So I make this promise to you:

I will impose no identities upon you,  
but will invite you to become yourself  
without shame or fear.

I will hold open a space for you in the world and

[support] your right to fill it with authentic vocation and purpose.

For as long as your search takes,  
you have my loyalty.

-Author Unknown

SOURCE: [allpoetry.com](http://allpoetry.com)



## MUSAWO MARJORIE: INSPIRED BY LGBTI PERSONS

**M**y name is Marjorie Nakimuli. For more than 10 years, I have been working at Most At Risk Populations Initiative (MARPI), a non-profit organisation that is doing work around ensuring that key populations get friendly health services. I studied at Aghakhan Primary School, Nakasero Secondary School, Kyambogo University, and UGRAIL University in South Africa-where I studied community development.

### Working with LGBT+ persons in Uganda

I started work in Mulago Hospital, offering services to sex workers. We were conducting a research program on sex workers that required us to visit their hotspots. It is here that I met many LGBTIQ identifying persons. It became obvious that they too needed the services we were offering.

The Ministry of Health, basing on our research findings, recognized the need to extend services to the LGBTIQ community as well. That is how my journey working with the community started.

I am a social worker, I didn't choose this route. I believe, it chose me. It was very easy and rewarding for me to work with people who were not getting fair treatment elsewhere. I was happy to be contributing something positive and making a difference in their lives.

Personally, accepting LGBTIQ persons wasn't a hurdle. Through working with them, they always shared personal stories. These were things that were not publicly spoken about yet they were happening in our homes. I will not deny that it has been a learning process but I still can't say that it was difficult to understand them. Being open to unlearning and relearning from their point of view has helped me accept them just as they are.

### Stigma, discrimination while working with LGBT+ persons

Stigma is part of the package that comes with working with the LGBT+ community. When we had just started offering services to most of the key populations, many health workers in and around Kampala blatantly refused to associate with us as they always assumed, and said that we were part of the LGBT+ community. Such attitude is what birthed sensitization programs that MARPI currently implements across different health facilities.

The transition period for people to come around and understand why we were doing this kind of work has been very frustrating. In different fora, there were many allegations leveled against us. We were accused of fronting the recruitment agenda but through the efforts that were channeled to sensitization of different health workers, things

*I am now more willing to see life from other people's perspectives- something that has made me a better person in the way I relate with people.*

started to look up and we now have many other health centres that have come on board to provide easy and safe health care to LGBTIQ persons.

### **Defining moments as an ally of the LGBT+ community**

The defining moments as an ally of the LGBTI movement in Uganda have been around perception change. The ability to sit in a room, be it with donors, different stakeholders, or even Parliamentarians, and make a case for the movement that I now regard as my family, is always a big win for me.

Watching perceptions change, one person at a time is very fulfilling. When we had just started conducting sensitization drives, Police were always trying to arrest us and the participants. However, we now have some members of the Police attending our engagements and data shows that they are slowly being more open-minded when dealing with key populations.

### **What have been the challenges?**

It has been particularly challenging to sensitize religious leaders on LGBTI issues. Their minds are set to certain beliefs and they are unwilling to even consider the other side of things. But, I believe that

just like we've made progress in other sectors, we will also eventually make them see, or at least accept LGBTI persons as human beings deserving of respect and love.

As far as health care provision is concerned, most donors want health workers to provide services to key populations yet they don't provide a specific plan for them and at the end of the day, incomplete services are provided to the beneficiaries.

We also find ourselves running out of crucial medication for STIs which are a general complaint across the divide. Such issues further widen the gap in delivering HIV/AIDS services to our clients.

### **Lessons to draw from the LGBT+ community in Uganda**

I have learnt a lot from my close association with LGBT persons in Uganda especially the youth. These interactions and personal relationships have demystified what society teaches us about gay people. The openness on my end has had tremendous lessons for me, mostly, the need to be purely unbiased and understanding - an attitude one should exercise in every aspect of their life.

I am now more willing to see life from other people's perspectives- something that has made me a better person in the way I relate with people.

### **What can the movement do better?**

It is very hard to answer this question without first appreciating the queer movement about the many milestones that have already been achieved.

But to answer the question, I believe allies must be willing to diversify. Many of us are concentrating on the central region and undeniably, a lot of good work has been done and progress has been registered. However, this strategy is leaving many regions out of the sensitization programs. While we need to adopt a new thinking process as allies, the movement should join us in this drive.

I also appreciate a slogan the movement has used for so long, "NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US" but perhaps they should now reconsider changing to "NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT OTHERS" ■

# DETERMINED TO MAKE THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FAIR FOR LGBTI PERSONS

**M**y name is Patricia Kimera and I am a Lawyer. I've worked with Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) for the past 9 years. HRAPF was my first place of employment and I'm glad I am still with them because I love everything we do as an organization. Currently, I am the Programs Director in charge of access to justice.

I was born in Hoima district, the only girl out of four children. I had my primary education in my home district before joining St Noah Girls School Zzana for my O' Level. For my high school, I went to Namirembe Hillside where I passed with flying colors - I got AAAA and went on to do a Bachelors in Law at Makerere University on government sponsorship. I thereafter joined Makerere Legal Centre where I did my diploma in legal practice.

Growing up, my three brothers had a big influence on me - I looked up to them, so they groomed and influenced most of the things I did as a child. I remember I loved dressing like then until I got to secondary school and it dawned on me that girls were expected to dress a little differently.

Around 2005-2006 while I was still at the University, talk about sex workers and LGBTIQ



persons became a daily discussion in many circles. It was impossible to escape these conversations. We all witnessed, heard, or read about the violations against the LGBTI community as they were commonplace in Uganda when the anti-homosexuality bill was trending. It was at this point that I decide to read more and self-educate on the whole subject particularly the legal aspects. Because I have a cousin who identifies as transgender, I was more open-minded and I had a faint idea of the realities of LGBTI persons.

It is when I went to LDC and joined HRAPF in 2011, that I officially faced the brunt of

the violations against sexual minorities.

## **Ever experienced stigma as an LGBTI ally?**

In 2012, we received information that some LGBT suspects had been arrested, so went to intervene and provide legal support. When I reached the Police station, I introduced myself as their lawyer and broadly explained that I was there to follow up on my clients who had been detained. As I was giving my clients details, I noticed that the Afande's demeanor and expressions were changing.

He asked if I was sure those were the particular people I had come to represent to which I answered in the affirmative. He double-checked my identification and looked me straight in the face and said, "If you are a lawyer, you have wasted your parents' money. How can you defend such people?"

I could feel the hatred emanating from him as he called my clients all sorts of degrading names.

Other incidences are rather recurrent. HRAPF conducts many trainings for magistrates, Police, and other stakeholders to sensitize them on the rights of LGBTIQ persons and other key populations. As such, on many



occasions, I have been asked if I am a lesbian in the closet, or rather getting paid insane money to promote homosexuality, all because of what I do because for the LGBT movement. I have been judged apparently for not channeling my drive and passion to other forms of legal practice.

I've also noticed that the judicial system is biased and set up in a way that deters key populations from receiving due justice. For instance, when people were arrested at Ram Bar, they were denied bail for no particular reason and had to spend two more weeks in jail while they waited for their next hearing.

Lastly, on this issue, the scariest incident for me was when I was being followed in 2018. They had my phone number and would call constantly to let me know they were watching me and each time mentioned exactly where I would be, what I was wearing. I was very scared for my life and the fact that so many people within the LGBT community were experiencing the same threats at that particular time made it even

more terrifying.

### **How did you come to a place of complete acceptance and respect for LGBT persons?**

The fact that I have a family member that identifies as trans helped set the stage for me. I knew better than to believe everything I saw that was being peddled by the public and anti-gay crusaders. My line of work also later played a big role as I interacted more deeply and closely with the community. I came to respect their intelligence and take on life.

I now appreciate their struggles and understand that they are normal people who are just trying to make it through life like those that have been normalized per society's perceptions.

I have a better understanding of their strength and resilience; I have seen people being rejected by their families, some have been evicted from their homes, others have been denied the

very basic needs like health care and all I can think of is how can I in my little way make the world a better place for these people?

### **With threats to retable the anti-homosexuality bill, how can you as an ally render your support to the Ugandan queer community?**

These threats have been there for a while but you see, some of these things are quite political. Due to the timing and elections being around the corner, politicians are bound to raise these issues simply to stir up hatred and reactions from the voters.

The only thing we can do now as allies is come up with strategies to tackle this issue when and if it arises. These strategies, I believe, should be developed with consultation of the community itself so that everyone is in on what should be expected and how best it can be handled. ■



# A HETEROSEXUAL ALLY WHO CONTINUES TO WORK CLOSELY WITH LGBT PERSONS

**2**8-year-old Peter Katende is no stranger to the Uganda LGBT community. While most heterosexuals do not associate with sexual and gender minorities (and the few who do keep their association secret), some people have stepped over these boundaries and in more ways than one, become a part of this marginalized community

Peter who was born and raised in Kampala is a Boda Boda rider (motorcyclist) and his job is what introduced him to the community. What started as being one person's go-to boda guy has now taken him to a world he, like many others, thought was nonexistent. He now prides himself on having some of his closest friends and clients come from Uganda's LGBT community.

Peter says initially, many people did not trust him but he could understand why. Almost six years later, the mistrust issues have vanished and he considers himself a wholesome part of this community that has taught him a lot.

He has over the years demystified most of the notions fronted by Ugandans against LGBT persons. He says some of the most intelligent and hard people he knows are LGBT persons. He now wonders why people continue to discriminate others basing on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. "I am now not bothered by anyone's gender identity or sexual orientation because that does not make them any less human. Someone's sexuality does not define them," Peter asserts.

In February 2014, the President of Uganda H.E. Yoweri Museveni signed the antigay bill; Peter narrated how many of his Kuchu friends going into hiding during this time. He also became a target as some of his peers planned to waylay him, in the hopes that Peter would lead them to different LGBT persons that they would arrest.

"Despite these threats, I stood firm and left it all to God. I told them that no matter what, I

*The mistrust issues have vanished and he considers himself a wholesome part of this community*

wouldn't betray people who had grown to be my friends," he recalls.

Peter has also been insulted on several occasions for his friendship with LGBT persons but he refuses to let homophobes dictate who his friends will be. He also said he is very proud to know the community intimately and acknowledges that these connections have opened doors for him. "I have gone places I never would have gone had I not remained open-minded about sexual and gender minorities," he says. ■

**EDITORS NOTE:** This article was first published on [www.kuchutimes.com](http://www.kuchutimes.com) in October 2016



**BM: Given the common African belief that homosexuality is unnatural and evil (as per religion), how did you personally come to a place of complete acceptance and respect for LGBTIQ persons?**

**WB:** I am an activist and I believe in social justice for all, since beginning of my career, I have always fought against injustice, it is for the same reason that I took a stand in the early 80's to fight against the injustices that were happening to the people in my country. I did not take the decision because I wanted to be in power, no, I took it because I wanted to see a change in the governance of people, change in policies, change in strategies and most especially respect for human dignity.

LGBTIQ people are people with the same human rights as everyone else. There is widespread stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ people which is a human rights injustice. For any of us... if loving who we love is not acceptable by our families, our religious leaders, our employers, our doctors... then we hide that love, and so we are exposed to risk, we face danger every time we express that fundamental human need to love and be loved... this is painful and unacceptable.

LGBTIQ people are disproportionately impacted in the HIV epidemic in every setting, including in the Africa region. This is not because of their behavior, nor because it is something they are doing wrong. It is a direct impact of heightened vulnerability to acquire HIV because of not being able to access HIV prevention commodities, not being able to access testing and treatment services, not having equal opportunities for education, employment, social protection... and for not being welcomed just like anyone else in our homes, families, communities, hospitals and clinics – simply for being who they are.

This is detrimental for all of us and it impacts on our societies. We need to strive towards a humanity that accepts, that celebrates and protects diversity – in all its forms.

**BM: Please share with us some of the wins or defining moments that you have experienced in your journey as an ally?**

**WB:** Being an African woman occupying political and diplomatic spaces that are commonly occupied by men, I am constantly aware that this is a right all women should have. I have taken several steps in my political and diplomatic roles to shape better policies

# A CANDID CONVERSTION WITH WINNIE BYANYIMA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UNAIDS & UNDERSECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

and programs for fairness, justice and equal rights for women and girls in their diversity. For example, I led the women's caucus in the Constituent Assembly that made Uganda's constitution and entrenched gender equality, affirmative action for women and girls across sectors, a one third quota for women's representation in local government and an Equal Opportunities Commission.

Uganda's constitution is still regarded as very progressive on women's rights and gender equality. I believe in change of policies in favour of the majority not for a few and having women in equal positions of power is critical to achieving this. On my journey, I have worked with amazing, courageous people to push the boundaries of laws, policies and norms so that those who are excluded and voiceless can assert their rights. This is my greatest joy.

**BM: Tell us about your down moments or challenges on your journey.**

**WB:** I draw many of my success from persistence, consistency and working with others to challenge what appears to be impossible to become possible. In my own life, I didn't choose the easy way, I walked the untrodden road and opened doors for

other girls and women. It was hard but there didn't seem to be another way than to assert my right and break a barrier for girls and women. Not doing so seemed like coping out and I would not have wanted to do that! I have occupied male dominated spaces in engineering, politics and diplomatic leadership. It has never been a smooth road but persistence, sharing with others and desire for change makes it possible.

Like any other leader, founder and co-founder of several movements, programmes and initiatives, I have faced many challenges, but I usually view them as opportunities to learn and do better. And when I have fallen completely flat on the ground, I was able to get up brush myself and start something new. I have been lucky to have friends and family who supported me in such moments. The experiences we go through give us the chance to acknowledge challenges, to transform them into opportunities and best practices and to learn and grow.

**BM: What lessons have you drawn from the LGBTI community in Uganda and Africa as a whole that have greatly impacted your life?**

**WB:** With unfavorable legal environments, I admire the LGBTIQ community for their courage, their persistence, their solidarity with each other, their innovative approaches as they demand for their rights. Across Africa LGBTIQ people face police brutality, exclusion, stigma and discrimination, but, at great risk to themselves, they continue to fight for their rights. This makes the community of LGBTIQ in Uganda and Africa at large unique because they are focused and ready to risk their lives for what others think doesn't belong to them, but which is their fundamental human right. The right to health, the right to education, the right to equal opportunities and the right to live their lives as they wish to.

Many African leaders and communities don't believe that gay and other members of the LGBTIQ communities exist by nature, many think it is a learnt behaviour. This is simply untrue. LGBTIQ people have existed and exist in every African country as in every country around the world and they are a vibrant, creative, compassionate community of people who have the right to the same rights as everyone else and should not have to hide in shame and be denied basic human rights because of the prejudices and bigotry of others.

**BM: As the head of UNAIDS, what are some of the practical steps being taken by UNAIDS to champion the rights of LGBTIQ people in Africa.**

**WB:** Combating stigma, discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ people is at the heart of UNAIDS work and key to ending AIDS. It is not only a health imperative. It is a human rights imperative.

In Africa, UNAIDS engages in continuous high-level advocacy to ensure access to HIV, TB and now COVID-19 services for LGBTIQ people. UNAIDS also works to protect and support of LGBTIQ rights, including working to reform laws that criminalize same-sex relationships and gender diversity as well as

harmful and discriminatory law enforcement practices.

One of the very concrete ways that UNAIDS helps to protect the rights of LGBTIQ people is by providing urgent support to people who are in situations of crisis such as violence or attacks. Recently, for example, in Malawi, a transgender person was brutally beaten. Working closely with local and regional organizations, UNAIDS was able to reach out to the person and, within days, secure a shelter and ensure medical care for the physical and mental injuries and trauma that the person incurred and that they had access to legal services for justice.

This kind of crises happens every day and for the last two months alone, UNAIDS has provided direct support to LGBTIQ people in Uganda, Tanzania, Madagascar, Ghana, The Gambia, Senegal, to cite but a few.

Another important area is for UNAIDS to provide evidence and support countries on what works and what does not work in responding to HIV.

We know that laws play a critical role either as obstacles or enablers to access to HIV services. Discriminatory and punitive laws like those that criminalize same-sex relations between consensual adults, for example, put people at increased risk of HIV and undermine their access to HIV services. UNAIDS' role here has been to provide countries with the best available evidence and technical input in drafting and reviewing their laws and shape a legal environment most conducive to human rights and public health.

From 2016 and 2020, UNAIDS has been working in partnership with other key organizations to establish and implement an LGBTIQ Fund to Reduce Stigma and HIV. With a focus on high HIV-burden countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Fund sought to address structural challenges and bridge critical gaps for in the access to HIV and other health services among LGBTIQ communities.

In Mozambique, Uganda and Kenya, innovative programmes were implemented including community-led peer-driven referrals and adherence clubs, reaching more than 50,000 LGBTIQ people. Furthermore, through strengthening the capacities of LGBTIQ led community organizations and local health facilities, these programmes have helped to create safe spaces and lasting change for LGBTIQ communities in the three countries.

UNAIDS work includes ensuring that LGBTIQ people and communities are included and contribute substantively to the HIV response in every country.

We know that it is often unsafe for HIV activists and the community to support their own rights openly on the ground. UNAIDS is working to publish incisive analyses based on the results and voices of the LGBTIQ people in their responses to the survey to support LGBTIQ equality. We are looking for basic rights: that governments take steps to ensure that LGBTIQ people have access to health and rights.

The legal environment for LGBTIQ people in Africa remains challenging but there are many encouraging developments. The latest countries to decriminalize same-sex relations between consensual adults on the continent are Botswana and Angola. Currently 12 countries (Angola, Benin, Botswana, Cape Verde, Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Rwanda, South Africa) on the continent have now decriminalized or do not have laws criminalizing same-sex conduct.

**BM: With threats lurking on the re-tabling Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act in Parliament, how can allies be more supportive of Uganda's Queer movement?**

**WB:** In many African countries controversial and anti-queer bills or ACTs have passed like Uganda, Kenya and others, UNAIDS has continued to engage with partners about the HIV impacts of such bills and Acts. The

platform given by UNAIDS can result into bills not being passed into law or the laws being repelled.

In Uganda, when the Anti homosexuality law was passed in 2014, it was the effort of UNAIDS to mobilize other development partners including its cosponsors, the UN Resident Coordinator, PEPFAR, Ireland, DFID, SIDA, Norway, GIZ, Clinton Health and EU to dialogue about the impact of the Act on the HIV response.

It is from that time that a decision was taken for UNAIDS to convene the AIDS Development partners group to dialogue about common areas of interest for all donors funding HIV and AIDS related programming in the country. The convening helps to bring the key HIV donors closer to UNAIDS and with a combined effort some issues can be resolved like the Anti Sexuality Act which was repelled as a result of the combined effort of development partners and the LGBTIQ community.

UNAIDS provides a neutral platform for dialogue with government stake holders like the Ministry of Health to call for the right to health for everyone and this has been used as a basis for continuous provision of health care services to the LGBTIQ communities in countries where the legal environment is not favorable.

LGBTIQ communities must actively seek to speak from other platforms, and join other movements like women's rights movements, the right to health, human rights movements of Uganda, civil society Budget Advocacy group (CSBAG) and others.

It is important to find safety and amplify your voice through working through broader social justice movements while also working in your own organizations. Together we are stronger.



# A LEGAL AND MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE ON WHY HE CHOSE TO BECOME A HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER



*People in the community come up to me and tell me how I have helped them move to a better place in life or mentally.*

**M**y name is Douglas Matthew Mawadri, the fourth child of my parents. My family and I have never lived in one place for long. My father, being an academic, was always posted to new places, and everywhere he was posted, the entire family packed up and moved with him.

I was born in Jinja. Shortly after my birth, the family moved to Moyo where my father had been posted as a Principal of a College. We set up roots in Moyo and I attended nursery and a good part of my primary school there. From Moyo, we relocated to Arua where I finished my primary education.

Growing up in Moyo shaped my perspective on life. I am more tolerant of individuals and more aware of how different and unique each person is. We lived in the medical quarters where doctors and other medics from across the country lived. They were from all walks of life, different backgrounds, ancestries, religions, tribes, and beliefs. So, at a young age, I interacted with the differences within society and the differences among individuals. It helped me appreciate and respect that what one culture/society holds dear may seem irrelevant in another culture.

After high school, I enrolled at Gulu University for a Bachelors Degree in Development Studies which I quit after only one year, a decision that would later pay off. My father nudged me towards law, so I went for a Diploma of Laws at Law Development Centre. Thereafter, I joined Kampala International University for my Law undergraduate degree, followed by a bar course, again at Law Development Centre.

When I was done with school, I didn't set out to work with the LGBTI community. After my first diploma, I got a job as an Administrative Assistant at Norvik Hospital. When I enrolled for my Bachelors degree, I knew I had to keep working but I was also looking for something in line with the educational course I was pursuing. My cousin who was working with East and Horn (now Defend Defenders) interested me in the work she was doing with the community.

At the time, my class was doing an analysis of the domestic perspective on the bill of rights, the constitution, issues of the universal declaration of human rights, domestic human rights perspective, among other things. This gave me a better understanding of issues of rage, anger, and injustice towards minority groups. That was how I picked interest in human rights at a domestic level.

This knowledge fueled my zeal to do something about the lives and rights of people marginalized by the laws that should ideally protect them from injustices. This was around the time that many activists including Kasha, Frank, Pepe, and the late Kato had sued the Rolling Stone, a local Ugandan Tabloid (that was since closed), and its editor Muhame Giles. The Rolling Stone published a story that violated the fundamental rights of LGBT Ugandans by attempting to out them and calling for their deaths. This case gave me a solid foundation with the LGBT community in Uganda as I better understood the treatment meted against sexual minorities and the different perceptions of the LGBT community by the broader

society.

In 2011, I joined Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) and started actively working with the LGBT+ community after the murder of LGBT Advocacy and Litigation officer David Kato. I started as an intern because my work at SMUG wasn't motivated by money. It was the perfect opportunity to explore and experience the human rights field firsthand. It was a perfect balance: in the evening I would study law and during the day I would assess the different cases of people being attacked due to the stigma, torture at home, work, and even social places.

For the entire period that I've worked with the LGBT community, I have struggled with a few challenges -something that I believe several activists for sexual minorities face. Some members of my family still make snide comments about my work but I am very fortunate that my father, as an academic in science understands most of these concepts and principles.

When I had just joined SMUG, I remember a particular incident in Law class where I made a very passionate presentation about the LGBTI community that left many of my classmates questioning my sexuality, and others wondering why I was speaking about 'these people' in such a positive way. I even lost a few friends because of that.

Have I been affected by some of these challenges? Absolutely. We all need support especially from friends and family and when your close people start distancing themselves from you, you feel isolated and hurt. I have

learnt, over the years, to simply state my point and make my peace, and leave other people to do with whatever information I've provided as they see fit.

In the last few years, I have combined my love for human rights and passion for psychology and expanded into helping fellow human rights defenders find viable solutions for the various mental health issues they are dealing with. During a workshop I attended, I interacted with various human rights defenders who shared stories of torture, imprisonment, and threats experienced while advocating for the rights of the marginalized. These people deal with a lot and yet not much attention is given to their state of mind which is the very core of the work they do.

While my work at SMUG focuses mostly on the legal aspects, I realize that many people still need support beyond the legalities -they need comfort, belonging, acceptance, and psychosocial support.

What I enjoy most about my work are the testimonies I get. People in the community come up to me and tell me how I have helped them move to a better place in life or mentally. The "thank yous," emails of gratitude, random hugs are what keep me going. I love that the LGBT+ community is growing, is much more organized, has formalized processes, and built networks. It is these synergies that we need to harness to ensure that the change we see now, however small, is amplified through continuous advocacy. ■

# I'M COMING OUT

**Today I'm coming out....**

**as a Straight Ally....**

**in support of LGBT equality.**

**and the Jacksonville Human Rights Ordinance.**

**in support of my brother.**

**in support of my sister.**

**in support of my mother.**

**in support of my father.**

**in support of my friends.**

**in support of my colleague.**

**in support of my employees.**

**in support of my community.**

**in support of non-discrimination.**

**in support of everyone's right to marry.**

**in support of basic Human Rights.**

**in support of the pursuit of happiness.**

**in support of LOVE.**

—

**I will stand by your side....**

—

**I'm coming out....because there is nothing more  
important than our humanity.**

*SOURCE: [wearestraightallies.com](http://wearestraightallies.com)*

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN LGBT ALLY?

**L**esbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month is currently celebrated each year. The majority of events are held in June to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion in New York on June 28, 1969, which most historians consider the birth of the modern LGBT movement.

While Pride events play a key role in raising the profile of the community and commemorating the history of the LGBT social movement, it also marks an opportunity for the community to come together, take stock and recognize the advances and setbacks made in the past year.

As members of A+PLUs (Allies and People Like US), Summa's Employee Resource Group for the LGBT population, we felt it was important to talk about who the "A" in A+PLUSs represents. What does it really mean to be an ally to our LGBT population?

We asked sisters, nieces, friends and colleagues to provide a perspective on what being an ally for the LGBT population meant to them. What we found is that each interpretation was very personal and individualized.

So, why are allies - or more importantly why are YOU as an ally - important to the LGBT population? An ally is one of the most powerful and effective voices of the LGBT movement. They help create a platform for activism to fight homophobia and transphobia and personally advocate for equal treatment for all people regardless of their sexual orientation. Each of our allies brings a unique form of support to the LGBT population. Some of you may not even be aware that you an ally.

Here are some testimonials of what it means to be an ally to the LGBT population:

- "More than likely, we all know someone on a personal level who is a member of the LGBT family whether it be a family member or close personal friend. We should all be cognizant and advocate that everyone be treated with dignity and respect, no matter what race, age, gender identity or sexual orientation they identify for themselves. In

my opinion, being an ally has nothing to do with changing our personal beliefs but it has everything to do with influencing our behaviors when it comes to equity of treatment."

- "Being an LGBT ally means helping others understand the importance of equality, fairness, acceptance and mutual respect. I believe that all people, regardless of gender identity and sexual orientation, should be treated with dignity and respect." "Being an ally is learning to embrace and respect not just gay people, but all people. I see my family member and numerous friends not as homosexual, not as gay but as absolutely, undeniably beyond measure a human being worthy of all the love in my heart." "Being an ally to me is advocating together and reaching further as an 'ally team' to spread knowledge, awareness and mutual respect for all humans regardless of sexual orientation, preference or belief. Recognizing and accepting the special attributes of all people."

- "To me, being an ally to the LGBT population means providing that safe space where anyone can feel comfortable talking to me about anything. It means advocating for equal treatment for all people and challenging those who may not be as open minded. It also means raising my children to be open minded and to see that love has no boundaries."

- "An ally can have their own opinions yet be open-minded and commit themselves to personal growth and advocacy for the LGBT community. Some simple ways to be supportive include being honest, reassuring, becoming educated and having the courage to speak on behalf of gender equality and civil rights for all. This includes using inclusive, affirming gender-neutral language in your interactions, speaking out about stereotyping and prejudice of any kind, intervening when you hear a negative LGBT remark and asking LGBT friends about their experiences and how to be an ally to them. It is the diversity of people and their experience that makes us stronger at Summa in serving our mission in the community." ■

SOURCE: [summahealth.org](http://summahealth.org)

# I DEVELOPED *TOUGH* SKIN FOR MY WORK WITH LGBT PERSONS -TEDDY

**M**y name is Teddy Nabajja, I am a medical professional. I was born and raised in Nalya, a suburb in Kampala. Growing up, my family was the typical average African family. I am the firstborn of nine children. I went to Trinity College Nabbingo, Rubaga Girls, and finally joined Mbarara University of Science and Medicine.

I did internship at Rubaga Hospital where I, fortunately, secured a job upon graduation. I later joined Mulago Hospital and was posted to the Most at Risk Persons Initiative (MARPI), a project that handles health issues relating to all the different categories of key populations including LGBTQI persons, sex workers, among others.

**BM:** So, how did you transition into working with LGBTI persons in particular?

**TN:** The first thing I noticed while working with MARPI was that it wasn't the same kind of work I had been accustomed to in the hospitals. With a hospital, it was routine - a patient would come in, you examine them, and they would go. You would probably not interface with them again. With MARPI, I had to engage more, it was more interesting and that is how I got drawn into paying attention

to the LGBTI community. Their challenges stood out and required me to think out of the box to provide adequate solutions. Without consciously realizing it, I was deeply entrenched into the community especially regarding the health aspect of their issues.

**BM:** Have you personally experienced stigma or discrimination based on your line of work?

**TN:** One of the incidences that quickly comes to mind every time I am asked this question is a training we had with several health workers. The session was organised to sensitize the health workers on providing more tailored services for LGBT individuals.

*One of them, bold enough, came to me and asked what I would do if my son one day told me he was a homosexual.*

During the lunch break, I sat near a table where some health workers were - either they were unaware of me or they just intended for me to hear. They made remarks to the effect that we were trying to teach them homosexuality. One of them, bold enough, came to me and asked what I would do if my son one day told me he was a homosexual. That particular training was difficult because you could feel the homophobia in the room. Thankfully, over the years, I have grown a tough skin and such things no longer bother me as much as when I had just started working with KPs.

**BM:** What moments stand out for you in your journey as an LGBT community ally?

**TN:** There was a client who urgently needed a surgeon. We did not have much time to spare but there was also the question of finding a surgeon who was willing to do a lifesaving procedure for an LGBTI identifying person. While he had the money and could afford to pay, we were not sure that we would be able to find a doctor who would be open to handling this specific case. Fortunately, after a long search, we zeroed down on a good surgeon who agreed to do the surgery. However, he said that would be

the last case he would take from me as his religion is very clear on homosexuality and he did not want anything to do with people who identify as LGBT. He handled that case, and went ahead to recommended another surgeon who was willing to take on our referrals.

**BM:** As someone that has closely worked with our community for years, why do you think society is still very prejudiced against sexual minorities?

**TN:** I think society simply has pre-determined information about LGBT persons and they have not even taken the time to find out if everything they've heard or think they know is true. They take in all this information as gospel truth because it is passed down mostly from religious and traditional leaders whom we've been taught not to question. They suck in all the negativity and spew it out in form of homophobia and hate.

In my opinion, there are so many people in our society who do a lot of evil things like murderers and child molesters and it is very hurtful that people would rather accept and forgive such crimes but will not have any level of tolerance for sexual and gender minorities that have committed no crime. I pray to see the day when we have openly out community members becoming lawyers, doctors, and respected leaders in society being treated with respect and dignity as their heterosexual counterparts.

**BM:** What more do you think allies can do to help better the Ugandan movement?

**TN:** I believe that allies need to become more vocal; we can't just be service providers. We must add our voice to the movement if we want to see this oppression and discrimination stop. Our job should go beyond providing services to speaking out about the injustices our clients face daily. ■

Focus on your work. Be the  
best you that you can be.  
Develop a thick skin and let  
things roll off your back. And  
keep a sense of humor!

Megan Alexander

# Ally

*I grew up in the 50's/60's  
when the world was full of sin...  
at least that's what the white man  
said  
(those religious - hard working sons  
of fools)  
That would rape a twig if they  
had a chance—  
beat their wives and children  
with a drink in one hand  
and scratched their gonads with the  
other.  
I was taught to love everyone  
by a loving mother and father  
and to extend a helping hand, when  
possible  
no matter the color, sex, religion, or  
age of the needy.  
I don't want someone to be an ally  
I want a friend (brother or sister)  
To show their love and  
understanding  
To share a smile and a kind word.  
But if we need to use labels  
I guess Ally will have to do.*

SOURCE: [allpoetry.com](http://allpoetry.com)







# SUSAN BALUKA, A PASSIONATE ALLY OF LGBT UGANDANS



**KT: Tell us about yourself**

**SB:** My name is Susan Baluka. I am a lawyer by profession. I was born in a family of 8 children and I am the last born. I went to Makerere University where I did my Bachelors of Law degree and after that, I went to LDC where I got my Diploma in legal practice.

**KT: What was your childhood like?**

**SB:** Growing up in a family of 8 was actually fun. It made me think of having about 10 children when I grew up because there were so many people to play with, laugh with, argue with so in a nutshell, I would say it was fun. There were a very good mix of 4 boys and 4 girls.

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**KT:** How did you end up working with the LGBTIQ community in Uganda?

**SB:** That's a very interesting story for me because I started getting very interested and vested in issues pertaining to LGBT+ rights when I was in my second year at law school. I remember a lecturer who gave us a call back assignment where at that time, we could come up with a paper on a topic of our choosing. So, I think when I was in my second year around 2010/11 when there was a lot of noise being made about the anti-homosexuality bill. So, for the life of me I couldn't understand why Members of Parliament and the country generally were so concerned about what people do in the privacy of their bedrooms. I just couldn't get it. I felt that it was an injustice to subject someone to the criminal justice system simply because of who they are and the presumption of what they do behind closed doors. So, I was so curious about that and my topic focused on the weight of Homophobia in Uganda and Human Rights Education. So, I did quite a lot of reading. I think I came across some articles that mentioned SMUG, I remember that very vividly, which talked about the work they do in regards to the LGBT community. So I would say my interest in issues pertaining to rights of LGBT+ persons sparked off at that point in my life. And I was given an opportunity to be part. I have to say that scored very highly in that paper and I should say that's one of the reasons that I am very proud of Makerere as an institution. It really embodies the idea of academic freedom. Because I have heard from colleagues of mine from other institutions that its unheard of to stand up and talk about things like LGBT rights and abortions, it's a taboo.

I have a colleague of mine that I studied with who went on to become a teaching assistant at a certain University. He got vetoed from the institution's leadership because of talking about these things while he was teaching.

So for me, that opportunity I got in the course of my studies to explore issues of LGBT rights pent up my energies to appreciate the issues within the movement and tickled my curiosity even further. So when I got to my 3rd year, I was part of Club MUK which is a clinical legal aid program that was being run by the Public Interest Law Clinic at Makerere University.

And so, at some point, after lectures, one of the lecturers who was managing the Public Interest Law Clinic told us that there were openings available for internship. So I had got a placement at a refugee organization but I hadn't yet confirmed with them. So he further explained that the internships were available at Human Rights organizations and among them was one that works with Sex Workers. He encouraged those interested should prepare their applications and send them so that he can forward them to the organizations since he was in partnership with them. Most of the other students laughed while for me, I was excited! Because as I studied about LGBT rights, I also got curious about Sex Workers rights movement in Uganda. So, soon as I heard of the opportunity, I jumped on it! And the organization that was being referred to by this lecturer was actually WONETHA. So, I interned at WONETHA for 3 months and I learnt a lot by intervening in cases. Around that

time, there was a collaboration between WONETHA and HRAPF so I had chances of interacting with lawyers from HRAPF in the process of intervening in some cases connected to sex workers and their rights. I also able to participate in researches that were being conducted by WONETHA at that time. I took part in awareness sessions on human rights of sex workers. I really got an opportunity to experience and appreciate the human rights issues of sex workers in the country. So, I enjoyed the experience and it eventually came to an end.

During LDC, there is clerkship which is something similar to internship which focussed more on practical things that you need to know and learn how to do as a lawyer in legal practice. The clerkship experience ended after 2 months. I did my final exams and I passed. So, the next item on the agenda was to get a full time job. I put my application in different places. At that time after my clerkship, I had always know that I wanted to be a human rights lawyer right from the time that I was around 16 before I even joined campus. So after my clerkship in a law firm and all this pain watching in the legal drama of my practice, I felt that I had geared away from my goal or envisioned career path of being a human rights lawyer. My applications focused more on private practice and I wasn't really getting any tangible feedback via the applications that I had sent. And then, someone whispered me there was a placement available at an organization called human rights awareness and promotion forum which I knew very well because I had worked with

before in my internship. I put in my application and I waited for a while. I then got a call back for an interview so I was excited. For me, I believed this was a divine intervention taking me back to my actual path of being a human rights lawyer. God brought me back to the path of righteousness despite this whole frenzy of clerkship and watching the law drama- Suits that taken me away from my true calling.

**KT:** Why did you choose this route in your career?

**SB:** It was deliberate. I think one of the reasons I was able to stand out in the interview from the rest of the applicants is because at that time, they were looking for a legal assistant to specifically focus on the sex workers' docket. So because I had worked with sex workers before, that gave me an edge over the rest of the applicants. When I got in, I worked with Sex workers but as I continued growing, I started doing other work related to LGBT+ rights and others that required our services.

**KT:** Ever experienced incidents with stigma or discrimination as LGBT/ SW communities?

**SB:** Oh yes! I have experienced that several times. Surprisingly, it has been alot from my peers and not family members. My immediate family is quite open-minded. So even those that got to know that the organization I was affiliated to worked with LGBT+ persons, they commended me on the work that I am doing who felt they didn't understand why they were being persecuted in this country and have given me

kudos for that. Some of them even heard me speak on radio while we launched one of our organization's reports and they thought it was awesome. My peers on the other hand, people that I went to school with... Wow! I only get comments like "Oh! You work with those people!". There was even an incident where we had a reunion with my colleagues from LDC. It was like a reunion dinner of about 20- 21 people of a firm which were more of small classes that we had been fitted in to firms. You know it's not easy passing that bar. It's really a tough hurdle to jump. So, your firm becomes your support system as you do assignments together and have discussions together. That encouraged us to socialize a lot. So after a year at LDC, we had a round table with my firm to talk about how far we have come, what we were up to, doing and working. When it came to my turn, I told them that I worked with HRAPF which is a human rights organization. I mean these are lawyers that you expect to understand and get it. I further told them that it was an organization that works with Key Populations including LGBT+ persons and sex workers. So, one of them goes like, "Oh yeah, that explains your thoughts." And then the other one said that, "You people, you over work with criminals!" So I really felt like I didn't know what I was doing there, what didn't they get about the concept of human rights?? I felt out of place for a while but I let slide. I always definitely get side eyed whenever I am with my peers and we are talking about the work that we do.

**KT:** How do you manage to handle that negativity or discomfort?

**SB:** Because usually the conversation comes up with my peers at a social gathering, I ask myself what would be the value addition of me engaging with this person unjust in a conversation like this? They are lawyers so they know a difference between criminalization of a conduct and person. Personally, I feel like if they still feel that way despite the level of qualifications about the law and human rights, it's all about them individually so I try not to press the matter any further. I just leave it at the fact that to advocate for their rights, they are also human beings. There can be an awkwardness for a while but then we get back to discussing other issues.

**KT:** What has your journey as an ally of LGBTI persons been like?

**SB:** My journey has been a learning and unlearning process for me. Even though I was already well-informed about issues pertaining to LGBT+ persons, it has been an opportunity for me to learn through their lived realities as an ally. In terms of how I engage with the community, I have been able to put a human face to the ideals that I already had. If I and a community member can call each other at talk and have a laugh about an issue they have, I feel like am not just a mechanical individual as just a lawyer that's going to help them with their problem and that's the end of it all. I feel fulfilled. It has been a fulfilling journey for me. There have been instances where I have had to move from just being a lawyer to deal with a legal issue to a confidant in terms of what implications they may have as individuals. I have at least been able to touch someone's

life through the work that I do.

**KT:** Please share with us some of the defining moments that you have experienced in your journey as an ally?

**SB:** Interestingly, any person will consider this so trivial but it was heartwarming for me. There was a lesbian who was arrested and she had been in the cell for like two days. They had searched her house and got IEC materials that she used to give out. She told me that she thought she was going to jail. "But I was so grateful when you came to my aid. And I don't know what I'll ever do to repay you," she said. That was her first time to be arrested and she thought that was the end of the world for her. Another defining moment for me working with the LGBT community was recently when we won the case against the Commissioner General of Prisons which was a success especially for denying us access to our clients (the COSF case) and the Court in Wakiso also issued summons against a political figure for perpetrating acts of torture and inhumane degrading treatment against LGBT youths. I feel like we are headed somewhere because all we have done hasn't been in vain if a judicial officer can acknowledge and take action when they issued summons and responded to our complaints and took them seriously, that's something I really do appreciate.

Also in regards to the sexual offences bill 2019 which was revised retabled before parliament in October last year. It was a very elevating and exciting moment for me because despite tensions from the meetings

we had with them, MPs took away the materials that they were given and some revisions incorporated. The clause on Carnal Knowledge against the order of nature wasn't removed completely but the fact that it was cut down. The maximum sentence in the penal code act is 14 years. In the 2015 Bill, it was life imprisonment. But in 2019 bill, they changed it to 10 years. It wasn't a complete win but to me, it was an indication that we are slowly but surely making gains towards appreciation of LGBT+ rights and not sexualizing the conversation.

**KT:** Tell us about your down moments or challenges on your journey?

**SB:** Sometimes, when you meet such backlash from people in positions of power and can make the changes in decisions that can positively impact the environment of LGBT persons. It makes one feel like they are never going to get to where they are going like that particular meeting we were in. You witnessed the MOs storming out. It made me feel like yes, we have gotten them to listen but some of them walked away. They preached to us while others set us storms of fire. I wondered if they will work through the situation or are they going to retable the Anti Homosexuality Bill because of that meeting? In that moment, I felt so hopeless. Towards the end of last year when they started talking about retailing the Anti-Gay Bill again in parliament and Lokodo with some other MPs were conceding. It felt like us advocating with S.O.B was what had brought that issue back.

**KT:** What lessons have you drawn from the LGBTI community in Uganda that have greatly impacted your life choices?

**SB:** Lessons I have drawn from the LGBT+ community in Uganda is do whatever you have to do in the time that you have to do it with a lot of passion. I have particularly seen Kasha do that. By the time I joined HRAPF, I started engaging with the LGBT+ movement. Through reading different literature in the course of doing my work, I could see that Kasha was very instrumental with a lot of passion even when she speaks. She even said it herself that, "I have done my part and whatever I can do for the movement, now I am passing on the baton to others to continue." It should also be a lesson that other LGBT activists can emulate within the community. Do what you have to do in the time you have to do it with a lot of passion with all your mind, body and soul then leave a legacy for others to follow.

**KT:** Why do you think it is difficult for people to accept LGBTI individuals and how can we change this? (Practical steps to break societal beliefs derived from culture religion etc)

**SB:** In addition to culture and religion, there are misconceptions about the LGBT+ community. First of all, they think that they just learn to be queer and now they are out to recruit heterosexuals to be gay for financial benefit. And then they have to recruit others to further their "mission" of getting more money from white people. So, for me broadly, that's one of the biggest impediments or

Lessons I have drawn from the LGBT+ community in Uganda is do whatever you have to do in the time that you have to do it with a lot of passion.

opposition that the LGBT rights movement in Uganda faces. I feel one of the ways that myth has been demystified is through dialogue. It is important that we continue to engage different stakeholders even in the areas that LGBT+ organizations operate and Local authorities on issues pertaining to rights of LGBT+ persons and their lives realities and also make them understand that one's sexuality is not a profession since they ride on a notion that this is a foreign or western ideation to trivialize seriousness of which issues of the LGBTI+ movement is supposed to be addressed. Let's make understand who queer persons are beyond their sexuality. For the time that I worked in the legal aid and strategic advocacy clinic, I know of an organization that used to have incidents of being raided every other year. But I think they finally mastered finally mastered the art of community engagement when they moved to another area with people in the neighborhood. They need to understand you and not have any presumptions. Engage the community beyond doing your work as an LGBT+ organization for example through social responsibility activities. If they really want to know who you are,

## “Sexuality is just part of who we are and not what we should be defined by.”

you can actually organize a day and talk to them about who you are and the people you work with and explain facts to end the myths through dialogues which is important.

**KT:** With threats that have been lurking for a while on retabling the AHA in Parliament, how can allies be more supportive of Uganda's Queer movement?

**SB:** We have had times when Allies do come together with the LGBT+ community before. There was that coalition for human rights and transitional law which was very strong. Well, it might not be revamping the Coalition itself but regrouping is important. Allies must be invited in spaces community members gather that they have created for themselves in such circumstances. For instance, we have seen the UKPC happen which is strong. If we regroup and the threat becomes more eminent, there will be new reinforcement and rearming ourselves in terms of security and strategies.

**KT:** What do you think the movement can do to better itself?

**SB:** I shall reiterate what I said earlier, to better ourselves as members of the queers community. It is important to develop your skills set and show it to the world so they know that you are not just a lesbian, gay or transgender person. You are

so much more. Because heterosexual people are not so different because if their heterosexuality so why should LGBT+ persons be defined by their sexuality or gender identity? They are so much more than that. Sexuality is just part of who we are and not what we should be defined by. It's just a small percentage of who you are as an individual. Show people who you are besides your sexuality. ■

## #ALLY FAIL

**You** are the kind of ally that would rather ask me how to twerk than how to pronounce my name

**You** are the kind of ally that doesn't know what cisgender means but loves staring at my chest before you address me

**You** are the kind of ally that makes me wonder who my enemies are and trips over words like transphobia and white supremacy

**You** are the kind of ally that will practice your sassy black woman voice in the mirror

but cross the street when black folks pass by you on street corners

**You** are the kind of ally that just showed up to help gay people have fancy weddings

**You** are the kind of ally that wants to take pictures together just for advertising purposes

**You** are the ally that calls my family's neighborhood up and coming

but would never want to bring up the word gentrification

**You** are ally on white horse

seemingly scooping down to rescue me from my own depravities

**You** are the kind of ally that shops only at wholefoods

**You** are the ally that doesn't realize being gay won't save you from your white privilege

**You** are the ally that tells old black men how adorable they are

**You** are the ally that sends me links to articles you've only read the title to

# *Because sometimes allies get it wrong, because they sometimes hurt us in their quest to understand us*

**You** are the ally that will think “gosh, this couldn’t possibly be a poem about me”

**You** are ally, waving righteous sword that loves to hear me tell a sad story over and over again because vicariously living my pain gives you some street cred

**You** are the kind of ally that thinks intersectionality uses too many syllables

**You** are the ally that thinks it’s okay to describe someone as having the nerve to be both big AND black

**You** are the ally that loves the texture of my hair

**You** are the ally that thinks fucking me is the same as fighting for me

**You** are the kind of ally that thinks you are hilarious when you rap

**You** are the ally that writes depressing poems in my honor but never fully gets my complexities

**You** are the ally that has enough time to google celebrity sex tapes but not rules on allyship

**You** are the ally that celebrates don’t ask don’t tell because kids that look like you will never be forced to cross seas to bomb kids that look like them just so they can have some of your fictitious “freedom”

**You** are the ally that thinks being accepted is the same as being understood

**You** are the ally that laughs way too hard at my jokes

**You** are the kind of ally that will share a poem like this on YouTube but will never listen to the words

**You** are the kind of ally that doesn’t understand the problem with words like minorities

**You** are the kind of ally that believes being on food stamps for your adult Americorps position is the same as a 10 year old brain eating itself for nourishment

**You** are the kind of ally that thinks I talk too loud when I am angry

**You** are the ally that thinks rape is funny because it hasn’t happened to you

**You** are that ally that thinks saying you are colorblind is a compliment

**You** are the ally that thinks believing in systemic oppression is an option

**You** are the ally that will fuck up my pronouns but think it’s okay, cause we’re friends

**You** are the kind of ally that will need to appropriate some yoga after this poem

**You** are the kind of ally that will only remember that last line about yoga in this poem

**You** are the ally that never has to progress, because you have already proclaimed yourself to be

POEM BY J Mase III  
POET. EDUCATOR. FOUNDER OF AWQWARD  
Originally published by Huffington Post

# WHAT COMING OUT AS AN LGBT ALLY TAUGHT ME

October 11 is National Coming Out Day. This is my own “coming out” story. Not as an LGBT individual, but as an ally to those revealing their sexuality. Sure, I had gay and lesbian friends. I was liberal-leaning and my 60’s soul was committed to equality. I mean, seriously . . . how tough could this coming out as an ally be?

I found out when I joined the Michigan Project for Informed Public Policy (MPIPP). One of my first tasks was to work on the KNOW US PROJECT. KUP is a practical and interactive skill-building application of scientific research. Our goal is to help build grassroots support for LGBT equality.

Experience informs us that LGBT people experience discrimination, oppression and even abuse after coming out. Therefore, KUP uses mental health professionals as facilitators to help program participants prepare themselves for the painful psychological effects of sharing their stories.

Most of the recent progress in the struggle for LGBT equality is because more people say they know someone who is gay or transgender. KUP teaches people how to talk about their experiences. Hearing those stories moved me from a silent ally to an activist.

Is there such a concept as an “ally closet?” Do allies “come out?”

I don’t know. Here’s what I do know:

- I can never compare my experiences as a more visible ally with those who are LGBTQ and experience stigma and discrimination daily.
- An “ally’s closet” isn’t likely to look like the closet lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people know. Our risks are not the same.
- Nevertheless, we struggle with what to say and how to say it and who to say it to. We worry that our own stories, often a blend of the stories of the people we care about and our personal values, are somehow insufficient by comparison.W

- Regardless, this commitment to LGBT equality is now as much a part of me as my DNA.

And, frankly, the results have been more positive than I could have imagined.

- A retired teacher quietly told me about her concern for LGBT students in the classroom and social media bullying.
- Another close friend disclosed her confusion about a transgender relative who is transitioning.
- LGBT friends are more open about the challenges they face and their relationships.

By having these discussions with others, I am helping to build an extended coalition of LGBT allies. And I have to admit I now have a more satisfying connection to many people in my life, most importantly to my husband of 43 years who has made this journey with me.

So, on National Coming Out Day, here’s my message if you are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender:

Reach out to allies for support and action. Tell us what we can do to help. I am not unique. We are here in far greater numbers than you think. We allies have “moveable middle” friends, a voice, and a vote.

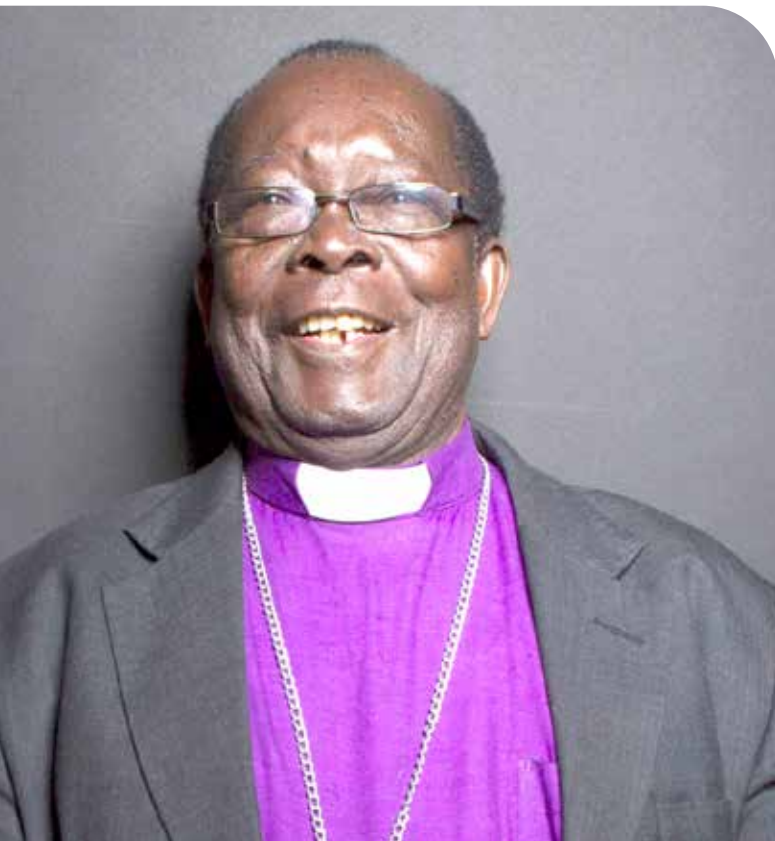
And here’s my message if you are a silent ally (as I used to be):

Tell your straight friends and family why you are an ally – and tell the LGBT people you know that you’re an ally and ready to help improve their quality of life – one conversation at a time. I have learned that each conversation builds confidence and the next conversation becomes easier. ■

Source: <https://psychologybenefits.org/>



# GOD'S LOVE SURPASSES SEXUALITY - BISHOP CHRISTOPHER SSENYONJO



In his modest home filled with photos of memories from his long life, 89-year-old Bishop Christopher Ssenyonjo gives off the aura of wisdom and quiet resolve. A man with a big heart, he has opened his doors to those in need, the downtrodden and the shamed. Over the years, he has offered an ear and a shoulder to lean on for many of Uganda's sexual minorities, an act that has earned him ridicule and ex-communication from the very church he served for most of his adult life.

Ssenyonjo was a diocesan bishop in the Anglican Church of Uganda from 1974 to 1998. During the period after his retirement, till now, he has become well known for his defence and advocacy for the rights of expression for the LGBT community in Uganda.

After retiring from active Church service in 1998, Bishop, as he is commonly referred to within the LGBTI community, heeded God's calling and went into the counseling ministry. It was during this period that he encountered many people

dealing with rejection and discrimination based on sexual orientation and or gender identity. Having received the Doctor of Ministry degree, which provided key background for understanding issues of complexities of human sexuality, the decision to help sexual minorities was easy for Ssenyonjo to make. It has since become his life's mission to emphasize God's love for all people irrespective of their sexuality.

In 2011, Bishop started St Paul's Reconciliation and Equality Centre (SPREC) to create a medium of dialogue for both the marginalised and their families. SPREC's programs include healthcare, chapel and counselling, psycho-social support and hospitality, entrepreneurship development (micro-loans), women's empowerment, and human rights advocacy and education.

Bishop Ssenyonjo stresses that even when the church excommunicated him over his stand on homosexuality, he has stood ground and continues to preach LOVE above all else. "Any religion that does not emphasize love but upholds values that disregard LOVE for one another is missing the most important facts," he says.

"The Bible is often quoted out of context but if people are to look beneath all the scriptures they

**"Any religion that does not emphasize love or upholds values that disregard LOVE for one another is missing the most important facts,"**

use to bash homosexuals, they will realize that the problem was never sexuality. It is the lack of love and hospitality,” Bishop sheds light on one of the greatest triggers of homophobia.

He recounts a time when he traveled overseas as a member of an NGO board; rumours spread far and wide that he had traveled on LGBTI business. As a result of that, he was forced to stay out of the country for over six months as he waited for calm to return. This was also the time when the church wrote a letter detailing their decision to excommunicate him. To this day, Bishop Ssenyonjo cannot officiate over any church activities. However, he refuses to be intimidated and religiously attends services, and is firmly rooted in the Christian faith.

When he first started working with LGBTI persons, his family was totally against his engagement. Like the rest of the Ugandan community, they were strongly opposed to sexual minorities. Gradually, he turned his family around and today, they are his strongest support system for his advocacy work, something the Bishop says is a testament to the fact that dialogue can change people’s attitudes towards homosexuality.

It has, however, not been an easy path to take for the dedicated man of God, as he has had to endure not only discrimination from society, banishment from church service, but he also lost out on his pension. He says that when he looks back at the one request he made to God when he embarked on this journey - never to lack -he attests that God’s faithfulness has been abundant, even when his only source of income (pension) was stripped away.

Asked where he sees the movement going in about ten years, the Bishop reflects on how far the LGBTI community has come - the days characterised mainly by denial, and alienation to foreign lands for security reasons. He asserts that the movement is much stronger now and envisions a society that will be more accepting of sexual minorities in the decade to come.

With all the obstacles he has had to deal with for his association with sexual minorities, Bishop Ssenyonjo affirms his commitment to the struggle. He says he has no regrets whatsoever and would do it all over again if he had to. His brave choice to stand with LGBTI persons only gets stronger. ■

# STANDING,



## Introduction

Of Nelson Mandela’s many wise sayings, one of my favorite is the old maxim: “Where you stand depends on where you sit.” Since we are also talking about sexuality, I would add that where you stand also depends on where (and how) you sleep. Hence the title of my presentation today: Standing, Sitting and Sleeping. This simple but poignant statement attests to the fact that the views and attitudes that people hold regarding sexuality, the powers that they wield in the name of culture, morality and religion and the control they seek to exercise over the sexuality of others, all have a direct bearing on their social and political orientation. Indeed, as the last bastion of gender inequality and social exclusion, sexuality has become a metaphor for dictatorship in Africa and elsewhere. It is not surprising that in the last two years alone, we have seen legislation seeking to negatively and hegemonically address the issue of sexuality in Uganda, Nigeria, Rwanda and Burundi,



# SITTING AND SLEEPING:

*On 12th February 2012, Dr Sylvia Tamale gave the above titled speech at Imperial Beach Hotel while opening a Freedom and Roam organized workshop under their PAL project. She had earlier presented the same communication at the Pennsylvania State University, on November 2, 2011 and realizing that it was relevant to the sexual and gender minorities' community in Uganda decided to share it as her opening remarks. Fast forward, nine years later, the Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community in Uganda continues to face the same problems they did back then. In the speech reproduced below, Dr Tamale dissects the beliefs most held by Ugandans towards LGBTI persons and also endeavors to demystify them as well as explain the liquidity of gender and sexuality.*

By Dr Sylvia Tamale

to mention just a handful of African countries where these questions are surfacing in bold relief. There is no doubt that the issue of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) is becoming one of the defining questions in the governance and democratization debate on the continent today.

Against the backdrop of a critical surfacing of some of the key issues affecting the issue of sexuality and drawing particularly from my experience in Uganda, my lecture seeks to offer some reflections on the manner in which governance questions in Africa today are intricately related to the twin issues of sexuality and gender identity. The main point I would like to underscore is that the intensive scrutiny, regulation and control of non-conforming sexualities and gender identities reflect both a deep historical connection to colonial structures of governance and marginalization, and to more contemporary attempts to control the body. In this way, sexuality is deployed as a tool for perpetuating patriarchy, inequality, and injustice and to consolidate the process of othering.

Many people regard Nelson Mandela as one of the greatest

leaders of our times. Very few however, associate him with the issue of sexuality. I first heard the saying, "Where you stand depends on where you sit" being articulated by Mandela. Although he is not the originator of the saying, it seems most appropriate to attribute it to the man who is iconized for his tolerance and desire to build bridges rather than walls. In this connection, it is important for us to recall that Mandela presided over the introduction of one of the most progressive constitutional instruments ever written.

In the internal African National Congress (ANC) debates leading up to the end of apartheid and thereafter, Mandela emphasized that the struggle against racial discrimination was fought by everybody, irrespective of their religious beliefs, their ethnic backgrounds, and of their gender. More importantly, Mandela was a strong proponent for the inclusion of a provision in the constitution of a new South Africa explicitly outlawing discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Hence, the South African constitution became the first in the world to explicitly outlaw discrimination on the grounds of non-conforming

sexualities.

I am from Uganda. Yes, that country that so few of you can pinpoint on the world map but which has recently become world famous as the locus par excellence of homophobia, thanks to its infamous Anti-Homosexuality Bill. Uganda is one of the few countries globally that also has a Cabinet minister with a portfolio responsible for Ethics and Integrity.

One would imagine that this government department was created for fighting graft and corruption, promoting transparency and accountability and building democratic integrity and disseminating principles of good governance. This is especially so because Uganda was ranked the 11th most corrupt country worldwide in the year 2000 by Transparency International, two years after the Ministry came into existence. However, this ministry is more famous for its work in policing issues related to sex than fighting corruption and mismanagement. In 2003 Dr. Nsaba Buturo was transferred from the Ministry of Information (read propaganda) to steer Ethics and Integrity, where he remained for eight years. Under his stewardship, the ministry's

single-most important brief was to regulate and control the sexuality of Ugandans, particularly those who practice non-conforming sexualities.

### Sexuality as a Critical Governance Issue: The Case of Uganda

As we all know, the patriarchal capitalist state creates an artificial institutional and legal separation of the public (politics/the market) and private (domestic/family, including sexuality) spheres. While public life is characterized by intricate regulation by the State, the private realm concerning the family is largely left to the control of the so-called “head of the family.” There has always been one exception to this rule: the regulation of sexual relations remains in the hands of the State. Michel Foucault illuminated State sexual politics by conceptualizing sexuality as a “disciplinary technology of power” (Foucault 1980). Through repression and criminalization, sexuality outside heterosexual marriage (e.g., adultery, prostitution, fornication, same-sex erotics) is marked as dangerous and polluting. On the other hand, polygynous heterosexual relations (preferably in missionary position) are legitimized and valorized. This means that the state strategically deploys sexuality to consolidate its stranglehold on power.

President Yoweri Museveni has ruled Uganda for the past 25 years under the National Resistance Movement (NRM). While he is widely recognized for his achievements in economic and political reform, it is Museveni who created the

Ministry of Ethics and Integrity. And it is my contention that this government department was created almost exclusively for one specific purpose. The objective was not to monitor political ethics in public offices, because Uganda already had the office of Ombudsman that performed the anti-corruption duty, and a human rights commission to combat state-inspired violations against individual citizens. Rather, the Ministry was created primarily as a disciplinary and surveillance body to focus on the sexual morality of Ugandans. By so doing, the NRM administration understood that if performed effectively, this mandate would act as chief detractor in diverting the attention of Ugandans from the real issues of governance and democracy. What better deflector than using the emotive instrument of sexuality? Like other historical dictatorships elsewhere in the world, the main target would be the sexualities of powerless social groups such as homosexuals and prostitutes. Adolf Hitler used the same tactics in Germany as did the McCarthyist movement in the USA, turning sexual minorities into scapegoats and blaming them for virtually every social and political wrong. In this way, the issue of morality is used as a convenient smokescreen for the real agenda of political and social dictatorship. In this case it was the imagined immorality of “recruiting Uganda’s youth into homosexuality” that provided the *raison d’être* for what was described as the noble cause of protecting the family from external and foreign influences.

In fact “moral panics” are an old-and-time-tested political strategy

that sows hatred and division in the populace, while at the same time deflecting attention onto a convenient scapegoat. On the African continent homophobic witch hunts have been used successfully by Presidents Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Arap Moi of Kenya, Sam Nujoma of Namibia, Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal. When nonconforming sexualities are used to cover up real socio-political issues such as high unemployment, run-away inflation, below-average wages, high taxes, an extremely high cost of living and the poor state of healthcare, they become a metaphor for bad governance and repression.

Returning to the Ugandan Ministry of Ethics and Integrity, Nsaba Buturo executed his mandate with such severity that he was solidly behind MP David Bahati when he tabled the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in October 2009. He condemned homosexuality at every opportunity and made it his *bête noire* at every possible opportunity. At a religious gathering in Kampala, tagged “Call Uganda” where the American evangelist, Lou Engle spoke, Buturo did not mince his words about his work on behalf of the Almighty:

I know Bahati has heard the voice of God and is now spearheading that bill in Parliament... It is your business that you pray for him. It is your business that you pray for the members of parliament. That on the day appointed for voting, there will be no Member of Parliament that will be absent... that the bill will be passed

without any debate.... Uganda will not accept that nonsense that says that homosexuality is a human right. It is an abomination. We are going to tell all that care to listen... that our dignity is not for sale, that our love of God is first and foremost.

In both 2008 and 2010 Nsaba Buturo banned regional conferences organized by Ugandan sex workers to discuss their health rights interests. In an intimidating letter that he sent to the hotel hosting the conference, and copied to the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Inspector General of Police, Buturo wrote:

It has come to my knowledge that an organization known as Akina Mama wa Afrika is planning to conduct a seminar for prostitutes at your hotel from 18th to 20th November 2010. I am reliably informed that participants will come from Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. If this information is correct, and we will soon find out, I should inform you that prostitution is a criminal offence in Uganda. By allowing your premises to Akina Mama wa Afrika for purposes of conducting this seminar, it is concluded that the hotel is an accomplice in an illegality.

This is therefore to inform you that government will not find it acceptable that management of Serena Victoria Hotel should be promoting and defending a criminal act.

I must point out that in Uganda it is the act of exchanging sex for money that amounts to a criminal offence. The freedoms of association and speech, on the other hand, are guaranteed

in the Constitution. But through that letter, Buturo achieved his goal. Serena cancelled the conference and the local media spent several days focusing on sexual morality and diverting from the real issues of the day.

The machinations of the Ethics and Integrity Ministry were also seen in the passage of the Equal Opportunities Commission Act in 2006. Although constitutionally provided for, government took its time to establish the EOC and only did so, on account of pressure from civil society. The EOC law was designed to create "...a just and fair society where all persons have equal opportunity to participate and benefit in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life." In other words, the EOC was created to address the concerns and exclusion of vulnerable minorities. Section 15 of the EOC Act is the key provision of the law with respect to its operationalization by elaborating the powers of the Commission which are equivalent to a civil court. In a bid to ensure that homosexuals and prostitutes would never be able to access the EOC for redress, at the eleventh hour of debate on the bill parliament inserted, the following provision into the final law:

The Commission shall not investigate any matter involving behaviour which is considered to be—immoral and socially harmful, or unacceptable by the majority of the cultural and social communities in Uganda. [See Section 15(6)(d)]

The Hansard record elaborates how legislators came to cast the homophobic and discriminatory

net over the EOC. While supporting the amendment, the Minister of Gender argued:

[I]t is very important that we include that clause. This is because the homosexuals and the like have managed to forge their way through in other countries by identifying with minorities. If it is not properly put in the clause, they can easily find their way through fighting discrimination. They can claim that since they are part of the minority, they can fight against marginalisation.

Such a clause was clearly misplaced in a legislation that was meant to address issues of marginalisation that affect "social minorities" and to ensure that they are accorded equal opportunities as "social majorities." To say that the EOC requires the authorization of the "social majority" in order to address the issues and concerns of "social minorities" simply defeated the core purpose of the legislation. It was a classic case of giving with one hand and taking away with the other. Indeed, it also unduly constrained the Commission from exercising the power of discretion, which is a basic feature of protective institutions such as courts, or human rights commissions. Most important is the fact that section 15(6)(d) is repugnant to the basic principles of substantive equality enshrined in Uganda's constitution. It quite clearly has no place in a democratic society committed to a fully-fledged system of minority protection.

But to further prove that the Ministry of Ethics and Integrity was not designed for public

accountability issues is the story of the chief ethics policeman himself being caught with his hand in the cookie jar and getting away with it. In the irony of ironies, in 2006 “man of God” Buturo misappropriated Ushs 20 million (approximately USD 10,000) that belonged to an upcountry FM station. Parliament investigated the embezzlement and ordered him to refund the money. Buturo acknowledged taking and using the money, but even after doing so, continued serving as the government watchdog for ethics and integrity. It was business as usual.

But lest I be misunderstood, it is crucially important to appreciate that the instrumentalization of sexuality as a political tool is not limited to African dictators. When the anti-Homosexuality bill was tabled in Uganda, a number of Western government leaders called on Uganda to recognize the sexual citizenship of all its people. Overnight the Bill turned into a “conditionality” for aid to government and non-governmental human rights organizations alike (Ewins 2011). Prior to the AHB debacle Ugandan human rights activists had shouted themselves hoarse regarding rigged elections, detentions-without-trial, the abuse of media freedoms, corruption and many other human rights violations. Western governments failed to lift a finger in condemnation of such practices, and were cosily in bed with Museveni who they dubbed one of only a handful of a ‘new breed’ of African leaders. The selective conditionality when it comes to the rights of LGBTI individuals therefore smacks of both hypocrisy and selective

amnesia. In a strongly-worded October 2011 statement signed by several African Social Justice Activists, it was clarified:

The imposition of donor sanctions may be one way of seeking to improve the human rights situation in a country but does not, in and of itself, result in the improved protection of the rights of LGBTI people. Donor sanctions are by their nature coercive and reinforce the disproportionate power dynamics between donor countries and recipients. They are often based on assumptions about African sexualities and the needs of African LGBTI people. They disregard the agency of African civil society movements and political leadership. They also tend, as has been evidenced in Malawi, to exacerbate the environment of intolerance in which political leadership scapegoat LGBTI people for donor sanctions in an attempt to retain and reinforce national state sovereignty.

Further, the sanctions sustain the divide between the LGBTI and the broader civil society movement. In a context of general human rights violations, where women are almost as vulnerable as LGBTI people, or where health and food security are not guaranteed for anyone, singling out LGBTI issues emphasizes the idea that LGBTI rights are special rights and hierarchically more important than other rights. It also supports the commonly held notion that homosexuality is ‘unAfrican’ and a western-sponsored ‘idea’ and that countries like the UK will only act when ‘their interests’ have been threatened.

Not much more needs to be said about this issue, save to emphasize that the differentials of race, power and economics have also found their way into the contemporary debate over sexuality and gender identity on the African continent. What is perhaps most galling is the over-drive production in the West of media portrayals of the developments around the AHB in a country like Uganda that completely ahistoricize and ‘otherize’ the phenomenon of homophobia, as if it has never existed in Western countries. Documentaries such as the BBC’s *The Worst Place to Be Gay* gloss over the fact that so many of the legacies of institutionalized homophobia and gender-identity discrimination were written into the political economy of our countries through the colonial experience. The Indian Naz Foundation case made this abundantly clear in declaring the Victorian-era Section 377 of the Penal Code which criminalized homosexual relations, as unconstitutional. Section 377 was reproduced verbatim in all the criminal codes of ex-British colonies, of which Uganda was one.

True Integrity and Honour:  
Lessons from Nelson Mandela

Even as we celebrate Africa’s great hero, Nelson Mandela today, we must never lose sight of the fact that he is (and has always been) a fallible human being. Many of us have the tendency to focus on the man/saint, projecting a static idolization on a critical figure that was so important in the South African democratization and reformist trajectory. However, such a stance has its limitations,

particularly in stifling the narratives and histories of those social groups whose stories may not necessarily match the common accessible narrative of the hero. It is my contention that it is only in recognizing such multiple voices and trajectories that “real” democratization will happen. Nelson Mandela himself has said, “I’m an ordinary person, I have made serious mistakes, I have serious weaknesses” (Crwys-Williams 2010: 48).

Today Nelson Mandela stands tall as a great icon of the rights of homosexual individuals. But Mandela’s perspective on gays was not this liberal when he started out on his political career. Indeed, his viewpoint on homosexuality has evolved from the conservative opposition that he held in the 1950s and ’60s to the full support of gay rights that he holds today. Even Desmond Tutu—currently one of the key proponents of gay rights globally—denounced homosexuality in 1973 as one of the most dehumanizing effects of the migrant labour system (Epprecht 2008: 169).

The point is that Nelson Mandela and his colleagues including, Tutu, Oliver Tambo and Thabo Mbeki were open-minded enough to carefully listen to some of their colleagues in the early anti-apartheid movement, empathize and make the parallels between racial and sexual apartheid. Anti-apartheid activists such as Cecil Williams and Simon Nkoli openly challenged the ANC’s Christian-influenced homophobia, effectively shifting the thinking of its leadership over time (Epprecht 2008: 184-

5). Moreover, the decades that Mandela spent in prison allowed him to reflect on his prejudices and mental positions on a lot of issues. In *Long Walk to Freedom* he writes:

It was during those long and lonely years that my hunger for the freedom of our own people became a hunger for the freedom of all people, white and black. I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man’s freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else’s freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both. (p. 544)

After Mandela’s historic release from prison in February 1990, he led the ANC in the negotiations that led to the dismantling of formal apartheid. As pointed out earlier, in May 1992 the ANC added a commitment in its manifesto to entrench sexual orientation as a category of human rights that would be constitutionally protected against discrimination in post-apartheid South Africa, eventually leading to the landmark inclusion of sexual orientation discrimination in the 1996 Constitution (Epprecht 2008, 189; Cameron 2002).

The country’s history of inequality and oppressive injustice taught the constitution-

makers that “irrelevant and stigmatizing criteria should not be used as a basis for judging people and their legitimate place in society” (Cameron 2002: 645). The ANC under Mandela was thus well ahead of its time; this was a whole 20 years before we get legislation such as the AHB in Uganda! What further evidence do we need to show that Mandela is a man deeply in touch with what it means to change?

African leaders such as Bahati and Buturo who preach homophobia need to tap into the classical African tradition of Ubuntu, a concept most clearly articulated to the world by Mandela. In Uganda we refer to Ubuntu as Obuntu Bulamu, and several other African communities have similar expressions for a concept that is fairly common around the continent. This hard-to-translate concept encompasses many values—humaneness, solidarity, interdependence, compassion, respect and dignity.

It rejects selfish, paternalistic, restrictive rules issued by rulers riding high moral horses in complete disregard of the interests of their neighbours, their community and their fellow human beings. Mandela’s leadership was greatly enriched by this philosophy. He said: “In Africa there is a concept known as Ubuntu – the profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievements of others.” By way of concluding my speech, I would like to reflect on the phenomenon of Ubuntu

by recreating an imaginary conversation between Nsaba Buturo and Nelson Mandela.

***Conclusion: A Conversation between Nelson Mandela and Nsaba Buturo***

Mandela and Buturo met in the corridors of the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa at the beginning of this year. The bulk of Mandela's words in this conversation are lifted verbatim from real quotations that he has made in the past as reported in the Crwys-Williams collection, In the Words of Nelson Mandela. Buturo's words are mostly culled from the speeches and interviews that he gave over the eight years as Ugandan Minister of Ethics and Integrity.

B: [With big smile and outstretched arm] It is such an honour to meet you President Mandela. I never dreamed that I would have such a blessing in my lifetime.

M: Good to meet you too Mr. Buturo, the Ugandan Minister of eh...

B: Ethics and Integrity sir.

M: [Half-instinctive, half-calculating response] Interesting. I hear you are a strong supporter of the Anti-Gay bill in your country.

B: Homosexuality in Uganda and Africa as a whole is a taboo. How can a man sleep with a fellow man or a woman with a fellow woman?

M: There was a time when I reacted with revulsion against the whole system of being gay.

B: Who corrupted your mind

then?

M: I was ashamed of my initial views, coming from a society which did not know this type of thing. I understand their position [now], and I think they are entitled to carry on with what pleases them.

B: It is not natural in Uganda. What we are doing is what the country wants. Ugandans also believe that anal sexual intercourse, foreign objects used in sexual intercourse and promiscuity do not deserve to be defended at all. It's abhorrent that homosexuality should be recognized as a way of life.

M: Well, my brother, you need to rethink your policy. The millions of graves strewn across Europe which are the result of the tyranny of Nazism, the decimation of the native peoples of the Americas and Australia, the destructive trail of the apartheid regime against humanity—all these are like a haunting question that floats in the wind: why did we allow these to happen? Never and never again shall the laws of our land rend our people apart or legalise their oppression and repression.

B: Oh no, no, no, Mr. Mandela. With all due respect, homosexuality will never be promoted, encouraged or supported in Uganda. Ever since the Bill was presented in Parliament, there have been various reactions as well as over-reactions from countries which are annoyed at our independence to enact our Laws. Consequently, we hear they are threatening to take action against Uganda. We wish to remind the donors that there is integrity to be defended and threats are

not the way to go. We are really getting tired of this phrase, human rights. It is important that we do not compromise on the values that we stand for.

M: Uganda has a Constitution, right? A Bill of Rights is a living thing. To deny any person their human rights is to challenge their very humanity. No true alliance can be built on the shifting sands of evasions, illusions, and opportunism... [Stares straight into Buturo's eyes]. One of our strongest weapons is dialogue. Let us refrain from chauvinistic breast-beating: [in South Africa we do] not underrate what we have achieved in creating a culture in which we increasingly respect the dignity of all.

B: [Adamant] Hmm... Even at the United Nations there are attempts by some nations to impose homosexuality on the rest of us... We have learned that they want to smuggle in provisions on homosexuality. Homosexuals can forget about human rights. Uganda will not be forced to legalize practices that are illegal, unnatural and abnormal.

M: Listen, my young brother. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred. None of us can be described as having virtues or qualities that raise him or her above others.

B: Perhaps what we need to add to the bill is a provision for reparative therapy to attract errant homosexuals to acceptable sexual orientation.

M: Listen brother, I am nearing my end. I want to be able to sleep until eternity with a broad smile on my face, knowing that

the youth, opinion-makers and everybody is stretched across the divide, trying to unite the nation. And I hope you will join them: Good day Mr. Buturo.

At this point, I walked away thinking about how Buturo had represented me as a Ugandan. I wondered to myself, Ain't I a Ugandan? Whose culture was he talking about? Whose morality? Whose sexuality? I guess it all depends on where you're sitting or how you're sleeping.

Thank you for listening to me ladies and gentlemen.

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