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VOICING LBQ LOVE,
RESILIENCE,
RELATIONSHIPS AND
REALITIES

BA LÉSBICA

ACE	An umbrella term used specifically to describe a lack of, varying, or occasional experiences of sexual attraction.
AGENDER	Someone who does not have a gender identity is neither masculine, feminine, transgender nor bi gender.
ALLO	Term used to describe people who experience sexual and romantic attraction and do not identify as on the spectrum.
ALLY	A typically straight and/or cis person who supports members of the LGBT community.
AROMANTIC	Term used to describe people who experience sexual and romantic attraction and do not identify as on the spectrum.
ASEXUAL	A person who is not sexually attracted to anyone.
BISEXUAL	Romantic and sexual attraction to more than one gender
BIPHOBIA	The fear or dislike of someone who identifies as bi based on prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views about bi people.
BUTCH	A term used in LGBT+ culture to describe someone who expresses herself in a typically masculine way.
CIS	When someone's sex assigned at birth and gender correspond in the expected way.
COMING OUT	When a person first tells someone/others about their orientation and/or gender identity.
DILDO	It is made of silicon or rubber and it is used for sexual satisfaction sometimes.
EKO	FARUG pet, our non-binary cat.
FEMME	A term used in the LGBT culture to describe someone who expresses themselves in a typically feminine way
GENDER DYSPHORIA	Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity.
GAY	Refers to a man who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. Also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexuality. Some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian.
GENDER IDENTITY	A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or something.
INTERSEX	person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes.
KUCHU	Queer slang to mean gay.

LESBIAN

A woman who has romantic and sexual orientation towards women.

LGBTIQA

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, intersex, Queer, Asexual.

LBQ

Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer.

LESBOPHOBIA

The fear or dislike of someone because they are or are perceived to be a lesbian.

NON-BINARY

They do not conform to any gender.

PANSEXUAL

They are sexually and emotionally attracted to all genders

PRONOUNS

Words used to refer to people's gender in conversations. He or she/it.

QUEER

A term used by those wanting to reject specific labels.

QUESTIONING

The process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

SELF CARE

The practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well- being and happiness.

SEX

Trait that determines an individual's reproductive function.

SEXUALITY

Awareness and feeling with one's own body and other people's bodies.

**SEXUAL
ORIENTATION**

An inherent enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

SRHR

A concept of human rights applied to sexuality and reproduction

TRANSGENDER

A Person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex.

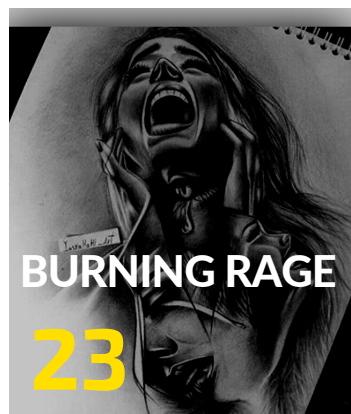
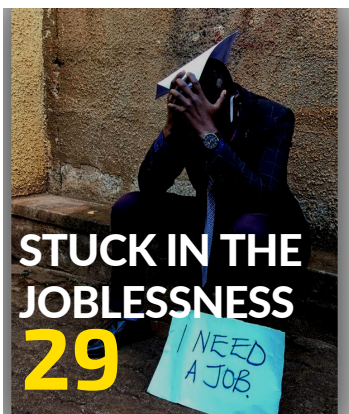
UGALEF

lesbian event hosted by FARUG.

WSW

Woman who sleeps with other women for sexual gratification only.

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A RAY OF HOPE

by Rick, 23

I am Rick; a Ugandan transman aged twenty three. This is the journey of my life before and after discovering I am queer. Earlier on in my life, I preferred to associate with the male gender despite being born female and found it so comfortable compared to being with the girls. I felt more connected to the male gender and their lifestyle but was hesitant to relate with girls. Little did I know that there was something different about me.

During my primary level of education, when I had arguments and debates I always stuck with the boys and defended them despite my birth gender. Once I was playing truth or dare and a girl on the opposite side challenged me to kiss her as my male friends cheered me on.

I had to prove to her how much of a man I am by making the first move. There was so much noise on our block that the teacher on duty caught us unawares, shortly

after this I was expelled from school. The girl I kissed was lucky to survive expulsion because of her father's position as the school director. I was so green about sexuality and gender orientation. As years went on, I joined secondary school and met some lesbians. This conjured up more feelings about my queerness within me. issues. I have been immensely inspired by these experiences to keep going and work hard to fulfill my aspiration of being an activist for the rights of queer people all over the world, especially in the African continent. It is my hope to have achieved this within the next five years.

Furthermore, I got involved in activities that empowered me to explore my masculinity, and be accepting of my attraction to girls. I was able to stay comfortable in my skin at school even though I knew that

being queer was prohibited. My first girlfriend wasn't open as such but I did quite a lot of things to keep her close. I remember a time, I pretended to be sick and asked her to spend a night with me. The feeling of having her in my own space this time round was remarkable only I understood this.

As a transman, stigma from friends, family and society have been a constant struggle for me.

Often people around me used the words ; bad omen, cursed, and devils agents and many other things that hurt to refer to queer people. I have kept on going because I have great dreams to achieve. I have come to the realisation that I am not the only one on this journey, and this has been a source of encouragement. I have read scripts and heard of stories of people who have lived to achieve their goals and raise their voices to fight against



discrimination and stigma. In a hostile environment some of these people have been able and overcome suicide, grief due to loss of loved ones mental health I am working towards fighting homophobia through writing and publishing poetry. I may not be financially stable at the moment however with continuous determination to and adequate support, there is no limit to what can achieve. One of my greatest challenges has been rejection in many forms. I have experienced rejection through expulsion from schools being abandoned by family, being chased from sports clubs and losing different jobs.

Under some circumstances I have been denied salary because of my sexuality and gender orientation and the stigma associated with it. I have received a lot of criticism from family and friends, nonetheless, I have learnt to accept my gender identity.

I am a human being like everyone else and I will not sit back and

watch while I am denied my rights. Upon realizing that I barely had the opportunity to complete my education I focused on earning a living getting a partner and starting a family. In the near future, as I start my family, I would like to adopt at least two children. Despite the fact that this process could be complicated, I am determined to go all the way and address these concerns in the legal system. One of the main concerns I would like to address in the queer community is entitlement and apathy. I see those two traits as holding queer people back because they often look towards others to meet their needs, a thing that is impossible under many circumstances. Additionally, I hope to sensitize them about how to handle the challenges that come with living as an “out queer person” in Uganda.

To be honest being queer in

Uganda is an emotional rollercoaster for the vast majority of people. One's emotions can change right from being confused to being excited, then being shocked. The psychological challenges that come as a result of being on this journey are endless. Some of these may include drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, suicide and sexual harassment. In order to stay on course and overcome these challenges; one needs to accept their reality, and do whatever it takes to take care of oneself, stay positive and be optimistic.

I believe that to attain freedom, respect and consideration from society we need to disrupt the common narrative that being queer is being unsuccessful.



INNER WHISPERS

by Michael Bill, 21

My name is Michael Bill, I am a transman, I know much has been said, we have all had stories of many different people. The sad and the happy ones but I hope this can make sense to someone out there, it's neither a happy nor a sad one. Being trans has painted a totally different perspective of life to me. The discrimination that comes along with it is something one has to live with each and everyday. The feeling of being born in a body you feel is not right for you is extremely difficult not everybody truly understands it. Desiring to belong in the body you see as right yet society perceives this as insane is disheartening. I am only human, and on my way to my destiny.

The way others have travelled their journeys some passing through and others leaving, I deserve love; this does not mean I'm forcing you to love me but to say the least accord me the respect I deserve. I long for dignity, if you expect me to respect you, it has got to be both ways. I have got a loving and agreeable heart. Why judge me based on what I am? I know this seems a lot to take in and we may not see eye to eye but try. All I ask is that you give it a shot and it's okay if you fail, don't shove it in my face. I was like you and I am still like you. We have all experienced true happiness but sometimes this is gone in a twinkling of an eye, then suddenly I feel sad and

have no clue why. It's alarming that out of the blue, find myself locked up somewhere I can't comprehend. All the memories of the happy times I had are no more and it makes no sense. I am back to the starting point. I feel low, very lonely, no one seems to understand what you are going through. If you are like me you sink into depression.

Understanding love from the perspective of a transman is complex, there is a lot to consider. One may be a transman but gay, one could still, be bisexual but trans. It shouldn't really matter, we are all simply seeking someone to love and yearn to be loved. I have met quite a number of lesbians that don't want to engage in sexual



relationships with transmen. I may not see things the way they do but that's okay, as long as they stay respectful and are certain about their decisions of whom to love.

I write this based on my experiences of love. Often it is hard for a transman to be vulnerable about how he feels so he may try to let go. It's because of the various challenges they experience including mental ones; for some its body dysmorphia, others have low self-esteem the list is endless. Some have resorted to drug abuse and faced its implications others have lost jobs and it still is a lot to take in.

Nonetheless, I see no harm in being vulnerable,

I actually believe that holding back has been the source of so much pain for us transmen. Sometimes I wonder, "Is it really that bad to be so vulnerable?" I know society labels vulnerability as a weakness but opening up and pouring out what you feel is a brave and courageous way of being. I'd really appreciate it if people walked into my life with good intentions, don't just come in and trample on me and then leave. If you think we may not work out as a couple, leave respectfully, don't go on leaving broken pieces of hearts ;cold hearts, and causing scars because that which was once a sweet little soul will go dark because of your actions. I

believe in true love, that it is and exists. I am convinced that there is one special person meant for everyone. However, I have found that belief in true love is no longer popular, people that see love the way I do are considered weak. Vulnerability paves a path for growth and strengthens one just like the old adage goes , "what does not kill you makes you stronger" and it's okay to feel the pain, it's okay to let it hurt, it's okay to cry because time heals wounds. Every time one tries to open up it boomerangs back at them. The world will use your word against theirs and remind you of your inadequacies when you least expect it. I know nothing ever comes on a silver plate, we have to put in the



rigorous work it takes to get to the top. No matter what happens, let us not forget who we are. When you feel like you are at that point in life where you deserve to be, don't forget to look back and help the next person in line. One act of kindness can change everything for someone, don't get too comfortable and proud, lend a helping hand remember to stay humble and kind. I believe all we need is a pillar to learn on, but who is going to be your pillar, think about it, I know we all want to survive in such a world but let us not forget, we are all but human. There is nothing so different about us we are all exceptional in our own ways. Let us listen and support one another. Spread love not hate!



WRAPPED BOTTLES

by Gazel, 30

Beneath lies queer scattered pieces with no formulas,
different echoes, different melodies filled with love.

Yet beneath are queer untold wounds.

Beneath the wrapped bottles, from the broken pieces,
She wraps her strength into creativity.

From her sorrow, she strikes with pride.

From within she builds
her wall composed of love, resilience, persistence,
unveiling her bareness.

Heteronormativity it is.

Myths they sing, a choice they say,
Western they phase it,
Un African they customize it.

Who am I?

I'm a lawyer

I'm a doctor

I'm a humanist

I'm a teacher

I'm a nurse

I'm a mother

I'm a market vendor

I'm a lesbian

I'm woman I'm human And I'm me.



CLIMBING MOUNTAINS

by Alice, 29

My name is Alice. Living as a lesbian in Uganda is a challenge. Every time I think about it, I wish living and being an LBQ person is not criminalized because in my personal experience, there are very many haters in the country some young others old.

This attitude is not uncommon due to lack of enough knowledge about LBQ persons.

Life would be very polite if large numbers of people are sensitized and who knows maybe the country would be more peaceful.

Many LBQ persons are talented and gifted with brains and because of this they have created employment for non LBQ persons. Further still, some have participated in helping others through charity. My dream is to start a motorcycle riding school for women, training those interested in learning how to ride because it motivates me to see an LBQ person shining out there through her sweat and hard work. I am carrying out private training lessons, a thing I single handedly started as I work towards

processing a certificate as a qualified trainer.

I am a queer woman who got to know about my sexual feelings for fellow women after the realization that I could no longer control myself. This happened because all the times I tried to get involved with a man, I realised that I would hurt myself. I was always At the very end of this journey, God is for us all. offended by their touches, arrogant talk, and patriarchal behavior which didn't happen whenever I was with a woman. It felt so good, I longed to be close to them all the time; talk about silly stuff,

laugh and cry together. I would only welcome men into my life as friends. I made it clear from the start that it's my right to choose whom to love; had they come with other Intentions they would be disappointed. The way I see it, queer love is a normal part of life. Love in queer relationships barely differ from the love between

that is it. It's about understanding the other person's partner, knowing that you are dating your friend during the time you are together and keeping it flexible.

I love children and would love to have my own biological child in the near future. However, not under pressure from family; besides have been taking care of my own relatives' kids for a while now and I can only imagine how sweet having my own child would feel. With support from my partner, I would probably consider adoption as well. Unfortunately, there are a range of mental health challenges among most LBQ persons because many are still closeted. The fear of having their family or friends find out about their sexuality is daunting. I haven't come out of the closet but I have learnt to accept myself and put myself first. At the very end of this journey, God is for us all. Despite the trials, I urge us to support one another and persevere through solidarity and love.



LEFT IN THE TUNNEL

by Cruize, 22

My name is Cruize, I am a lesbian staying in Uganda, am 22 years old. My story started when I discovered I was queer! I grew up with a few siblings while staying in Kampala. I come from a very staunch Christian family and my parents are church elders who always wanted my siblings and I to serve in church. I did enjoy the experience but I always felt like my life was different from my siblings. From the time I was little, I loved putting on my brothers' trousers, shorts and shirts. I felt comfortable only around boys especially while playing and socializing.

Elders around me always said that I look a lot like my father. I was more fond of my father in comparison to my mother, and it's for that reason that I tried my level best to emulate him. I had a walk quite similar to his, and this propelled me even more to believe that I was the spitting image of him. A while went by, and I had to start school. I remember; I was taken to primary one and was given a blouse for a

uniform instead of a shirt. I cried so hard in the office in front of my parents and the administrators until I was given a shirt, which only boys wore. Little did I know, that this was but the start of a thrilling journey of self-discovery. I studied well and excelled at the primary level. At this time of my life, I had no clue about queerness and what it entailed. I later joined an only girl's secondary school. In my senior one that I began to hear about queer people, through watching my schoolmates. I understood what happens in queer relationships. I saw quite a number of girls in my school who were tomboys but didn't know that most of them were lesbians. On many occasions when these girls were caught, they were expelled from school. My first romantic experience took place when I was in S.1, a girl in S.3 approached me and told me they liked me. The feeling was exhilarating. I was really

startled. I was young and afraid and you can only imagine what was running through my mind. I had the perception that it was very wrong since many had been expelled from school and people spoke ill about it. It was at this point that I started developing feelings of affection toward girls. I was only 13 years old when I realized that I was queer. It took me a long while to internalize and accept. I lived in denial praying that God would change me. Sometimes I felt heterosexual for a few moments then this would fade away, leaving me feeling haunted, traumatized and empty. At 14 years of age, I had my first kiss.

This officially marked my turning point from living in denial.

I started living with ease as a queer person because I found contentment and was excited to say the least. I realized that queer love was and is just like any other kind of love. One acquires feelings of love and affection towards someone they



feel attracted to though not of the opposite sex. I eventually accepted the girl who confessed her love for me and we started our relationship at school. There was not much that went on between the two of us besides holding hands on the compound, tight hugs, writing love letters and kissing. These little gestures of love always made me feel special.

With time, the school got to know about our relationship, they called for an assembly in which they embarrassed us by telling everyone that we were dirty and not fit to be in the same community with the rest of the students. As if this was not enough they branded us as a bad omen to the society and expelled us from school. Our parents were called to pick us up. While we waited for them to arrive at school, all my friends had already started pointing fingers at me, yelling insults and calling me names like Sodom and Gomorrah, devil, rotten tomato and many

more. This made me feel miserable and eventually resulted in low self-esteem. I lost so many friends because nobody wanted to associate with me because I was in love with a fellow girl. When my mother arrived at school and they narrated to her the reason for my expulsion, she cried in the office and told me I was no longer her child. She continued to say that I need to find my own way because she has never given birth to a lesbian. She carried my belongings and shoved them into the car, and left me all by myself at the gate. Christ! I started thinking about where to start and where to go but I just couldn't figure things out. I was accustomed to receiving everything from my parents. I thought about committing suicide, I just wanted a car to run over me so that I die because my life had come to an end. I moved slowly down this road with tears in my eyes and all I had with me was the school uniform and shoes,

not a single coin in my pocket. "You have to be strong on your own, I said to myself. So much changed for me. I had to live by myself on the streets and could hardly get a meal to survive on for the day.

I endured all the hardships as I looked for small jobs to do in order to earn some little money for a living. Somehow, I managed to go through it all. In various ways, God saw me through and I got a job to clean in a supermarket in Kampala.

I came to the realization that being an LBQ person in Uganda is really tough especially if one is a tomboy. People out rightly refer to me as gay, others keep asking themselves whether I am male or female and they utter annoying words just to see my reaction. I believe some of the greatest challenges most LBQ persons experience in Uganda include; bullying in schools, denial and neglect from family members and as friends which results into mental challenges such as depression, anxiety and stress.



These psychological difficulties could escalate into suicide since one feels like they have nothing left to live for.

In spite of these trials, I have managed to cope. I pray to God that one-day things could get better and being LBQ is legalized. During my journey of personal growth, I have attended gatherings and seminars prepared by LBQ organizations that sensitize us and inform us of our rights. They improve our mental health and teach us how to cope and stay strong. I believe that the best is yet to come and strive to extend my horizons. In addition, I try not to disclose to friends that am lesbian, even when they ask endlessly. I know they could harm me since they are homophobic. Above all, I keep hard work central to all I do so as to improve my wellbeing. When I got my second job, I was discontinued just because I was always wearing trousers. The reason I was given was that they couldn't continue employing me

everyone is entitled to love whoever they wish to. I hope that we too can enjoy freedom of speech and expression with the rights to equal resources that we would have the chance to preach love to the heterosexual community.

In my experience, queer love is unique compared to heterosexual love. In queer relationships, partners understand each other more and the bond they have with each other is stronger. Love is beautiful and remains a precious thing created by God. I would love to continue enjoying the wonderful relationship I have with my girlfriend. In addition, I would like to have children either through adoption or preferably using the fertility opportunities available. Being a parent to my own children would bring happiness and satisfaction. Watching my kids play would be my joy just like it is for every parent. My experience

could encourage other LBQ people living in silence and self-denial that they too can bear children. Additionally I think, information about childbirth and family planning needs to be made more available to the LBQ community, this would make it easier for us to make informed decisions. I value hard work and will work tooth and nail by saving up money to live comfortably. I hope to have built a decent home in five years' time and started a family with my girlfriend. I would further like to work on our immigration to a favorable country like Canada. We are already working on this and trying to see that we acquire green cards. I have been inspired by LBQ people who are influential and involved in activism. I look up to countries that have legalized being LBQ and have favorable policies. This serves as a source of hope and encouragement for the way I view the Ugandan LBQ community. I believe that one



day; our voices will be loud enough that we will be heard by the government, that we shall be free to enjoy life like all other citizens, and occupy leadership positions as well. I would like to see LBQ persons who are members of parliament participate in national events and take part in influential decision making. In order to achieve all my aspirations, I am working closely

with some LBQ organizations to sensitize the people in our community and place of work about LBQ rights. Furthermore, I am planning to establish a home for the LBQ people who are homeless. I believe once they gather, they can be empowered with different skills that they can utilize to create jobs and opportunities. This could help eliminate the

problem of denial of jobs and unemployment. I believe that getting my green card to Canada will enable me to raise my voice even more for the rights of LBQ persons and that this will present a platform and golden opportunity. I am thankful for this opportunity to write about my story and experience as an LBQ in Uganda. I am proud to be part of this community.



TALES OF A NON-BINARY LESBIAN

by Elizabeth Nabunya

I am a non - binary lesbian. In Uganda, lesbians are part of a marginalized community. We are often despised by the public based on sexuality until they know what we are capable of, at least from my point of view. This means that so many questions will go round about when I am getting married, whether this is a phase or if I even do exist. I am also a person living with a disability, low vision to be specific. It would have been easier for me to say I am just lesbian but being non-binary means that even among LBQ in the Ugandan context I am mis-gendered and referred to as she I need to keep reminding people that it's 'they.' When I think about LBQs in Uganda, I think about segregation based on the way many of my queer

friends and activists have been treated. I remember those that have been forced out of shelters and accused of being gay, my friends that have been arrested in bars yet they had no intentions of looking for visibility. Personally, I think about the times I have been outed by people and as a result received back lash. I was excited to discover that I am a womxn that loves womxn because I always felt like something was different about me, I was never excited about meeting guys like my peers even through school. My questions were answered, I also found that when I started dating girls the connection was magnetic, it went beyond just sexual attraction. Later coming out as non-binary addressed my feelings and thoughts of not wanting to identify as neither

masculine nor feminine. The downside is that my parents and some family members are homophobic so finding out meant they treat me differently and the response was harsh, being from a religious family I have been considered dirty and sinful. It also means not as many friends and family members will respect and celebrate my relationship as would have if I was heterosexual and people often will mis-gender me.

Well, I am working towards completing my master's in Counseling psychology and having a successful counseling career. I hope for more growth in my relationship with my partner, and probably a child. I hope that the LBQ community will open more doors for people who are skilled and



knowledgeable in different fields like education, medicine, social work so that they can provide queer-friendly services. I also hope for fair and just leadership in queer spaces, for personal growth to happen for many queer people. I am working to the best of my ability. I am working on my master's thesis 'Experiences and coping among Parents of Children on the Autism spectrum want to have completed all my revisions by the end of this year and to graduate next year I am offering counseling services to LBQ community members when I can and also looking for teaching opportunities. I also ran a pastry business 'Liza Pastries' which I started during the COVID period to help me earn extra income. Queer love according to me, is a romantic or intimate relationship between two or more lesbians. It

could be monogamous or non-monogamous. I found out I was lesbian in 2018 nearly three years ago. however have had the sense that I could be queer all my life right from my primary school years when I had crushes on girls till now. In my first years at University, I always craved intimacy and a lasting relationship with a girl, but it didn't happen till I did my master's in psychology and was forced to reflect on why I always found hetero relationships empty and unfulfilling. I was surprised when I discovered, it took a while for me to take it in. Once I was at home with it, I was filled with inner peace. My greatest threat was lesbophobia especially from the people that matter, my friends and family. It still is. I became cautious, I had to protect myself from people with lesbophobia

views. I was more certain of who I really am and this helped me be at peace with myself. I had a more exciting sex life. I came to the realization that I was part of yet another marginalized group, I wouldn't have the opportunity to have the ordinary wedding, I'd have to get married in one of those countries in which same sex marriage is legal. I had to think of ways to leave more independently, with less support from close family and friends. Queer love is more liberating. It's easier for people to share chores and responsibilities in lesbian relationships because girls are sometimes more flexible than guys. The sex can be more exciting because as women we understand our bodies better than men do. When I discovered I was queer, I had to hide from some family members, especially those with



in my close knit family ,maternal aunts and my biological parents. My siblings and cousins were okay with it. I had to be careful thought about who I talk to about my sexuality and gender. I think parenting is not about whether one is heterosexual or lesbian. I think one just needs to be ready for the challenge, that's all. One needs to know for example that within the first month of pregnancy the fetus' nervous system has begun to develop, and understand the overall development of a child, let alone be willing to make all the necessary sacrifices a responsible parent needs to, I want to have a child, one. I have always wished to have a person to share my world with, the world can get lonely and so many people can leave or may, but I want to believe that if I work at my relationship with my child,

I will have an honest and we need to have access to family planning and safe abortion services, one cannot claim to be feminist and yet deny themselves or others an opportunity to love whoever they want to make the very personal decision to either carry a pregnancy to term or have an abortion. If abortion was legal and safe many womxn lives would have been spared, just by being able to walk to a health center and ask for pills or a safe and affordable surgical procedure. Lesbians are often tangled up in complicated situations like sexual harassment, abuse and rape, sometimes these result in unwanted pregnancies. We need to ask ourselves why every man's sperm and penis should be monitored yet it insists it must have access to what a womxn does with her vagina. I think

adoption and fertility opportunities should be made more available for LBQ women. We need those services, many lesbians want children but can't society does not insist that Mental health challenges are mostly as a result of homophobia. It gives rise to so many other issues ; right from childhood if parents realize a child may be queer they become overly harsh and protective. Queer children grow up with low self-esteem, some are bullied in school too. As adults' lesbians become depressed because the seek for acceptance in a world where they are often despised. I think that we each have to find ways to manage our anger, pain and stress before it blows up on us. We need to keep letting off the steam each day, kind of like gently reducing the air in a balloon instead of pricking it with a pin and having it burst



suddenly, it's a cautious and gradual process. One may also choose to take time and sit with their challenges, sort and rearrange, sometimes we may not have clear solutions to everything but we can make it lighter, easier on us. When I am overwhelmed, I speak to a confidant, or do some baking. I also go for therapy ,I believe I deserve a chance at life an therapy helps make things better

I also meditate to calm down, but we are each unique individuals and we have different ways of dealing, often the answers lie within. As an LBQ person I have experienced homophobia, especially after being outed by family members. I have been referred to as sinful and ungodly by some Christian family members and even asked to stay single.

I have also experienced embodies solidarity and visibility and identity. We need new strategies with which to create our own culture. I believe that we ought to be fair in our ways and encourage each other to be the very best version of themselves, lifting others when they fall. Let us persist, insist and continue to guard our walls from homophobic parasites who camouflage in rainbow colors.

I am strong, proud and satisfied with myself. I am forever grateful to the universe for creating me in the most unique way with both male and female genes.



PAINTING MY REALITY

by BOZILY, 33

The lesbian community has groomed me to live a liberal life. Sexuality is no longer an issue in comparison to economic hardships surrounding the LBQ community. It is characterised by high level of illiteracy and unemployment, especially in Uganda. Embracing change, personal growth and unconventional ideologies has been a slow process. The unnecessary competition due to the fear that there are not enough resources and opportunities for LBQ womxn has led to disagreements and strife. This holds many LBQ womxn back from reaching their full potential. It makes unity and solidarity almost unattainable, and hence downplays the building of a meaningful collective. As a result of the discrimination that I watched many face, I was motivated to work exceptionally hard and be good at what I do. I was afraid of facing double discrimination for being poor and a lesbian. The pressure of trying

to fit cost me a mental I was afraid of facing double discrimination for being poor and a lesbian. The pressure of trying to fit cost me a mental break down. Episodes of mental illness became so frequent in my life that I resorted to drug use to numb my pain. However, along the way, I went on a journey of self- discovery.

Along the way, I developed an interest in healing others and myself and doing advocacy through Art and Craft. I am passionate about using nature to heal particularly through camping and regenerative work internal healing. I view this as a way to help me and other LBQ womxn activate and improve wellness and therapy for emotional balance. On my path to personal growth and healing with nature; I took to fishing and rowing. I love canoeing and lake tours. I dream of canoeing one day on an ocean. Lyric writing, singing, dancing and

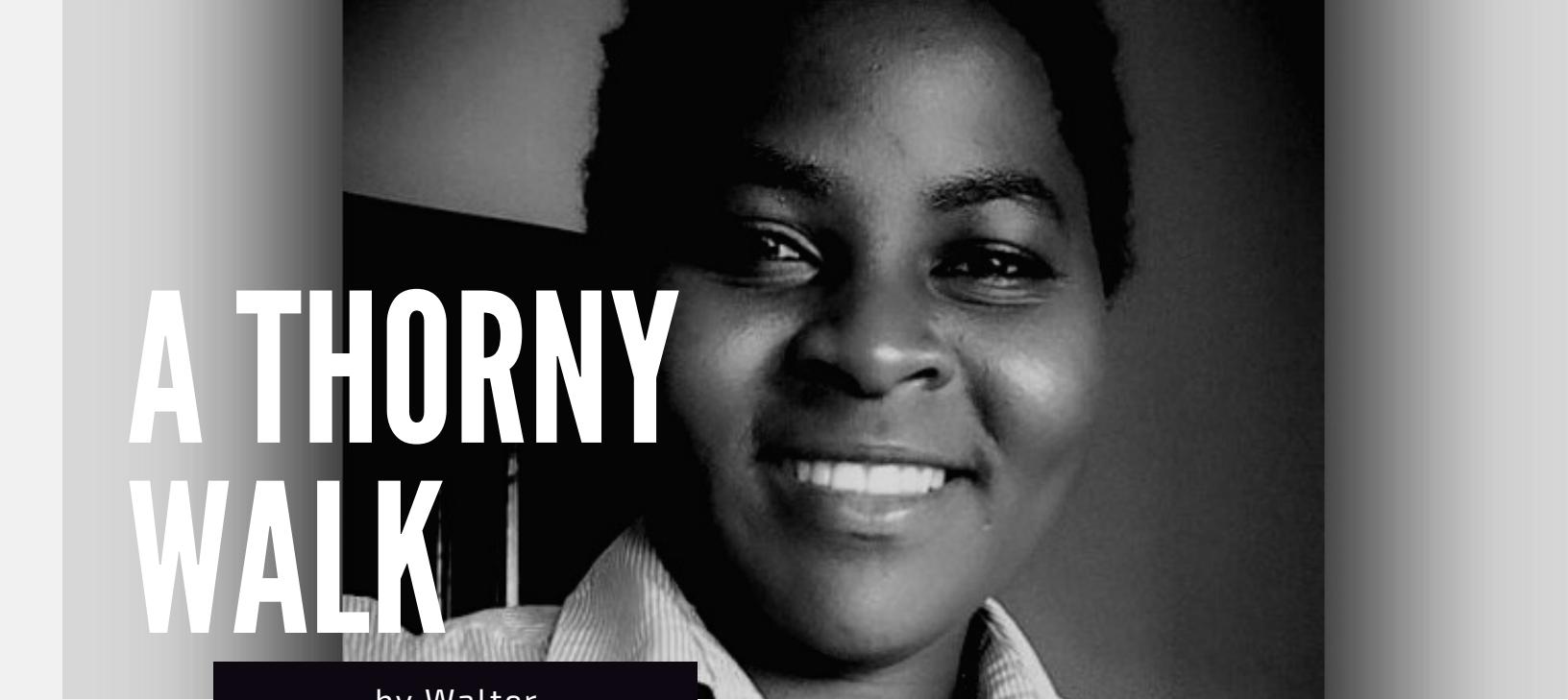
seeking solitude keeps me in check as well. I have used all these activities to enable me deal with the fear of being discriminated in social and economic places. I have found them helpful on many occasions. I have found that voluntary participation in such activities helps us as LBQ womxn resolve challenges and deal with the bad blood among us. I believe that love conquers all obstacles.

Furthermore, I have realized am everyone because everyone is in me. I have learned important life lessons from each person one who has corrected and taught me. I have gained from people that have criticized and betrayed me as well as those who have supported and protected me. I now appreciate that life is a maze. We have been created as powerful individuals to occupy various spaces in the universe. All we need to attain our goals as the LBQ movement is unity. We need to build a community that



embodies solidarity and visibility and identity. We need new strategies with which to create our own culture. I believe that we ought to be fair in our ways and encourage each other to be the very best version of themselves, lifting others when they fall. Let us persist, insist and continue to guard our walls from homophobic parasites who camouflage in rainbow colors.

I am strong, proud and satisfied with myself. I am forever grateful to the universe for creating me in the most unique way with both male and female genes.



A THORNY WALK

by Walter

The Covid-19 lockdown has been quite an exasperating experience for me. In April this year, I started my small business dealing in plastics, unfortunately, the 42-days lockdown was announced. During this time, my mum fell sick and was admitted. The reality of nursing a COVID patient, having only recently heard about Covid-19, was terrifying. I was the only bread winner at home and I definitely felt the pinch. As if this was not enough, my sister was infected with COVID 19 as well, sadly she failed to make it and died.

I continued to carry the responsibility of being the financial provider at home. Everyone was looking up to me. Shortly after losing a sister, my brother died. I was confused and overwhelmed.

While all this was going on, my mum was still in the hospital and the bills were piling each passing day.

I had to sell my small plastic business in order to pay for the hospital bills. The pressure of caring for an ill mum while grieving my deceased brother and sister broke me.

While at the hospital, I received medical attention. Doctors thought I had contracted a UTI, however their diagnosis was inaccurate. I was given an injection but the situation became worse. After receiving the injection many other illnesses cropped up one of these was a persistent cough which worsened each day. I had to borrow two hundred thousand shillings from someone, this enabled me to do a COVID test. It's after this that I discovered I had COVID-19. I had to leave my home and stay with someone in Kyaliwajjala. COVID 19 gravely affected me. I lost taste and appetite and was in constant fear. I got attacks every night

for a fortnight and could hardly sleep. During the third stage of illness, I struggled with frequent fever and pain all over the body. This created much anxiety within me. I relied on herbal medicine because I could not afford to pay for western medicine. Quite surprisingly the herbal medicine helped me recover. In addition to this, I did lots of daily exercise which proved helpful.

Having recovered, my search for a job resumed. I did all I possibly could to find work but all was in vain. During one of the darkest times in my life, I saw a light at the end of the tunnel when I received food relief from FARUG. I was ill prepared for the second lockdown, I was still dealing with a lot from the previous one. At the moment, I am still job hunting. I have applied to several places, but not received any feedback.



DEAR DIARY

by Anonymous

You know that feeling...!
Each new day is a blank page.
Meaning writing my story and writing for another.
When all is said and done,
A good life is important than keeping a good diary.
It is a last place to go if you wish to seek the truth.
In many ways, am inordinately, indescribably,
Amazingly lucky that my identity never had to be a
secret.
Kept only between the pages of my diary and locked
up
With a key carried around my neck as a ribbon.
Yet I know my dear diary, that this cannot be the case
for all of us.
Just like we all experience our identities in unique
ways.
We all have our favorites, divergent feelings
And have different relationships with our dear queer
selves.
When did you come out to your journal?
What did you write?
Dear Diary.....



BURNING RAGE

by THE COLOR BAE

©PICTURE FROM THE INTERNET

For some, what a reason she does not call for tragedy,
she is always careful and steady.

Less she knows about the malice filled in the hearts of
men who toss their dice to her in anticipation of harm.

Unlucky the PROUD GIRL CHILD is because she's
always in target as a rare flower species. She's put to
race but she gives up to their pace.

She's forced into intercourse as she yells to the cruel
world but no help as if care free mode is new fuel for
the human race.

Her voice gets coarse and slowly can't be heard
because of the pain that covers her.

Disappointed in the society, she is filled with
vengeance she finds no justice to her satisfaction in a
country full of corruption and bribery.

Worse comes to the worst that the criminal(s) is
unknown.

The candle in the female head burns with low flame
since there is no more rise and power to frame.

Hate is a big word which is left in HER though the male
counterparts deserve it.

Not to blame to have it.

THE POWER OF BOLDLY FACING YOUR FEARS

by Haddy

At the start of the lockdown, I experienced a series of challenges. As a matter of fact, so much was going on in my life that I would not dare to stay at home with anything to keep me busy. I am a lesbian who identifies herself with the pronouns “she”. The 42 days were a mess, because they came at a time when my partner and I were going through a rough patch. We were not doing well at all. We started a heated argument that resulted into a fight and in which we physically and emotionally hurt each other. Prior to this, I had hurt my partner a lot; we had several episodes of physical violence in which both she and I had suffered a lot of pain.

From this point on, our relationship could no longer hold. The fight sent me on a downward spiral; I was drunk in love and had suicidal thoughts after my partner sent me away. At that time, I had left my parents’ home; this meant I had nowhere to stay. It was impossible for me to go back to their place. The break up resulted into many mental health challenges for me. I blamed myself, felt unworthy and wanted to kill myself nearly all the time. To keep my mind off all that was going on, I applied for a job. During the interview process, I was filled with feelings of inadequacy and doubt. I was

broken; I was in and out of my body, much of the time unaware of my responses. Quite surprisingly, I got the job. I was glad and satisfied with that achievement. I tried to heal, but was constantly being affected by my ex-partner’s conversations about me with her other friends. They kept on asking me what I did to her. The negativity and the words kept coming to this day. She referred to me as crazy, and I was left thinking only about how unworthy I am. I continuously tried to make positive changes in my life but my ex-partner kept talking. She destroyed my relationship with my cousin with her rumors about me. As if this was not enough, she outed me to



my family. Almost half my family currently know about my sexuality because of her. Even my mum reached out to me upon hearing what was going on. It felt horrible to disappoint her, one of the people dearest to me. I cried and stood in the middle of the high way wanting a boda boda to knock me down. I had to explain to my close friend why I lost so much weight because they could not help but notice.

I was blessed to have people accept and support me just the way I was. I called my grand papa and made up a story in order to get some money from him. I was glad that granny responded positively and promised to send me the money I had asked for. He advised me to get a room and he gave me rent for three months. This gave me way forward and room to plan my next move. He continued providing rent and upkeep money for a while. With his support, I was able to find my bearings. I am forever grateful for people like him.

I am a project development officer at a certain organization in kabalagala. My relationship with the boss is kind of good. My boss is a good man; he has always been supportive, accepting my excuses whenever I do not work. Despite all this, I worry about his behavior. I constantly wonder what his ulterior motive is, but that does not stop me from working. On my third day at work, he asked me to get a house close to the workplace. This made me raise my eyebrows. He eventually got me a house, but my suspicion did not stop. My boss would take me for rides in his car and whilst I was there ensured that I am comfortable, with time, started communicating more to me through WhatsApp, he would ask for photos and selfies when we talked. This made me angry, I told him off and assured him I am not the type he thought I am, but he would not listen. I felt

violated because of his constant naggings. He claimed to miss me. It seemed to him like I was extremely desperate and this job was my ticket out of the difficult COVID-19 times.

He started coming to my place unannounced, he would frequent my place often late in the evenings. He would pretend to ask for water. With time, he got so comfortable in my space that he started giving orders. Frustrated, I confessed to him that I had a boyfriend, just so that he would cut me some slack. The more I hanged around him, the more humiliated I felt. As all this was on going, I remained quiet. Looking back at my decision to remain silent, I was filled with regret, each time he came to me, I would feel disturbed. I would sit on my bed with endless questions.

I felt used. One day he took me out with his friends, he got drunk and told them that I was his wife. I responded by convincing them



that I was a worker not his wife. This made him livid and he thus forced to admit his love for me. Whenever he would insist that he loved me, I would remind him that I had a boyfriend. My work mates kept teasing me that am the boss's wife. This left me emotionally bruised. After a while, I stopped letting him come to my place and responding to his calls or non-work related messages. I stood firm and confidently told him that I could not stand his behavior towards me any longer. It was not an easy choice to make; it involved many tears and an inner dialogue of endless questions. One day, a coworker came to my place to notify me about a work related meeting, which I agreed to attend. To my surprise, the boss had asked me to return to work. He said he would not fire me over such petty issues. I was quite skeptical but I hearkened to his call and resumed work.

NEVER WAS I ALONE

by PAT

Hello, am pat, staying with my dad, brother, and girlfriend whom I call a friend while with my dad. The 42 days of lockdown brought along mixed feelings for me. Cooking was something I grew to love while staying home. I found myself socializing at home much more than I was during this period than ever before. One of the other activities I took part in was rearing poultry, and I was lucky to get help with this from my uncle who stays abroad who sent money.

Unfortunately, when the 42 days were announced; there were restrictions on transport, barely any means to travel, hence access to work places became a hustle. I couldn't go anywhere except stay home. If I really had to be at work, I would get there by foot. This was extremely tiring and this was so stressing for me. The ugliest bit was that I was sick of COVID and was down for two weeks, I had all the signs and symptoms, couldn't eat, smell,

taste, lots of headaches and for a fact, I would be sweating like nothing, also feeling cold at most times but lucky enough, I got my treatment from home and I was on natural remedies as well. So it helped me get well faster. Yaaah....actually I had contracted the virus from my dad whom I had been nursing, but got healed too. The fact that people were dying, compared to the first wave, hearing horrible stories from the news got me more terrified, trust me I was really scared. I kept on thinking....will the next minute be my last... will I be able to wake up in the morning...? So I was stressed and depressed which made it worse for me. I became bitter with myself and I did not want to talk to anybody. Before lockdown, I had gotten a new job in the first week, I was supposed to start working, but I sort of lost the chance. I was also meant to do my CP exams, which we were around

June/July. But we didn't the fact that we had gone back into lockdown though now, they have been scheduled for October and now I have more time to read. I could not access my friends, communication was online and phone calls which was pretty much costly than I had anticipated. This was so stressful that I wished FARUG would be in position to see me through. Just maybe or even if there was a way I could access a counsellor on board or even share their contact on social media, trust me I had no idea about that. Filled with stress, anger, depression, I started thinking of so many ill things and my reason was it that I did not have the counselor's number or what. But as a person, I wished that there was a way out, I had to deal with my depression and show myself the right way out. Food, yes of course, food was cheap but there was no money to buy it. Before my uncle sent money for upkeep, honestly there was no food, the



mere fact that dad was longer working. So it has not been ok and there was not any ka money. This was not easy. But then I received a call from one of the staff at FARUG, about food relief of beans, rice and maize flour, which was in good timing. I extend my gratitude to FARUG for being there for me in the trying days. That is when I got to know that I was never alone.



STUCK IN THE JOBLESSNESS

by Usher

Hello, I'm Usher a lesbian (stud) living in Uganda. During the most recent total lock down, my girlfriend and I were found making out, by her parents. It was such a horrific experience for both of us."

. The society in which we are is largely homophobic, and many families condemn homosexual activity of any kind. My parents chased me from home and quite unfortunately, my girlfriend too was chased a few days later by her parents. From

this point on, it became quite difficult for us to survive. The isolation from our families was further worsened by the fact that everyone was locked down. Consequently we could barely ask for help from friends who also seemed to be struggling financially, very little could be done about the situation. My partner and I were able to find a room to rent and tried to find employment to make ends meet. We needed food to sustain and jobs to keep

us going as well. It was tough for us because during this period, there were hardly any jobs available and most people were surviving off their personal businesses. Right now, we are still hanging in limbo without enough income to pay rent, having stayed in the same place for several months without paying. We are in search of gainful employment that will enable us pay our bills and meet our necessities to date.



ROBBED BUT STILL STANDING

by Desolate

I am no longer interested in any business ventures because I used to sell second hand clothes, which lost value due to the total lockdown. When the 42 days of lockdown were declared; I had to seek refuge so I went to stay with my parents because I was not doing well financially. Unfortunately, I had a fight with them. This resulted in my leaving and moving to my small rental. I had nothing with me. I survived only at the mercy of the neighbors.

I felt so sad, and wished that my parents and I had never fought at all. A week later, I was robbed. I could no longer stay in that environment I left to stay in a shelter. I was extremely depressed. As if that was not enough, I was raped. All these experiences left me jaded. Thinking about the lockdown is so traumatic for me. I'd rather just forget these experiences. Everyone was struggling to survive.

However, I am now undergoing counseling, and it's been helpful because it has become easier for me to tell my story. I am recovering and ready to face the world afresh. I went back home to my mother's house in the village to settle and begin a new life.



© PICTURE FROM THE INTERNET

THE SILENCE

by Last Born

Better kept inside, amid a myriad of flowers is a black rose I cannot utter it
out because there are no words to
describe.

Stuck in this mind, a sack of empty withered dreams
A hurt from the deep within like a sharp sword in the heart Betrayed by a
crowd, I can't say a word.

Too painful to beep, I can only weep.
Deep sorrow through which I can't bear a situation ship, So I shut up and
let up before I roll up.

Speech isn't my thing, so I write for multitudes that won't narrate.
I can be talkative at times but I hesitate Leaving in a world of treachery and
hate

In fear for small things groomed big by the state.

I speak with a pen for the silent.

It's the little I can do for solace of emotions.

I never imitate,

In my head, I meditate.

My words fresh like an echo of new music

I hurt because these memories relay memories
of the beautiful and the ugly mistakes in my head at a flashing speed.

Rape, harassment, rejection.

Silence is who I am.

For all my words in vain have been
My past behind me, head up, chin high, Back straight like a model, I walk.



©PICTURE FROM THE INTERNET

INFECTED

by sarah

Once upon a time, a baby called Sarah (not real name) was born in a village called Kireka in Uganda. Her mother was a single parent whose husband denied the pregnancy. She grew up into a teenager and had to join high school. Her mother could not afford to pay her school fees, so her uncle requested to take care of her and cater to her every need. Her mother was very glad and happy knowing Allah had an answer to her prayers.

Days, weeks, months, and years passed while both of them kept in close communication. Sarah's uncle started behaving strangely towards his niece Sarah. He started making sexual advances towards her. As time went by Sarah's uncle started sexually abusing her. She kept silent about this, and did not even let her mother know about her uncle's predatory behavior of forcing her to have intercourse with him.

The abuse continued until after her graduation. At this point, she decided to go and test for HIV. Unfortunately, she found out that she had contracted the HIV virus. She chose to be vulnerable and open up to her mother about it. Upon hearing this shocking news, her mother collapsed and died.

Adopted from a true story



QUEER PARENTING

©PICTURE FROM THE INTERNET

by Pola

Pola a 37-year-old woman married to her partner for four years. They decided to have children with their gay friend Moses. When Pola and Warry got their first son Ivan, things started changing. Moses and his partner Dickson were free to visit Ivan anytime they felt like. This annoyed Pola so much because she felt that these two were encroaching upon too much of her time with Ivan. They wanted to spend all their time with Ivan, leaving Pola and her partner Warry with none.

Pola and Warry decided to shift to control Moses and Dickson's frequent visits to see Ivan. This decision did not go down well with Warry who felt like it was unnecessary to keep shifting.

She thought the problem would be resolved by simply having a conversation with Moses and Dickson and asking them not to visit as often. When Warry invited Moses and Dickson to talk about and how Pola had been affected by their constant need to spend time with Ivan. Following their conversation, Moses decided to report the matter to police and file for custody over Ivan. That Ivan was his biological son.

This infuriated Pola so much that she wanted to run away with Ivan. This was not possible because they live in Uganda. They could barely do anything much to follow up on the case because being homosexual in Uganda is illegal. Pola and

Warry decided to look for a legal forum to help them win the custody of their son. While at it, a lot of violence is going on in their homes with each of them accusing each other of creating a mess out of this situation. This case is still on going while Pola and Warry are seeking counselling from an LBQ organisation.

A story based in Uganda.



CLIMATE JUSTICE

by Dhel

CLIMATE CHANGE IS AN LGBT ISSUE

Landslides in Bududa, evacuation efforts, first safety is police post.

Officer towers over me, he wont let me through.

Are you a she or a he?

Why Officer? does it matter?

Womxn like you, i don't like much.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS AN LGBT ISSUE

Downtown Kampala,i feel dehydrated from the March sun.

I can feel a sweat bead trickle down my back.

I need to catch some shade.

I feel my pants sagging and think twice.

Will any shop let me rest at their Verander?

Will I be welcome to catch my breath by the roadside?

It's safer to keep walking.

My very existence is a crime.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS AN LGBT ISSUE

I pray it doesn't flood when it rains.

Our shelter is in Bwaise

It's the natural swimming pool of Kampala

A joke they make every time it rains

Rain rain go away, your wrath renders me homeless.

I have no home when my shelter home ceases to be one.



TOXIC LOVING

by Anonymous

It all changed so fast, the grip in her touch, look of kindness and love. The tone in which she spoke, I was helpless for my best friend had turned into a nightmare not because of the continuous violence that had been going on but because I trusted and had enabled her bad behaviors in the guise of love. I believed that because of love her kind-heartedness and concern for me would return. I had blind faith in I a love that never fails.

However, is love enough? I thought to myself to stay in an abusive relationship where by today we are high in love and the next moment out of love. It now hurts me, I 'm sad and I cry nearly all the time. Lost in thought about how I got here and how I can get out . She was my family , my everything.

I had never been so lost in for now the place I called home seemed like hell .My partner had turned me into a punching bag for all that had been going wrong in her life claiming that I was to blame. I was the reason as to why she left her family; I was working against her, she literally accused me for everything. It was sad that something beautiful, pure had turned bitter before the world rained on me for being who I am.



THE LOSS OF A BEST FRIEND

©PICTURE FROM THE INTERNET

by Anonymous

In this world, from the time you are born, you never know what you are going to become or who you are going to be, or what people you will meet. When I was growing up, I was a stubborn girl that every child admired at school and I didn't know that this would escalate into a tragedy when I became older. I grew up in a single-sex school called "Stella Maris primary Nsubbe". It was an only girls school; we had matrons that used to tell us to "pull". I had one friend that I used to do it with. Whenever we would go to bathroom to "pull", she touched me and it felt nice. We did it about twice each day until we left school and I didn't see her again. When I joined high school, I had this habit of touching girls. The ones I touched enjoyed it and they didn't ask me to stop. As I grew, I joined senior five where I made a best friend called Jackie. I liked her so much because she was so kind and sweet. We were good

friends for one year. We were more than sisters till I started getting sexually attracted to her. I began writing love notes to her and she always wrote back. I was glad that the feeling was mutual. My desire to be close to her all the time increased. Our school mates started pointing fingers at us whenever we were together. I didn't care because what I felt for her was real and mere gossiping couldn't hurt me.

We spent times together in dark corners and would shower together. We were so good together until sadness engulfed us. This one time I was with Jackie, and it was prep time but we decided not to go because we had put off that time to spend together. We didn't know that our colleagues had reported us to the matron. As we were together in bed kissing, touching and so happily madly

truly in love, the matron pushed the door and came into the dormitory. We were so scared, we didn't know what to do. The matron called our names and said, "you devils, we have finally got you".

We cried, asked for forgiveness but we were treated like thieves. They locked us in a room and they said they are waiting for the headmistress. In the morning, all teachers beat us. We got over two hundred canes each. We got beaten so much that we got wounds. They shaved off our hair so that we could look like criminals. They called our parents and we were expelled from school. I lost my best friend. I lost my mum after she found out that I was a lesbian and I was banned from home. Since then, life hasn't been easy because I am trying to fit in a society in which I am not accepted. I don't care because this is who I am. Me, myself and I.

WISHING FOR THE BEST

©PICTURE FROM THE INTERNET

by Clara

My name is Clara, I am a humble and down to earth woman. After my third year at the University I met a woman whom I fell in love with. I had been single for a very long time. When I met her, the connection was magnetic! I fell head over heels in love with her. She was so responsive that our communication made me believe she was the right person for me. During our first physical meeting, I experienced the best feeling ever! Everything went on well, there was love in the air, I experienced the finest treatment I had ever gotten from a fellow girl! "she treated me like the only girl in her world". No sooner had I fallen madly in love, that I noticed she started seeing other girls. She did this behind my back and I kept on giving excuses for her. One day I came across a very disturbing message on her phone. I cried and I decided to end the relationship though I didn't have the courage to do so. On confronting her she pleaded and asked for forgiveness. She

promised to change. I took her back and we started all-over again. She became a transformed person and I was so proud of her. Time went on and I introduced her to my family. She confided in me and confessed that she was afraid of introducing me to her family as well. I would have to hide at the neighbors in case any of her relatives was passing by. With time I got irritated over doing all this hiding in the middle of the night, especially if relative of hers had decided to sleep over. Months into the relationship brought along some life changes.

I came to the realisation that my girlfriend was seeing some another person. I confronted her and she didn't deny. I could not hold it any longer and decided to leave her. The way I see it, she was really relieved. I stayed in my lane but what hurt me most after our break up was her partner's gossip about me.

She was constantly bad-mouthing me to her partner, yet I kept silent. Within a short while, they were broken up and my ex came back crying to me bad-mouthing a very big mistake. She lamented about how she still loved me and pleaded with me to take her back. I took her back but emphasized that this was the last time I was doing so. Were we to break up again, I would never take her back.

We resumed our relationship. However, a few months later, the same thing happened. At this point, I was physically and emotionally exasperated. Cheating really hurts. What hurt me most was her cheating, yet I remained very loyal. I would have preferred her being honest with me and ending everything instead of creeping up on me. Nonetheless, after this incident, we broke up with each other for good. I stayed single for some years but finally got someone who treats me right. It's been two great years. So far, so good. I am only wishing for the best!

DARE TO QUESTION



©PICTURE FROM THE INTERNET

by Agnes

I lived with my aunt in kiwatule the after I lost my beloved sister, the only one I ever had. My uncle who had proposed to my aunt that I stay at their houses was a wealthy man owning a company , he had recently been elected, as a minister in a certain district. He loved me so much and often called me his girl. He paid my school fees and gave me all the love I needed. However, my aunt started feeling envious and got insecure about the love and care I was getting from my uncle. She then tried so hard to chase me away from home. She framed me by putting alcohol in my room and called my uncle telling him how bad I had become, my uncle decided to stop paying my fees thinking I am a drunkard and a worthless girl.

After all that, I decided to leave home with pain and hatred, in my mind. I vowed never go back home. A friend took me in and I hoped to start afresh and get a job so that I can take care of

myself. My friend would leave home for work and leave me with her little girl that I always looked after. This happened for over a period of three months. Later I met this one guy from a bar where my friend and I used to hang out, he boldly asked to pay me to have sex with him. I was speechless for some seconds, he said "you want the money, take the money, Just do it for just the money ."All these alarming suggestions run flooded my mind, Oh God! I dared to do it. I accepted because I needed the money. I had searched for job opportunities and never did any pull through, most employers said, I wasn't fit for the position because I didn't reach their demands and expectations. I got comfortable with Moses providing for me.

I managed to get myself a place and stopped staying with my friend. However with Moses,

I did not feel any butterflies in my stomach, at least not as many as I felt when I met Suzanah. Was she ready for me... was she waiting for me? Well I kept wondering why I felt this way about Suzanah, yet I loved how it felt. While with Moses, I failed to define what I had. I was only glad that he was providing.

One day at Mama Naka's, a place we always met and just talked, laughed, closely felt each other's bodies rub, I decided to let Suzanah know of my intentions. She wasn't surprised; instead she asked if she would move in with me. I was exhilarated that it was all happening now. I couldn't hesitate or even think about it twice. As time passed, I felt guilty for what I was doing, I did not ever tell Suzanah that I had Moses whose was sexual needs I was satisfying in return for my rent and food. I was caught up in contemplation.



While lost in thought, I couldn't help but notice that Suzanah always came home drunk. At first I thought it was just that one time when we went with a couple of friends and we all drank alcohol like crazy. However, it was just not that one occasion, but so many others. She barely returned home sober, and when she did, we would have volatile verbal fights. Some mornings, I would ask why she kept drinking that much, she would apologize and promise not to drink again, and a few days later resume. I was providing for all her needs but I was almost always unhappy because I painfully got these essentials from Moses. I never let Suzanah know about this and complained silently. How I wish she knew!

In the long run, I realized I was judging, not only judging Suzanah, but also myself for what I was doing with Moses. I loved Suzanah deeply, but didn't feel this way with Moses. So I decided to understand everything by questioning everything. I later understood that Suzanah was dealing with addiction. I came to the realization that it okay to keep questioning.

READ BETWEEN THE LINES.

written by

N.A.AMOR

CURTAINS OPEN

It's 8:35pm. It's a single room with two beds, we see Maya and Emily seated each on their bed.

MAYA:

But why would you even put up with all that!

EMILY:

I fell deeply for Billy that I forget to think about myself and think about him...has he eaten, does he have some money on him... is he..

MAYA:

Enough please...stop.

Maya gets up and picks her phone from the charger

EMILY:

I Know... you don't like the guy, but I love him
Maya is quite busy on her phone

EMILY:

Maya...Are you listening

MAYA:

No

EMILY:

Come on, what should I do?

MAYA:

Just keep loving the guy that keeps on hurting you over and over again...it seems you enjoy it.

EMILY:

You seem not in a good mood today.

Emily gets a towel and a bucket, she goes out of the room. Maya stares at her as she goes out.

MAYA:

(Monologue)

This is too much for me now...I can't take this anymore. Say how you feel about this person and looks at you like you're freak, avoid you for the rest of their lives. No...

(MORE)

MAYA: (CONT'D)

I can't have that, atleast be there as a good friend and Maybe...

As she's still speaking, door opens, Emily enters, Maya panics and gets back to her bed and holds her phone

EMILY:

Is it me...or I heard you talking to yourself?

MAYA:

Why would I be talking to myself.

It's 10:00pm, they all prepare to go to bed, they enter bed and both stay on their phones, Emily is trying to call Billy countless times without answer and she's restless in bed. Maya keeps on checking on her seeing her disturbed.

MAYA:

Emily, let him be.

Emily just jumps out of the bed and looks for some change of clothes, pants a top and a hoodie. The entire time Maya is watching seated in the middle of her bed crossed legs.

EMILY:

(Angry)

If he can't pick my calls, I will just show up.

As she walks to the door, Maya jumps and block her

MAYA:

(Calmly)

Hey...all that can be done
tomorrow, its late.

EMILY:

Move...

MAYA:

Calm down, maybe he is still mad
about your fight earlier.

EMILY:

(Sarcastically)

What do you know about
relationships? Do you have a man?
Have you ever been in love?

Maya looks at her in a we and doesn't say anything.

EMILY: (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

She pushes Maya away and opens the door and off she goes, slams the door behind her.

We see Maya filled with anger, breathing heavily and throwing things around, she walks to the mirror.

MAYA:

(Angry)

You say I have never been in love
before...I say you're blind.

Maya puts back all the things she has thrown, tides up the room, locks the door and switch off the lights and goes to bed. Little sobs are heard in the dark for some time and the utter silence.

It's midnight. A big knock on the door, stunned Maya jumps out of bed. Looks at her phone to see the time. Switch the lights back on.

MAYA: (CONT'D)

(Shaky voice)

Who is it?

EMILY:

(Rudely)

Open.

Maya rushes to open the door, as she unbolts it, Emily busts the door open in anger walks and seats on her bed covers her face and bows down.

Maya stays standing right in the same position at the door side. She locks the door and seats one her bed facing directly at Emily.

MAYA:

(Calmly)

Emily, Are you okay? What happened?

Emily seats upright, she takes her time to talk

EMILY:

He has been dismissive, very busy,
no time for me (frustration on her
face) and all for one reason... he
has another girl.

MAYA:

I hope nobody told you this
because...

EMILY:

(Angry and loud)

I caught him, I saw him with my own
two eyes, they were too much in
a hurry to get their clothes off
that they forgot to lock
the door..

(sobbing)

Maya is seen confused, tries to say something but doesn't

EMILY:

(Teary with a Shaky voice)

I can't believe he did this to me. I
have given Billy all he asked for,
nearly my life. How could he do this
to me **(breaks down into tears)**

**Maya comes closer to her and seats right beside her, she
puts her head gently on her chest and wraps her arms around
her as she pats her on the back**

MAYA:

It's okay,

**Emily in Maya's chest mumbling as she sobs, and minutes
away, she calms down. Maya wipes her tears and slowly leans
in for a kiss. Emily quickly jumps away from Maya looks at
her so weirdly as she wipes off the kiss with her palm**

EMILY:

What are you doing

**Maya looks embarrassed and tries to explain herself as
comes close to her**

EMILY:

Don't come near me, stay over there.

MAYA:

I am sorry I didn't mean to..

Emily stops her from talking with a hand gesture as she gets to her bed. Maya walk to the switch as she reaches her hand

EMILY:

Leave it on

Maya also gets to her bed and they both face away from each other.

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS ON

Maya and Emily in their room both seated away from the other. Maya folds her clothes on her bed, Maya seated by the dressing mirror on her laptop. They both avoid looking at each other.

MAYA:

(Moves to sit on her bed, takes a deep breath)

Look Emily, I.. (stuttering)

EMILY:

Sorry!

MAYA:

Yes, I didn't mean to..

EMILY:

Shhhhhhh!

Emily gets up and moves to Maya's bed, runs her hand over her cheeks, Maya is in shock, her eyes are about to come out, Emily then pulls her in for a kiss. That goes on for a moment. Maya looks stunned and Emily, smiles as she gets back to her bed.

MAYA:

I don't understand

EMILY:

You're a coward

MAYA:

How?

EMILY:

Did you see yourself these past
two days?

MAYA:

I thought you didn't want to
talk to me

EMILY:

I didn't tell you that though

MAYA:

So you're not mad?

**Emily giggles, Maya still doesn't get it, looks a
little confused.**

EMILY:

Loosen up Maya, I am not mad. We are good.
Emily's phone rings, they both look at it

MAYA:

Are you going to pick that up

EMILY:

NO

Maya gets up to get back on her laptop, as she moves,
Emily pulls her hand, Maya seats down on Emily's bed,
they get cozy with each other...

DIM LIGHTS

**It's 10pm, raining outside, Emily is sleeping and Maya in
bed on her phone.**

EMILY:

(Soft voice)

Maya

MAYA:

Yes?

EMILY:

It's really cold, can we share the
bed please?

MAYA:

Are you sure about this?

Emily gets up from her bed and covers herself inside, Maya stays on her phone but she's a little uncomfortable.

EMILY:

Are you going to be on your phone
all night?

Maya puts away her phone.

EMILY: (CONT'D)

Cuddle me please

Hands moving inside the bedcover, lights off

BLACK OUT

LIGHTS ON

Phone rings, Emily, Maya both sleeping in one bed, Emily wakes up, she is half naked. Moves out of bed to get her phone from the dressing mirror. She mutes the phone.

MAYA:

Who is it

EMILY:

Billy

Both silent for a moment

MAYA:

Thanks for the night, that was
really great.

EMILY:

Shut up

MAYA:

And the moans (giggles)

EMILY:

It was different, Soft, sweet in a
weird way. Who taught you how to do
that? How do you know where to touch?

Before Maya answers anything

EMILY:

All along you liked girls! I kept wondering why you chase away all men and no man ever visits. (quiet for a moment) How did you become one? Where do you guys hang out from? Do you have a like a group? So, do you get paid?

MAYA:

Breath, too many questions but I only have answers on how I feel about you.

EMILY:

Feel?

MAYA:

Yes, I have tried to express my feelings in all ways, for all the years at university...I cared, listened...

EMILY:

Not as a friend, my roommate.

MAYA:

How many roommates or friends do all I do for you? Clean, wash, cook even bail you out on almost everything.

MAYA: (CONT'D)

How many?

EMILY:

I thought you the sister I never had. Why didn't you say anything?

MAYA:

So you can judge me, get away from me like I am possessed. Just listen to all the questions you asked. I

EMILY:

I didn't mean to be judgmental...but you know, it's a little confusing and odd.

Phone rings again, Emily mutes it again. She then puts on some clothes. Maya looks on without saying anything. Phone rings again. She picks it in fury.

EMILY:

(On phone)

What? (listens) I don't want to talk.

She hangs up. Maya gets up from bed and comforts her

MAYA:

It's okay.

EMILY:

You so sweet.

MAYA:

Always

EMILY:

Brag

A knock at the door, both look at each other, Maya goes on to open the door.

BILLY:

Emily

EMILY:

(Stunned)

What are you doing here?

BILLY:

I'm here to talk.

Emily walks out of the room and Billy follows. Maya looks at them get away.
She seems frustrated. Keeps herself busy as she tides up the room. Door opens.

MAYA:

Are you okay?

EMILY:

Yeah I'm alright, I'm good.

Maya gets closer to her, she moves backward

EMILY:

We talked and.... I am going with him.

MAYA:

What? That easy, I thought we had a moment?

EMILY:

It wasn't that...don't tell me you took that serious.

MAYA:

Emily, I just told you how I felt for all these years, school is done and I am still in the same room with you. Don't you think I would be already gone!

EMILY:

Did I ever ask you to stay?

MAYA:

I stayed to support you pay the rent because I knew you wouldn't manage.

EMILY:

Well I am setting you free now, I am moving out.

MAYA:

No please Don't, I am sorry I said that.

Emily gets a bag, starts packing

MAYA:

Babe please

EMILY:

(Rudely)

Don't call me that. Shameless.

Emily picks a small bag

EMILY:

If you ever get a man and fall in
love, you'll understand me one day.

She walks and reaches the door

EMILY:

I will send someone to get my things.

**She walks out and slams door behind her. Maya is seen
looking heartbroken and confused**

CURTAINS CLOSE

LBQ CROSS WORD PUZZLE

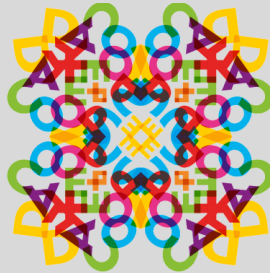
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- 1.LESBIAN
- 2.QUEER
- 3.AGENDER
- 4.INTERSEX
- 5.LGBTIQA
- 6.CIS
- 7.SEXUALITY
- 8.LBQ
- 9.PANSEXUAL.
- 10.UGALEF
- 11.NON-BINARY
- 12.COMING OUT

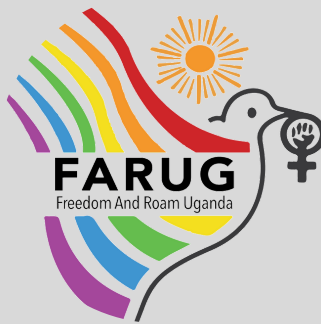
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- 21.SRHR
- 22.SEXUAL ORIENTATION
- 23.SELF CARE
- 24.TRANSGENDER

- 25.DILDO
- 26.WSW
- 27.KUCHU
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P.O BOX 591,
Kampala Uganda
Toll-Free: 0800-100-093
Email: faruginfo@gmail.com
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