

## **My adultery is holier than your homosexuality!**

I don't know what it means for a man to be attracted to another man. But I also know that I don't have the moral right to hate or prescribe punishment for same-sex lovers, male or female. Nobody does and, yes, you can quote me on this one! Since a large number of the people that castigate homosexuals claim to be "spirit-filled, born again Christians," perhaps they should contemplate Christ's message of first removing rocks from their own eyes before looking for dust in someone else's. They should also contemplate His challenge to a mob bent on killing an adulteress; he dared the man without sin to cast the first stone. (Isn't it interesting that whenever an adulteress is to be stoned, the collaborating male adulterer is never present to be stoned along with her?) Although many would selectively cite Leviticus 18:22 as justification for slamming homosexuals, the truth is that the bible condemns any form of sex outside of marriage. How many of us are innocent? If homosexuals should be derided, ostracized and punished, then so should most of us!

Nigeria's anti-homosexual law, which prescribes imprisonment of up to 14 years for same-sex marriage or union, is not only a mindboggling indication of our inability to get our priorities straight, but a symbolic explanation of why we are well behind where we should be. Are homosexuals responsible for the wars, the coups, the dictatorships, the corruption, the mismanagement of funds and resources, the abuse of women and girls, the chauvinism or the crumbling infrastructure that have plagued and still plague Nigeria and several African countries? We are not ignorant of the real culprits who, ironically, sashay through our corridors of power, goaded by our butt-kissing ovations.

Whether anyone agrees or disagrees with homosexuality is not the issue here. Given that consenting adults engage in the act, it remains a private matter (which doesn't put it on a par with pedophilia as some have tried to argue). For the most part, we endorse the freedom of adults to make choices, including self-destructive choices, as long as they are not in violation of anyone's rights. Smoking and drinking are therefore permissible in most African countries, as is sex outside marriage (albeit unofficially). Homosexuality does not deprive anyone of a good job, a home, an education, healthcare, food, electricity supply, water supply, security and other

basic needs. However, the gluttonies of incompetent, self-seeking leaders can and do cause such deprivations every single day. One has to contemplate the double standards that inform the assault on homosexuals by governments and officials that are themselves morally bankrupt. Take the example of former Senate President David Mark, a by-product of one of the most ruthless, destructive, criminal and repressive systems of governance in Nigeria's history—military dictatorships! Yet, he has also been one of the leading “moral” voices against homosexuality. If only we could zoom in on the private sex life of Mark and other such holier-than-thou, self-proclaimed agents of morality; isn't it interesting what we would find?

Sexuality is a significant part of human existence and manifests in numerous ways, all of which are either acceptable or unacceptable to various people for various social and religious reasons. This fact raises a fundamental question that makes rubbish of the entire discriminatory crusade in Nigeria (and Africa) against homosexuals. Why is your adultery and fornication better than someone else's homosexuality? Why is your French kissing and cunnilingus, which carry hygienic risks, not punishable? And what should be the fate of heterosexuals who engage in anal sex? To isolate any sexual practice and mark it for denunciation and punishment is merely to seek justification for victimizing a group of people, which is potentially volatile as has been proven in the isolation of Jews in Nazi Germany, the isolation of blacks and so-called coloreds in South Africa and the isolation of African American males in Jim Crow and post Jim Crow America.

It is one thing to hate a group of people; it is another to create lies for that purpose. Homosexuals have been constantly and falsely blamed for the existence and spread of HIV/AIDS, an allegation that has been repeatedly debunked by the experts. Some of the more ignorant haters have claimed that “it is not a part of our (African) culture.” First, sexuality is not cultural; it is emotional and sensual. Second, the insistence that homosexuality is not a part of African culture is premised on the fantasy notion that a single African culture exists alongside a prescribed sexual model for the one billion (approximately) Africans that occupy the continent. In Nigeria alone, traveling from Abonema in Rivers State to Kafanchan in Kaduna State is like traveling from one country to another. Lifestyles and cultures differ drastically in terms of food, clothing, spirituality, values, mores and architecture. The

differences are even more expansive when one considers the thousands of ethnicities that exist on the African continent. Our sexual drives, preferences, likes and dislikes are as diverse as the people that occupy the continent. Even in communities with rigid customary systems, there are still individual personalities and habits, and this applies to sex. We are also adventurous and subject to outside influence (like everyone else), and, again, this also applies to sex. But if there is anything we have appropriated from abroad, homosexuality is not one of them. French kissing, oral sex and pornography, for instance, are more foreign to us, but there is yet to be an outcry for their patrons to be lynched, mauled and sent to jail.

Let us imagine, hypothetically, that homosexuality was indeed introduced to Africa from some distant lands. We seem to abhor foreign influence when it satisfies our intolerance, and embrace it when it satisfies our selfish cravings. African countries are structured on educational systems, modes of governance, official languages, lifestyles, urbanization trends, technologies, infrastructures, religious practices, foods, names and clothing heavily impinged on by foreign contact. The suggestion, therefore, that we are a people so excessively thrilled with our cultural ways that we should repel foreign influence is as bogus as it is pointless.

Once we remove the junk from our own eyes, we would not only be wary of hurling self-righteous stones; we would begin to see more clearly. For those of us that are not homosexuals, let us remember the many other things that we are—thieves, liars, haters, cheats, wife beaters, deceivers, gossips, drunks, fornicators, adulterers, bribe givers, bribe takers, rapists and bigots among so many others. Does it also occur to homosexual haters that more sex crimes are committed by heterosexuals than homosexuals?

The pervasive onslaught against homosexuals in some African countries is symbolic of how backward we still are. In Nigeria, the marriage, in 2010, of a 13-year-old girl to a middle-aged lawmaker (former Governor and Senator Ahmed Yerima) who was about 49 at the time, received considerable support from those who used religion and culture to justify what at best was deodorized pedophilia. This was an instance when self-proclaimed agents of morality had a valid reason to be outraged and take some form of action. But that didn't happen, which is why Yerima faced minimal

opposition. How warped our thinking is, that we would imprison homosexuals but embrace flamboyant and influential child molesters. It is a curious trend that consistently ignores human rights violations generated by rampant forms of sexual abuse and harassment, including but not limited to infibulation and clitoridectomy of children (often referred to as female circumcision), habitual rape, institutionalized rape (as perpetrated mainly by men in positions of authority, including university lecturers) and forced marriage.

It is time for us to stop peeking into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and actually step into it. How about we make sexuality a key aspect of our faith-based teachings and counselling services? How about we introduce sexuality into our educational curricula with topics designed according to age and educational level? How about we provide parents with pertinent information that would serve as a blueprint for talking to their children about sex and sexuality? This, and not aggression, would be a more productive and civilized approach to the subject, and we will not isolate homosexuals but will be compelled to thoroughly address the subject of sexuality, including those aspects that we struggle with. Whether we admit it or not, we have all struggled or are struggling with sexuality to a certain degree. If in doubt, consider those instances when you've had certain less than holy thoughts about your housemaid, your cousin, your sister's husband, the lady singing in the choir or even your pet animal. As it is, we already have enough hostility and animosity to contend with. Should we be beating up, incarcerating and killing homosexuals while giving national awards to those that have robbed and continue to rob us blind, crippling our lives and economies? These are our real enemies, the shameless delinquents parading themselves in splendid leadership garbs. But, of course, those of us who continue to think through our anuses (literally) will dismiss my views here and hold rigidly to our preferred, programmed and primordial method of dealing with things that confuse and agitate us.

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