

My adultery is holier than your homosexuality!

I don't know what it means for a man to be attracted to another man. The thought confuses me. But I also know that I don't have the moral right to hate or prescribe punishment for two 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?) The bible does not only condemn homosexuality, it condemns any form of sex outside of marriage. How many of us are innocent? If homosexuals should be punished, then so should most of us!

Our inability to get our priorities straight is mindboggling but an indication 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 plague 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 with homosexuality or not is not the issue here. It is a private matter between consenting adults (which doesn't put it on a par with pedophilia). For the most part we endorse the freedom of adults to make choices, even self-destructive choices, as long as they are not in violation of anyone's rights. This is why smoking and drinking are permissible in most African countries, as is sex outside marriage, even if unofficially. Homosexuality does not deprive anyone of a good job, a home, an education, healthcare, food, electricity supply, water, security and other basic needs. However, the gluttonies of incompetent, self-seeking leaders can and do cause such deprivations on a daily basis. 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 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 is also one of the leading "moral" voices against homosexuality. Oh that 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, in itself, 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 have 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 condemnation and punishment is merely to seek justification for victimizing a group of people. This is a very dangerous and potentially volatile pattern. Think of what the isolation of Jews led to 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. If you don't know; carry out some research.

It is one thing to hate a group of people; it is another to create lies for that purpose. Homosexuals have been constantly, 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." Sexuality is not a cultural thing; it is an emotional thing. 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. 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. This is in just one country, Nigeria. The differences are even more massive when one considers the thousands of ethnicities that exist on the African continent. Our sexual drives, preferences, likes and dislikes are as numerous as the people that occupy the continent. Even in communities with rigid customary systems, there are still individual personalities and idiosyncrasies, and, yes, this applies to sex as well. We are also adventurous and subject to influence (like everyone else), and this also applies to sex. Ironically, homosexuality is not the practice that we have appropriated from outside. French kissing, oral sex and pornography are actually more foreign to us. Should those of us who engage in the latter acts be lynched, mauled and sent to jail?

Let us imagine, hypothetically, that homosexuality was actually introduced to Africa from some distant lands, so what! 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 input. 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 actually 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, racists, 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 of a 13 year old girl to a middle-aged lawmaker (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 the lawmaker faced minimal opposition. How warped our thinking is, that we would imprison homosexuals but embrace flamboyant and influential pedophiles. It is a curious trend that consistently ignores the pressing issue, which is the human rights violations generated by fairly rampant forms of sexual abuse and harassment. Some of them are: infibulation and clitoridectomy of female 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 21st century and actually step inside 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 way, we will not isolate homosexuals but will be compelled to address those aspects of our sexuality that we struggle with, for, whether we want to admit it or not, we have struggled or are struggling with sexuality to a certain degree. If you are not sure of what I mean by struggle, think of 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. This would be a more productive and civilized approach to the subject, and not aggression. 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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