

LOVE & LIGHT

Child-Ghastisement | HIV | Albinism | LGBTQIA | Pansexuality

By Nitha
creativity meets advocacy

So Dapper



2 Wrongs | Living with HIV



Image Source: Pinterest

When I was younger I always thought that life had something better to offer, that there were always good people in the world. Not that I was clueless on all the other bad things that were happening out there, but I just thought that there was light at the end of the tunnel. The world is categorized based on race, culture, continent, profession and many other aspects.

As Maslow put it in his hierarchy of needs, we all want to belong to something to make us feel complete. Be it family, religion or school, everyone wants to be a part of something. When I went to college, I struggled to fit in because making friends was not my greatest strength. Luckily, I met a wallflower like myself in the library and we bonded over a broken pencil. She had a sharpener and the moment I asked if I could use it, she smiled so wildly. At that moment I just knew. This marked the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Mary and I hit it off. We were enrolled in different programs, but we knew each other's class schedules. As time passed, I realised that I saw little of Mary. My assumption was always that maybe she had a makeup class or group discussions. Whatever it was seemed to have been taking much of her time. Not that I did not want her to have a life without me, but I was just worried about her.

She then started getting constantly moody even when it was not that time of the month. Sometimes she would just wake up and walk past me as if we did not know each other. I felt bad. My friend was slipping through my fingers and I had no idea why. I thought she needed space, so I kept my distance.

They say absence makes the heart grow fonder and mine really did. I missed my best friend. I saw her walk past our classroom with her head down. She looked so sad. I also noticed she had lost some weight but then it could have been the effect of the clothes she was wearing. We can never be too sure.

I put my ego aside and decided to confront her. This was my best friend and I had to know what was bothering her. Perhaps she could explain to me if I did her wrong and we could talk about it and move on.

I went to her dorm room and found her laying on the bed. I let my guard down and sat on her bed. Normally I would make noise, but my silence meant serious business. She got up and sat beside me.

"What is going on?", I asked her calmly "You have been blowing me off, skipping class and you're always moody. Did I do something wrong?" She shook her head. "You have to let me in," I placed my hand on her shoulder, "What is going on?" I asked softly. The next thing I saw was a flood of tears streaming down her face. She sobbed on my shoulder and I let her cry it out.

When someone cries out of nowhere, the words we speak to them are very crucial. I knew that I wasn't very good with words, so I gave her what I could afford. I gave her my ears.

I was going to just quietly let her narrate her story. My words would have either made her feel better or worse and I could not take that chance because I was clueless. A couple of minutes later she calmed down, wiped her tears and looked at me in the eye.

"I am HIV positive", she said bluntly. Time out. I froze. Goosebumps invaded my body and my mouth suddenly became dry. She forced a smile and continued, "let me tell you my story", she said sitting comfortably on the bed.

Tears clouded my eyes, but I was not going to let them fall. I knew that if I cried I was going to scare her and she would not tell me her story. I wanted to know everything. I ruled out sex as the causative agent because we were both virgins. At least that's what she had told me during one of our chats. I shook off my assumptions and decided to have a clear mind. "I was only eleven years old when I started feeling different from all my siblings", she started explaining. Mary had two older brothers. "I had just finished writing my primary school leaving certificate examinations with a terrible fever and nausea", she kept eye contact the whole time. She explained how she struggled throughout the three days of examinations.

"My mother thought I had malaria and gave me some medicine to take. You know how African mothers seem to have a clue of what disease you are suffering from before you even see the doctor", we looked at each other and chuckled mocking our parents. Perhaps it is because of all the experi-

ence they have had raising their children.

She further explained how the medicine her mother gave her managed to ease the pain for a few hours but was not healed. Mary had gotten worse. Her mother was so worried that she called her father, who at that time was out of town on a business trip. He gave her mother thorough instructions and all she could hear was her voice breaking on the phone. She was worried. I could see her forcing a smile as she continued narrating her story. The next few hours were a blur to Mary and she woke up in the emergency room. The room was so bright that it took her a couple of seconds to open her eyes fully.

All she saw was red lights and at the corner of her eye, she saw her mother sitting down with her face in her hands. Her mother heard her turning and raised her head with a smile on her face, "you're up", she said. Mary nodded as she tried to sit upright only to realise her left hand had an IV. It stung a little when she moved. I groaned. "Careful", her mother warned. Mary stayed in the hospital for four days. She did not know what disease she had but whatever it was, it must have been bad. She lost so much weight that she stopped looking in the mirror. I felt sorry for her, but I could not show it. I crossed my legs on the bed to make myself comfortable as I continued listening to the story.

They gave her a ton of medication to proceed taking at home. It was normal. Everyone who gets discharged from the hospital gets some take home medicine to help with the recovery process. To Mary, that was what it was. A normal post-hospital medication. When she got home, everything changed. From a new diet, which was to help her stay healthy to medicine instructions every day. They even changed her school plans. She had made plans with her childhood best friend to attend secondary school together at a local boarding school. Due to my recent near-death experience, her parents were reluctant to send her away to some school 5 hours from home. Instead, she went to a day secondary school in the city.

Meanwhile, I tried to push back my questions. I did not want to cut through the conversation. All I did was swallowed my saliva and continued to listen. Mary elaborated how the new diets, medicine schedules were still going on even after a year.

I mean I am no doctor but what kind of disease makes you take medicine for over a year? Just like anybody else, I was

confused. Still, I kept my mouth shut.

One day Mary decided to approach her father to find out why she was still taking medicine even when she was healthier than ever before.

"I am tired of taking medicine every day", she confessed to her father, "when will I stop?" she asked. Her father held her hand and said with a smile, "soon", and then he walked out. I was furious. Calm down, I told myself. I had no right to be mad as this was not my story and I did not understand the reasons her father said so. I swallowed my anger and nodded to show Mary that I was still listening. Being the 12-year-old clueless person that she was, Mary let it go and never bothered her father again. She chose to believe him even though somewhere deep down she had questions, theories and thoughts on what could be wrong. However, the theories she had conflicted with the fact that she was so healthy and active. I mean, a sick person is always in bed of which she never was. Even I could have believed it. She bought the story her father told her and patiently waited for the "soon" to come so that she could stop taking her medication. Unfortunately, it did not. The empathy inside me badly wanted to just hold her and cry my lungs out. The story was not yet over. From the look of things, it seemed that it had only just began. Mary looked down and continued to tell me her story.

She explained that during History lesson in her second year of secondary school, the teacher had given them an assignment and class ended early. One of the boys in her class stood up and yelled, "has anyone ever seen yellow and white pills?", he asked. The class was so noisy, and everyone was busy talking that people barely heard him. "Me!", Mary replied, "I take them every day", she added.

He looked at her and before he could respond, the teacher for the next lesson walked in and the class was calm again. During break, the boy who asked about the drugs approached her. The two were never really friends as she found boys completely repulsive at that age. He gave her a note that said to meet him behind the stairs. Her curiosity made her to go meet the boy.

"Are you sure you take those drugs?", he asked with concern in his voice. "Yes", Mary replied firmly. "Why did you ask?". He was silent for a second and looked at her straight in the eye, "my mum takes the same medicine too and I think you should ask your parents about them", he sounded serious. Mary tried to convince him to tell her why

his mother took the same medicine, but he insisted that she confront her parents instead. He said, "its not a big deal, trust me", he assured her and started walking away. He then turned and said, "please, find out", and disappeared up the stairs. Mary told me that she knew something was wrong with her, but she believed that if it was so serious her parents would never keep her in the dark. I understood her. A good parent would never keep anything that was life threatening from their own child. She said that she kept telling herself that her mother would surely tell her if her life was at stake. "The woman cannot keep secrets", she laughed.

I had met her mother a few times and she was right. Her mouth was always full of gossip every time we met. I loved her stories though. Mary continued to explain and told me how she had no reason to question her parents, after all she trusted them enough to take the drugs without any solid information. Like the obedient child that she was, she let it go.

She skipped the story about the next two years of her life but managed to explain how she had made so many friends and realised that attending a day school was not as bad as she had thought. It had its perks, for instance, she had to sleep in my own bed as compared to the bank beds in boarding secondary schools and could watch TV nearly every day. I was jealous. I went to a boarding secondary and we were only allowed to watch TV once in a fortnight. Mary had gotten used to the school and made so many memories there.

During the Malawi School Leaving Certificate Mock examinations, Mary got sick again. It was bad that she did not finish writing all the examination papers. She said that she was truly devastated because rumour had it that if you passed the mock examinations then you were guaranteed to get good grades during the final national examinations. Two weeks after the exams, her father took her to the hospital for a check-up. The doctor they met that day was new. Her regular doctor was on leave. Well, a doctor is a doctor, right?

Mary sat in the consultation room with her father while the doctor went through her file. She explained how the doctor looked at her through her glasses by mimicking her face. I laughed, and she joined me.

We always made fun of old people with glasses. Her laugh ended as quickly as it started. She continued the story and told me that the doctor kept looking back and forth at her and the file, which crept Mary out a little, for a while.

The doctor then eventually said, "it's her HIV status that I am worried about", she said looking at her father. Silence. "Oh no!", Mary's father said as he stood up. "What is it?", she asked with a sombre face "She doesn't know. It's news to her", her father replied. The lady covered her mouth with her hand and regret was written on her face. "I am so sorry, I thought she knew", she said sincerely. "What have I done?", she solely asked herself out loud.

Meanwhile, Mary narrated how she felt her brain freeze for a minute. It took her about five minutes to make out what was going on. She said that she had a dozen memories flash through her eyes in a few seconds. Clues that she had tossed aside as she believed if it was her situation was serious, both the doctor and her father would have sat her down and explained everything.

Here was a doctor who had no idea that this girl was clueless. I could tell from her tone that those words the doctor said ripped her heart out. She mentioned of how when her numbness was gone, she got up and walked out of the room without a word. She looked at me and blinked tears. "can you imagine", she cried. Here was a girl who lived 4 years on drugs, she had no idea what they were for. Not only did the doctor reveal the secret her family kept from her for years but also caused Mary a mini heart attack. Her reaction was unexpected. If it was me, I would have let hell break loose. Mary was a calm person. Her specialty was bottling up her emotions.

The doctor had no right to do what she did. The best option would have been to speak to her father first and find out how much the child knew. The medical system failed Mary. Her family failed her too. No one is supposed to find out about something critical like that. The two parties should have done better. A hundred apologies were not going to cover up the bruise they created.

Mary was scarred. Her life changed tremendously after that day. I was mystified by her story. We truly never know what other people are going through.

Murdered In Front Of My Son

by Wongani

The gruesome murder of Kwenda Phiri in the presence of his nine-year-old-son shocked most Malawians. Yasin Kwenda Phiri was a hospital attendant at Kande Health Centre. Unknown assailants entered Kwenda Phiri's home through a window. They stabbed him in the stomach and removed his intestines, and chopped off both his arms before fleeing with them.

By then, his young son, George had rushed to his father's room, only to find him being brutally dismembered. Kwenda's cry for the two assailants' mercy may have awakened his son, who was sleeping in a separate room. George recalls calling out to his father at around 10pm to escort him to the toilet outside their house. Instead, he heard the

sound of intruders in his father's bedroom.

Kwenda's cries for mercy did not make the killers relent "I called out again, but all I heard was someone groaning. I decided to go to my father's room where I found two men with sharp knives. When I got to the room, one of them grabbed me, as the other stabbed my father in the stomach four times." Reports 9 year old George.

The young boy says he asked the two men why they were killing his father, especially after seeing them removing intestines from his father's stomach with their bare hands. But when he started asking them questions, the one who grabbed him beat him up heavily on the chest and threw him to the ground roughly. They told him to shut up or they would cut him into pieces. He

then witnessed the other man cutting off both his father's arms. He could not understand what was happening, and he could not shout for help. He was terribly scared. They forced him to open the front door, carrying with them his father's body and the two arms they had chopped off. Terrified, he opened the door, and they took him to the back of the house where they also beat him up they told him not to shout if he wanted to live. They dumped his father in a drain behind their house. The killers only left the scene, at Kande Trading Centre in Nkhata Bay, when the victim breathed his last.

They ran away, that's when George started calling for help. He was a person with albinism and some people believe that body parts from albinos, if used in so-called magic potions, can bring good luck and wealth.



"I am advocating and lobbying for policies and programs that protect and promote human rights of girls and women with disabilities. My work creates a platform for them to report cases and also space for referral to other stakeholders. The major challenge has been the deep rooted stigma that has led to their exclusion in social and cultural information platforms"

BONFACE MASSAH
NATIONAL COORDINATOR - ASSOCIATION OF PERSONS WITH ALBINISM IN MALAWI (APAM)

BEN WANDAWANDA | *So Dapper!*

3 random things people do not know about you?

Of fitness

I moved my body fat ratio from 22.4% to 18% in 12 months, at the cost of messing up my shoulders and elbows with osteoarthritis.

Of family

It's not random that I have two kids, is it? They are 17 and 15.

Of Arts

I used to be the Head Chorister when I was at Kamuzu Academy. I can sing!

Sports

I have played for the Malawi national golf team.

Engaging with people

I believe every person in society plays a role. I have no class distinction. I refuse to be distinguished by a title.

Giving

I am a very impulsive person. Many times I will find out I have given out my last penny and be amused that I am now literally broke.

Two things you must do every day

Pray, and read

Favorite African Countries

If I had to relocate, I would go back and live in Kenya. I loved Kenya. Nigeria gives me a different kind of kick though – it's got a different kind of vibe.

Banking around Africa

I am the head of Business Development at Standard Bank PLC, having spent 13 years with them in Malawi, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Sudan, Mozambique, Botswana and South Africa.

If he was to stop working today

I would spend a lot of time helping young entrepreneurs get things right.

If you are a part of #TwitterMw (Twitter Malawi) and have not taken part in the #WandamanChallenge – what the hell are you waiting for?

Ben has taken twitter by storm, sharing his extremely dapper style and embodying #Goals for most young Malawian (male) professionals. When you meet him – he is the precise definition of a metrosexual guy. His style is simple, and yet very dapper. He showed up driving the Mercedes E220 CDI Cabriolet he bought for his wife for her 40th birthday. He was dressed in a 3 piece suit, and a pretty colourful bowtie.



Image Credits: @wandaman

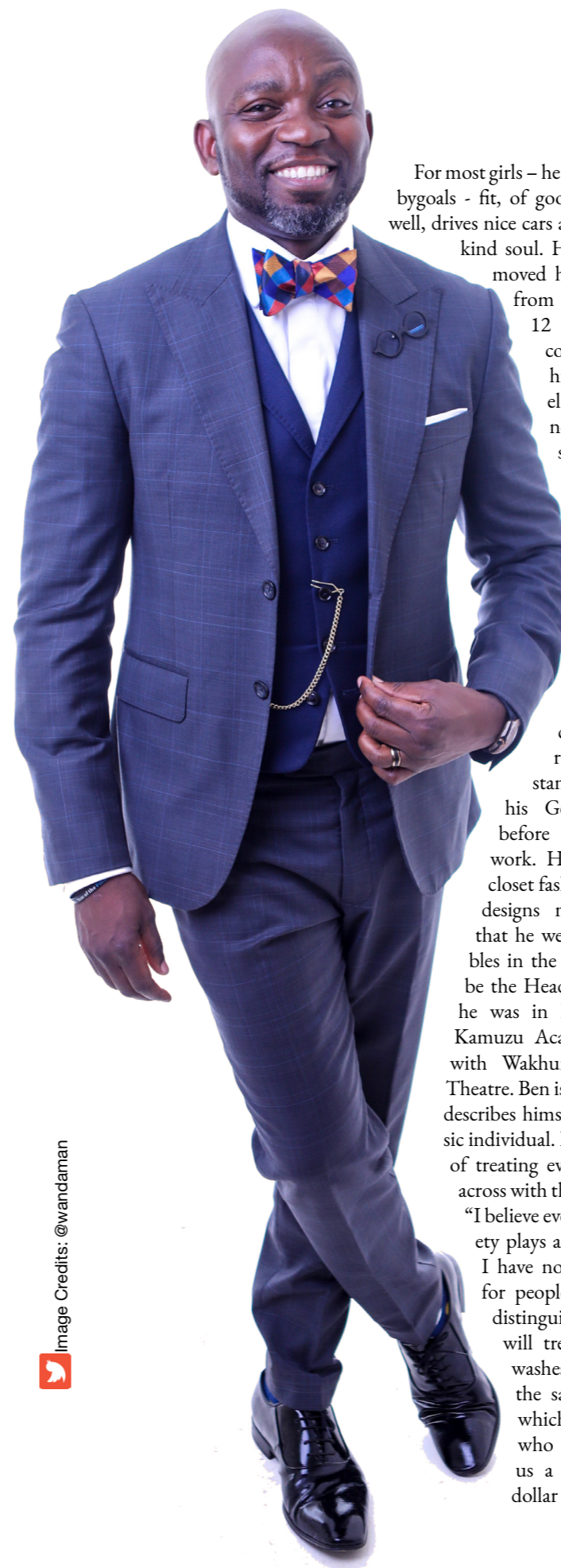


Image Credits: @wandaman

For most girls – he is probably #hubbygoals - fit, of good height, dresses well, drives nice cars and is genuinely a kind soul. He claims to have moved his body fat ratio from 22.4% to 18% in

12 months, at the cost of messing up his shoulders and elbows, but shows no regret as he states this. He is quite the sporty guy, and once played for the Malawi national golf team. Every morning, Ben takes about 3 photos in his never-ending collection of Sheria Ngowi suits; standing next to

his German machines before he heads out to work. He calls himself a closet fashion designer. He designs nearly everything that he wears. He also dabbles in the arts, and used to be the Head Chorister when he was in high school and Kamuzu Academy and acted with Wakhumbata Ensemble Theatre. Ben is quite chatty, and describes himself as a rather basic individual. He has a principle of treating everyone he comes across with the utmost respect.

“I believe every person in society plays an important role. I have no class distinction for people. I refuse to be distinguished by a title. I will treat the guy who washes my car with the same respect with which I treat a client who is going to give us a hundred million dollar transaction.”

A few weeks ago, Ben started doing the #WandamanMarketPlace where he would promote young entrepreneurs and their work. Ben is a giver, if his twitter is anything to go by. He has given away plenty clothing items and bags to people, simply because they asked.

When I walked into the store where we met – I was wearing a pair of heels that slightly did not match my dress. I tried on a pair in the shop, and fell in love with it. We were chatting when I told him my birthday is coming up; and he offered to pay for the heels as an early birthday present. “I am a very impulsive person. Many times I will find out I have given out my last penny and be amused that I am now literally broke.”

Talking about family – he has been with his wife, Anita – known to most as Ms. Divalicious, for 20 years; and married for 12 of them. They have two kids together, Yolanda (17) and AJ (15). “My mom and dad broke up when I was 5 years old. I never knew what it was like growing up in a home with both parents in it. I won't pretend that marriage and relations are easy, because no human being is perfect. Relationships require a lot of work, and willingness to cede ground from time to time. I have learnt to listen more than I talk. My late dad used to say this is the reason God gave us 2 ears and 1 mouth. If you really want to find peace in your relationship as a guy, you have to learn to listen more. Above all, live, laugh, love, and never go to bed angry with each other even when it hurts the most.”

Professionally, he is the Head of Business Development at Standard Bank Plc, having spent 13 years with the bank in Malawi and Kenya and having had experiential attachments in Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Sudan, Mozambique, Botswana and South Africa. Two things he must do every day – pray; and read. He is not specific about what he reads, and tries to make it as random as possible.

“I like to expand my base of knowledge. I can wake up and read about 3D designs, or global warming and how the Maasais are dealing with it. I recently read about Turkana in Kenya, and how there is so much water just 100m below the surface that could supply the country for ages; but they have never bothered to actually get that supply.” He has two favourite African countries. “If I had to relocate, I would go back and live in Kenya. I loved Kenya. The traffic is horrible, but if you figure it out – you will be fine. My first degree was in Applied Physics and Maths. One of the disciplines I studied was the Physics of Chaos – and traffic is an element in that. If Kenya let the

traffic flow automatically and not use traffic cops, things would actually be less hectic. You should never replace computer logic with human logic. I would actually love to go back to Kenya to do my PhD and really study the Physics of Chaos – of Kenya's traffic."

Kenya was seconded by Nigeria, which led me to believe he likes busy scenes. "Nigeria gives me a different kind of kick though – it's got a different kind of vibe. It gets you to think differently. Nigerians are extremely ambitious. You would have a conversation with a young entrepreneur; and he tells you that he is looking for a small loan from the bank of \$300,000,000. That's a small loan in his context, because

other people are taking out billion \$ loans. To them, it's normal."

He dreams of retiring soon, and following his passion mentoring young entrepreneurs. "I want to help young entrepreneurs get things right. I have spent a lot of years in Banking; and I have dealt with plenty entrepreneurs so much so that I have a very good idea across different sectors, industries, products and concepts– on what it would take to actually succeed. I would love to have random conversations with people and help them think things through." Beyond work, he wants to help people appreciate the journey that helps people build wealth- the savings journey, and all else associated with it.



Spoil the Rod, Spare the Child

Of Chastising Children as a Form of "Discipline"

by Nthanda

#ByNthandaTweetChat
-@nthandamanduwi

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

Proverbs 13:24

"It is your God-given right to beat your child if he/she misbehaves. Check your bible."

-@IamRodgerz

"The Qur'an says you should beat up your wives when they disagree with you. Should we also follow that advice? Following morally bankrupt books is the reason most communities are such a mess."

-@Xetanix

"God forbid I have ever have any, but I am never hitting my kids. Ndipo oyelekeza kudzamenya ana anga ndidzawaswa. Olo ali makolo anga omwe. No one is traumatizing my babies."

-@pastiche mode

It was a video as posted by @theamazonstalk1 of a father whipping his child because she was having sex at 12 years old that really set the internet (i.e. black Twitter) in flames. There were people taking varying sides on the debate – some completely opposed to child chastisement, while others were completely for it. Some argued being beaten as children made them better human beings, while others discuss of the post-traumatic stress disorder they have endured as adults, as a result of being beaten as children.

"I was a child, but I can clearly remember how it tormented my thoughts. I remember asking myself if they were even my real parents. I had thoughts of running away. I eventually got used to the beatings, and acted rebellious anyway. Whooping is just not it to me. There are plenty other effective ways to discipline children."

-@Marie_JahLady

Kenyan Comedian @ruthkirathe, shared a video on how she intends to creatively beat her children when she is a mother. All her life, she had committed to the view that she would never beat her children, as a result of being beaten herself.

She reminisces on her childhood, leaving school every day, and heading home while expecting a beating from her moth-

er. There was not always a valid reason to get beaten, but an 'ass-whooping', as she calls, it was always on the menu.

Her view on beating children has now changed after having lived in Japan for a while now. She has gotten quite sick of what she considers undisciplined children, who throw tantrums in public at their pleasure, and swears to creatively beat her children to discipline them.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is defined as communication between two or more persons in which the intended message is –

- properly encoded
- delivered through appropriate channel
- received
- properly decoded and understood by the recipient(s)

Communication is said to be effective when all the parties (sender and receiver) in the communication, assign similar meanings to the message and listen carefully to what all have been said and make the sender feel heard and understood.

The video of the father beating up his daughter for having sex at 12 as a means of communicating to her that he disapproves of her actions really set off some triggers for me, and I shared how I do not perceive beating children an effective mode of communication. I spoke of the traumatic effects of beating a child – which was met with different types of views, some in agreement, and others opposing.

The first, and rather controversial view was shared by @kayphanga, who said that someone who has not yet been a parent has no place telling parents how they should parent.

@lilmisscheesy opposed this view, saying someone who has been parented, even without having parented, has every right to share their views on parenting – especially from the receiving end.

"If we suddenly need to be parents to tell people that beating children is wrong,

do we also need to be married to tell people that beating their spouses is wrong?

If you are arguing that children need to be subjected to physical violence because they lack the intellectual capacity to understand that they are wrong, do you realise that you sound sadistic and psychopathic?"

-@Neo_url

Views shared highlighted that people opt to beat their children, because children are not independent thinkers and most times stray when 'disciplined' without violent acts.

People consider beating/spanking their children a mode of "disciplining" them.

@kumwenda_3 shared how he would not be violent to his children, but would give them the occasional spank when necessary.

"Your child depends on you to teach them right from wrong. You have the right to discipline them."

Discipline

Noun/'disiplin/

"The practice of training people to obey rules or a code of behaviour, using punishment to correct disobedience."

@Bentigo proceeded to share on a book he is currently reading, Dr. Spock's titled "Baby and Child Care", as a new father.

Dr. Benjamin Spock discusses what discipline is, where children are concerned. He emphasises on the fact that discipline is NOT punishment. Most people perceive disciplining someone as 'punishing' them.

Punishment is but only one part of disciplining someone, and Dr. Spock goes further to share that he hopes that punishment only takes up a small part of discipline. It's important to recognize the difference between discipline and punishment. Peggy Drexler Ph.D. on 'Psychology Today' says that discipline is necessary, but punishment is not.

She goes further to explain that in most cases, misbehaviour among toddlers and young kids isn't something that requires punishing but, instead, some understanding and a frank parent-child discussion.

Many kids will act out as a cry for attention or for firmer limits. Most kids, especially boys, have an impulse to push boundaries



Image Source: Twitter

while also needing to know that they'll be reigned in. Others act out as they learn how to get their desires met; all kids, at one point or another, will express a feeling or need in a socially unacceptable way. The job of the parent is to help kids develop positive strategies for expressing those feelings and needs, and set their own limits, part of which includes learning about consequences. Dr. Spook explains the true goal of discipline as 'teaching' children the role of behaviour, what behaviour society and other people expect from them, so they can grow up to become productive members of society. As a parent, you task is to teach a child the hows and whys of acceptable behaviour – but never at the expense of self-worth and optimism.

Is it abuse/ violence, or are you just disciplining your children?

"Abusive parents swear they are the only ones who have ever experienced naughty children. 'They are just so naughty. It's

just not possible to beat them' They are children. 'Naughty' is how they learn and explore their surroundings. What were you expecting when you decided to bring new humans into this world? The problem is not that the kids are being kids. It is that you are lazy and incompetent. You have never talked to your child about sex. You have never explained to them the implication of having sex. You have never made them aware of the fact that you are the source of information, and that they should discuss anything they are curious or concerned about with you; but somehow you expect them to miraculously engage or not engage in sex in a manner that you as their parent would approve of. When they act differently from your expectations because you did not do the work as a parent, they get all their information from people who are not you – you get angry and assault them because you failed as a parent. Beat yourself." -@THISisLULE

Violence

Noun /ˈvaɪəl(ə)nɪs/ "Behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or

something." Asked about how violence towards children is different from violence against women, most argued that women are adults and not deserving of a spanking for discipline, as compared to children. "Y'all don't want to talk about how beating children is abuse because you will be forced to come to terms with the realisation that your parents abused you. It is abuse, and they did abuse you. 'I will teach my children right from wrong by showing them that they should only beat people who are smaller and more societally vulnerable than them.' Y'all are abusers who view children as property and not autonomous beings. You have no concept of morality and ethics outside of violence. You are emotionally stupid. That is why you think it is okay to beat children. You did not turn out fine, because believing children should be hit is peak abusive cycle mentality. Y'ALL DON'T EVEN HAVE THESE KIDS YET, THAT YOU ARE ALREADY IMAGINING INCITING VIOLENCE ON?!!" -kylemalanda @RJtheDJMw share a sentiment that

there is a big difference between violence, and disciplining a child. Most shared her view. Those who shared this view were those who approved of beating children as a form of discipline. One then proceeds to wonder where exactly they draw the line.

Effects of Chastisement

"Y'all have really convinced yourselves, with your Stockholm syndrome, that being regularly being assaulted was beneficial to your upbringing and mental health." -ThisisLULE

I came to the opinion that most of the resistance to riding of child-spanking as a means of disciplining children was a rebellion of sorts for most people – the desire to stick to the African way of doing things, and avoiding westernisation at all costs! But could our ways of doing things sometimes not be the best ways? "Not beating my kids is working out so well. We taught them responsibility and respect at a very age – so they have the self-awareness that I did not grow up with. They also do Karate lessons, so that also sets their discipline. Of course, from time to time, they will wild out; but that's kids." -@Tzzak A couple of people argued that they were beaten as children, but turned out perfectly fine. "Talking about 'I turned out okay and I was beaten by my parents.' Did you really? Go to therapy one time and see the bucket load of shit you are carrying around.

Constantly emotionally unavailable, stunted emotional growth, zero emotional intelligence, violent, built up walls, can't ever trust anyone, but you turned out okay? Beating children stems from the fact that adults refuse to see children as human beings whose right to dignity

and protection from violence is just as important. It is very dishonest to say you do it because you want to discipline a child – when the reality is that the child, by rebelling made them angry; and their reaction to anger is violence. A clear sign of lack of emotional intelligence.

It is very embarrassing that the only way to deal with a defenceless human being whom you overpower not only physically, but also in strength, is to... beat them? A whole big person cannot figure out other means of grilling information into a child? If you do not resort to violence with an unreasonable adult; why would you do that to a child?

If you foster open communication with respect and love, do you really think a child will not appreciate that? My landlady's 3 year old is about the most intelligent little girl, and her parents really treat her like she is human. They acknowledge her feelings, and hear her out. Now, she knows that when she does something wrong, it upsets or hurts her parents' feelings, she has to stop, apologise, and not do it again. She is still a child, so obviously she will forget much sooner, but she is aware hurting people's feelings is not nice much as she does not like getting her own feelings hurt. I once accidentally scratched her, and I said "I'm sorry baby"; and her response was "It's okay, everyone makes mistakes," and I damn near cried! Her mother has told her that no boy should touch her 'privates' or demand to see them and she will report if anyone even peaks at her." -@_Dawned_

Most people ended up acknowledging the amount of disciplining options that exist before they resort to beating a child. Some accepted they will not beat their children if alternatives means of chastising are presented – and we are so grateful to psychology for the abundance of options! "I do not, and will never beat my daughter – but that is my personal choice." -DeusThengo

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The LGBTQIA+ Community vs The Law in Malawi |

A National Case of Cognitive Dissonance

by Nthanda



Image Source: bbc.com

Cognitive Dissonance

noun (Psychology)

The state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioural decisions and attitude change. The feeling of discomfort that results when your beliefs run counter to your behaviours and/or new information that is presented to you.

L. Perlovsky, A Challenge to human evolution – Cognitive Dissonance. Frontiers in Psychology.

Everyone of us experiences dissonance in our day to day activity. Think of me – a person who claims to be paperless as I care for the environment; but can better draft my creative ideas with a pen and paper.

As Malawians – we claim to love and respect everyone around us, yet we are some of the most bigoted people; especially when other people's beliefs do not align with our own.

Causes of Cognitive Dissonance

People desire consistency in their attitudes and perceptions; and thus when what people hold to be true is challenged with new information – something within must change in order to reduce, or eliminate the lack of agreement (i.e. dissonance). Some of the most popular causes for cognitive dissonance are religious and political leanings.

It is in our interest to bridge the gap between what we believe, and the reality that is presented to us.

Human Right of people in the LGBTQIA Community: Where we are coming from, where we are, and where we are heading. Sexuality/sexual orientation is a topic seldom discussed in common Malawi.

If you ask a regular Malawian about anything to do with the queer community – first they will give you the very ignorant opinion that gay people are strictly men who have sex

with men. If you are to ask them about women being gay, they usually giggle and say that there is not such thing as a woman being gay. They way even go further to express how they find lesbians very sexy and attractive.

The law supports this cognitive dissonance, as men can get up to 14 years in prison, while women only get a maximum of 5 years. One would wonder why this is the case – and if the government supports the idea that there is such a think as being 'less gay'.

Another common thing Malawians will tell you is that homosexuality is a western ideology – non-African. Every time the issue of homosexuality comes up – Malawians quickly rush to defend: Stop imposing western ideologies on us.

Uhuru Kenyatta, in response to Barack Obama when he addressed the legal discrimination against the LGBT community, said that the west must accept that there are just some things we as Africans, do not share with the US. Africans expressing the view that homosex-

uality is a western concept shows ignorance on our part. We use ignorance to oppress fellow Africans because we are too lazy to read up on and inquire about our history.

If you say being gay is not African, you do not know your history.

Bisi Alimi Nelson Mandela once said that homosexuality is not un-African, but, just a form of sexuality that has been suppressed for many years, previously by colonialists, and later Africans.

Most Malawians will tell you that they do not approve of gay people because they are Christian. These are the same people who cannot tell you of their own (African) religious history. They are the same people who cannot acknowledge that homosexuality was banned by the coloniser i.e. white man when he brought Christianity to Africa – the same white man who returned home, and later legalised homosexuality in his own land.

Human Rights activist Nigel Patel, a Philosophy and Law graduate, argues that decriminalising homosexuality is about decolonisation as homophobic laws are very much colonial.

In a landmark judgment on June 11, 2019, Botswana's high court rules that its penal laws criminalising consensual same-sex sex were unconstitutional. It was noted by the court: "with the advent of colonialism, the offence of sodomy was henceforth imported into the British colonies during the 17th and 20th centuries." Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Malawi face legal challenges not experienced by non-LGBTQIA+ residents.

The Malawi Constitution does not specifically prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Human rights lawyer Chripine Sibande, argued in 2010 that discrimination is prohibited under Section 20 of the constitution, which provides that: All persons are, under any law, guaranteed equal and effective protection against discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status.

The Malawi Constitution

There has no been no official legal ruling to this effect. The Malawian law is very clear, however, (or one would think) on the issues of homosexuality in Malawi. The Penal Code prohibits "carnal knowledge

against the order of nature", attempts to commit "carnal knowledge against the order of nature", and acts of "gross indecency".

More cognitive dissonance for our nation- To tackle the issue of LGBTQIA+ rights in Malawi – one must explore the different fields of law, history, psychology, and sometime religion; and come up with a common ground that serves the interests of all; without infringing on any human rights. A tough ball, if you ask me. Timeline of Events surrounding queer issues in Malawi

In late December 2009, Tiwonge Chimbalanga, transgender woman, and a cit heterosexual man, Steven Monjeza, were arrested after holding a traditional "engagement" party. On 18 May 2010, they were found guilty of having committed "unnatural offences" and "indecent practices between males".

This was the first time homosexuality was discussed with such public interest in Malawi. Prior to then, I personally had not heard of homosexuals in Malawi. It was such a wild concept, and being a self-acclaimed "God-fearing Nation", the religious community (which makes of really most of Malawi) was deeply offended, as the bible clearly states homosexuality as being a sin, punishable by death.

The international community was deeply involved in the Tiwonge and Steven case, with some nations going to the extents of withdrawing aid and funding to Malawi. On

the 29 May 2010, then President late Bingu wa Mutharika pardoned Tiwonge and Steve. In 2011, it was reported by the Ephraim Chiume (The Malawi Minister of Justice then) that all homophobic laws were sent to the Malawi Law Commission for review. It was later discovered by legal experts in January 2012, that the Malawi Law Commission had in fact not been asked to review these laws.

On 18 May 2012, President Joyce announced her intention to repeal the laws criminalising same-sex sexual activity. On 5 November, the Malawian government suspended all laws that criminalised homosexuality.

The Attorney General and Minister of Justice Ralph Kasambara ordered police not to arrest LGBT individuals, pending a review from the National Assembly. Three days later, he reversed his word, saying,

There was no such announcement and there was no discussion on same-sex marriage.

The Malawi Law Society argued that it was unconstitutional for ministers to arbitrarily suspend any law, and would set a dangerous precedent for the future.

Religious leaders, as expected, were strongly against the suspension.

In November 2013, the Malawi High Court announced its intention to review the constitutionality of the law by accepting an appeal. The focus of the appeal is the case of three prisoners Amon Champyuni, Mathews Bello and Musa

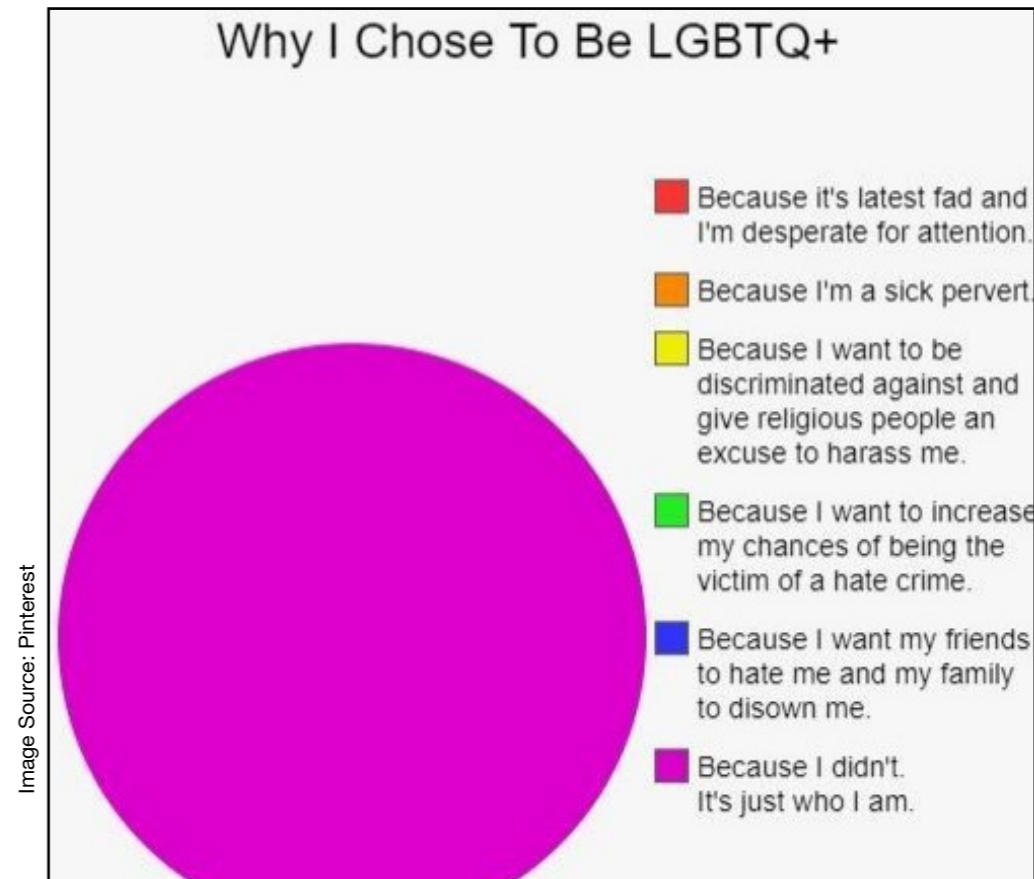


Image Source: Pinterest

Chiwisi, who were convicted in 2011 and are serving sentences ranging from 10 to 14 years for practicing homosexuality.

In January 2014, the court's deliberations on the issue were delayed pending a determination by the Supreme Court on whether the High Court can proceed to review an issue of constitutionality. As of 2019, there have been no ruling.

In July 2014, the Justice Minister announced that Malawi would no longer arrest people for same-sex sexual activity and review its anti-gay laws. Recognition of same-sex unions

On 17 April 2015, The Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Law came into force and banned all same-sex marriages and unions.

While the law was praised for raising the minimum age of heterosexual marriages from 16 to 18, it was at the same time condemned for the exclusion of homosexual couples and for its homophobic language stating that one's gender is assigned at birth. This new law, thus, does not allow people who have undergone gender reassignment surgery to marry someone of that person's prior gender.

The law goes further to draw comparisons of gay sex to rape and sexual harassment.

On 9 February 2016, the High Court in Mzuzu has ordered the Malawi Police Service, the Director of Public Prosecutions to continue arresting and prosecuting gays and lesbians who commit homosexual offences in Malawi. High Court Judge Dingiswayo Madise granted an injunction requested by anti-gay pastors seeking an end to the government's moratorium on arrests under the country's anti-homosexuality law during court deliberations on that law's constitutionality. The prosecutions will continue pending a judicial review of the decisions, conduct and abdication of legal and constitutional duty by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Malawi Police Service. In September 2016, President Arthur Peter Mutharika said that he wants gay rights protected. President Arthur Peter Mutharika and proposed a referendum on

decriminalising homosexuality and legalising same-sex marriage. However, in October 2015, a State House spokesperson has said the president's comments are his own personal opinion on the subject and not a policy. The law, and same-sex sexual activity in Malawi | The Malawi Constitution.

The Malawi Penal Code provides: Section 137A. Indecent practices between females. Any female person who, whether in public or private, commits any act of gross indecency with another female person, or procures another female person to commit any act of gross indecency with her, or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any female person with herself or with another female person, whether in public or private, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to imprisonment for five years.

Section 153. Unnatural offences. Any person who—

(a) has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature; or

(c) permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature, shall be guilty of a felony and shall be liable to imprisonment for fourteen years, with or without corporal punishment.

Section 154:

Attempt to commit unnatural offences. Any person who attempts to commit any of the offences specified in the last preceding section shall be guilty of a felony and shall be liable to imprisonment for seven years, with or without corporal punishment.

Section 156:

Indecent practices between males. Any male person who, whether in public or private, commits any act of gross indecency with another male person, or procures another male person to commit any act of gross indecency with him, or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any male person with himself or with another male person, whether in public or private, shall be guilty of a felony and shall be liable to imprisonment for five years, with or without corporal punishment [under Section 28 of the Penal Code].

Same Sex Laws

(SUMMARY)

In summary, the Malawi constitution is very silent on a lot of issues to do with rights of queer people in Malawi. As it stands, the government rarely comments on the issue – but queer people continue to have their rights infringed in the country.

Currently, and by law

Same-sex sexual activity is illegal, even though people in the LGBT community are not persecuted anymore for it. (Penalty: Up to 14 years imprisonment for men, up to 5 years imprisonment for women; rarely enforced, suspension from usage since 2012 disputed)

There is no age of consent, as the constitution is yet to acknowledge same sex-union. (Penalty: Up to 14 years imprisonment for men, up to 5 years imprisonment for women; rarely enforced, suspension from usage since 2012 disputed).

- Anti-discrimination laws in employment only are not there.
- Anti-discrimination laws in the provision of goods and services are not there.
- Anti-discrimination laws in all other areas including indirect discrimination and hate speech are not there.
- Same-sex marriages are not legal.
- Same-sex couples are not recognised.
- Same-sex couples cannot adopt children individually.
- Same-sex couples cannot adopt children jointly.
- Gays and lesbians are not allowed to serve openly in the military.
- People do not have the right to change legal gender.
- Lesbians have no legal access to IVF.

There is no legal provision for commercial surrogacy for gay male couples. Men who have sex with men are not allowed to donate blood. There are a lot of incoherent thoughts, where issues and laws on homosexuality are concerned. We claim to be a God-fearing nation – and declare in public that we are a warm nation with so much love to give. One would then be appalled by the hate that is passed around towards minorities, homosexual people being one.

Why are we so comfortable in our cognitive dissonance on issues which matter the most?

Unpacking my Pansexuality | Of Femme Privilege, and Erasure

by Nthanda

pansexual

/pan'sɛksʃʊəl/
Adjective

Not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity. Pansexuality as a word can be traced back to around the 1920s – when people were exploring and becoming more expressive about their sexual orientation.

I met Kyle via Twitter. I remember my first interaction with her, when she commented on a picture I had posted while I was on vacation in Kenya, saying “This photo just told me to go and take a bath”, and I knew she was lovely vibes.

@carolinemugz on Twitter later tweeted saying she thought Kyle and I would make for great friends. Kyle shot the first friendship shot – and we instantly became friends.

Kyle is an artist – currently a second year fashion design student. She describes herself as a self-portraiture photographer, who dabbles in design and textiles.

She reminds me of a slightly older version of myself, living her life quite unapologetically, and taking plenty risks for the sake of her happiness.

A short conversation with her will let you know she is quite brilliant. I am taken by how she uses her artist Twitter account @kylemalanda to speak up on issues close to her heart – sexuality being one.

In the LGBTQIA+ community, there is such a thing as femme erasure. Femmes can be left out, and put down in LGBTQIA+ communities – especially femme women who date people who

So what is Pansexuality?

are male-identified and male-presenting. Pansexuality is not the same as bisexuality. While there are some similarities, there are some distinctive differences between the experiences of being bi, and being pan. Bisexuality is where someone is attracted to people of more than one gender (whether that's male, female, non-binary or trans). Pansex-

uals ‘don’t see gender’. Most pansexuals are drawn to their partners by reasons beyond their gender/physicality. Some would say they are drawn by the ‘vibes’ and the ‘feel’ they get from their partner as a being. Gender/physicality is a non-factor, in attraction.

Some variations of this are orientations like sapiosexual and demisexual. One can however be these two, and still be heterosexual/homosexual.

I had been thinking about femme erasure in the LGBTQIA+ community a lot – and when Kyle told me she is pansexual, I was interested in learning about her story.

We had a brief chat about what it's like; being queer, and Malawian.

How can you describe being a queer person in Malawi/Africa using one word?
Rough.

I would say rough, but at the same time I need to acknowledge that I do not have it as rough as other Africans/Malawians because I do not live in Malawi anymore, for now. At the same time, my presentation (femme) allows me to come off more straight than I actually am. It's a privilege in that sense, that it's rough for me, but it is rougher for other people.

When, and how did you discover that you were queer?

I suppose I have always known. I have never let gender limit me in who I liked. My first sexual experience was with a girl.

I remember feeling so much shame about it that I never spoke to her again. I felt really disgusted with myself – and for the first time I thought something was really wrong with me.

It took a lot of concessions for me to fully acknowledge that I am queer, because I kept telling myself that it was dirty. I would tell myself that I am attracted to girls – but only sexually. I would never date them; could never be with another woman.

After a while, I was like wait, I could be with another woman. As my understanding of gender and sexuality opened up, I realised

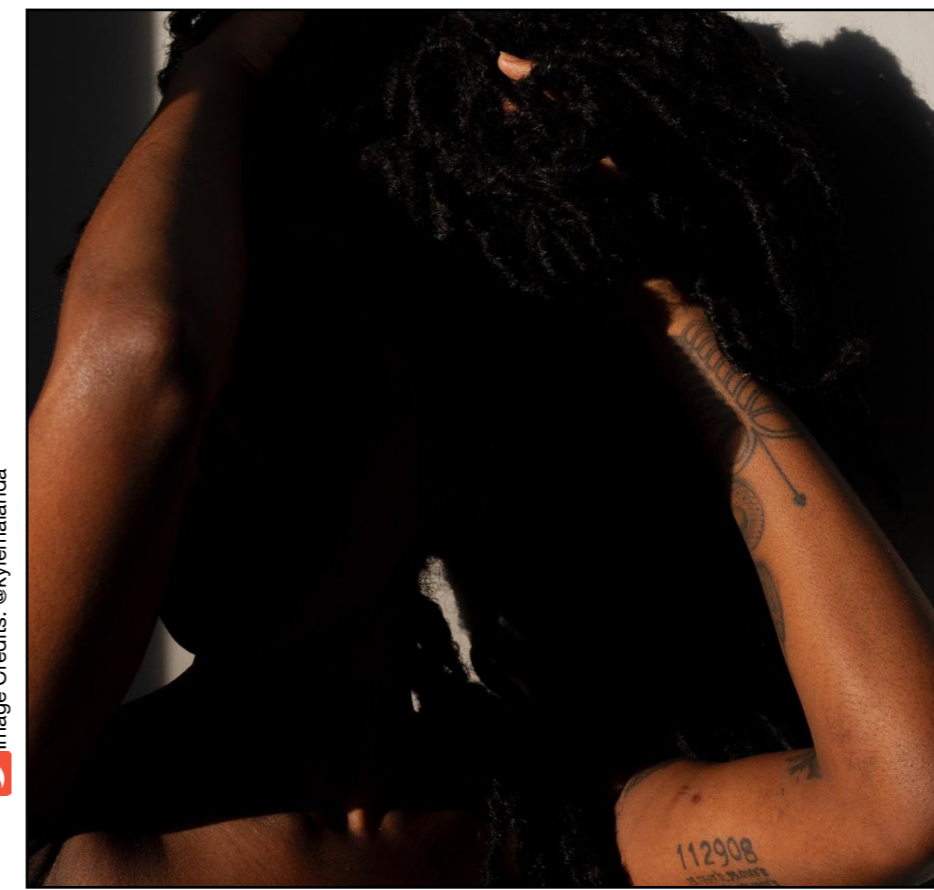


Image Credits: @kylemalanda



Image Source: Pinterest

that I was pansexual, and that I liked people regardless of gender identity and orientation. Whether someone was cis, trans or non-binary to me; it did not matter in my attraction to them. That was when I realised just how queer I was. It was definitely a process of discovering little by little; and having my identity change as a result of those discoveries.

The internet has been such a great vehicle for me in the exploration of erotic literature and pornography itself; and just seeing how different humans can be together. That was really important for me. Social media has also been great for me – seeing actual queer people. That allowed me to also start actively dating women; and it was amazing. Every experience has been me discovering how far I can go. It has been about me discovering just how queer I am; and I always adjust my approach accordingly.

How has being queer affected your relationships with the people you love?

The first family member I ever came out to was my younger sister. That was a couple of years ago. We were talking on the phone, and I said, “I am gay.” and she was like “Yeah cool,” and that was that! My older sister knows; and I think there are people in my family who have got an inkling. I have made enough WhatsApp statuses about it for people I love to not really know. For the most part, it has not changed much about how I interact with my family – but at the same time I have never really come out. Nothing has changed with my sisters. They love me just as they always did.

I have not yet come out to my parents; so this means that I censor myself when I am around them; and that they do not get to see as much of me as I would prefer for them to see. I always have to have this hidden part of my life that I just can’t tell them about. I can’t tell my mom that I had this girlfriend who I was deeply in love with – till I found out she was a Zionist. It’s weird, it’s different.

In terms of romantic relationships – I have been fortunate enough to be with people who have just gotten it. Being pansexual also influences how I see romantic relationships. I have this incredible sexual orientation that allows me to love so many people. It’s a blessing to me. It is a blessing that I can love people regardless of their gender. Because of that, I also deeply un-

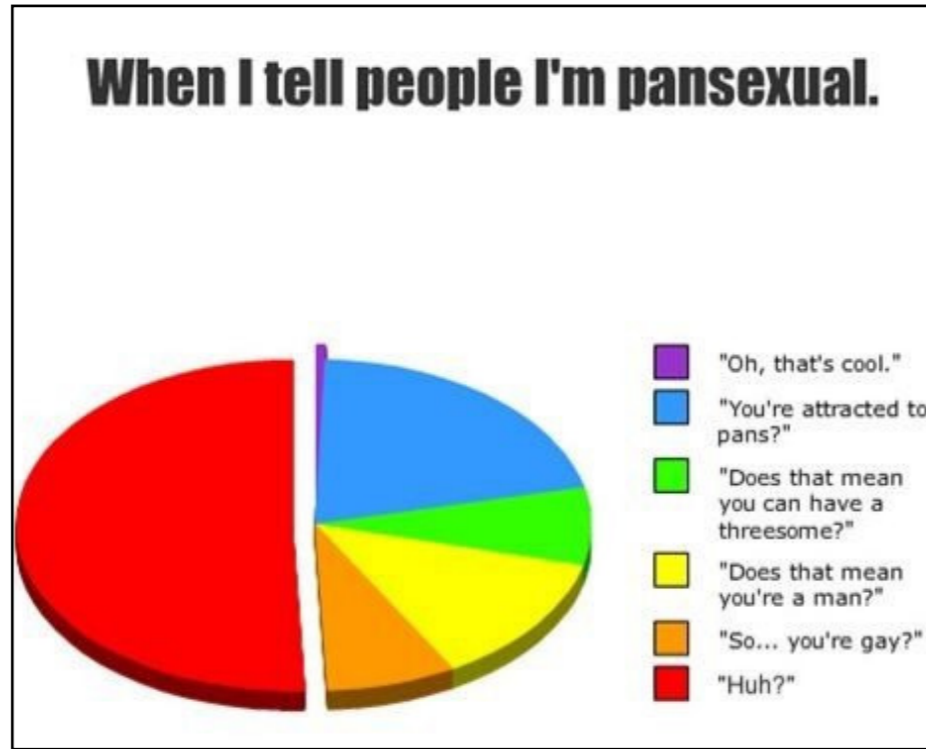


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derstand the human capacity to feel so deeply for so many people.

That also means that I do not believe that monogamy should be touted as the only successful relationship framework. There are so many ways that relationships can manifest themselves; and so many ways that you can build romantic; sexual and platonic relationships.

How do you wish your family could support you, and your sexuality?

My sisters, like I said, are great. I am so thankful for them because I really lucked out. They are very open-minded; and very welcoming. I would love to be able to come out to my family – not so we can make a big deal out of it, because it is not big deal; but to be able to just say “I am dating a woman, a trans person, or a non-binary person” the same way that it is okay for me to casually say that I am dating a man. I want it to be so normalised, that if I show up with somebody who is not a cis-heterosexual man, it should be normal. The same way it was like with my sisters; where I said I am queer and they were like “Cool”.

That should really be it; and there is no need to have on-going conversations about it – unless people are super homophobic; which most Malawians are. As I know how super conservative Malawi is, and parents inclusive – I do not think it will ever come to anything being

normalised; and that kinda makes me sad. **What would you like changed about the policies in Malawi, regards people in the LGBTQIA+ community?**

First of all; full decriminalisation. It is a shame that we can go to prison for these “unnatural acts.” Full decriminalisation is definitely a start. Throwing people in prison for being queer is completely unacceptable. It is a violation of human rights. Every time I think of this, I think of aunt Tiwo whose story was the most prominent. We owe her an apology, as a nation – and we owe all queer Malawians an apology for having to put up with all this bullshit. We owe queer people an apology for making them live in fear; being socially ostracised and physically harmed.

This has actually always been funny to me , because Malawi is a very homoerotic country. People are super homophobic; but our interactions are so homoerotic!

I also think that policy changes alone will not be enough. We have to change the culture and mindset through education, information workshops and parades. We need to have a strategy to communicate and to normalise queer people in Malawi culture.

We need to check how we teach people about sexuality and gender. Our approaches need to change; and how we represent that in the culture also needs to change. Queer people also need unlimited access to basic needs like health-care and mental health resources.

Decriminalisation is definitely a start; but there is so much more to be done.

Do you think that our “God-fear” is what makes us defend our bigotry?

Hell yes! Malawians use religion as an excuse for homophobia, misogyny, and all sorts of bigotry. This is a simple fact. It is disgusting, and a shame.

If your religious doctrine dictates that you must hate other people, in order for you to go to heaven; that’s kinda fucked up!

If people must be below you, if people

must be left back, if people by the nature of their identity are lower in the hierarchy than you; that is a problem. Defending that, and you start using your beliefs as justification for stripping away someone else’s humanity; for taking away somebody’s freedom – your belief is the problem. You and your belief are the problem; not this other person.

I suppose my biggest peeve is that most of these people have not even read their own religious doctrines. They do not fully understand their own books of worship. If you really want to follow the bible – well how come you are still fornicating? The bible

in Leviticus states that you must not wear blended fabrics – so why are you still doing it? The bible says you should not plant two different seeds in the same vineyard. The bible says you must not blend two seeds to get a hybrid crop – so what are you eating?

My point is people cannot cherry-pick religion like a fucking McDonald’s menu. You cannot use religion because it fits your bigotry. Own your homophobia with your whole chest. Do not hide behind religion, and say ‘God makes me do it.’ When Jesus comes back; he will look at you and say, “This is not what I meant.”

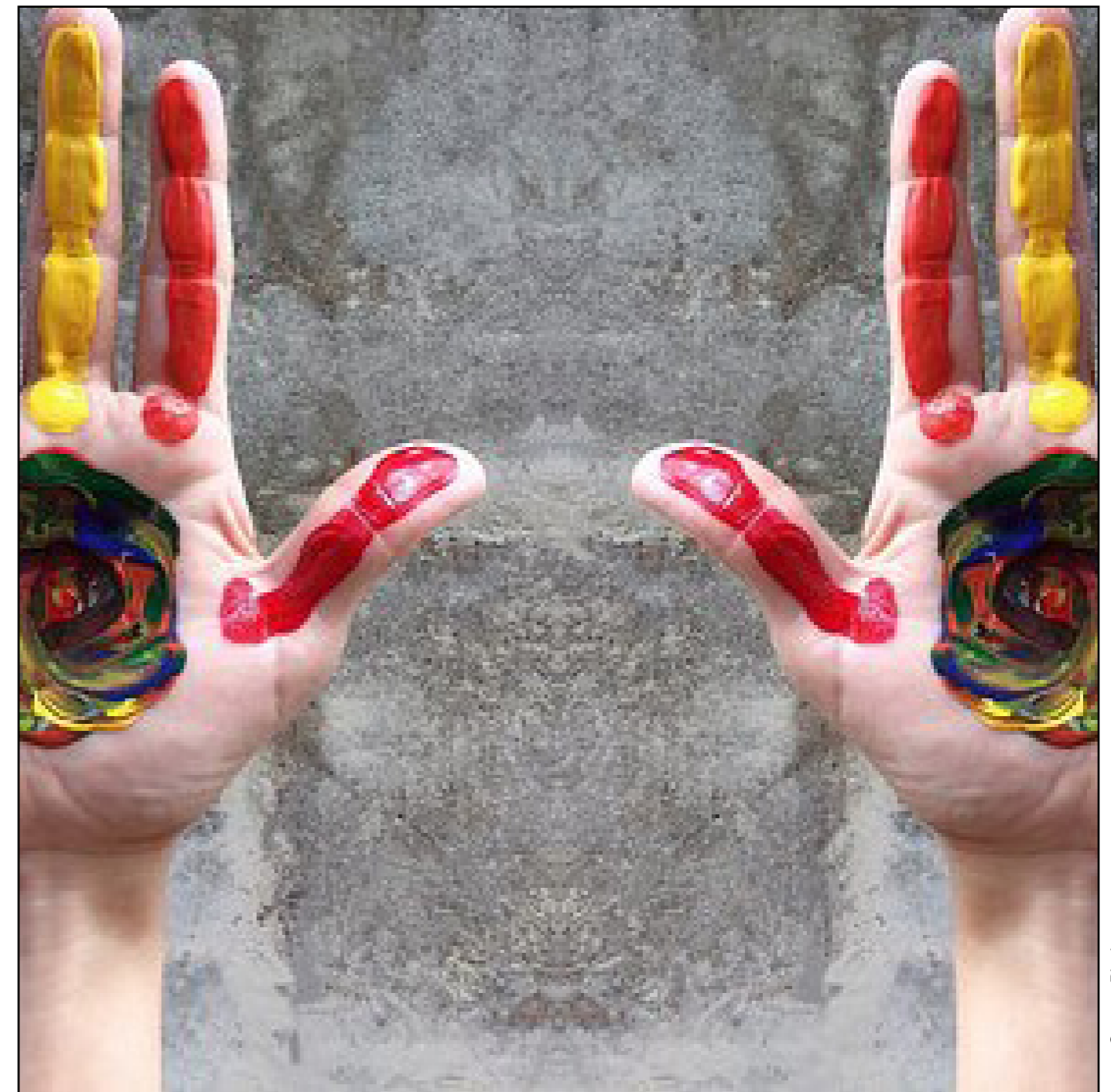


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