

Healing wounds



Where we continue to violate the human rights of LGBTQI+ and gender-diverse people, we dishonour and oppress our African families, friends, colleagues, communities and ourselves.

Most Africans are taught that family is everything. We might not be united as a continent yet, but Africans can largely agree that family is sacrosanct. Well, maybe food, too.

It is depressing, then, that African families who are against the protection of the human rights of [LGBTQI+](#) and gender-diverse people will criticise states that neglect women, persons living with disabilities and children. For instance, African families will express contempt about the rise of gender-based violence in South Africa and then remain largely silent about the rape of trans South African women. Nigerian mothers will rally in outrage about kidnapped Nigerian children while also ostracising daughters who identify as lesbians. Black church congregations in the US will suggest that homosexuality is a choice while advocating for realised constitutional rights through the Black Lives Matter Movement.

African families are thought of as teachers about peace, love, kindness and forgiveness. There are thousands of ubuntu references on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn and ubuntu talks on TEDx. We see our grandmothers and grandfathers, who remind us about the significance of respect; there are certain words used only to greet an elder in Africa. We are taught this at an early age. Arguably, what a grandmother or grandfather says is paramount in Africa.

A challenge to African families

Therein lies our request for African families (our grandparents, parents and siblings) to use their social and financial powers to condemn and hold to account family members (even if they are politicians) who violate the human rights of LGBTQI+ and gender-diverse persons. We challenge African families to stop enabling [violence](#).

As adults who will soon look after the teeth of our children and our children's children (extended and immediate family alike), we challenge ourselves too. We continue to write and speak about human rights injustices in Africa, as per ratified international and regional human rights instruments as well as declarations that explicitly mention legal obligations surrounding human rights standards and principles. By speaking and writing, we are respecting our African culture which, at its core, is about healing and protecting our communities lovingly.

If we practice violence against LGBTQI+ and gender-diverse persons, then what stops us from violating additional family members?

In closing, by 2055, Africa's youth population (aged between 15 and 24) is expected to be more than double the 2015 total of 226-million youths (see *Project Syndicate's* 2017 article "[Africa's defining challenge](#)"). If 20% of young black Africans (from the more than expected 452-million) will identify as LGBTQI+ and gender-diverse persons, then that could imply more than 90-million LGBTQI+ and gender-diverse persons in Africa by 2055.

Moreover, in a 2020 UN [article](#), Dr Ibrahim Mayaki said that while African countries have been enjoying notable social and economic progress, the gains made in this realm have, in most cases, not cascaded down to alleviate everyday problems such as improved healthcare systems and the creation of the much-needed jobs for Africa's youths. Without more deliberate and concerted efforts to address challenges faced by the continent's youth, especially unemployment, and lack of meaningful economic opportunities, Africa faces the real risk of frustration from the youth, leading to a spike of instability and civil conflicts.

More young family members then, to exclude, ridicule, harm and condemn; or more family members to include, support, heal and love?

Where we continue to violate the human rights of LGBTQI+ and gender-diverse people, we dishonour and oppress our African families, friends, colleagues, communities and ourselves. Surely, we now know that social divisiveness in Africa harms, and even causes deaths.

Aren't we stronger together; an Africa with more humane actions than less?

To sustain our African continent, what are our choices?

We note the language used in the Yogyakarta Principles to identify sexual orientation and sexual identity. One author identifies as homosexual, and the other two as heterosexual. Our solidarity is human rights justice. The authors are from Nigeria, South Africa and the US, all living in Africa, working as LGBTQI+ human rights defenders



[Portia Comenetia Allen](#)

Portia Comenetia Allen has been fundraising in Africa for two decades (primarily in East Africa with local communities and organisations); collaboratively, they have raised \$10-million for education, health, and human rights projects. Recently, Allen has been invited to work as the advocacy and fundraising lead with Amahoro Human Respect.



[James Katlego Chibamba](#)

James Katlego Chibamba is a human rights defender and a fellow of African Radio Workshops. He is an alumnus of the Young African Leadership Institute (Southern Africa), and a qualified "Learning In, Learning Out" Master Trainer through Positive Vibes Trust. He is a grants officer at the Other Foundation Trust.



[Augusta Aondoaver Yaakugh](#)

Augusta Aondoaver Yaakugh has 10 plus years of legal experience in the human rights and governance sector in Nigeria, also with compliance and regulatory issues. She has worked with several initiatives focused on gender, digital freedom, equality, as well as the rights of women, girls, and sexual minorities.