

My Body, My Choice

By Guest

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Abstract

The following blog post is Audrey Mbugua from of Transgender Kenya. Mbugua works for Transgender Education and Advocacy (TEA). TEA is a human rights organization working towards ending human rights violations against transgender and intersex people. Imperialistic Complex Against Transsexual Kenyans
“My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same [...]”

Article

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Imperialistic Complex Against Transsexual Kenyans

“My notion of democracy is that under it the weakest should have the same opportunity as the strongest” By Mahatma Gandhi

One of Kenya’s notable heroic moments in history is undoubtedly the fight against white rule dating from 1900 to early 1960s. Songs have been sung about this despondent time in Kenya’s history. Some of the heroes of this struggle have been immortalized by naming streets and institutions after them. Students have been forced to invest a great deal of mental energy in reading and re-reading about these heroic and gallant Kenyan warriors and of course there is the national anthem to habitually remind us the sacrifices some Kenyans made in liberating Kenya.

To an intelligent Kenyan, all these would be meaningful to all was it not for the tragic and unwarranted atrocities committed by Kenyans on innocent and hapless Kenyans. Take the example of women been circumcised while under sedation during child birth on the behest of their husbands whose community practises circumcision among women to “tame” their sexual desires. Also deconstruct the paternalistic attitude people have on transsexual people and you will have no doubt some Kenyans simply picked up the paraphernalia of colonialism from the whites and are hell bent on oppressing guiltless Kenyans.

Why do you Kenyans assume that transsexual people don’t know what is best of them? Why do you ask us whether our parents are okay with our gender transitions? How comes you don’t do the same when non-transsexual Kenyans seek treatment for sexually transmitted diseases? How comes you don’t ask non-transsexual Kenyans with cardiac arrests whether their parents will go pissy pants on doctors who treated them? Unfortunately, it doesn’t stop them. I am a an “out” and politically active transsexual woman and at times I do hear people (relatives, neighbours and work colleagues) making projections of

trans folks and what we should do (wear, eat, watch movies, carry, language) for us to be a “real women” or “real men”. Putative experiences of gender expression and gender role sound sagacious to those with superficial analysis of transgender/transsexual discourse and sadly to say, are patrolling the borders of the man-woman gender dichotomy. Such consists the basis of transphobia and colonization of the trans community in Kenya. Giving primacy to the emancipation of the transsexual Kenyans, we hereby state that its us to grant ourselves identities that serve us well both, psychologically and biologically. The same way some man in the street will be offended if I referred to him as a woman, we do get offended when you people continue to pigeon hole us into your gender binary system or whatever identity you brand us with. And this is not just a preserve of Kenyans; Joelle Ruby Ryan, Ph.D., reveals this patronizing attitude in United States of America[1]:

“Cissexual ‘experts’ treated transpeople like their subordinates, as objects who needed to be controlled, monitored and rendered subhuman. This tradition of paternalism made trans people into butterflies pinned to a cork board; we were rendered motionless and voiceless by the weight of a colonizing body of people who wanted to figure out why we were transsexual and what to do about it.”

This blatant lack of accommodation by non-transsexual Kenyans leads to conflict which then metastasizes in the whole society with time been manifested as gross human rights violations against transsexual Kenyans.

From my self awareness of gender, I brand myself transsexual. Its for my own psychological, social and biological needs and if its okay with me I don’t understand how its suppose to affect anyone’s life. But, a majority of Kenyans use it to disqualify us from the feast that is equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. Yet, these are the same people who screech loudest when the Kenya’s police force shoot their sons and rape their mothers and daughters. The instrumentation of human rights and good governance does not solely lie within the ambit of yielding to the “distress” of religious and cultural fanatics and conducting some free and fair elections but: “states have the mandate to eliminate inequalities and inequities entrenched in society that results in the exploitation and the marginalization of certain groups, depriving them of basic rights to guarantee protection for the human rights of all citizens”[2].

A large majority of Kenyans regard themselves as religious and saved. They brag of how special they are to their gods and how assured they are of getting the green card to the land called heaven. A land where you have rivers of honey and milk. A land where baboons will mingle with crocodiles without the crocodile turning the baboon into its supper. A land where there is no hunger, drought, El Nino, hurricanes, gonorrhea, post election violence and political parties. I could excuse children for taking these fantasies seriously but not for adults. More so, for adult Kenyans who keep on singing that gender reassignment therapy is “ungodly” and should be discouraged by all Kenyans who believe in Christ and savior. Well, gender reassignment therapy is not godly (and we don’t need it to be) and all sorts of medical interventions for any disorder, condition and disease. Just because something or a situation has been labelled ungodly doesn’t mean its harmful or inappropriate to intelligent and rational people. The bible states that donkeys and snakes can converse with human animals. The bible states that its possible for a human being to die and after a number of days the body to come back to life. Yes it does. So if I said snakes can’t talk with human animals, then its ungodly, but then it’s a fact snakes and human animals can’t converse with one another. Its also a fact that its impossible to beat a donkey so

much it spontaneously learnt a human language. Yes, this means my utterances are ungodly, but that doesn't necessary mean they are harmful or inconsistent with reality. Also, considering the ethnic cleansing committed by Samson as instructed by god, and the deification of these by god's earthly delegates no reasonable person would want anything to do with such a psychotic god.

For those transsexual people feeling the guilt of undergoing or contemplating gender transition because its "ungodly" I urge you go ahead and be who you feel in the inside rather than succumbing to the mumblings of ancient shepherds and hobos. Just ignore these messages of madness and obsession. Imagine the honour of been gods side kick and you will understand why nearly all Kenyans regard themselves as the truly anointed ones. Don't get subjugated by these cheap lines and in the process give these people the airs of respectability they crave for. Simply, they are as useless as they are irritating.

Lets move to something else. Not too uncommon, most religious people will argue that transsexual people should accept their assigned sex and pray for god to help them cope with the psychological distress that accompanies gender identity disorders. The butter is having faith because chapter blah blah verse blah blah says whatever we ask god to provide to us he shall give in abundance. Everyone say amen but I beg to differ. If transsexualism/gender identity disorder, is classified as a psychological disorder then it should be handled by people with the training to do so. Not by any Kenyan at any level of ignorance. Why do we ring fence some disorders but come transsexualism we change the tune? I will be okay with the "accept yourself the way you are" solution was it also dished out to people with diabetes, gonorrhea, chlamydia, cataracts, HIV, cholera, malaria and all diseases and disorders.

Another mentality that perturbs me is the mentality that transsexual people can only work in the sex industry. I don't have a problem with transactional sex and sex workers but I have a problem with the way Kenyans discriminate us in employment simply because they deem us to fit well in the sex industry. Like any other myth, this is a fundamental lie and just as wicked as racists and sexists stereotypes. Sex work should not be the only option for us. There is no reason for us not to be a computer programmers, teachers, accountants, drivers, lecturers and even traffic police officers. What we have between our legs doesn't in anyway preclude us from been productive; both for trans and non-trans folks.

Another of the many patronizing habits Kenyans have against transsexual Kenyans is this argument that they should not access gender reassignment therapy because "they can't have babies afterwards". So what harm do we inflict on you people when we don't get babies? What harm has been inflicted on me just because there is a childless 50 years old woman in Mombasa? And, in the first place who told you all of us want babies? Don't even dare to answer that question. I know you will sing that line of "what if your parents were in your school of thought, you would never have been born". I have nothing else to say to such hollow and daft arguments.

As I pen off, I urge Kenyans to stop falling throwing their spanners into work they don't have the slightest clue what its all about. Stop filling our heads with messages of "don't fly too high because the wax holding your wings and feathers will melt". Stop judging us before you even get to know us. And stop trying to scare us with threats of an apocalyptic future if we undergo gender reassignment therapy.

The neat division between failures and high achievers is that one gets fixed on one way of undertaking a

task and gives up after things don't work out as expected. The other is open minded to new ideas of executing an idea or task and whatever the results, new information, expected or unexpected, is generated of how life works at various different niche. The bench mark of non-transsexual people don't have to be our bench marks. We are different and unique. We are special and capable of changing the face of the earth in a positive ways. Conway, Susan Stryker, Femke Olyslager, Whittle and others have done it, why not us?

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