

GENDER AND SEXUALITY (1)

Hello everyone, Mujibaliko, habari, muraho. Welcome to our chat on gender and sexuality in Uganda beyond survival. Designed and presenting today is my lovely self Ruby.

I would like to let us know that this chat will have three main topics we shall look at. Briefly sharing about the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023, then share about humanism as a framework, and then reclaiming gender and sexuality and lastly we shall interact and have closing remarks. In Uganda, gender and sexuality are not merely personal identities but sites of political struggle.

Expression outside heteronormative binary expectations is met with violence, criminalization, and systemic erasure. Particularly for those living at the intersections of queerness, disability, poverty, and displacement. The Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2023 represents one of the most violent legislative attacks against LGBTQ plus Ugandans.

It includes the death penalty for aggravated homosexuality under Clause F and I that speak to persons with disabilities and criminalizes the promotion of LGBTQ plus identities, putting activists and community organizers at risk. It has led to arrests, evictions, mental health crises, and disruptions in access to safety and care. Since the bill's passage, Uganda has seen a rise in homelessness among LBQT plus women with and without disabilities, with and many displaced and facing limited access to safe housing.

Cases of gender-based violence and mental health crises have increased, while funding for SRHR programs is shrinking under political pressure. This moment demands intersectional action. Womanism as a Framework Coined by Alice Walker, womanism is a black feminist ideology that centers the lived experiences of black and African women while embracing the liberation of entire communities.

A womanist approach emphasizes radical care, spiritual resistance, and collective healing. It tells us that our survival is sacred, but our joy is revolutionary. At its heart, womanism resonates with the African ethic of Ubuntu, I am because we are.

This philosophy reminds us that healing is never individual. It must be shared, rooted in community, and built through solidarity across differences. Who is a Womanist Today? A womanist today is the mother who shelters queer youth when their families reject them.

She is the disabled organizer leading healing spaces, the lesbian doctor sharing inclusive abortion and family care information, an artist expressing through paintings what accessibility looks like or the rural activist fighting for access to reproductive health. Womanists are those who nurture justice, hold space for truth, and build community even when systems fail and remind us that care is a form of power. Reclaiming Gender and Sexuality Gender is not biology, it is socially constructed and culturally diverse.

In many pre-colonial African societies, gender was fluid and expansive. Sexuality, too, is not a Western import but part of the natural spectrum of human identity. In Uganda, historical accounts from the Buganda kingdom reveal that some Kabakas, kings, including Kabaka Mwanga too, engaged in same-sex relationships often with royal pages called E Abomi Biye Kabaka, meaning husbands of the king as part of court life.

These practices were not criminalized or shameful until colonial rule introduced Victorian moral codes. As Dr. Sylvia Tomali writes in *Decolonization and Afrofeminism*, 2020. Pre-colonial African societies were replete with diverse sexual and gender configurations that defy modern heteronormative definitions.

Colonialism introduced moral rigidity under the guise of civilization. Therefore reclaiming this knowledge allows us to resist imported narratives that label queerness as un-African. To live openly as a queer with disability, a person in Uganda today is an act of courage therefore for us all to organize, love, and create joy in this context is radical.

We must understand that a womanist future is one where everybody is sacred, every identity is valid, and care becomes the foundation of justice. Thank you, Asante Sana, Mwibel Nyo for being present. And showing up and this comes to the end of our presentation.

Happy to start our open chat. And to that end, I would like each one of us to share in what ways ancestral wisdom, storytelling, and spiritual connection can guide our movements as we create inclusive programming when it comes to gender diverse persons with disabilities.