

'I Say, We must Talk, Talk, Mama!'

Introducing African Voices on Religion, *Ubuntu* and Sexual Diversity

Kapya Kaoma

In May 2014, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) broke the African silence around homophobia and transphobia when it vividly condemned 'acts of violence, discrimination and other human rights violations' directed on sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons, LGBTI) at its 55th session in Angola. In addition to calling for the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships, the Commission highlighted the "corrective" rape, physical assaults, torture, murder, arbitrary arrests, detentions, extra-judicial killings and executions, forced disappearances, extortion and blackmail' that sexual minorities experience in Africa.¹ A year later, Mozambique legalised same-sex relationships.

The ACHPR's resolution and the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Mozambique were heralded as signs of good hope, amidst the growing violence targeting sexual minorities and the adoption of new anti-gay laws on the continent. There is a gap, however, between these developments and the political and socio-religious context in which most sexual minorities exist. The introduction of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009 (AHB)—signed into law in 2014 and later revoked on technical grounds the same year—publicised the plight of sexual minorities to the global audience. But it also catalysed the global North's involvement in African sexual politics—leading to religious and diplomatic confrontations between the West and Africa.²

Although the growing politicisation of sexuality, arrests, killings and violence against sexual minorities could have influenced the ACHPR's and Mozambique's

- 1 African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, '275: Resolution on Protection against Violence and other Human Rights Violations against Persons on the basis of their real or imputed Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity'. *The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Commission), meeting at its 55th Ordinary Session held in Luanda, Angola, from 28 April to 12 May 2014*: <<http://www.achpr.org/sessions/55th/resolutions/275/>>. Accessed 3 February 2015.
- 2 Kapya Kaoma, *Globalizing the Culture Wars: US Conservatives, African Churches, and Homophobia* (Somerville: Political Research Associates, 2009); *Colonizing African Values—How the U.S. Christian Right is Transforming Sexual Politics in Africa* (Somerville, MA: Political Research Associates, 2012).

Kapya John Kaoma is Visiting Researcher at Boston University Center for Global Christianity and Mission, Senior Research at Political Research Associates in the United States, and adjunct Professor at St John's University, Zambia. <jkaoma@bu.edu> .

actions, the global North and the United Nations' involvement in defending LGBTI rights played a critical role. Western nations and the UN view their involvement in African sexual politics as defending fundamental human rights, yet many Africans interpret it as neo-colonialist and imperialist. They further defend their politically and religiously organised opposition to homosexuality—which can be termed 'protective homophobia'—as protecting Africa's traditional heritage, religions and children from the perceived assault of immoral values originating in the West, for example, the 'international homosexual agenda'.

It is important to note that African anti-gay laws are gifts of colonialism. In former English colonies, the criminalisation of homosexuality is the ghost of King Henry VIII, who made the 'crime of buggery (not to be named among Christians)' a capital offence.³ According to that law, 'every person convicted of the abominable crime of buggery, committed either with mankind or any animal shall suffer death as a felon'.⁴ Henry's law followed the Hebrew Bible (Leviticus 18:22-23 and 20:13, 15-16) in demanding death penalty for adultery, homosexuality and bestiality, among many other acts.

The Christian overtones of this law are immense. The crime is decried as 'to the displeasure of the Almighty God', while the phrase 'not to be named among Christians' is repeatedly cited; the latter occurs three times on the same page in William Hough's 1824 commentary on the laws of England,⁵ and six times in John Frederick Archbold's 1824 three-page section on 'Sodomy'.⁶ 'Feloniously', 'wickedly', 'diabolically', 'abominable' and 'detestable' are among the words employed to describe homosexuality. Such language has persisted; employed in contemporary religious sexual politics to refer to sexual minorities both locally and globally.

Regardless, protective homophobia has many pastoral, theological and missiological implications. For example, the infamous claim that God does not make mistakes—one is born either male or female—fails to take into account that some people are born intersex. Suffering the shame associated with being intersex, many families exist in the shadows of secrecy, fear and rejection. The

3 William Hough writes, 'Statute 25, cap.6, made [homosexuality] a capital offence,' in *The Practice of Courts-Martial, also The Legal Exposition and Military Explanation of the Mutiny Act, and Articles of War* (Oxford, Oxford University, 1825), 833. In addition to 'man with man', the law included sex 'with the woman; or by man on woman; in any manner with beast'. John Frederick Archbold, *Summary of the Law Relative to Pleading and Evidence in Criminal Cases With Precedents of Indictments, and the Evidence Necessary to Support Them* (New York, Stephen and Son, 1824), 262-264.

4 John Frederick Archbold, John Jervis, and William Bruce, *Pleading and Evidence in Criminal Cases with the Statutes, Precedents of Indictments, [Etc.] and the Evidence Necessary to Support Them* (New York, Gould, Banks and Co., 1840), 456.

5 Hough, *The Practice of Courts-martial*, 833.

6 Archbold, *Summary of the Law Relative to Pleading*, 262-264; see also Archbold, Jervis, and Bruce, *Pleading and Evidence in Criminal Cases*, 456-458.

Church can play a critical role in empowering these families to accept sexual diversity as natural. Moreover, the Church needs pastoral resources on sexual diversity if it is to fully support and care for such families—which is impossible when it denies the diversity of human sexuality.

The Commission's courageous step and pastoral concerns were the background to a three-day August 2014 *First African Scholars' Consultation on Sexuality and Religion* in KwaZulu-Natal. The 35 African scholars who participated expressed the need for African-born scholarship—by and for Africans—on sexual diversity.⁷ This volume, responding to that need, places sexual diversity in the African lifeworld, while acknowledging the inter-relatedness of sexual orientation and gender identity in sexual politics.

The Consultation brought to the discussion of sexual rights and politics some theological, cultural, and global underpinnings. The resulting Issue is strikingly intersectional, covering topics such as sugar daddy dynamics, misrepresentation of sexuality in Africa, sexual dance, *ubuntu*, and heuristic models for interpretation of sexual diversity. The volume holds an analytical tension between sexuality as a 'social construct' and as a 'lived experience' in specific social locations. Contributors engage, from authentic African socio-political and religio-cultural perspectives, the complexity of colonial, post-colonial, neo-colonial, socio-political, and religious factors at play in contemporary sexual politics. In other words, this Issue locates Africa's sexual politics within the paradigmatic elements of democracy, human rights, and global religion. While acknowledging the contestation of sexual diversity in Africa's socio-cultural, religious and political spaces, contributors avoid the binary that frames this opposition as reflective of Africa's backwardness or the hypothesis that blames foreign interests. Unfortunately, this binary partially informs and directs how sexual politics are perceived. Contributors, however, associate the opposition to interconnected dynamics; hence they employ intersectional, nuanced and conjectural analysis in their exploration of sexual politics on the continent. It is from this perspective that the transnational implications of sexual politics upon African Christianity, culture and politics is explored.

In Christian Africa, sexual politics benefit from theological and ecclesiological partnerships within global Christianity. Against accusations of imperialism,

7 African-related scholarships on sexuality have emerged since 2009. Sylvia Tamale ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Oxford, U.K.: Pambazuka Press, 2011). S.N. Nyeck and Marc Epprecht, *Politics, Theory, and Citizenship* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013). On the transnational aspects of sexual politics, see Michael Bosia and Meredith Weiss (eds.), *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013). Adriaan van Klinken and Ezra Chitando (eds.), *Public Religion, Politics of Homosexuality in Africa* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016). For challenges associated with sexuality in religiously defined socio-political contexts see Ezra Chitando and Adriaan Van Klinken (eds.), *Christianity and Controversies over Homosexuality in Contemporary Africa* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2016).

Christianity is a global religion with global networks of adherents. Through Christian mission, believers import, export and share their beliefs and values with their fellow believers near and far. This missiological premise explains the US Christian Right⁸ activities in Africa. Aside from partnering with African conservative Christians, the US Christian Right shares its opposition to sexual diversity with its allies on the continent using various means—from human bodies to TV, to the internet and to literature.

But Christianity is equally a local religion—it operates within specific socio-cultural, political and historical locations. In Africa, this context is defined by colonial history, traditional religions, competitive democracy, and the overriding sociopolitical and religious networking within global Christianity. The US conservatives' involvement in Uganda's AHB is an example of the transnational nature of African homophobia—it transverses continental boundaries. Whereas the US conservative pastors such as Scott Lively of Abiding Ministries and Lou Engle of The Call exported the Christian Right's idea of the 'international homosexual agenda' to Uganda, it is local religious leaders who campaigned for the passage of the AHB. The transnational aspect of sexual politics is equally reflected in language. The Christian Right's conspiracy theory of 'the international homosexual agenda to take over the world,' the slogan of 'Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve,' and 'abortion is the Trojan horse of homosexuals' among many others, are not only established in African sexual politics but also localised as default African phrases on sexual diversity.

All these factors must be taken into consideration to adequately understand African sexual politics. It is important, nonetheless, to note that sacred texts play a critical role in African sexual politics. The Bible and the Quran are repeatedly cited and employed in African sexual politics. In this case, exploring sacred texts is critical to the examination of sexual politics. Without underestimating the value of re-reading sacred texts on sexuality, contributors also appeal to traditional resources as instrumental to sexual imagination in post-colonial Africa. Among such resources are initiation rituals and ceremonies, African myths/epics and *ubuntu*. These resources are employed as heuristic models for reimagining sexual expression, orientation and gender identity. Various scholars also argue that *ubuntu* has potential to transform the heteronormative landscape in which sexuality is currently contested while acknowledging our common origin and vulnerability. The appeal to traditional concepts is another unique and important contribution of this Issue to the study of sexuality in Africa.

8 The US Christian Right is a white-dominated movement (some African Americans and Hispanic pastors are part of the Christian Right) that aligns itself to conservative politics and theology. Aside from voting with the Republican Party, it supports *laissez faire* capitalism, militarism, capital punishment, anti-immigration, anti-welfare, anti-gay, anti-gun control, denies climate change, and opposes all forms of contraceptives and abortion.

Global Religion and Protective Homophobia

Despite attempts to secularise the African mind, the majority still identifies with religion. Whereas the traditional worldview informs much of the religiosity of an African, Christianity and Islam play an important role in the appropriation of traditional religious beliefs and convictions. Since an African is not divorced from this traditional worldview, the application of Christianity or Islam is usually planted in the traditional ontology, in which the binary between Emile Durkheim's 'the sacred and the profane'⁹ is hard to strike—both worlds are intricately intertwined. In Africa, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz write, 'politics is played out in a world which incorporates both and in which both have a direct significance'.¹⁰ It is for this reason that African religious leaders are critical political actors in sexual politics.

Christian ecumenical partnerships in fighting homosexuality

Protective homophobia is ecumenically sustained—it brings Protestants, Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals together in Christian Africa. African Evangelicals/Pentecostals may hold negative views about the Roman Catholic Church, but when it comes to 'protecting' Africa from the international homosexual agenda—they are bedfellows.

But this unity is in contrast to the Vatican's position on sexual diversity. In 2009, the Vatican opposed 'all grave violations of human rights against homosexual persons', and 'all forms of violence and unjust discrimination against homosexual persons, including discriminatory penal legislation which undermines the inherent dignity of the human person'.¹¹ While Pope Francis's boundary-crossing ministry is globally celebrated, he is yet to fully embrace sexual diversity as a human rights issue. During his 2015 Africa tour, which included Uganda and Kenya, Pope Francis condemned corruption and showed solidarity with Muslims in the Central African Republic, but ignored the plight of sexual minorities.¹²

This failure is equally reflected in his 2016 *Amoris Laetitia: On Love in the Family*. Pope Francis writes, 'We need to acknowledge the great variety of family situations that can offer certain stability, but de facto or same-sex unions, may

9 Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: Free Press, 1965), 37.

10 Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999), 65.

11 Rev. Phillip J. Bene, J.C.D., 'Statement of the Holy See Delegation at a panel meeting of the UN General Assembly' (December 2009).

12 I am aware of Pope Francis's response of 'Who am I to judge', when asked about a gay priest. Also, I am aware of his meeting with a gay couple (the Pope's former student, and his gay partner) in Washington DC. during his official visit to the U.S.

not simply be equated with marriage. No union that is temporary or closed to the transmission of life can ensure the future of society'.¹³

The claim of ensuring 'the future of society' is at the core of African Roman Catholic opposition to sexual diversity. For example, bishops from Malawi, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, Eritrea, Zambia, Uganda and Ethiopia jointly opposed same-gender relations in 2014. Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, the President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria, likewise supported criminalising sexual orientation, claiming homosexuality is opposed to 'cultural and religious norms of marriage' and 'alien to our understanding of the family and should not be imposed on Nigerians'.¹⁴ Patrick Awondo argues that in Cameroon, the archbishop of Yaoundé, Victor Tonyé Mbakot, and Cardinal Tumi mobilised the anti-homosexual crusade, which catalysed the public's discourse on sexual diversity.

Since the Vatican and African Bishops conflate homosexuality with 'same-sex marriages', it is hard to determine whether their statements are about 'same-sex marriage' or homosexuality per se. Such ambiguity fits into Meredith Weiss's argument on 'anticipatory' or 'pre-emptive' legislations: laws that bar same-sex couples from marriage and the adoption of children, even though these issues are not yet on the radar of most African sexual minorities.¹⁵

The cross and the crescent—united on fighting homosexuality

Protective homophobia is, for better or worse, enticing inter-religious partnership in Africa. The majority in some West African nations adheres to Islam, but in East and Southern Africa, it is a minority religion. In attempt to assert influence on national politics in predominantly Christian nations, Islam is highly involved in local sexual politics. Since Islam and Christianity share aspects of the Hebrew Bible, Imams have called for the death penalty for same-gender loving individuals based on their readings of the Quran, especially the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. In 2014, Dr. Salmin Omar Idrussi of the Muslim Association of Malawi argued that homosexuals 'need to be handed death penalty as a way of making sure that the issue is curbed'.¹⁶ In 2011, Sheikh Mohammed Khalifa of the Council of

13 Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia The Joy of Love; on Love in the Family* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2016), par. 52.

14 Vatican Radio: The voice of the Pope and the Church in dialogue with the World, 'Nigerian Bishops' Conference takes a swipe at media misrepresentations'. <http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/28/nigeria_bishops_conference_against_media_misrepresentations/1175390>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

15 Meredith L. Weiss, 'Prejudice before Pride: Rise of an Anticipatory Countermovement', *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression*, edited by Michael J. Bosia and Meredith L. Weiss (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 149-73.

16 Ali Blessings Idi, 'Malawi's Muslim Body Calls for Death Penalty for Homosexuals,' 13 February 2014. <<http://www.malawimuslims.com/featured/malawis-muslim-body-calls-for-death-penalty-for-homosexuals/comment-page-1/>>. Accessed 12 March 2016.

Imams and Preachers of Kenya demanded the death penalty for homosexuals.¹⁷ Reminiscence of the US Pastor's demands to fence off all gays until they die off,¹⁸ in 2007, Mufti Sheikh Ramathan Shaban Mubajje of Uganda asked President Museveni to round up all homosexuals and dump them on an island on Lake Victoria until they starve to death¹⁹—a departure from Islamic law, which requires death by stoning. Such views are equally found in Islam-dominated nations such as the Gambia, Senegal, Tunisia, and in Islamic States in Nigeria.

Whereas African Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians consider Islam a major threat to Christianity, Africa is witnessing interfaith corroboration in sexual politics. In Nigeria, Muslim and Christian leaders backed President Jonathan's 2014 law banning same-sex marriages, gay groups and show of same-sex public affection.²⁰ Similarly, Mufti Mubajje of Uganda, the head of the Pentecostal Church Pastor Joshua Lwere, Anglican Archbishop Stanley Ntagali, and Roman Catholic Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga' jointly presented President Museveni a plaque for signing the anti-gay bill into law in 2014.²¹

Some Unintended Benefits of Protective Homophobia in Africa

The marriage between Islam, Protestantism, Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism and Roman Catholicism is an excellent example of some unintended benefits of sexual politics in Africa: it is aiding inter-faith and ecumenical relationships. The fact that these religious communities join hands in fighting what they perceive to be a 'common' threat to shared religious values suggests the insidious nature of sexuality politics. It also illustrates the limitations of the secular human rights frame in negotiating sexual rights in Africa, where religion suffuses all areas of socio-political interaction. As religions seek to stamp their influence on the political life of their nations, the *assumed* secularisation of sexuality by sexual rights advocates attracts organised religious opposition. Religious leaders not only

17 Sapa-AP, 'Kenyan Muslim leaders call for death penalty for gays.' 14 June 2011. <<http://www.timeslive.co.za/africa/2011/06/14/kenyan-muslim-leaders-call-for-death-penalty-for-gays>>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

18 Rene Lynch, 'Put gays, lesbians behind electric fence? Pastor's sermon goes viral.' *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 2012. <<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/may/22/nation/la-na-ann-pastor-wants-to-put-gays-lesbians-behind-electrified-fence-20120522>>. Accessed 12 March 2016.

19 Didas Kisembo, 'Activists lobby donors on gays law as Uganda feels the pinch,' *Daily Monitor*, May 13 2014. <<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Activists-lobby-donors-on-gays-law-as-Uganda-feels-the-pinch/-/688334/2312524/-/jk4jp3z/-/index.html>>. Accessed 12 March 2016.

20 Will Ross, 'Nigerian gay people being hunted down', *BBC News*, Bauchi. <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26065392>>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

21 Didas Kisembo, 'Activists lobby donors on gays law as Uganda feels the pinch', *Daily Monitor*, 13 May 2014. <<http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Activists-lobby-donors-on-gays-law-as-Uganda-feels-the-pinch/688334/2312524/-/jk4jp3z/-/index.html>>. Accessed 19 March 2016.

reject the notion that homosexuality is a human rights issue, but also appeal to their religious convictions which prohibit same-gender relationships. It is within this socio-political and religious climate that the contestation of sexual diversity occurs.

The consequence of such unified religious opposition is that it pushes politicians into uttering populist anti-gay polemics, often accompanied by calls to arrest or report known sexual minorities to the police. Such polemics force many sexual minorities into the shadows of society—making them vulnerable to arrest, torture, extortion, blackmail and HIV/AIDS. Since the shadow existence is employed to deny their existence, those who publicly come out as sexual minorities do so at the cost of their own lives.

Another unintended element is the role homophobia is playing in the development of African democracy. African political opposition to homosexuality is generally planted in competitive politics within the established democratic culture. As in US politics, religious leaders attach their opposition to votes, while politicians employ it to entice religious votes and endorsements. Since religion legitimises norms and values, protective homophobia 'invokes fundamental social values and emphasises group differences'.²² These differences are generally presented in the post-colonial binary of 'religious Africa' versus the 'secular West'. To religious leaders, opposing homosexuality is within their democratic rights and freedom of expression. Pro-sexual minority advocates equally appeal to these rights and freedoms, as Sylvia Tamale's essay reveals.

This paradox invites a question: Who defines human rights, freedom of expression and association? Although human rights are assumed to be universal, the application of human rights is locally defined. Since the preservation of tradition, religious identity and community cultures are recognised human rights, African political and religious leaders view Western involvement as violating their democratic rights and national sovereignty.

African sexual politics is equally driven by sexual developments in the global North. The progress on same-sex marriages and the dwindling numbers of Christians in the US, for example, affect how Africans interpret sexual diversity—it is at par with secularism. In other words, Western involvement in African sexual politics feeds into Africa's neo-colonial 'suspicion' politics. From notorious dictator Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia to Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe to Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, African politicians ride on Africans' distrust of Western nations; thus their anti-gay messages carry neo-colonial accusations. In doing so, they attract support from an overtly religious electorate while negatively projecting Africa's socio-economic plight on Western imperialism—thereby avoiding accountability. But it also allows global North conservative groups such as the US Christian Right to partner with African religious leaders on the

22 David C. Leege and others, *The Politics of Cultural Differences Social Change and Voter Mobilization Strategies in the Post-New Deal Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 27-28.

premise of providing a helping hand to African Christianity against the assault of the homosexual agenda—promoted by EuroAmerican nations.

Finally, sexual politics has increased the visibility of sexual minorities. In addition to challenging the claim that Africa has no gays, Africa is witnessing a myriad of new same-gender rights civil societies. These groups are not only partnering with well-established human rights organisations in the global North such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, but they are also publicising sexual rights violations to the global audience. Although most of these groups are not officially registered, and are often raided by law enforcement agencies, they are nonetheless playing a critical role of providing health services, security, moral support and in some cases legal help to LGBTI persons. This is another benefit of sexual politics in Africa.

Listening to African Voices of Pain and Hope

The diversity of contributors, styles and methodologies in this Issue makes it accessible to a wider readership interested in poly-vocal analysis and distinctive insights on a discrete range of topics at the forefront of African sexual politics. Although the following articles complement each other, they are divided in three sections on sexual diversity—listening to our stories and religions, gender and religion, and new heuristic Models for liberation.

Sexual diversity: listening to our stories and religions

The lead essay by Dora King invites readers into the lived experiences of sexual minorities. King reflects poetically on the murder of an openly lesbian human rights advocate in her native country of Sierra Leone. While acknowledging the danger of existing in secrecy, King bemoans that ‘the secrecy that protects us can someday be the face of the impunity that murders us.’ This essay speaks to the wider issue of sexual politics—it is about people whose life-existence is constantly threatened by death.

Against the belief that sexuality in Africa exists in silence, Kapyra Kaoma explores the silence associated with sexuality in Africa. Unlike in the traditional culture where sexuality was openly discussed and ritually celebrated, missionaries and settlers attached shame to it—thus introducing the silence which is now defended as the default African position on human sexuality.

Like King, Yvette Abrahams locates issues of sexuality and gender identity in an ecological context and pan-Africanist discourse accompanied by personal experiences. She argues that while ‘most plant species are not two-gendered’ and some animal species—such as snails—‘are fully intersex’, humanity ignores what ‘can be observed throughout nature’. Abrahams’s essay locates the sexual rights

struggle in the wider Pan-Africanist movement—alerting readers to the dangers of fighting discrimination and the power of the victims.

In addition, S.N. Nyeck rejects the posturing of sexual orientation on simplistic binary constructs of subjects (African/Un-African, heterosexual/homosexual, homophobic/homophile). Employing the *Epic of the Mvet Moneblum* among the Fang of Cameroon and Gabon, she concludes that 'Mvet celebrates the ethics of the journey, rather than the journey itself and provides a framework' for exploring sexual diversity. It is from this perspective that she proposes ambiguity as a starting point for analysing sexual diversity. Ambiguity, Nyeck argues, accords one a chance 'to retrieve nuanced modes of conceptualising and theorising the human and sexuality within African systems of thought'.

Together these articles open space for social imagination and the interpretation of sexuality beyond the established cultural, religious and social binaries informed and directed by heteropatriarchy.

Sexual diversity: gender and religion

Sexual politics directly impact gender justice. Patrick Awondo, for example, explores sexuality politics in Cameroon, showing how the Roman Catholic Cardinal and Archbishop mobilised around homosexuality and abortion to raise their religious and political profiles in the nation. While Awondo does not link Catholic anti-gay and anti-abortion activities in Cameroon to the US Christian Right, he nonetheless shows how Catholic leaders linked these issues in their mobilisations. Attacking the *Maputo Protocol* (the African Union agreement that accords reproductive rights and equality to women), a Cameroonian priest termed it as 'the Trojan horse of homosexuals'. This language is an established mantra of the US Catholic Right—Priests for Life, Human Life International, and Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute—all with dealings with African Catholicism.²³

Sylvia Tamale, however, explores how 'cultural and religious relativism' affect sexual and reproductive human rights in Uganda. Aside from showing the collusion between religious and political actors in scapegoating women and sexual minorities to deflect from good governance issues, Tamale asserts that the 'fusion of African culture/morality and a wide array of religious values have been invoked to justify the actions and to legitimise such overtly political agendas'. She maintains that Uganda's anti-women and anti-gay laws and policies are reflective of invasive structures of social control, sexual dominance and exploitation of women and sexual minorities. Such laws have serious health ramifications for sexual minorities and women.

The susceptibility of women in sexual politics is further explored in Gerald O. West and Beverley G. Haddad's examination of the 'sugar daddy' culture, in

23 Kapya Kaoma, *American Cultural Warriors in Africa: A Guide to the Exporters of Homophobia and Sexism* (Somerville, MA: Political Research Associates, 2014).

which young women are caught in South Africa. They argue that this phenomenon exposes young women to HIV infections. West and Haddad cast the book of Ruth as a religious resource to empower young women to negotiate their economic vulnerability in the context of HIV/AIDS and economic exploitation. Speaking about HIV, the denial of homosexuality increases the vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS especially when gay men are forced into heterosexual marriages to survive social stigmatisation.

Ubuntu as a new heuristic model for liberation

Against the argument that sex education is foreign to Africa, Mutale M. Kaunda and Chammah Kaunda reveal how some African ceremonies have potential for women liberation. They illustrate how the ritual of *imbusa* among the Bemba people of Zambia subverts the domestication of the female body. In *imbusa*, they contend, women teach each other the art of negotiating patriarchal and heterosexual landscapes, while deriving sexual pleasure from erotic encounters.

Kaoma and Petronella Chalwe's essay argues that African sexual politics exist within the ideological tension of US anti-gay and pro-gay activism, and Africa's socio-political and religious realities. Nonetheless, they invite African Christian solidarity and dialogue planted in the *dialogical* ethics of *ubuntu* coupled with the Christian value of loving the neighbour as oneself.²⁴

In his examination of 'liminality' in public religious discourse, Chammah Kaunda explores anti-homosexual speeches in Zambia and other parts of Africa. Using the concept of liminality, Kaunda maintains that liminal public religious speech can aid a Christian oppositional stance against rampant heterosexist narratives while erasing the prejudices against sexual minorities.

Following the liberationist model of human empowerment, Gerald O. West argues that the social context of the victims as opposed to the oppressor should be taken as the starting point for the liberation of sexual minorities. Like Abrahams, West proposes the 'liberationist queer theological pedagogy' that can enhance dialogue while opening up safe spaces for the theological acceptance of sexual minorities.

African voices on sexuality are poly-vocal: despite the complementary nature of the articles, differences exist in how authors present their findings. For instance, the understanding of gender relations in traditional Uganda, according to Tamale, does not offer strong expressions of egalitarian gender ideologies. In contrast, Kaunda and Kaunda, and Kaoma, independently suggest that such un-egalitarian features of contemporary Bemba culture are not traditional but from encounters with colonialism and Christianity. Rather than seeking to reconcile different

24 For a wider discussion on *Ubuntu*, see Kapyra J. Kaoma, *God's Family, God's Earth: Christian Ecological Ethics of Ubuntu* (Zomba: University of Malawi Kachere Press, 2013).

findings and worldviews, the volume demonstrates the complex nature of sexual diversity on a continent formed and being reformed by various socio-political and economic forces.

Toward Our New Mamaland—*Nakupenda Mama Africa*

The history of Africa is the story of *ubuntu*, solidarity, life-giving dialogue and hope. But it is also a story of rejection, discrimination and hate-killings. Yvonne Chaka Chaka's (aka Princess of Africa) song *Mamaland* speaks to wider issues of hate, discrimination and rejection by various state machineries. Chaka Chaka protests,

Who's that man, calling me stranger?
In my land, my *mamaland*,
Who's that man, telling me go?
From my land, my *mamaland*.

.....

This is my home, where I belong.
My roots are here, in Africa!
This is my land, Africa!

.....

Stop fighting, mama.
Stop killing, for *mamaland*.

....

Iwee nakupenda, iwee mamaland (I love you, my *mamaland*)

Chaka Chaka argued that despite the discrimination black South Africans suffered during apartheid, they nonetheless belonged to mama Africa, which was their home, and where their roots were; and they passionately loved their *mamaland*. To make mama Africa a better land, Chaka Chaka invites dialogue, 'I say we must talk, talk, mama'.

On 10 December 2013, Yvonne Chaka Chaka declared her full support of sexual rights during her visit to the United Nations. Today, her song applies to the plight of sexual minorities. They may be called strangers, and told to go from their *mamaland*, but Africa is where their roots are. No violence will erase sexual minorities from their *mamaland*! In the spirit of *ubuntu*, let us talk, talk, and stop killings and raping, for Mama Africa or for God!

God bless Africa
Guard her children,
Guide her leaders.
And give her peace,
for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.