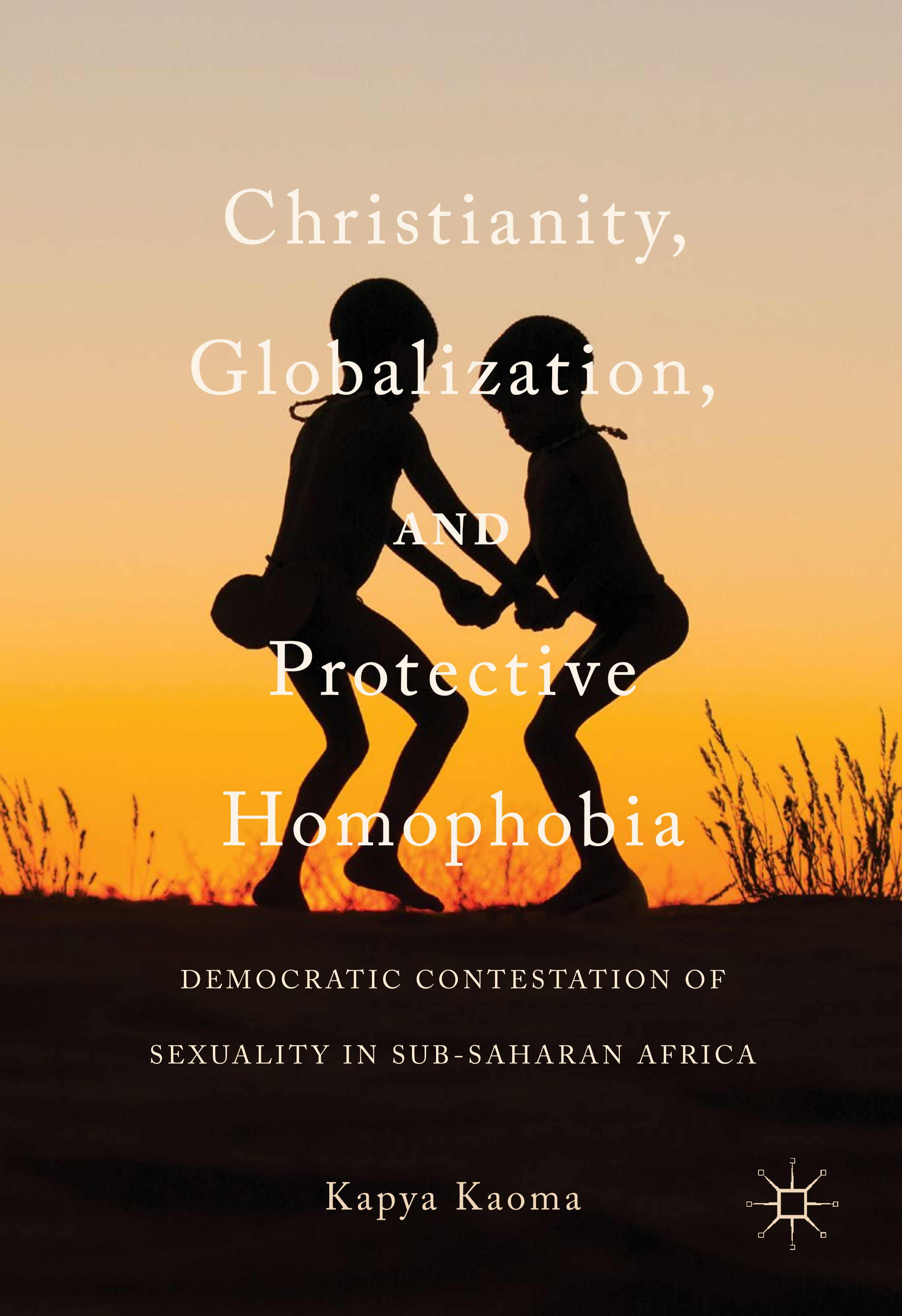

Christianity, Globalization, and Protective Homophobia

DEMOCRATIC CONTESTATION OF SEXUALITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Kapya Kaoma

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Democratic Contestation of Sexuality in Sub-Saharan Africa

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To
Mercy Kaoma
My dearly beloved sister,
I invite you to dance,
To a melody unheard,
Yet in every heart, yes, in every soul,
ubuntu exists,
a divine mettle to beat;
Make my motherland,
a loving home,
for all helpless children of the Soil.

Preface

In 1991, I lived with Anglican Franciscan brothers in Zimbabwe. The superior was from England and was in his late 70s. One day a teenage girl asked me, "What is wrong with that old white boy?" Confused, I asked for clarification. "I am talking about your boss," she boldly responded. "Among my people," she continued, "You are a boy as long as you do not have a child. So what is wrong with him? Is he going to die as a boy?"

I wondered why the girl expressed such concern over someone's private life. But then it dawned on me—her apprehension reflected the African ontology in which sexuality is a public good. In this worldview, the sexual transcends individual rights—it is planted in community rights and obligations. This philosophy is central to African Christian opposition to homosexuality—something I witnessed at the 1998 Lambeth Conference—the global gathering of bishops in the Anglican Communion. To African bishops, homosexuality threatened the public good. Hence, it was termed un-Christian and un-African by default. The 1998 World Council of Churches' conference in Harare, Zimbabwe, duplicated this very scenario—African Christians were unified in their opposition to homosexuality. Although this opposition received negative publicity in Western media, it nonetheless forced the public contestation of sexuality on the continent. As is the case with religious leaders, the majority of Africans view homosexuality as un-African, un-Christian, and unnatural. But this claim is contested by Africans who self-identify as homosexuals—challenging attempts to erase them from the continent.

It is important to note that African opposition to homosexuality usually neglects African gay experiences while insisting that Africa has no gays. In most cases, sexual minorities are negatively ascripted as a danger to children, African traditions, and Christianity. To negotiate this political terrain, sexual minorities disrupt this dominant narrative by their physical visibilities in the public sphere. The interplay of these forces is what I term "the democratic contestation of sexuality"—homosexuality is un-African and un-Christian vs. a human rights issue.

They are various forces that influence postcolonial Africa's opposition to homosexuality. In addition to the tremendous growth of Christianity and the growing global democratic cultures, sexual politics is informed by transnational networks and domestic and interstate politics. If globalization invites sexual pluralism, African Christianity promotes sexual monoculturalism. In this case, the opposition is viewed as an attempt to protect African and Christian sexual norms from the onslaught of globalization. This attitude is termed *protective homophobia*—the attempt to justify the opposition to sexual diversity on the premise of protecting African cultural identity, children, and religion (Christianity or Islam) from the assumed assault of the Western "global gay agenda."

Christian-informed protective homophobia, I contend, occurs within three main socio-political frames—cultural, postcolonial, and religious predispositions. By predisposition, I mean the epistemological loci through which sexual disputes occur. Aside from viewing same-sex relations as sinful, religious predisposition benefits from the ongoing global shifts in Christian demographics from the North to the South, and Africa in particular. This growth has increased the church's influence in African politics while recalibrating the historical power relationships in global Christianity.

It is important to note that cultural predisposition opposes globalization-infused cultural pluralism or multiculturalism—thereby externalizing homosexuality as a foreign vice. Due to transnational networks of global religion, however, the US Christian Right and the Vatican's distrust of cultural pluralism in favor of "traditional family values" appeal to African Christianity. Whereas the meaning of "traditional family values" is contestable, it nonetheless aids the foreignization of homosexuality and gender identity. By appealing to the defense of traditional family values, however, the anti-gay movement perceives its activities as "protecting" Christian and African sexual norms.

Both religious and cultural predispositions influence postcolonial predisposition—the attempt to explain negative African experiences from the mistrust of the global North. Economic exploitation, wars, human rights abuses, and the double standards in the application of international law inform and direct postcolonial predisposition. In this frame, Western involvement in African sexual politics may be well intentioned, but postcolonial predisposition influences how Africans perceive such activities. Anti-gay advocates, for example, view homosexuality as imposed on Africa by the donor community. Through politics of being or public visibilities, however, sexual minorities dispute such claims by planting their sexual orientation and gender identity in the African heritage and democratic human rights cultures.

This book is a result of many years of personal struggle to make sense of African sexual politics. Since 2008, I have shared sacred spaces with respectable scholars, sexual and reproductive rights advocates, and students across the globe—who have influenced my analysis. I have also heard stories of death and dehumanization—some I share in this book to humanize sexual disputes—it is about people.

My particular thanks to my beloved wife Phie, and our lovely children, Dorothy, Nattie, Nandi, Kudzwa, and Chilufya. To my mother Jessy Mushili, my twin brother Chikulu Kaoma, and my brothers Nyembe Misheck and Denis Chola, I say thank you, *zikomo, tatenda, natasha, and asante sana*.

I am grateful to Prof. Dana Robert of Boston University Center for Global Christianity and Mission as well as Mr. Tarso Ramos, the executive director of Political Research Associates, for their support in my research endeavors. Prof. Michael Bosia, Prof. Jennifer Hughes, Dr. Liz Parson, and Ms. Chalwe Petronnella provided critical feedback to this work. I am equally grateful to Prof. Gerald West for his support in my exploration of sexual politics. To all anonymous reviewers, research assistants, and scholars who worked on this project, I say thank you for your help in shaping this book.

I view this book as a manual for constructive dialogue on African disputes on homosexuality. Critical and sustained scholarship can create a society in which all persons are dignified and respected regardless of creed, sexual orientation, gender, and ethnic identity.

God bless Mother Africa,
a blessed continent of many cultures,
many faiths, and values,
the fountain land of diversity,
a life-giving continent,
and a sacred font of ubuntu!

Boston, MA Kapya Kaoma

CONTENTS

1 Is Homosexuality an African or Un-African Human Rights Issue? 1
1.1 Mapping the Landscape of Protective Homophobia 6
1.2 An African or Africa's Identity? 6
  1.2.1 Religious Predisposition 9
  1.2.2 Cultural Predisposition 9
  1.2.3 Postcolonial Predisposition 10
1.3 African Sexual Political Actors as Social Movements 11
1.4 Outline of the Book 12
References 14

2 Contesting the Sexual: Sexuality in an African Context 21
2.1 Sexual Diversity in African Tradition: Melissa's Story 22
2.2 The Externalization of Homosexuality in Africa: It Is a Foreign Vice 24
2.3 Rethinking Traditional Silence on Sexuality 27
2.4 Problematizing Human Sexuality in Sub-Saharan Africa 29
2.5 The Unproven Silence on Sexuality in Africa 30
  2.5.1 Does an African Sexuality Exist? 32
  2.5.2 Reactions to the Caldwell Thesis of Sexuality in Africa 33
2.6 Dancing for Sexuality in Africa 37
2.7 Looking Forward 39
References 41

3 Contesting Religion: African Religious Leaders in Sexual Politics 47
- *3.1 Politics of Being: Sexual Minorities Tell Their Stories* 47
- *3.2 The Four Cs: Civilization, Christianity, Commerce, and Conquest* 50
- *3.3 The Vatican and Sexual Politics in Africa* 51
  - *3.3.1 The Vatican and Secular Policy in Africa: The Case of Kenya* 54
- *3.4 Protestant Christianity in Sexual Politics* 56
  - *3.4.1 National Council of Churches on Human Sexuality* 57
  - *3.4.2 Evangelical Fellowship/Pentecostal Churches and Sexual Politics* 58
- *3.5 From the United States to Uganda: Transcontinental Contestation of Homosexuality* 60
- *3.6 Homosexuality and Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa* 63
- *3.7 The Religious Contestation of Homosexuality* 65
- *3.8 Looking Forward* 67
- *References* 69

4 Contesting Global Culture: Globalization and Sexual Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa 73
- *4.1 "It Took One Brave Young Man" to Change the Narrative in Malawi* 73
- *4.2 Erasing Spaces, Breaking Cultural Boundaries* 75
- *4.3 Postcolonial Contestation of Globalization* 80
- *4.4 Contesting Globalization Within Local Social Locations* 83
- *4.5 No Longer Local: The Domestic Is Global* 86
- *4.6 Global Sexual Politics in Postcolonial Africa* 88
- *4.7 Looking Forward* 94
- *References* 95

5 Contesting Identity: Democratic Human Rights and Sexual Politics 99
- *5.1 Democracy, Religion, and Sexual Politics* 99
- *5.2 Democracy in Africa: Imposed or Homegrown* 100
- *5.3 Old Africa vs. Young Africa: The Contest of Generations* 103
- *5.4 Democracy and Sexual Rights* 105

5.5 *Contesting the Separation of Church and State* 107
5.6 *Public Identity Groups in Democratic Polities* 108
  5.6.1 *Democracy, Identity Politics, and Protective Homophobia* 109
  5.6.2 *Assigned Identities in Democratic Deliberations* 112
  5.6.3 *Cultural Politics in Protective Homophobia* 114
5.7 *Democracy, Human Rights, and Culture* 118
5.8 *Looking Forward* 120
References 120

6 Contesting Sovereignty: Protective Homophobia and International Relations 123
6.1 *Protective Homophobia in International Relations* 123
6.2 *President Obama: A Political Actor in Sexuality Politics in Africa* 126
  6.2.1 *President Obama and Sexual Rights in Uganda* 126
  6.2.2 *President Obama and Sexual Rights in Senegal* 128
  6.2.3 *President Obama and Sexual Rights in Kenya* 129
6.3 *Responses on the Continent* 130
6.4 *Responses in the Global North* 131
6.5 *Whose Power and Politics: The West or Africa?* 132
6.6 *Understanding the African Norm of Solidarity in IR* 133
6.7 *Can Ubuntu Become Another Paradigm in IR?* 135
6.8 *Explaining Africa's Place in International Relations* 138
6.9 *Protesting or Protecting Global Marginality* 141
6.10 *Beyond Africa's Sexual Politics* 143
6.11 *Looking Forward* 144
References 146

7 Contesting the Biblical Adam and Eve Narrative: Jesus on Sexual Diversity 149
7.1 *A Story of Self-Identity: From Mary Waithera to James Karanja* 149
7.2 *Sexual Minorities and the Church in Africa* 152
7.3 *African Sexual Minorities' Stories and the Church* 153
7.4 *African Biblical Interpretation Lenses* 155
7.5 *Sexual Diversity: Jesus's Words in the Gospel of St. Matthew* 159

7.6 Beyond Adam and Eve: The Diversity of Sexuality 160
7.6.1 Eunuch in the Wider Social History 161
7.6.2 Revisiting Matthew 19:12: Jesus, the Church, and Naturally Born Eunuch 163
7.7 This Thing Is Foreign: Said Emperor Domitian—Says Robert Mugabe 166
7.8 Looking to Jesus 166
References 167

8 A Dance of Many Tunes 171
References 179

Index 181

CHAPTER 1

Is Homosexuality an African or Un-African Human Rights Issue?

"Is homosexuality an African or un-African human rights issue?" This question is not only central to the examination of Christian-informed *homophobia* but also the lens through which this study explores African disputes on homosexuality. In both religious and political circles, the argument that homosexuality is un-African and thus not a human rights issue is now an established mantra. Sexual minorities and human rights advocates, however, contest such claims—leading to what this study terms the contestation and externalization of sexuality. By "contestation," I refer to the competing socio-political claims—homosexuality is un-African and un-Christian vis-à-vis a human rights issue. Externalization, however, refers to attempts to present homosexuality as a foreign vice imported into Africa. The study understands homophobia as the stigmatization and discrimination directed at people who demonstrate sexual diversity (West et al. 2016: 1).

Although the study acknowledges the life-threatening effects of homophobia on sexual minorities, it nonetheless contends that the desire to protect an "African identity," culture, religion, and the youth from an assumed Western "assault" of the "homosexual movement" drives African religious and political opposition to same-sex intimate relations. This attitude or stance may be considered *protective homophobia*—that is politically and religiously organized opposition to homosexuality as an attempt to protect Africa's traditional heritage, Christianity/Islam, and children from the "global homosexual agenda" (Broqua 2016; Ndzovu

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2016). The result is restrictive national legislations enacted under the banner of protecting African culture, religions, and children. On the political front, however, protective homophobia is driven by the growing influence of Christianity and democratic human rights cultures in sub-Saharan African politics (Kaoma 2015; Katongole 2011; Sanneh 2003).

During my 2009 visit to Abuja, for example, I interviewed Canon Joshua Taiwo, a Nigerian Anglican priest, about same-sex intimate relationships. "If they are doing it, they are doing it privately. They dare not come to the open. They will be shot. I can assure you that they will be stoned to death. We don't do it in Africa. It is only in the West that they are doing rubbish," the visibly angry reverend told me on camera. Addressing his supporters in 2013, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe also warned, "Let Europe keep their homosexual nonsense there and live with it. We will never have it here. The act … is not humane" (Newsweek 2015). In these words, Canon Taiwo and Mugabe are simultaneously contesting and externalizing homosexuality.

The visit to Abuja was part of a study which sought to understand African sexual politics as it relates to American mainline Protestant churches—Episcopalian/Anglican, United Methodist, and Presbyterian. In addition to Nigeria, the study took me to Malawi, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. During my research, I realized that the topic was beyond inter-continental church affairs—it included both domestic and interstate politics. Some of the findings were published in *Globalizing the Culture Wars* (2009), *Colonizing African Values* (2012), and *American Culture Warriors in Africa* (2014).

The scapegoating of sexual minorities and the number of African nations adopting or expanding anti-gay laws, as well as international responses to the same, invite scholarly analysis—something this study undertakes. It locates sexual politics within the broader historical, socio-economic, and the political context of postcolonial Africa. The study further explores the implications of sexual politics on Africa's self-understanding.

To some extent, the US Christian conservatives' involvement in Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009 increased global academic interest in Africa's sexual politics (van Klinken and Chitando 2016; Bosia and Weiss 2013; Bob 2012; Kaoma 2009). The publicization of the plight of sexual minorities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex [LGBTI] persons) in Africa attracted international involvement in African sexual politics. The US government, Canada, the United Nations, the European Union, human rights organizations, and some churches did not just condemn the persecution of sexual minorities but also sided with, and funded, sexual rights advocacy in Africa. This response, however, provoked militant homophobia in sub-Saharan Africa.

The opposition to sexual diversity, the study contends, benefits from the free democratic space brought about by the post-one-party state civil society organizations dedicated to human rights (Mutua 2000; Schwab 2002). In other words, the democratization of Africa increased the church's involvement in governance. But this involvement has a post-independence history. At the time when the press and political opposition were suppressed by nationalist leaders, the church became the most important institution to challenge African dictators. In this regard, the 1990s' democratization of Africa institutionalized the church's socio-political role in domestic affairs, specifically, human sexuality.

The church's initial involvement in sexuality politics became critical in the fight against HIV/AIDS. As Africa negotiated the HIV/AIDS crisis, the church emerged as the major partner in government efforts to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Aside from providing home-based care to AIDS patients, the church intensified its HIV/AIDS awareness programs for both the infected and affected while promoting "abstinence"-only programs. Since sexual promiscuity is linked to HIV/AIDS, the church insists on changing heterosexual attitudes as key to arresting this epidemic.

African Christian contestation of homosexuality benefits from this established social history. Indeed, the advent of HIV/AIDS forced the issue of sexuality into African political and social discourses. However, the subject was/is deeply entrenched in, and limited to, heterosexual relationships—sex between males and females. In this context, sexuality is defined in heteronormative terms—leaving out non-heterosexuals.

The identification or "medicalization" of men who have sex with men (MSM) as among the key risk populations in contracting and transmitting HIV expanded the definition of sexuality (UNAIDS 2006; Bosia 2014; Roehr 2010; Beyrer et al. 2012). In Africa, however, it unwittingly increased the stigmatization of sexual minorities. As Bosia (2014: 258) observes, the medicalization of same-sex intimate relations is "a frequent trope for political action and political contestation." In Africa, for example, it aids protective homophobia—by opposing homosexuality, we are protecting Africa from AIDS.

The aforementioned context informs how sexual rights are perceived in Africa and across the globe. How international and local groups negotiate this landscape is critical to overcoming the global divide on homosexuality (Pew Research Center 2013). It is tempting, however, to conclude that this divide will not change—cultural change is slow and fragile. Moreover, the West has wrestled with sexual politics for decades, but in Africa, the subject is still developing. Nonetheless, the developing study is dominated by anthropologists, historians, political scientists, and public health scholars—detaching it from the wider Christian theological discourse.

The accusation of neocolonial imperialism as regard to the American Christian right's involvement in African sexual politics is theologically justified. Christianity is a global religion with global networks of adherents. Through Christian mission, believers import, export, and share their beliefs and values with fellow believers near and far (Robert 2008; Gifford et al. 1996; Kalu 2008; Sanneh 2003; Anderson 2014).

The missiological concept of *missio Creatoris Dei*—originally conceived as *missio Dei* (Kaoma 2015; Wright 2013; Douglas 2008; Bosch 1992)—"the mission of the Creator God" explains why opponents and proponents of sexual rights in Africa have Christian allies in the global North. Christianity, however, is equally a local religion—it operates within a specific socio-cultural, political, and historical location. As this study reveals, colonial history, traditional religions, globalization, democracy, and international relations define the African postcolonial context. Besides, the extraordinary growth of global religion (Christianity and Islam[1]), which African scholars attach to the extreme religiosity of Africans (Mbiti 1988; Magesa 1997; Kalu 2008), equally informs this postcolonial context (Jenkins 2002; Johnson and Ross 2010).

It is important to note that globalization has its economic discontents, and Africa is not immune from its effects (Enloe 2007; Stiglitz 2002; Schwab 2002). Nonetheless, globalization has led to the intensification of information movement. Former US President Jimmy Carter (2000: 52) writes: "The free flow of information available through these new media (the internet, the web, and social media) should give hope to those who would otherwise find themselves silenced by government repression or inadequate resources." Bohman (2004: 139) also contends, in boundary-crossing spaces, "the internet provides a positive and enabling condition for democratic deliberation and thus creates a potential space for cosmopolitan democracy." This deliberation is locally contested—forcing communities to self-select issues to reject or endorse. In this case, globalization escalates the global consciousness, while heightening the sense of cultural identity. Sociologically, culture "transmits sexual schemas" and aids the internalization of sexual norms "such that the meanings of sex and sexuality come to seem natural and intrinsic to individuals rather than culturally produced" (Moon 2008: 184; Williams 1996: 25–32).

In the field of culture, globalization aids moral and sexual pluralism. Through the Web, the Internet, and the cable TV, new sexual norms are introduced beyond geographic boundaries. This process, however, is not new to Africa—it dates to the colonial and missionary era. Whereas missionaries and colonial officers condemned African sexual customs (Elphick 2012; Hoad 2007; Epprecht 1998; see also Hinchy 2015; Miescher et al. 2015; Amadiume 1987; Gunda 2010; Epprecht 2014; 2005) for Victorian sexual norms (Phillips 2005; Foucault 1978; Archbold 1824; Archbold et al. 1840; Hough 1825), contemporary Africa is now resisting Western sexual norms for colonial-influenced Christian values. Moreover, just as missionaries protected Victorian sexual norms, African clerics are at the center of protective homophobia (Ssempa 2005; Kaoma 2010).

This scenario invites a vital question: is homosexuality a state or a church issue? In Western sexual politics, this proposition is about the constitutional separation of church and state. Aside from the fact that sexuality, gender, and the sacred are interlinked (de Groot and Morgan 2014), in Africa, religion suffuses all areas of politics. While the democratic space is assumed to be secular in the West, in Africa, it is sacred (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Kaoma 2016; Kaoma 2015). Since sexual rights advocates usually operate from the secular human and individual rights paradigm under which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights exists (Schwab 2002), the secularization of sexuality attracts organized political and religious opposition.

Such opposition, however, is accompanied by neocolonial—the West is exporting homosexuality to Africa. Yet evidence of the existence of homosexuality in pre-colonial Africa exists (Evans-Pritchard 1970; 1937; Kunhiyop 2008; Smith and Dale 1920; Nkabinde and Morgan 2006). Besides, sexual minorities plant their sexual identities in local cultures too (Tamale 2011; 2016; Stychin 2004). Their opponents, however, perceive them as products of postcolonial imperialism—thereby erasing their agency in sexual politics.

Often international developments in sexual politics (both secular and religious) propel African protective homophobia (Kaoma 2016; 2012). The 2003 consecration of an openly gay bishop and the legalization of same-sex marriages in the US invited African Christian opposition to homosexuality (Hassett 2007). While South Africa constitutionally legalized same-sex marriages in the 1990s, it is the US which provoked negative religio-cultural reactions across Africa. President Mugabe's 2015 response to the legalization of same-sex marriage across the US is a case in point:

> I have just concluded—since President Obama endorses the same-sex marriage, advocates homosexual people and enjoys an attractive countenance—thus if it becomes necessary, I shall travel to Washington, DC, get down on my knee and ask his hand. … I can't understand how these people dare to defy Christ's explicit orders as our Lord prohibited mankind from sodomy. (Hall 2015)

Mugabe went on to accuse the US government of being run by "perverted Satan-worshipers who insult the great American nation." There is no biblical evidence to Mugabe's claim that Jesus gave explicit orders against same-sex intimate relations. Nonetheless, Mugabe aims at coating his opposition in Christianity—inviting the religious-informed opposition to homosexuality.

Mugabe's opposition to the US while remaining mute on South Africa is another example of postcolonial predisposition. Such attitudes are equally present among religious leaders, who mostly turn a blind eye on some African nations' acceptance of homosexuality.[2] To some extent, the turning of a blind eye reveals how traditional Africans treated homosexuality. However, it could also be part of the wider African Union's solidarity norm, which bars member states from publicly criticizing each other (Tieku 2012: 45–46).

1.1 Mapping the Landscape of Protective Homophobia

Various factors inform and influence Africa's sexuality politics—religious, cultural, and postcolonial predispositions are the lenses through which sexuality politics occurs. I am not saying that all these dynamics are present in each situation—rather they inform social locations in which sexuality is politicized.

First, what constitutes an African identity?

1.2 An African or Africa's Identity?

The problem of defining Africa is that it is both a geo-historical reality and a social construct. The African identity, one can argue, is an ascripted identity of colonial naming and shaming. Thus, what "African" is, is debatable. Ndlovu-Gatsheni writes,

> The flows of commodities, capital, ideas, and people have coalesced to create an African identity. Even the tragedies that have befallen the continent, including conflicts and underdevelopment, have indirectly provoked a consciousness of being African. The nationalist and Pan-African initiatives to deliberately create an African identity, such as the African Renaissance, the African Union (AU) and the Pan African Parliament, have continued to build an African identity. African nationalism was, therefore, a grand project of making African citizens out of colonial subjects. (2012: 78)

From this frame, an African identity is remodeled as people make sense of their socio-historical and political space on the continent and in the wider global community. In sexual politics, however, anti-gay advocates mobilize against homosexuality on the premise of defending the African cultural identity. This cultural identity is assumed to be geographical—an assumption this study employs in the exploration of sexual politics. Although this geographical hypothesis has limitations—telling by cultural differences found on the continent—in *God's Family, God's Earth* (2013: 95–96), I write:

> Early works of missionaries and anthropologists are usually accused of generalizations in their presentation of Africa. This is true, bearing in mind that like other continents, Africa is too big and too complex to be studied as one homogenous unit. Each community culture has its own heritage and customs, and one needs to be careful not to be caught in a colonial consolidation of cultures.

Nonetheless, there is need to acknowledge general themes African communities share in the study of Africa. Aside from dismissing "an essentialist perspective of Africa," Bongmba (in Kaoma 2013: 96) invites "a balanced approach that emphasizes local ideas, as well as universal principles … which scholars turn to when making broad generalizations about the nature of African societies." In this light, this study identifies protective homophobia as a common theme that Africans share.

Despite growing attempts to expand anti-gay laws in Africa, the ILGA-RIWI Global Attitudes Survey on LGBTI People showed that only 45% of Africans support the criminalization of the LGBTI identities. Specifically, 46% of Kenyans, 59% of Nigerians, and 53% of Ugandans support criminalizing homosexuality. However, 78% of Africans are highly opposed to their child entering a same gender romantic relationship. The difference between 45% support for criminalization and 78%

opposition is due to the fact that some Africans disapprove of homosexuality as well as the criminalization of sexual minorities based on their human rights commitments. In fact, the very survey revealed that a majority of Africans support extending human rights to LGBTI individuals (ILGA-RIWI 2016: 2). The survey also revealed that "only 43% have no concerns, 18% with some, and 39% being very uncomfortable" if their neighbor was gay – Algeria 34%; Egypt 26%; Ghana 46% Kenya 46%; Morocco 33%; Nigeria 41%; S. Africa 77%; Uganda 40%; Zimbabwe 49% (ILGA-RIWI 2016: 10).

The Pew Research Center, however, showed that sub-Saharan Africans are highly opposed to homosexuality. The June 2013 Pew Research Center survey reported a big global divide on homosexuality. Aside from noting that the acceptance of homosexuality grows with sexularism, the survey noted that disapproval rates are higher in "poorer countries with high levels of religiosity." In sub-Saharan Africa, nine of ten in Nigeria (98%), Senegal (96%), Ghana (96%), Uganda (96%), and Kenya (90%) are opposed to homosexuality. In South Africa, where same-sex marriage is constitutional, only 32% approve of homosexuality. Although this survey showed no change in Nigeria, which registered 98% in the 2006 Pew Research Center survey, Kenya showed an eight-point decrease, from 98% in 2006 (8) to 90% in 2013—suggesting a shift in how the community perceives homosexuality. Although the reasons for this drop are many, as Chap. 7 shows, Kenya has registered some court victories on intersex and transgender issues.

The public opposition to homosexuality is equally reflected among religious leaders. In addition to the Roman Catholic bishops and priests (Awondo 2016), the 2011 Pew Global Survey of Evangelical Leaders who attended the 2010 Evangelical Lausanne Conference in Cape Town showed that 98% of African religious leaders were highly opposed to homosexuality (Pew Research Center 2011). Although only 32% of Americans oppose same-sex marriage (Pew Research Center 2017), 87% of American and 45% of South American Evangelical leaders oppose homosexuality. It is telling that despite many years of sexual rights campaigns in the US, almost nine of ten US Evangelicals oppose sexual rights. The 2011 survey partially explains the growing partnership between the US Evangelicals and Africans in sexual politics. In short, almost all African religious leaders of various Christian traditions are opposed to homosexuality.

1.2.1 Religious Predisposition

The key to the African identity is religion. Despite attempts to secularize the African mind, the majority still identifies with religion. To some extent, it is hard to separate politics from religion and vice versa.

Often, religion plays a critical role in people's comprehension of reality and in the context of this study, sexuality (Gaydos et al. 2010; McGuire 2008). Like President Mugabe, African politicians' opposition to sexual diversity carries religious overtones. The global North's involvement in Africa's sexual politics is said to threaten religion—Christianity or Islam but rarely traditional African religions. Moreover, while missionary-planted Christianity is anti-African traditional religion, Africans appeal to traditional beliefs in attempts to externalize same-sex intimate relations. Whereas the traditional worldview informs much of the religiosity of an African, Christianity plays a major role in the appropriation of traditional religious beliefs and convictions.

Further, traditional religions and cultures inform African Christian and Islamic identities. Cox (2001: 219) asserts that "for any religion to grow in today's world … it must be able to include and transform at least certain elements of pre-existing religions which still retain a strong grip on the cultural subconscious." Cox is right. In part, the rapid growth of Christianity lies in Africa's traditional religious heritage (Rowley 1867; Mbiti 1988). In this ontology, sex is not just a social or biological act but a sacred/religious duty through which life is sustained and transmitted (Mbiti 1988; Bujo 1992; Magesa 1997; Zahan 1970; Kaoma 2013). Christian and Islamic teachings directly confirm the sacredness associated with sex in traditional worldviews—providing cover to religious leaders' opposition to homosexuality.

In postcolonial terms, the independence of Africa did not halt the colonial project; rather, it continued through institutions colonialism left behind. Roman Catholics, for example, do not consider the Vatican as a foreign establishment. In fact, the sacredness of the Vatican is assumed to be unchallengeable—the Pope reigns. This appropriation of religious institutions as African is equally the case with Euro-American-born churches.

1.2.2 Cultural Predisposition

Implied in the externalization of homosexuality—the claim that homosexuality is foreign is cultural predisposition—heterosexual sex is African and cultural; gay sex is un-African and un-cultural. In cultural predisposition, white people can be gays, but black people cannot be. This inclination allows certain norms to pass as acceptable for specific groups. Dress codes such as miniskirts and sagging of pants follow this reasoning—the assumption is that some people are free to dress in a particular manner due to their ethnicity and social locations. If Africans behave like Westerners, in certain cases, they are said to be "importing" foreign values.

Cultural predisposition does not occur in a vacuum. Political, religious, media, and elite individuals define particular groups as unwelcome strangers in society. Aside from creating public disgust, unwelcome strangers are robbed of their humanity—they are pigs, dogs, cockroaches, among many dehumanizing epithets. Such characterizations act as justification for physical and often violent exclusion of marginalized communities (Vigneswaran and Landau 2012: 126). In the case of sexuality, sexual minorities are demonized and denied police and community protection. In short, cultural predisposition aids the othering of the enemy within, while inciting community vigilantism to arrest the threat—in this case, sexual minorities.

African sexual minorities, however, contest cultural predisposition by locating their sexual identities in local cultures. By using local names like *kuchu*, *hungochani*, or *yan daudu* for same-sex identities, sexual minorities reclaim their cultural histories and challenge the claim that "homosexuality has polluted a sexually pure culture" (Stychin 2004: 960).

1.2.3 Postcolonial Predisposition

Related to cultural predisposition is postcolonial predisposition—the attempt to explain African experiences from the postcolonial mistrust of the global North. Postcolonial predisposition explains international relations from the vantage point of the postcolonial subject. This predisposition not only invites political responses but also externalizes the very issue of human sexuality. To this reasoning, homosexuality is not an African problem, but a foreign matter imposed on Africa.

Like religious and cultural predispositions, colonial history and the place of Africa in the global community inform postcolonial predisposition. The politics of neocolonial suspicion of master/slave informs the intersection between African socio-cultural identities and the "imperial" created identity of nation/state. In this case, postcolonial predisposition creates tensions with regard to the involvement of the global North in African affairs. The long negative history of Western participation in African domestic politics, the history of colonial oppression, and post-independence capitalistic exploitation of Africa are lenses through which Africans judge the West. Young (2016: 11) observes,

> Postcolonial critique focuses on forces of oppression and coercive domination that operate in the contemporary world: the politics of anti-colonialism and neocolonialism, race, gender, nationalism, class, and ethnicities define its terrain. Interest in the oppression of the past will always be guided by the relation of that history to the present.

Whereas postcolonial politics pays attention to the interconnectedness of various facets of power, it permits the contestation of ideological interests in particular social settings. Since historical and global realities inform contemporary Africa, postcolonial analysis extends to how nations and people relate to one another in the postmodern world (Young 2016; Bong 2012). As Reus-Smit (2001: 590) writes,

> there are good reasons to believe that politics is more than instrumental and strategic action, that is, it also involves prior and more fundamental concerns about individual and group identities and about individual and collective purposes. Politics thus resides at the intersection of self-interest and power, on the one hand, and morality and ethics, on the other.

Similarly, Bosia (2014: 261) writes,

> Certainly, cultural and political patterns are not distinct….; like cultural forms embedded in economic processes and markets that come with neoliberal globalization, politics is inflected with both the economization of social life and questions of power inherent in neocolonial disequilibriums.

Politics is, therefore, the medium through which social actors align and contest religio-cultural and economic interests, first locally, and then globally. In Africa, however, there is an inverse colonial history to this alignment—thus postcolonial predisposition is critical to social mobilization in sexual politics.

1.3 African Sexual Political Actors as Social Movements

Africa is witnessing growing social movements in domestic and international politics. While social movements are goal driven, they aim at creating or countering the new world order. In this regard, social movements are strategic and tactical responses to socio-cultural and political issues that demand social change (Stohl 2005; Warkentin 2001; Berlet and Lyons 2000). In sexual politics, the anti-gay movement is seeking to block sexual rights from being codified in African nations, while the pro-sexual rights movement is a counter-movement trying to ensure the decriminalization of homosexuality.

The success of the anti-gay movement in African politics is partially due to domestic and global infrastructure (churches, schools, radio, and TV stations) for social mobilization. The campaign also benefits from the global anti-gay movement seeking to defend "traditional family values" (Martin 1999: 78; Butler 2006; Buss and Herman 2003). Like the word African, "traditional family values" is assumed and not defined. Whereas it means father, mother, and children in the West, in Africa, it speaks of the wider family of relatives (extended family), threatened by globalization and capitalism. Arguably, the reasons for opposing homosexuality in Africa are not the same as in the West—though the goal is the same.

While the pro-gay rights movement lacks local support and social infrastructure, it employs Western diplomatic missions, the United Nations, and global progressive civil society organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to advance its agenda (Bob 2012; Butler 2006; United Nations 2015). To counter these institutions' reach, however, the anti-gay movement strategically defines them as part of "the global homosexual agenda" (Lively 2009; Slater 2009; O'Leary 2007). It is within this socio-political and ideological climate that the contestation of sexuality occurs (Bob 2012; Kaoma 2009; Butler 2006).

1.4 Outline of the Book

This study opens with a discussion on the colonial and Christian transformation of sexuality in Africa (Caldwell and Caldwell 1987; Caldwell et al. 1989). Whereas this change is ongoing, Chap. 2 explores how the imperial colonial agenda transformed sexuality in Africa as well as set the foundation for African Christian opposition to sexual diversity.

Chapter 3 examines religious leaders' attitudes to sexual diversity. Aside from making the case that globalization and inter-continental relationships drive the opposition to sexual rights, the section shows that protective homophobia is uniform across denominations. It also highlights religious leaders' influence in policy development on sexuality. The chapter argues that protective homophobia is fostering ecumenical and interfaith relations on the continent while aiding the development of democracy in Africa.

Chapter 4 builds on Chap. 3—but it pushes further the question of the influence of globalization on Africa's sexual politics. Globalization has not only compressed the world and widened the levels of transcontinental interactions; it has also broken up space and time in socio-political, cultural, and economic interfaces (Bartelson 2000; Boellstorff 2016; Bohman 2004; Enloe 2007; Brah 2002). It has also intensified the pan-Africanist protectionist attitude—fueling protective homophobia.

Building on previous chapters, Chap. 5 examines identity in sexual politics. Africa, the chapter argues, is witnessing the birth of civil society organizations dedicated to sexual rights issues. Aided by the Web, such organizations share socio-political tactics and ideologies with like-minded groups across geographic and social boundaries. The interaction of all these forces has contributed to the resurgence of identity and cultural politics exemplified in the politics of being and politics of disgust (Leege et al. 2002; Gutmann 2003; Hancock 2004).

Against the assumption that protective homophobia is a domestic issue, Chap. 6 contends that it is an international relations issue. Using the encounters between Presidents Obama, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Macky Sall of Senegal, and Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, the chapter argues that global sexual developments force African politicians into sexual politics. The chapter examines the nature of inter-continental sexual politics as well as the global and local political and religious implications of the same (Dunn 2001; Smith 2012). It concludes that Western involvement in Africa's sexual politics, though well meaning, can feed the neocolonial claim that gay rights are foreign impositions.

Due to the religious context in which protective homophobia exists in Christian Africa, Chap. 7 employs Jesus's words in Matthew 19:12 to reject a simplified theological model of sexual identity. In addition to arguing that Jesus acknowledged sexual diversity, the chapter rejects the religious argument that procreation is the only goal of human sexuality. The book concludes with remarks on sexual politics in Africa.

NOTES

1. While acknowledging Islam as a global religion, this study mainly focuses on Christianity.

2. I am aware that some African countries such as Cape Verde, Madagascar, Mozambique, and São Tomé e Príncipe do not have laws against homosexuality. The absence of anti-gay laws, however, does not mean the recognition of same-sex marriage, which is mostly limited to male and female. For details, see The Law Library of Congress. 2014. *Laws on Homosexuality in African Nations*. (Global Legal Research Center. https://www.loc.gov/law/help/criminal-laws-on-homosexuality/homosexuality-laws-in-african-nations.pdf. Accessed January 12, 2016.)

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CHAPTER 2

Contesting the Sexual: Sexuality in an African Context

Over the past decade, Africa's sexual politics continue to make international headlines—mostly about same-sex intimate relations. From *The BBC* to *The New York Times*, Africa's sexual politics carry one tone—Africans are highly opposed to sexual pluralism. Similarly, local stories on same-sex expressions continue to surface—mostly to do with arrests of gays or the expansion of laws that prohibit same-sex relations.

Although such laws are passed on the premise of protecting African culture, it is the colonialization and Christianization project that transformed pre-colonial Africa's liberal attitudes toward sexuality. Pre-colonial Africa did not attach shame to sexuality as was the case in Europe (Epprecht 2008: 134; 2014). Indeed, the association of sex with shame and the criminalization of homosexuality are of colonial and Christian origin. In Anglophone Africa, they are ghosts of King Henry VIII, who decreed homosexuality as a capital offense. Per that law, "every person convicted of the abominable crime of buggery, committed either with mankind or any animal shall suffer death as a felon" (Archbold et al. 1840: 456). 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.

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The Christian overtone of anti-sodomy/homosexuality laws is evidently clear. The crime is decried as "to the displeasure of the Almighty God." The phrase "not to be named among Christians" is repeatedly cited. The latter occurs three times on the same page in Hough's (1825: 833) commentary on the laws of England, and six times in Archbold's (1824: 262–264) three-page section on "sodomy." "Feloniously," "wickedly," "diabolically," "abominable," and "detestable" (Archbold et al. 1840: 456) are among the words employed to describe homosexuality. Such language has persisted, and it has been used in contemporary Christian discourses to refer to sexual minorities on the continent. In fact, this derogatory language is now appropriated as default African Christian descriptions of same-sex intimate relations. Yet the diversity of African sexuality still exists in cultural beliefs, customs, and rituals as the following case reveals.

2.1 Sexual Diversity in African Tradition: Melissa's Story

Melissa (not her real name), despite coming out as a lesbian in Zimbabwe, enjoys a great relationship with her Christian family. This is unusual for most African families. Melissa noted that in most cases, lesbians are rejected by their own families. She explains,

> My family believes in cultural traditions. They ended up accepting me because they believe that some sort of male ancestral spirit resides in me. So at the end of the day, they would force you to go through cultural experiences and rituals. They said that I need a female spirit to uphold me. So that's how they understand it, but I know that I am ok. I don't have a demon. They accept it in a cultural manner. (Interview 2011)

But how did she win acceptance? Born into a lovely Roman Catholic family, Melissa was in high school when she realized that she had romantic feelings for other girls. When the school found out, they called her parents and shamed her in the presence of other students. The family resolved that she should live with her uncle who was a police officer. Melissa was not allowed to have female friends, only males, hoping that she would date one. "I remember people used to tell me, just have sex with a man and your feelings will come back … so I would say no. If I don't feel for a man, I don't."

When this did not help, the family sent her to a juvenile probation facility, where she stayed for months. While there, she was forced to undergo trainings to love men. After deceiving the authorities that she now wanted to date men, she was released back to her parents, but nothing changed. Convinced that their daughter was possessed, they sought the help of a priest to exorcise the demon—but nothing changed. Then they took her to an African Christian prophet (*vapostori*).

When this too failed, her grandmother came to the rescue. After being informed about the poor girl's story, she told her family that the girl was a blessing: "She has the male spirit of one of the rich family members who died without marrying. He is the one who has possessed her and he needs a wife," the grandmother explained. Since then, Melissa has been accepted and regarded as a man among her people. "I am actually allowed to drink by my parents," says Melissa, which is not a norm among the Shona people. Asked about her relationship with her uncle, the police officer, she responded, "I must say that after grandmother brought up the issues of this relative who was in me, he kind of respected me. Every time he sees me, he greets me, 'How are you *baba, mudara* (sir).'" With pride, she added, "You know the way he (uncle) says it, he respects me. I remember there was a family meeting going on at home and I did not find a seat. He was ready to stand up and make me sit there." (Again, this is unusual since women are expected to give up their seats to men, and not vice versa.)

Whenever Melissa challenges her parents about their syncretistic or contradictory religious beliefs, they remind her that she is the last person to question their faith. "You have a man in you, why are you dating women?" Asked whether her family respects her, she responded, "Yeah! Even my siblings believe it. Sometimes I use it to my advantage. Even my extended elder sisters respect me because of that. They call me whenever they want to do something."

Melissa's story shows that traditionally sanctioned homosexuality can be culturally acceptable in some African cultures. Among the Shona, Epprecht (1998: 202) observes, a woman could only avoid heterosexual marriage if she is "a healer or prophetess." Although Melissa does not identify as a healer or prophetess, by virtue of being the host of the late uncle's desires, she is a spirit medium to her family—something that explains the respect accorded to her.

Similarly, Morgan and Reid (2003: 379) observe that same-sex marriages explained in traditional terms are still common among the Shona and Venda people. Indeed, only women possessed by male ancestral spirits would marry fellow females as wives. In one contemporary case, a young Shona lesbian bribed a traditional healer to assure her parents that she was possessed by “a male ancestral spirit,” making it possible for her to marry three wives.

The association of spiritual beings with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual, and intersexed (LGBTI) identities is not limited to the Shonas. Among the Zulu, sexual minorities were said to possess spiritual powers, revealing an echo of Melissa’s story (Nkabinde and Morgan 2006). Ancestral approval of same-gender marriages among female *Sangomas* (traditional healers) in South Africa goes as far back as human memory (Lewis and Marshall 2011). Despite such evidence, a common claim is that homosexuality is foreign to Africa.

2.2 The Externalization of Homosexuality in Africa: It Is a Foreign Vice

The externalization of homosexuality as a foreign vice is consistently cited in Africa’s sexual politics. Jenkins, for example, attributes Africa’s opposition to homosexuality to its foreignness. In his reaction to *Globazing the Culture Wars* (Kaoma 2009), Jenkins links homosexuality in Africa to the “Arabic pederasty culture” (Philip Jenkins in Cromartie 2010; Kaoma 2010). Jenkins cites as evidence the 1880s killing of early converts to Christianity in Uganda (known as Uganda Martyrs) after they refused to engage in same-sex relations with their King, Kabaka Mwanga.

Jenkins’s argument, however, is refuted by Ugandan anti-gay pastor Martin Ssempa, who plants homosexuality within African culture long before colonialism. Mwanga, Ssempa argues, engaged in same-sex relations with his pagers (Ssempa 2005: 8). Nigerian anti-gay advocate and the 2015 recipient of the US anti-gay and anti-abortion advocacy group World Congress of Families’ *Woman of the Year Award*, Theresa Okafor also explains:

> In the 19th Century, we had homosexuality. It has always existed in the pagan society in Africa. In Uganda for instance, the King was homosexual and was making … sexual advances towards his young pagers in his courts. And it is precisely the missionaries from the West, who stepped in and made those pagers convert to Christianity and told them the righteousness of sexuality and why it is wrong to yield to the advances of the King. …If homosexuality was in our pagan society, what is progressive; what is new

> about it? It was there! And it was the missionaries who came and changed all of that. …There is nothing new; it has always been there. And right now, we are fighting it—it is like retrogressive—it is [going back to] where we started—[traditional life]. (Eleveld 2015)

Ugandan Anglican bishop Mutebi (Interview 2009) puts it bluntly, "Those who claim homosexuality is foreign are telling lies." Also, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni (2013: 6) has repeatedly claimed to know of two kings and one chief, who were gays long before colonialism. In pre-colonial Uganda, Museveni argues, homosexuals "were not persecuted, discriminated or killed. …The chief actually did a very good job. …People would whisper and ignore; the issue now is promotion as if it's good, that we can't accept" (Karugaba and Kwesiga 2012). President Museveni's claims are enlightening on two levels. Aside from proving that violent homophobia is new to postcolonial Africa, Museveni shows how many African societies dealt with same-sex relations—they turned a blind eye to them.

In December 2013, Museveni also appealed to "indigenous science" to challenge the often cited religious and Pope Francis's claim of sexual complementarity between males and females. In his letter to Speaker Kadaga, Museveni writes:

> I can see the fallacy in such an argument. Who creates albinos? Is it not the same God who creates other people—Black Africans and Europeans? Do Albinos create themselves? No! Simply, nature goes wrong in a minority of cases. Fortunately, our indigenous science has since millennial detected and described these abnormalities … A disabled person is a normal person but who got disabled in some aspect. (2013: 4)

Without stating how to differentiate between gays created by God and those recruited, Museveni asserts, "Apart from people who are born abnormal, it seems there is a larger group of those who become homosexuals for mercenary reasons—they get recruited on account of financial inducement. This is the group that can be rescued" (Museveni 5). Ugandan Pastor Julius Oyet's prayer also speaks of this belief: "Father, our children today are being deceived by the West. To buy them, to give them school fees so that they can be homosexuals; we say no to that" (Kaoma 2014).

All these confessions contradict attempts to externalize homosexuality, which scholars plant in the African heritage (Gunda 2010; Hoad 2007; Epprecht 1998). Smith and Dale, for example, documented same-gender ritual marriages in their 1915–1920 research on the Ila people of Zambia. In some rituals, a male doctor chose another man as *mwinangu* (wife). The *mwinangu* was the only person permitted to cook and perform all duties for the doctor during the ritual period. However, Smith and Dale (1920: 207) note that such husband/wife relation had nothing to do with sexual intercourse; "it meant no more than that." In their second volume, however, Smith and Dale (1920: 74) write,

> Instances of sexual inversion are known, but whether congenital or acquired it is impossible to say. We have known of only one man who always dressed as a woman, did woman's work such as plaiting baskets, and lived and slept among, but not with, the women. This man was a *mwaami* ("a prophet").

Smith and Dale follow then established conclusion that homosexuality was sexual perversion—hence their classification of the trans-identity as sexual inversion. However, the Ila community identified him as a woman, thereby allowing him in women spaces, including sleeping among them. Moreover, it is also telling that while Smith and Dale, and President Museveni, exist almost a century apart, they shared the belief that some sexual minorities are born, while others acquire this lifestyle.

Regardless, esteemed anthropologist Evans-Pritchard attests to homosexuality among the Zande of Central Africa Republic. According to Evans-Pritchard, same-sex marriages commanded similar respect as heterosexual marriages (1937: 56; 1970: 1428–1434). Equally telling is Nigerian Evangelical scholar Kunhiyop's (2008: 304) who contends that it is historically false to argue that there were no same-sex relationships in traditional Africa. In fact, Nigerian gays (*yan daudu)* publicly danced annually in the streets as late as the 1970s. But, like Okafor, he attributes contemporary same-sex relations in Africa to the "*erosion and abandonment of traditional* values *and beliefs*" as well as the "*rejection of biblical revelation and ecclesiastical faith and practice*." Nonetheless, he concludes that homosexuality was not mentioned in public unless it was "in harshed tones"—contradicting his earlier observation on *yan daudu's* annual parades.

It is important to note that the *yan daudu* played a role similar to that of the *khwajasarais* (eunuchs) in the mid-nineteenth-century North India—their roles spanned from government officials to managers of elite households to singers (Hinchy 2015: 25–48). Mark (2013) of the *Guardian* newspaper implies this when she notes that the *yan daudu* were known for their various public-speaking skills, and accompanied politicians in public spaces, including political campaigns. But she regrets,

> With a religious revival sweeping Africa's most populous country, the yan daudu are increasingly being persecuted. As Nigeria edges closer to passing a bill outlawing same-sex marriage and targeting groups who support sexual minorities [signed into law in 2014], many fear they will be driven underground.

In *Manhood and Morality*, Heald equally accepts the diversity of sexuality in Africa. Among the Gisu of East Africa, Heald (1999: 160; Hassett 2007) argues that transsexuality and homosexuality exist, but "it was not an issue—at least one never felt it as such then." Indeed, Heald is right—militant homophobia is a recent guest to sub-Saharan politics. Besides, the fact that such individuals exist underground does not entail their erasure from the continent. As the case of Melissa showed, same-sex marriages still exist in some African cultures.

2.3 Rethinking Traditional Silence on Sexuality

Whereas chiefs have been involved in sexual politics, in Zambia and Malawi, they employed the Bible in their opposition to same-sex intimate relations. Danny Kakunka (Interview 2011), a counselor to Chieftainess Lesa of Zambia, said, "I know that homosexuality is not a taboo among the Westerners. But our traditions are opposed to it. Even the Bible does not allow it."

The 80-year-old John Robert Mangani, senior chief of the Kadewere-Chiradzulu district in Malawi, explains,

> Our culture does not accept same-sex marriages. It is against human dignity. Let us go to the book of Genesis: God created man and woman that they should live together. God knew that man has sperms, and these sperms are aimed at fertilizing ova in a woman. If we hear that there are some people advocating for same-sex marriages, as chiefs, we are totally against [it.]. (Interview 2011)

Paramount Chief Lundu of Malawi described homosexuality as satanic. In addition to blaming homosexuality on the human rights movement, chief Lundu elucidates,

> At the beginning God created Adam and his wife Eve, it is very strange to see that these people who are promoting homosexuality have wives and they do not encourage their children to follow homosexual acts. If we go to

> scriptures Genesis 19:1–22, it states how Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed due to homosexual acts. As Chiefs, we will not allow such acts to continue in our country, it is an abomination. We will not accept this. It is better to remain poor than to accept same-sex marriage. (Interview 2011)

The fact that traditional African leaders employed "traditional positions" couched in Christianity is suggestive. By implications, the African culture is used as a décor for homophobia. It is also a critique of the neocolonial African experiences—something we find in chief Lundu's preference of poverty over Western-imposed same-sex marriages. This claim, however, is part of the wider religiopolitical argument that externalizes homosexuality to the West. Even Pope Francis (2016: Par. 251) advances a similar argument in his condemnation of donor nations' attachment of sexual rights to foreign aid.

A Malawian law professor, however, linked traditional leaders' opposition to homosexuality to the political climate of sub-Saharan Africa. Apart from arguing that "traditional authorities" are more political than harbingers of traditional culture (since their power is rooted in Frederick Lugard's indirect rule), he maintained that speaking against homosexuality wins such chiefs political favors and space in government-controlled media outlets (Interview 2011). Malawian human rights advocate Soedi White (Interview 2011), however, explicates that Africa's homophobia is part of the postcolonial struggle to comprehend homosexuality, which, for many years, was invisible. This battle, she argues, is planted in heteropatriarchy—which views men as superior to women. Homosexuality threatens male supremacy and heteropatriarchy; hence, sexual minorities are contending with the same oppressive forces African women have struggled with for years. She concludes that sexual minorities are in a catch-22—their visibility invites organized sociopolitical and religious opposition, while their invisibility invites erasure from the continent—Africa has no gays.

Regardless, protective homophobia is a product of many forces. The growth of Christianity, democratization, human rights cultures, and globalization, for example, introduced a new political dispensation, in which militant protective homophobia would play a role. Aptly stated, politically and religiously motivated homophobia is a new development in Africa's sociopolitical history. In this regard, non-heterosexuals can be said to be caught up in the postcolonial politics of the time (Bob 2012; Bosia and Weiss 2013).

2.4 Problematizing Human Sexuality in Sub-Saharan Africa

The sacredness surrounding sexuality in Africa is behind the cult of ancestors and fertility rites. Unless sanctioned by religion, childlessness is abnormal, a curse, and the end of one's vital force (Zahan 1983; Magesa 1997; McQuillan 2004). Because African ontologies view procreation as the goal of human life (Caldwell and Caldwell 1987: 412; Adongo et al. 1998; Addai 1999), Zahan (1983: 10) observes that barren individuals are negatively likened to "the unproductive Earth, having no value." He concludes, "Almost everywhere in Africa, sterility constitutes a cause for 'divorce' because a household without children signifies the extinction of the family line." Zahan's observation seems to agree with the Caldwells' (1987: 414) findings that not only untimely or terminal barrenness is negatively perceived, but women who insist on limiting their families behave in a "monstrous fashion."

This worldview fits into the Vatican (Pope Francis 2016: Para. 250, 2014), the US Evangelical, and the African Christian arguments that externalize abortion—like homosexuality; it is foreign to the continent. On the contrary, across sub-Saharan Africa, traditional methods of aborting and birth control exist. Although pro-abortion rights advocates may consider some of such methods unsafe, traditional Africa possessed medications for both abortion and birth control. Smith and Dale (1920: 250) attest to such methods among the Ila. They write, "There are several apparently efficient abortifacient in use among these people." After describing methods employed to delay or terminate a pregnancy, they explain the motives behind such acts:

> These are used by girls; by women who do not want to lose their husbands' attentions through being pregnant; by women who through anger or dislike of their husbands do not want to bear children; and by a woman who becomes pregnant when suckling a baby. (Ibid.)

Against claims that women's bodily autonomy and reproductive rights are foreign to Africa, like progressive feminists, Ila women controlled their bodies. In short, Ila women viewed sex as beyond procreation—it was a *good* in itself.

2.5 The Unproven Silence on Sexuality in Africa

Often an assumed "silence" on sexuality drives disputes on sexual rights in Africa. Caldwell et al. (1989: 201) share this assumption. In sub-Saharan Africa, they argue, sexual matters are rarely discussed between generations or among married couples. Similarly, Anglican Archbishop Jonathan Hart of Liberia claims that the silence associated with sexuality is the biggest problem to addressing HIV/AIDS, and to active dialogue on homosexuality (Interview 2009). This silence, however, does not represent precolonial Africa, but the Victorian era. Africans, one would argue, are equally "the other Victorians," to use Foucault's heading of his opening chapter in *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault (1978: 3) writes,

> For a long time, the story goes, we supported a Victorian regime, and we continue to be dominated by it even today. Thus the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, certain frankness was still common; it would seem. Sexual practices had little need for secrecy; words were said without undue reticence, and things were done without too much concealment; one had a tolerant familiarity with the illicit.

To Foucault, the West inherited seventeenth-century Victorian silence on sexuality. Since then, "Calling sex by its name … became more difficult and more costly." Those who dare do so place themselves "to a certain extent outside the reach of power." Like Europe, this study argues, the puritan sexual "triple edict of taboo, non-existence and silence" (Foucault 5) is Africanized—it is the basis of postcolonial African sexual politics.

It is important to note that the Christianization of Africa brought with it European cultural values and norms. In the context of this study, European sexuality norms were exported to Africa. In this case, "it would be inadequate to examine the Christianization process in Africa without first examining the internal changes taking place within Christian morality up to the time of colonial expansion" (Ahlberg 1994: 227). The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European socioreligious and political developments on sexuality influenced the missionaries' attitudes to sexuality. Moreover, the Victorian and the imperial milieu influenced the missionaries' and settlers' sexual norms. For example, the Victorian era treated males' sexual urge as biologically natural, while female unfaithfulness was anathema—something that seems to control postcolonial Christian views of sex outside marriage.

Phillips explores the relationship between the Victorian era values and European imperialism. He cites Ronald Hyam, who understood European imperialism as beyond religion and commerce. To Hyam, "the expansion of Europe was not only a matter of Christianity and commerce" but also of "copulation and concubinage" (2005: 291). In his examination of Josephine Butler (1828–1906), a Victorian era feminist who successfully campaigned against sexual practices in England and the maltreatment of sex workers in India, Phillips writes, to "Butler the sexual activity of the empire spoke of power and a morally bankrupt imperial order" (292).

According to Phillips, the heteronormative sexual arrangements were instrumental to the imperial and colonial projects. Since sex was relevant to the imperial agenda, "prostitutes were deployed to serve the armies and frontier settlements" (292). Moreover, "the heterosexual nuclear family was the building block for agricultural colonization of large parts of the world" as well as the slave trade (ibid.; Bosia 2014).

This social context was behind missionaries' attempts to establish sexual norms detached from perceived worldly sexual mores of secular Europe. Okot p'Bitek's (1970: 38–39) perception of colonial activities in Africa shares this observation. The European notion of the wild man or the noble savage, he argues, was the lens through which colonial settlers, anthropologists, and missionaries analyzed African cultures (Kaoma 2013a).

Ahlberg, however, traces the transformation of sexuality beyond the Victorian era sociopolitical context. She maintains that various sociopolitical, religious, and economic forces—from the slave trade to globalization to colonialism to the Christianization projects to postcolonial modifications—transform/ed sexuality in Africa. Since the goal of colonialism and missionaries was the total eradication of African customs, the prohibition of sexual rites undermined pre-colonial sexual "regulating mechanisms" as well as silenced sexual discourses in sub-Saharan Africa (Ahlberg 1994: 233).

It is from this position that contemporary Africa seems to negotiate sexuality. To employ Ahlberg's four moral realms or regimes of sexuality control, an African has four sources of sexual authority. The Christian conception of sex as taught by missionaries/church, the traditional African perspective, the legal frame left behind by colonialism, and finally the young generation preferred secular "romantic regime," publicized by global sexual cultures. Since the adult world considers the first three frames legitimate, it employs them to police sexuality.

Without adequate policing mechanisms, however, the young generation is thrown into “a highly paradoxical situation of prohibition, silence, and confusion on the part of the adult world” (Ahlberg 1994: 234). While Ahlberg argues that young people prefer the “romantic regime” characterized by “serial monogamy” of quick successive relationships with grave implications for HIV infections, this lifestyle is shared by adults in postcolonial Africa. Since these four moral regimes are simultaneously operating in Africa, the missionaries/church system restricts “sexuality education” to pre-marital counseling. Unlike in pre-colonial Africa, however, the adolescents are left without structured sexuality education—save calls for abstinence-only programs.

2.5.1 Does an African Sexuality Exist?

The theory that sub-Saharan Africa’s perception of sexuality differs from those of Eurasia is accredited to Caldwell et al. (1989). They write, “sub-Saharan African population is not a morally backsliding Eurasian population that can be returned by exhortation and education campaigns to a pattern of sex occurring predominantly within marriage” (Caldwell et al. 1989: 224). Caldwell et al. attributed the HIV/AIDS crisis in sub-Saharan Africa to sexual permissiveness, which they contend even missionaries failed to transform. “Africa may be nudged toward a Eurasian pattern [sex within marriage] not by missionaries but by fear” of HIV/AIDS (225), Caldwell et al. conclude.

As already noted, Caldwell et al. share the thesis that African sexuality primarily exists for lineage expansion, through which ancestors return to human communities. Sub-Saharan Africans, they assert,

> put emphasis on the importance of ancestry and descent, usually accompanied by a belief in ancestral spirit intervention in the affairs of the living; a related social system that is, in its most complex form … places greater importance on intergenerational links than conjugal ones and that gives great respect and power to the old; … In keeping with the aim of lineage perpetuation, emphasis is placed on fertility: by society, the ancestral spirits, and even the high gods who are otherwise of a little day-to-day importance. (Caldwell et al. 1989: 188; Caldwell and Caldwell 1987: 416)

The value associated with lineage prolongation, they insist, affects the conception of sexual acts—they are acts removed from morals, norms, and conjugal bonds (ibid. 201). Even sexual intercourse carries no sacredness;

rather, it is "a worldly activity like work or eating and drinking" (ibid. 194). In this regard, the contemporary sacredness associated with sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa is due to "the arrival of foreign religions, administrations, and educational systems."

In social life, they argue, Africans place emphasis on rites of passages that announce maturity for sexual activity over marriage ceremonies (ibid. 188). To make their case, Caldwell et al. contend that female sexual permissiveness is widely acceptable and manifests in institutionalized prostitution, rampant among married and unmarried women. The clientele of institutionalized prostitution includes "migrant laborers, short-term miners, cattle herders, itinerant traders, soldiers, in some locations tourists, and men in urban or mining areas" (220). Only the fear of an angry husband is a deterrent to women's infidelity, they maintain. Here, it is central to realize that aside from cattle herders, the clientele of institutionalized prostitution are largely products of colonialism. Arguably, what Caldwell et al. term "African sexuality" has much to do with colonial and Christian-informed African socioeconomic and political systems.

2.5.2 Reactions to the Caldwell Thesis of Sexuality in Africa

Caldwell et al.'s claims that sexuality in Africa is devoid of moral and religious values and lacks permanent bonds are misleading. To start with, Caldwell et al. employ Smith and Dale's (1920: 35–75) study on sexual relations among the Ila of Zambia as part of the evidence of the lack of marriage bonds in sub-Saharan Africa. They nonetheless ignore Smith and Dale's disclaimer:

> To correct an impression that might be conveyed by this chapter, I add a note written by Captain Dale: "There are so many unhappy unions, and so many instances of infidelity come under the official's notice, that [the reader] is apt to conclude they are all of a like character. I believe this to be a mistake; they are many instances of sincere affection and many happy unions of long standing; a number of instances, too, where, when death has severed the tie, the survivor has proved inconsolable and sought relief and oblivion in suicide." With this, I agree. (E. W. Smith 1920: 75)

African scholars such as Mbiti (1988), Magesa (1997), and Bujo (1992) attest to this fact—marriage is a sacred act that unites communities. The emphasis placed on initiation (puberty) rites,[1] Magesa (1997: 98) argues, is because sexuality ensures the "transmission of life and the preservation of the life force." For Africans, therefore, "marriage is the focus of existence" (Mbiti 1988: 132).

Furthermore, Caldwell et al.'s study imposed Eliade's dualism of "the sacred and the profane" (popularized by Emile Durkheim) on Africans. To Durkheim (1965: 37), the separation of the world into the sacred and the profane "is the distinctive trait of religious thought." In African ontologies, however, the separation between the two is hard to strike. For a religious person, a "worldly activity" is equally a "sacred event." As Eliade and Trask (1987: 170) assert, sexuality is not only ritualized but "also homologized to divine acts (Heaven-Earth hierogamy)." So how can the act through which ancestors retain their identities among the living be void of sanctity and moral norms? Mbiti (1988: 133) is right—marriage is a religious duty to an African.

Heald dismisses Caldwell et al.'s assumption that *homo ancestralis* cares only about reproduction, but has no respect for the sexual act itself. In East African cultures, she argues, the control of sexuality was central to morality. "Coitus," she argues, "is fraught with danger, circumscribed by taboo and subject to restrictions unknown to the West" (Heald 1999: 132). Similarly, Ahlberg (1994: 231) argues that sexuality in Africa was governed by "a strict moral order and rules of sexual conduct were strictly observed." Magesa (1997: 98) also points out that sexual discourse in African traditions usually employs coded language, "but there is little doubt about its meaning: sexuality is good, but it must be accompanied by sexual responsibility."

The Bemba, for instance, believed that sex before marriage would make a girl grow long fingers. As among the Ila people, in many cultures, couples were expected to abstain from sexual intercourse when the child was breastfeeding—in some cultures for two years (Kaoma 2013b: 137–138). The reason was that the community believed that the husband's sperm would mix with breast milk and poison the child. Further, it was tabooed to have sex with a woman during her menstrual period. Besides, on the onset of the girl's first menstrual period (*ukuwa icisungu*), among the Bemba, she is not allowed to eat with others until certain rituals are performed. *In the absence of such rituals, her pure blood would pollute (ukukowesha icalo) the land.*

The argument that female adultery is allowed and is regarded less illicit than adultery by males is also erroneous—the opposite may be true. Among the Bemba cultures, it is said *ubucende bwamwaume, ta bonaula in'ganda* (the man's extramarital affair does not break the marriage). While this saying seems to share much with the Victorian era, Richards (1982: 36) notes that in Bantu cultures, adultery harms "innocent people, [who] are thought to suffer from the magical results of a sex misdemeanor committed by someone else." If such persons die as a result, they would "have died in a state of righteous indignation, [and] 'will come back' to haunt the family which did them wrong" (Richards 1982: 36). For this very reason, sexual intercourse outside marriage is among the evils (such as witchcraft, shedding blood, and murder), which the Bemba believe to threaten the entire community. In short, sexual conduct was monitored spiritually.[2]

In attempts to defend their thesis, Caldwell et al. rightly cite Richards's argument on the effects of the wife's adultery on the family. Nevertheless, Richards shows that *ukukowesha* (polluting) of the spouse applied to both husband and wife—the point they ignore. If the man commits adultery while the wife is expecting, it is believed that she will deliver a dead baby. In this case, the man has willingly killed the child (*aipaya umwana*). On the other hand, if a pregnant wife commits adultery, it is believed that she would die in childbirth unless she confesses to the crime and gets medications (Richards 35). In Bemba cultures, this belief is called *incila*. Although Richards failed to link *incila* to the man, it is believed that the husband's adultery threatens both his baby and the pregnant wife. If the woman dies in labor, he has killed both the child and the woman *(aipaya umwana no mukashi*). In traditional times, such a man would be treated as a murderer and would suffer the wrath of his in-laws. Similar beliefs exist among the Thonga, studied by Junod (1913), the Ashanti culture of Ghana (Sarpong 1977), and the Shona cultures of Zimbabwe and the Kikuyu of Kenya (Ahlberg 1994: 230).

Against the claim of female infidelity, most African cultures treasure virginity.[3] Unlike other African cultures, the Bemba do not have dowry—they charge only *impiya sha cisungu* (the money for the girl's virginity). If the girl claims to be a virgin when she is not, the husband will not pay *impiya sha cisungu*. If he had paid, he has the right to reclaim it from the in-laws since he is not the one *uwalile icisungu* (lit. who ate the girl's virginity or who broke the hymen)—to the embarrassment of the girl's family. It is also a taboo to claim *impiya sha cisungu* twice—thus, only the person who had the first sexual encounter with the virgin girl is eligible for this payment.

Africans placed emphasis on children, but pregnancy in or out of wedlock was tabooed. In Bakiga community of Uganda, the *BBC* (2017) reports, girls found pregnant from wedlock "were taken to a tiny island

and left to die," while others were "thrown off a cliff at Kisiizi Falls." About the Bemba, Richards also observes, the taboo extended to the child born out of wedlock. An illegitimate child, she asserts, was,

> a creature of ill-omen … who would bring misfortune on any village in which it lived, the child will be a portent of evil. It would stop rain from falling. It would make the granaries empty quickly. It might bring dissension. (Richards 1982: 33–34)

For the sake of community well-being, the child and its parents were expelled from the village. Aside from revealing the interconnectedness of African ontology, the linking of sexual misconduct to rain, harvest, and social well-being suggests the sacred and moral undertones of sexuality (Junod 1913: 335–36, 526). Fertility is a desired public good, but it must occur within established norms and beliefs. In short, sexuality was not as lax as Caldwell et al. suggest.

Caldwell et al.'s argument that women's sexuality existed only for the interest of men can be equally contested. While this may be true in some African cultures, in pre-colonial matrilineal cultures such as the Bemba, Ushi, Chishinga, and Nsenga, women were/are the most important and valuable assets the clan possesses. In Bemba cultures, hens (*inkota*/women) are preferred over roosters (*bamukolwe*/men). The reason is, *bamukolwe*'s duty is limited to the sexual act—they do not grow the family.[4] Unlike in many cultures where boys and girls are initiated, among the Bemba, the *icisungu* ceremony is reserved for girls, again suggesting the value Bemba cultures place on women. In these societies, children belong to the mother as opposed to the father.

Since children belong to the mother, Bembas are not obliged to carry their father's last names, as is the case in patriarchal societies. For instance, my two brothers do not take Kaoma, which was my dad's name; their legal names are Nyembe Misheck and Chola Dennis.[5] Similarly, in 2016, I co-authored an article, "The Good Samaritan and Sexual Minorities in Africa" with Chalwe Petronella. The editors queried her last name—they could not comprehend Petronella as her last name. Being a Bemba, however, Chalwe is not her father's name, but her first name—her second name is Petronella. Is it not the time to heed to Amadiume's caution about forcing Western lenses in understanding gender and sexuality in African communities? In some communities, Amadiume (1987: 132) writes, "pro-female institutions were being eroded both by the church and the colonial administration." To these, one can safely add postcolonial legal instruments as well.

It goes without saying that the permissiveness Caldwell et al. associate with women in urban areas is partially due to the colonial patriarchal realities. Based on the Victorian model of education, boys were educated, while girls were trained to be "good" wives to educated husbands. This situation was duplicated regarding work. Men "worked" and women existed at the mercy of men—a tradition still found in postcolonial Africa. Hence, associating female sex work with pre-colonial traditions can only be defended with considerable difficulties. I am not saying that sex outside marriage never occurred—like, in any human community, it did. However, pre-colonial Africans existed in compact communities—making it easy for cheaters to be noticed. This level of accountability is nonexistent in urban areas.

2.6 Dancing for Sexuality in Africa

African traditions publicly celebrated sex—something missionaries found appalling, vile, filthy, and unspeakable (Elphick 2012: 77). Despite his excellent presentation of African customs, the Church of England missionary Rowley opposed the Southern African girl initiation ceremony of *chinamwali*. After observing the rite in 1861 in today's Malawi, he considered it a salacious ritual. He writes, "I felt that this Niamwali (sic) has so much wrong in it that I presented to the bishop the advisability of preventing it for the future" (1867: 210; Elphick 2012: 77–78).

Richards's study of the Zambian Bemba *icisungu* ceremony (the girl's rite of passage) shares much with *chinamwali*. Aside from being presided over by older women (*banacimbusa*, lit. mothers of initiates, and *nangoshe*, lit. the mother of the cobra), sexuality in its fullness was discussed through words, songs, and dances as the following song proposes:

Iseni mumone yanga yanga,	(Come and see my overflowing joy)
Umwana wandi akula iye,	(My child is now an adult [has finally reached puberty])
Iseni mumone yanga, yanga	(Come and see my overflowing joy)

This song is sung by the girl's family, while the girl is undergoing the *cisungu* ceremony.

Although some initiation ceremonies can be said to promote patriarchy, during the rite, girls are taught how to reclaim their powers within marriage. The following song speaks to this point:

Cikala cishasha	(Lit. dweller, or penis conqueror and resister)
Somone ifyo bacindila abalume	(Come and see how you dance for your husband),
Somone ifyo basamfya abalume	(Come and see how you wash your spouse)
Somone ifyo bamekela abalume	(Come and see how you sexually attract your husband's attention)

Banacimbusa sing this song before *banacisungu* or *imbusa* (initiates). The dance of *infunkutu* (a traditional sexual dance) accompanies this song—teaching *imbusa* various sexual skills (Kaunda and Kaunda 2016). In contemporary Zambia, the song is sung during kitchen parties and marriage ceremonies accompanied by explicit sexual dances. Ironically, the song starts by presenting the girl as the conqueror of manhood—again pointing to the rebellious nature of *cisungu/imbusa* ceremonies.

The word *cikala* has dual meanings—it can mean community dweller or the penis. This double meaning has made it possible for people to sing it in full view of young people. Nevertheless, this song is coded—for instance, is it speaking about the girl as a community dweller? If so, she needs to know how to live within her newly created sexual space. If *cikala* translates as penis, however, it speaks of the power of the woman over her husband in the act of sexual intercourse in which the woman subjugates an erected penis.

That said, it is important to point out that Bemba cultures consider initiation rites as learning points. Through such rites, the young are educated about sexual life, marriage, procreation, and family responsibilities (Mbiti 1988: 122), as the next song reveals:

Banacimbusa eyee	(Mothers of the initiates)
Banacimbusa mwangalafye	(Mothers of the initiates you are playing)
Mwafunda umwana eyee	(You teach a child)
Mwafunda umwana mwamusha panshila	(You teach a child, but you leave her by the roadside)
Ukufunda umwana eyee	(To teach a child)
Ukufunda umwana kufikapo	(To teach a child, you must be explicit)
Nsenseleni eye, senseleni akasuba kawa!	(Hurry up, hurry up, time is running out).

Like *cikala*, *ukufunda* denotes "teaching" or "removing the skin of an animal or a tree." *Ukufunda* is not only about imparting intellectual knowledge, but also socioethical obligations. A person who does not respect in-laws, for example, is said to be ignorant (*tafundwa*). Thus, *banacimbusa* must explicitly educate girls in sexual matters without shame (Kaunda and Kaunda 2016). It is *banacimbusa's* obligation to demonstrate everything sexual—both positive and negative sides of sexuality—to initiates.

In some cultures, sexuality education included "controlled" sexual acts—having sex without vaginal penetration (Ahlberg 1994: 230). Known as *hlobonga* among the Zulu, *kujama* among the Swati of Swaziland (Chilisa 2006: 253), and *ngweko* among the Kikuyu of East Africa (the same culture Caldwell et al. studied), the tradition sought to give young people sexual satisfaction without penetration. Although the newly initiated girls and boys shared one room during such ceremonies, full sexual intercourse was discouraged "as the loss of the hymen lowers the status of the bride on the day of her marriage" (Magesa 1997: 126). During *ngweko*, girls tightly tied their clothes around their thighs—thus stopping the penetration even when tempted to do so.[6] Such activities are in line with *comprehensive sexuality education* that provides room to young people to have sex without vaginal intercourse. Nonetheless, the Vatican, the US Christian Right and African religious leaders deplore them. Like homosexuality, however, such initiatives are said to be foreign to Africa. And just as missionaries condemned such rituals, religious leaders including the Vatican are opposed to such sexual educative initiatives, which they argue originate from the West.

It is therefore misleading to claim that pre-colonial Africans never discussed sexual matters. As already noted, it is Christianity and colonialism that created the silence that surrounds sexuality in contemporary Africa. The rites of passage such as *icisungu* and *ngweko* were not just about procreation as Caldwell et al. want us to believe. Rather, they sought to initiate young people into the world of sex—in which certain things are tabooed.

2.7 Looking Forward

In sum, since the advent of colonialism and missionaries, the African perception of coitus has been contested and transformed by various factors. Just as Victorian values were contested in pre-colonial Africa, the global North's acceptance of same-sex subcultures and sexualized Hollywood and Nollywood movies, globalization, and Christian partnerships are equally transforming sexual expressions in Africa. Although these social realities complicate the study of sexuality in Africa, sexual expressions are re-appropriated in local contexts—by the very people who exist on the margins of global politics. This re-appropriation aids "strategic essentialism"—that is, the selective application or disregard of history to influence or respond to local political situations within the confines of differential global relations.

The assumption that African traditional values are static ignores the fact that various forces are simultaneously contesting the once assumed "unchangeable" sexual norms—forcing religious leaders, politicians, and traditional authorities into a sociopolitical and moral panic in attempts to defend a distinct "African" sexuality aside from what I term "global sexualities." The web, romantic movies, social media, and other media outlets are the vehicles of global sexualities—making it impossible to regulate. But as Melissa's story illustrates, the colonial and postcolonial criminalization of same-sex relations did not mean their eradication. Like respect for ancestors, homosexual relationships exist amidst the post-independence silence on sexuality. This observation explains the absence of politicized sexual discourses in Africa before the 1990s (Hassett 2007; Kaoma 2009).

If sexuality in Africa is sacred and puts emphasis on fertility, how can same-sex relations fit into this lifeworld? To some extent, this question is behind the contestation of sexuality as unAfrican and uncultural *vis-à-vis* a human rights issue. Regarding Ahlberg's "four moral regimes," the church, the state, and traditional leaders are agreed—sexuality in Africa is all about procreation. However, the moral realm of romantic love challenges this assumption. If a romantic, sexual relationship between two consenting heterosexual adults is acceptable, can such relationships be extended to same-gender relations? In Africa, the affirmative answer to this question would meet religious leaders' opposition—the following chapter explores this objection.

Notes

1. Mbiti (1988: 122) argues that since some communities initiate young people before they reach puberty, it is wrong to call such rites of passage puberty rites. The *icisungu* rite, however, is only done to a girl who has reached puberty.
2. Among the Bemba, incest (*ishiiku*) is said to pollute the land—it is a crime that demands the expulsion of the party involved. Moreover, the Bemba say, *amaaso yankashi, tayemya mutima* (your sister's puberty hair cannot invite

an erection), again suggesting sexual boundaries. Here it is important to note that incest in most African cultures goes beyond the immediate family—it includes various categories of relatives within the clan as well as certain in-laws.

3. In the Shona cultures of Zimbabwe, young girls were expected to remain virgins (*mhandara*) before marriage. In these cultures, *atete* (aunties) and specific older women (*chipanga mazano*) were tasked with an obligation of ensuring that young girls abstain from sex before marriage. In fact, specific virginity tests (mostly using fingers) were employed, thus discouraging premarital sex. The girl's virginity was also confirmed on the couple's first sexual encounter—usually the family would look for blood on the beddings. If it is discovered otherwise, the husband's family had the right to withhold some of the *lobola* (dowry).
4. I am aware of the arguments that all cultures are tainted with patriarchy. In *Raised Hopes, Shattered Dreams*, Kaoma (2015: 144) employs Alice Lenshina, a Bemba woman who successfully founded the Lumpa Church in colonial Zambia, to dismiss the feminist characterization of her "role as that of a ritual male. That position ignores the traditional religious context of the Bemba, which was centered on women. … Aside from attributing their origin to the heavenly mother, Mumbi Mukasa, Lenshina's movement benefited from this cosmology": thus, her name Regina (Lenshina).
5. Similarly, in Ashanti culture of Ghana, the biological link between generations is through the mother. Peter Sarpong (1977: 4–5) explains, "An Ashanti traces his physical descent through the female line. [An Ashanti] is a member of the mother's matrilineage which consists of all the descendants of both sexes who trace their genealogy through women to a common ancestress." He argues that among the Ashanti, the father–child bond is not regarded as biological, but as spiritual.
6. Whereas Ahlberg's observation is varied, Magesa argues that in some communities, full sexual intercourse was not prohibited if it did not result in pregnancy—suggesting that such communities had methods of preventing or terminating pregnancies.

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CHAPTER 3

Contesting Religion: African Religious Leaders in Sexual Politics

In Chap. 2, I explored the transformation of sexual values in the Victorian era and the silencing of precolonial African sexuality. Such values, the chapter argued, influence postcolonial African attitudes toward sexuality. In this chapter, however, I argue that cultural, religious, and postcolonial predispositions inform religiously informed opposition to sexual rights. African religious leaders' public statements, the chapter argues, are assumed to "protect" Africa and Christianity from the "global homosexual agenda." Whereas African religious leaders are openly opposed to homosexuality, encounters with sexual minorities and the ethical and dialogical values of the politics of being have positive transformative potential.

3.1 POLITICS OF BEING: SEXUAL MINORITIES TELL THEIR STORIES

In July 2012, Kenyan Bishop Julius Kalu of the Anglican Diocese of Mombasa reportedly described gays as worse enemies to the church than terrorists. His statement followed two terrorist attacks that targeted two churches and claimed 18 lives in Garissa, Kenya. As expected, Christians were petrified—affecting church attendance in the region. To encourage his followers, Bishop Kalu told Christians to fear gays over terrorists. "Our greatest fear as Church should not be the grenade attacks, but the new teachings like same sex marriages" (Beja 2012), the bishop told the faithful.

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The same month, the Rev. Michael Kimindu, executive director of Other Sheep Africa—a Kenyan sexual minorities advocacy group—invited Bishop Kalu to a face-to-face meeting with sexual minorities—the LGBTI persons. During the meeting, the bishop could not hold back his tears as he heard vicious stories of persecution from the LGBTI people attending the meeting, especially the brutal murder of LGBTI activist Morris Mjomba in Tanzania that same month.

The bishop explained that reports saying he equated gays to terrorists were not accurate. Then he expressed remorse. "It is indeed a shame to me that I've been shepherding to LGBTI people in the Anglican Church when I even don't know…. Out of the testimonies I have heard from you," the bishop confessed, "I have learned a lot. There are even Anglicans here! Come to church." The bishop also told Rev. Kimindu to openly distribute his gay-friendly views across the globe.

Bishop Kalu's change of heart due to the politics of being may sound dramatic, but I personally witnessed something similar at the "First Dialogue on Christianity and Human Sexuality" in Stellenbosch, Cape Town, South Africa, in November 2009. At the time, Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill was just introduced in parliament (it would be signed into law in February 2014, and struck down on technical grounds in August 2014). About 35 sexual minorities and over 35 religious leaders from various African Christian traditions and regions met for dialogue on human sexuality. Having worked in Africa on such issues, I wondered what the conference would accomplish. How can Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Anglican religious leaders and gays dialogue, let alone spend over four days together?

My fears were confirmed. As I mingled among other clergy, I heard their (well-founded) suspicions that the conference sought to force them into accepting homosexuality. "Never will I be forced to accept this evil, it is an abomination," one Anglican bishop from the Congo told me. Others kept making negative comments on transgender individuals, while some saw demons all around.

LGBTI people attending the meeting had their fears as well. Victor Mukasa, a prominent Ugandan LGBTI human rights activist and cofounder of Sexual Minorities Uganda, asked me what organizers were thinking to bring such homophobes into dialogue with them. "Let us fight it out right now. We have suffered so much because of these people.

Please give us a chance to end this conference right now," Victor cried. Victor had all the reasons to hate the church. He had suffered so much demonization and dehumanizing attempts to make him heterosexual from various pastors in Uganda. I told Victor that I, too, was just an invitee, and that I had no power over the conference. After this wrenching encounter, I was left wondering, "What would come out of such a mess?"

The following day, we gathered in the conference room. The situation was tense, but the Inclusive Affirming Ministries' (religious sexual rights advocacy group) staff who had organized the conference remained optimistic. The conference opened with plenaries featuring African speakers. We heard various perspectives on Christianity and human sexuality. Then we were all invited to employ dialogical politics of being and *ubuntu*, to listen to each other and learn from one another's experiences without prejudice. From listening, respectful dialogue emerged—once we realized that we are all human, no matter our sexual orientation or gender identity. By the fourth day, we were able to share meals together.

It was during the politics of being that I realized that some African LGBTI persons are extremely religious. We witnessed a number of LGBTI people break down as they shared their spiritual journeys and the pain of church rejection based on their sexual orientations. A young woman from Ghana told our group that she was demonized after her congregation discovered she was a lesbian. In tears, she softly told us, "They told me to leave the church, but that is the only loving community I knew. I tried to explain myself, but nobody was willing to listen to me. Pastors, even if I am a sinner, I need the church."

A minister's daughter from Lesotho brought us all to tears. The safe space the dialogue created empowered her to address her sexuality even in the midst of pastors. In tears, she introduced herself as the daughter of a very popular minister and active human rights defender sitting among us—with values, she said, he passed on to her. She then came out as a lesbian. A deep silence engulfed the entire conference. The courageous father, however, stood up, walked straight to his daughter, and hugged her. Then he quietly told her, "I love you still." As the father and daughter hugged, most of us were moved to tears. Such a transformation, however, is not reflected in most Christian responses to homosexuality on our continent.

3.2 The Four Cs: Civilization, Christianity, Commerce, and Conquest

In 1957, missionary explorer David Livingstone was convinced that "Bibles and preaching were not all that was necessary" to civilization. Aside from arguing that Christianization should accompany civilization, Livingstone believed that commerce "and not guns would liberate Africa" (Pakenham 1991: xxii). It is ironic that while Livingstone had in mind the liberation of Africa from the slave trade, he opened the continent to the four Cs—Civilization, Christianity, Commerce, and Conquest (Pakenham 1991: 1–7). Since these four Cs have morphed in globalization, it is understandable that Africans self-select which **C** to accept or reject. In most of sub-Saharan Africa, for example, with little modifications, Christianity, Civilization, and Commerce are now recognized as African.

If Livingstone came back today, he would be shocked by the growth of Christianity and Islam in Africa. In 1910, 10 million Africans were Christians. Within 107 years, more than 500 million sub-Saharan Africans have become Christian, with over 20% identifying as Pentecostals (Pew Research Center 2006). By 2025, over 633 million Africans will be Christian. Correspondingly, Muslims "increased more than 20-fold, rising from an estimated 11 million in 1900 to approximately 234 million in 2010." This number changes to 429 million Muslims if we add 195 million in North Africa. Islam is projected to grow by nearly 60% in the next 20 years. By 2030, Africa will be home to 639 million Muslims (Pew Research Center 2011b: 91–92). That within 107 years over 95% of Africans self-indentify as either Christian or Muslim testifies to the growing influence of religion in African politics

However, the growth of these religions is religiously explained. Christianity and Islam may conflict with traditional religions, yet both religions benefit from the African religious heritage. Anti-gay religious and political leaders appeal to the traditional worldviews in their opposition to sexual plurality. To some extent, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah attested to in the Bible (Genesis 18–19) and the Qur'ān (Qur'ān 26) *sacralizes,* localizes, and modernizes anti-gay positions. The question of Islam's relationship with African Christianity and its influence on sexual politics in Africa is beyond this study. Nonetheless, protective homophobia unites both religions. As discussed below, despite their antagonistic relationship and major theological differences, these religions have agreed that homosexuality is not just un-African but un-Christian and un-Islamic.

3.3 The Vatican and Sexual Politics in Africa

The examination of African Christian opposition to homosexuality has centered on Evangelicals and Protestants. Yet, the Vatican, Roman Catholic bishops, and para-church organizations are equally active participants in Africa's sexual politics.

The election of Pope Francis to replace Pope Benedict XVI suggested a major shift in the Vatican's opposition to sexual and reproductive rights. "If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge him?" Pope Francis asked in July 2013. On his September 2015 official visit to the US, Pope Francis did not only speak at the Pontifical Council for the Family's *World Meeting of Families* in Philadelphia but also met with a gay couple (one of them was his former student) in Washington DC. However, as *The New York Times* reported, the Pontiff also privately met with Kim Davis (a US county clerk in Kentucky, who refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples despite the court order).

In November 2015, Pope Francis toured Africa. Despite the growing demonization of, and violence directed at sexual minorities, the Pontiff did not utter a word on sexuality during the African tour. In June 2016, however, Pope Francis called on Christians and the Roman Catholic church to ask for forgiveness from gays "for the way they had treated them" (Pullella 2016).

The Vatican's opposition to *gender theory* directs the contradictory nature of Pope Francis's attitudes toward sexual minorities and trans- and inter-sex persons, whom he once compared to nuclear weapons (McElwee 2015).[1] As Cardinal Bergoglio in Argentina, Pope Francis described same-sex marriages as "destructive pretension of God's plan" aimed at destroying the divine image: man and woman. As Pope, he reiterated this position in his address to the *Colloquium Humanum* in Rome. He did the same in *Laudato Si'* (2015 Pars. 120,155) and in *Amoris Laetitia* (2016 Pars.52; 55; 173). Whereas Pope Francis acknowledges "great variety of family situations"—the argument sometimes interpreted as endorsing same-sex marriages—such thinking ignores the Vatican's anti-homosexuality and anti-gender teachings.

Unlike many African churches, the Vatican accepts the biological existence of sexual minorities "through the centuries" (Catechism 1997. par. 2357; Francis 2016), and claims to *oppose* "unjust discrimination" against LGBTI persons (Bené 2009; Catechism, par. 2356). The Vatican's 2003

Considerations, however, termed homosexuality evil; and called on governments "to contain" it "so as to safeguard public morality and, above all, to avoid exposing young people to erroneous ideas about sexuality and marriage that would deprive them of their necessary defences and contribute to the spread of the phenomenon".

These views are equally reflected in Pope Francis's writings and public statements. In *Amoris Laetitia,* Pope Francis views homosexuality as being forced on developing nations by the donor community. He writes:

> It is unacceptable that local Churches should be subjected to pressure in this matter and that international bodies should make financial aid to poor countries dependent on the introduction of laws to establish "marriage" between persons of the same sex. (AL Par. 251)

According to Goodstein of *The New York Times,* this paragraph is from the 2015 Vatican Bishops' meeting final report, in which many global South Catholic bishops were "irate at foreign governments and aid organizations that insist on equal treatment of gay people as a condition for financial aid" (Goodstein 2016).

Pope Francis's opposition to gender theory resurfaced in 2016 during his meeting with bishops from Poland. He complained:

> In Europe, America, Latin America, Africa, and in some countries of Asia, there are genuine forms of ideological colonization taking place. And one of these—I will call it clearly by its name—is [the ideology of] "gender." Today children—children!—are taught in school that everyone can choose his or her sex. Why are they teaching this? Because the books are provided by the persons and institutions that give you money. These forms of ideological colonization are also supported by influential countries. And this [is] terrible! (The Vatican 2016)

In Africa, this claim is accompanied with the externalization of homosexuality and gender identity—they are alien to African culture and Christianity (Kaoma 2009a, 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

The Vatican's anti-gender theory is a reaction to Judith Butler's and the feminist argument that sex, gender, and heterosexuality are historical constructs. Cynthia Weber (2017) writes, "Butler's book *Gender Trouble* was critiqued in the theological writings of Cardinal Ratzinger, heavily implied in his 2008 address to the Roman Curia once he became Pope

Benedict XVI, and lingers in Pope Francis's concerns about 'gender indoctrination'."

The Pontiff's position is an excellent example of protective homophobia. In Africa, for instance, Roman Catholic bishops and priests—with the support of the US Roman Catholic Right—are at the forefront of protective homophobia. After the passage of Nigeria's anti-gay law in 2014, Roman Catholic bishops praised President Goodluck Jonathan for "his 'courageous and wise decision' in signing the anti-homosexuality Bill into law":

> "We commend you for this courageous and wise decision and pray that God will continue to bless, guide and protect you and your administration against the conspiracy of the developed world to make our country and continent, the dumping ground for the promotion of all immoral practices, that have continued to *debase* the purpose of God for man in the area of creation and morality, in their own countries." (CBCN 2014).

Similarly, Ugandan Roman Catholic bishops thanked President Yoweri Museveni for assenting to the Anti Homosexuality Bill in 2014, which sought to expand the criminalization of homosexuality. In Cameroon, Victor Tonyé Mbakot, the Archbishop of Yaoundé, and Cardinal Christian Wiyghan Tumi mobilized the anti-homosexual and anti-abortion crusade, which catalyzed the public externalization of homosexuality and abortion (Awondo 2016).

While the Vatican claims to oppose the criminalization of sexual minorities, in 2014, Roman Catholic bishops from Malawi, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, Eritrea, Zambia, Uganda, and Ethiopia jointly advocated for the criminalization of same-sex unions, which they claimed are unnatural and alien to Africa (Lusaka Times 2014). Then representing the Roman Catholic church in Zambia, Fr. Paul Samasumo, the head of *Vatican Radio* (the official voice of the Pope) English and Swahili Service, wrote, "Homosexual acts are seriously wrong and sinful…. Many homosexual persons argue that they were born that way. …Even if this was conclusively proven by science, it would not make homosexual behaviour acceptable" (Times of Zambia 2011).

Fr. Samasumo's opposition to homosexuality is also informed by postcolonial predisposition—he views sexual rights as neocolonial impositions—the point shared by Archbishop Ignatius Ayau Kaigama, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria. To Kaigama, homosexuality "contradicts our cultural and religious norms of marriage" and is "alien to our understanding of the family and should not be imposed on Nigerians…" (Vatican Radio 2015).

It is tempting to treat such statements as oppositional to the Vatican's stance on homosexuality. The positive news coverage of African bishops' anti-gay statements by *Vatican Radio*, as well as the elevation of Samasumo despite his overtly anti-gay positions, reflects the Vatican's official views on homosexuality. For the Vatican to request politicians to oppose same-gender rights while opposing all forms of violence and unjust discrimination is an oxymoron. Despite such ambiguity, the Vatican's position fits into Weiss's (2013) argument on "anticipatory" or "pre-emptive" legislations: passing laws that bar same-sex couples from marriage and the adoption of children without the decriminalization of sexual orientation and gender identity.

3.3.1 The Vatican and Secular Policy in Africa: The Case of Kenya

According to Case (2016), the Vatican's goal in sexual politics is to influence public policy—something reflected in Kenya's *National Family Promotion and Protection Policy* (NFPPP) spearheaded by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Eight Roman Catholic clergy and a number of Protestants and Evangelical pastors were among those who drafted the NFPPP. Intended to oppose sexual and gender rights in Kenya, the September 2016 draft presented at the US-based World Congress of Families conference in Nairobi, Kenya, repeatedly cites the Vatican statements without saying so. On gender theory or the ideology of gender, it reads:

> The challenge is posed by the various forms of the ideology of gender that denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. (Slide 20)

Amoris Laetitia reads:

> Yet another challenge is posed by the various forms of an ideology of gender that denies the difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman and envisages a society without sexual differences, thereby eliminating the anthropological basis of the family. This ideology leads to educational programmes and legislative enactments that promote a personal identity and

> emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female. (AL Par. 50).

On religion and culture, the Kenyan Policy states:

> Throughout the centuries, different religions maintain their constant teaching on marriage and family by promoting the dignity of marriage and family and defining marriage as a community of life and love. (Slide 14)

The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of Bishops reads:

> Throughout the centuries, the Church has maintained her constant teaching on marriage and family. …promoting the dignity of marriage and the family. (Par 16)

On the media, it reads:

> The media have the capacity to do grave harm to families by presenting an inadequate or even deformed outlook on life, on the family, on religion and on morality. If this power by the media are to be correctly employed, it is essential that all who use them know the principles of the moral order and apply them faithfully. (Slide 14)

Pope John Paul II's Message for the 2004 World Communications Day reads:

> Yet these same media also have the capacity to do grave harm to families by presenting an inadequate or even deformed outlook on life, on the family, on religion and on morality. This power either to reinforce or override traditional values like religion, culture, and family was clearly seen by the Second Vatican Council, which taught that if the media are to be correctly employed, it is essential that all who use them know the principles of the moral order and apply them faithfully.

These statements illustrate how the Vatican and its bishops influence secular policy. The employment of the Vatican's teachings in what is meant to be a secular policy is an excellent example of how the Roman Catholic church is purposefully driving its conservative agenda in Africa. Like the US Christian Right, the Vatican political project is to ensure that its religious views become the basis for secular law and policy. It is this agenda that Pope Francis is driving while publicly issuing what appear to be progressive views. But the Kenyan case also illustrates how homosexuality unites various Christian traditions—it knows no denominational or religious boundaries.

3.4 Protestant Christianity in Sexual Politics

The 1998 Lambeth Conference (global gathering of Anglican/Episcopal bishops) at the University of Kent, England, set in motion the Christian debates on human sexuality. I still visualize the drama that took place outside the Conference Hall as Nigerian Bishop Emmanuel Chukuma attempted to exorcise the demons of homosexuality from an English gay rights activist. Since then, Anglican bishops from Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, Burundi, and Rwanda with links to the US Christian Right have viciously opposed homosexuality (Rubenstein 2002; Hassett 2007).

African mainline Protestant churches monitor developments on sexual rights in the global North. The 2003 consecration of an openly gay Episcopal Church bishop in the US further catalyzed religiously opposition to homosexuality and destabilized global Protestant Christianity at many levels. In *Globalizing Culture Wars*, I document how the paradigm shift on homosexuality in US Christianity led to cutting ties with African Protestant churches in the Anglican Communion and Presbyterian Church (US). The severed relationships, however, were replaced with new ties to like-minded US conservative churches.

But African bishops also consider the approval of same-sex relations by some US-Churches, as spiritual betrayal. Apart from criticizing global North Christianity for bringing the “anti-gay” gospel to Africa only to reject it, Archbishop Orombi of Uganda described homosexuality as “evil, abnormal, and unnatural as per the Bible. It is a culturally unacceptable practice” (Kasozi 2010).[2] Following the April 24, 2015, court ruling for gay rights advocacy groups to formally register in Kenya, Anglican Archbishop Eliud Wabukala objected that the judgment was “not only against Christianity but also against Muslims’ teachings and traditions.” Wabukala went on to argue that the Kenyan society is organized around “family units” as opposed to “gay rights groups” (Nzwili 2015).

Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria described “gays as lower than dogs.” Akinola’s successor Nicholas Okoh also maintained:

> In the beginning, the Lord God made the woman for the man. And to show us that it was not that God did not know that he could make another man;

> could have very well created another man, he crafted a person, who is a human being all the same but very different; a woman…. Those who are treading that path of same-sex marriage are treading the path of a dead end. Marriage is for procreation, God brought you together, and it is the same God who will give you children. (Umeh 2015)

Presbyterian Churches in Africa are also opposed to same-sex rights. In addition to David Githii of Kenya, in 2006, then Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Rt. Rev. Dr. Frimpong Manson "condemned the shameful act of homosexuality and same-sex marriages" and "pledged the church's full support for government's prompt and bold stance to prevent this abomination from being encouraged on Ghanaian soil" (Addo 2006). Bishop Emmanuel Martey, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, wrote, "The Presbyterian Church of Ghana sees same-sex marriages as ungodly, sinful, unrighteous and "Satan's deadly agenda" (Littauer 2013). He further called "on all Christians in Ghana and all Ghanaians in general to 'wake up' against it [homosexuality]" (Presbyterian Church of Ghana 2011). Martey also announced the establishment of therapy centers for rehabilitations of sexual minorities—sharing the pseudo-science of reparative therapy (Ghana News Agency 2011).

3.4.1 National Council of Churches on Human Sexuality

Despite the World Council of Churches *Reference Group on Human Sexuality* and Christian Councils of Churches in the West holding progressive views on homosexuality, the majority of African Councils of Churches is opposed to homosexuality. Then Council of Churches in Zambia General Secretary Rev. Suzanne Matale argues that "sex is between male and female in a marriage context hence homosexuality should not be tolerated" (Lusaka Voice 2013).

In Liberia, the Liberian Council of Churches-endorsed statement blamed the deadly *Ebola disaster* that killed thousands in West Africa on "corruption and immoral acts" such as homosexuality (Daily Observer 2014). Archbishop of the Internal Episcopal (Anglican) Province of West Africa, Jonathan Hart (cited in Chap. 2), Lewis Zeigler, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Church of Liberia, the bishop of the United Methodist Church, Kortu Brown, and over 100 Protestant and Evangelical/Pentecostal religious leaders signed onto the statement.

Like Pope Francis, the General Secretary of the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) Opuni Frimpong warned the government to resist “foreign donors who set acceptance of homosexuality as a condition for donations and supports” (Akuffo 2015). The CCG has a detailed document on homosexuality. The paper describes homosexuality as “detestable, unnatural, un-African, abnormal, filthy and unbiblical.” Despite admitting that homosexuality “is not entirely alien to Africa,” the document argues that it is “a deviation and perversion of the Creator’s original intention.” Using the Pentecostal theology of spiritual warfare, the statement invites all Christians to participate in “the spiritual warfare exercise” against homosexuality.

The document also wrongly argues that “Africans believe the principles of moral conduct must not be changed with time in the name of tolerance (religious etc.), human rights or in the name of civilization” (something that betrays the transformation of African values through the Christianization and civilization processes). Like Samasumo, the statement points to the “disagreements among researchers as regards the “inborn” or “born-gay” theories,” before concluding that similar to “all sexual perversions, homosexuality is immoral” and “degrades human dignity to the level of a beast. …Both Old and New Testaments have catalogued the punishments for sexual sins including excommunication and even death” (Presbyterian Church of Ghana 2011). Underlying such claims is Leviticus 20:13 and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. Whereas mainline Protestant churches in the West understand this story as dealing with the lack of hospitality to strangers,[3] their African counterparts see it otherwise.

3.4.2 *Evangelical Fellowship/Pentecostal Churches and Sexual Politics*

As noted in Chap. 1, 98% of African Evangelical leaders are opposed to homosexuality (Pew Research Center 2011a: 30). All leading African Pentecostal and Evangelical pastors share this opposition. Since churches compete for public legitimacy, homosexuality becomes an important path to national and to some extent global fame. On the social front, however, the legalism that characterizes African Evangelicalism blocks any discussion on homosexuality and abortion rights.

The growth of Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity (Anderson 2014; Maxwell 2006) vis-à-vis the opposition to homosexuality is visible on the continent. Since the 1970s, American-founded churches have experienced rapid growth. With this increase comes political power—making the

Evangelical/Pentecostal pastors critical to national politics (Kaoma 2015). Like their Protestant sisters, African Evangelical/Pentecostal religious leaders' involvement in sexual politics is driven by their hermeneutics (biblical interpretation) as well as shifts on homosexuality in the West.

Both local and global socio-theological and political factors influence this objection. In "The homosexual agenda," Zambian Pastor Conrad Mbewe (2015) employs cultural, religious, and postcolonial predispositions on sexuality. He describes homosexuality as "abnormal" and "irrational," a Western import, and contrary to African "cultural and Christian values" (Mbewe 2015). "Sex is not only for pleasure," he maintains. "It is also for procreation, taking us on the road of partnership in parenting, as we fulfill God's cultural mandate to fill the earth and subdue it." Pastor Mbewe has links to Western conservative churches, but nonetheless writes:

> Zambians have said a very clear "No" to the homosexual agenda over and over again. We are being made to look as if we are petty, fearful, and backward. We have said that it goes against both our cultural and Christian values. Yet, the pressure continues to mount. …Western funds are being used in Africa… in pushing the homosexual agenda.

The accusation of Western funding for sexual rights activism is highlighted in Africa's sexual politics. Behind it is the claim that sexual minorities are paid recruiters of young people into homosexuality. Since US conservatives also make this claim, their sister churches share this position.

Mbewe's opposition to homosexuality is also informed by the global North's acceptance of homosexuality, which he views as a spiritual betrayal. Like Orombi, Mbewe complains:

> It was the West, through its Christian missionaries who taught us decency and propriety but now Western society is walking around half naked. It was the missionaries who taught us that marriage comprised one man and one woman for life, but now their own kith and kin are totally defacing this concept. (2013)

As in US culture wars, Mbewe links homosexuality to abortion rights. He writes:

> It was the missionaries from the West who stopped us from sacrificing our babies, but now millions of babies are being slaughtered in the West in their mother's wombs. As for tattooing, don't even talk about it. (2013)

Similarly, Ugandan pastor Ssempa links his opposition to homosexuality to abortion rights. Specifically, he accused the Obama administration of promoting the gay agenda by funding "the daily butchering" of "innocent babies… in the abortion industry" (Kincaid 2010).

The similarities between Ssempa's and Mbewe's characterization of abortion, namely, "butchering" and "being slaughtered," are telling. The choice of words, the conflation of homosexuality with abortion, and the "homosexual agenda" are now established mantra in African cultural politics. Like the Kenyan policy, these pastors do not cite the sources of such ideas. To the African audience, however, such claims are of African origin. Again, this is another example of how the US culture wars influence and inform sexuality disputes in Africa.

3.5 From the United States to Uganda: Transcontinental Contestation of Homosexuality

In early March 2009, Uganda hosted the Stephen Langa-led Family Life Network's (FLN) "Seminar on Exposing the Homosexuals Agenda". This seminar resulted in the drafting of the *Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009*—which was signed into law in February 2014 but ruled unconstitutional the same year. With the mission of "restoring traditional family values and morals in Uganda," FLN partnered with three US-based anti-gay advocates—Pastor Scott Lively of Abiding Truth and Defend the Family, Don Schmierer of the now disbanded ex-gay group Exodus International (after its leader confessed that reparative therapy or healing of homosexuals had adverse consequences on sexual minorities), and Caleb Lee Brundidge of the International Healing Foundation. Among the participants were the country's high-profile religious leaders, parliamentarians, police officers, teachers, and concerned parents.

During his presentation, Lively highlighted the claim that gays had a global agenda to destroy the family (see also Slater 2009; O'Leary 2007). Legalizing homosexuality, he reasoned, is at par with legalizing the "molestation of children or having sex with animals." Like Mbewe, Lively disputed the human rights claim on sexual orientation:

> The people coming to Africa now and advancing the idea that human rights serves the homosexual interests are absolutely wrong. Many of them are outright liars, and they are manipulating history; they are manipulating facts in order to push their political agenda.

As for abortion, Lively presented it as "a product of the gay philosophy." In line with Martin's (1999: 67) claim about the Christian Right's distrust of the United Nations, Lively accused the United Nations of being controlled by gays: "Nobody has been able to stop them so far," he claimed, "I'm hoping Uganda can."

Lively also met with Ugandan lawmakers and government officials, some of whom would draft the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2009. The Bill sought to ban public advocacy for sexual rights and demanded death penalty in some cases for same-sex intimate relations. On March 10, 2009, Lively explained the purpose of his trip on his Defendthefamily blog:

> The campaign was to teach about the "gay" agenda in churches, schools, colleges, community groups, and in Parliament … The international "gay" movement has devoted a lot of resources to transforming the moral culture from a marriage-based one to one that embraces sexual anarchy. …Our campaign was like a nuclear bomb against the "gay" agenda in Uganda.

A week later, Lively's PowerPoint presentation became the basis for the FLN's "strategic meeting on combating homosexuality" where the idea of lobbying for a new anti-gay law was born. Harry Mwebesa of FLN provided the rationale for the Bill:

> Dr. Scott told us about Brazil where ten years ago, homosexuality was unheard of. …Today [Brazil] is the capital [of homosexuality]. … There are people [Brazilians] that have been against homosexuality that are having to leave {Brazil] because of the pressure and the threats that they are putting on them. That is how serious it is.

Another participant said:

> The man of God [Scott Lively] told us about … a movement behind the promotion of homosexuality and it is called gay movement. Me, I had never heard of that. But I got to know that there is a force behind homosexuality which we need to tackle with force. He also told us that these people who are behind this … evil, they have all resources that they need … to spread this evil. [In] Africa, Uganda in particular… it is … easy for the young generation to get attracted into this evil.

After listening to participants' complaints against the government's failure to aggressively combat homosexuality, Charles Tuhaise, Principal Research

Officer at the Parliament of Uganda, revealed that Lively's meeting with parliamentarians was highly influential. In his words, "[The parliament] feels it is necessary to draft a new law that deals comprehensively with the issue of homosexuality and … takes into account the international gay agenda. … Right now, there is a proposal that a new law be drafted." Aside from Lively personally reviewing the AHB[4] and communicating with Ugandan lawmakers (Ponsor 2017: 9), the US anti-gay campaigners' language characterized the Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009. Despite international outrage to the Bill, it was passed in parliament in 2013, and signed into law in February 2014. It was later struck down on technical grounds in July 2014 after human rights advocates went to court.

Following the introduction of the AHB in Parliament, Sexual minorities Uganda (SMUG) successfully sued Lively in the US court for crimes against humanity for his role in the AHB. On June 5, 2017, Judge Michael Ponsor of the US District Court in Springfield, Massachusetts, dismissed the law suit on jurisdiction grounds. In his summary judgment, however, Judge Ponsor cited Lively's "crackpot bigotry," which he argued "could be brushed aside as pathetic, except for the terrible harm it can cause" (2017: 2). To this end, he added:

> Anyone reading this memorandum should make no mistake. The question before the court is not whether Defendant's actions in aiding and abetting efforts to demonize, intimidate, and injure LGBTI people in Uganda constitute violations of international law. They do. (2017: 3)[5]

Like the Vatican, Lively's activities in Uganda illustrate how international forces are changing sexual politics in Africa.

That said, from the social movement theoretical frame, the success of FLN's strategic advocacy in passing the Bill and SMUG's successful law suit to strike down the Bill illustrate how the democratic political space accords rooms to anti-gay and pro-gay activists to move their respectful agenda. Despite using religious convictions as well as partnering with pastors and Roman Catholic bishops, FLN presents itself as a civil society organization. This self-positioning allows FLN to work across denominational boundaries. Whereas Langa is an elder in the Watoto Pentecostal Church (one of the hosts of Lively's presentations), the civil society status of FLN provides the organization with access to funding streams free from ecclesiastical and government control. This is equally the case with SMUG.

Besides, the partnership between Lively, FLN, and the Parliament of Uganda is equally insightful. First, the primary agents were Ugandans.

They are the ones who organized the meetings in which Lively served as a movement intellectual—he provided the mobilization rationale for the AHB. Second, the case also suggests a paradigm shift in sexual politics from that of mainline global Protestantism. Like the Vatican, the US anti-gay conservatives aim to influence secular policy—their goal is to reform the legal frame under which sexuality is currently contested. From Brazil to Belize to Russia to Eastern Europe and to Africa, this paradigm shift is self-evident. These religious groups are engaged in anticipatory legal reforms on sexuality—which differ drastically from Protestant transcontinental religious activism. If US conservatives in the Episcopal Church sought to transform the Anglican Communion, Pentecostal/Evangelicals and Roman Catholics are effecting secular policy—in the process inviting religious and political leaders of various faiths.

3.6 Homosexuality and Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa

African Christians are highly suspicious of Islamic take over of the continent and vice versa. In sexual politics, however, they are bedfellows. While Christians negatively perceive Islamic demands for the *Shariazation* of national constitutions, the *Christianization* of African constitutions is an assumed public good. In 2010, aided by American anti-gay and anti-abortion civil society organizations, Kenyan Christians demanded the removal of Islamic *kadhis* courts from the new constitution, while insisting on the inclusion of Christian “traditional family values” in the same document. Raghavan (2010), of the *Washington Post,* writes:

> In this [Kenya] predominantly Christian nation, Christians are worried about a Muslim community that is growing in numbers and influence, and they have been vocally backed by U.S.-based Christian groups. Muslims are wary of the rising power of fundamentalist Christian organizations backed by American Christians.

While Christian fundamentalists consider Islam demonic, they nonetheless partner with Muslim religious leaders in their opposition to homosexuality. Since Islamic fundamentalists equally view the West as a threat to their religious and political agenda, on issues of human sexuality, Islam and African Christianity are agreed—homosexuality is a major threat to their respective religio-cultural values.

In Uganda, Moslems were part of the Pastor Ssempa-led "Taskforce against Homosexuality." Also, they called for death penalty for gays. Reminiscence of the US Pastor Charles L. Worley's demands to fence off all gays until they die off (Lynch 2012), Mufti Sheikh Ramathan Shaban Mubajje asked President Museveni to round up all gays and dump them on an island on Lake Victoria until they starve to death. In 2011, Sheikh Mohammed Khalifa of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya demanded death penalty for gays (Sapa-AP 2011). Writing about Kenya, Ndzovu (2016: 83) states, "there is a consented effort by Muslim religious leaders to ensure that homosexuality is not acknowledged in society" (see also Broqua 2016: 163–176).

The Muslim Association of Malawi did the same. Specifically, the Muslim Association of Malawi Secretary General Dr. Salmin Omar Idrussi argued that gays "need to be handed death penalty as a way of making sure that the issue is curbed" (Idi 2014). In 2016, seventeen Senegalese Islamic associations demanded tougher sentences against homosexuality. Similarly, in Nigeria, The Gambia, and Uganda, anti-gay laws were backed by Muslims.

Like Christianity, Islam is a global religion—thus the negative perception of sexual minorities in Islamic nations is equally exported to Africa. For example, fundamentalist Islamic Middle East cultures sanction the execution of gays. Like President Mugabe, Iranian Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi-Amoli argues that "homosexuals are inferior to dogs and pigs." Aside from describing Western leaders who support homosexuals as "lower than animals," he argues, "Even animals … dogs and pigs don't engage in this disgusting act [homosexuality], but they [western politicians] pass laws in favour of them in their parliaments" (Dehghan 2012).

Similarly, Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi of the Islamic Society of North America writes:

> Homosexuality is a moral disorder. It is a moral disease, a sin, and corruption… No person is born homosexual, just like no one is born a thief, a liar or murderer. People acquire these evil habits due to a lack of proper guidance and education. (Religious Tolerance 2006)

Such claims are prominent in the US Christian Right anti-homosexuality literature. As Herman argues, the Christian Right views homosexuality as "a sin akin to adultery—individuals are no more 'born gay' than they are born adulterers" (1997: 71). This ideological unity may explain the partnership between Christian and Islamic religious leaders in sexual politics.

3.7 The Religious Contestation of Homosexuality

The prodigious growth of Christianity and Islam has increased religious fundamentalism on the continent. If Islamic fundamentalists are attempting to enshrine Shari'a laws in national constitutions, Christian leaders are equally demanding that "biblical laws" become the laws of the land. Paradoxically, since religious laws are assumed to be unchallengeable and unchangeable, fundamentalists view the progress in sexual rights as an attack on religion—the same argument advanced by US Christian anti-gay proponents. In partnership with politicians and foreign allies, African religious leaders are mobilizing their followers to oppose sexual rights, which they perceive as both evil and against African social and religious norms. This opposition is embedded in religious, cultural, and postcolonial predispositions.

Christianity has global outreach as its goal—thereby connecting peoples who otherwise would be strangers. Theologically, the Christian doctrine of oneness in Christ suggests *globality*. As discussed in Chap. 4, the shrinking of the world into a global village—whereby local faith communities are linked to other global communities—accords Christianity an added advantage since it falls within its belief system. As in other cases of globalization, however, the global North, specifically the US (despite being a minority in world Christianity), has an overwhelming influence on African Christianity (Gifford et al. 1996; Ranger 2008).

As pointed out earlier, the influence of global North Christianity on Africa dates to early missionary activities. Since then, the Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church, and now various US-born Pentecostal Churches have exported hymnals, religious rituals, dressing codes, liturgies, and theologies to Africa in the name of Christian missions. Although the exportation of Western cultural values to non-Western cultures can be contested as imperialism, in missiological terms, such exportations are considered a divine-sanctioned duty (Matt 28: 19–20). Across Christian traditions, participating in the Creator's mission (*missio Creatoris Dei*) is understood as sharing financial and spiritual resources as well as ideologies beyond local boundaries. As Pearce's study in Nigeria reveals, the Charismatic Movement is an active agent of, and participant in globalization. Pearce (2012: 346) writes, "Globalization has afforded more international participation than existed before: converts select from the global and the local in an attempt to construct new selves, develop nontraditional marital relations and solve everyday problems."

Kalu agrees with Pearce in his study of African Pentecostalism, which he argues benefits from both internal and "external intervention and spiritual flows" (Kalu 2008, 190). Aside from some African-initiated churches, Kalu's point applies to Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. As discussed in the following chapter, through the process of *glocalization*, African Christianity transforms and domesticates useful US conservative tactics and ideologies to serve locally defined political ends, while increasing its visibility in national politics. Even though the influence of American conservatives on African Christianity has attracted scholarly debates (Maxwell 2006; Ranger 2008; Kaoma 2009b), the US conservatives understand their involvements as Christian mission. Due to their vast resources and infrastructure—TV, radio, books, and schools—the US conservative missionaries have dominated the postcolonial mission field—thereby influencing local Christian expressions and politics.

Consequently, the politicization of sexuality is not accidental. In *Reshaping World Politics*, Warkentin (2001: 32) argues that the development of any social movement is usually part of the "purposeful political agenda." The expansion of the sexual rights movement is not a sporadic phenomenon—it is part of the larger global political agenda of the human rights movement. As a social movement, it is a product of strategic alliances and organizing over many decades. In the 1970s, Wilson (2002: 253) argues, the movement for sexual rights was organized at academic conferences. In the 1990s, however, the movement was organized around the United Nations' events—linking global South activists to well-established advocacy groups in the global North.

Similarly, the social movement to police sexuality is not accidental but part of the organized conservative political project. According to Martin (1999: 67), the US Christian Right:

> domestic agenda: distrust of secular government, opposition to any perceived threat to 'traditional family values,' determination to preach and practise their beliefs without hindrance or restriction [and] a conviction that globalization is a fulfilment of the Biblical prophecies foreshadowing the return of Christ drives its global agenda.

As Pastor Lively showed, ideologically, to the US Christian Right, homosexuality is sinful and a chosen lifestyle. If "love the sinner and hate the sin" speaks to the sinfulness of homosexuality, reparative therapy speaks of a chosen behavior.

Furthermore, the Christian Right is highly suspicious of the United Nations, European Union, and the World Council of Churches. Due to these institutions' progressive human rights agenda, they are said to be "controlled by Marxists, secular humanists, radical homosexuals, and feminists with an agenda to eradicate traditional Christian family values" (Martin 1999, 78; Butler 2006). This conviction drives US Christian Right global activism. Riding on African religiosity and the Christian conception of missions, the US conservatives view themselves as defenders of global Christianity from secular elites (Wilson 2002: 257; Weiss's 2013).

Often protective homophobia stems from various beliefs among them—the recruitment hypothesis. Anti-gay activists share the theory that homosexuality grows with recruitment—thus, the opposition to sexual rights is interpreted as protecting children and Africa. Ugandan Archbishop Orombi, for instance, accuses wealthy Anglo-American homosexuals of "taking advantage of the abject poverty in Africa to lure people into their club" (Aruho 2011). Akinola (2006) also accused the Western world of employing large sums of money to lure young people into homosexuality. This opposition, however, is planted in the Bible, the Qur'ān and a romanticized unadulterated cultural identity. These beliefs are presented as one—hence they carry sacred, religious, political, cultural, and neocolonial overtones.

3.8 Looking Forward

African religious leaders conflate homosexuality with same-sex marriages. By overemphasizing marriage over human rights, anti-gay advocates have managed to avoid discussing the issue of violence directed at sexual minorities. Here, international and local human rights organizations need to find a working strategy that emphasizes the humanity of sexual minorities.

Although African religious leaders' views on homosexuality are diverse, like traditional authorities in Chap. 2, they appeal to sacred texts as well as to global developments in their contestation of sexuality. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is highly pronounced by Muslim and Evangelical/Pentecostals leaders—inviting death penalty as punishment for homosexuality (Ndzovu 2016; Broqua 2016). The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, one can safely argue, is the key interpretive lens among Islamic and Evangelical/Pentecostal religious leaders in Africa. Since homosexuality is presented as among the demonic forces Africa should fight, the punitive language against sexual minorities creates a confrontational atmosphere for dialogical politics of being. It is this confrontational situation that informs religious leaders' protective homophobia—blocking any room for democratic deliberations on human sexuality.

Finally, with few exceptions, African Christianity believes that the "global homosexual agenda" exists and must be disrupted. Since religious leaders do not make laws, they push politicians to oppose homosexuality and commend governments' efforts when they do so. Like the Vatican and Pope Francis, most religious leaders are mute on arrests of, and violence directed at sexual minorities—who are purposely considered criminals as opposed to innocent victims. In the globalized world, however, violence and arrests of sexual minorities attract international outrage. The following chapter explores the role globalization is playing in sexual politics.

Notes

1. This characterization of gender theory is similar to that of Scott Lively's presentation of homosexuality. He writes, "the Bible treats homosexuality as a form of rebellion against God even worse (from God's perspective) than mass murder" (12/09/2014). "Is Homosexuality Worse than Mass Murder in the Bible?" http://www.scottlively.net/2014/12/09/is-homosexuality-worse-than-mass-murder-in-the-bible/. Accessed June 10, 2015.
2. In Southern Africa, however, anti-homosexuality voices are challenged by a small number of Anglicans priests and bishops such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, and Rev. MacDonoald Sembereka who have spoken in favor of sexual minorities' rights. Archbishop Makgoba has gone further to condemn the use of African religious leaders "as proxies" in US culture wars (Conger 2016). In East Africa, however, Bishop Christopher Ssenjonjo and Rev. Michael Kimindu have been excommunicated from the Anglican Church—thus, their influence is limited within the Anglican Church in East Africa.
3. Studies abound on these texts. Respectable scholars including Walter Bruggermann have argued that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was that of inhospitality as opposed to homosexuality. It is also important to note that the Prophet Ezekiel (16: 49) explains the sin of Sodom in social justice terms: "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy."
4. Lively recommended the replacement of death penalty with 20 years of imprisonment to "soften public backlash" (Ponsor 2017: 8).

5. "The much narrower and more technical question posed by Defendant's motion is whether the limited actions taken by Defendant on American soil in pursuit of his odious campaign are sufficient to give this court jurisdiction over Plaintiff's claims. Since they are not sufficient, summary judgment is appropriate for this, and only this, reason." (2017: 3–4). Lively's lawyers have appealed the ruling based on the judge's wording of the judgment at the time the book went to press.

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CHAPTER 4

Contesting Global Culture: Globalization and Sexual Politics in Sub-Saharan Africa

In Chap. 3, I examined how religious leaders' public statements provoke protective homophobia. I noted that these declarations provide political incentives to politicians to engage in sexual politics. But I also pointed out that the rapid growth of Christianity has increased religious leaders' influence in domestic and global sexual politics. Just as African Roman Catholic bishops influenced Pope Francis's opposition to Western nations' attachment of gay rights to foreign aid, some US Christian conservatives have done the same. In this chapter, however, I explore how globalization shapes and informs domestic and global sexual politics.

4.1 "It Took One Brave Young Man" to Change the Narrative in Malawi

"A confession. An impassioned plea. Silence. Rapturous applause. More confessions. Then a dramatic change of heart. It took one brave young man. He changed the conversation from one that dwelt on abstracts on the topic of homosexuality to one that zeroed in on specifics."

These words opened the September 9, 2013, Ephraim Munthali article, "40 gays take on Malawi clergy, married woman admits being lesbian" in *The Nation*, one of Malawi's most respected newspapers.

The young man was attending a screening of the movie, *God Loves Uganda*. Over 80 religious leaders and 40 sexual minorities watched the movie at Cross Road Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi. The movie documents

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how US Christian conservatives are transforming African politics around sexuality. Since the documentary was informed by my work, I was there and sat on a panel with Oscar-winning director Roger Ross Williams and Malawian human rights defender Mr. Gift Trapence.

As expected, pastors came after me—telling me that I am headed to hell for misrepresenting the Christian faith (something I take as a mark of honor). But other pastors went after gay people. Pastor Tupi Monjeza passionately told the audience that homosexuality was unacceptable in God's eyes and was punishable by death—it is in the Bible. Other pastors echoed his defense of biblical condemnations of gays, repeatedly citing the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Aside from erasing gay persons from the continent, some said that people become homosexuals due to foreign influence. Pastors applauded each time a pastor said something deleterious and dehumanizing about homosexuals.

But things changed so fast. A young man in his early 20s challenged the pastors to listen to him and not to speak for him. "I am gay. Nobody made me gay and I did not choose to be gay. I was not recruited into homosexuality, it came naturally to me," the visibly angry young man said. Shaking with rage, he courageously continued, "My parents knew that I was different when I was a child. So tell me, why do you want me dead?" Dead silence filled the room.

"What followed this impassioned plea was pure drama," wrote Munthali in *The Nation*. Dressed in a suit, a professional-looking woman took the mic and addressed the audience. "I am married with two kids. I do not love my husband and I feel so bad about it. The person I love is in this room. I sleep with my husband but I also sleep with my female lover. Between the two, it is my female lover who satisfies me. I cannot die for my husband, but the person I would die for is in this room."

"That is my lover," a female voice shouted from the audience. In full view of pastors, her female partner rushed to embrace her and openly kissed her—attracting disapproval from the clergy and applause from sexual minorities. She then picked up the mic and introduced herself as a married woman with one child. Like her partner, she told the audience that she was forced into marrying a man, but her real lover is the one she just kissed. The couple's courageous affirmations of each other's love opened room for more sexual minorities to declare publicly their humanity in concrete terms as pastors listened assiduously.

The program was broadcast on the radio, and the moderator announced we were coming to the end of our time. Pastor Mogeza, who initially told me that I will go to hell for supporting gay rights, asked for the mic. Sexual minorities shouted that he should not have the last word. Since he persisted, I asked the moderator to let him speak. *The Nation* reports:

> But in a dramatic change of heart, [Pastor] Monjeza—after listening to the gays(sic) confessions and plea for acceptance, stood up, as the discussion was winding up, to announce that he was withdrawing his initial remarks against gays, saying his views evolved during the two hours of the discussion. He added, "I did not know that gays are humans just as I am."

If there is something to learn from the Malawian experience, it is that open discourses on sexuality give a face to the issue of homosexuality. As long as issues are discussed in the abstract, anti-gay claims are likely to win over real-life stories of sexual minorities. Africa needs to hear such stories from the very people who are demonized and erased from the continent. But the making of *God Loves Uganda* by a US-based filmmaker and its screening in Malawi point to the role of globalization in African sexual politics.

4.2 Erasing Spaces, Breaking Cultural Boundaries

As the world was coming to terms with the infamous Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill 2009, *Globalizing the Culture Wars* (Kaoma 2009) revealed how global information and ideology exchanges are reforming Africa's sexual politics. Although the report sought to address religious players, it also illustrated how forces of globalization are instrumental to Africa's sexual politics. It concluded that the resistance to same-sex intimate relations in political, socio-cultural, and religious realms brought sexuality to the forefront of Africa's political landscape. Aside from the growing opposition to, and visibility of sexual minorities, Africa is witnessing an increased participation of global pro-gay and anti-gay advocates in domestic sexual politics. Indeed, globalization knows no socio-economic, political, cultural, religious, and geographical boundaries (Gupta 2004: 79; Bohman 2004; Bosia and Weiss 2013).

The Web, cell phones, mass media, social media, and global religion influence, and to some extent, communicate alternative ways of being sexual in Africa. The Web, social media, and cell phones accord local actors a chance to organize at local and global levels. As discussed later in the chapter, the claim that the world is a "global village" has some truth—but it is a village informed by cultural diversity on the one hand, and cultural specificity on the other. As noted in Chap. 6, globalization is not only challenging states' claims to sovereignty but also weakening cultural boundaries—forcing communities to act to "protect" their cultures.

In *Globalization and the Decline of Social Reform*, Teeple contends that globalization ends ethnic and national histories. Amidst the effects of globalization, Teeple (2000: 167) argues, "global culture [is] the dominant source of our identity as national/ethnic differences dissolve." In addition to ending "national history," he argues, globalization renders "history as part of self-definition and understanding" inapt. Although Teeple's claim has merit if applied to the economic aspect of globalization, it assumes that globalization operates aside from local cultures. If by "global culture" we mean capitalism, Teeple may be right. If applied to socio-cultural aspects of globalization, the global culture usually meets resistance from local cultures as communities seek to protect their identities. Aptly stated, people uphold local cultures; hence, culture does not die without a fight.

But as Movius (2010: 9) writes:

> The breaking up of space and time, brought about by electronic media, has led to individuals being able to interact with one another and within frameworks of mediated interaction, regardless of special disparities. This has altered contemporary methods of communication, leading to new phenomena such as participatory journalism, online communities, and transnational activism organized through online networks.

Considering Movius's observations, the concurrent participation and transformation of local and international spaces into virtual communities represent a new global reality. Like Teeple, however, such a conclusion underestimates Africa's religio-cultural and political histories. Colonial history and the marginal global economic status of the continent are critical lenses through which most Africans participate in the global culture. Western ideas and developments perceived to enhance claims to cultural identities and social values—community rights, democracy, the Web, and cell phones—are re-appropriated, while those viewed as threats are opposed. Although this selective appropriation of global values is universal to human existence, in Africa, it is at the center of cultural, religious, and postcolonial predispositions through which the Christian contestation of sexuality occurs.

Whereas scholars have identified the limitations and simplicity of the binary construction of sexuality (local/global; homosexual/heterosexual) (Nyeck 2016; Boellstorff 2016; Bosia 2014; Hoad 2007; Obendorf 1999), to some extent, binaries inform sexuality politics on the continent. Opponents of sexual rights perceive both sexual minority and gender rights campaigns as threats to traditionally defined values and norms. This assumed foreignness of homosexuality and to some extent gender identities provide the reason for religious and political opposition to sexual rights.

Although sexuality is globalized through various vehicles—social, cultural, religious, and economic processes—globalization involves a "complex interplay between local and global forces, and the consequent production of heterogeneous identities" (Corboz 2009: 2). Boellstorff speaks of this interplay when he warns against "a monodiscursive frame" in the exploration of global sexual politics. Since various discourses—race, gender, class, sexuality and religion—inform sexuality politics, a metanarrative allows the position that "'sexuality' as such is not a pre-existing social category of experience, but an emergent, intersectional aftereffect, albeit one with significant effects of its own" (Boellstorff 2016: 178). The major question then is how can one explore the globalization of sexual identities and cultures without reproducing such binaries—global/local, Western or foreign/African, sacred/profane? In Africa, such binaries present sexual minorities as a product of the West, while anti-sexual rights advocates are perceived as backward or simply ignorant.

But as argued in Chap. 3, the sexual rights movement is now a transnational phenomenon which benefits from the global interactions of values, practices, cultures, and identities beyond local spaces. Corboz's perception of sexual politics as "transnational" highlights the interactions and tensions between the global and the local lifeworld. She writes, "The term transnational destabilizes assumptions that the global is oppressive and the local is resistant against and subversive of the homogenising tendencies of global forces" (Corboz 2009: 4). Rather, the global and the local are mutually interlinked and influence the constitution of the other. Wilson (2002) makes a similar point on how globalization reshapes sexual rights. Due to the intersectionality of capitalism, state sovereignty, and culture, sexual rights are products of intense transnational networking and interactions. While globalization aids "the formation of a sexual rights agenda," Wilson writes, "the global economy and the restructured state produce a backlash and real obstacles to those very efforts" (Wilson 2002: 252; Stiglitz 2002).

The precipitous sexual rights politics represents contradictions between local and global experiences and expectations. This process is equally contradictory; experiences of sexual minorities in Africa and those of the West are not interchangeable. As Bosia writes:

> sexual minorities were part of larger indigenous populations subject to colonial systems that already saw (and see) the totality of the colonized as sexually and racially suspect—or desirable… And just like the colonizer, the colonized has been defined and targeted through medical, scientific, and security imperatives, but the sexuality of the colonized has been separate from and subordinate to the idea of the homosexual in the West, even as both the metropolitan homosexual and the colonized were each peripheral but necessary to the colonial state. (2014: 258)

In this regard, African sexual minorities are discursively denied the agency to inform global sexual politics positively. In other words, residue colonialism presents African sexual minorities as both insiders and outsiders within the frame of global sexual and cultural rights.

The illogicalities born from globalization are necessary to the contestation of sexuality in Africa. Often, these contradictory forces are occurring at once; thus, they influence the comprehension of sexuality as well as the "sexual." Despite attempts to romanticize traditional and cultural norms, African cultures and Western cultures are not completely discrete; rather, various global factors influence Africa's self-understanding. The calls to end girl child sexual abuse "sanitized as child marriage," the campaigns against domestic violence, and the empowerment of women are simultaneously changing how sexuality in Africa is lived and negotiated. Although various global forces are responsible for such changes, the tension between contemporary expressions of sexuality and traditional cultural norms exists. Since communities are culturally and religiously predisposed, attempts by women and now sexual minorities to reform some religio-cultural norms of patriarchy are defined in binary terms—un-African vs. foreign.

Another incongruous tension exists between contemporary sexual expressions and the terror of socio-religious "exclusion and demoralisation" (Corboz 2009: 6). As such, many sexual minorities choose to exist in the shadow or margins of their societies—promoting the claim that Africa has no gays. Because contemporary sexuality in Africa is affected by global sexual norms, the issue of same-sex relations cannot be studied in isolation from developments in the global North (Bosia 2014: 261; Wilson 2002; Kaoma 2016). In this case, a cross-cultural examination of sexuality is necessary. But as Padilla et al. (2007: 201) argue, the exportation of the letters LGBTI can be an ethnocentric imposition. These letters, they argue, are not only questioned in non-Western contexts, but also inadequate in the exploration of sexual diversity beyond the West.[1]

Manion and Morgan rightly advocate moving "away from western terminology and labels" in the exploration of sexuality in Africa. Based on their 1997 South African Gay and Lesbian Archives history project, they discovered that older women didn't self-identify as lesbians. A similar situation arose in the 2003 Africa's women oral history, where potential researchers denied the existence of "lesbians in their countries" (2006: 31). But when challenged to think beyond the Western labels of LGBTI, they successfully documented same-gender loving women in their respective countries.

Often global North human rights advocacy assumes that the Western-born human rights frame is universally applicable from Africa to Asia to South America (Bosia 2014). Aside from forcing Western gay activism on non-Western cultures, this assumption undermines how sexuality is understood and studied in non-Western cultural contexts. As Padilla et al. (2007: 215) write:

> A significant proportion of the same-sex behavior in many cultural settings may not be definitive of a homosexual identity in any way analogous to gay identity in places such as the United States or Western Europe. Therefore, any attempt to understand the relation between sexual identification and health risks in the developing world, by necessity, must consider the local meanings of same-sex practices in specific cultural settings in addition to the nature of social inequalities and structural violence (see also Amory 1997: 8; Obendorf 1999; Kaoma 2016).

Yet the Western prism is the dominant frame of African sexual politics. In short, LGBTI characterizations are the lens through which sexual diversity is debated in Africa's public forums. Aside from misrepresenting African sexual expressions and identities, this prism feeds into postcolonial predisposition—it externalizes homosexuality. But as Obendorf (1999: 184–185) argues, postcolonial discourse seeks to identify and disrupt binaristic conceptions of sexuality.

Regardless, the global sexual rights movement must ensure that African sexual minorities' experiences inform and direct sexual rights activism on the continent. In her exploration of sexual politics in Uganda, for example, Boyd locates anti-gay opposition in the traditional worldview. To her, sexual subjectivity is usually disputed in local cultural contexts; hence, the perception of a "homosexual" subject differs from community to community. Writing about the US–Uganda networking, she concludes:

> American and Ugandan anti-homosexual activists may aspire to the same goal—the moral rebuke and criminalization of same-sex sexual acts—but their motivations, and the underlying moral frameworks which shape these motivations, are not interchangeable. (Boyd 2013: 699)

Boyd argument isolates the African lifeworld from the influence of globalization on global religion. Christianity is a global religion with global adherents; hence, Pentecostal Churches in Africa have sister churches in the global North, especially in North America. And as Chap. 3 showed, aside from missionary activities, globalization has tremendously enhanced Christian partnership across continental and national boundaries. In this regard, while motivations for protective homophobia may be distinct and separate, the instruments and strategic tools to reach those goals are globally informed.

4.3 POSTCOLONIAL CONTESTATION OF GLOBALIZATION

The academic acceptance of globalization does not necessarily suggest a common definition. The phenomena of globalization, Jones (2012: 22) asserts, "is not just an economic theoretical concept—it is a catch all or umbrella concept. It impacts almost every aspect of human existence—environmental, technological, economic, political, cultural and the list is endless" (see also Koshy 2001). Peters (2004: 107) writes, "'Globalization' as a defining term for a new era can mean whatever we choose for it to mean." Bartelson, however, argues that globalization is an undeniable and inescapable part of our world (2000: 180; Enloe 2007). Yankuzo (2014: 2) consequently writes, "globalization is like an uncontrollable wildfire, which shapes our common life."

It is important to note that these observations point to what globalization does as opposed to what it is—adding to the challenge of defining it. As a process, globalization is the avenue through which human values are contested, transmitted, shared, or somehow imposed on the world cultures through various media—TV, Internet, economic and political institutions, global governance, civil society organizations, and religious institutions. For this reason, globalization is, by its very nature, destabilizing to human communities since it challenges and informs communities to self-select/reject certain aspects of the global culture (Kaoma 2016).

The lack of unanimity on the definition of globalization is problematical in itself. Obviously, we cannot make definite arguments for or against globalization if we don't share a common definition. Yet there is consensus on "what globalization does" as opposed to "what it is." Brah explains globalization as "multiaxial and multidirectional," representing "complex articulations of socio-economic, political and cultural dimensions" (2002: 38). Douglas (2008: 25) views globalization as "the process by which anything, any movement, any phenomenon becomes global," and this argument is also shared by Enloe (2007: 2–3).

Gupta (2004: 79), however, views globalization as "a rapid accelerating process of change that is transforming the ways individuals, social groups and political states interact with one another." Gupta further argues that advancement in technology has increased the free flow of information, people, and capital across the globe—it has redefined the meaning of the local state and the local culture while shrinking the world into a global village.

Although the concept of a global village has gained influence in understanding globalization, I propose that the world is "a global metropolitan." Whereas globalization brings communities closer to one another, the economic muscle of the rich overrides those of the poor and powerless. As a result, globalization is profoundly destabilizing to local cultures as communities engage new set of norms that originate from dominant parts of the globe. In terms of sexual politics, globalization represents antithetical transnational flows of values, giving birth to contradictory experiences of social life.

Peters (2004: 106) advocates paying attention to people's experiences in the conception of globalization. She writes:

> Much of the discourse in globalization studies revolves around attempts to define, explain, and theorize what globalization "is" or to examine differing accounts of its history and development. Unfortunately, this approach assumes a universal quality to the phenomenon of globalization. It assumes that "globalization" represents a single reality that can be debated. There is another way to approach the topic: namely, to acknowledge that the lived material realities of differing people around the globe provide a variety of competing epistemological positions from which to define, explain, and understand globalization.

Peters's challenge as regard to "competing epistemological positions" suggests diverse experiences of globalization. A poor person on the streets of Lusaka understands globalization from a different social location just as an unemployed person in America whose job is shipped to China (Enloe 2007: 3).

In addition, there is more to globalization than capitalism (though the effects are interlinked). Stohl (2005: 231) explains:

> When globalization is viewed as an economic phenomenon, the means of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption are highlighted, neo-liberalism ideology is seen to permeate society, the world market dominates, and transnational links often transcend and supplant nation-states. When globalization is viewed as a political phenomenon, the exercise of power, coercion, surveillance, and control over people and territories is paramount. When it is conceived as a cultural phenomenon, symbolic exchange through rituals, everyday practices, mass media, face-to-face communication, and cultural performances are central. The intensification of global consciousness, reflexivity, perceptions of risk, the struggle for identity, and community are overriding features of this approach.

What these arguments hold in common is the perception of globalization as a rapid process of change in almost all spheres of human life (Tomlinson 2003). Nonetheless, this process does not occur in a vacuum—it is contested by local cultures as is the case with sexual politics. As Yeung rightly observes, globalization constitutes "a set of mutually constitutive tendencies comprising both material processes of transformation and countermovements, and contested ideologies and discourses that operate across a variety of geographic scales" (Yeung 2002: 287). It is from this perspective that Yeung apprehends globalization in economic terms—it is a "rapid proliferation of cross-border production, trade, and investment activities spearheaded by global corporations and international financial institutions that facilitate the emergence of an increasingly integrated and interdependent global economy" (287).

Yeung's observation about *countermovements*, *contested ideologies*, and *discourses* has critical implications for the politicization of sexuality in Africa. In line with the selective appropriations and rejections, African communities are predisposed to the protection of their long-held assumptions on life. In the case of sexuality, the question is whose *ideologies* or *discourse* should inform global politics on homosexuality? Is the Western acceptance of same-sex relations a given? Is Africa's discourse on homosexuality sacrosanct? Whose voice counts and whose does not in this process?

Answers to these questions speak to the tension between individual and community rights. While local cultures may resist some foreign values, some individuals may choose to live by them—thus rebelling from the majority cultural values. Throughout human history, such individuals are negatively perceived and virtually viewed as threats to their communities. In national contexts, they are traitors. But as Chap. 5 suggests, individuals have the democratic liberty to live in accordance to their creed or values as long as they do not trump on other people's rights. Again, this democratic right suggests a tension between individual human rights and community rights.

Globalization rides on capitalism. In this frame, global capitalism aids the spread of transnational or global sexual cultures. Western notions of sexual and gender identity rights are likely to reach Africa faster than vice versa due to the economic advantage the West holds over Africa. As Wilson (2002: 252) writes:

> the claims of sexual rights have evolved out of intensified transnational networks and a fluctuating global political and economic landscape. Yet, at the same time that globalization indirectly generates the network and the logic that contribute to the formation of a sexual rights agenda, the global economy and the restructured state produce a backlash and real obstacles to those very efforts. Sexual rights thus represent contradictions.

Like capitalism, globalization favors the West over Africa. Tomlinson (2013) rightly compares globalization to a flood tide aimed at destroying our diverse socio-cultural and religious identities in favor of "a market driven 'branded' homogenization of cultural experience." Indeed, globalization promotes pluralism and cultural diversity, but it is predominantly Western values, particularly the US culture, which are widely exported, threatening the existence of weaker cultures. About Africa, Oni (2005: 15) writes, globalization "has dealt a serious blow to African culture and has even almost wiped off [African] culture." There is some truth to such a claim. But as Teeple noted earlier, globalization reconstructs social identities. These identities, however, are context specific. In short, African culture cannot fully become Western, even though the West informs and reforms the continent's cultural identity.

4.4 Contesting Globalization Within Local Social Locations

The Web, social media, cable TV, wars, migration, movies,[2] and cell phones do not only connect cultures faster than ever in human history, but also change "the experiences of socio-sexual expression in consequential ways, including through changes in homophobia" (Bosia 2014: 260).

Similarly, Povinelli and Chauncey (1999: 442) argue that the role of technology in exporting and importing socio-economic values highly depends on the institutionally mediated global power relations. They write, "How local persons imagine the commonsense location of the local may be defined by a globally disseminated U.S. television show"—the screening of *God Loves Uganda* in Malawi is one example.

Although Yankuzo shares this perspective, he, like Peters, links globalization to colonialism—arguing that it is instrumental to the capitalist efforts of the West. Media houses, Yankuzo asserts, exist to Westernize or Americanize other cultures, thereby sidelining non-Western cultures. He writes, contemporary "Africans have it in their minds that the more their building, music, dressing and even food appear western, the more civilized … they are. To be civilized then will mean to be able to think, eat, walk and speak like Europeans and Americans" (4). Yankuzo's observation speaks to postcolonial predisposition on the one hand, and to Teeple's claim that globalization erases national and ethnic history on the other hand. Nonetheless, the Euro-American cultures are mostly admired for what they represent in an African mind—Memmi's "the colonizer and the colonized" or "the haves and the have not." It is therefore impossible to determine how much of what pass as "Western" is due to globalization, or residue colonialism. In Southern Africa, for example, successful Africans are called *musungu/muzungu or bwanas*—they are Europeans.

It is telling that Yankuzo does not extend this critique to religion. As already noted, the undermining of African cultures began with the advent of missionaries on the African soil. In fact, the expansion of Christianity to the global South is an act of globalization (Robert 2008: 14–15). With globalization, however, comes secularization and the plurality of morals, which, as Altman (2004: 24) argues, reform sexual norms and consequently "traditional ways" of regulating or policing sexuality decline, leading to new conceptions of the sexual.

There is no doubt that globalization has made it easy for both anti-LGBTI and pro-LGBTI groups to connect across continental, national, and religious divides, leading to the political contestation of cultural and sexual norms. But as discussed under democracy and identity politics, when cultural identities are threatened, people police social life as another way of protecting their cultural identities. Cultural identity, Tomlinson asserts, "is the product of deliberate cultural construction and maintenance via both the regulatory and the socializing institutions of the state: in particular, the law, the education system and the media." For this reason, globalization usually meets a structured opposition through socio-cultural and religious reinforcements, and the routinized claims to national and cultural identity in public discourses. In the context of human sexuality, for instance, cultures tend to externalize homosexuality and politically contest it in the public square.

The contestation of ideologies and values is behind those who understand globalization as an intrinsic "colonizing paradigm" (Peters 2004: 111). This postcolonial analysis projects the theory that poor nations exist to enrich the rich and powerful, thus directly linked to capitalism. Against Teeple's (167) argument that globalization is "the end of national history," the state occupies undeniable space in the working of this phenomenon (Bosia 2014). As Bartelson (2000: 186) avers, globalization "takes place in, through and under the aegis of states; it is encoded by them and in important respects authored by them."

If the argument that globalization erases socio-cultural identities is true, then it affects people's self-understanding. To Arnett, globalization has a psychological effect on communities—it affects how people perceive themselves and those around them. Through globalization, Arnett (2002: 777) observes:

> the values of the global culture often collide with traditional cultural values, causing people to face the challenge of adapting to both the global culture and their local culture, even as their local culture may be changing rapidly—globalization is seen in most places as a source of opportunities but also as a source of problems, and organized resistance has developed to the economic and cultural disruptions it causes.

Arnett concludes that globalization transforms social identities, that is, how people think about themselves and their roles in the global culture. Some people, he asserts, "develop bicultural identity, in which they are not rooted in their local culture while the other part stems from an awareness of their relation to the global culture" (ibid.). Others, however, experience "identity confusion"—they "find themselves at home neither in the local culture nor in the global culture" (ibid.). Therefore, religio-cultural predisposed people "self-select" norms, often on religious grounds. Thus, communities usually turn to religion or traditional culture in attempts to protect themselves from the perceived dangers of globalization, leading to the rise of fundamentalism and nationalism across the globe. While Arnett asserts that the self-selected cultures can be non-religious, he nevertheless argues:

> Often, these self-selected cultures have a religious basis. The global culture is relentlessly secular. …To the extent that religious issues exist at all in the global culture, they do so only in the form of the value of tolerance, the idea that religious beliefs should not be a source of discrimination or conflict. But for some people, such not-values fail to provide the structure and meaning they need. They turn instead to religious systems that reject secular values and promise eternal, transcendent truths. (779–780)

Since globalization threatens “eternal, transcendent truths,” it threatens cultural identity. Thus, “Against the tolerance and inclusiveness of the global culture, fundamentalists assert their belief that there is one true faith and that all who fail to accept it place their lives and souls at risk” (ibid).

Arnett’s observation applies to African sexual politics. Christian anti-homosexuality advocates—in both Africa and the West—believe that homosexuality is curable through faith in Jesus. Although the Vatican may not share this belief, it sanctions celibacy for all LGBTI individuals, regardless of their religious beliefs. In conservative religious fundamentalist circles, however, homosexuality is immoral and an attack on sacred family values of Christianity. In addition to providing political incentives to politicians, these assumptions form the foundation for the criminalization of homosexuality.

Finally, Africa’s sustained opposition to homosexuality is also a reaction to globalization (Kaoma 2014). As Stohl (2005: 254) puts it, “Paradoxically, the increasing levels of global consciousness” derived through globalization can also be “associated with increasingly local politics, a heightened sense of the importance of community, social movement organizing designed to counter the new world order, and individuals’ desperate struggles for identity.”

4.5 No Longer Local: The Domestic Is Global

The 2010 arrest of a Malawian gay couple, Tiwonge Chimbalanga and Steven Monjeza for the alleged wedding ceremony was locally and globally contested. Smith (2010) of *The Guardian* reports that while in prison, the couple was in contact with controversial UK-based gay activist Peter Tatchell. According to Tatchell, Chimbalanga vowed: “I love Steven so much. If people or the world cannot give me the chance and freedom to continue living with him as my lover, then I am better off to die here in prison. Freedom without him is useless and meaningless.” Monjeza said, "We have come a long way and even if our family relatives are not happy, I will never stop loving Tiwonge."

Such defiance met local resistance. Aside from inciting community outrage, Maikolo Phiri, a local vendor, said, "They have given this township a bad name." The aunt of Monjeza reportedly said: "We as a family have been terribly embarrassed to be associated with this gay thing. It's a curse and a big shame. We will chase them away if they are freed." Monjeza's uncle alleged, "I won't drop a tear if they are jailed—they deserve it." It is hard to tell how much of these reactions were the result of the publicity this case received. Nonetheless, it shows how homosexuality is perceived in the public square.

Although the couple was sentenced to 14 years in prison, international outcry and the UN Secretary Ban Kim Moon's intervention forced President Bingu Wa Mutharika to pardon them.[3] Nonetheless, the UN involvement in the couple's release is an illustration of how globalization is shaping Africa's sexual politics. But it also illustrates the complexity of Africa's sexual politics—when does African sexual politics cease to be local and become global? Was the couple's alleged wedding gay marriage? Did the marriage reflect an indigenous or global understanding of marriage? How about the words Tatchell attributes to them, did the couple utter them? If so, to whom were they directed? And what do we do with their relatives' objection? Answers to these questions suggest that globalization affects the construction and transformation of sexual identities and subjectivities.

The very language of political deliberations, however, informs such subjectivities. For this reason, language is another important instrument of globalization. As Padilla et al. noted earlier, the conception of LGBTI rights is Western informed. During my research in various African countries, "gay rights" were directly linked to same-sex marriages. Even local research assistants found it hard to speak of gay rights in their own languages but explained it in the same-sex marriage frame. In Malawi, the purported marriage of Chimbalanga and Monjeza were repeatedly cited in response to the following question: "What is your position on gay rights." This situation was equally the case in Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda—as with the Vatican, same-sex marriage is the lens through which homosexuality is now debated in Africa.

As discussed in Chap. 3, the lack of local language for sexual rights is partially due to the silence associated with the word "sex" in contemporary Africa. But it is also a result of the Western-developed frame in which sexual rights are discussed. To many Africans, their cultural identities are horribly different from those of the "immoral global North;" homosexuality is

Western and un-African—again conforming to the binary. The questions, then, are, "How competing global values are perceived in Africa vis-à-vis the West; how sexual rights developments in the West shape local sexual politics; and finally, what does this say about Africa's position in the world?"

These questions indirectly or unswervingly challenge traditionally held marital norms. As noted, globalization influences "the construction, regulation, and imagination of sexuality and gender" (Altman 2004: 22). But it also negates the regulation of sexuality. On the downside, however, globalization forces Western LGBTI sexual norms or the Stonewall model of sexual identities (the one a person has sex with defines that individual's identity) and the Western, especially the US conservative, opposition to sexual rights on other cultures. As already noted, when "traditional family" is employed in the West, it carries a narrower frame than it does in Africa where the family goes beyond father, mother, and children.

Besides, globalization promotes cultural plurality; yet, the preservation of tradition, local, religious identity, and community cultures are all acknowledged human rights (Stychin 2004: 955). The establishment of the 1981 African (Banjul) Charter on Human and People's Rights, for instance, sought to protect African cultures from the onslaught of perceived "Western" values. The Charter accepts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on the one hand, and protects communities' rights to self-determination and cultural identity on the other. Thus, African nations oppose homosexuality on the premise of protecting the continent's "cultural and religious values," while sexual right advocates plant their political claims in protecting human rights (Obendorf 1999: 187–197). And as discussed in the following chapter, globalization invites local identity politics as social actors contest cultural pluralism in localized social locations.

4.6 Global Sexual Politics in Postcolonial Africa

The neocolonial global landscape is another prism through which sexuality is debated in Africa (Bosia 2014). This contestation is partially provoked by the visibility of local and global sexual minority rights activism vis-à-vis the anti-gay global and local sexual rights groups—leading to the intensification of the political battle. Thus:

> Postcolonial nations are witnessing the emergence of sex-based social movements whose political rhetoric and tactics seemed to mimic or reproduce Euro-American forms of sexual identity, subjectivity, and citizenship and, at

> the same time, to challenge fundamental Western notions of erotic, the individual, and the universal rights attached to this fictive “subject.” (Povinelli and Chauncey 1999: 439)

But just as it affects pro-gay activism, globalization has made it possible for American “Culture Wars”—that is, conservative and progressive conflicting positions on homosexuality/abortion—to reach Africa. Like in the US (Moen 1996), the US Christian Right has taken advantage of the vehicles of globalization to advance its mission. As a result, Africa is equally witnessing the birth of new anti-gay social movements committed to blocking sexual rights. As we shall see later, anti-gay campaigners, especially those associated with the American Christian Right, are exporting their “political rhetoric and tactics” to Africa—further muddling the sexual political landscape. Africans, one can safely argue, are still to independently debate human sexuality from traditional perspectives in which sexualities were diverse and as Chap. 2 showed, at times, spiritually explained. The globalization of sexual politics and the dominance of Anglo-American activists on both sides of the spectrum undermine such debates.

The introduction of extreme anti-gay laws in Nigeria, the Gambia, and Uganda among many other African nations; the arrest of gay persons in Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Cameroon; and the murders of sexual minorities in various African countries catalyzed international human rights involvement in Africa’s sexual politics. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the US-based OutRight (former International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission), and the Human Rights Campaign are among the many organizations that partnered with African sexual rights advocates, helping sexual minorities to organize international opposition to such developments.

The Western involvement, however, leads to two paradoxical developments. On one side, it raises the plight of sexual minorities to the global audience, and on the other, it forces African leaders to take sides—either for, or against sexual rights. As for African politicians, to use Altman’s (2004, 27) words, the “choice is not whether [the state] should intervene, but what forms of interventions it should take.”

Consequently, the pro-sexual rights global advocacy unwittingly catalyzes anti-sexual rights activism. The US Christian conservatives, for example, provided/provide financial, ideological, and moral support to African anti-gay advocates. In addition to the number of US conservative pastors that travel to Africa and speak in support of African anti-gay activists, the US anti-gay para-church advocacy organizations have tremendously increased their activities on the continent. The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) opened its offices in Kenya and Zimbabwe, and was involved in the drafting of the constitution of South Sudan, while the US anti-gay Roman Catholic group, Human Life International (HLI), the Mormon-led Family Watch International (FWI), and World Congress of Families (WCF) are among the many groups working on the continent (Kaoma 2012). In 2016 alone, WCF held three conferences—in Kenya, Malawi, and South Africa. Also, the US conservative-backed "40 Days for Life" was organized in many African nations. Whereas some of these meetings seem to focus on abortion, homosexuality is prominently highlighted as the major threat to African "traditional family values." Behind these activities, however, is the desire to influence secular policy on sexuality (Kaoma 2016).

Although such involvements were mostly welcome, anti-gay activism experienced some resistance in 2016. The US-based anti-gay Pastor Steven Anderson of Faithful Word Baptist Church in Tempe, Arizona, who praised the mass shooting that saw 49 deaths at a gay bar in Orlando, Florida, was not only denied entry into South Africa and Malawi but also deported from Botswana. Anderson's situation was chiefly the result of massive lobbying from human rights groups—especially from the US. That the governments of Malawi and Botswana acted upon the demands of human rights advocates, but are unwilling to repeal anti-gay laws illustrate the ambiguous nature of sexual politics—it is a game played in local and international spaces. This ambiguity is because African governments are in need of foreign aid and domestic legitimacy—they will dance for Western aid, and dance for votes from a religiously driven electorate.

In his study of the politicization of homosexuality in Zambia, for instance, Van Klinken (2014) attributes anti-gay campaigns to what he terms "Pentecostal nationalism." This nationalism, he hypothesizes, is planted in the 1991 presidential declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation by the late President Frederick Chiluba and later enshrined in the country's constitution. Van Klinken, however, sees no evidence of direct interference of US conservatives in Zambian sexual politics, which is misleading. As in most of sub-Saharan Christian Africa, US conservative cable TV stations (Christian Broadcasting Network, Trinity Broadcasting Network, and Daystar, among many others) and Christian radios broadcast daily, while its literature dominates bookshops, streets, and theological libraries. In addition to the US-affiliated Pentecostal churches such as the Pentecostal Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission (the churches van Klinken studied), the US conservative missionaries, Bible schools, and pastors operate across the continent (Kaoma 2013). In short, aside from the global religious connections that anti-gay campaigners share, the Web, the media, the literature, and the US missionaries have made possible the importation and exportation of the US ideologies and tactics across geographical boundaries.

Moreover, the language of the "international homosexual agenda," the American Christian Right's semantic of *pro-life* (to refer to opposition to abortion), is employed in Asia, Europe, South America, Russia, and sub-Saharan Africa. The US Christian Right's and the Vatican's opposition to *Comprehensive Sexuality Education* is equally Africanized and *glocalized*. Promoting the WCF-sponsored 2016 *African Regional Conference of Families*, in Nairobi, Kenyan anti-gay and abortion advocate Anne Kioko is cited as saying:

> These programs (Comprehensive Sexuality Education) go way beyond regular sex education and are designed to change all sexual and gender norms of society. They openly promote promiscuity, high-risk sexual behaviour and sexual pleasure even to very young children. (Vatican Radio 2016)

In addition to the US conservative outlets, Kioko's words were posted on the Vatican Radio's Website. But these words were not Kioko's but were taken from the US culture warriors' playbook. The FWI promotional page entitled *The War on Children* reads:

> These programs go way beyond regular sex education and are designed to change all of the sexual and gender norms of society. They openly promote promiscuity, high-risk sexual behavior and sexual pleasure even to very young children.

The co-opting of US culture war language into African sexuality politics is an excellent example of how globalization aids information flows. But it also illustrates *glocalization*, as the global is re-appropriated in local social locations.

Similarly, the November 19, 1977, US Christian conservative-coined slogan "Adam and Steve" (Klemesrud 1977) is Africanized and *glocalized*. In 2013, Zimbabwean pastor Amidu Saidi (Gore 2013) opposed homosexuality on this premise: "When God created humans, he made Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." "In creation, God made them male and female," Zambian Pentecostal Assemblies of God Bishop Joshua Banda told his congregation: "It is Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve" (Van Klinken 2011: 137). On the US daily show *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver*, a Ugandan woman opposes homosexuality using a similar line—"In the beginning, it was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve" (June 29, 2014). To some extent, local people understand such statements as purely African. Again, the appropriation of the US Christian Right arguments suggests that sexual politics is now a global phenomenon. Moreover, the ideological exchange submits that sexual rights politics traverses geographical and religious boundaries.

Besides, the US anti-gay activists have worked across continental and national boundaries from the United Nations' buildings to foreign parliaments. As Chap. 3 revealed, Lively could have enforced the established American Christian Right conspiracy theory of a global "gay agenda" in Uganda, but as Lydia Boyd observes, it is the phobia of assumed Western forces coming after Africa's children (one can add culture and Christianity) that drives the opposition to homosexuality. Boyd writes:

> By placing children at the center of discussions about homosexuality, as victims easily drawn to a "foreign" way of life, pastors and others deftly link homosexuality to other contemporary anxieties about social forces which threaten hegemonic relationships and social hierarchies. Such stories also highlight a deep anxiety about social reproduction during a period of expanding urbanization and capitalist consumption. (2013: 712)

The employment of children in sexual politics is not limited to Africa. In addition to the US, the Vatican and European anti-gay groups do the same. Writing about Catholic anti-gay mobilizations in France, Fassin (2016: 177) argues that this strategy works since the protection of children "is always a concern for the vast majority." As in Africa, anti-gay advocates in France defend their campaigns as solely meant to ensure "the well-being of children" (Fassin 2016).

Correspondingly, the accusation of gay recruitment implies access to foreign money and power on the one hand and turning young people from cultural values and customs on the other. Since sugar daddies prey on young women's economic vulnerability while exposing them to HIV infections (West and Haddad 2016), "the homosexual recruiter" is thus characterized as preying upon young people's needs. Such social anxieties feed into neocolonial narratives of cultural dominations by powerful homosexuals. Just as homosexuality was associated with the mid-thirteenth-century Italian aristocracy (Greenberg and Bystryn 1982: 540), Diamond (1998: 169) argues that the US Christian Right key "propaganda arsenal is the notion that homosexuals wield disproportional power."

If the US anti-gay rhetoric is globalized, so is the resistance. Wilson (2002: 256) writes:

> Global sexual rights organizers have garnered language, tactics, and leverage from … domestic struggles. At the same time, translocal collaboration at international forums informs local political strategies.

In addition to successfully taking their campaign to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and other regional bodies, Africans sexual rights advocates are adopting US tactics such as the gay pride parades to increase their local visibility. In 2012, Alexis Okeowo (2012) of the *New Yorker Magazine* reported on the August 2012 Ugandan gay pride parade. Since then, Ugandan gay communities have held annual pride parades despite arrests they repeatedly face. Such parades allow sexual minorities to employ politics of being to challenge the myth that Africa has no gays.

Further, sexual minorities employ petitions to block policies deemed unjust. As Uganda was considering the AHB, SMUG petitioned then Ugandan Speaker Edward Ssekandi to stop the bill. SMUG raised over 450,000 online signatures (the US-based pro-gay advocacy group, Human Rights Campaign, launched a similar online petition to sanction the Gambia after it passed the 2014 anti-gay law)[4] mostly from outside Uganda (Mugerwa 2010). The petition made some international headlines. But as Will Ross, BBC East Africa Correspondent (2010), rightly noted, because "the vast majority of the signatures were from outside Uganda," the petition had little impact on MPs, who were "more likely to take notice of Ugandan rather than international opposition to the bill."

That petition inadvertently catalyzed anti-gay responses. Aside from asking the speaker to reject SMUG's petition, on April 6, 2011, local anti-gay advocates led by Pastor Martin Ssempa handed Speaker Ssekandi a petition of over 2 million local handwritten signatures, demanding the passage of the bill. Presenting the petition, Ssempa employed protective homophobia: "We are not here to hang the gays as people have speculated but to protect young men and girls being recruited into the practice" (Naturinda 2011)—the similar argument made by the US and French anti-gay activists.

Similarly, with the US conservative Evangelical and Roman Catholic support, Kenyan anti-gay and anti-abortion groups such as ACLJ and HLI campaigned against the approval of the Kenyan constitution primarily for allowing abortion under the guidance of medical professionals, and for the anti-discrimination clause, which they interpret as protecting sexual minorities. Since the Kenyan Constitution passed through a plebiscite, anti-gay groups have been fighting to repeal Article 26 (4)[5] of the 2010 national constitution, which they interpret to allow abortion on demand, and the anti-discrimination clause in Article 27: (1; 4),[6] which they view as protecting LGBTI persons. Fr. Lucas Manwa and Fr. Richard Rwiza—head of Moral Theology Department at the Catholic University of East Africa, Nairobi, the two Roman Catholic Priests (who were among those who drafted the Kenyan Family Policy discussed in Chap. 3); Ann Kioko, the WCF organizer of the Nairobi conference; and Bishop Mark Kariuki of the Evangelical Alliance with direct link to ACLJ confirmed that the new policy is an attempt to repeal such clauses, which they deem favorable to sexual minorities and women reproductive rights.

On the legal front, both groups are seeking court rulings on sexual rights. Just as anti-gay groups have sought court rulings to oppose homosexuality and abortion, sexual rights civil society organizations sued the Kenyan government to officially register gay rights advocacy organizations. On April 24, 2015, the court ruled in their favor. As the cases of intersex and transgender rights court rulings reveal in Chap. 7, pro-sexual rights advocates in Kenya also employed the courts to reclaim transgender and intersex human rights. In Uganda, human rights organizations sought the constitutional court ruling on the legality of the Anti-Homosexuality Act after President Museveni assented to it. The court ruled the law unconstitutional. As already noted, SMUG brought the lawsuit against Pastor Lively in the US court in 2012. Although the case was dismissed in 2017 on jurisdiction grounds, Judge Ponsor concluded that Lively broke "international law."

4.7 Looking Forward

Globalization has propelled the rapid sociocultural, religious, and political transformation of Africa. The compression of the world has not only widened transcontinental interactions but also weakened the cultural locus for policing morality. By encouraging ethical pluralism, globalization concurrently threatens and transforms cultural norms, setting in motion socio-religious and political protests. It is important to note that Africans view themselves as obliged to protect their culture from the assault of globalization, while enjoying some aspects of the same. It is within this context that religious fundamentalists contest the inclusivity of global cultures for their "sacred" beliefs and values, which are assumed to be unchallengeable.

If Western sexual politics inform pro-gay advocacy in Africa, so is anti-gay activism. Anti-gay activism, however, benefits from established "Christian" theological beliefs. Whereas Christian beliefs are products of colonialism, they are now *glocalized*. To be an African implies accepting Victorian norms on sexuality—questioning them is considered foreign—it is un-African. Since the majority is opposed to homosexuality, African politicians mobilize around it in democratic deliberations. The following chapter explores this point.

Notes

1. In many parts of Latin America, reference is made to the LGBTT population, with the second T having been added to distinguish between transgender and transvestite subgroups (210).
2. It is important to note that media is a proven instrument of propaganda. In Southern Africa, Nigerian accent was viewed with distain before the Nollywood movies popularized it. Aside from the number of people imitating Nigerian accent, the word "Igwe" (the Igbo for King) has found itself in Christian popular music in Southern and Eastern Africa.
3. Tiwonge applied for asylum in South Africa, while Steven reportedly married a woman, but died in 2012.
4. African sexual minorities' advocacy groups are opposed to economic sanctions generally.
5. 26. (4) Abortion is not permitted unless, in the opinion of a trained health professional, there is need for emergency treatment, or the life or health of the mother is in danger, or if permitted by any other written law.
6. 27. (1) Every person is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law. (4) The State shall not discriminate directly or indirectly against any person on any ground, including race, sex, pregnancy, marital status, health status, ethnic or social origin, color, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, dress, language, or birth.

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CHAPTER 5

Contesting Identity: Democratic Human Rights and Sexual Politics

In Chap. 4, I examined how globalization informs sexual politics in Africa. I noted that globalization leads to *glocalization*—that is, the domesticating of the global in localized social locations. In this regard, Africans self-select and adapt to transcontinental ideologies in attempts to negotiate local and international socio-political, economic, and religious landscapes. In sexual politics, however, the very process of norm-selection is contested as individuals choose values to endorse or to reject. In this chapter, I explore how democracy directs and domesticates socio-cultural and religious identities in sexual politics.

5.1 Democracy, Religion, and Sexual Politics

African politicians baffle Westerners with their public opposition to homosexuality. Partially, this is due to the distance between Western democratic cultures and "African" democracy. If liberal democracy separates itself from religion, African democracy exists in religiously informed political climates. The following statements from African politicians exemplify this point:

> We will stand with religious leaders to defend our faith and beliefs. We will not allow homosexuality in our society as it violates our religious and cultural beliefs.
>
> William Ruto. Kenyan Deputy President
> *The Star*, May 3, 2015.

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> Zambia is a Christian nation, and as such we live by the Christian values, and we will not be able to recognize gay rights…. This is because it is untraditional to our culture, and we have appealed to our colleagues [Western governments] to respect our stance that as Zambians, we shall remain a Christian nation.
>
> Foreign Affairs Deputy Minister Gabriel Namulambe
> *Times of Zambia*, June 8, 2014.

> If there is any country that wants to stop giving us aid because we want to pass the bill on same sex, that country can go ahead. We are a sovereign nation, and we have the rights to decide for ourselves because no country can interfere in the way we run our country. Same sex marriage is against our own culture and tradition and against our beliefs.
>
> David Mark, Nigerian Senate President
> *Nigerian World* Wednesday, December 28, 2011.

These are among the many postcolonial and religio-culturally predisposed anti-homosexuality statements uttered by African politicians amidst global pleas to accept sexual orientation as a human rights issue. Disgusting, filthy, satanic, repulsive, repugnant, appalling, obnoxious, and worse than dogs and pigs are common characterizations of sexual minorities on the continent. Whereas these words offend some Westerners, across sub-Saharan Africa, they are celebrated as accurate representations of homosexuality. As inferred in previous chapters, however, African politicians' primary allegiance is to the African electorate—the international community is secondary. In this regard, protective homophobia must be examined within the continent's maturing democratic processes.

5.2 Democracy in Africa: Imposed or Homegrown

Is African democracy a Western imposition? Those who follow African politics know that the 1990s' return to democratic governance was mostly due to international pressure to adopt plural politics. At the time of independence, most pan-Africanist leaders opted for one-party rule, with their political parties as sole parties in their nations. Under their watch, African economies experienced a free fall.

The 1970–1980s economic plight in which millions of Africans found themselves as well as international conditions for accessing donor aid forced African politicians to adopt democratic governance. Since then, "democracy" has become a chorus sung by African dictators such as

Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Omar al-Bashir (Sudan), and the US government-supported vicious dictators like Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Museveni of Uganda. In Uganda, the opposition was banned between 1986 and 2006. Nonetheless, Museveni saw his rule as democratic (Kaoma 2015). The same can be said about the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and many African nations.

The shift from one-party rule to plural politics was promoted as the key to unlocking Africa's perpetual poverty. Such demands opened new cash flows from Western donors but did little to address poverty. Contemporary Africa is still struggling with poverty, rapid social transformation, global economic marginality, and corruption (Kaoma 2015; Katongole 2011).

In part, African nations' economic crises were due to the continent's sad colonial history. Aside from adopting colonial political and economic structures, independent nations were plugged into a foreign global economic system, which sidelined Africa's history and culture. This situation led to what Chabal and Daloz (1999: 51) term:

> Africanization of politics that is, the adjustment of imported political models to the historical, sociological and cultural realities of Africa.—The dialectical process[es] between the modernization of African forms of identity and the administration of political systems issued from the West have been complex, painful and chaotic.

John De Gruchy (1995: 167–168) also insists, "Independence did not mean the creation of genuinely African democracies, but the Africanization of colonial institutions and economic structures."

Worse still, independent nations' relationships with former colonial powers remained the same—the former colonizer was all powerful, while the former colonized remains a powerless subject. This situation did not just encourage poverty and the sidelining of human rights, but also led to civil wars and rampant corruption—the crises that still haunt Africa from Cape Town to Cairo (Schwab 2002: 64–95). It also resulted in "the cult of the big man" after the manner of the colonizer—dissident voices were silenced or liquidated at will.

If one hoped that democracy would curtail human rights violations, the protection of fundamental human rights remains a dark cloud over African democracy (Mutua 2000). Partially, this is because "democracy" in sub-Saharan Africa is mostly honored as a process of choosing political leaders.

As the US-government's support to vicious dictators such as Kagame of Rwanda and Museveni of Uganda reveals, little attention is paid to the fundamental principles of democracy—human rights, free press, and the protection of minorities. Since the process, as opposed to its theoretical principles, legitimizes democracy in Africa, human rights violations barely determine donor–Africa relationships. Because the West adjudicates African democracy from elections as opposed to human rights records, African politicians want to present themselves as democratically elected to the outside world. In this case, public show of popular support matters.

The increasing clout of US-backed pastors in African sexual politics threatens politicians with sanctions should they stand up for sexual minorities. "If they dare to come and support homosexuals, they are committing political suicide," Pastor Ssempa warned Ugandan politicians. Ssempa's words were directed at MPs as opposed to President Museveni. Ssempa's threat rings true to Uganda as it does in many nations—supporting homosexuality and abortion is highly risky for politicians in religious-informed cultures.

In 2014, I visited the Embassy of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago at the UN in New York. During that visit, a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago challenged the ambassador to stand up for sexual rights. Although the ambassador was very sympathetic to sexual rights, he nevertheless reminded us that standing up for gay rights is risky since Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals would campaign against his government. "Are you going to give us votes," he softly asked. Surprisingly, even my friend from Trinidad did not respond in affirmative. Unlike in the West and parts of South America, in conservative cultures, sexual rights campaigns lack votes.

The ambassador's fear of the church is indicative of the growing influence of religion in global politics. As one of the most organized civil society organizations with a sustained weekly audience and growing rapidly, the church plays a major role in African politics. But since sexuality blurs the line between human rights and religion, it creates tension amidst the church and civil society groups dedicated to sexual rights.

Yet the "civil society is a broad and internally contradictory category that includes a wide range of groups" (Ritzer and Dean 2015: 134). Because these groups seek to inform and to some extent direct secular policy, they have different political agendas—economic inequality, girl child, gender, domestic violence, and sexual rights, among many other issues—and compete for political attention. Issues likely to provide votes attract mainline political support over those which do not do so—another reason why religious groups are critical to sexual politics as discussed in Chap. 3.

5.3 Old Africa vs. Young Africa: The Contest of Generations

Although Africa lags behind other continents in human development, it leads the globe in population growth. By the time of independence, Africa's population rose from about 150 million in 1910 to over 240 million. In 2017, Africa was home to 17% (1.3 billion) of the world population. By 2050, Africa's population is expected to double. With this growth, the continent will account for more than half of the anticipated 2.2 billion global population growth (United Nations 2017: 3). Besides, Africa has the youngest population on Earth. As the United Nations (2012) concluded,

> Africa has the youngest and fastest-growing population, increasing at an annual 2.15 percent … with urbanization closely linked. While in 2010, 395 million people lived in urban areas, UN. projections say this will reach 1.23 billion people—60 percent of the total population—by 2050.

There are many implications of the UN observations for sexual politics. Urban dwellers are apt to appropriate unconventional sexual norms due to what Cox called the *anonymity* and the *mobility* of city life. Cox (1966: 47) writes, "In the anonymity of urban culture … humanity experiences both the terror and the delight of freedom more acutely." Cox's book deals with the socio-cultural developments of the 1960s, but it applies to the postmodern era. Urban dwellers are much open to cultural pluralism. In Africa, however, individuals who choose to appropriate new sexual norms are accused of destroying "the African" culture.

I am not saying urbanization erases homophobia, but that it liberates social space for sexual minorities to network, build same-sex intimate relations, organize against, and oppose socially and religiously ascriptive or assigned identities. Notwithstanding, the visibility of sexual minorities as an identity group in urban areas provokes culturally, politically, and religiously influenced protective homophobia in urban areas.

Moreover, the young generation is bound to break traditional taboos. The manner of dressing, speaking, eating, and even "respect" for the elders are issues that the adult world holds against the young generation. This pattern goes back to the colonial days when then young people responded positively to the benefits of colonialism (civilization) than did the adults. As Chinua Achebe observes in *Things Fall Apart*, colonialism and Christianity dealt a deadly blow to African culture. Hence colonialism, Christianity, civilization, and globalization inform and, to some extent, direct most of the postcolonial African culture. In this case, while the current adult generation may claim to be traditional and African, much of its values are "burger cultures"—they are sandwiched between pre-colonial, colonial, and postcolonial traditions.

The "local and modern is growing side by side with the global and Western," Zakaria (2008: 82) writes. Indeed, the young generation is actively acute to globalization—always experimenting and welcoming new ways of life. They are also more open to sexual experimentation than the older generation is. This observation has implications for sexuality politics. For instance, the younger population is acute to the Internet/the Web and social media. Although advancement of technology mostly favors the global North, the 2015b Pew Research Center survey showed that cell phone use in Africa is as common as in the US. Over 80% of Africans possess cell phones, with 41% of people aged 18–34 owning a smartphone, compared to 27% of those aged 35 and above. As the 2010–2012 Arab Spring uprisings revealed, mobile phones and social media were instrumental to the youth-dominated social movements that sought to bring down autocratic regimes for democracy. Like in the US Occupy movement, cell phones and social media were used to organize as well as to learn new tactics and strategies from similar social movements across the globe.

Similarly, advancements in technology aid the exportation of values beyond local spaces (Zakaria 2008: 83). Just as African "tele-prophets" have capitalized on TV, radio, and social media in their deceptive schemes, anti-gay and pro-gay advocates employ cable TV and the Web to advance their causes. The effect of popular media in social mobilization is enormous. Aside from being used in government propaganda across sub-Saharan Africa, TV and radio programs aid the appropriation, and in some cases the rejection of certain values. Let's take Nigerian movies as the case in point. In the 1990s, Nigerian accent was glowered in Southern Africa. Nollywood movies, however, have led to the acceptance of Nigerian accent, and some young people imitate it on African streets. Moreover, Igbo words such as *Chineke* and *Igwe* are incorporated in popular discourses and gospel music from Tanzania to Zambia to Kenya.

The Web and social media have aided the incorporation of such terms. According to the 2015a Pew Research Center Global Survey on the use of the Web, the majority of the world population perceives it as having a positive influence on education, but a negative one on morality. In Africa, this observation applies to globalization as well. From haircuts to dressing to speaking, young Africans are living between the local and global cultures. On the socio-cultural level, however, it adds to the anxiety of the adult generation as the young appropriate various global norms, which the older generation may consider "foreign" and un-African.

African customs exist, but the postcolonial life is a dance between traditional and global cultures. Let us take marriage as a case in point. The church and the state inherited the missionary and colonial powers' definitions of legal marriage. The African and global cultures, however, inform the celebration of marriage. The "white" wedding is an example. The ritual may appear to be global—the bride dresses in white, and the father gives over his daughter to the husband. Celebrations, however, are usually a combination of many cultures. In this regard, the wedding can be called "white" and Christian, but like African traditions, the whiteness is transformed by both local and global factors. What Zakaria says about the relationship between Indian mass culture and the US applies to Africa. While African cultures retain some traditional elements, Africa and the West "are all mixed up" (Zakaria 2008: 81).

5.4 DEMOCRACY AND SEXUAL RIGHTS

As already noted, African democracy is perceived as majority rule. It is on this premise that African parliaments and millions of Africans defend anti-gay laws and policies. But as Gutmann (2003) asserts, democracy must "ensure civic equality, equal freedom, and basic opportunity for all citizens." If "civic equality" obliges governments "to treat all individuals equally," equal freedom is an obligation "to respect the liberty of all individuals to live their own lives as they see fit consistent with the equal liberty of others." Basic opportunity, however, "is the capacity of individuals to live a decent life with a fair chance to choose their preferred ways of life without fear while respecting the rights of others" (Gutmann 2003: 26–27).

These democratic principles are critical standards of liberal democracy. Snyder (2006: 55) asserts that equal justice ought to protect "the freedom of individual citizens to embrace a variety of religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines rather than attempting to impose one vision on everybody." These very principles are foundational to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Schwab 2002: 63–64). Due to the individualist bias of these principles, however, their applications in non-Western communistic communities can sometimes be problematic.

Hardisty acknowledges the fluidity of democracy as a political ideology. Rejecting the emphasis placed on rights to vote, she observes that democracy includes rights to vote and have one's vote counted, free expression, equal access to the law, and freedom of worship, thus blocking discrimination on the basis of creed. In her words, an "inspiring vision of democracy is a society that provides equal protection under the law, equal access to economic opportunities, and equal access to individual rights" (Hardisty 2001: 2).

Hancock (2004) shares this understanding but adds that democratic principles cannot be adjudicated by a majority vote or rule since they are intrinsic to the ethos of human rights on which all democratic ideals rest. She writes:

> Civil rights, legal equality, and human dignity cannot be legitimately revoked by the majority; they exist as inalienable human rights not subject to community approval. A deliberative democracy cannot call these principles into question because these principles form the necessary prerequisites for democratic deliberation itself. (Hancock 2004: 7)

Hancock's point has bearing on sexual rights deliberations. A just democracy must secure democratic principles, which are the very "preconditions of a fair democratic process" as well as "valuable in their own right as expressions of the freedom and equality of individual persons as ethical agents" (Gutmann 29).

Writing on American democracy, Bowles and Gintis (1986: 6) link democracy to collective identity and aspirations. Democratic governance, they argue, is not only about the distribution of goods and services, but includes how individuals as collective social actors see themselves in society. Democracy, they write, "is also a contest over who we are to become, a contest in which identity, interests, and solidarity are as much the outcome as the starting point of political activity" (8). In short, democracy aids cultural pluralism, thereby allowing people to live their diverse lives, without social impediments from the state if they do not violate the freedoms of others. As Bowles and Gintis (1986: 4) conclude:

> Liberty entails freedom of thought and association, freedom of political, cultural and religious expression, and the right to control one's body and express one's preferred spiritual, aesthetic, and sexual style.

In this regard, the demands for a referendum on sexual rights can be deemed anti-democratic. In conservative communities, however, this is unavoidable.

5.5 Contesting the Separation of Church and State

During his joint press conference with President Kenyatta in Nairobi, Kenya, President Obama asserted, "the state does not need to weigh in on religious doctrine." As noted, this statement speaks to one of the central principles of liberal democracy—the separation of religion and state. In Africa, however, this claim demands a nuanced approach if it is to address African politics. African politics lacks a clear distinction between the religious, commercial, and political realms (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Kaoma 2015).

The religious predisposition of African politics challenges attempts to isolate religion from African democracy. Democratic governments may not impose religious views on their citizens (Snyder 2014: 76), but in contexts where much of the population identifies as religious, this imposition is unavoidable. As politicians' statements revealed, in Africa, the opposition to sexual plurality is organized around religious and cultural claims. For this reason, religious and political leaders are united in their attempts to block same-sex rights.

This unity is fostered by protective claims—homosexuality harms children and young people. Such claims provide the unchallengeable premise for state intervention in same-sex politics. As problematic as it is, the linkage of homosexuality to child molestation characterizes Africa's politics. Even in countries where the claims to national religious identity (Christian nation; Islamic country) are much complex and nuanced, the protection of the family and children from the "homosexual agenda" provides the basis for political involvement in policing homosexuality.

It is critical to note that democratic principles are at the heart of sexual politics. Whereas sexual minorities are fighting to have their democratic rights of association and expression upheld, their opponents contest such rights on the basis of majority rule. This political battle is characterized as politically sanctioned homophobia. It is, however, part of the common dilemma of Africa as groups appeal to democracy to advance their causes. Africa's democracy is still developing, but it has already created a new political space for value and cultural politics in which religion and culture play a critical role. Because sexuality traverses socio-cultural, political, and religious boundaries, value or cultural politics is hyped with emotional sensitivity, making it attractive to competitive politics (emotions are among the key drivers of people to the polling stations).

Besides, the return to multi-party politics in sub-Saharan Africa brought with it non-state actors—the civil society. Although Salamon et al.'s 1999 study of the "global civil society" left out Africa, the democratization of sub-Saharan Africa gave birth to civil society organizations dedicated to ensuring ordinary people's participation in politics. In the 1990s, most of these organizations worked to liberate political space and to promote good governance once closed by the "one-party state." Today, however, Africa's civil society organizations are highly driven by the desire to direct public policy. But since interests are diverse, the civil society is equally diverse (Ritzer and Dean 2015: 134)—as is the case with sexual politics when anti-gay and pro-gay groups organize to influence public policy. As discussed under globalization, such organizations are linked to similar groups in the West—making it easy to expose and publicize their plight to the global audience and vice versa on the one hand, and to attract funding from similar groups and foundations on the other.

5.6 Public Identity Groups in Democratic Polities

Anti-gay advocates tend to link their campaigns to national identity. Just as nationalist leaders fought colonialism by mobilizing around nationalism, "saving the soul of the nation" is a common anti-gay cry across continental boundaries. During the 2009 Anti-Gay Seminar—the seminar which led to the drafting of the AHB in Uganda—FLN Executive Director and organizer of the event, Stephen Langa, informed his audience that fighting homosexuality was about "saving the soul of Uganda." As Chap. 4 revealed, van Klinken (2014) documents what he terms "Pentecostal nationalism" among Zambian pastors. Just as Western anti-gay advocates appeal to national identity in their attempts to oppose homosexuality, African pastors do the same. They view their actions as defending their national and religious identities from external forces—mostly associated with globalization.

The concept of nation-state is discussed in Chap. 6. Nonetheless, it is important to briefly recapitulate what it is. In *The End of the Nation-State*, Guehenno argues that the concept of "nation" is a product of what he terms the delicate "transition between the age of kings and the 'neo-imperial age.'" Guehenno explains:

> A nation defines itself first by what it is not: it is not a social group, it is not a religious group, and it is not a racial group; in other words, what binds together the citizens of a nation is the product of a unique combination of historical factors, and can never be reduced to a single dimension, whether social, religious, or racial. (2000: 4)

Guehenno further elaborates that the idea of the nation “brings people together not for what they are but for the memory of what they have been” (5). In this respect, a nation has no other definition but “the locus of a common history, of common misfortunes, and of common triumphs.” Although African countries are products of colonial anthropological insults, nationalism is now enshrined in people’s identity, as evidenced in xenophobic attacks in South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia. But as discussed in Chap. 6, in Africa, nationalism is somehow linked to the continental identity or the pan-Africanist identity (Young 2016; Bong 2012).

5.6.1 Democracy, Identity Politics, and Protective Homophobia

In *Identity in Democracy*, Gutmann defines identity groups as “politically significant associations of people who are identified by or identify with one or more shared social markers.” Identity groups, she adds, carry socio-cultural expectations with regard to:

> how a person of the particular group is expected to think, act, and even appear. Social markers, therefore, contribute to the creation of collective identities of both individuals and groups. Collective identities can change over time, and they are also open to varying individual interpretations. (Gutmann 2003: 9–10; Zakaria 2008: 63)

Whereas national/continental identity is important to Africans, religion is another important identity marker in democratic politics. Aside from the “oneness” claims of global faiths (all Christians are one), religious identification is critical to politics. While religious beliefs are diverse, in sexuality politics, it is presumed that all Christians/Africans are opposed to sexual pluralism. Such claims are not limited to Africa, and as Gutmann rightly notes, politics of religious groups is “an important part of identity group politics in modern democracies” (2003: 25).

Although group identity is critical to democracy, such grouping is subject to the morality of justice and equality. In democratic politics, for example, a religious identity group cannot impose its faith on other groups. This is because all groups are subject to similar scrutiny—they are accountable to the democratic norm of justice and equality. Whereas identity groups can blind people from opposing injustices committed by one of their own members—as is the case with the African Union's norm of solidarity discussed in the following chapter—democracy respects the ethical agency of all individuals. Since "ethical agency is a basic good" (Gutmann 2003: 26), moral actors ought to live freely, while respecting the freedoms of others.

Gutmann identifies four categories of identity groups—cultural, ascriptive, voluntary, and religious. Identity groups, she argues, usually form around these categories. Although cultural (national) and religious identifications are the most pronounced in Africa's sexual politics, they exist in a postcolonial environment in which voluntary and ascriptive identities mostly informed by human rights cultures and Abrahamic religions are taking root. Nonetheless, as Butler argues, identity categories can also become "instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression" (2012: 308).

As humans, we carry multiple group identities. An African simultaneously belongs to a tribe, religious group, nation, and continent. Although "African" is liberally employed in academic and popular literature to refer to the people of African descent, it is an ascriptive identity that carries double connotations (nothing good comes from Africa) on the one hand, and cultural uniqueness (this is foreign to Africa) on the other hand. Since all these multiple identities operate in an individual simultaneously, they are employed in sexual politics to avert globalism in defense of "authentic" Africanness. For instance, sexual minorities are publicly considered "culture" outsiders. Placards at anti-homosexuality rallies in Africa that demand the exiling of gays to Europe and North America are great examples.

While identity is key to democratic deliberations, on its own, it does not always lead to a healthy democracy. Like culture and religion, it is subject to the democratic norm of justice and civic equality. Gutmann writes:

> If identity groups were ultimate source of value, then they could subordinate the civic equality and equal freedom of persons … to their cause. Accepting an identity group as morally ultimate is inconsistent with treating

> persons as civic equals who are free to live their lives as they see fit. Living your life as you see fit therefore presupposes that self-appointed groups not impose their identity on you against your will. (Gutmann 2003: 7–8)

That said, numbers do matter in democratic politics; hence, a majority culture is intricately connected to the state (Zakaria 2008). In political terms, the state often protects the interests of the dominant culture, while the principal culture ensures those who share its values ascend to political power. Since religion governs the dominant culture in Africa, the state and the church/mosque serve each other's political interests. From this perspective, the state and the dominant culture cannot be politically neutral in democratic deliberations—another reason they are both subject to the norm of justice and civic equality.

The ideals of liberal democracy attempt to address this problem by allowing reasonable contestation of norms and policies out of respect for individuals as moral agents. Because the state exists to protect and defend the human rights of all its citizens, the public contestation of norms aids the building of alliances across identity groups. Gutmann (2003: 193) speaks to this need when she writes:

> Disadvantaged individuals who are unjustly treated cannot mount a successful struggle, let alone a social movement, without allies in their cause. Allies can be easier to organize based on mutual identification rather than self-interest, especially when collective goods are at stake. … Identification with a group can provide … tangible benefits, such as social belonging, that motivate individuals to work together to combat injustice.

Underprivileged persons are not agentless subjects—they possess moral and political agency. In the context of sexuality politics, through the "politics of being," sexual minorities contest the externalization of their identities by "being" African and homosexuals. "The politics of being" can also be called the contest of visibility, whereby marginalized communities destabilize the dominant narrative by their very existence on the one hand, and by their lived stories and experiences on the other. If the dominant culture rejects the presence of gays in Africa, by coming out as gays and African, sexual minorities give face to their plight and victimizations. And as Chap. 3 showed, *the politics of being* can transform public opinion and aid the building of alliances with other human rights organizations; hence, anti-gay advocates block advocacy for this very reason.

5.6.2 Assigned Identities in Democratic Deliberations

In democratic politics, how the public perceives an identity group affects the group's role in political delibarations. In *The Politics of Disgust*, Hancock examines the role of ascriptive identities in US politics. While all identities are social constructs, dominant cultures impose undesirable public identities on marginalized populations. In other words, the elite, the media, religious and political leaders aid the public construction of marginalities in the society. Speaking about the building of the negative identity of the African-American "welfare queen" in US politics, Hancock maintains that marginalized identities are robbed of authentic voices and experiences in public deliberations. She writes, "whether the words of the marginalized reinforce or contest the assigned identity, any political claims made are judged in the context of the assigned identity" (Hancock 2004: 2).

Besides, the dominant culture's stereotyping of certain identity groups stirs public emotional reactions of shame or disgust—leading to a biased perception of the group involved on the one hand, and silence and invisibility on the other hand. As is the case in protective homophobia, a marginalized group is challenged to change "or risk further isolation" (Hancock 2004: 17). In this frame, Hancock writes, "genuine democratic deliberation falters as public identities long debunked by empirical research persist in the memories of elites and citizens" (Hancock 2004: 150).

In sexual politics, the accusation of recruitment and the linking of homosexuality with child molestation are real examples. Similarly, despite the American Psychiatric Association's decision to remove homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1973 as well as the U.N. World Health Organization's declassification of sexual orientation in the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems*, the assertion that homosexuality is a "mental disorder" curable through therapy is a common belief across Africa. Similarly, while the US Supreme Court concluded that children raised by same-sex couples are just as good as those raised by heterosexuals, the claim that gay people harm children persists (Ponsor 2017). To Hancock's point, these negative stereotypes are implanted in the public minds and are the established ground for sexuality politics.

While Hancock is right, negatively constructed identities once positively appropriated can aid the formation of alliances with powerful groups. The formation of alliances, however, depends on how the marginalized group defines the root causes of its marginalization. For example, the public denunciation of homosexuality in Africa and arrests and killings of sexual minorities aid the formation of political alliances with some powerful human rights organizations working on women's rights, and HIV/AIDS both on the continent and in the West. This is because these groups view religion and patriarchy as major obstacles to their realization of fundamental human rights (Sawyer 2012: 477).

Moreover, the formation of alliances is because people carry multiple identities—some we accept, while others are "ascribed to us by others regardless of whether we accept them" (Hancock 2004: 6). The rejection of ascribed identities by a particular identity group does not erase such naming in the public sphere. That the "N" word is retired in American mainline political discourse does not mean it has no bearing on the perception of black people. Similarly, in African political discourse, the negative identity of gays born from the misconception and public misrepresentations of same-sex individuals as molesters, recruiters, and part of the global conspiracy to destroy the human family creates "disgust" in the public sphere. It is this ascribed identity that seems to control Africa's legislative outcomes on homosexuality.

Further, the public identity of gays as molesters is the heuristic model the dominant culture employs to deny them their rights "as human beings, much less citizens" (Hancock 2004: 146). This exclusion from political deliberation is expanded through laws that stop advocacy—robbing them of ideological and political solidarity from potential allies. It also makes it harder for sexual minorities to challenge their assigned identity in the public sphere. That said, by being citizens, Africans, and same-sex loving individuals, sexual minorities are contesting their demonization. The stories shared in this book are examples of this form of social contestation through politics of being.

Often the politics of disgust use negative social images to provoke public outrage—forcing people into fighting to change it. Aside from using pictures of babies and ultrasound images to oppose abortion rights, anti-gay advocates use same-sex pictures—usually, two people of the same-gender kissing or in some cases gay pornography to cause cultural disgust. For example, Ugandan Pastor Ssempa screened gay pornography depicting anilingus and fisting in his church to stir up public disgust of sexual minorities, as well as to press lawmakers to pass the Anti-homosexuality Bill 2009. During his presentations, Ssempa linked homosexuality to pedophilia. He closed his show with an emotional caution to Ugandans—allowing homosexuality would make their children eat "poo poo." In other cases, disgust is cued by asking rhetorical questions such as imagine your son eating poo poo; or marrying another man; imagine women using men's bathrooms?

Aside from emotionally inviting public reaction, such attitudes rob sexual minorities of their voices in democratic deliberations. As Hancock (2004: 150) observes:

> the prevention of democratic attention; the unequal communicative context; the failure of representative thinking; and the lack of solidarity from traditional allies—contribute to … misrecognition, which is a distortion of marginal group's voice(s) due to culturally embedded interaction predisposition, prevents effective communication and thus effective political participation.

As noted, the politics of disgust benefits from long-held negative beliefs about the group deemed disgusting (Hancock 2004: 146). By deleteriously identifying sexual minorities in stark adverse imagery, for example, Ssempa invited hyped emotions and set the basis for political contestation of sexuality in Uganda. Thus:

> The politics of disgust creates a context that is hard to contest successfully, thus leading to perpetuation. …A politics of disgust has further implications for numbers of oppressed groups because it reinforces silence and invisibility among those brought into the public sphere as part of another citizen's ideological arguments…. (Hancock 2004: 14)

It is important to note that negative "public identities" rob citizens of their full participation in democratic politics. Attempts by the marginalized to resist public injustices provoke further politics of disgust, thereby inviting "both rhetorical and policy-related retaliation" (Hancock 2004: 49; Gutmann 2003: 3). Full democratic deliberation, however, requires the "abandonment of preconceived notions of other citizens and the accurate interpretation of individuals' varying experiences" (Hancock 2004: 148). Until sexual minorities' experiences and voices become part of African democratic deliberations, one can argue that activism on gay rights is likely to provoke further public disgust, stigmatization, and policy retaliation.

5.6.3 Cultural Politics in Protective Homophobia

Just as protective homophobia falls within identity politics and politics of disgust, it is equally cultural politics. In *The Politics of Cultural Differences*, Leege et al. (2002: 27–28) observe that "cultural politics is less a set of issues than a style that invokes fundamental social values and emphasizes group differences." Like Gutmann, Leege et al. (2002: 25) argue that cultural identity is exploited in political constituency mobilization. As political salespersons, politicians tailor their messages to diverse groups of cultural voters. Since cultural politics "involve disagreement about what society should or does prescribe as the appropriate way of life," they insist, "any political controversy that turns on conflicts about social norms, and symbolic community boundaries" (2002: 26) qualifies as cultural politics.

Cultural politics is equally about what people perceive as intrinsically evil or good. Hence, it is "often explosive" and "nonbargainable" (Leege et al. 2002: 28–29). As noted earlier, the defense of cultural identity aids social movement building (Kaoma 2016). But as Gusfield (1970: 10) concludes:

> Whether they seek means of defense to maintain old habits against the blows of unfortunate changes or align themselves as proponents of new ideas and norms against the past, the partisans of social movements are grappling with problems that have emerged within their lives.

As highlighted in Chap. 1, social movements are motivated by a sense of grievances, which they seek to address through various means. Whereas sources of complaints vary, movements seek to bring about desired social change using "rational strategies and tactics" (Berlet and Lyons 2000: 13).

Importantly, cultural politics goes beyond interests—it is a moral and ethical contestation of right and wrong. But it also highlights subcultures within communities, that is:

> groups that persist within the larger society but maintain their own parochial views of the ordered life. While they may recognize that the claims of society as a whole are legitimate in a pragmatic sense—how else could the subculture persist if the society did not allow it leeway to practice and propound its values—the subculture may still feel that its way of life is superior, ordained of God, or "natural." (Leege et al. 2002: 26)

The growing influence of religious subcultures in African politics accords anti-gay groups organizing opportunities. Although Christianity is one subculture in Africa, it is assumed that the Christian subculture is the basis for all democratic deliberations in Christian-dominated nations. Since the Christian subculture considers sexual minorities as sinners per "Bible," democratic debate on gay rights is often informed by religious beliefs as opposed to human rights. But as the contest of "being" illustrates, despite attempts to externalize homosexuality, the gay subculture exists within the dominant "African" culture. While sexual minorities seek to transform the prevailing culture into sexual rights affirming societies, the Christian subculture rejects such demands purely on a religious basis. Leege et al. write:

> People who identify with different social groups often have different, deeply held perspectives not only on how they should live but also on the scope of political community and purpose. They have a sense of a legitimate moral order, and they expect other citizens and government to further that design. They often dislike and distrust groups with rival perspectives, and they even feel that some groups have no right to participate in democratic politics, much less to have their rivals' perspectives become binding on society. (5)

The outlawing of gay rights advocacy and state opposition to registering sexual rights civil society organizations in many African countries are good examples.

That said, the electorate is diverse, but a religious subculture unites people with various interests. In sexual politics, Africa is witnessing both ecumenical and interfaith partnerships in sexual politics. As Chap. 3 illustrates, Islam, Protestantism, Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, and Roman Catholicism are unified in opposition to same-gender rights. Else-where, I write, "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." (2016: 22).

Because cultural norms are said to be "unchallengeable," defenders of "culture" incite moral panic through intricate strategies. The goal is "to mobilize the faithful, demoralize parts of the opposition by sowing the seeds of anxiety and attract defectors from the opposition though negative symbols of opposition's leadership" (Leege et al. 2002: 5–6). In sexual politics, moral panic provides religious and cultural motives for people's participation in sexuality democratic deliberations.

Leege et al.'s observation though tailored to American politics equally applies to African sexual politics. Individuals claiming to have been recruited into homosexuality defect and join anti-gay advocacy groups. In Uganda, George Oundo, known in Uganda's gay community as Georgina, defected from pro-gay rights groups to join Uganda's anti-gay groups, claiming he was recruited into homosexuality as well as given money to recruit school children by Western gay groups. In Malawi, Steven Mojenza defected to the anti-gay group after being pardoned for his "marriage" to Chimbalanga. Like Oundo, Mojenza blamed his marriage on foreign influence. Aside from confirming the recruitment hypothesis, these defections enhanced the call for African gays to change or face further discrimination.

But there is another way to explain such defections—the idea of "passing" proposed by Erving Goffman to explain stigma negotiation among marginalized identities. By passing, marginalized individuals reject their negatively assigned "identities," thus "passing" to the mainline group as Monjeza and Oundo arguably did.

Regardless, pro-gay and anti-gay actors are contesting the sexual order through social movement lenses within the postcolonial political landscape. Anti-gay groups have built their movement around the religio-cultural premise that the condemnation of homosexuality is non-negotiable. Proponents of sexual rights, however, counter such claims—sexual orientation is a fundamental human rights issue. Unlike the anti-sexual rights movement, whose audience is mostly domestic (both religious and political), sexual rights advocates' primary audience is the West, and to some extent continental intergovernmental organizations such as the African Union. Unlike the West, however, many African regional institutions are predisposed against homosexuality. As Onapajo and Isike (2016: 34) conclude:

> The possibility that gay rights would be given a favourable consideration at the African Union (AU) is also most unlikely. Indeed, it was reported in 2010 that the nomination of a Ghanaian nominee for the AU's Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) was rejected on (sic) given her record of defending gay rights in Ghana.

Onapajo and Isike's observation ignores the 2014 ACHPR resolution on sexual orientation, which condemned the persecution of sexual minorities and called for the decriminalization of homosexuality. But as historic as that move was, the resolution did not lead to the decriminalization of same-gender relations on the continent. Only Mozambique decriminalized homosexuality in 2015—joining South Africa, and a number of island nations such as Cape Verde. In mainland sub-Saharan Africa, however, most countries ignored the ACHPR resolution. In line with Hancock's observation on policy retaliations, Africans are now hypersensitive to any language deemed "gay" friendly. In Zambia, the FIFA (The Fédération Internationale de Football Association—the global soccer governing board) requirement to oppose homophobia, the Bill of Rights, and "the anti-discrimination" clause in the national constitution were interpreted as promoting homosexuality, forcing political and religious leaders to condemn homosexuality publicly.

5.7 Democracy, Human Rights, and Culture

At the center of protective homophobia is the defense of African culture. To some extent, Africa's opposition to sexual rights is a global crush of "cultures"—which moral and social values to uphold or reject? As a phenomenon, "culture encompasses norms deemed valid or authoritative by arbiters of the society" (Leege et al. 2002: 28). To Africans, therefore, culture provides the spiritual "tool kit" from which social action is born. Since culture is appealed to during periods of rapid social transformations, it is one of the most utilized anthropological symbols in collective social actions.

Gutmann, however, views cultures as "repositories of meaningful choices for individuals," implying that individuals have the option either to live by specific cultural standards or not. In this regard, the dominant majorities cannot outlaw minority subcultures if they do not violate the rights of others. To do so "constitutes a kind of tyranny, even less excusable than the tyranny that minority cultures exert when they prevent their members from adopting majority cultural practices that do no injustice to others" (Gutmann 2003: 198).

But this sociology raises another issue—do people have the democratic right to defend their cultural practices? The answer is yes, they do. In global sexual politics, this defense is associated with the mantra of "defending traditional family values" or "culture of life" vis-à-vis the "culture of death." Opponents of sexual rights object that same-sex marriages and abortion aim at destroying human civilization (Slater 2009; O'Leary 2007). In fact, they see their activities as ensuring cultural survival. Gutmann, however, argues that cultural survival cannot come at the expense of human rights. She writes:

> If cultural survival means that people who identify with disadvantaged cultures have a right to life every bit as important as the right of members of more dominant cultures, then democrats can readily defend cultural survival. But cultural survival on this understanding does not call for any special group rights. Instead, it is a shorthand for defending the human rights of disadvan-

> taged cultures; it says that no person should be denied an equally effective right to life because of cultural group identities that are not merely a matter of choice and do not threaten anyone's human rights. (2003: 74–75)

This observation raises an important question about the origin of culture itself. As the socio-cultural transformation of Africa suggests, culture is created over time—it is not something already made; human beings create culture. Gutmann's proposal that human rights can become another "culture" makes sense. Nonetheless, she opposes the singularity of the human rights "culture" for human rights "cultures" since people's rights are present in diverse cultural traditions, both religious and secular. Thus, "A defense of human rights is a defense of many cultures and of democratic politics itself …." (2003: 84).

Associating human rights with culture is problematic, nonetheless. On which premise do we judge human rights cultures and what should be the basis for judging other cultures? Gutmann does not ignore these questions but maintains that "Accepting the equal legitimacy of 'other' cultural practices that are no less problematic than 'ours' is as important as opposing cultural practices, whether 'ours' or 'theirs,' when they violate basic rights" (Gutmann 2003: 199). Democratic life, I argue, allows the contestation of all cultural values through the justice lens. It also ensures all citizens and by extension all human beings are accorded their rights regardless of how they are perceived by the dominant culture if their subcultures do not violate other people's rights. Again Gutmann (2003: 196) explains:

> Democratic life is characterized more accurately by the intermixing and changing of cultures and the conflicting interpretations of cultures by creative individuals and groups than it is by the constitution of individual identity by a single, coherent cultural group. Yet democratic life is not without its dominant cultural cast. Every democratic society imposes some culture on its citizens by the very language, history, holidays, and customs in which its politics is conducted.

The Sall–Obama encounter discussed in the following chapter is one example. The US is a defender of human rights as it is a violator of other fundamental human rights both domestically and internationally. This case does not mean the failure of the human rights cultures; it is an invitation to reform today's cultures to embrace democratic ideals.

5.8 LOOKING FORWARD

The establishment of multi-party politics in sub-Saharan Africa has produced the platform for the contestation of values and ideologies through diverse civil society organizations. Although such organizations are essential to ensuring human rights, the definition of these rights is contested locally. To its credit, the anti-gay movement has successfully identified homosexuality as a threat to traditional African, religious, national, and cultural identities. This definition of homosexuality invites public opposition to sexual minority rights from diverse African communities.

Moreover, religion is an important identity marker for millions of Africans. Real Christians and Muslims, it is assumed, are opposed to homosexuality (Ndzovu 2016; Broqua 2016). Those who attempt to use religion to justify same-sex relations are negatively regarded. Hence while most African nations formally uphold the separation of church/mosque and state, the religiosity of Africans attracts religiously coated political messages. Because sexual rights advocates operate within the secular human rights paradigm, the *secularization* of sexuality attracts organized domestic disgust and policy reiteration.

Finally, the donor community ought to gauge good governance through the human rights frame. This is critical since sexual rights activism needs to move from international frontlines into local spaces. Indeed, the domestic arena is fraught with danger—telling by the many arrests, violence against, and killings of sexual minorities. Sexual rights, I propose, must be deliberated upon in local politics. Such contestation must be within the democratic space brought about by competitive politics. But since African democracy is assumed to be about rights to vote, sexuality politics favors anti-gay actors. I am not saying that African democracy cannot reform to include human rights for sexual minorities. On the contrary, democracy must move beyond votes—it must respect the fundamental principles of democratic theory. Can the exploration of international relations aid this transition? The following chapter explores this question.

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CHAPTER 6

Contesting Sovereignty: Protective Homophobia and International Relations

In Chap. 5, I examined the relationship between identity politics, politics of disgust, and cultural politics. Protective homophobia, the chapter argued, benefits from these politics as Africans negotiate the growing democratic political landscape. In this context, African culture is presented as anti-sexual diversity, while sexual minorities are said to be un-African. But I also noted that global political and religious developments aid the public externalization of sexual minorities in African democratic deliberations. In this chapter, however, I examine African sexual disputes in interstate politics.

6.1 Protective Homophobia in International Relations

"T[he] assumption—that Africa does not have meaningful politics, only humanitarian disasters—has marginalized the continent on the world's political stage. …Simply put, Africa has long been absent in theorizing about world politics," Dunn (2001: 2) writes in his introduction to *Africa and International Relations Theory*. In *Non-Western International Relations Theory*, Acharya and Buzan (2010: 1) also write: "Today, the contemporary equivalent of good life in international relations—democratic peace, interdependence and integration, and institutionalized orderliness, as well as the normal relationships and calculable results, are found in the West, while the non-West remains the realm of survival."

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There is some truth to such stark claims, especially when applied to Africa—it is a continent made by disasters as the news media wants us to believe. Despite advancements in many areas of life, an African child is usually presented as "dying from hunger," while stories of political violence, poverty, and corruption flood the Western media. In sexual politics, homophobia is portrayed as African—it is another sad chapter in the cursed continent (Epprecht 2014; Hoad 2007; Katongole 2010). This Africanization of homophobia replicates a similar picture whereby Africa is employed to illustrate the politics of repression. The agency of sexual minorities and their opponents, both local and international, is erased from sexuality politics. As the previous chapter suggests, however, Africans are active political players in sexuality politics.

On the local front, however, the criminalization of sexual minorities is defined by protective claims—defending *ordre public,* morality, culture, religion, and children from the assumed imperial gay agenda. In Africa's sexual politics, global North countries are associated with this agenda. This strategic positioning presents anti-gay advocates as resisting this assumed imperial agenda, and protecting children and the society from the same. The deleterious language employed to describe sexual minorities on the continent—worse than dogs, pigs, terrorists—speaks of this fact.

African sexual politics also benefits from the global North strategic involvement in the contestations of homosexuality and gender identity on the one hand, and the domestic realities on the other. The respective diplomatic encounters between Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, Senegalese President Marky Sall, and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni with former US President Barack Obama illustrate these points.

The Obama administration's "aspirational goal" both home and abroad was to ensure the decriminalization of sexual minorities. Aside from directing his ambassadors to support gay rights in their respective jurisdictions, President Obama personally spoke strongly against the criminalization of homosexuality in various diplomatic contexts. President Obama's activism, however, forced his African counterparts to openly oppose same-sex rights in attempts to remain competitive in domestic politics. But it also attracted public opposition to homosexuality and simultaneously forced sexual rights into national and global discourses.

Although sexuality politics is evidently globalized, it is a subject of interstate politics. Apart from the Yogyakarta Principles and the Montreal Declaration, not all major U.N. declarations and treaties endorse sexual orientation and gender identity as universal human rights.[1] Besides, sexual rights are not acknowledged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the absence of international agreement, sexual rights are defended based on national and regional treaties (Fellmeth 2008: 800). As noted, in 2014, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights passed a resolution that called for the decriminalization of same-sex intimate relations, and the protection of sexual minorities and sexual rights defenders. Unlike the 1998 European Union, however, both the Commission and pan-African Parliament lack authority to police member states. Writing for the South African *Mail and Guardian*, Mulindwa (2014) asserts:

> The African Court on Human and Peoples Rights is limited in its powers to engage in reforming national human rights norms because Article 27 (2) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights construes issues of sexuality as ethical rather than legal matters, and thus outside the court's remit.

At the United Nations, African nations abstain from or vote against resolutions that seek to declare sexual minority rights as universal human rights; while pushing the claim that sexual orientation and gender identity are unrecognized international human rights.

Regardless, sexual orientation and gender identity rights are established international relations issues. It is important, however, to note that the inclusion of sexual rights in international relations is a significant shift from the traditional understanding of interstate relations. Traditionally, international relations issues sought to address national security, economic, and other state interests—subjects that had little to do with the LGBTI community.

Proponents of sexual rights attach the treatment of sexual minorities to international politics. International pressure, they insist, must be applied to nations that criminalize sexual orientation and gender identity. This conviction guided the Obama administration's aspiration of decriminalizing homosexuality and gender identity in Africa. However, it *ALSO* increased the visibility of sexual minorities as political actors on the one hand, and the continental opposition to homosexuality on the other hand. Sexual minority activists are thus caught up in the web of international and domestic sexuality politics—as heroes in the global North, but villains at home.

There is a reason to argue that the application of pressure by sexual rights advocates pays dividends. In 1998, the European Union Parliament required all member states and those who intend to join the Union to decriminalize homosexuality, leading to the legalization of homosexuality (though not same-sex marriage) in member nations. Similar developments occurred in some parts of South America. In 2010, same-sex marriage was legalized in Argentina; in Brazil it was legalized in 2013; and some South

American countries also support same-sex unions. These developments led Fellmeth (2008: 817) to point to the alarming rate at which homosexuality is decriminalized across the globe. Today, he reasons, all nations are being pressurized to decriminalize same-sex intimate relationships between consenting adults. Fellmeth, however, writes:

> At the antipodes of the discrimination spectrum is the majority of the world's states-including almost all of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and much of Latin America-which continues to lack any legislation to protect sexual minorities from public or private discrimination. In some of these countries, general antidiscrimination legislation proposed on behalf of sexual minorities has met with rebuffs. It remains clear that there is no consensus that sexual minorities are entitled under international human rights law to freedom from arbitrary discrimination. (Fellmeth 2008: 834–835)

Consequently, the international pressure to decriminalize homosexuality hit the wall in Africa. Aside from South Africa, which legalizes same-sex marriages, only Mozambique decriminalized homosexuality in 2015 despite the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights 2014 resolution to decriminalize same-sex relations and protect sexual rights advocates (see also The United Nations 2015). Evidently, most of the continent witnessed a surge in the expansion of anti-homosexuality laws. Whereas residue colonial anti-gay laws were in the penal codes, in contemporary Africa, the criminalization of same-sex relations/marriages is now enshrined in many national constitutions. In such contexts, sexual minority rights advocacy is also severely crippled.

6.2 President Obama: A Political Actor in Sexuality Politics in Africa

While global North governments have been instrumental in providing voice and visibility to sexual minorities, President Obama was arguably the most prominent campaigner for the decriminalization of same-gender intimate relations and sexual identity in Africa.

6.2.1 President Obama and Sexual Rights in Uganda

As President Yoweri Museveni was about to sign the infamous Uganda Anti-homosexuality Bill 2009 into law in February 2014, President Obama cautioned him that enacting it would "complicate" the good diplomatic relations between the two nations. In his February 16, 2014, letter to Museveni, President Obama wrote:

> The Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda, once law, will be more than an affront and a danger to the gay community in Uganda. It will be a step backward for all Ugandans and reflect poorly on Uganda's commitment to protecting the human rights of its people. It also will mark a serious setback for all those around the world who share a commitment to freedom, justice and equal rights. (The White House: Feb 16, 2014)

But Museveni countered:

> I would like to discourage the U.S.A government from taking the line that passing this law will "complicate our valued relationship" with the U.S.A, as President Obama said. Countries and Societies should relate with each other on the basis of mutual respect and independence in decision making. "Valued relationship" cannot be sustainably maintained by one Society being subservient to another society. There are myriad acts the societies in the West do that we frown on or even detest. We, however, never comment on those acts or make them preconditions for working with the West. Africans do not seek to impose their views on anybody. We do not want anybody to impose their views on us. This very debate was provoked by Western groups who come to our schools and try to recruit children into homosexuality.

It is critical to note that Museveni shares the US Christian Right's conspiracy theory that Western gays recruit young Africans into homosexuality. But unlike other African politicians, Museveni's views on homosexuality were nuanced. He not only acknowledged the existence of sexual minorities in Uganda but invited the US government to send its scientists to work with Ugandan scientists to determine the scientific basis for homosexuality: "When that is proved, we can review this legislation."[2] President Museveni also set up a team of "scientists" to study homosexuality and to offer guidance on whether homosexuality is inborn or not. Among the sources cited in the "scientific" report on homosexuality *Colonizing African Values* (Kaoma 2012).

Just as President Obama viewed that law as threatening the cordial relations between the two nations, Museveni appealed to the same—the AHB was a domestic issue. "I want to work with Russia[ns] because they don't mix up their politics with other country's politics," Museveni told Ugandans a day before signing the AHB into law on February 24.[3]

It is important to note that while Western nations spoke harshly against Uganda's AHB, the African response was mute. Even South Africa did not comment on that development. *The Mail and Guardian* headline "Pan-African bodies wash their hands of Uganda's anti-gay law," summarizes the African response. The lack of African nation's opposition to Uganda's AHB speaks to the pan-African norm of solidarity discussed in the following section.

6.2.2 President Obama and Sexual Rights in Senegal

President Obama further campaigned for the decriminalization of homosexuality during his June 2013 visit to Senegal. The visit coincided with the June 26, 2013, US Supreme Court declaration of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) unconstitutional. Before the ruling, DOMA restricted marriage to heterosexual couples, and prohibited states from recognizing same-sex marriages from states where it was legal. President Obama celebrated the court ruling as "a victory" for same-sex "couples everywhere."

During their joint press conference in Dakar, Jessica Yellin, then CNN Chief White House Correspondent asked President Obama whether he pushed his counterpart to decriminalize homosexuality. She also asked President Sall whether he had plans to do so.

Aside from acknowledging the controversial nature of homosexuality in Africa, President Obama made a strong case for sexual equality:

> My basic view is that regardless of race, regardless of religion, regardless of gender, regardless of sexual orientation, when it comes to how the law treats you, how the state treats you—the benefits, the rights and the responsibilities under the law—people should be treated equally. (The White House: Jun 27, 2013)

Employing the non-interference protocol in international relations, and like Museveni, President Sall pushed back:

> We cannot have a standard model which is applicable to all nations, all countries—you said it, we all have different cultures. We have different religions. We have different traditions. And even in countries where this has been decriminalized, and homosexual marriage is allowed, people don't share the same views. (The White House: Jun 27, 2013)

In addition to insisting that Senegal upholds "inalienable rights" for all its citizens, President Sall intelligently employed the death penalty to illustrate the non-interference protocol in international relations—"*It is just like the capital punishment. In our country, we have abolished it for many years. In other countries, it is still the order of the day, because the situation in the country requires it*" [italics mine].

President Sall continued:

> And we do respect the choice of each country. But please be assured that Senegal is a country of freedom and homosexuals are not being prosecuted, persecuted. But we must also show respect for the values and choices of the other Senegalese people. (The White House: Jun 27, 2013)

President Sall's criticism of capital punishment in the US is missing from the White House's official transcript. Nonetheless, his response carries postcolonial criticism of sexual politics on the one hand and illustrates Africa's perception of the contradictory and hypocritical nature of the US human rights' record on the other. As to Museveni, the US president could criticize human rights violations in Africa, but was blind to his own country's human rights record, both at home and abroad. This situation invites what I term "neocolonial diplomatic suspicion." To Africans, the US involvement in their domestic sexual politics is imperialistic—it is a violation of international relations protocol.

But Sall's comments on capital punishment raises another critical issue—if opponents of capital punishment employ the human rights claim, then the US violates human rights of those it puts to death. Therefore, how human rights are defined cannot remain the prerogative of each sovereign state but of the human rights community. For this reason, human rights activists routinely condemn the US on capital punishment, racialized policing, and the demonization and profiling of immigrants and Muslims.

6.2.3 President Obama and Sexual Rights in Kenya

President Obama's pro-gay rights commitment resurfaced again in July 2015, when he visited Kenya. Like in Senegal, on July 25, President Obama and President Uhuru Kenyatta held a joint press conference in Nairobi. During that conference, Reuters' White House Correspondent Jeff Mason asked Obama to address Kenya's criminalization of homosexuality, which Kenyatta termed "a non-issue."

President Obama answered:

> I've been consistent all across Africa on this. I believe in the principle of treating people equally under the law, and that they are deserving of equal protection under the law and that the state should not discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation.
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> ----
>
> And the state does not need to weigh in on religious doctrine. The state just has to say we're going to treat everybody equally under the law. And then everybody else can have their own opinions. (The White House: Jul 25, 2015)

In contrast to President Obama, President Kenyatta responded:

> Just like President Obama, I think we also need to be able to speak frankly about some of these things. And the fact of the matter is that Kenya and the United States, we share so many values—our common love for democracy, entrepreneurship, value for families. These are things that we share. But there are some things that we must admit we don't share—our culture, our societies don't accept. It is very difficult for us to be able to impose on people that which they themselves do not accept.
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> ----
>
> This is why I repeatedly say that, for Kenyans today, the issue of gay rights is really a non-issue. (The White House: Jul 25, 2015)

It is important to note that long before his tour, the US media reported that President Obama would publicly address gay rights in Kenya—how and when was what the international press awaited. As noted, in Senegal and Kenya, US-based journalists attached to the White House raised the question of homosexuality on the African soil. Yet the co-opting of sexuality into interstate relations overshadowed President Obama's security and economic issues on his Africa visits. Finally, we can only hypothesize as to how African presidents would have responded had African sexual minorities themselves asked their presidents about their criminalization.

6.3 Responses on the Continent

As necessary as joint press conferences are to the media, political leaders are promoting their own countries' interests over those of foreign nations. In the aforementioned diplomatic encounters, all presidents were concerned about domestic policies. By speaking against the criminalization of homosexuality, the US pro-gay activists and their African allies saw Obama as a courageous leader. On the other hand, African nations and anti-gay advocates supported their president's stance against US/pro-gay interests.

Besides, postcolonial predisposition influenced media responses on the continent—they all praised African presidents for standing up against unsaid imperialist attitudes of President Obama as the following headlines suggest: "On Homosexuality, We Won't Agree—Uhuru," *Capital FM*. "Uhuru Kenyatta dismisses gays rights as a non-issue in Kenya," *The Daily Nation*. "Kenyatta dares Obama: Homosexuality is not part of our Culture," *Malawi 24*.

Nossister's June 28, 2013, *The New York Times'* article "Senegal Cheers Its President for Standing Up to Obama on Same-Sex Marriage" summarized media responses in Senegal:

> "Firm … and subtle," crowed Sud Quotidien on its front page, praising Mr. Sall for his response. "No, We Can't," trumpeted Liberation. "Macky says no to Obama," said Walfadjri on its front page. "Obama makes a plea for the homos, Macky says no!" said Le Pop. "President Sall has closed the debate on homosexuality," read a headline in L'Observateur.

In short, the African media presented these encounters within the postcolonial predisposition landscape—the US involvement in assumed domestic politics is another wave of colonialism. Besides, the claim that homosexuality is "a non-issue" is an attempt to erase sexual minorities from domestic politics. But as discussed in Chap. 5, it is also an "attempt to represent, limit and legitimate a political identity" (Devetak 2005: 176). Aside from employing Africa to create an anti-gay continental identity, the erasure of sexual minorities is now a common dominator in Africa's sexual politics. From Sall to Museveni to Kagame of Rwanda to Lungu of Zambia, homosexuality is a non-issue.

6.4 Responses in the Global North

The Western media covered these exchanges as an inter-continental contestation of values as the following headlines suggest: "Obama Kenya Trip Sets off Gay Rights Debate in Africa," *The New York Times*; "Kenyan president rebukes Obama's gay rights message," *The Hill*; "Obama lectures Kenyan president on gay rights," *CNN*. *The Wall Street Journal's* headline read:

"President Barack Obama Condemns Kenya on Gay Rights." *Christianity Today* read, "Kenya's president thumbs down President Obama's promotion of gay rights in Africa." "Obama Don't Preach: African Bishops Defy Obama's Pro-Gay Bullying," was *Breitbart* headline.

Other headlines read, "Senegal Rejects Obama's Push for Gay Rights," *Voice of America*; "Obama urges gay rights in Africa during trip to Senegal," *BBC*; and "Senegalese President Defends Jailing of LBGT Citizens, Hits Obama Over The Death Penalty," *BuzzFeed*. On Uganda's anti-gay law, the *BBC* wrote, "Barack Obama warns Uganda's Museveni over anti-gay bill," while "Ugandan President signs anti-gay bill, defying the West" was *Reuters'* headline.

These headlines are representative of how the West viewed Obama's co-opting of gay rights in IR. Some present him as exporting the gay rights agenda to Africa, an assumption that robs Africa of its agency in sexuality politics (Bosia 2014; Bosia and Weiss 2013). But one also finds some neo-colonial biases of the Western media. The CNN headline "Obama lectures Kenyan president on gay rights," for instance, can be interpreted in two ways—is it presenting Kenyatta as a student of Obama or derogatory to Obama since lecturing being something you don't do with an equal?

6.5 Whose Power and Politics: The West or Africa?

Africa's political opposition to sexual rights in international politics is not limited to the US. When then British Prime Minister David Cameron threatened to cut funding to African countries on the premise of gay rights in 2011, the African response was unwaveringly uniform. Most African nations—Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya—dared the UK to cut aid. Others termed the threat imperialistic (Kaoma 2014). "Sinful," is how Museveni characterized the attachment of foreign aid to gay rights.

Ugandan Speaker Rebecca Kadaga's 2012 encounter with Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird is another example. To her, as a sovereign nation, Uganda has the right to make its laws, and Canada cannot dictate Uganda's domestic laws or policies. In that encounter, Kadaga told Baird that the Parliament of Uganda would pass its AHB (which at that time was thought to be dead) as a Christmas present to Ugandans. On December 20, 2013, she fulfilled that promise, and President Museveni assented to it in 2014. As already noted, the law was ruled unconstitutional the same year.

The question of national sovereignty *vis-à-vis* human rights needs addressing. African nations have the right to make their laws, but they are also accountable to the global community. This raises a related point—is Africa's understanding of human rights predetermined by Western nations? And who determines what constitutes human rights and what form those rights should take in specific socio-political locations? Are African sexual minorities a collateral damage in global sexual politics? Answers to these questions complicate the examination of sexual politics in Africa.

Notwithstanding, the global North–Africa encounters on sexual rights are evidently a new site of transnational politics. Therefore, the "old" or the traditional model of international relations is inadequate in the exploration of global sexuality politics.

6.6 Understanding the African Norm of Solidarity in IR

The invisibility of Africa in international relations theory is partially due to the failure to acknowledge the epistemological consciousness of the continent. This epistemology is built around the collective norm as opposed to the individualistic assumptions of the West. Whereas an individual exists, the politics of "being" is only realized in community. In *The Creator's Symphony* (2015b: 28), I write:

> The community is not only a loose association of individuals in African traditional thought but also a social unity in which life is lived, shared and experienced. Belonging to this community is the essence of being human (*ubuntu*), and banishment from one's community was/is the ultimate punishment or death penalty in most African communities. For this reason, a detached "individual" does not exist in African worldviews. This is because being cut off from one's community is at par with the death of one's being. As long as one remains isolated from the community, such a person ceases to be *umuntu* (human).

In *Personhood in African Philosophy*, Matolino (2014: 30) also argues that African beliefs originate in community. It is fathomable that the individualist ontology on which IR and the concept of human rights are theorized find it hard to make sense of the African "collectivist international life" (Tieku 2012: 37).

The individualistic outlook of IR identifies nation-states, like powerful individuals, as independent entities with unchallengeable sovereign rights. As Devetak (2005: 162–163) observes, in this ontology, the sovereign state like a sovereign person is "a pre-given, bounded entity which enters into relations with other sovereign presences." Because not all sovereignties have equal economic and political power, interstate relations usually work in the interest of powerful nations. Tieku (2012: 39) writes:

> The reason is that powerful governments usually use coercive measures such as threats, side-payments, rewards or punishments, sometimes combinations, to induce [powerless] governments to accept, comply with or acquiesce in particular outcome the powerful governments think will advance their interests.

Employing the postmodern analysis of international relations, Devetak (2005: 167) argues that IR is about *power* and *authority*. For instance, President Obama's letter to Museveni, Kadaga's experience with Baird, and Cameron's threat to cut aid to anti-gay nations are examples of power differential in IR. As representative of powerful nations, they sought to impose their interpretation of sexual rights on Africa. These attempts were nevertheless met with public and diplomatic opposition, as many African states pushed back or ignored such threats in domestic politics.

President Obama's encounters with Kenyatta and Sall fall into a social constructive individualist approach in IR. This method employs rational consensus:

> with the hope that other nations can be and will be persuaded by the better argument. For social constructivists, therefore, political outcomes reflect the position of governments that succeed in convincing others to abandon formerly held views by providing information that discredits them … or that introduce new ideas that trigger normative and behavioral changes in other governments. (Tieku 40)

To some extent, sexual politics benefits from this approach. It is critical, however, to note that African ontology is collectivist—belonging is acute to African life and worldviews. It is telling that the continental identity (African) as opposed to nationalist identity (Zambian, etc.) is highly promoted in sexual politics. In this worldview, group membership carries ontological obligations, which every member is expected to uphold.

Among these obligations is the virtue of secrecy within a particular group. Whereas conflicts can exist within the group, public display of oneness is a given. It does not mean that members are agreeable on every issue. Rather, members can criticize each other in private and yet demonstrate unity in the public eye.

During his interview on his edited volume, *Africa's Challenge to International Relations Theory,* Dunn argued that "All identities are socially constructed, but the real questions then become: Which actors, practices, mechanisms, institutions, and so forth are implicated in the social construction of a given identity, at a given historical moment?" He explains the goal of the edited volume: "We wanted to offer a corrective to much of IR that either develops theories devoid of reality or uncritically generalizes out from Western historical experiences and cultural practices." African experiences, Dunn argues, should direct the study of IR.

Award-winning economist Jeffrey D. Sachs (2005: 81) speaks of this point when he calls for "differential analysis" of Africa's problems as opposed to the "one size fits all." Although Sachs is speaking about poverty, the experiences of Africa, once properly understood, can provide "ideational agency" in the examination and practice of international relations. Non-Western societies' ideas and concepts can also reform, adapt, and create new IR norms applicable to both domestic and international contexts (Acharya 629). Aside from arguing that Africa is an agent in IR, Smith proposes the concept of *ubuntu* (corporate personhood) as another heuristic model in interstate relations (Smith 2012: 33; Matolino 2008; Kaoma 2013).

6.7 Can Ubuntu Become Another Paradigm in IR?

The key to understanding African IR is the value of social congruence characterized with *ubuntu*, which is the *summum bonum* among the Bantu. To some extent, *ubuntu* challenges the individualistic perception of international life. The value of *ubuntu* to international politics is that it strives to put other people's needs and experiences before one's own interests. "Our interest is included in common interests but cannot override it" (Francis 2007: 3). In *God's Family, God's Earth,* I argue that:

> Since African life is "collective," being ethical or possessing *ubuntu* means upholding community values and norms. Among the Bemba, for instance, human actions qualify one to be human or not. … Possessing *ubuntu* implies

> acting in the interest of the community. *Umuntu* [person] with *ubuntu* is expected to build community life, while the one who lacks *ubuntu* destroys it. (Kaoma 2013: 69)

The Bantu maxim *umuntu ngubuntu ngabantu* in Xhosa, and *munhu munhu nekuda kwevanhu* in Shona (a person is a person through other people), speaks of this collectivist approach to life. In this ontology, the "I" is minimized over the "we"—thus I am because I am interconnected to other beings (Kaoma 2016; Tutu 2004; Matolino 2008). It recognizes that our humanity is inextricably bound up in each other's being—echoing "much of the values of African cultures as well as principles of good governance and respect for human rights for all people" (Kaoma 2013: 103).

The ethical values of *ubuntu* positively contributed to the success of the post-apartheid South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Thus, *ubuntu* promotes forgiveness and reconciliation, and restorative over retributive justice. It recognizes and protects the humanity of each individual, while insisting that the distinctiveness of each person depends on one's connection to other vital forces. To possess *ubuntu* is to proactively seek the transformation of human communities into welcoming, friendly, and caring societies. Here, the success of one is celebrated by the greater whole, and the diminishment of one's humanity affects the whole.

Although Smith warns against romanticizing *ubuntu*, she concludes that it "has potential to contribute to our understanding of IR" (Smith 2012: 34). The concept of *ubuntu* can shed light on various issues including regional conflicts, and cross boarder ethnic violence and African states' voting patterns at the UN. But it can also protect sexual minorities since it disavows hate-crimes, corrective rapes, discrimination, and murders of sexual minorities while encouraging the norm of solidarity in socio-ethical interactions.[4]

The norm of solidarity seems to bind African politicians together in international relations. Aside from employing this norm as a defense mechanism—an attack on one is the attack on all African states—Tieku traces this solidarity model to the early 1960s (Tieku 2012: 45–46). This norm is the foundation under which the Organization of African Unity, now the African Union, was founded and operates. It discourages interference in internal politics as well as criticizing another African nation in public. While the non-interference norm shares much with the Westphalia model, it is also found in African traditional norms and cultures. As Museveni said about President Obama's interference in the AHB:

> If you see a person going to another person's home then you know there is a problem. …This is my home. You cannot find a man with a bald head like mine in his home and tell him what you want. Go back to your home … In Ankole, if you find such a thing happening, one will enter his house and pick his stick. (Ssebuyira and Kasasira 2014)

Museveni's comment shows how the African worldview still informs the African political landscape. By referencing "picking his stick," Museveni seems to identify the AHB as a domestic issue, in which President Obama is an intruder. That Museveni used these words at the time he favored Russia over the US was a slap in the face of President Obama.

The African solidarity norm finds support in the ontological organization of African cultures, in which the community is part of an individual just as the individual is part of the community (Matolino 2008). In this ontology, "states see themselves as being inextricably linked to the selves of others, or into international episodes in which actors prioritize the social over the personal, and … group preferences take precedence over individual state interests" (Tieku 2012: 49). This approach to international relations explains why many African politicians including Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki remained silent at Zimbabwe's dictator Robert Mugabe's and genocidal Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's human rights violations. It also explains why African nations were mute at the Gambia, Uganda, and Nigeria anti-gay laws.

It is tempting to see this collective model of international relations as limited to Africa. The NATO alliances, and the Israel–Palestine relations and the global North's role in it, are equally driven by the ethic of solidarity. Thus, rather than limiting this model to Africa, the norm of solidarity is equally found in individualistic communities.

In contemporary politics, however, this solidarity norm has been challenged in some cases. After Yahya Jammeh, former president of the Gambia, refused to hand over power to Adama Barrow (the winner of the 2017 presidential elections), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) suspended this norm. Aside from threatening military action, ECOWAS arranged for the swearing-in of President-elect Barrow in Senegal. This situation suggests that even African nations realize that there is a limit to the solidarity norm.

6.8 Explaining Africa's Place in International Relations

Many colonial forces created an African identity. Without African input, the continent was divided along the Westphalian model—British, French, Belgium, Portuguese, and so forth. But with colonialism came the separation of people in two camps—a small group of "citizens" and a large group of "subjects," as Mahmood Mamdani rightly observes. Albert Memmi presents this system as made up of the "colonizer and the colonized." Despite pre-colonial Africa having its own "interstate" relations, issues of anarchy, sovereignty, trade, and markets are understood from the colonial vantage point. In addition to informing postcolonial predisposition, this colonial history is the lens through which African nations interpret international relations—it is always in the global North economic and political interests.

Although the Westphalia model emphasizes states as the centers of power, this model is inadequate in the examination of Africa's interstate politics. While the African nation was built on the colonizers' perception of the "state," in postcolonial Africa, sovereignty and territory are contested by various traditional and postmodern forces (Devetak 2005; Pommerolle 2010). The donor community, the human rights civil society, religious leaders, and traditional chiefs are equally hubs of political power across the continent. Engel and Olsten write:

> Different actors contribute to and participate in these processes [IR], including Africa's political elite, multi-national companies, informal traders, warlords and their middlemen, the so-called community of states providing "development assistance," imperial interventions such as the "war on terror" and International Non-Governmental Organizations …. (2012: 51)

In this case, the international norms of sovereignty and the sanctity of national boundaries have come under stress.

Nevertheless, the epistemological privilege of the lived realities defines African engagement with the West. As President Obama's support for LGBTQ rights was interpreted, Africa is highly suspicious of Western countries' exploitative agenda. In sexual politics, calls to decriminalize homosexuality and gender identity are interpreted as tailored to the destruction of African traditions.

The academic field of international relations, Christian Reus-Smit argues, was born out of the anxiety and the trauma of World War I; "it was a field situated at the interstices of the empirical and the normative" (2001: 573). This historical context accounts for the emphasis placed on national security in interstate interactions. But as Acharya and Buzan (2010: 5) argue, the contemporary world is "far removed from anarchy to be Westphalian, and too distant from hierarchy to count as either an empire or a domestic political space."

Today, we live in the post-Westphalian global community in which state authority is always challenged and reformed by globalization, global religion, and the global civil society. Therefore, the post-Westphalian global context attests to the postmodern and postcolonial international systems in which many social, political, economic, and cultural/religious actors participate. To engage in contemporary international politics, one can argue, non-Western experiences and ideologies are as valuable as are those of the North. Nonetheless, since the political is informed by knowledge and power differentials, the global North remains the unsaid standard of what qualifies as political experience. Yet to study IR is to explore the identity, context, and mental and the sociological ontology of the people.

Besides, the binary of the domestic/international is problematic in the examination of African IR. The distinction between what is national and international politics is hard to identify as the world becomes increasingly interlinked through migration, information exchange, and globalization. Smith writes:

> The so-called domestic challenges facing the states today cannot be separated from the international environment. The problems of the poorest countries in Africa are closely tied to the marginalized position in which they find themselves in the international system. The local manifestations of global processes are essential to our understanding of IR. (2012: 29; Sachs 2005)

Smith goes on to argue that issues of global governance can benefit from our knowledge of local issues. But she warns against limiting this marginality to IR, since various African communities are equally marginalized based on class, ethnicity, and, in the context of this book, sexual orientation and gender identity (Smith 2012: 33).

Similarly, Dunn (2001: 4) challenged the marginalization of Africa in IR. Whereas the servant–master relationship between Africa and the West exists, Dunn (2001: 2–3) argues against attempts to present Africa "solely as part of the global 'periphery'; an agency-less victim of Great Power/core manipulation. Africa exists only to the extent that it is acted upon." In other words, Africa is not the *tabula rasa* or "the voiceless space upon/into which the West can write and act," to use Dunn's words. Since the end of the Cold War (Engel and Olsten 2012: 51), Africa has increasingly occupied a central position in international politics. Nonetheless, the global North—especially North American and Euro–Asian—experiences and practices are the lenses through which international politics is studied.

Accepting non-Western nations' marginal positions in global polity, Acharya argues that non-Western countries have international rules and norms under which they exist:

> These include significant modifications to, and adaptations of, European norms of sovereignty as the basis of pre-existing local beliefs and practices, as well as the creation of new rules in the local context and exporting them to the wider regional and global levels to influence and shape relations within the Third World and between the Third World and the West. (Acharya 2011: 629)

Most importantly, Africa's agency in IR is informed by, and directed by, the colonial, postcolonial, and cultural experiences; hence, it labors to fathom how Africa makes knowledge from the margins as *ubuntu* suggests. Dunn writes:

> Rather than use African experiences to revise [Western IR] theories, most IR scholars simply continue to ignore the continent. At best they note Africa's uniqueness and relegate it to a footnote; the theories which created Africa's erasure remain dominant. The hegemonic reading/writing of IR ignores and marginalizes that which it cannot explain—or rather, it excises that which illustrates the partiality of its constructed text. (Dunn 2001: 4)

Smith summarizes this point when she writes:

> a number of IR scholars have emphasized the lack of engagement with the developing world, Africa in particular, in the field as a whole. While some have focused on how Africa is overlooked as an important object of study, others have lamented the unsatisfactory tools with which IR tries to make sense of Africa. (21)

As inferred, the emergence of African colonies/states had little to do with nation-states' "ambitions of hegemony" or pre-colonial wars and politics, but more to do with the domination of the African person and African natural goods. Consequentially, the imposition of colonial rule undermined Africa's precolonial political organization. Unlike the Westphalian paradigm, Malaquias argues, "Africa's pre-colonial political systems were not only much more diverse, [but they were] also centered around pluralistic nations, not homogenous states" (2001: 14).

In itself, the creation of national boundaries was the disempowering and shaming of Africa. In fact, the scramble for Africa was partially due to the struggle between European authorities over who should occupy and control the new political space. But it also destroyed pre-colonial nations. Colonial boundaries were drawn as if Africa was a blank slate. Across the continent, many communities such as the Tonga, Hutu, Zulu, and Yoruba spur the colonial boundaries—further complicating interstate relations. Even the decolonization project did nothing to remake Africa—it only endorsed the colonizer's boundaries.

The sanctity associated with colonial boundaries is very much at the heart of civil wars, political violence, and the creation of new national states such as Eritrea and South Sudan. But it also complicates international relations and national security. The Rwanda genocide is an excellent example. Hutus and Tutsis are not only found in Rwanda—they are citizens of the Congo, Uganda, and Burundi. Since tribal solidarity is real, violence in one nation destabilizes the entire Great Lakes region.[5] Despite these past mistakes, the Westphalian model is the foundation on which independent nation-states were founded. But as already noted, independent nations also sought to define their international identity aside from the West—leading to the birth of the Organization of African Unity—now the African Union.

6.9 Protesting or Protecting Global Marginality

In International Relations theoretical frame, sexual politics is mainly domestic, thus covered by the "non-interference" rule of inter-state politics. Yet IR theory acknowledges the existence of "legitimate standards of state conduct, individual conduct and state–society relations" (Reus-Smit 2001: 591–592). For example, President Museveni's preference of Russia over the US is an example. Arguably, African politicians apply already made international relations standards in their opposition to homosexuality. By defining gay rights as "a non-issue," they seem to apply the non-interference claim while relegating sexual rights to domestic politics as opposed to international relations on the contrary.

It is vital, nevertheless, to emphasize that the marginality of Africa affects its place in the global community. African politics is affected by global capitalism as it relates to the continent's economic marginality. But as Francis (2007: 5) contends, the West employs the phrase "international community" to refer to itself. This claim is further presented to mean they act "on behalf of all right-minded governments" as opposed "to their interests." The global North interests are assumed to be globally legitimate, while Africa's perception of the West is sidelined as illegitimate, as evidenced by the White House's erasure of President Sall's judgment of the US refusal to abolish capital punishment. President Obama's threat of the complication of US–Uganda relations also carries an economic threat. Because of Uganda's financial dependence on foreign aid, its economic vulnerability undermines the claim to sovereignty—something Museveni's response implied.

Moreover, domestic and foreign interests simultaneously drive Africa's internal political processes. Even the ability of nations to collaborate on an issue of mutual concern, for instance, is influenced by both local and global interest groups. President Obama's comments of sexual liberation endorsed US democratic progressive values just as African president's responses sought to endorse the anti-gay landscape.

Regardless, the establishment of human rights in international relations not only overrides the claim to national sovereignty but involves national and international political actors in the contestation of such rights. As political actors, states are accountable to the global society in how they treat their people—thus, the violation of human rights by state machinery override claims to sovereignty. As Slaughter argues, restricting or constraining "state use of power" is a given in international law (Slaughter 1995). Accordingly, the global human rights standards, humanitarian law, and the emerging paradigm of the "responsibility to protect" are means through which states are held accountable for the gross violation of their citizens' human rights. In Africa, genocides, elections, and civil wars have led to the suspension of state sovereignty to hold perpetrators of crimes against humanity liable.

It is important to add that the geographical boundary erasing of globalization complicates the application of international politics. As discussed under globalization, Africa is increasingly witnessing the shift of power from the state to civil society and religious groups (Smith 2012: 28). As Engel et al. maintain, through globalization, states voluntarily transfer their sovereignty "to supranational organizations and new regionalisms" (2012: 58). In this regard, state authority and sovereignty are questioned in international politics. In sexual politics, pro-gay and anti-gay rights advocates contest sexuality and gender identity beyond state boundaries.

As autonomous nations, however, African countries employ sovereign claims to "decide who is in or out of a political community" (Devetak 2005: 174). Nobel Peace Laureate and Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's opposition to homosexuality is one example. "We've got certain traditional values in our society that we would like to preserve," she told the *Guardian* during a joint interview with former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2012. Despite Blair's advocacy for the legal equality of sexual minorities in the UK, in that joint interview he remained silent. To some extent, both Sirleaf and Blair viewed homosexuality as a domestic rather than an international relations subject.

6.10 Beyond Africa's Sexual Politics

The contestation of sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa lies at the intersection of internal anti-gay resistance, African sexual minorities' activism, and the demands for global decriminalization of homosexuality. As global North human rights defenders and nations demand the acceptance of sexual minorities, the local agency of African sexual minorities is not only demeaned but underplayed by anti-gay advocates. Rather than presenting sexual minorities as social and political actors in domestic politics, their activism is externalized—foreign interests' influence is behind sexual rights advocacy in Africa.

Nonetheless, sexuality politics in Africa demands new analytical lenses. Take President Sall's refusal to decriminalize homosexuality as an example. Indeed, Senegal is a sovereign nation, and its political processes must be respected. And just as the US moved to allow same-sex marriages on its terms, it may be logical that African nations do so at their pace without international involvement. But this raises an important question—when do nations cross the line between sovereignty and violations of human rights? This issue is critical but is lost in similar situations of international treaties and relations. For example, the US may oppose Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians but will never endorse sanctioning Israel. To assume that African nations are ignorant of the same is arrogance.

In addition, the global politicization of sexuality pushes politicians to oppose same-sex relations as a political mobilization tool. It is not homosexuality that is political, but the politics it enforces on the streets of Africa. As Chap. 5 revealed, there are many electoral incentives for opposing sexual rights in democratic Africa. Standing up against the US president is employed as a sign of strength—something that makes Robert Mugabe a hero in some African eyes.

The diplomatic contretemps that arise as foreign nations participate in perceived domestic politics speak of the dichotomy between global human rights and state sovereignty. Residual forms of colonial hegemony and postcolonial predisposition inform Africa's identities and sexual politics, and the international involvement in Africa's sexual politics (though well intended) legitimatizes African politicians' anti-gay campaigns. But it also strategically presents the global North as behind the "bad human rights" of sexual pluralism.

It is important to note that the international media's obsession with Africa's homophobia and the pressure put on African governments to decriminalize homosexuality tend to incite public rebellion by African populations. African politicians are perceived as homophobes—which may be true, but so are many Western politicians. President Obama himself evolved on same-sex marriage, and many US politicians, mostly in the Republican Party, have employed sexuality politics in their campaigns. In 2017, as Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor was running for her fouth term, she surprised the world by voting against the bill that legalized same-sex marriage. She defended her vote as due to her conviction that marriage is between a man and a woman. Since Africans follow such developments, they are aware of the double standards applied to judge Africa's human rights record.

6.11 LOOKING FORWARD

The fact that Africa exists in the twenty-first century does not minimize the role of traditional worldviews in the contestation of sexual norms. The sacredness associated with sexuality in African communities makes it highly sensitive and divisive. Since protecting or defending African religio-cultural values and children is the premise for opposing homosexuality, anti-gay activists mobilize domestic opposition to homosexuality. In Africa's dealing with the West, however, homosexuality is defined as a non-issue—making it hard for the West to hold Africa accountable for the human rights violations of LGBTI persons.

Although there is no agreement as to what constitutes "African," it is assumed that homosexuality threatens an "African identity." Hence sexual politics carries neocolonial and international relations implications. The neocolonial politics of suspicion and the double standards through which human rights are discussed and applied destabilize claims to the universality of human rights claims. As the fiasco of President Obama and President Sall reveals, many Africans are aware of Western nations' human rights abuses—from torture to unjust wars to bombings. To some extent, it is not homosexuality per se which is on trial but assumed imperialism. To Africans, President Obama wanted to impose US political will on the continent, while ignoring the US human rights record and the IR protocol. In this regard, Presidents Museveni, Sall and Kenyatta's statements were assumed to be on behalf of the entire continent—another reason media houses across the continent celebrated their presidents for standing up against perceived US bullying.

But such opposition is supported by religious leaders, who view the West as a significant threat to their religions. As discussed in Chap. 3, to Christian leaders, homosexuality is not only un-African but also un-Christian and un-biblical. Jesus, however, affirmed sexual diversity as the natural order of Creation—the following chapter explores this issue.

Notes

1. For a detailed discussion on other legal instruments as well as their limitations in international law, see Obendorf's (1999) "Homosexual Rights and the Non-Western World: A Postcolonial Reading of Homosexual Rights in International Human Rights Law," *Third World Legal Studies* 15: 179–204.
2. Here, Museveni seems aware of non-conclusive scientific theories on homosexuality. "They're disgusting. What sort of people are they?" he said. A day after signing the Bill, Museveni told CNN, "I never knew what they were doing. I've been told recently that what they do is terrible [and] disgusting. But I was ready to ignore that if there was proof that that's how he is born, abnormal. But now the proof is not there." http://www.cnn.com/2014/02/24/world/africa/uganda-homosexuality-interview/, February 25, 2014.
3. On July 31, 2014, the Constitutional Court struck down the anti-homosexuality law on a technical basis.
4. For the wider discussion of Ubuntu, see Kaoma, *God's Family, God's Earth*, 2013.

5. This situation is not unique to Africa but extends to Europe as well. Just as multi-ethnic states exist (e.g. Belgium and Switzerland), so do ethnic populations across borders—from Hungarians in Romania to separatism from the disintegration of Yugoslavia to Scotland demanding its independence from the United Kingdom. Whereas these examples can inform IR, African history with colonialism and its marginality in the international economic system sets the continent apart.

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CHAPTER 7

Contesting the Biblical Adam and Eve Narrative: Jesus on Sexual Diversity

In Chap. 6, I examined how sexual politics is affected by international relations. In this chapter, however, I argue that African sexual politics is planted in religion. Since Christians view Jesus a moral guide, I argue that Jesus attests to sexual diversity. This proposition is critical since sexual politics is built around the claim of complementarity—one is born either male or female—which to some extent contradicts Jesus's words in Matthew 19:12. In *The Anti-gay Agenda*, for example, Herman associates the US Christian Right's opposition to homosexuality to the fact that God cannot create sexual minorities. "Clearly," Herman writes, "God made Adam and Eve … and subsequent scriptures expressly condemn same-sex sexuality" (1997: 71).

7.1 A STORY OF SELF-IDENTITY: FROM MARY WAITHERA TO JAMES KARANJA

In September 2016, about a hundred people gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, for the African Regional Conference of Families, a socially conservative conclave sponsored by the US-based WCF. The WCF is an international coalition of religious rights groups (both Christian and non-Christian)

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dedicated to the notion of protecting “the natural family”—meaning families created by married heterosexual couples. WCF international meetings promote US conservative anti-gay ideologies.

Don Feder, WCF’s Coalitions Director and Coordinator of Regional Conferences, opened the 2016 gathering with a speech in which he acknowledged WCF as the official sponsor of the Nairobi conference. He went on to present the sexual rights movement as a new form of “ideological colonization” and slavery, calling on participants to work together to defend the natural family. That is nothing less than “the institution on which the fate of humanity hinges,” he said. He called human-generated climate change a hoax of the sexual revolution—a claim Michael Hichborn of the US anti-abortion and anti-gay Lepanto Institute later made the center of his presentation. Sharon Slater of another US-based organization, FWI, called on participants to oppose comprehensive sexuality education, denouncing the use of condoms and calling for abstinence-only sexual education instead.

Other speakers included Alfred Rotich, an African Roman Catholic bishop from the Kenyan Conference of Catholic Bishops (see Chap. 3), who blamed the Church of England’s position on contraceptives for abortion, “necrophilia, bestiality, paedophilia, same-sex relationships as well as calls for free sex and reproductive health services for children!” Various speakers followed Rotich’s lead in arguing that foreign interests and funders are to blame for sexual orientation and gender identity of the sort that departs from the natural family as well as reproductive rights. WCF African representative Theresa Okafor claimed that transgender individuals were mentally ill—and blamed their identity on contraceptives.

Then Gathoni Muchomba, a renowned Kenyan radio host, took the stage. In addition to being a famous media personality, Muchomba is the director of Gamafrica, a Kenyan civil society organization dedicated to supporting children with intersex conditions. Although she was not included on the original list of speakers, Muchomba issued a surprising call for the inclusion of intersex/transgender people in the proposed Kenyan National Family Promotion and Protection Policy (see Chap. 2), drafted by Kenya’s Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, which co-sponsored the WCF Nairobi meeting.

Muchomba is hardly a traditional ally of sexual minorities: she conflates gender identity and sexual orientation; she didn’t know the meaning of the LGBTI acronym; and she warned that if Kenya doesn’t address intersex and transgender issues, it won’t be able to fight “lesbianism.” She nonetheless used her platform at WCF to bring attention to the suffering of intersex and transgender children, and unwittingly advanced the cause of sexual minorities.

Among the people who apparently inspired Muchomba's advocacy is James Karanja, an intersex man who was raised as a girl. Officially named Mary Waithera, Mary chose the name James Karanja after publicly declaring his gender identity as male. Muchomba invited Karanja to address the WCF audience directly. Karanja (who does not identify as gay or transgender) told the gathering about the shame he experienced at his all-girls school, where he woke up at 3 a.m. to shower before his classmates arose; how he was later suspended because he was attracted to other girls; and how his mother suffered a mental breakdown after he came out as a man and said he was changing his name.

"I don't want to see another child go through what I went through," Karanja told the crowd.

The conference heard a number of alarming stories about sexual minorities who are forced to live as outcasts, including a child who was raised as a boy but later came out as a girl, and who, like James, was subsequently forced to leave school. The public sharing of these stories came weeks after Kenyan parliamentarian Isaac Mwaura asked lawmakers to consider a bill recognizing and accepting intersex people. Only a few years before, Kenya's High Court ordered in October 2014 that public authorities amend the transgender (born male) woman's name from Andrew Mbugua to Audrey Mbugua on her school certificate (BBC 2014). A 2009 court case also ordered the Kenyan "government to issue a birth certificate to an intersex five-year-old" whose gender was recorded with a question mark on her birth record (Migiro 2014).

Although these developments suggest advances in intersex and transgender rights activism, many Christians and the WCF cast transgender sexual minorities as mentally ill. As attorney John Chigiti of Kenya noted, intersex people are called eunuchs, or bisexual or transsexual. "The general view of the public is a cocktail … of confusion and fear," he told Reuters. It is within this socio-cultural and religious context that James Karanja delivered a message—Africa has sexual minorities, and they are not a curse.

After hearing from James, some attendees seemed moved to at least reconsider their previous positions. Bishop Rotich told me that Karanja's story illustrated the need for pastoral resources for caring for intersex people and their families. But can pastoral awareness have an effect amidst Christian protective homophobia?

In the following section, I employ Garner and Worsnip's article "Oil and Water" to examine the place of sexual minorities in the church in Africa. I then use Jesus's words in Matthew 19:12 to argue that the Christian Bible attests to sexual diversity.

7.2 Sexual Minorities and the Church in Africa

In "Oil and Water," Heather Garner (lesbian) and Michael Worsnip (a gay priest) raise critical issues about sexual minorities' place in the Church. Amidst the heteronormative values of Christianity, they contend, "it is functionally impossible for gays and lesbian people to be Christians" (Garner and Worsnip 2001: 205, 221).

Using their personal stories and relationships with their respective former denominations (which they left in their attempts to live freely without prejudice and judgment), Garner and Worsnip theologically argue against efforts by some sexual minorities to remain unaffiliated Christians since no "private" Christian exists. In their words:

> gay and lesbian people, faced with a hostile environment within churches, are very likely to tend towards some notion of Christian individualism. This enables him or her to partake in church rituals selectively and still feel part of the thrust of salvation. But at the same time, the individual does not need to take on the dairy battle of defending their personal integrity against ignorance, prejudice, and legalism. It allows them to have, frankly, the best of both worlds. But it is not an integrated, or even a particularly sustainable position. (222)

Garner and Worsnip acknowledge the value of contextual and liberation theologies in Africa. They argue that such theologies cannot apply to sexual minorities due to the heteronormative landscape in which such theologies were born. Unlike slaves, black people, and women, they maintain, sexual minorities are considered intrinsically evil—thus, they are othered as "immoral and necessarily outcast" (224). This acuity is mirrored in the Bible where all themes (they did not consider Matthew 19:12), figures, and texts confirm the oddity of sexual minorities. Aside from asserting that "attempts to uncover gay and lesbian topics in the Bible are inadequate, unsatisfying and often pathetic," they write, "There simply is no robust, healthy homosexual relationship in the biblical text, so we should stop looking for one" (226).

Garner and Worsnip further assert that heteronormative values of Christianity are in direct conflict with the gay subculture that "seems to accept more sexual contacts on more frequent basis than perhaps is the case in the heterosexual world." Aside from attributing these contacts to lack of pastoral care, and religious and social isolation, they conclude:

> If the Church is serious about looking realistically at the span of gay and lesbian sexual experience, it needs to do so not from the basis of a heteronormative universe, but from the basis of accepting that there is a whole vista of sexual experience which for historical reasons has been outside of both its sphere of operation and control but also, most likely outside its ken … only when the old paradigm is ditched as being fundamentally flawed, then the new debate can begin. (230)

7.3 AFRICAN SEXUAL MINORITIES' STORIES AND THE CHURCH

Garner and Worsnip's experiences confirm the findings of my research conducted between 2008 and 2012. From interviews, focus groups, meetings, and interactions with over 100 sexual minorities and their allies in Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe as well as in the diaspora, the majority of sexual minorities identifies as Christian; either as closeted or "private" Christians. While most religious leaders deny their existence, findings revealed that Anglican, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, and even African-Initiated Churches, among many others, have an active gay membership.

Kudakwashe (not her real name) is a lesbian from Zimbabwe. She works as a financial secretary in a Roman Catholic Church in Harare, and she is a committed Roman Catholic. People have demonized her due to her sexual orientation, and she was expelled from the choir. Asked why she still maintains her membership in a denomination that demonizes LGBTI persons, she responded, "I believe in God, and I am a lesbian, and I am proud of it" (Interview 2011). Asked whether God loved gays, she responded, "God loves people. Homosexual, heterosexual, God loves his (sic) people, because we are all his creation." Citing the book of Genesis, she added, "God loves his creation, and all that God has made is beautiful" (Interview 2011).

Like Garner and Worsnip, however, others have chosen a different route. In Uganda, a woman I call Jane, a prominent lesbian and sexual rights defender, once asked me why I supported LGBTI rights. “Father, you are a priest, so why do you fight for gay rights? The Bible is against homosexuality, and so is the church. Are you a priest really?” She went on to cite the story of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example that God hates gays. “God hates us, so why do you support us?”

Jane was shamed publicly and excommunicated when her Pentecostal Church discovered she was a lesbian. But like many sexual minorities, she has remained a private born-again Christian. In 2011, Jane spent a week praying and fasting as she awaited the outcome of her academic scholarship application. When her brother passed, like most born-again evangelicals, she so worried that he went to hell. “I did not have a chance to share Christ with him,” she said in a sorrowful voice. Jane possesses strong evangelical convictions, but struggles to negotiate her negatively defined sexuality. But one thing is clear to Jane—it is Jesus who has inspired her to fight homophobic forces in Uganda.

Jane’s experience is shared by many sexual minorities, who have left their churches due to demonization. “I am a Christian, and I used to go to church. But the moment they started talking about homosexuality, I felt out of place. I don’t go to church anymore. I pray when I wake up, before eating and going to bed. I even read my Bible daily” (Interview 2011), a gay person softly said.

While many sexual minorities have left their denominations, a small number has won acceptance from fellow Christians and pastors. As one man said, “I am Roman Catholic, and some of my friends are Roman Catholic priests. They all know that I am gay, but they don’t care. They only tell me to be careful and to use protection (condoms).”

Although Garner and Worsnip are critical of affirming churches, in the past decade or so, Africa has witnessed a growing number of LGBTI-affirming churches and ministries, mostly in urban areas. In fact, some sexual minorities worship and affiliate with such churches—mainly those associated with the US Community Metropolitan Church and the Unitarian Universalists Church. Bishop Christopher Ssenyonjo’s St. Paul’s Reconciliation Center in Uganda, Rev. Michael Kimindu of the Other Sheep, Pastor John Makokha of Riruta Hope Community Church in Kenya, and Rev. Rowland Jide Macaulay’s House of Rainbow in Nigeria are examples.

Like to so many people in sub-Saharan Africa, Christianity is a critical aspect of sexual minorities' lives. Even the lethal anti-sexual minority interpretation of the Bible, which usually characterizes African Christianity, has not deflected their love for the Holy Book. But these experiences also illustrate and somehow confirm the dilemma of many gay Africans whose spirituality helps them face discrimination from fellow churchgoers as an act of Christian witness, on the one hand, and makes them feel like outcasts, on the other. Acknowledging the limitation of biblical support for, and lack of African theological acceptance of sexual minorities, it is my contention that Jesus's words in Matthew 19:12 can positively influence Christian dialogue on sexuality.

7.4 African Biblical Interpretation Lenses

The question of biblical interpretation is behind Garner and Worsnip's argument on the heteronormative nature of the church in Africa. According to Meenan (2004: 270), the church in Africa faces the challenge of

> a distinct lack of ability to hear the text, first in its original *Sitz im Leben*, its own socio-historical context, and then second, in its consideration of the writer's intent, and third, in its unbiased approach to the African context and, in a larger sphere, to the world.

Meenan's observation speaks to the issue of biblical interpretation in the socio-economic and political context of the continent. Since the setting affects the comprehension of the text, to a greater extent, the interpreters' life experiences and the intended audience consciously or unconsciously affect how the Bible is understood, let alone applied.

In his presentation of three poles of African biblical interpretation—"text, context, and the reader's appropriation"—West writes:

> Any act of interpretation that has to do with text has at least two related components. All interpreters come to the bible (or any text) with two sets of interests, what we may call interpretive interests and life interests. Interpretive interests are those dimensions of the text that are of interest to the interpreter, while life interests are those concerns and commitments that derive or motivate the interpreter to come to the text. Life interests shape the questions which we bring to the biblical text. (2009: 38)

From this perspective, the lack of theological and pastoral interests in sexual minorities' rights partially explains the shortage of sound African Christian reflections and discourse on the subject, one can safely argue. That said, the growing visibility and violence against African sexual minorities have forced the African Academy to start exploring issues of human sexuality from the theological, pastoral, and ethical contexts.

Since African biblical interpretation seeks to address existential postcolonial and neocolonial human realities in which Africans find themselves (Sawyer 2012), biblical scholars and theologians need to seriously explore the issue of human sexuality in the church and in the Bible. While the Bible is a product of the missionary–colonial project, Africans have a special relationship with it. As Wittenberg writes:

> The Bible still plays a significant role in black communities. The general agreement is that the Bible is of fundamental importance for their life and faith: indeed, that the Bible can and does play an important role in the empowerment of communities for liberation. (2007: 137–8)

Wittenberg, however, regrets the lack of sound scholarly biblical materials tailored to ordinary Christians' religious and spiritual needs. West shares this observation—he asserts, "the Bible itself has 'good news' for Africa, and/or Africa [can] illuminate the biblical message in a way that Western biblical scholarship has not been able to do" (West 2015: 382).

While African academics may share much with Western scholars, the African and interpreters' life experiences are important aspects of African biblical interpretation. These life-interests influence African theological scholarship within the constraints of socio-historical, socio-economic, and socio-political realities of the continent. Among these realities is the early missionary/colonial project, which to some extent still affects the contemporary comprehension of the biblical text.

Despite African Christianity's claim to independence, as repeatedly noted, colonial and neocolonial forces form and to some extent inform the continent's religious identity, interests, and the interpreters' and the audience's comprehension of contemporary life. Again, West writes:

> One of the most significant contributions of African postcolonial hermeneutics is this recognition that African postcolonial interpretation (like African postcolonial identity) is itself partially constituted by colonialism.... Instead of denying this by claiming an authentically African interpretation, postcolonial interpretation embraces the multiplicity of identities and differences

> that constitute the postcolonial African context, but always with a view to harnessing these hybrid resources for decolonization. (West 2015: 366)

The influence of various forces on African biblical interpretation is not always evident to the interpreter and the audience. For instance, global Christianity, the Web, cable TV, Western theological resources, and missionaries still form and inform biblical interpretation. Amidst all these factors, however, is a desire to appropriate and apply the biblical message to the life-threatening challenges the continent faces. As Adamo rightly observes, African biblical interpretation strives to:

> be transformational and liberational; to break the hermeneutical hegemony that Eurocentric biblical scholars have long enjoyed; to understand the Bible and God in the light of African culture and tradition; to interpret the Bible existentially; to blacken the Bible; and to correct the effect of the ideological conditioning to which Africa and Africans have been subjected; and to promote African culture, tradition and identity. (2015: 47)

Framed this way, reading the Bible from the perspective of the justice-loving God is critical to African hermeneutics. In other words, African hermeneutics attempts to read the Bible "with the community" within the socio-economic context of the people's life-struggles:

> Interpreting the biblical text is never, in African biblical hermeneutics, an end in itself. Biblical interpretation is always about changing the African context. This is what links ordinary African biblical interpretation and African biblical scholarship, a common commitment to "read" the Bible for personal and societal transformation. (West 2015: 381)

Besides, African biblical interpretation seeks to relate and understand the significance of the "sacred text" in the African socio-cultural and political contexts. Since the Bible is translated into people's languages, the issue of hermeneutics moves beyond the academy. It implies assisting the believers in understanding and applying the text in their particular socio-economic and political lifeworld. As Meenan writes:

> Within African scholarship, one sees a commitment to relate biblical scholarship to the realities of Africa, an oppositional stance towards the missionary-colonial enterprise which brought the Bible to Africa, a recognition that the Bible is an important text in the African context which must be engaged

> with and by critical scholarship, and a preference for socio-historical modes of analysis for both the biblical text and the African context. (2004: 270)

But Meenan also argues that the reaction "to missionary-colonial imperialism does not appear to be particularly widespread beyond the academy" (Ibid.). In 2014, I attended a consultation on Human Sexuality in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. While pastors were highly critical of the imperialistic and neocolonial nature of the Western advanced socio-economic and political systems in Africa, most of them felt that theology in Africa should always reflect dogmas propagated by Western theologians such as Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. Attempts to challenge them to move beyond such theologies were dismissed as heretical.

From a postcolonial perspective, Meenan's observation remains a challenge to the academy—can African Christians interpret the Bible from their social/political context while remaining faithful to the original meaning of the text? Amidst the growing misuse of scriptures among untrained "prophets," pastors, evangelists, and politicians, this question is critical to the future of African Christianity. It is here that the role of the biblical scholar becomes imperative. West writes:

> The African biblical scholar is never allowed to settle in the academy; there is a constant call from ordinary African interpreters for African biblical scholars to engage with them and their realities… In sum, the presence of ordinary African interpreters and their concerns shapes the ideo-theological orientation of African biblical hermeneutics. (2010: 29)

West's observation has been picked up by missiologists. Sanneh attributes the rapid growth of Christianity in Africa to the translation of the Bible into people's languages. While Africans once viewed the Bible as the white man's book, today, it is an African sacred text, Sanneh argues (1989; 2003). The indigenization of the Bible, however, provides new challenges to Africa as the laity and, in some cases, religious leaders read and apply the text literally. In the context of homosexuality, the Bible whether correctly or wrongly understood has been used to demean and reject sexual minorities—something we find in the story from Malawi in Chap. 4. In that regard, African theologians may employ Biezeveld's concept of *listening from* as opposed to *reading with* "the other" in biblical interpretation (2009: 136). Biezeveld is speaking about the role of "the other" (the global South) in the reading of the Bible in the West, but his argument applies to African Christianity as well. Unless we learn to *listen from* "voices outside" (LGBTI persons) our heteronormative religious life and institutions, we risk ignoring LGBTI individuals in African biblical scholarship and interpretation.

7.5 Sexual Diversity: Jesus's Words in the Gospel of St. Matthew

The question of human sexuality is the most divisive issue in global Christianity. People opposed to sexual diversity use Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1–38), Leviticus 20:13, and Romans 1:32 to argue against diverse sexual orientations. Without underestimating the scholarly value of these texts, I explore the issue of human sexuality from Jesus's actual presentation of naturally born eunuchs in Matthew 19:12. I employ eunuchs to illustrate that despite the heteronormative values of Christianity, Jesus acknowledged sexual diversity in the Creation.

The wider context of this text surrounds divorce and celibacy in the early church, issues that still dominate the study of Matthew 19:1–12. African scholars, however, have done little to address naturally born eunuchs.

The Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" Jesus responded, "What God has joined together, let no one separate." When they challenged him with the Torah, Jesus replied, "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." To this, his followers responded, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry" (10). Jesus, however, responded:

> Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it. (11–12)

Since this text is found in Matthew only, some scholars such as Robinson H. Theodore argue that these words were "the opinion of the early church," ascribed to Jesus as "the epitome of what they believed his will to be" (1928: 150–151). Keener, however, observes that the fact that John the Baptist, and Jesus were unmarried suggests that Jesus could have addressed the issue of eunuchs in one way or the other (Keener 2009: 470). Accordingly, Moloney SDB of the Salesian Pontifical University posits that the harshness, offensive, and crude nature of the word "eunuch" suggests that it was never "invented" by the early church. Because Jesus uttered them, the words were preserved regardless of their crude nature (1979: 42–60).

As noted earlier, this text centers on heterosexual marriage. In line with contextual issues in hermeneutics, today, it is somehow agreed that divorce, though outlawed by Jesus, is not written in stone; rather, people must be accorded space to divorce and remarry if need be. Likewise, despite the Reformers' attempts to demean celibacy, today, this text is employed to justify the life of celibacy in the church. Thus, while there are some agreements on divorce and celibacy, "eunuchs who were born that way" are usually lost when discussing Matthew 19:11–12.

It is important to note that like in many African cultures, heterosexual marriage and procreation were expected from Jesus's audience. Jesus, however, speaks about people whose biological makeup, religious convictions, and arguably personal choice exempt them from these roles. Implied in Jesus's teaching is the fact that some people are naturally born heterosexuals, others asexual, and still others choose this lifestyle for personal reasons. I employ the term "asexuality" as opposed to eunuchs to uphold sexual diversity in the Creation.

Moreover, the heterosexual and patriarchal context in which the Bible was born could be the reason we are only alerted to male eunuchs. Arguably, Jesus also suggest that women asexuals existed in the oriental and biblical worlds. In other words, some women were among those who are born non-heterosexuals. It is telling that while the disciples wanted to impose asexual orientation on everyone, Jesus rejected it—"only those to whom [asexuality] is given can accept it" (Matthew 19:12). In other words, we have people who do not fit into the heteronormative universe in which sexuality is currently discussed—something that has led many biblical scholars in Africa, the US Christian Right, and even the Vatican to ignore people who are born neither Adam nor Eve in their theologizing and ethicizing!

7.6 Beyond Adam and Eve: The Diversity of Sexuality

Jesus's positive presentation of eunuchs has continued to puzzle scholars. Gundry and Hare independently link this text to Christian men in the early church who divorced their wives but were not allowed to remarry per Jesus's command. Specifically, Gundy writes, Matthew's "purpose is to urge full acceptance of such men in the Christian brotherhood" (Gundry 1982: 383; Hare 1993). John Wesley, however, interpreted this verse as speaking to those who choose to live as celibates in the church. Paul Edenfield, of the University of Cambridge Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies shares Wesley's observation when he concludes that "the eunuch serves as a proto-monastic ascetical type, and there are several defining qualities implicit in the example of the eunuch that prefigures later monastic ideals" (2015: 3). In addition to sharing this argument, Allison Jr. adds that religious celibacy was not uncommon in ancient Judaism—something that could have influenced the author of this text (1993: 6).

7.6.1 Eunuch in the Wider Social History

The word "eunuch" referred to men who were incapacitated and believed to be incapable of penetrating a woman (Wilson 2014: 407–408; Lev 2010). In his study of rabbinic literature, Moloney (1979: 51) identifies two types of eunuchs:

> The "eunuch of the sun" (*seris hammâh*) and "the eunuch of man" (*seris adam*). The "eunuch of the sun" is one whom the sun has always seen as such, and Matt. 19: 12 calls such people "eunuchs who have been so from birth." The "eunuch of man" is the one who has been made a eunuch by the intervention of man, and Matt. 19:12 calls such people "eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men".

Kuefler asserts that Roman law differentiated between eunuchs who were naturally born (*natura spadones*), those castrated (*thlibiac thlasiae*), and those whose penis or the entire genitalia was surgically removed (*aliud genus spadonum*). In late Christian antiquity, Kuefler (2001: 33) further observes, three primary methods were employed in making eunuchs—"amputating the penis with or without the testicles, tying the scrotum, and crushing the testicles." Unlike the first, which included the surgical removal of genitals, the other two methods would only sterilize the individual, but "leave the genitals indistinguishable from those of other men."

According to Moxnes (2010: 194), eunuchs "could not be placed securely either as male or as female." Similarly Wilson (421) contends, "the eunuch is a 'betwixt and between' paradoxical figure." Like attorney Chigiti, Sean Burke, cited by Duba (2011: 118), argues that "eunuchs were variously gendered as "not-men," "half-men," "male-female" and a dozen variants thereof. The Hebrew word *saris* refers to a castrated male, but Bible translators have used many different words in translating this word." This negativity against eunuchs was because "they mixed boundaries and their genitals did not meet the standards of bodily wholeness. Eunuchs were neither male nor female and so did not have a distinctive place on the purity map of the social body" (Wilson 410).

Regardless, this group could not be easily gendered—they were individuals who challenged and still challenge the gender binary as well as the heteronormative assumptions of patriarchy. Whereas sacred castration rituals were common, the Jewish, Roman, and Greek worlds viewed them as demeaning to mannishness.

From this perspective, Wilson argues that "the eunuch emerges above all as a gender-liminal character" (Wilson 2014: 422). Aside from noting that Josephus and Philo follow "Jewish scripture, which likewise points to the boundary-blurring nature of eunuchs," Wilson argues that in Greek and Roman literature:

> eunuchs emerge as gender-liminal figures with one foot in the realm of women and one foot in the realm of men. As unmanned men, or "non-men," eunuchs embodied all the characteristic of effeminate men, but they were also portrayed as ambiguous figures who upset the male/female gender binary. The second century C.E. satirist Lucian epitomizes the perceived ambiguity of eunuchs when he writes that "a eunuch was neither man or woman, but something composite, hybrid, and monstrous, outside human nature"… Because of their liminal status, eunuchs were allowed both in "private," domestic space with women and in "public," political space with men, often acting as couriers between these two gendered realms. (Wilson 2014: 120)

This liminality destabilized the male–female binaristic assumptions of sexuality. It also disrupted ancient heteropatriarchy and the very conception of sexuality. Talbot shares this argument when he explains Jesus's usage of the eunuch in the gospel of Matthew. He writes:

> the eunuch saying targeted male power based on gender distinctions that legitimized kyriarchy at the expense of women's equality and hence opposed Jesus' vision of the *basileia* of heaven. The eunuch saying essentially called men to refuse to play this Mediterranean machismo game, which was rooted in a culture characterized by an honor-shame protocol. Eunuchs symbolized

> the opposite in such a society; that is, impotence, effeminacy, impurity, and shame. (Talbott 2006: 41)

To some extent, these sociological characteristics defined their social roles. As Kleist (1945: 447) argues, “oriental monarchs were in the habit of appointing a man so incapacitated to act as superintendent of their harem.”[1] As among the Ila (Smith and Dale 1920), their sexual ambiguity liberated them to mix socially constructed gender roles—again disrupting the gender binary. As Wilson observes:

> On the one hand, eunuchs were often regarded as lacking libido and were thus in charge of guarding the sexual integrity of women on behalf of men or were in the employ of wealthy women themselves. On the other hand, they were also depicted as licentious lovers of both women and men. (2014: 406–407)

Furthermore, eunuchs were hardly gendered “in the arena of sexuality and sexual acts—as sexually penetrators or as sexually penetrated” (Kuefler 34). This ambiguity was partially due to their engagement in oral and same-gender sex. To some extent, this role is behind Leviticus 20:13 “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, they have committed an abomination; the two of them shall be put to death; their bloodguilt is upon them.”

7.6.2 Revisiting Matthew 19:12: Jesus, the Church, and Naturally Born Eunuch

Aside from recommending the lifestyle of eunuchs to his followers, Jesus accepted the existence of naturally born (*ἐγεννήθησαν*) non-heterosexuals. But this position is no simple undertaking. As a Jew, Jesus and his audience knew that the Torah negatively regarded eunuchs. Besides, Jesus’s audience could have been aware of the existence of eunuchs dedicated to sacred duties in other religions. The *galli*—the priests of the Syrian goddess Cybele—were eunuchs. Although this practice was common in Near East religions, the Hebrew Bible outlawed such persons from attending sacred events or serving as priests (Leviticus 21: 20). Deuteronomy 23:1 reads, “No one whose testicles have been crushed or whose penis has been cut off may come into the assembly of the Lord.”

While it is probable that Jesus spoke positively of “eunuchs” because of his single status (something his opponents could have used to demean him), Matthew 19:12 overturns the Law of Moses, which condemned eunuchs to the margins of human society. Read in conjunction with Acts 8: 26–40, whereby the Ethiopian eunuch is accepted in the early church as among God's people, in Jesus the once demeaned group is finally accepted in the kingdom of God. Hester writes:

> Jesus questions the privileged position of a heterosexist binary paradigm of identity. No matter how you view it, the figure of the eunuch as both a physical body and a social identity radically undermines the foundational assumptions used to reinforce the conservative heterosexist reading of the Bible, precisely because this body and this social identity threaten the sacred boundaries between male and female. The kingdom of heaven resides in between, even outside this dichotomy in the ultimate ancient figure of sex-gender transgression. (2005: 37)

The concept of complementarity advocated by Pope Francis, the US Christian Right and African religious leaders is hereby challenged—people are fully human by creation as opposed to their sexual role in procreation. Just as the blind man, who is another outcast in the Hebrew Bible, was born "so that the works of God might be displayed in him" (John 9: 3), eunuchs are born to add to the diverse beauty of the Creation. Put differently, it is not being born a eunuch which is unnatural—it is unnatural for all people to be born heterosexual. It is also un-Christian for the church to claim to have the power to transform eunuchs into heterosexuals—something both Jesus and Phillip did not do.

Further, Jesus challenges the concept of complementarity that Adam and Eve are the full definers of humanity. An argument that men are meant to marry women and vice versa is one natural existential condition, but Jesus alerts us to another level of human sexuality. Jesus does not promote heterosexuality over eunuchs but alerts us to the fact that not all people can fit into one culturally or religiously constructed sexual orientation. As to their sinfulness, Jesus did not stop eunuchs from being asexual. Rather, he challenged his followers to imitate their lifestyle, something the Jewish, Roman, and Greek worlds considered scandalous. Thus, as long as humanity continues to procreate, new eunuchs—and by extension sexual minorities—will be born. Therefore, African Christians' and governments' attempt to further criminalize sexual minorities will not put an end to such individuals.

Against the claim that therapy and prayers can heal such individuals, Jesus did not perceive eunuchs as ill. He healed the blind, lepers, bleeding woman, and the paralytic—but not the eunuchs. Neither did the apostles in the book of Acts. To Jesus, eunuchs are full human beings—*abantu* and the *Imago Dei*! In many respects, Jesus deconstructs the story of Creation in Genesis 1 and 2, adding that Adam and Eve are not all there is to God's Creation. In Matthew 19:12, the reader is directed to a being that is neither Adam nor Eve, but still an image of God—loved and created by the same God who made Adam and Eve.

But Matthew 19:12 invites ethical questions: What then is the goal of human sexuality, and what becomes of the slogan "Adam and Eve and not Adam and Steve?" Both St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas perceived procreation as the *telos* of human sexuality—the position still advanced by the Roman Catholic Church, US Conservatives, and African religious and political leaders. On the contrary, Jesus suggests otherwise. Indeed, eunuchs are not a threat to the traditional family, just as a celibate pope, nun, or priest is not. Against traditional dogma on procreation, not every person is created to procreate. This condition does not make them less human.

Jesus, one can safely argue, opposed the imposition of a single sexual orientation on all humanity. To him, sexuality is something that people are born into, choose for the sake of the kingdom, and, in the context of human rights cultures, choose for personal preference. The Spirit's acceptance of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40) and his subsequent baptism by Phillip suggests that sexual identity is no longer a barrier to becoming a Christian. As people exposed to the Jewish faith, Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch knew that the Torah did not approve of eunuchs.

The Spirit who accepted eunuchs in the kingdom of God broke this taboo. To the Jewish mind, this paradigm shift was highly scandalous—it was breaking the law of Moses. Being eunuchs on account of the gospel, Talbott writes, is "becoming neither male nor female per social scripts; that is, it meant stepping outside the structure of ancient Mediterranean kyriarchy" (2006: 42). In other words, in the Kingdom inaugurated by Jesus and the Holy Spirit, humanity becomes one—all distinctions disappear—lesbians, transgender, bisexual, straights, eunuchs, and gays are now equal—for in Christ, there is neither gentiles and Jews, females and males, gays and straight; we are all equal in the eyes of the Creator (Galatians 3:28).

7.7 This Thing Is Foreign: Said Emperor Domitian—Says Robert Mugabe

Like African religious and political leaders and the Vatican, the Jewish, Greek, and Roman worlds viewed eunuchs as the embodiment of foreign values. As with the Bible, the Roman Empire prohibited men from joining the cult of Syrian goddess Cybele due to its foreignness. Reminiscence of African religious and political leaders, "both the Greek and Roman authors describe the galli as effeminate, 'foreign' followers of the Syrian goddess." (Wilson 2015: 121; 2014: 407–408). Like in many African nations, this assumed "foreignness" of eunuchs led Roman officials to employ "drastic means to prevent the creation of such ambiguous men/women." By the end of the first century CE, the emperor Domitian outlawed castration to stop the creation of eunuchs in the Roman Empire (Ibid.: 407).

Domitian's fear was equally shared by the British East Indian Company in mid-nineteenth-century colonial India. According to Hinchy, British officials barred *khwajasarais* (eunuchs) from holding public office or enlisting in the army since they destabilize sexual boundaries. Although traditional Indian culture regarded eunuchs positively, colonial officials influenced by the Victorian era values viewed them negatively. Hinchy attributes this transformation to the Victorian changes in the British Empire: the constriction "of the definition of the family and notions of sexual respectability"; the Evangelical gendering of spaces—feminine "private sphere" for women and masculine "public sphere" for men; and the privileging of Victorian "conceptions of sexual practices" (2015: 31–35).

While the British viewed sexual minorities as deprived savages, in postcolonial Africa, African leaders such as Robert Mugabe and Museveni externalize them. Like the British and Roman Empires, they are stopping advocacy on sexual rights on the premise that foreign interests recruit and turn the youth into homosexuals. Conversely, African eunuchs/sexual minorities are said to import "foreign" values. Thus, eunuchs/sexual minorities are un-African and un-Christian—the claim that betrays Jesus's own words.

7.8 Looking to Jesus

Scholarly studies of eunuchs reveal that they had more in common with sexual minorities than what religious leaders want to accept. In part, protective homophobia is highly driven by the effeminate and sometimes gender-liminal nature of same-sex relationships—who is the woman/man?

Who cooks and sweeps the house? Why do women want to dress/behave like men and vice versa? All these questions suggest that sexual liminality threatens mannishness.

Jesus's attitude toward eunuchs raises many pastoral questions—how can the church provide pastoral care to transgender and intersex individuals and their families if it denies sexual diversity? The experiences of Equatorial Guinea's Genoveva Anonma, 2012 African female footballer of the Year, and South African Olympic Gold Medalist Caster Semenya—and the humiliation they went through to ascertain their gender identities—are representative of millions of Africans whose crime, like James Karanja, is being born this way.

Furthermore, if Jesus speaks about people who are born eunuchs, what does this say about heterosexual marriage? In this text, the stigma that characterizes single persons in Africa is confronted. Heterosexual marriage may be "sanctioned" in Genesis, but Jesus taught otherwise.

Finally, there is nothing unnatural about being born a eunuch—it is a natural form of being *umuntu*. Attempts of African Christians, the Vatican, and the US Christian Right to impose a single sexual orientation on every person under the rubric of complementarity contradict Jesus's position too. Jesus opposed imposing the life of eunuchs on his followers and vice versa; the Church should follow his wisdom when dealing with issues of human sexuality—"The one who can accept this should accept it." In other words, our gender identities and sexual orientations do not make us God's children—we are all God's lovely children despite our diverse sexual orientations or gender identities.

Notes

1. This position seems to be behind Joseph's role in Potiphar's house in Genesis 39.

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CHAPTER 8

A Dance of Many Tunes

The growing influence of Christianity amidst the challenges of globalization and democracy is directly related to the resurgence of protective homophobia in sub-Saharan African politics. This phobia is mostly directed on attempts to "protect" Africa—culture, religion, and young people—from the assumed "global gay agenda." Since the social location of "protective homophobia" is locally defined and globally influenced, sub-Saharan Africa is witnessing a growing democratic contestation of sexuality in both domestic and interstate politics.

There is no evidence to the existence of the *global homosexual agenda*, but the claim of battling "the global homosexual agenda" is established on the continent. This conspiracy presents Africa and the youth as helpless victims to be rescued from this evil agenda. In this case, protective claims characterize African opposition to homosexuality—it is another way to protect Africa from the global North exploitation.

The contestation of sexuality, however, is not new to the continent—in Christian Africa, it dates to the seventeenth- to nineteenth-century colonial and the Christianization projects. At that time Africans contested the Victorian sexual norms that sought to displace sexuality from its central place in their worldviews. After many years of resistance, these Victorian norms were re-appropriated—the Victorian sexual norms became African and so did Christianity. Various sexual rituals such as *cisungu*, however, reveal how sexuality was upheld socially in pre-colonial Africa. By their persistence amidst various social forces, such rituals are contesting postcolonial sexual landscapes—the very dynamics propelled by globalization.

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Although these dynamics are many, globalization, the growing human rights cultures, international relations, and the rapid growth of global religion (Christianity and Islam) have created an environment in which protective homophobia ensues. For this reason, the human rights frame is inadequate just as the religious one. As this study demonstrates, Africa's sexual politics is a dance of many tunes—it does not belong to one academic discipline.

Globalization does not eliminate local and cultural differences; hence, the shift in sexual norms in Western Christianity affects Africa's sexual politics. The progress on same-sex marriages and the dwindling numbers of Christians in the global North affect how African Christians and the US Right interpret sexual diversity—it is at par with secularism (Pew Research Center 2013; Kollman 2007). In a continent where the majority is highly religious, the misrepresentation of sexual minorities as anti-Christianity provokes organized religious, political, and public disgust. This religio-cultural context is fundamental to the contestation of sexuality in Africa.

The post-1990s' African political landscape established the role of the civil society in the contestation of socio-cultural, socio-economic, socio-political, and socio-religious values. While some civil society organizations are informed by the human rights cultures, in Christian Africa, the church is one of the most prominent civil society organizations. Aside from providing social services, the church has a long history in African politics. In addition to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, human rights advocacy, democratization, and globalization enhanced the church involvement in sexuality politics. In other words, the ghostly longevity of the church's socio-political role in Africa places Christianity at the center of the contestation of sexuality. To some extent, the church defines what constitutes human rights; hence, to engage in sexual politics in sub-Saharan Africa is to contest Christianity as a sub-culture, social construct and a political actor. In fact, much of the effort to undermine sexual rights rides on the fear of secularism. Against the argument that African sexual minorities are instruments of the West, the secularization of the African democratic space through globalization and democratic deliberations creates socio-religious moral panic associated with sexual norms and values, thereby inviting the politics of disgust in the public square.

The social panic generated by globalization and human rights cultures forces communities to oppose sexual rights as a cultural survival mechanism. But it also increases surveillance of sexuality—increasing societal and religious policing of the sexual. To some extent, protective homophobia normalizes sexual panic—it works as the buffer zone to the threat of rapid socio-cultural changes enhanced by globalization and capitalism. Amidst rapid changes, religion offers social security to Africans due to its conservative proclivities. It is therefore critical for human rights advocates to engage Christianity in sexual politics.

In addition, cultural, religious, and postcolonial predispositions inform sexuality politics in Africa. The history of colonialism, Christianization, and civilization/globalization is the lens through which sexuality is debated. Since sexuality revolves around social and religious values, Christian sexual norms become the basis for public policy. For this very reason, African sexual politics is a contest between localized religiously informed norms and the globalized human rights cultures. Paradoxically, both the defense of cultural values and sexual orientation and gender identity are acknowledged human rights.

While cultural predisposition results from the religiosity of Africans, Christianity and Islam play a significant role in the appropriation of traditional religious beliefs and convictions. Since an African is not entirely divorced from this traditional worldview, the application of Christianity or Islam is planted in the traditional ontology, in which the binary between "the sacred and the profane" is hard to strike—both worlds are intricately intertwined. Since religion is one of the key domestic variables that influence the perception of sexuality (de Groot and Morgan 2014; Miescher et al. 2015; Kollman 2007; Pew Research Center 2013), it provides the motive for Africa's resistance to homosexuality. But it also makes African religious leaders prominent actors in domestic and global sexual politics.

Enforced by globalization, sexuality politics is sustained ecumenically—it brings together diverse Christian traditions. African Evangelicals/Pentecostals may hold very negative views about the Roman Catholic Church, but when it comes to "protecting" Africa from the international homosexual agenda, they are bedfellows. Although the exploration of the newfound partnership between African Catholicism and Evangelical/Pentecostal Christianity is beyond the scope of this study, African Evangelicalism is highly informed by US Evangelicalism. In this regard, the long-established relationship between the US Christian Right and US Catholicism seems to influence Evangelical/Pentecostal relationships with Catholicism in Africa as well.

The examination of sexuality politics in Africa cannot ignore Roman Catholicism. In 2012, the BBC put the number of Catholics in Africa at 176 million. Aside from various religious orders (Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, etc.) operating health, academic, and policy-related institutions and think-tanks, Roman Catholicism accounts for over a third of African Christians. In sexual politics, the Vatican serves as the movement's intellectual base to sexual politics through its various scholastic secretariats. This relationship raises an important question, who is influencing who in the contestation of sexuality? Is the concept of "ideological colonization" and "anti-gender ideology" from the Vatican or the US Christian Right? Pope Francis's use of these terms—the very ones employed by fringe characters in the US Christian Right—gives credence to "crackpot bigotry" (Ponsor 2017: 2), creating a danger for sexual minorities.

Similarly, protective homophobia unites the Cross and the Crescent. Whereas many African Christians consider Islam as a significant threat to the future of African Christianity, sub-Saharan Africa is witnessing interfaith corroboration in sexual politics. Partially this is because both religions share aspects of the Hebrew Bible as well as the suspicious perception of the West. When President Museveni signed Uganda's Anti-homosexuality Bill into law in February 2014, the heads of the Anglican Church of Uganda, the Islamic community in Uganda, Evangelicals/Pentecostals, and the Roman Catholic Church applauded him jointly. Likewise, Christians and Muslims heralded President Jonathan for assenting to Nigeria's anti-gay law.

It is critical to note that postcolonial and religious predispositions are also the lenses through which Western involvement in African sexual politics is judged, thereby feeding into neocolonial "suspicion" politics. Nonetheless, when it comes to sexual rights pugilism, this neocolonial facet does not reflect the realities on the ground. As the WCF Nairobi meeting revealed, prominent anti-LGBTQ rights advocates are associated with and funded by global North anti-gay advocates. Since the anti-gay movement benefits from local and global ideological and movement infrastructure, it has succeeded in deflecting neocolonial accusations to Western pro-gay rights advocates. It has also shaped public debate on homosexuality mostly through politics of disgust, identity, and cultural politics. This is because the African public space is highly influenced by, and planted in religion—allowing religious leaders to influence how human rights are understood and applied. Bluntly stated, Africans seem to acknowledge select human rights, but not all human rights.

In addition, religious predisposition can explain the growing marriage between Islam, Protestantism, Evangelicalism, Pentecostalism, and Roman Catholicism. It is also an example of some unintended benefits of sexual politics: it is aiding interfaith and ecumenical relationships (de Groot and

Morgan 2014: 8). That these religious communities join hands in fighting their perceived "common" enemy suggests the insidious nature of sexuality politics. It also illustrates the limitations of the secular human rights frame in negotiating sexual rights in Africa. Religious leaders not only reject the notion that homosexuality is a human rights issue, but they also appeal to religious texts and convictions which they believe prohibit same-gender relationships. It is within this socio-political and religious climate that the contestation of sexuality occurs.

But 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 extortion, blackmail, and HIV/AIDS. Since the shadow existence is employed to deny their existence, sexual minorities who come out do so at the cost of their own lives. Due to globalization and human rights cultures, however, the persecution of sexual minorities invites human rights solidarity from the global North.

Whereas historical evidence of the existence of homosexuality long before colonization abound, homosexuality is viewed as a Western export—a form of cultural imperialism. Coupled with the accusation that the rich white gays are taking advantage of Africa's abject poverty to recruit young people into homosexuality, African sexual minorities and their allies are smeared as selfish individuals after monetary gain. Thus the involvement of Western pro-gay groups in sexual politics opens sexual minorities to the accusation of being conduits of imperialism. Yet due to globalization, such involvement is unavoidable. But as indicated throughout this study, African sexual politics rides on the continent's postcolonial predisposition—the distrust of the West; thus, anti-gay messages carry neocolonial accusations. To some extent, such charges are critiques of the West's undemocratic relationship with Africa. As President Obama's encounters with African presidents showed, in international relations, Africa is no longer a junior partner. This is not to say that the international community has no role in African sexual politics (Bosia 2014). As the deportation of Pastor Anderson from Botswana revealed, African presidents also pay attention to how they are perceived in international circles. In this regard, international activism has a role to play in African sexual politics.

It is important, however, to note that Africans are highly sensitive to neocolonialism and imperialism. The appeal to pan-Africanism more than nationalism characterizes African sexual politics. Informed by postcolonial predisposition through which Africans define themselves vis-à-vis the outside world, the continental identity is employed to protect "Africa" from foreign cultures. Although no single definition exists as to what "African" means, the term is employed to contrast Africa from the West or foreign cultures.

Nonetheless, the fear of "foreign cultures" is not limited to Africa. Across the globe, globalization is forcing nationalist activism. The 2016 election of Donald Trump as US President, the 2016 victory of Brexit—the UK's vote to leave the European Union—and the rise of nationalist parties and populist politicians in Europe point to the social destabilization of globalization. If immigrants are perceived as threats to European and North American cultures, so are sexual minorities to many Africans. As Bosia (2014: 264) rightly observes, "sexual expression and intimacy between men have been closed down as policing and moral panic ensnare a kind of unintentional homosexual, but analytically the imbrication of sexuality with neocolonial power structures can elide and distort a truly more complicated LGBT experience." In other words, it is not the "gay person" being contested but what the gay person represents in the public sphere—global cultures and neocolonialism. As the ILGA-RIWI survey (2016), the case of Karanja and President Museveni's letter (2013) suggest, many Africans are sympathetic to sexual minorities as individuals but oppose what they seem to "represent"—cultural imperialism.

Domestically, the claim that homosexuality is a donor-driven agenda gives African religious and political leaders ammunition to oppose sexual rights. Because politicians understand the frustration of many Africans over supposed global injustices, they package their anti-gay messages as defending an African cultural identity and religion. Moreover, by defining homosexuality as a Western imposition, politicians negatively define the West. In doing so, they attract support from the overtly religious electorate, while negatively projecting Africa's socio-economic plight on the West. Yet the growing visibility of sexual minorities also destabilizes the *hetero-sexualization* of the African identity. Through the politics of being, sexual minorities are not just reclaiming their political and to some extent cultural space, but also reforming and informing the public deliberations on sexuality.

Further, the politics of passing as some sexual minorities switch camps and join anti-gay advocates muddles African sexual politics. Aside from complicating the contestation of sexuality in the public sphere, such individuals are used to illustrate not only that homosexuality is curable, but also that gays exist for monetary gain.

It is vital to note that the pressure of lineage perpetuation encourages "passing" as well. Gay persons mostly pass into "heterosexual marriages" to negotiate social stigma as Allman et al.'s (2007) study of MSM in Nigeria shows. Like the lesbian couple in Malawi (see Chap. 5), heterosexual marriage accords sexual minorities a chance to engage in same-sex relations. Passing, however, has serious public health ramifications since "not all gays [use] condoms despite understanding the risks involved" (Allman 2007: 154). Allman et al.'s study confirms the UNAIDS (2006) observation that MSM "are often married, especially when discriminatory laws or social stigma of male sexual relations exist." That said, the medicalization of homosexuality in Africa ignores the fact that sexual minorities' needs go beyond sex.

Moreover, the Vatican, US Christian Right, and African Bishops and politicians conflate homosexuality with "same-sex marriages." In this regard, it is hard to determine whether they are opposed to "same-sex marriage" or homosexuality per se. Such ambiguity allows Pope Francis to claim support for gays, while opposing same-sex marriage and transgender rights. But it also legitimizes anti-gay laws that bar same-sex couples from marriage and the adoption of children.

Related to same-sex marriage is the recruitment hypothesis. The answer to this hypothesis is equally complex. Like in other social issues, the accusation of wealthy Westerners and rich Africans seeking same-gender sex with poor African sex workers cannot be denied entirely. Such individuals, however, are not being recruited—they choose to use their bodies for financial gain. To claim that foreign interests recruit such persons is like saying that heterosexual sex workers are recruited in heterosexuality. Besides, sex tourism is not just limited to gays but to heterosexuals as well.

Most importantly, the pedophilia conspiracy—the hypothesis that sexual minorities are a danger to children—is employed to deny sexual minorities their human rights. Yet no evidence backs this argument (Ponsor 2017: 7).[1] Regardless, the linking of homosexuality to child abuse aids politics of disgust. By presenting the boy-child sexual abuse as "homosexuality," the perpetual criminalization of same-sex loving people is justified. In Kenya, the Anglican Bishop Kagunda of Mt. Kenya West reportedly expelled a priest for "homosexuality." But it turned out that the priest sexually abused young boys. To challenge this hypothesis, there is a need for sexual rights advocates to increase public education on sexual orientation and gender identity. Amidst all the excitement that homosexuality causes in Africa, there is a need to accept that child abuse knows no sexual orientation and must be addressed holistically. The abuse of boys is not worse than that of girls—heterosexual and homosexual child molesters are criminals and cannot be defended in the name of sexual rights.

Despite protective homophobia's adverse effects on sexual minorities, the contestation of sexuality in sub-Saharan Africa has some unintended benefits. Protective homophobia has brought the human rights discourse at the forefront of African politics. In this regard, the contestation of sexuality is unwittingly playing an important role in the development of African democratic cultures. As in US politics, religious leaders attach their opposition to homosexuality to votes, while politicians employ it to entice religious endorsements. Although how human rights are applied is usually contextual, Africans are slowly establishing the culture in which human rights can blossom. The contestation of sexuality by pro-gay and anti-gay rights advocates is interpreted as exercising one's democratic rights of expression and freedom of associations which are fundamental to human rights cultures. In short, both groups are active political actors in sexual rights democratic deliberations—they know that they can influence public policy through social activism.

Africa's protective homophobia cannot be addressed fully without the daily experiences of sexual minorities. The various stories shared in this study suggest a new way of examining human sexuality and the politics it invites. Rather than ignoring such experiences, there is a need to engage them in the study of sexuality in Africa. It is for this reason that the concept of *ubuntu* can positively inform both local and international sexual politics. Sexual politics is about people—it carries the human face.

Finally, the emphasis placed on same-sex sexual acts as opposed to sexual minorities' humanity robs them of their authentic humanity or *ubuntu*. Sexual minorities are not just fighting for the rights to have sex—despite the emphasis placed on it. They are fighting for the rights to exist as human beings with equal rights to other vehicles of social life—employment, legal protection, and accessing health services, among many others. I hope that scholars and religious leaders will help Africa acknowledge the humanity of sexual minorities, as citizens as well as beutiful and sacred children of the Soil.

NOTES

1. In a footnote Judge Ponsor (2017: 7) writes, "The United States Supreme Court itself has recognized the dignified and proper status of "tens of thousands of children now being raised by same-sex couples.""

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Index

A
Activism
  anti-gay, 67, 88, 90, 92, 93, 95, 144
  pro-gay, 62, 89, 95, 131
Adam and Eve, 91, 92, 149–167
African bishops, 54, 132, 177
African Christianity, 50, 63, 65, 66, 68, 155, 156, 158, 174
African Union (AU), 6, 7, 117, 136, 141
Anglican Communion, 56, 63
Anti-Homosexuality Bill, 2, 60, 62, 75, 113, 126, 127, 174
Ascripted identity, 6, 103

B
Bible, 21, 27, 50, 56, 67, 68n1, 74, 91, 115, 152, 154–158, 160, 162–164, 166, 174
Biblical interpretation, 59, 155–159
Bishops, 8, 51–56, 62, 68n2, 73, 132, 150, 177

C
Catholic Church, 51, 53, 55, 57, 65, 153, 165, 173, 174
Christianization projects, 21, 31, 171
Christian mission, 4, 59, 65, 66
Church, 2, 3, 5, 12, 31, 36, 37, 40, 41n4, 47–49, 51, 52, 55–60, 65, 67, 68n2, 80, 90, 91, 102, 105, 107, 108, 113, 120, 150, 152, 153, 155, 156, 159–161, 163–165, 167, 172, 174
Cisungu, 35, 37, 38, 171
Civil society, 3, 12, 62, 63, 80, 94, 102, 108, 116, 120, 138, 139, 143, 150, 172
Colonialism, 9, 24, 25, 31, 39, 78, 84, 95, 104, 108, 131, 138, 146n5, 156, 173
Cultural, 4–7, 9–13, 22, 23, 30, 47, 53, 56, 59, 65, 67, 75–88, 92, 94, 103, 106–110, 113, 114, 120, 123, 135, 139, 140, 144, 164, 172–176

Note: Page number followed by 'n' refers to notes.

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K. Kaoma, *Christianity, Globalization, and Protective Homophobia*,
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Cultural pluralism, 88, 103, 106
Cultural politics, 13, 60, 107, 108, 114–118, 123, 174

D
Democracy, 2–5, 13, 62, 68, 76, 83, 84, 95, 99–103, 105–107, 109–111, 120, 123, 130, 142, 144, 171, 172, 178

E
Eunuchs, 26, 151, 159–167
European Union, 3, 67, 125, 176
Evangelicals, 8, 26, 29, 48, 51, 54, 57–60, 63, 67, 94, 102, 116, 154, 166, 173, 174
Externalization of sexuality, 1, 123, 143

F
Foucault, M., 5, 30

G
Global
  religion, 4, 13n1, 50, 64, 75, 80, 139, 172
  sexual rights, 4, 47, 56, 66, 77, 79, 83, 93, 144, 172, 174
  values, 88
Global gay agenda, 171
Globalization, 4, 5, 11, 13, 28, 31, 39, 50, 65, 66, 73–95, 99, 104, 105, 108, 139, 142, 143, 171–173, 175, 176
Glocalization, 91, 99
Gutmann, A., 13, 105, 106, 109–111, 114, 115, 118

H
Hancock, A., 13, 106, 112–114, 117
Heteropatriarchy, 28, 162
Heterosexual, 3, 9, 23, 26, 31, 40, 49, 52, 76, 112, 128, 150, 153, 160, 164, 167, 177, 178
HIV/AIDS, 3, 30, 32, 113, 172, 175
Homosexual agenda, 1, 12, 47, 59, 68, 91, 107, 171, 173
Homosexuality, 1–13, 21–28, 30, 39, 47–54, 56–67, 68n1, 68n3, 74, 77, 79, 82, 85–95, 99, 100, 102, 107, 108, 112, 113, 116–118, 120, 124–131, 138, 141, 143–145, 145n2, 149, 154, 158, 171, 173–178
Human rights, 1, 27, 28, 40, 48, 49, 58, 60, 62, 66, 67, 74, 79, 83, 88–90, 93, 94, 99, 124, 125, 127, 129, 133, 136–138, 142–145, 165, 172–175, 177, 178
Human sexuality, 3, 10, 13, 29, 48, 49, 56, 57, 63, 68, 85, 89, 156, 159, 164, 165, 167, 178

I
Identity, 1, 5–11, 13, 49, 52, 54, 76, 79, 83–86, 88, 99–120, 123–126, 131, 134, 135, 138, 139, 141, 143–145, 150, 151, 156, 157, 164, 165, 174, 176, 177
Identity politics, 88, 109, 114, 123
Imperialism, 4, 5, 31, 65, 145, 158, 175, 176
International relations, 4, 10, 13, 120, 123, 149, 172, 175
Internet, 4, 5, 80, 104
Islam, 1, 4, 9, 13n1, 50, 63, 65, 67, 107, 116, 172–174

J

Jesus, 6, 13, 86, 145, 149

K

Kadaga, Rebecca (Speaker), 25, 132
Kenya, 2, 8, 13, 35, 47, 53–56, 63, 64, 87, 90, 94, 104, 129, 131, 132, 149–151, 153, 154, 177
King Henry VIII, 21

L

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI), 2, 24, 48, 49, 51, 62, 79, 125, 153, 154, 159

M

Malawi, 2, 27, 37, 53, 64, 73–75, 84, 87, 89, 90, 117, 153, 177
Mwanga, Kabaka, 24
Men who have sex with men (MSM), 3, 177
Missionaries, 5, 9, 30–32, 37, 39, 50, 59, 65, 66, 80, 84, 91, 105, 156, 157

N

Ngweko, 39
Nigeria, 2, 8, 27, 53, 56, 64, 65, 87, 89, 132, 137, 153, 154, 174, 177
Norms, 5, 6, 10, 23, 30–32, 34, 36, 40, 53, 65, 77, 78, 81, 84, 85, 88, 91, 94, 95, 99, 103, 105, 110, 111, 115, 116, 118, 125, 128, 133–138, 140, 144, 171–173

P

Patriarchy, 37, 41n4, 78, 113, 162
Pentecostals, 48, 50, 57, 58, 62, 63, 65, 67, 80, 90, 92, 102, 108, 153, 154, 173, 174
Politics of being, 13, 47–49, 68, 93, 111, 113, 176
Politics of disgust, 13, 112–114, 123, 174, 177
Pope Francis, 25, 28, 29, 51, 53, 55, 58, 68, 73, 164, 174, 177
Predisposition
  cultural, 9, 10, 173
  postcolonial, 6, 10, 11, 47, 53, 59, 65, 76, 79, 84, 131, 138, 144, 173, 175, 176
  religious, 9, 107, 174
President
  Kenyatta, Uhuru, 13, 107, 124, 129–132, 134
  Mugabe, Robert, 2, 6, 9, 64, 101, 137, 144, 166
  Museveni, Yoweri, 13, 25, 26, 53, 64, 94, 101, 102, 124, 126–129, 132, 141, 174, 176
  Obama, Barack, 6, 13, 124–132, 134, 136–138, 142, 144, 145, 175
  Sall, Marky, 124, 128, 129, 131, 134, 142, 143, 145
Protective homophobia, 1–3, 5–7, 12, 13, 28, 50, 53, 67, 73, 80, 93, 100, 103, 109, 112, 114, 118, 123–126, 166, 171, 172, 174, 178

R
Religions, 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 13n1, 29, 31, 33, 47–68, 75, 77, 80, 84, 85, 95n6, 99, 102, 107, 109–111, 113, 120, 124, 128, 139, 145, 149, 163, 171–174, 176
Religious leaders, 6, 8, 9, 12, 39, 40, 47, 73, 99, 118, 138, 145, 153, 158, 164, 166, 173–176, 178

S
Sexual, 1, 21–40, 47, 73, 123, 149, 171
Sexual diversity, 1, 3, 9, 12, 13, 22–24, 78, 79, 145, 149, 172
Sexuality, 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 21, 47–49, 51, 57, 59, 60, 63, 66, 67, 74–79, 82, 84, 85, 88–91, 95, 102, 104, 108, 109, 111, 112, 114, 116, 120, 124–126, 130, 132, 133, 143, 144, 149, 150, 154, 155, 158, 160, 162, 163, 165, 171–176, 178
Sexual minorities, 1–3, 5, 10, 22, 24, 26, 28, 36, 47, 51, 53, 57, 59, 60, 64, 67, 68, 68n2, 73–79, 89, 93, 94, 95n4, 100, 102, 103, 107, 110, 111, 113–117, 120, 123–127, 130, 131, 133, 136, 143, 149–156, 158, 164, 166, 172, 174–178
Sexual politics, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11–13, 21, 24, 27, 30, 47, 73, 99, 149, 172–176, 178
Social media, 4, 40, 75, 104
Social movement, 62, 66, 86, 111, 115, 117
Sodom and Gomorrah, 28, 50, 58, 67, 68n3, 74, 154, 159
Solidarity, 6, 106, 110, 113, 114, 128, 133, 136, 137, 141, 175
Sovereignty, 76, 77, 123–145
Sub-Saharan Africa, 2, 3, 8, 28–33, 50, 63, 73, 100, 101, 104, 108, 117, 120, 143, 155, 171, 172, 174, 178

T
Traditional
  family values, 12, 60, 63, 67, 90, 118
  healers, 24
  leaders, 28, 40
  religion, 4, 9, 50

U
Ubuntu, 49, 133, 135, 140, 145n4, 178
Uganda, 2, 8, 13, 24, 25, 35, 48, 49, 53, 56, 60–64, 75, 79, 84, 87, 89, 93, 94, 101, 102, 108, 114, 116, 126, 127, 132, 137, 141, 142, 153, 154, 174
UnAfrican, 1, 123
United Nations, 3, 12, 61, 67, 92, 103, 125, 126
US Christian conservatives, 2, 73, 74, 89

V
Values, 4, 5, 10, 26, 29–33, 36, 39, 40, 47, 49, 55, 58–60, 63, 65, 66, 76, 77, 80–86, 88, 90, 92, 95, 99, 100, 104, 107, 108, 110, 111, 115, 116, 118–120, 129, 131, 135, 136, 142–144, 152, 153, 159, 166, 172, 173
Vatican, 9, 29, 39, 51–56, 62, 68, 86, 87, 91, 92, 160, 166, 167, 174, 177
Victorian era, 30, 31, 35, 47, 166

W
Western
  media, 124, 131, 132
  nations, 73, 128, 133, 145
World Congress of Families (WCF), 24, 54, 90, 149

Z
Zambia, 2, 26, 27, 33, 38, 41n4, 53, 57, 87, 89, 90, 100, 104, 109, 117
Zimbabwe, 2, 22, 35, 41n3, 90, 101, 137, 153