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Open Talk Magazine

Dare to think

Issue 4 Sept. 2013 **ABORTION ON THE RISE** Ushs 2,000/=, US\$1

TEENS DIE AS THEY DO BACKSTREET ABORTIONS



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EDITORIAL



Welcome to yet another exciting magazine, the Open Talk Magazine (OTM), the only magazine that gives young people a platform to bring out their views without censoring them because a certain section of people take them to be culturally or religiously offensive. The OTM brings out issues as they are without covering them up.

In this issue, we still expose the hidden issues regarding reproductive health and sex related concerns that gravely affect young people and gradually force them out of school. Aware that the parents and teachers are too shy to talk about sex before teens, that the government is dragging its feet when it comes to having sex education an item on the school calendar. Aware that religious leaders hide behind dogmas to deny teens a chance to learn what they ought to know in regard to sex and sexuality, that cultural leaders are too busy preserving a culture trait that does not allow free talking and sharing knowledge in regard to sex yet at the same time teens are busy having sex and getting into trouble; the OTM seeks to bridge that gap and save lives of many innocent teens by providing a platform in which their views can be freely shared and knowledge can be easily obtained. That is why the OTM exists.

In this issue, we extensively handle the critical issues of our life; ABORTION. Aware that lives of innocent teens and young mothers perish annually as a result of backstreet abortions, the OTM sought to candidly bring this issue to the fore so that all the stakeholders concerned can stop pretending that this is not a serious issue and instead start focusing on the best practical way forward to save so many other lives from perishing today and in the near future.

There are several teens concerns that are handled in this issues. Teens have openly talked about the issue of having mobile phones at school. Recently the ministry come out with a statement to the effect

that students would be free to have phones at school but the communication did not even last for a week as the Education Minister, Hon. Jesca Alupo came out strongly telling every one that phones would not be allowed at school. The OTM has given young people a chance to talk about this issue as well .It is vital that their views are put into consideration before any policy that affects them is implemented.

We all know that teens are having sex. Don't we? Even when we pretend not to know, statistics will continue proving it that indeed teens are having sex,

"One Generation Plants a Tree, Another Generation Gets a Shade"

yes, un protected sex and they are contributing to the soaring rates at which our population is escalating beating many world records. In this Issue, teens have discussed the issue of having boyfriends and girlfriends and they have given their honest opinions. Its is up to all stakeholders

to listen to the voices of the affected and make wise decisions before our children land into further trouble.

This Magazine being a handiwork of a humanist organisation, we have created room to expose our readers to other realities of life .Are you aware that Christianity is dying in England and France; that churches are getting empty as people opt out? Read this issue and get more details. The magazine has also brought you the dangers of too much religion. Why should a sensible person kill another because of differences in religious opinions?

In this issue, we have gone further to expose to the reader the new scientific discovery on the origin of life, this may help you to understand the origin of the earth and thereby gradually be in charge to interpreted the basis of all the lies in the name of creation stories and all these mad made beliefs.

Do you know that Suzy Monte is the world's oldest

model at 62 but her beauty is a source of envy to many young girls the world over? Are you aware that Mike Tyson is on the verge of death due to excessive drug abuse? Read this OTM issue and learn more.

This Magazine is meant to inspire you live your life in all its fullness. Leo Igwe is calling upon all African Sceptics to arise and we are calling upon our dear readers to do all that it takes to save lives of our vulnerable teens.

Thanks to HAMU and the people and government of Norway, the OTM is out and HALEA is able to continue serving young people in Uganda. Our pledge is to continue serving you whenever the opportu-

nity knocks. We yearn to see our works make differences, positive differences in the lives of people we serve. We hope that you do not only read this magazine but put into action the good lessons learnt from it. Enjoy.

KATO MUKASA is the Executive Director of HALEA Youth Support Centre and Managing Editor of the Open Talk Magazine

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Abortion Cases on the Rise in Uganda as Teens Die in Backstreet Operations.

Kato Mukasa.

The term Abortion is one of the commonest words known to many a teen that if you asked a group of teenagers to choose between defining a university, a scholarship and abortion, many of them without labouring to think will choose to define abortion because it is all easy to know what it means in the simplest term.

Teens are busy having sex and doing abortions and many Ugandans continue to pretend that sex education remains and unwanted item on the school menu. Teens are actively engaged into sex as early as ten yet they is no chance to get exposed to reproductive health and use of contraceptives.

I first encountered an abortion case in 1999 while teaching English Lesson to Senior Four students in a school whose name I will not disclose for obvious reasons. In the middle of an interesting lesson, one of these pretty young girls begun to sob and within seconds the sobbing had graduated into wailings. The innocent little thing attempted to rush out of the class but collapsed just before she reached my desk to obtain permission to leave the class. She was bleeding heavily and had soiled her grey skirt and light blue blouse in a matter of minutes. Together with her classmates, we rushed her to a neighbourhood clinic where upon close observation the nurse declared that she had to capacity to handle post abortion cases. We rushed her to Mulago Referral hospital only to pass on eleven days later.

I later got stories of how girls would swallow so many aspirins and other tablets to induce an abor-

tion. Others would go to traditional healers to get all sorts of dirty concoctions which they applied to get rid of that unwanted baby. Some temporarily succeeded while many did not. There was this other case of this girl who the school administration had to permanently discontinue because of a terrible odour that was emanating from her virgina which could no longer control urine many concluded that her uterus had been ruptured in the course of procuring an abortion.

We have experience so many abortion related cases at HALEA. Indeed we have laboured to provide financial assistance for medical care in relation to post abortion related complications. The existing school policy of discontinuing pregnant girl and the backward practice by many parents and families who disown their pregnant daughters have worsen the rising cases of abortions in Uganda. There was this case of a young girl whose uterus was raptured in the process of procuring an abortion under the hands of a traditional birth attendant and to save her life, the medics had to remove the rotting uterus thus ending her chance of having her own biological children!

Sex related crimes are on the increase in Uganda today that each gone year registers less cases of rape and defilement when compared with the new year. Whereas in 2012, there were 530 rape cases reported to police while the number of cases reported by September 2013 was 301. Defilement cases reported in 2011 were 7690 as compared to 2010 in which

ABORTION CASES ON THE RISE

7564 cases had been reported in Uganda's Annual Crime Reports. By September 2013, 600 defilement cases were being reported on a monthly basis! It is unusual that a defiler or rapist would use a condom or give his victim a chance to swallow contraceptives. Such sex is live and unprotected and can inevitably lead to contraction of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Of course there are many girls out there who do not need to be raped to get pregnant. They negotiate for sex and have it as willing partners regardless of their tender years.

Unplanned pregnancy is the root cause of most abortions.

Preventing unintended pregnancy, and thereby the abortions that often follow, would eliminate nearly all injury and death resulting from unsafe abortion. Studies show that more than half of pregnancies in Uganda are unintended, and nearly a third of these end in abortion. Ugandan women (and girls) possess the highest levels of excess fertility in Sub-Saharan Africa and this illustrates just how difficult it is for women to meet their fertility desires as an average woman is capable of producing 7 children in a life time. The high levels of unintended pregnancy and unplanned births in Uganda can be attributed primarily to non use of contraceptives by women who do not want a child soon and even among the married folks, modern contraceptive use remains too low to address the high rate of unintended pregnancy

According to Standard Digital News and the Inter Press News Agency (September 2013), the only national estimate of abortion incidence in Uganda comes from a 2003 study that reported an annual abortion rate of 54 abortions per

1,000 women of reproductive age, or one abortion for every 19 such women. This rate is far higher than

the average rate for Eastern Africa (36 abortions per 1,000 women).

It is all too well known here in Uganda that abortion is illegal thus since abortion is legally restricted in most cases, even skilled providers must work in clandestine environments, which often compromises the safety of the procedures they perform and frequently leads them to charge a high premium for their services.

Poor teens whose access to skilled providers is limited by financial constraints and sheer ignorance, often resort to abortions performed by untrained providers using unsafe methods or attempt to self-induce an abortion and yes, the results are bitter and disastrous.

In 2008, the Ugandan Ministry of Health estimated that abortion-related causes accounted for 26% of all maternal mortality. This proportion is considerably higher than the World Health Organization's estimate for Eastern Africa (18%). Furthermore, for every maternal death resulting from abortion, many more Ugandan women suffer injuries, some severe and permanent, from unsafe procedures.

According to the 2003 national abortion incidence study, 15 out of every 1,000 Ugandan women of reproductive age were treated for abortion complications that year. Such treatment may require hospital care, blood transfusions and antibiotics—scarce resources in a country with limited health care funding and insufficient medical personnel

HALEA research has shown that many teens who abort do not bother to seek thorough medical and indeed many delay seeking care for post abortion complications because they fear that they will receive judgmental or



Hanifa is found bleeding in a bathroom



Hanifa struggles to get help

ABORTION CASES ON THE RISE

abusive treatment from health care providers. Our research has shown that making abortion illegal has not stopped hundreds of girls procuring unsafe abortions and as you read this, several others are struggling to get rid of that unwanted pregnancy. It should be known that medically acceptable abortions are legal but can only apply to adults and can be provided by even midlevel providers, such as nurses and midwives, who can also provide post abortion care, but the teens cannot even dare to access them because they know that the law is not on their side and no sane medical doctor or personnel would risk his or her career to save a life of a dying teen. Teens cannot afford clean abortions even if they wanted. I am talking about the poor slum teens HALEA has served since 2008. Our research has shown that the amount a teen will pay for a clandestine abortion is about shs 300,000 or

US\$88 if performed by a professional medic but one performed by a traditional healer will cost about US\$20.

The cost to the healthcare system of treating complications from unsafe abortion is on average, nearly US\$130 per patient a figure that can not be affordable to many Ugandans be it teens or adults, married or not, the figure is far too high to be managed by a people who can not even earn a dollar in a single day! The state spends colossal sums of money treating abortion related complications and significant proportion is spent treating more serious complications, such as sepsis, shock, lacerations and perforations.

What Our Law Says on Abortion

Ugandan law allows abortion under some circumstances, but laws and policies on abortion are unclear and are often interpreted inconsistently, making it difficult for women and the medical com-

munity to understand what is legally permitted. One will reason that abortion is allowed when a woman's life is in danger but that is applicable to a woman, how about a teen whose life and future would be much more in danger if she continues carrying that unwanted pregnancy?

The Ugandan Constitution states that abortion is permitted if the procedure is authorized by law. Article 22(2) states thus: No person has the right to terminate the life of unborn child except as may be

authorised by the law. According to the 2006 National Policy Guidelines and Service Standards for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, pregnancy termination is permissible in cases of fetal anomaly, rape and incest, or if the woman has HIV.

Our law is vague, ambiguous and unclear on several grounds. It gives no clear chance to teens who find themselves with unwanted pregnancies

all the time. It gives no

direct licence to even the married women to abort a child unwanted on economic grounds. Lets think aloud, why should one carry a pregnancy she will never manage to even provide the basic meal. Think about a mother to be who can not even afford to buy her own meal for a day now carrying a pregnancy she will never afford to take care of!

Many would line up to have the pregnancies terminated but there is a law that scares them off. Doctors would be willing to come to their rescue but they are unsure of the consequences if only they helped. HALEA's working with teens and young mothers has opened doors to understanding the need to have abortion laws relaxed to save lives of innocent girls and women who continue to die or suffer for the rest of their lives because a certain law or religious teaching dictated so. I have observed that many teen mothers have no love for their babies and if they could trade them for the money, many would gladly do so. Think about a mother hating her child



Hanifa is helped by a shoolmates to get to the hospital

ABORTION CASES ON THE RISE

and cursing the child on a daily basis. We have had cases in which teen mothers have abandoned their babies at HALEA offices and directed us to take the babies for keeps if we wanted. We continue to read and hear stories of strangled babies, sacrificed babies, physically abused babies and children whose biological parents have no regrets for such grave abuses.

The September 2013 Standard Digital News has revealed that Kenya and Uganda have earned the dubious distinction of achieving the highest number of backstreet abortions in the world with almost half a million women, including ten-year-olds, exposed to the vice. The two countries are however true to trends in East Africa with the region leading the rest of the world in the procurement of unsafe abortions, according to data covering the last decade as well as last year. While the global and African averages show that out of 1,000 pregnant women 28 will go for a risky abortion, for East Africa this figure jumps to 39 and for Kenya it gallops to 48 only to be edged out by Uganda where the figure was 54 in 2003

Practical Way Forward

I have said this before in these very pages that sex education should be put on the primary and secondary school calendar and syllabus and should be a compulsory subject regularly taught and examinable by the Uganda National Examination Board. Our children have the right to know all they ought to know about sex and all the ABC about it should be openly taught at the earliest stage of their sexual lives. What is too bad for a child to learn the meaning of a condom, how to use it and how to use contraceptive pills or how to know the so called safe days and the danger days? What would be too bad if a girl child knew how to read her body temperature and the warning signs that she is within her fertility days so she must not have sex without a condom or using

other contraceptives?

Can our government ensure that free family planning services reach all teens to reduce unmet need for contraception and lower the unintended pregnancy rate. We should have Programs that offer comprehensive family planning services, including counseling, and a wide range of contraceptive methods, to enable these young folks to choose the best methods for themselves, to use methods effectively and to switch methods when desired.

Can our health providers be brave enough to provide post abortion care services to treat the often serious health complications resulting from unsafe abortion? In our previous issue, the Open Talk Magazine brought to you the lifesaving story of the great humanist and abortionist doctor, Dr. Henry Morgentaler. Think about the many lives of women he saved and how many Canadians were given their lives back! Our government must make deliberate efforts to improve health care providers' ability to offer abortion services within



Hanifa's friends are frightened!

the confines of the law. It is vital to raise providers' awareness of the content and scope of Uganda's abortion law and to equip them with appropriate training to provide safe abortion services in legally permitted circumstances.

Time is now to scrap the abortion law and recognise the full rights of women over their bodies. It is high time we scrapped such male centred laws that were written to further the enslavement of the women under the guise of backward religious doctrines and retrogressive cultural practices. Realities on ground will show that the prolife activists are simply egoistic, self-centred and unconscious individuals whose only defence against abortion is the religious teachings whose truth and relevancy especially in the modern times can never be proven accurate. It is high time we got the best laws that put women's lives first before any other fertile imaginations. I rest my case.

TEENS' TAKE ON ABORTION

NAMBI ALISAT- ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGALIZED

Abortion should be legalized because of the following reasons
Many teens have resorted to crude means of procuring abortions and this has led to death. If a girl decides to abort and does it her own way, there is less possibility for her to stay alive because during the process she will have to lose a lot of blood leading to anaemia hence death.

Illegal abortions have led to school dropouts. This comes in the way that if a school girl decides to become pregnant, no one can allow her to school when she is pregnant which can lead to school dropout thus many girls decide to resort to abortions and in the process they either die or develop complications and still drop out of school.

If a person was impregnated and she decides to abort, this can lead to the removal of the uterus or piercing of the uterus walls as has been the case with many girls who go to have abortions done by traditional doctors and birth attendants. It is better to have an abortion done by qualified doctors and this is only possible if abortions were legalised.

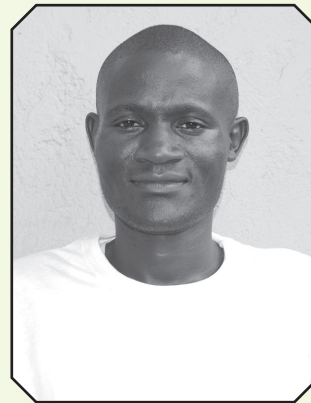
Although abortion is illegal in many African countries, some people decide to have an abortion because their pregnancy was not planned for example a young girl who is still going to school or a woman who already has many children will decide to have an abortion because her pregnancy was caused by forced sex (rape) or if the father of the child refuses to accept the responsibility of becoming a father.

In countries where abortion is illegal, abortion services are not easily accessible and many women decide to do it themselves or with the assistance of an untrained personnel and as a result the woman may end up losing her life. It is therefore safe to have abortion legalised to save the lives of many innocent young girls who die because they went to have an abortion done by unqualified personnel.

As a student, I have witnessed scenarios where teens get pregnant and are immediately expelled from school as well as home. Many teens are well aware of the repercussions of getting pregnant yet many still go ahead to get pregnant. There are several girls who delivered babies and their careers end-

ed in oblivion. Their suffering was sealed by getting the babies and they wanted to terminate the pregnancy but the law could not allow them. I understand in other countries, there are abortion clinics and women have rights to decide on having babies, this should be emulated here in Uganda.

ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGALIZED- SSENDIKWA-NAWA IBRAHIM



According to my understanding, abortion is the deliberate removal of the foetus. Abortion should be legalized by the government because in most cases teens get pregnant due to factors beyond their control. Many teens get pregnant out of rape, absence of family planning services, age factor, disappointment, family

background, and oppressive cultural background, retrogressive religious beliefs which condemn use of condoms and massive poverty and income disparities.

As a teenager, I have realised that many young mothers say that they were either forced or duped into sex and they ended up with babies they never wished to have. Many young girls in Uganda are just raped or defiled by men far older than them which results into unwanted pregnancies and in such a situation abortion should be applied to solve that problem.

Let me observe here that the fact remains that abortion is another form of family planning which unfortunately scientists in Uganda have deliberately refused to put on the list of methods of family control and planning. True to say therefore that it is a form of family planning because honestly people do abortion with the intention of spacing their children which helps them to have affordable families.

I have also realised that adolescence is a trying period for many teens. It is full of excitement and discoveries including sex discoveries. Teens have sex as early as ten years. Girls and boys tend to play sex at

early stages and do so recklessly without any protection because some believe that they are too young to get pregnant while others simply fear to use contraceptives due to several anti-contraceptives theories regarding contraceptives. This result into pregnancy yet many girls will still want to continue with their studies hence abortion will be suitable to solve that problem

There are also several cases of Incest in Uganda. Just think of a scenario were a father forces his daughter into sex or a brother having sex with her sister and it results into pregnancy. I want to ask, should we allow a father to have a child with her daughter, a brother to have a child with his sister or a son to father a child with his mother? Don't you think that it is rational to allow abortion to be used to terminate such pregnancy? From the critical thinking lessons I have attended from HALEA, I believe it is only prudent to apply practical solutions to solve daunting problems. As for me, in such conditions I would call for abortion to be legalised because, abortion is necessary to avoid embarrassment in the society. With the nature of our society I do not see how a child born between a father and daughter or between brother and sister will grow well and avoid insults from society throughout his or her life and such a child can either commit murder or suicide. I believe that abortion would save society from such eventualities.

Having a child out of marriage is condemned by biblical teachings and a married woman can be divorced for conceiving a child outside marriage. The same is applicable to married men. Because people want to keep their marriages safe, they end up going for abortions and many die in the process because they have used unqualified people. It is only better to legalise abortion to enable people get better services.

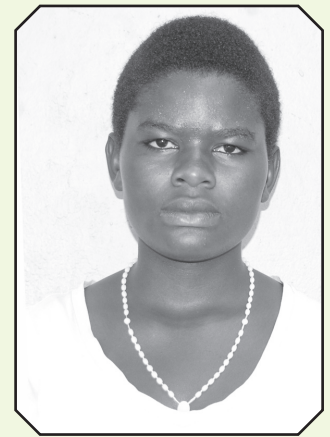
LEGALIZING ABORTION SHOULD BE ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS.

KAMAKUNE ELIZABETH, 17, S.3. GRACE FELLOWSHIP HIGH SCHOOL MAKERERE

Abortion is the termination of pregnancy by removing the foetus from the uterus and in my view it should be legalized but this should be based on a case by case situation and not as an omnibus arrangement. This is because of the following views; There are cases where the father is not willing to take care of both the baby and its mother or even

denies the baby and the mother is unemployed making it hard to obtain basic necessities of life, it's only prudent that such should be done away with to avoid further suffering.

The Ugandan constitution its self-permits abortion in cases where the mother's life is in danger, so in expectation of the mother losing her life, it's better to carry out safe abortion in order to prevent losing both the mother and the would be baby.



Due to the increasing rate of poverty and high population in the country, doctors are some times faced with an option of aborting since in most cases those who do so did not intend to get the pregnancies. Think about this, that women in Uganda has one of the highest fertility rates in the entire world, one woman can deliver 8 babies and I know of a woman who delivered 16 children and they all grew up. However, none of them even completed primary seven because they never had fees and many resorted to stealing and prostitution, some were killed in armed robbery. In such scenarios, I would advocate for abortion to ensure that people only have children they can manage to cater for thoroughly.

Think about rape. Rape is a situation where one is forced into sex without mutual consent. In my village, there was a young girl about 16 years who was raped and impregnated but she didn't want her parents to know about the incident and therefore the girl waited for two months, went to her friend who gave her traditional herbs and within one week the termination had taken place successfully. This one was very lucky, she never had any complications and managed to report back to school after a week and she completed her senior four last year. If she had not aborted, she would be out of school, today, this girl is high school and she told me she wants to go to university and becomes a social worker, she would be out of school today if she had not aborted.

We all know that many parents will abandon their daughters once they get pregnant. As for me my father warned me a long time ago how I will be chased from where I stay in case I get pregnant and that he will never consider me as his daughter if I get preg-

TEENS TAKE ON ABORTION

nant. I do not want to be chased from where I stay therefore I cannot allow my self-carrying a pregnancy. Think about a girl in my situation, it's only safe that she aborts and avoids the bitter consequences but also as a means of ensuring that your future is secure.

On the other hand abortion should not be legalized because it may lead to death in case its done unprofessionally and measures are not done to obtain after abortion treatment and may lead to low chances of getting pregnant again especially if the womb is removed.

It's my humble appeal to those in Authority that the laws on abortion should be clearly elaborated and steps be taken to sensitize the masses about the laws on Therefore I would recommend all pregnant women to abort in case there in no promising future for the baby and the mother. Why suffer all your life because you carried a baby you never wanted to have? Why bring about a baby who will suffer all his or her life yet you had an opportunity to stop such future suffering? It is only important to think through all decisions we make, think for yourself, never allow others to do the thinking for you, it is your life we are talking about, it's your future and happiness at stake, it's all up to you and your conscious, respect it and live a happy life.

ABORTION SHOULD NOT BE LEGALISED NAMUKOSE FARIDAH, 15 Years, GRACE FELLOWSHIP HIGH SCHOOL MAKERERE

First of all, abortion is the removal of a foetus from the womb of a female before the date of birth. According to me, abortion should not be legalized because of the following;

Abortion in most cases leads to internal bleeding among women hence death especially if the doctor was unskilled and un professional. Furthermore, if a woman has on several occasions carried out abortion, the cervix and uterus become weak hence reducing her chances of getting a baby again. I have seen one woman on my village who is barren and it is said that when she was a teen she had so many abortions that in one of those cases her uterus was ruptured and it had to be removed hence she cannot have a baby . In fact that woman was abandoned by her husband yet she is a very beautiful lady. This is all because she did an abortion now if she had had her babies perhaps she would have got another



good man who would have married her and took care of her babies.

As of now, she is a very miserable woman and regardless of her education, she is miserable because she does not have children. I have heard that many fake doctors carry out abortions and they use all sorts of out dated

and unworthy equipments which have caused diseases like cancer, tetanus and so many infections to women who carryout abortion. Biblically, abortion is a sin because it involves the killing of Gods creature and in some countries like Uganda it is considered to be murder. Furthermore, people who abort are not valued or respected in the community because they are considered murderers. This has been my take during our school debate and I still maintain it because I understand the dangers of abortion and besides the existing laws condemn abortion because it is considered as taking one's right to life which is un constitutional. However I also know through our critical thinking lessons with HALEA that everything good has its bad side and every think in life should be looked at from an objectivity view point. Yes abortion has its good side too. It has helped many women to plan for their future without any worry and it has also helped students to continue with their studies. I have seen some of the students do abort and gradually they get back to school yet without it, they would have dropped out of school.

Be it as it may, teens must know where their priorities are. Is it having reckless sex or completing studies and have sex later. It is better to wait because everything has its proper time. Sex too has its proper time, do not have sex because you are sure to abort. Anything can go wrong and you die. I conclude by saying that abstinence is better to avoid the effects of unplanned pregnancies. Therefore I do not support legalisation of abortion because it may encourage young people to have more sex because they will be assured of going to a clinic and have an abortion without any barrier. Please be on my side and we all say, NO TO LEGALISATION OF ABORTION.

ABORTION SHOULD NOT BE LEGALIZED - NAKAMATTE MILLY

Who says that abortion should be legalised? You

TEENS TAKE ON ABORTION

must be joking. Who will accept that? Let me assure you, abortion is a bad practice and therefore should not be allowed because of the following reasons;



Abortion is an act of murder and if interpreted from the biblical point of view that means that you've abused the Ten Commandments yet still the constitution itself is against killing one another.

I do not recommend aborting because if you do it several times it may lead to barrenness and when you get married you may fail to have a child blaming others yet you're the one to blame. I know of women who say that they are being bewitched not to have children and others end up sacrificing other people's children in order to conceive yet they carried out abortions during their teenager lives and cannot conceive again.

People abort because they don't think twice before doing so. The mothers normally do not consider the future of the child who may become more useful to the country yet if such are not aborted they may become lawyers, presidents, doctors, nurses, accountants, teachers and many others.

On the other hand, abortion is commonly done by the youths because they don't feel comfortable with pregnancy and those men who are responsible for their pregnancies do not want to take care of the babies as the girl's parents prefer taking them to prison or reporting them to police hence running away. Seriously speaking, abortion is bad and young people should not freely go about having sex because they have a chance to abort, they should exercise self-control and restraint, and abortion may not be the best way out of a problem. With all those views, I firmly encourage authorities and individuals not to allow abortion.

ABORTION SHOULD BE LEGALIZED. MUBIRU MORGAN, 19 YEARS

I have heard my colleagues on the affirmative side arguing for legalisation of abortion with all their hearts and passion. I want to believe that they are totally wrong. Bad can never be good even when you colour it with goodness. Abortion should not be legalized due to the following points ; According to the population statistics of Uganda chil-

dren are delivered because the mothers never used family planning methods such as pills and condoms. If you do not want to have a child, simply use a condom, an injection or pills, do not have live sex and say you will abort, you do not need to wait for the problem to happen to you yet you are able to stop it from happening to you. Abortion can never be a

solution. Unsafe abortion leads to damaging of the uterus walls or endometrial walls hence making the woman barren or unable to produce since it reduces their chances of becoming pregnant again.



A good number of girls who abort do not have a chance to get babies

again. When they get married, they are easily divorced due to bareness because traditionally a barren woman is considered useless in the family since she is considered infertile.

Unsafe abortion measures may result into dangerous diseases in the woman's body like abdominal cancer and cervical cancer. It has several other consequences too including, Lower person's self-esteem, Lead to lack of respect in the societies for those women who abort, Imprisonment of abortive mothers, It's not allowed even in the ten commandments amended by God, Leads to loss of life of both the mother and child and Reduction in the population of people who would have played important roles in the community

I therefore propose that abortion should not be legalised to ensure that there is life continuity because legalising it may give teens a licence to have reckless sex and in turn get terrible diseases worse than having a baby. Such diseases can include HIV –AIDS. What would you prefer, carrying a baby or having HIV AIDS or failing to have a baby throughout your life? I conclude by encouraging those in the affirmatives to think about life first and to encourage teens to abstain and avoid sex until they become of age and have the ability to handle the consequences of sex, early sex will never be good to anyone, it only destroys one's life, it is better to abstain. Please girls think about deaths that result out of girls having to carry out abortions using a backward method that leads to their death.

CIVIL LIBERTIES NO MORE!

CRACKDOWN ON CIVIL FREEDOMS IN UGANDA CONTINUES WITH A NEW LAW IN PLACE TO LEGALISE THE REPRESSION.

Lukyamu Joseph

In September CIVICUS a global civil society alliance produced a report showing how civil rights were more and more under threat with each coming day in Uganda. They singled out media and public freedoms especially since the report was coming on the heels of the government's two week closure of the Daily Monitor independent daily newspaper.

CIVICUS being a global civic organization perhaps hasn't had enough time to focus their scope on Uganda otherwise they would be looking at empowering Ugandan liberty activists and not wasting time asking the Ugandan president to carry out reforms or involve other major stake holders.

The organization also reported about the new draconian law that is the Public Order Management Bill(POMB) which was passed amidst controversy that involved the flouting of rules of procedure in the country's parliament. Its passing was so dramatic that it wasn't even part of the day's business as it hadn't been included the day's Order Paper of issues to be discussed or handled that day. All that it now waits is for the President's signature and it will become law.

However a lot of political and civil activists have threatened to go to the courts of law to oppose this new law that outlaws any more than two people to gather and discuss political or governance matters without seeking the approval of police. The law in fact makes the country a 'Police State' where the police will have authority to allow or refuse any public gathering.

The law there for implies that marginalized groups like gays can no longer gather to discuss their plight since the police can never allow them to. The new law however for the most targets political opponents of the state from addressing gatherings though they

still have all along been stopped from doing even without the law meaning that the new enactment is only meant to legalise the police's repressive methods.

The Black Monday movement a grouping of anti corruption activists are now spearheading the opposition of the new law as it directly affects them for speaking against corruption in Uganda is akin to speaking against the state and its major actors. The new law is deemed illegal since it seeks to over turn an earlier court ruling that had ruled that police has no powers to legalize gatherings but rather should just be informed and it puts the necessary security requirements in place.

However the new law is not so much of a threat like the threat to lives of activists. Sometime back a gay activist called Kato David was killed under mysterious circumstances and the police initially gave the reason for murder as a robbery gone wrong. Problem in Uganda is that when public figures die, the police always has lame excuses which they can never justify. That's the state of society in which Ugandan liberty advocates and promoters operate in and it becomes darker and darker each coming day.

ALBUM-LAUNCH
HALEA'S 'One Life
Entertainment' will Launch
its First Album. "Kampala
City Yiyo in May 2014"
Get ready to Support your
teens.

TEENS AND PHONES

SHOULD TEENS BE ALLOWED TO HAVE MOBILE PHONES WHILE AT SCHOOL?

Teens should not be allowed to have mobile phones at school

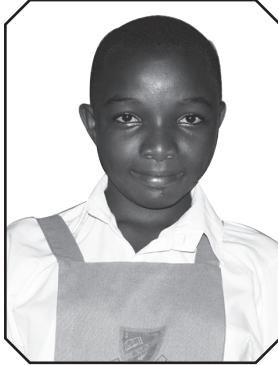
Ainembabazi Catherine, Bat Valley Primary School, 12 years P.7

A phone is a telecommunication device that permits two or more users to conduct conversation when they are not in the same vicinity of each other to be heard directly. Teens should not have mobile phones at school. When a teen has a phone at school he/she can play games especially during class time, break time and lunch time and Lacks concentration in class. I have also seen teens using their phones to communicate to bad people like sugar daddies and eventually make plans to spend nights with them. I have also seen teens who receive phone calls and then dodge classes since they then assume have got important appointments which late distract them from attending classes. Many girl teens have misused their phones and have ended up getting pregnant hence I do not support the proposal to enable us teens have phones because e are not ready and disciplined enough to use them purposively otherwise they will become a source of distraction.

I was expelled from School Over a phone

My name is Ayebazibwe Scovia. Until July 2013, I was a student of Kyezoba Girls School Senior Four but as fate dictated, I was found with a phone during lunch time and was expelled by the school Headmaster. The reason given was that I had a phone when according to school rules and regulations, it was not allowed. I had borrowed the phone from a canteen operator to communicate to my parents because I was sick and my medication was over. I needed to get more medicine and it would be my parents to get it for me.

My parents found it to hard to manage the situation. I am a candidate student and had registered with Kyezoba Girls' School but now it was becoming very hard to complete the year at school and to sit for my Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) exams without attending lessons. When I reported back home in Wandegaya, we got to know of Kampala Students Centre and when we approached the school head, they gave me opportunity to study with the S.4 candidates and that when I meet HALEA and gave me lots of support. I have managed to study and get ready for exams and Kyezoba Girls School has accepted me to go back and sit my exams. Fortunately, I will not miss UCE. However, I am not happy with the policy of not allowing



students to use phones to communicate to their parents.

Phones should only be allowed with restrictions- MBWALI AMINA

We all know that life is about communication, it is only dead bodies that do not communicate. Teens are human beings too who need to communicate but our schools do not allow us have mobile phones. At my school I have seen teachers confiscating teen's phones because it is not allowed to have phones at school. A mobile phone is a means of communication, so let us have it at our easiest disposal because we all

need it. Teens should be allowed to have mobile phones while at school because of the following views;

In case a student fell sick it can be easy to inform the parents. The student will call the parents he or she and tell them how serious the sickness is. Some teens have terminal diseases, some have diabetes and others are HIV positive hence they need medical care urgently.

There are many students who come from far distances to school and others stay at school. Mobile phones can ease sharing of information between the parents and the child as third parties (teachers) may not deliver the information accurately and on time. Although mobile phones should be allowed to teens while at school sometimes they are a nuisance to teens because of the following reasons;

The students lose concentration or do not pay attention in class because whenever they are seated in class, they are called and at times given bad news hence loss of interest in what they are studying and may end up failing exams.

Students who have phones that are expensive than their teacher's phones start abusing teachers because they think they are more expensive than the teachers and this brings misunderstanding between teachers and students. I have seen some inferiority complex cropping up among teachers when teens have better phones than theirs, this leads to conflict and it is better to avoid it by not allowing a student to have a better phone than that of his teacher and more so by a teen not having a phone while in class.

In conclusion, teens should be allowed to have mobile phones while at school because one has a right of expression or freedom of speech and to whoever he/she feels like communicating to. But this should be done with restrictions, there should be a no phone policy in classroom, let class time be class time and then students can have phones when out of class. This will enable all concerned achieve a win- win situation by having phones while excelling at school at the same time.



SHOULD TEENS BE FREE TO HAVE LOVERS?

TEENAGERS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO HAVE BOY FRIENDS OR GIRL FRIENDS

NAMYALO VIOLINE, 17, GRACE FELLOWSHIP HIGH SCHOOL MAKERERE

Dear Open Talk Magazine readers, allow me to give my thoughts in a free manner and please make good use of my opinion instead of pointing fingers and becoming judgemental. Do we know who teens really are and what being a teen brings about? How I wish we know before



we condemn one another over this issue! Thanks to HALEA that we can have an avenue to speak our minds freely.

Let me start off this way. Usually teenagers are youths who are below the age of twenty (20) and above 10 years. Being a teenager, it means being in the most sensitive stage or age in life and therefore youths should be given a chance to have lovers to avoid the following;

Number one on my list is the need to avoid misuse of sex. It is well known that being an adolescent makes our bodies sexually active, so if teens are not allowed to have their lovers, they will engage in bad practices like masturbation, homosexuality and as such this can result into the spread of diseases like gonorrhoea, Syphilis and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Let's not forget that teens are human beings too with red blood like adults, teens have sharp feelings which need to be attended to hence having a lover should not be seen as a bad thing at all.

The next reason is about rights. It is our right to be happy. Everyone has freedom or right of choosing a lover of their choice, so if a teen thinks he/she has chosen a lover of his/her choice she/he is entitled to being with him/her. In case they are deprived of that right it means teen's rights are being violated yet everyone has a right to enjoy his or her rights. If one is already 18, why should any parent reason-

able enough stop such a teen from having a lover of his or her life. It is only natural that we fall in love, love grows gradually and it is finally consummated, it is a teens right if he or she becomes of age to get a lover of his or her love and the two become happy thereafter, thus there is no wrong for teens of age to get boyfriends or girlfriends or to put it candidly, to have sex partners.

Teens in love command respect and in most cases become responsible and are more likely to act reasonably than those without lovers. Teens in love tend to mind about all the natty gritty on their bodies, they tend to be smart and try to avoid trouble because their partners will not approve of their bad behaviours. Relationships lead to personal responsibility and grow respect. I am 17 years now but I have observed over the years that there is a difference in terms of behaviour between girls and boys with lovers and those without. When a boy gets a girlfriend he will start to respect himself, work hard in order to give his girlfriend gifts and be respectable and therefore teens should be allowed to have lovers such that they can gradually learn to be responsible and avoid bad behaviours and gain respect from society. In conclusion, I want everyone to get me right. I am not saying get up get a lover and have sex.

I am saying be responsible when you get a lover, delay having sex, have protected sex if you must have it, have sex only when you are 18 years and above and be aware of the negative effects of unprotected sex. Dear teens, as a student leader I call upon all of you to be careful with your lovers in order to avoid early pregnancies and should always take your lovers to your parents to seek for advice from parents but also to be able to get support from parents in times of difficulties. Parents should also welcome our lovers so that we can get parental advice and blessings. Otherwise I see nothing wrong with having a boyfriend or a lover for that matter if at all everything is done right.

NAMUKASA MARIAM, S.3 15 YEARS, STRIVE HIGH SCHOOL KAWAALA

WAIT a minute. Before you think that all of us will buy your views that teens have rights and all the puffs and lies you are parading about love and

rights, I must tell you right here that teens should not be allowed to have lovers. It is morally wrong, religiously unappealing and health wise not a cool idea to sell among teens. I know you will say that I am ugly or that I simply lack suitors but that is not the case, I simply think that no teen



is ready to handle all the pressure that comes with getting a lover. And yes, what do you teens know about love anyway? I propose that teenagers should not be free /allowed to have boyfriends /girlfriends because of the following reasons;

I am only 15 years but I have observed that when teenagers get lovers they start disobeying their elders or parents because they take themselves as mature people yet in reality they are still very young to have girlfriends and boyfriends as they cannot conform to the responsibilities of wife and husband. To such teens, they feel very important and too big to even take advice from parents and before they know it, they are already in trouble, failing exams and getting diseases.

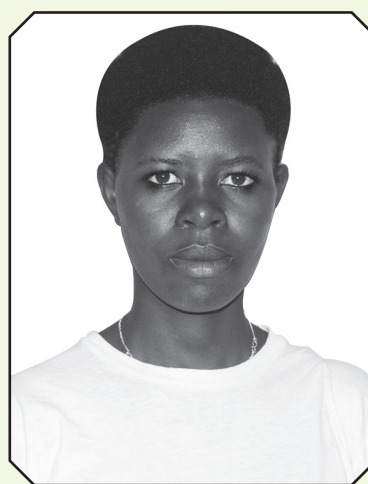
If a teenager plays sex with his boyfriend or girlfriend they can easily be infected with sexually transmitted disease (STDs) like HIV/ AIDS, syphilis, Candida and so many other diseases which they can get through playing sex yet in most cases they have no idea about their treatment and in case they do, they may not shoulder the expenses. From my experience I know for sure that teens do not know how to use condoms, personally I have never seen a female condom, we do not even know how pills look like, their different types, effects of using pills and injections etc so how do you expect such teens to have safe sex? In most cases teens have live sex and end up getting diseases and unplanned pregnancies. These days there are teens who are born with HIV and because of medication, they manage to grow into beautiful girls and handsome boys who can infect their peers with HIV hence promoting the idea that teens should have lovers in order to have access to sex is not only wrong but very deadly. I cannot support such hopeless thinking.

Teens having lovers can lead to unwanted pregnancies. What is happening here is that the two teens will fall in love and a girl child may be impregnated by her boyfriend after having sex and the boyfriend denies the pregnancy which puts the girl in trouble because she will not have enough of what it takes to cater for the pregnancy and the baby in case she delivers.

It can also lead to loss of life, if a girl becomes pregnant out of sex with her boyfriend she will only have one option and that is having an abortion so that she gets rid of the foetus because she is not ready to become a mother or to face the challenges of motherhood hence loss of life as one of the effects of abortion especially if carried out by unskilled personnel. Just remember that abortion is illegal in Uganda.

In conclusion teenagers should not be allowed to have boyfriends or girlfriends since in most cases such a privilege is abused. We are talking about teens who cannot properly reason things through, teens who cannot be in a relationship without having sex, teens who cannot access family planning services hence such teens cannot be allowed to have lovers because this will instead cut their lives short. I still say NO to sex relationships; teens should not be allowed to have lovers while at school. A teen is a teen and will remain young and unready, it is better to avoid any type of relationship until one is totally ready to handle the consequences.

NABAGEREKA SUSAN, 18 YEARS



Whereas many others are saying no to relationships, I want to differ and say yes to relationships. Please avoid pretending that you are abnormal that you can stay a good life without having lovers. This is so because we all know that even when you pretend to hate them here, you still hide somewhere and

engage into relationships, and we all know that that is the truth. I think we should use the HALEA Youth Support Centre given opportunity to be totally free and speak up our minds because it is clearly written

TEENS AND SEX

that it is only the truth that will set you free. I want to be free so I will speak out freely. I believe teenagers should be allowed to have boyfriends/girlfriends because of the following reasons;

The first major reason is the need to have the basic needs. Many of the teenagers require basic needs like food, clothes among others n even lack pads or Vaseline which many times our parents cannot provide. We all know that no normal girl will live a comfortable life without the basic needs. What do you want such a teen to do? Should such a teen go parade her body on the street, sell herself in order to get them or she should get one serious lover who can enable her get them and make her happy at the same time? Friends, let us be logical, we have been taught critical thinking lessons by HALEA and we should put them into use instead of pretending that everything is well when we all know that everything is not well and we need to put things in the right perspective. Look, many of us here are orphans without anyone willing to help provide the basic needs. For the girls know very well that if one has a boyfriend who is trustworthy and especially if that man's intention is not after sex only, such a person can be able to provide each and every other need she wants I do not think there is a problem with that.

Being into relationship provides us with comfort and counselling whenever you are into trouble. This is applicable either side. If you or your partner has a problem, you can easily share it and find a solution rather than being alone all the time. There is no sin about this, it is purely logical, you do not need to know rocket science to simply understand that human beings cannot be lonely, people are not like mountains which can afford to live in isolation, people need the comfort of fellow human beings so relationship are not bad at all for teenagers. Please remember that many of our parents are not there for us, many are not even friendly to their children hence a need to have a genuine friend who can share your problems and enable you move on with life.

Girls will certainly agree with me that for us girls need extra care and support because of our biological nature which makes us demand so many things than boys who may not even care if they have a Vaseline or not. First of all, we need, need of money for menstrual cycle facilitation, if you are lucky and have a boyfriend who can afford to take care of you, so be it because you will certainly have such a

problem covered. Who wants to live a miserable life when there is someone willing to help you handle such a problem?

Teens need lots of comfort and guidance. Teenagers do not fear each other instead of respecting each other i.e. if one gets a disease like malaria, fever, one can comfort the other. We normally fell sick and our parents are not there for us and yet here is a dude willing to help me out. Do you think I will stop my boyfriend from giving me cash for treating because the bible and all those books condemn relationships? I do not think so. Sorry to disappoint you.

I am very much aware of the consequences of having a boyfriend that demands sex. I do not encourage recklessness among teens. You must have sex only when you must. Let that man not drive you like a cow into having sex when you know you are not ready for it. Do not make a mistake to have sex when you know your fertility days are around the corner. Do not accept to have sex when it is not protected. Do not accept to have sex tied with material property; it just does not feel and sound right.

I call upon all young ladies and teens out there to be smart in mind and avoid being reckless. Having a boyfriend or girlfriend or lover does not give you liberty to engage into sex. Remember that you can get that unwanted pregnancy. Remember that having unprotected sex may lead to sexually transmitted diseases such as STDs like HIV/AIDS, Candida and among others.

Do not be fooled my fellow teens that relationships must be meant to have sex. You can have a healthy relationship without having sex. This can help you understand one another until you become of age and then decide on having sex. Remember that sex comes with all its negative consequences so you must think ahead of having sex. You know very well that our families are not supportive at all when we get pregnant, you know that the government of Uganda is against early pregnancies, you understand very well that boys will always reject you upon getting pregnant that schools will indefinitely expel you once you are found pregnant. Then if you know all this, please kindly have relationships that do not lead into sex affairs. In case you are ready for sex, have it protected and calculate every move you make ahead of time, there you will be safe and you will enjoy your relationship. What do you think?

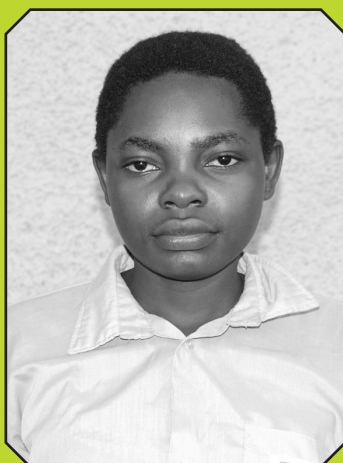
PARENTS AND THEIR TEENS SEX LIFE

Parents should not choose marriage partners for their children**Nakalembe Naava Rose,S.4****Kampala Students' Centre School**

Marriage is an agreement between two people. Parents should not get marriage partners for their children because conflict may arise in a newly formed family and children will blame their parents for example if they choose some whom you do not want, it will take you a long time to fully understand that person you are married to and there is a high possibility that you will never understand him/her. At the end of it you will have children you will never be able to fully love and once there is no love for children parents will pay less /no attention to their children thus leading to increase in number of street children.

**Nalwoga Florence,S.4**
Kampala Student's Centre

Parents may choose for you a marriage partner who is a HIV positive and yet you are negative because you have been protecting yourself. I know of some parents who choose older men for their daughters because they



want money through bride wealth but their daughters die only after a year into marriage because they would have contracted HIV AIDS which was all due to forced marriages. In this twenty first century, freedoms apply everywhere and it is our right as young people to have marriage partners of our choice. We are no longer commodities which parents should continue to trade among themselves for personal benefits. We need respect and rights to be guaranteed by our parents. It is vital that our parents know that we have rights not to marry or marry. It is a personal choice and it is no longer a family decision. It is only one life we live and no one should help another live her life miserably. Therefore I conclude by saying that children should be left to choose marriage partners for themselves.

YES. Parents should choose marriage partners for their children**Kabuye Ivan Griffin S.4****Kampala Students' Centre School**

I seek to differ from the rest of you on this subject matter. What is too bad in parents acting as parents and ensuring that their children have a good future? Which parents would want to see her daughter married to a robber, murderers, a gambler or a good for nothing man? If you become parents tomorrow, would you be comfortable seeing your beautiful daughter being wasted in a

marriage to a thug and good for nothing person? As teens, what do you know about marriage? What do you know about bad and good families? What do you know about family cohesion and continuity? Do you think that President Museveni is a fool scrutinise all men that want to marry his daughters? Do you think that the president is doing so because he hates his daughters or because he loves them so much that he wants them to be in happy marriages? Have you heard of any of President Museveni's daughters who is having trouble in their marriages? Do you know that all the president's daughters were married off through arranged marriages and the president was personally involved/ Then do not say that all arranged marriages are bad. Traditionally that was the case here in Africa and let us not be too quick to embrace modernity with all its weakness. No parent hates his or her daughter. Parents are far more focused that they are more likely to know what is good for their children.



Many Parents choose marriage partners for their children because since these children are young they do not more about marriage and have no experience. For example if parents choose for you a marriage partner in case of conflicts parents can come in and settle them since they have experience in marriage. In Africa, marriage is a family matter and not an individual issue, marriage binds two families together. Marriage is the foundation of a strong community and it is so essential to good governance and management of society. A wise parent will not simply let his daughter simply marry a thug in the name of rights.

Any sensible parent will intervene and say no to such a union. Since it will be an agreement between two families, parents cannot choose wrong partners for their children since they care about the wellbeing of their children. If children are left to choose marriage partners for themselves they may select wrong elements for partners for example thieves, drunkards job less person since for them they will be only caring about love. Parents only come in when it is necessary. I mean to say that teens should have the liberty to have their marital partners but they should have the audacity to bring their lovers home to be vetted by their parents. If a parent says no to such a boyfriend or girlfriend, any good child must listen to parental advise because parents ought to know far much better than their children when it comes to marital issues. That is my thinking, how about you?

Are parents responsible for early marriages?

A teens View- Joan Birungi, S.3 Kampala Students Centre.

Thanks to HALEA Youth Support Centre, we have discussed this topic at length and I want to base my reasoning from largely the views we generated during second term debates. Parents can be said to be responsible for teens early marriages at a large extend but there also incidences when parents are simply not responsible.



Parents are not responsible for early marriages because many teens go into marriages due to rampant poverty which has been a creation of those into leadership. Parents are too poor, they do not have jobs, those who have jobs are not paid well, there are too many taxes and parents can not even earn well. The end result is that many parents can not address the needs of their children. This is not because the parents do not want but simply because the parents have no means to get income to address the needs of their children. In that case, I can not entirely blame the parents, In blame the government of Uganda for not creating a good environment in which parents can afford to work hard and get what fits into their work so as to take care of us the teens. Because of too much poverty in Uganda many parents cannot provide the necessary necessities to their children therefore the child decide to choose other means to get the necessities and many will chose early marriages so as to avoid too much suffering and the parents will support their children to go into such marriages of convenience because no right thinking parent would wish to see her daughter suffering without necessities all the time.

There are also several incidents where the parents are not responsible for teens getting into un planned marriages. Teens are too hard to manage and in most cases teens are misled by their fellow peer. Peer groups or pressure has misled many teens into early marriages. Teens spend much of their time with their peers and if they come from poor families, the boys end up providing their basic needs and before they know it, they get pregnant and since they see many other young teens with babies and staying in small rooms with boyfriends, many end up into early and un planned marriages not because their parents approved of such marriages but because of peer pressure. You should note that many teens are aggressive and cannot even listen to their parent since they think they are mature and they know more, thus blaming parents for every wrong is a misplaced wrong.

I do not want you to think that parents are angels and do not have any blame when it comes to early marriages. I have realised personally that our parents are too busy looking for money and have too little time for us their children. It is sad that our parents send us to school and leave every responsibility to our teachers. Parents must know that school the teachers simply concentrate on making teens pass

AROUND THE WORLD

exams and have little time to go into details in regard to issues affecting teens. I have seen our teachers doing the job of a teacher because this is what they are paid for and it is only sensible that parents must begin doing their job as parents. Remember that teachers are also too busy because they too have their own children giving them trouble.

Some parents are too rude to their children she/he can not sit down and discuss some issues with their children and in long run their children get problems which will force them into early marriages. Lack of counselling from our parents also leads us into early marriages. For example our parents can not help us to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong when it comes to issues concerning sex. Many of our parents can not be bold enough to give us advice and guidance in regard to sex and instead they pretend that they do not have time and they leave us to guess everything and we normally get things wrong! Some parents advocate for early marriages because their minds are on material gains and wealth therefore they end up giving in their daughters for that reason.

On the whole, parents take the largest blame when it comes to forced and arranged marriages. This is a bad cultural practice and I wish that all concerned stakeholders would fight against the practice so that teens are not forced into early marriages.

Thanks to my school Kampala Students Centre for allowing HALEA Youth Support Centre to work closely with us. I have benefited from their counselling services and debates ever since I joined senior one and I am in senior three now. Without their services I might have dropped out of school but they have continuously given us advice, engaged us into debates in which we have discussed issues to do with sex which our parents do not have time or even want to share. I stay with a single mother having lost my father when I was too young, HALEA has played that parental role and I feel very happy to associate with HALEA because without them, I would in most cases be out of school as of now. By playing a parental role, HALEA has enabled me stay in school, parents should borrow a leaf from HALEA's role.

AROUND THE WORLD

Christianity is dying in England, and in France Catholic priests are only preaching to pensioners

Barry Duke wrote recently in the Freethinker that a WARNING has been sounded by the Catholic Bishop of Shrewsbury that Christians may soon become "strangers in our own land".

The Rt Rev Mark Davies was delivering his grim message to more than 1,000 young Catholics, aged between 16 and 30, at a five-day prayer-fest in Norfolk. He urged them to make a "clear stand" for their faith after recent Government data which suggest Christians living in Britain will soon become a minority. The bishop told his audience that the results of the last census suggested most Britons would not describe themselves as Christians by 2020. A recent think-tank warned that 4,000 churches could close by 2020 if congregations continue to shrink at current rates.

Bishop Davies said:

With more than three million in Rio last month

and with more than a thousand in Walsingham this weekend, we might not really feel like a minority but that is what Christians are about to become in this country of ours. By 2020, if the analysis of the recent census is to be believed, most people in this land will no longer identify themselves in any way as Christians.

THE WORLD'S LOST TRIBE
Isolated Mashco-Piro Indians appear in Peru

FRANK BAJAK of the Associated Press revealed Mon, Aug 19, 2013 that members of an Indian tribe that has long lived in voluntary isolation in Peru's southeastern Amazon attempted to make contact with outsiders for a second time since 2011, leading to a tense standoff at a river hamlet. Authorities are unsure what provoked the three-day encounter but say the Mashco-Piro may be upset by illegal logging in their territory as well as drug smugglers who pass through. Oil and gas exploration also affects the region.

THE DANGERS OF RELIGION

The more than 100 members of Mashco-Piro clan appeared across the Las Piedras river from the remote community of Monte Salvado in the Tambopata region of Madre de Dios state from June 24-26, said Klaus Quicque, president of the regional FENAMAD indigenous federation. They asked for bananas, rope and machetes from the local Yine people but were dissuaded from crossing the river by FENAMAD

rangers posted at the settlement, said Quicque, who directed them to a banana patch on their side of the river. The incident on the Las Piedras is chronicled in video shot by one of the rangers and obtained Monday by The Associated Press which can be obtained here: Frank Bajak on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/fbajak>

THE DANGERS OF RELIGION EXPOSED.

Too much religion is bad for the economy, researchers find

Ruth Gledhill, the Religion Correspondent of The Times, London August 22 2013 wrote that Religion really is “the opium of the people” as Karl Marx wrote, according to a new study.

Researchers in Britain and Germany found that people who were religious were seemingly content with a lack of material wealth but that there was a downside for society as a whole. Religious leaders speaking in praise of poverty risked undermining financial success in individuals and society. “Religiosity may curb ever-needed economic growth but may also thwart individuals and cultures from making risky financial decisions,” the authors wrote.

Money could buy happiness if a person was not religious, but having faith could make riches superfluous, the academics, from Southampton University and from Humboldt University in Berlin, found. In fact, among people of faith, being poor could lead to greater contentment than being rich.

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God,” are among the sayings of Jesus cited in the study, published in the September edition of Social Psychological and Personality Science. The findings were based on surveys of nearly 190,000 people across 11 European countries.

The researchers said religion acted as a “poverty buffer” while creating “anti-wealth norms” among believers. They found that rich atheists were happier than poor atheists, but lower down the income scale the benefits of wealth versus faith were reversed.



Church goes at Nakasero.

Poor believers were happier than poor atheists.

At the upper income levels, however, there was no benefit from religious faith. Rich atheists were just as happy as rich believers. The effect of faith on an individual’s psychological well-being

was so pronounced that religious people in religious cultures were actually happier when their income was low than when it was high. “World religions embrace anti-wealth norms in comforting the poor,” the researchers explained, citing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. People of faith believed that “financial goals should be little valued, or even devalued as sinful and guilt arousing as they put heaven and God first instead yearning to make their lives and lives of others better while on earth.

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Former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson: 'I'm on the verge of dying because I'm a vicious alcoholic.'

Mike Tyson (Below) attends the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame ceremony in Las Vegas with his wife, Kiki (Getty Images)

Kevin Iole of Yahoo Sports wrote recently that Mike Tyson, former world boxing heavy weight champion was on the verge of dying because of being a drug addict. The former heavyweight champion. He appeared on Fox Sports 1 to talk about his upcoming six-part series on his life, and he staged his first boxing card as a promoter. He appeared in great spirits and in command of a life that just four years ago, seemed in total disarray.

According to Tyson himself, however, his life is still in a bad place. He said: 'I'm negative and I'm dark and I want to do bad stuff. I want to hang out in this neighborhood alone (as he tapped his forehead). That's dangerous to hang out in this neighborhood alone up here. Right? It wants to kill everything. It wants to kill me, too. I went to my AA meeting and I had to make a discussion to check out what we're going to do. So I explained to them, my fellow alcoholics and junkies, that I was going to deal with this certain situation. And I explained the feelings that I evoked from it, almost like, hmm, almost like a Hatfield and McCoy, I explained to them. I made the right decision [to apologize]. I made [mentor and former trainer] Cus [D'Amato] proud of me. I made myself proud.'

Tyson said he is seeking forgiveness from those he's hurt and said he has to forgive those who have hurt him. He said it is hard because he is a bad person who has done many very bad things. He described himself in terms that made him sound like a monster.



I'm a bad guy sometimes. I did a lot of bad things and I wanted to be forgiven. In order for me to be forgiven, and I hope they forgive me, I had to change my life. I want to live a different life now. I want to live my sober life. I don't want to die.

I'm on the verge of dying because I'm a vicious alcoholic. I've been ... Wow. I've been ... Well, this is some interesting stuff. I've been ... I haven't drank or took drugs in six days. For me, that's a miracle. I was lying to everybody else who thinks I'm sober, but I'm not. This is my sixth day. I'm never going to use again.

As he spoke, he held up six fingers and began to whimper, his voice cracking. It was hard not to feel devastated for him, as it appears that all of the supposed progress of the last four years was a well-packaged lie. Addicts become very good at lying and it appears that Tyson is another of them.

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Here is Britain's Oldest Model Young Girls Love to Envy.

Suzy Monty, Britain's oldest glamour model at the age of 62, shows off her modelling prowess as she poses up a storm

By Nicola McCafferty of Yahoo Lifestyle

Suzy Monty is Britain's oldest glamour model at the age of 62 [SWNS] Suzy Monty has revealed she's still flaunting her bikini body for the camera and in fact is in more demand than ever - at the ripe old age of 62. Despite modelling throughout her 20s and 30s before taking a break, the Truro, Cornwall native returned after a 20-year hiatus and now has more modelling work than ever before. Posing up a storm in these pictures, Suzy has revealed she was initially turned down for work as she didn't fit the typical image of a 'granny.'

But soon she found her niche - youthful-looking older women - and now works for a whole host of top modelling magazines and naturist publications. She revealed: "About six years ago one model agency I approached said that I didn't have the 'granny' look for my age." They missed the whole point - a woman looking young for her age.



Suzy Monty says she gets more modelling work now than ever [SWNS] "Thankfully, I have since been taken on by another model agency which does realise my potential as a younger-looking model."

Here is the world's oldest model, Suzy Monte

"I am doing a lot of fashion shoots at the moment and the odd light glamour one."

Suzy, who celebrates her ruby wedding anniversary in September, won first place in a modelling contest aged 10 and went on to start her own agency. She says she barely wears make-up and sunbathes only in moderation, opting instead for a good facial and body moisturiser to keep her skin soft.

To keep slim Suzy says she eats sensibly and enjoys daily coastal walks with her dog.

She says the secrets to a lengthy modelling career is quite simple - learn to smile and stay grounded. Suzy said: "Radiate joy and people will smile back, making one's day a happier experience. The 62-year-old has worked for some top modelling agencies [SWNS] "I honestly think people these days don't smile enough, I smile at everyone, even animals."

"Modelling is my passion. It may look glamorous but actually it is hard work if you want to get to the top of the profession." Keeping a level head has helped. Parts of the modelling industry can be a tad egotistical (This article is sourced from; <http://uk.lifestyle.yahoo.com/a-bikini-body-to-rival-women-half-her-age--meet-britain-s-oldest-glamour-model-152918735.html>)



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Pope says Church must end obsession with gays, contraception, abortion

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Pope Francis said the Catholic Church must shake off an obsession with teachings on abortion, contraception and homosexuality and become more merciful or risk the collapse of its entire moral edifice "like a house of cards".

In a dramatically blunt interview with an Italian Jesuit journal, Francis said the Church had "locked itself up in small things, in small-minded rules" and should not be so prone to condemn.

Its priests should be more welcoming and not cold, dogmatic bureaucrats. The confessional, he said, "is not a torture chamber but the place in which the Lord's mercy motivates us to do better."

His comments were welcomed by liberal Catholics; but they are likely to be viewed with concern by conservatives who have already expressed concern over Francis's failure to address publicly the issues stressed by his predecessor, Benedict.

Francis, the first non-European pope in 1,300 years, the first from Latin America and the first Jesuit pope, did not hold out the prospect of any changes soon to such moral teachings.

But, in the 12,000-word interview with *Civiltà Cattolica*, he said the Church must find a new balance between upholding rules and demonstrating mercy. "Otherwise even the moral edifice of the Church is likely to fall like a house of cards."

In the interview with the magazine's director, Jesuit Father Antonio Spadaro, he also said he envisioned a greater role for women in the 1.2 billion member Church but suggested it would not include a change in the current ban on a female priesthood.

SOCIALLY WOUNDED

In a remarkable change from his predecessor Benedict, who said homosexuality was an intrinsic disorder, Francis said that when homosexuals told him they were always condemned by the Church and felt "socially wounded", he told them "the Church does not want to do this".

He re-stated his comments first made on a plane returning from a visit to Brazil in July that he was not in a position to judge homosexuals who are of good will and in search of God.

In the interview released on Thursday, he added: "Religion has the right to express its opinion in the service of the people, but God in creation has set us free. It is not possible to interfere spiritually in the life of a person."

The Church, he said, should see itself as "a field hospital after a battle" and try to heal the larger wounds of society and not be "obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently."

Francis's approach contrasts starkly with that of his conservative predecessor Benedict, who stepped down in February and now lives a withdrawn life in the Vatican grounds.

The interview was not didactic and formal, in the way of past popes, but easygoing, familiar and friendly. He even spoke of his favorite author, Dostoevsky, painter, Caravaggio and composer, Mozart.

"What is clear is that he does not think like a classicist who

sees the world in unchanging categories. He is a story-teller like Jesus, not a philosopher," said Father Tom Reese, an American Jesuit and author of several books on the Vatican. John Gehring, Catholic program director at Faith in Public Life, a liberal advocacy group in the United States, said:

"This pope is rescuing the Church from those who think that condemning gay people and opposing contraception define what it means to be a real Catholic. "It's a remarkable and refreshing change."

The interview took place over three sessions in August in his simple quarters in a Vatican guest house where he has lived since his election instead of the spacious papal apartments, and was released simultaneously by Jesuit journals around the world.

Francis alluded to criticism of him within the conservative Catholic establishment.

"We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. This is not possible. I have not spoken much about these things, and I was reprimanded for that," he said.

CONSERVATIVES DISAPPOINTED

Just last week, Bishop Thomas J. Tobin of Provi-



dence, Rhode Island, spoke for many conservative Catholics when he said he was disappointed that the pope had not addressed “the evil of abortion” more directly to encourage anti-abortion activists.

“I think this is the real beginning of his pontificate,” said Massimo Faggioli, theologian at the University of St Thomas in St Paul, Minnesota. “The overall picture is a Church that is not imposing a test on people before they even think of staying or leaving.”

The highest-ranking bishop in the United States said he found the interview another example of Francis reaching out to all people, “including those who feel that they have been wounded by the church.”

“I particularly welcome his reminder that the clergy are primarily to serve as shepherds, to be with our people, to walk with them, to be pastors, not bu-

reaucrats,” Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement.

Reflecting on the role of women in the Church, Francis said: “We have to work harder to develop a profound theology of the woman. Only by making this step will it be possible to better reflect on their function within the Church.”

“The feminine genius is needed wherever we make important decisions.” The Church teaches that women cannot become priests because Jesus willingly chose only men as his apostles. Proponents of a female priesthood say he was only acting according to the norms of his times.

(Additional reporting by Tom Heneghan in Paris; Editing by Ralph Boulton and Eric Walsh)

A CALL TO ALL AFRICAN SCEPTICS TO ARIZE

By Leo Igwe

For too long, African societies have been identified as superstitious consisting of people who cannot question, reason or think critically. Dogma and blind faith in divinity and tradition are the mainstay of African popular thought, culture and mentality.



African science is often equated with witchcraft and the occult. African philosophy with magical thinking, myth making and mysticism, African religion with stone-age spiritual abracadabra, and African medicine with folk therapies often involving concoctions inspired by magical thinking. Science, critical thinking and technological intelligence are portrayed as western - not universal-values, alien to Africa and to the African mind set.

An African who thinks critically or seeks evidence and demands proofs for extraordinary claims is taken to be taking a white or western approach. An African questioning local dogmas and traditions is portrayed as having abandoned or betrayed the essence of African identity. Scepticism and rationalism are regarded as western, un-African philosophies. Although there is a risk of over generalizing, there are clear indicators that the black continent is still socially, politically and culturally trapped and held back in the past.

Many irrational beliefs exist and hold sway across the region. These are often informed by fear and ignorance, misrepresentations of nature and how na-

ture works. These misconceptions are often instrumental in causing many absurd incidents, harmful traditional practices and atrocious acts.

For instance, not too long ago, the police in Nigeria arrested a ‘robber’ goat which they said was a thief who suddenly turned to a goat. A Nigerian woman was reported to have given birth to a horse. In Zambia, a local school closed temporarily due to fears of witchcraft. In Uganda, there are claims of demonic attacks in schools across the country. Persecution and murder of alleged witches continue in many parts of the continent. Many Africans still believe that their suffering and misfortune are caused by witchcraft and magic. In Malawi, belief in witchcraft planes is widespread. Ritual killing and sacrifice of albinos and other persons with disabilities take place in many communities. Across Africa people still believe in the potency and efficacy of juju and charms. Faith based abuses are perpetrated with impunity. Jihadist, witch hunters and other religious militants are killing, maiming and destroying lives and property. Other-worldly visions and dogmatic attitudes to anything divine continue to corrupt and hamper attempts by Africans to improve their lives.

Even with the continent’s ubiquitous religiosity, many African states are to be found at the bottom of the Human Development Index and on the top of the poverty, mortality and morbidity indices. Recently Africa was polled as the most devout region in the world. Devoutness and underdevelopment, poverty, misery and piety co-exist and co-relate. Incidentally, the dominant faiths in the region are alien faiths. That means African Christians are more

devout than Europeans whose missionaries brought Christianity to Africa. African Muslims are more devout than Muslims in the Middle East whose jihadists and clerics introduced Islam to the region.

Meanwhile, whatever good these foreign religions must have brought or done in Africa cannot be compared with the damage and darkness they have caused and are still causing in the region. Intellectually, these two religions are holding Africans hostage. Most Africans cannot think freely or express their doubts openly because these religions have placed a huge price on freethinking and critical inquiry. Christianity and Islam peddle too many irrational claims which reinforce traditional irrational beliefs and encumber efforts to combat superstitions in the region. They include the belief in heaven and hell, virgin birth, Jesus as the saviour of the world, ascension and resurrection, divine revelation, holy spirit, angels, the devil, prayers and faith healing, divine emissaries, the prophet hood of Mohammed and other Abrahamic religious icons, holy books, holy land, holy water etc.

Africans must reject religious indoctrination and dogmatization in public institutions. Africans need to adopt this cultural motto: Dare to think. Dare to doubt. Dare to question everything in spite of what religions teach or preach. Africans must begin to think freely in order to 'emancipate themselves from mental slavery' and generate ideas that can ignite the flame of enlightenment.

The two dominant religions have fantastic rewards for those who cannot think, the intellectually numb and dumb, those who exercise blind faith and unquestioning obedience, even those who kill or are killed furthering their dogmas. They need to be told that the skeptical goods - the liberating promises of skeptical rationality- are by far more befitting and more beneficent to Africans than imaginary rewards either in the here and now or in the hereafter.

Today the African continent has become the new battle ground for the forces of a dark age, and we have to dislodge and defeat them if Africa is to emerge, grow, develop and flourish. To some people, the African predicament appears hopeless. The continent seems to be condemned, doomed and damned. Africa appears to be in a fix, showing no signs of imminent radical change, transformation and progress. African enlightenment sounds like a pipe dream.

I do not think this is the case. The fact is, there are indeed Africans who reason and think critically. There are Africans who are skeptics and rationalists, but they are too few and far apart to form the critical mass the continent needs to experience a skeptical

spring.

However, the momentum is building slowly and steadily. One can say that an African "skeptical awakening" is in sight. The darkest part of the night often precedes the dawn. There is reason to be optimistic and hopeful. After all, Europe went through a very dark period in its history, in fact, it was a darker and more horrible phase than that which Africa is currently undergoing. Yet the European continent survived to experience enlightenment and modern civilization.

Who ever thought that the Arab Spring would happen in our lifetime? African enlightenment can happen sooner than we expected. But it will not happen as a miracle. African enlightenment will not fall like manna from heaven. It requires - and will require - hard work, efforts, sacrifice, courage and struggle by Africans and other friends who are committed to the values of enlightenment.

In Europe, skeptics spoke out against dogma and tyranny and caused the dawn of a new awakening. African skeptics need to speak out against the forces of dogma, irrationalism and superstition ravaging the continent. Skeptics need to organize and mobilize - online and offline - to further the cause of reason, science and critical thinking.

Skeptics can no longer afford to keep quiet or remain indifferent in the face of a looming dark age, because charlatans operate in their communities, 'mining' popular fears and anxieties, exploiting desperate, ignorant gullible folks. We need to expose them and free our people from their bondage.

African skeptics cannot remain passive and inactive and expect skeptical rationality to thrive and flourish or expect the forces of dogma and superstition to simply disappear. The situation requires active engagement by convinced and committed skeptics. That was how the much talked about skeptical tradition in the western world was established and is sustained. That is how we are going to build and leave a skeptical legacy for Africa.

This is a call to duty to all African skeptics in Africa and in the diaspora. History has thrust on us this critical responsibility which we must fulfil. Let us therefore marshal our will to doubt and other intellectual resources and cause this new dawn - this sceptical awakening to happen early in this 21st century. African skeptics arise.

Leolgweisa Nigerian born, internationally known Humanist, currently on a study fellowship in Germany. Rob Waugh of Yahoo News

RELIGIOUS PEOPLE ARE LESS INTELLIGENT THAN ATHEISTS. STUDY FINDS

Religious people are less intelligent than non-believers, according to a new review of 63 scientific studies stretching back over decades. Intelligent people are more likely to be married, and more likely to be successful in life - and this may mean they "need" religion less. Further findings reveal that

A team led by Miron Zuckerman of the University of Rochester found "a reliable negative relation between intelligence and religiosity" in 53 out of 63 studies. Even in extreme old age, intelligent people are less likely to believe, the researchers found - and the reasons why people with high IQs shun religion may not be as simple as previously thought.

Previous studies have tended to assume that intelligent people simply "know better", the researchers write - but the reasons may be more complex.

For instance, intelligent people are more likely to be married, and more likely to be successful in life - and this may mean they "need" religion less. The studies used in Zuckerman's paper included a life-long analysis of the beliefs of a group of 1,500 gifted children - those with IQs over 135 - in a study which began in 1921 and continues today.

Even at 75 to 91 years of age, the children from Lewis Terman's study scored lower for religiosity than the general population - contrary to the widely held belief that people turn to God as they age. The researchers noted that data was lacking about religious attitudes in old age and say, "Additional research is needed to resolve this issue."

As early as 1958, Michael Argyle concluded, "Although intelligent children grasp religious concepts earlier, they are also the first to doubt the truth of religion, and intelligent students are much less likely to accept orthodox beliefs, and rather less likely to have pro-religious attitudes."

A 1916 study quoted in Zuckerman's paper (Leuba) found that, "58% of randomly selected scientists in the United States expressed disbelief in, or doubt regarding the existence of God; this proportion rose to nearly 70% for the most eminent scientists."

The paper, published in the academic journal *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, said "Most extant explanations (of a negative relation) share one central theme—the premise that religious beliefs are irrational, not anchored in science, not testable and, therefore, unappealing to intelligent people who "know better."

The answer may, however, be more complex. Intelligent people may simply be able to provide themselves with the psychological benefits offered by religion - such as "self-regulation and self-enhancement", because they are more likely to be successful, and have stable



**Christopher Hitchens-
Famous Atheist Author** lives.

"Intelligent people typically spend more time in school—a form of self-regulation that may yield long-term benefits," the researchers write. "More intelligent people get higher level jobs (and better employment (and higher salary) may lead to higher self-esteem, and encourage personal control beliefs." "Last, more intelligent people are more likely to get and stay married (greater attachment), though for intelligent people, that too comes later in life. We therefore suggest that as intelligent people move from young adulthood to adulthood and then to middle age, the benefits of intelligence may continue to accrue."

The researchers suggest that further research on the "function" of religion may reveal more..

"People possessing the functions that religion provides are likely to adopt atheism, people lacking these very functions (e.g., the poor, the helpless) are likely to adopt theism," the researchers wrote.

WINNING WOMEN.

Uganda's top woman leader, Speaker Rebecca Kadaga won the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians and promised to push for equality, better services and leadership for women. Speaker Rebecca Kadaga was y elected the new chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians - International (CWP). Of the 98 votes cast, Ms Kadaga garnered 68, beating Australia's Lisa Baker to the seat. Ms Kadaga, who campaigned on the promise of rallying women parliamentarians across the Commonwealth to fight for increased welfare and political representation. She will hold the seat for the next three years. The elections took place at the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference in South Africa.

In her acceptance speech, Ms Kadaga promised to work on increasing women influence in Africa and around the world. "I will enhance political party participation, more equity for women, more access to justice and I will use the experience I have from the CWP Africa region to ensure that the people we lead have the best services," she said.

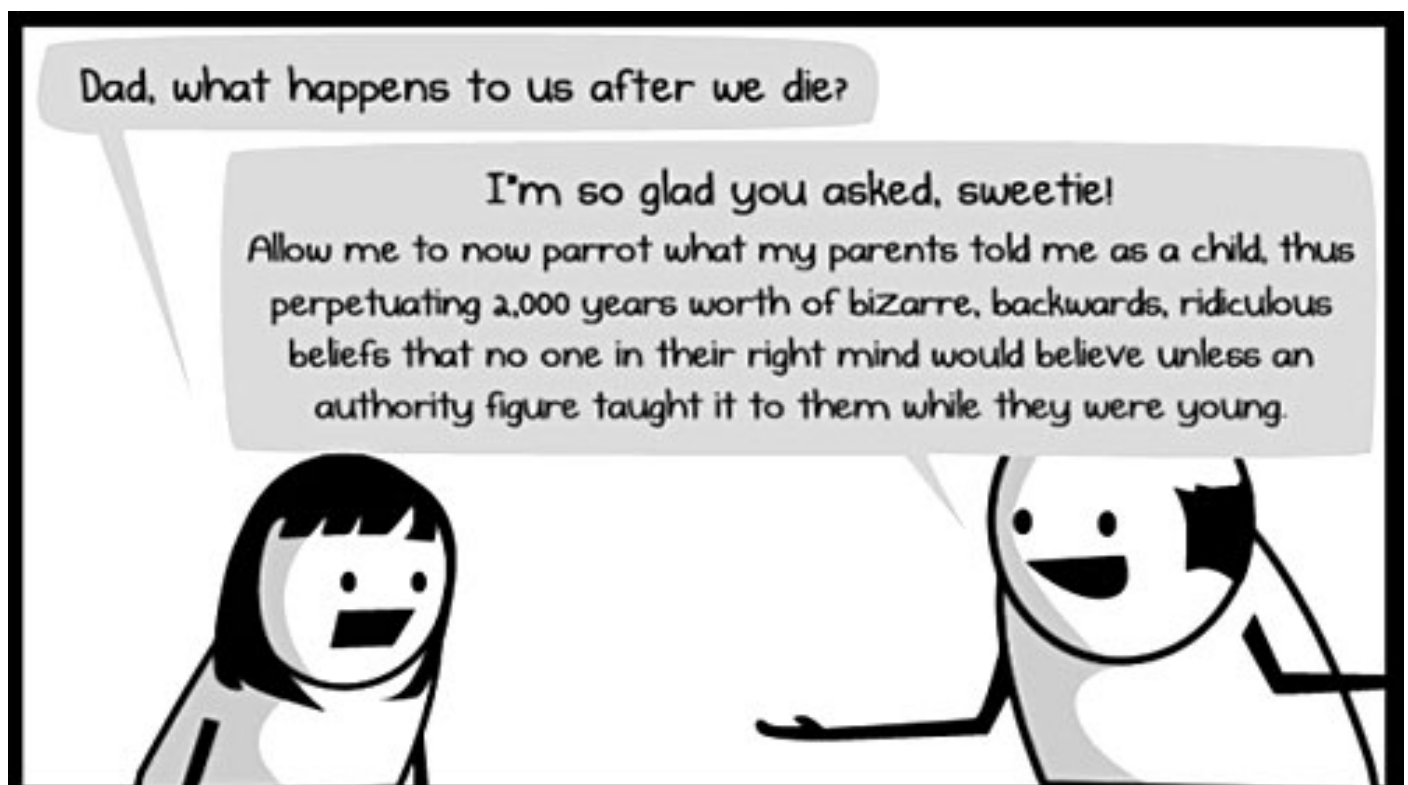
Two days before the vote, the CWP-Africa had endorsed Ms Kadaga for the post. Campaigning for Ms

Kadaga, Ms Lindiwe Maseko, the Speaker of the Gauteng Province, South Africa, said African women should be assured that Ms Kadaga would put across their needs in the CWP and all other international forums. "We are sure that Ms Kadaga has travelled the road and she is tested in the fight for women," Ms Maseko said.



Speaker Rebecca Kadaga

HALEA congratulates Speaker Rebecca Kadaga and encourages all girls and women especially in Africa to take Kadaga as an inspiring figure worth emulating. Already several MPs are encouraging Kadaga to contest for the Presidency and if this is to come to pass, she will be the first female Uganda president. We wish her all the best in her endeavours and we hope that teenager girls will be greatly motivated to dream BIG.



WOULD YOU CHANGE YOUR NAME?

I Didn't Change My Name After Marriage, and Neither Should You .. Writes Amy Plitt.

I Didn't Change My Name After Marriage, and Neither Should You. When I got married in 2007, there was no discussion between my fiancé and me over whether I'd change my last name to match his. Not because we'd made an unspoken agreement to unite behind his slightly clunky, three-syllable surname; on the contrary, I made the choice years before that I would never, ever change my name to match my husband's. And unlike some decisions I made as a strident, self-righteous teenager, the decision to keep my name is one I've never regretted. (Especially considering that we got divorced four years later-changing my name back was one less thing to worry about amid the crazy stress of separating.)

But not everyone feels the same way: In a recent poll by Huffington post 2013, of 1,000 people conducted by YouGov, 61 percent of those surveyed stated that they think a women should take her husband's after marriage. (Yikes.) And the number of women who actually keep their maiden names after marriage is shrinking: Various surveys have estimated that anywhere from 8 to 18 percent of women don't change their names, down from about 23 percent in the '90s.

I thought of all this while reading Pamela Paul's recent essay in the New York Times, "The Problem That Has Two Names," about her struggle with the whole name-change issue. "Like others wanting it both ways," she writes, "I held on to my professional name while also taking on my husband's." Paul-who wrote *The Starter Marriage*, so she's something of an expert on the subject-describes the challenges inherent to having it both ways, both legally (on things like tax returns and passports), and within her own family. "My young children are all in a permanent state of confusion about the bylines they see under one name and the family name we use at home," she explains. "Isn't our shared name part of what unites us as a family? Why would I want to set myself apart?" What does bother me is the fact that it's 2013, and for all the strides that women have made-socially, culturally, politically, everywhere-we're still expected to change such a fundamental part of ourselves, simply because we got married.

There are a few reasons why buying into this retrograde notion doesn't make much sense anymore. For one thing, more women than ever are marrying

later, when they're already established in a career under a maiden name. My personal politics aside, I've built up a career and a reputation as a Plitt, and I didn't want to lose that identity-it'd just be confusing. Furthermore, as gay marriage becomes more and more widespread-hooray!-the conventions of heterosexual marriage, such as wives taking husband's names, don't have to be the norm. It's silly at best, and exclusionary at worst.

And let's face it, men never get this kind of pressure. About a year after I married, I got into an argument with a (male) coworker who called me selfish for keeping my own name. As far as I know, my ex-husband never once got the same reaction-that would have been totally unthinkable. Historically, the reasons for and consequences of name-changing were pretty vile; a Harvard study noted that "the laws of various states have deprived women of rights, such as retaining their driver's license and voter registration, if they did not assume the surname of their husband." That's changed, thankfully, but it illustrates my biggest problem: the whole convention is rooted in sexism, and the idea that a woman is little more than an extension of her husband. There isn't really any good reason why a dude can't take his future wife's last name, other than the fact that society might disapprove.

And then there's the issue of the "family name." After marriage and having kids, couples-like Paul and her husband-may want to be united under a common moniker. And that's totally fine! But now more than ever, there's an opportunity to redefine what the "family name" means. It doesn't have to be just about a woman changing her identity; it can be about whatever the couple wants. Hyphenating? Making a portmanteau out of your last names? Choosing a brand-new surname altogether? Sure, why not? But let's stop having an outdated, sexist custom drive the decision-making.

Look at probably the most famous and awesome married folks in the world right now: Beyoncé and Jay-Z. As the Cut pointed out earlier this year, both members of that power couple legally changed their surnames to Carter-Knowles, creating a family unit that represents them both equally. If Bey and Jay can embrace a more progressive, egalitarian path on the name-changing front, perhaps the rest of us should follow suit. (Sourced from: UK News.yahoo.com)

HERE IS A RELIGION THAT SUPPORTS AND PRACTICES POLYGAMY

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dear reader, we at least know that polygamy has been part of African tradition and culture for centuries but probably many did not know that even in Europe and America; there are people who are purely polygamists and are proud to be so. Here is a story from Arizona where it is religion used as a basis to promote polygamy. Do people in polygamous marriages have rights? Do they enjoy rights? Should governments that disagree with polygamy continue to harass polygamous families? Should polygamy be legalised in countries where it is illegal? What are your views about polygamy? Read on and provide some answers.

Modern Polygamy: Arizona Mormon Fundamentalists Seek to Shed Stereotypes By CECILIA VEGA and MARY MARSH | ABC News

Nineteen-year-old Rose Marie Cawley has been praying a lot recently. She's been praying for inspiration from God, that he will reveal to her the name of the man she will marry.

"I could marry someone single or I could marry someone very married with three wives or 10 wives," she said. "You just have to keep your mind open."

Cawley will keep praying until inspiration strikes, just like her mother, and two other mothers before her, because in this Centennial Park, Ariz., polygamist community, God reveals to the women who they will marry.

"This is my choice," Cawley said. "I chose to basically give myself over to the heavenly father to place me with whoever he chooses."

Centennial Park, Ariz., is a remote town just over the Utah border and it is home to 1,500 fundamentalist Mormons. They still believe that plural marriage, one of the religious teachings of Mormon founder Joseph Smith, was ordained by God and that a man receives a higher form of Salvation when he has several wives.

The vast majority of Mormons belong to the Church

of Latter-Day Saints, which renounced polygamy in the late 1800s, but several groups splintered from the Church over religious differences – most commonly, over the ability to engage in plural marriage. The Cawleys, one of the families in Centennial Park, is made up of a husband, three wives and 18 children, all crammed under one ever-expanding roof -- the family has outgrown their house and is renovating shipping containers in the backyard for additional bedrooms. Michael Cawley, the head of this plural household, says he expects his family to keep growing.

"One of the interesting things about our lifestyle is we believe that our Father in heaven blesses us and those blessings entail the children who come into the

family," he said. "I may have another lady that comes into the family...I'm pretty sure I'll have more children that come into the family and so as the husband and the provider, then a lot of what I do is prepare for that."

The polygamist lifestyle is illegal in all 50 states, but residents of Centennial Park

say they allowed our cameras into their home because they want to

show just how average and normal their lives are. "We would like to start having the debate nationally about the decriminalization of polygamy," Michael Cawley said. "If I had my choices, I would like to see it done right now. I don't see there is any reason for this lifestyle to be a crime. It's a religion. Not a crime."

Cawley's first and second wives said they agree with their husband's viewers. "This is where I choose to be. ... I truly am happy with this lifestyle. I truly would be unhappy in something different, I truly would," Rose said. "Living in a monogamous lifestyle simply would not be full enough for me." "This is our version of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," added Connie Cawley, Michael's second wife. "And really if everyone else is entitled to that, so are we." At Centennial Park, a woman is not forced into marriage, which is different from the more infamous, well-publicized group of polygamists just down the



A Polygamous Family In Prayer

road. Three miles north is Hildale, Utah, and Colorado City, Ariz., the home of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints followers, or FLDS, the group led by self-described prophet Warren Jeffs. Jeffs, who married more than 80 women, is currently serving a life sentence in prison after being convicted of two counts of sexual assault against two underage girls.

While more tolerant than the FLDS, the Centennial Park polygamist community is not quite as laid back as the polygamy family featured on TLC's "Sister Wives" either. Women in Centennial Park get the inspiration for who they will marry, but then they can't say no to an additional wife if one gets an inspiration to join their family.

"They way I came in was that I believed that I belonged to Michael and I can't say that there is nobody else who belongs to you," Rose said. "That's between Michael and God." There is no dating allowed. Women have to be at least 18 years old to marry, and God can tell them to marry just about anyone in town, even if they were many years older. If his daughter gets the inspiration to marry someone who is 70 years old, Michael Cawley doesn't disagree with that decision. "If that is what the answer is that comes from our Father in Heaven through inspiration to our elders and to her and to me and her mother, great," he said.

If Rose Marie marries into a home where she is the fifth or sixth wife, Cawley said that is also fine with him. Future husbands can be revealed anywhere and at any time. For Connie Cawley, inspiration came when she was in the sixth grade. Once her science teacher, Michael is now her husband.

There are other polygamy families in Centennial Park. Arthur Hammon, one of the town elders and a husband to three wives with more than 20 children overseas a small army of young men who are learning the teachings to be good polygamist husbands. Memories of the 1953 Short Creek raid, when the authorities arrested members of a polygamist community and removed the children from their homes, remain strong here. When asked if he were afraid of the police coming and shutting down his town, Hammon said "afraid" is the wrong term. "If I let fear rule me, I would not do what I have done," he said. "It's a concern, they could do that."

Nevertheless, the polygamist community said they are tired of living in secret and want to demonstrate plural marriage as the way they say it should be

seen. Hammon said that the stereotype that women in polygamist marriages have no rights, no freedom to leave the community and are only there to have babies is false, as far as he is concerned.

"I can tell you that my door swings both ways," he said. "If they come in, they can go out. I know of no greater freedom for a woman than living in a responsible, caring polygamist home" he noted.

Editor's End Note: We wait for your views, what do you think about Polygamy?

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