

Transgender People: Facts vs. Myths

There are a lot of myths and misinformation about transgender people in Kenya and across the world. The goal of this article is to list these misinformation and myths and then provide readers with accurate facts about transgender people.

Myth 1: There are no transgender people in Kenya except Audrey Mbugua.

Fact: There are thousands of transgender people in Kenya each at a different stage of their sex change transition. These transgender men and women fear being exposed to stigma, violence and neglect by their families. It isn't fun to be the face of transgender people in Kenya. You get to face a lot of security threats, insults and stigma in your life. But, you don't choose to be the face and leader of the transgender movement, rather, you are chosen by fate.



Figure 1: Caitlyn Jenner - An American Television Personality and retired Olympic gold medal-winning decathlete



Figure 2: Audrey Mbugua - The leader of the transgender species in the universe

Myth 2: Transgender people are gays (homosexuals)

Fact: This false perception/belief is perpetrated by ignorant people in the human rights sector, some gays, liberals and other transphobes. Changing sex (transgender people) is not the same as being attracted to people of one's sex or practicing same-sex activities. Second, transgender is not a sexual orientation/preference issue; no one is transgender because they are attracted to this or that. However, most transgender people have a sexual orientation; and for most it is heterosexual (straight).

Myth 3: Transgender people are criminalized in Kenya

Fact: Transgenderism or sex change is not illegal in Kenya or any part of the world. This misconceptions stems from the belief that transgender is the same as homosexuality. The penal code criminalizes sexual activities commonly known as "unnatural acts"; and not transgenderism.

Myth 4: Sex change is not possible in Kenya

Fact: Sex change surgery is not prohibited by any law in Kenya. Hormones (estrogens and testosterone) can be accessed in most pharmacies in Kenya.

Transgender people can change their names and sex mark in their national identity cards and passports. However, it is still difficult to enact name changes in their academic documents and birth certificates.



Figure 3: Joyital Mondal - A transgender woman and high civil court judge in India

Myth 5: Sex change is prohibited by the bible and the Koran

Fact: There is not verse or chapter in the bible that prohibits people, who are uncomfortable with the sex god gave them at birth, from changing their sex. Sex change is not the same as practicing homosexuality which is the one prohibited by the bible and Koran; sex between transgender people and their lovers is not homosexuality no matter what organs these transgender people have.

Countries with a good understanding of the Koran and the bible actually provide help to transgender people in need of sex change health care services and legal recognitions (change of names and sex mark in their documents). For example, since the late 1980s, Iran has been providing assistance to transgender/transsexual persons. The great (and late) supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa in 1987 recognizing the right of transgender people to change their sex. As of 2005, Iran performs more sex change surgeries in the world, second to Thailand. All Muslim clerics and the Iranian government in present-day Iran respect this fatwa. This has earned Iran recognition and respect from the United Nations, USA, African, Asian and European Countries.

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