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# A GUIDANCE CAMPAIGN TOWARDS A WIDER UNDERSTANDING OF SAME SEX MARRIAGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOCIETY.

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**Abstract**
*The human society in the context of evolution has experienced several changes that continually shape its conducts. Despite the fact that many scholars have pointed out that there have been times in the history of human existence that there was no knowledge of right and wrong and no ethical feelings, yet human history has proven that man is a social animal who lives in a society and strives to maintain his relationship with his fellow man. In sustaining these relations, man has evolved principles that guide him in his conduct. These principles when clearly observed are seen as having been drawn from the mind and the desire of his creator (God). The application of these principles by man is to make him fulfill his ultimate goal of being happy and satisfied. Nevertheless, contemporary man in this present world seems to have little or no consideration for moral values. He is much more concerned with himself and it does not bother him how people conceive of his actions. The issue of same sex marriage, despite the fact that it still sounds odd to many people, especially Africans, has come to form part of man's social practice and behaviour. This paper takes a look at the implications of this practice for the society; by doing so, the writer expounds on the dangers associated with same sex marriage and the consequences it may pose on the society as a whole. These arguments will be drawn from the perception of the African value system that completely frowns at the idea of same sex marriage. To this end, the paper advocates for an enforcement of African values and laws that will discourage and prohibit this practice.*

**Keywords: Guidance Campaign, Knowledge, Same Sex Marriage, Implications, African Society.**

## Introduction

Following his recent visit to Kenya, the President of the United States of America, Barak Obama, while addressing the people concerning the legalization of gay rights pointed out clearly that " when you start treating people differently, not because of any harm they are doing to anybody, but because they are different, that's the path whereby freedom begins to erode" (*www.edition.com*). According to the President, God who created human beings has equally provided man with the freedom of choice to decide on whatever he/she desires to do. Thus gay marriage is one of these rights of a human person and to him, whoever chooses this pathway is only exercising his/her freedom.

With the above understanding, youths in most parts of the world are excitedly embracing this practice without actually understanding what marriage means and the reasons for getting into marriage are being lost. The question to be asked now is: what has brought about this drastic change in human attitude? Or have human beings lost the true idea of marriage? Or does it now mean that man has evolved a new reason for going into marriage?

The Christian scriptures clearly states, "for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife … therefore what God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matt. 19:5 and Mk. 10:6-8). This quotation clearly proves that mankind has deviated from the original plan of the creator concerning marriage. This study therefore goes out of its way to identify and recognize the reason as to why marriage was instituted and at the same time attention will be drawn on the worldview of the African on the concept of marriage. For expositional clarity, however, the work shall now provide brief explanation on some of the major concepts that form the topic of this work. These concepts are: same sex marriage, society and values.

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**Same Sex:** It connotes the idea of having the same state of being either male or female. As a concept, it is simply known as marriage between people of the same sex, either in a secular civil ceremony or in a religious setting (*en.wikipedia.org/wiki/same-sex-marriage*). It is also known as gay-marriage and advocates of this form of marriage equally term it as "marriage equality" (rationalwiki.org). But despite the many colorations by supporters of this practice same sex marriage still remains the marital union of two individuals of the same sex, for example between two male homosexuals and also the one involving two female lesbians.

According to Boswell, in his book entitled, *Same Sex Unionin Pre-Modern Europe,* the first historical mention of same sex marriage was during the early Roman Empire (81). This marriage was contracted by Emperor Nero who was equally reported to have married two other males on different occasions. The first was one of Nero's own freedman called Pythagoras with whom Nero took the role of the groom (William 284). Both of these marriages were celebrated in Greece and Rome. From these explanations, it is clear that same sex marriage remains a union between people of equal gender.

**Society:** The *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English* explains the term society as "a particular community of people who share the same customs, laws etc and who are joined together for a particular purpose" (1129). In the words of Dzurgba;

Society is seen as a community in which its inhabitants interact with one another, meet their needs for survival and welfare, seek to develop their unique lifestyle of life and work out their problems of group living. They reflect on their past and present circumstances… this leads to group integration, cohesion, solidarity and harmony (5).

Human societies generally address the fact that an individual person cannot live in isolation, that is, he has a limited means as an autonomous unit. Thus, used in this sense, the society can be seen as that body or group of persons outlined by the bounds of functional interdependence, possibly comprising characteristics such as national or cultural identity, social solidarity, language or hierarchical structure.

Scholars have differed on the classification of societies, however, and on a broader look, societies are generally classified under pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial. The pre-industrial society concerns itself with food production which is usually done using human and animal labour. The industrial societies developed out of the pre-industrial. Here, the

society relies heavily on machines for the production of goods. The post-industrial societies on her part are societies dominated by information services and high technology more than the production of goods (*www.en.m.wikipedia.org*).

Thus, a society is not determined in terms of number of participants or their geographical spread. However, for them to interact fully with one another in harmony devoid of conflict there are some conditions and set-down rules and principles that regulate that human behaviour towards each other. These codes of conduct include cooperation, cohesion, conformity and participation.

**Values**: By examination, the term value has to do with the regard that something is held to deserve, it is the importance, worth or usefulness of something. It similarly means the principles or standards of behaviour, of one's judgment of what is important in life (www.google.com.ng). Values can also be seen broadly as preferences concerning appropriate courses of action or outcomes. As such, they reflect a person's sense of right and wrong or what "ought to be". Typical values include honesty, integrity, compassion, courage, honour, responsibility, patriotism, respect and fairness.

To a very large extent human beings are greatly influenced by their cultural and societal settings and its values imprint themselves on our minds in ways most of us are unaware of. Our attitudes and opinion to issues are all connected to our thoughts and feelings. It is based on this understanding that we explain African values as those practices that would earn somebody respect and honour. These practices include sense of community life or communal existence, good human relations, the sacredness of life, hospitality, religiosity, sense of time, respect for elders and lastly sense of appropriate use of language (*www.emeka.atlafrican-cultural-values*). These values are passed down through oral traditions from generation to generation within a culture, subculture or community.

**Marriage:** The affections and emotional feelings that stem from the human mind have made them to evolve ways by which relationship between two people will be legally formed. It is based on this background that the idea of marriage was initiated. This practice has been with human beings since the beginning of the world.

There are very divergent views as to what marriage represents. To some people marriage occurs for a fulfillment of sexual satisfactions. For others, it is for economic reasons, while others see marriage as a natural social order; still yet, many believe it to be a divine purpose of God towards mankind. Based on these variations in views, many scholars have come up with several definitions as to what marriage is. According to Goodenough in his book *Description in Cultural Anthropology*, marriage is seen as:

> A transaction and resulting contract in which a personal (male or female, corporate or individual, in person or by proxy) establishes a continuous claim to the right of sexual access to a woman - this right having priority over rights of sexual access others currently have or may subsequently acquire in relation to her… until the contract resulting from the transaction is terminated, and in which the woman involved is eligible to bear children (13).

To Anyebe, "Marriage is a voluntary union of one man and a woman or women to the exclusion of all others" (26). What this means is that the union could extend even beyond the life of the man as it is found in most African societies, but could terminate or end at the death of the woman. On the whole, marriage incorporates union or legal contract between spouses that establishes some rights among the parties involved.

**Same Sex Marriage: A Critical Approach**

The Christian Holy Scripture in the book of Jeremiah 17:9 say "the human heart is the most deceitful of all things and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is" (New Living Translation). This passage of the Bible suggests that human beings become more interested doing what is against the will of their creator. It is in relation to this that Paul too wrote to the Romans in Romans 17:15, 19 "I do not understand what I do; for what I want to do, I do not. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do, this I keep doing" (New International Version). All these passages suggest that the human mind is more conditioned towards opposing the plan and purpose of God. For instance, when God was done with the work of creation, He blessed man and gave him the mandate to go into the world and "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion" (Gen. 1:28). And yet when God said, and for the purpose of procreation, "let it be carried between a man and a woman" some human beings in this present world have come to kick against this idea of God, as witnessed in the marital union among people of the same sex.

Historically, same sex marriage was even evident during the biblical era. Consider passages like Genesis 6; Leviticus. 18, 20 and Rom. 1:26-27 all point to the fact that this practice was actually in existence. In Nigeria, this practice was not even a topic of discourse, let alone a cultural practice, until January 2006 when Justice Bayo Ojo placed the bill at the National Assembly (*www.wikipedia.org/same-sex-marriage*). The bill sought for the prohibition of relationship between persons of the same sex, celebration of marriage by them and for other matters connected therewith. To this end, the bill calls for a five-year imprisonment for any person that undergoes, performs, witnesses, aids, or abets a same sex marriage. It would also prohibit any display of a same sex amorous relationship and adoption of children by gays or lesbians (www.en.wikipedia.org). According to this same bill, any act of involvement in public associations or advocacy by person supporting the rights of lesbians or gays people will equally attract a five-year jail term. Going by this development, it is very clear that Nigeria as a nation does not recognize same sex marriage nor will unions among people of the same gender. In other states of Nigeria, particularly in the Northern parts where they practice Sharia law, this practice may have up to a maximum of twelve-year jail term and in other instances, it may lead to death by stoning the violators (www.en.wikipedia.org). For example in the states of Gombe, Jigawa, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara states, anyone who commits this offence shall be punished with caning which may extend to fifty lashes and in addition be sentenced to a term of imprisonment which may extend to six months, whereas in the state of Bauchi, in addition to caning, the offender will also bag a five-year jail term and in Kaduna state, the punishment given to the offender to *ta'azir* which refers to punishments not provided by way of *Hadd* or *gisas*. Hadd here means punishment that is fixed by Islamic laws whereas Qasis includes punishments inflicted upon offenders by way of retaliation for

causing death or injuries to a person. (Ostein 53-54). What this means is that all acts of some sex union or relationships are totally not acceptable and unethical.

Following this development, in August 2007, eighteen people were arrested in Bauchi State and were charged with committing this offence. They were seen dressing in women attires and addressing each other as women (Human Rights Watch 51). Similarly in Lagos, communities around House of Rainbow Metropolitan Community Church staged a riot to set the church ablaze. It was known that this church was not only advocating for same sex marriage but were equally encouraging and supporting her members. (Human Rights watch 52). Because of the widespread societal taboos against this culture, very few persons openly revealed their identities or their orientation.

**Same Sex Marriages: Consequences on the Survival of the Society**

Despite the very many arguments from the supporters of the cultural practice, commonsense has taught us that gay marriage remains unreasonable and unthinkable. It violates natural order and remains a sin in the sight of God and even unto those that love humanity and may wish for the continuity of the human race. In this section, I will try to provide the negative effects of same-sex marriage and the dangers it stand to impede on the society. Some of these include.

**i**. It is not marriage: At the beginning of this paper it has been discovered that God, who is the creator of the universe has bestowed unto mankind some certain principle and guides to follow. As pointed in the opening passages marriage, naturally is that which should take place between a man and a woman. It is in affirmation of this understanding that TFP student action writing on Defending Moral Values on Campus says "marriage has always been a covenant between a man and a woman which is by its nature ordered towards the procreation and education of children and the unity and well-being of the spouses". (*www.tfpstudentaction.org*). To this end, any marital union entered which is not built on this foundation is not to be considered as marriage.

**ii**. Is contrary to God's word. Same sex unions contradict completely the purpose and the plan of God concerning marriage. For instance, in the bible, Lev. 18:22 states "thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind, it is abomination, (KJV), thus condemning homosexual relationship. Even among Islam, several passages are found that does not agree with this practice. According to prophet Muhammed (SAW), "when a man mounts another man, the throne of God shakes, and lesbians sex of women is illegitimate sexual intercourse (*www.gaymarriage.procon.org*). These passages attributed to both Christians and Muslims condemn same sex union. And it still remains so that there is yet to be found any religion in the entire world that has explicitly given approval of this practice.

**iii**. It reduces population growth and development. It is common knowledge that these types of union make it very difficult for the partners to have children. Even when such partners have, it is usually accompanied with additional cost. To this end, there is the fear that the human society is now gradually been reduced and not checked, the entire human race will go into extinction Relatively too is the issue of underdevelopment which this may bodied people

who may come to take over from the aged and weaker ones. The consequences of these will be hunger, poverty and general underdevelopment.

**iv**. It creates single sex parenthood. Same sex marriages deny the children, that is even when the spouses opted for adoption, the opportunity to the cared and natured by both a father and a mother as in this case, only one sex of a person is involved. It is very clear that a child best interest that he/she should be raised by both the father and the mother. This idea is confirmed by the evident difficulties faced by the many children who are orphaned or raised by a single parent, a relative or foster parent. To this end, the child becomes deprived of either a father or another role model; as oftentimes the child in the centre of this development is raised by one party or both parties who does not share any blood relationship with him/her.

**v**. It promotes homosexuality and lesbianism: Homosexuality has to do with a person, usually a man that is sexually attracted to another man. The term is closely similar to that of gay. Whereas, a lesbian is that woman who is equally attracted sexually to other women. It becomes more worrisome that homosexuality in itself violates societal civil laws and moral principles, now, how can we turn to look at that which promotes and encourage it? Thus, it will not be an exaggeration that same-sex marriage would at the end, obscure certain basic moral valid and weaken public morality.

**Same-Sex Marriage: A Threat to Undermine African Values**

According to Mbiti, marriage in African worldview remains "a complex affair with economic, social and religious aspects which often overlap so firmly that cannot be separated from one another" (33). This explains that the idea of marriage remains the fundamental focus and basis for human existence. It is the point where "all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet to be born. All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized" (33). To this end, marriage remains a major factor for the continued existence of the society.

Thus, for continuity of life, marriage has become not only a requirement but also necessity to comply with and it remains expedient a duty that everyone should conform with. It is in this way that the African sees the inability or refusal by someone to get married as an abnormality. It is also based on this understanding that Wegh in his book entitled *Between Continuity and Change: Tiv Concept of Tradition and Modernity* asserts that. Marriage is a sign of the fulfillment of the wishes and aspirations of one's parents, kingship and the community at large (75). It means that in other to avoid the wrath of the gods and ancestors, one must get married to fulfill this obligation.

Unlike the western perception of marriage which is built on love and companionship, in African worldview, the primary reason of getting married is procreation and without procreation, marriage is incomplete. It is held among the Africans that the people one lives behind when he/she dies continue to stand in and represent him. It is based on this that makes the African to marry as many wives and bear as many children as possible. This means that a person who therefore, has no descendants in effect quenches the fire of life and becomes forever, dead since his line of physical continuation is blocked if he does not get married and bear children (Mbiti 133). This equally answers the question as to why an old man that is

believed to be sexually inactive but is yet to father a child will still go out and marry. The essence of doing this is that, as the woman is brought into the house, she is allowed to have sex with the relatives of the husband with the sole purpose of making children that will represent at the death of the old man.

The value placed on marriage and childbearing among the African is so strong that when couples get married and in case of the death of one of the couple, especially the man, if they had not given birth to any child or not many children, the young woman is betrothed to the other relatives of the dead person, who now "go into" the young woman so as to make her pregnant to sustain the family name and especially of the one that has died. In doing this Africans believed that the chain of existence will not be broken and human existence will continue.

Similarly, marrying and childbearing are considered as prosperity. This explains also the large number of people found in a family unit. The Africans are mostly and predominantly farmers. It is considered that a person with a large farm is a wealthy person and the size of farm of person is due to the number of people he has that will continue to work and keep the system.

African cultural practices place a lot on the dignity of the human person and the need to safeguard good societal values. Same-sex marriage is Un-African because it is inconsistent with African values of procreation and the belief in the continuity of family life and the society. Same-sex marriage is one ill that will completely destroy the value of African culture which is considered as model for all other cultures of the world.

**Conclusion**

This paper critically examines the concept of same-sex marriage and the consequences that such unions has on the society. In doing this, the paper proved some negative impacts associated with this practice. It drew comparisons using the African worldview on marriage, family life and society's continuity. It uncovers the dangers of same-sex marriage towards the growth and development of the community. The paper maintained that same-sex marriage is a western idea which should live with them alone. In fact, it should be abhorred and rejected totally by all persons, cultures and religions globally. This paper agrees that this sex deviant's practice, as being introduced in Africa is only aimed at distorting our good value system. All Africans should all remember that as Africans, we have our own culture and we must re-dedicate ourselves to our positive traditional values.

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