HOW THE IDEA OF CHANGE HAS MEDDLED WITH AFRICAN CULTURAL PRACTICES AND THE AFRICAN SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Ovett NWOSIMIRI
African Centre for Epistemology and Philosophy of Science (ACEPS)
University of Johannesburg
Email: ovettmore@gmail.com
ORCID No: orcid.org/0000-0003-3596-0717

Abstract
The idea of change seems to be a vital part of human life and culture. With the concept of change, people, communities, and cultural practices have significantly evolved. Change has transformed some communities, traditions, cultural values and practices, communication methods, education, art, and literature. Thus, in this paper, I focus on the idea of change, African cultural practices, and the African sense of community. I aim to show how the concept of change has meddled with African cultural practices and the African sense of community. I intend to achieve this by using the Ifá divination system, the idea of storytelling, and homosexuality or the LGBTIQA+[1] people as examples.

Keywords: African (Culture), Change, Community, Individual, LGBTIQA+, Modernity, Practices

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[1] LGBTIQA+ is an acronym that encompasses all people whose sexual orientation differ from heterosexual. LGBTIQA+ is the acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexuals, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual and questioning. Also, I would like to note that for the purpose of this paper I will use both homosexuals and LGBTIQA+ interchangeably.

Introduction

It is often said that change is inevitable. However, the reality is that change is not accepted readily. Many dread the idea of change and find it very disturbing. Societies do experience various changes over time because it is one indicator of growth. The rate at which change happens in human society can either be fast or slow; no matter how slow or fast it is, change still happens. According to Kwame Gyekye, "no human culture is absolutely unchanging, totally refusing to take advantage of possible benefits that often accompany encounters between cultures. Absolute changelessness is therefore impossible and cannot be considered a necessary condition of any human society" (1997, 217–218). Holding up to one's ideas and cultural practices can hinder the concept of change, but this does not mean that a slower rate of change is unchanging.

Thus, in this paper, I aim to show how the concept of change has meddled with African cultural practices and the African sense of community. This paper is divided into three sections. The first section is an overview of African culture and the African sense of community. Using the *Ifá* divination system as an example, I show how the idea of change has meddled with African cultural practices in the second section. In the final section, I show how the idea of change has meddled with the African sense of community. To show this, I used the idea of storytelling and homosexuality or the LGBTIQA+[2] people as examples. Before I proceed, I would like to underscore that I am aware of the importance of change in different cultures and traditions. I am also aware that change has positive and negative sides, but for the sake of this paper, I intend to look at the negative aspects of change.

An Overview of African Culture and African sense of Community

The diversity of cultures indeed attests to the richness of human creativity and invention; it also ensures, however,

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that there will be variations in the mind-set of human cultures, variations in the specific aspirations and concerns of their peoples, variations in the principles of action and sensibility which they invoke in their attempts to solve culturally rooted problems as well as variations in their efforts to advance reality towards ideals. (ABRAHAM 1992, 13)

Before explaining African culture, it is essential to know what culture is. The term culture can mean the way of life of some people. According to Stuart C. Bate (2002), six common descriptive understandings of culture exist. These six descriptive understandings of culture are (1) culture as a way of life, (2) culture as something that can be learned, (3) culture as involving language, (4) culture as dealing with symbols that include rituals and myths, (5) culture as giving meaning to our lives, and (6) culture as communication. From those mentioned above, it will be suitable to define culture as a way of life of some people, and its importance varies from society to society. Gabriel E. Idang defines culture as "a patterned way of life shared by a particular group of people that claim to share a single origin or descent" (2015, 98). Culture as people's way of life embraces a wide range of human phenomena, customs, practices, beliefs, moral codes, knowledge, arts, and any other capabilities and habits of people within a society. Culture, therefore, refers to the heritage of people that differentiates them from other people. It is essential to underscore that a simple way to think about culture is to think about the discrepancy between nature and nurture. In this case, nature refers to our genetics and biological makeup, and nurture refers to how our environment and surroundings help shape our identities. A combination of these notions gives us culture (NWOSIMIRI 2021).

There can be no people without a culture. This implies that the essence of people exists in their culture. Every human being grows into, and within, the cultural tradition of their people. "Every human being who grows up in a particular society is likely to become infused with the culture of that society, whether knowingly or unknowingly, during the process of social interaction" (IDANG 2015, 99). Culture stems from people's daily and social interactions with each other and their interactions with the physical and spiritual world. These

interactions and different practices help transfer culture from generation to generation (NWOSIMIRI 2021).

What is African culture? African culture can be defined as "all the material and spiritual values of the African people in the course of history and characterizing the historical stage attained by Africa in her developments" (IDANG 2009, 142). Edward Ezedike defined African cultures as:

> The sum total of shared attitudinal inclinations and capabilities, art, beliefs, moral codes and practices that characterize Africans. It can be conceived as a continuous, cumulative reservoir containing both material and non-material elements that are socially transmitted from one generation to another. African culture, therefore, refers to the whole lot of African heritage. (2009, 455)

It is evident from the above quote that African culture represents the totality of the African way of life. I will like to underscore that I do not wish to argue that the whole of Africa has one homogenous culture. I am aware that there are many African countries, and within each country, various cultures and traditions differ in some respect. Nevertheless, regarding the idea of African culture, there are some deep underlying affinities running through these cultures, which justifies the existing generalization. I do not intend within the pages of this paper to present all the different African cultures that exist in Africa. Instead, I intend to give a brief overview of African culture.

African culture "is one of discipline. It insists that the individual should be seen in the light of the whole – family, group, community, the past, and the future generations" (ANYANWU 1983, 24). Here, it is essential to note that the sense of community is one of the African cultural values. Other African cultural values include the sense of hospitality, good relations, sacred and religion, sacredness of life, respect for elders and authority, morality, language, proverbs and time, etc. Almost all of the African cultural values are derivative of African communitarianism. This means that African cultural values and practices are the African community's main foundations and are of great significance. According to Kwesi A. Dickson, the community is a "characteristic of African life to which attention has been drawn

again and again by both African and non-African writers on Africa. Indeed, to many, this characteristic defines Africanness" (1977, 4).

Africans are known and identified through their sense of community. They emphasize the idea of community life. The community is the custodian of an individual. An individual sees him or herself existing in a community and in relation to others. An individual understands their:

> [I]ntrinsic relation to others and sees the interdependent existence of their lives with others… not that the community forces itself on an unyielding individual, rather the individual, through socialization and the love and concern which the household and community have extended to him/her, *cannot* now see himself or herself as anything apart from his/her community (GBADEGESIN 1998, 293).

This is evident in John S. Mbiti's assertion: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (1969, 108–109). Simply put, 'I exist because the community exists.' It is no longer 'I' but 'We.' In this view, the reality of the communal world, in the African context, "takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever these may be" (MENKITI 1984, 171). In the words of Steve Biko:

> We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life. Hence in all, we always place man first, and hence all our action is usually joint community oriented action rather than individualism… (1998, 27)

We could see from the above quote that African culture embraces and encourages communitarianism over individualism. According to Gyekye:

> It is an obvious fact, of course, that an individual human being is born into an existing human society and, therefore,

into a human culture, the latter being a product of the former. As an Akan maxim has it, when a person descends from heaven, he/she descends into a human society (*Onipa firi soro besi a, obesi onipa kurom*). The fact that a person is born into an existing community must suggest a conception of the person as a communitarian being by nature, even though some people insist on the individuality of the person. (1998, 320)

The above underscores the fundamental relations between the community and the individual.

How the idea of Change has meddled with African Cultural Practices
The idea of modernity is the catalyst that fuels the idea of change in African cultural practices. According to Gyekye, the notion of modernity has been very significant for the world's people for more than a century. Societies in the world have, with no exception, aspired to become modern, and this concept has gained a normative status. This aspiration of becoming modern is visible in the social, cultural, and political lives of many. To this, Gyekye argues thus:

> Western societies generally, from which the notion is said to have emerged, have become the quintessence of modernity, the mecca to which people from non-modern societies go for inspiration and knowledge as to models of thought and action in pursuit of the development of their societies and transition to modernity. (1997, 263–264)

Corroborating this view and showing Africa's involvement in the idea of modernity, development, and change, Oyekan Owomoyela claims that, "already evident is the philosophers' conviction that Africans must discard their traditional ways in favour of modern European (or Western) ways in the name of development" (1987, 161–162).

Lewis Gordon argues that the idea of modernity is seen as a state of affairs where "one group of people enforced its portrait of reality on others, an antagonistic relationship emerged in which dominated peoples not only resisted what was imposed on them, but

also evaluated their presuppositions about the world" (2014, 10). In other words, his idea is that modernity is a portrait that imposes its reality on others and, in this case, creates an agnostic relation that will, in turn, make the dominated group evaluate their presuppositions about the world. "This process took on a dialectical quality to give and take, which led to new problems of value and meaning that also affected the people who dominated them" (GORDON 2014, 11). From this, it is evident that the imposition is catastrophic on the people this modernity is imposed on. In this case, it becomes "*modernities*, instead of only one modernity and that for the people on whom it is imposed, it often means the catastrophe of a haunted future, of a disruption of time, wherein a new set of problematics of continued existence comes to the fore" (GORDON 2014, 11).

Colonialism, in general, imposes modernity (a peculiar crisis) on the colonized (the *present*), thereby creating two major problems. The first problem, according to Gordon, is "their disappearance, either through genocide or cultural erasure or assimilation," and the second problem is "their adaptation, through transformation often in the form of hybridization and synthesis" (GORDON 2014, 11). In view of this, for example, African cultural practices face two possible futures like the above, which are: (1) cultural genocide or disappearance and/or (2) transformation in the form of hybridization and synthesis (the mixture of the modern and the traditional). Because of modernity and change, we can say that the second future is now the case.

One possible example of transformation in the form of hybridization and synthesis is the Ifá[3] divination system. Ifá divination, according to Wande Abimbola, is:

> Ifa and related systems of divination based on the stories and symbols of the Odu such as dida owo (divination with the

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[3] "*Ifá* ancestry can be traced to the Yorubas. Yoruba is an ethnic group in South Western Nigeria. Some parts of the Republic of Benin (Dahomey) and Togo are Yorubas. *Ifá* is known by the Yorubas as the deity of wisdom and intellectual development, and *Ifá* divination shapes individual interpretations of experience" (Nwosimiri, 2021, 93). According to Ovett Nwosimiri, "the Yorubas believe that Ifá's wisdom, knowledge, and understanding transcend the past, present, and future" (2020, 89).

> sacred divining chain called opele) and etıte-ale (divination with the sacred palm nuts), eerındınlogun (divination with the sixteen cowries), agbigba (divination with a divining chain slightly different from opele), and obi (divination with kola nuts). (2001, 141)

Ifá is recognized as the repository of the Yoruba traditional body of knowledge. Ifá divination cannot be what it is without the divinatory procedures, the rituals, and the outcomes. According to Phillip M. Peek (1991), the throwing of bones and shaking of the basket, and divination apparatus, etc., which appear so haphazard, make the divinatory enterprise unique and, ultimately, so effective. However, Abimbola (2000) notes that some of the equipment used during the consultation of Ifá, such as the beaded objects, performance, opa orere, and the use of musical instruments, have been replaced because most of them are no longer being produced in Africa. This, I believe, shows the effect of change and modernity. Also, it is a salient point that clearly shows that resources are becoming outdated, less available, reshaped, or non-existent, all because of change and modernity. This suggests the idea that African cultural practices are in constant flux. Drawing from all of the above replacements and other changes, Abimbola mentioned in his work that "the interesting thing is that change or deliberate creativity is built into and has become an integral part of the tradition of *Ifa*" (2000, 176). This is questionable as it questions the significance of the divination process and its uniqueness.

The Ifá literary corpus is the storehouse of the Yoruba culture; in it, the Yoruba comprehension of their actual experiences—the experience of life itself and their understanding of their environment can always be found (ABIMBOLA 1975, 32; see also ABIMBOLA 1977, 73–89). The Ifá literary corpus demands an oral performance because the client must be present before the Ifá priest. The latter has to chant the poems from the relevant "Odu" very clearly to the client's hearing and that of any other person present. The Odu has 256 chapters. The Ifá priest knows the manipulation of all the 256 chapters known as "Odu Ifá" because every Ifá priest is required to properly study the literature of Odu, one after the other, and memorize as much of this text as possible (EZE 1998, 174). "The 256 odus are divided

into two categories. The major 16 chapters are known as Oju Odu, and the minor 240 chapters are known as Omo Odu or Amulu Odu". The combination of the major 16 and the minor 240 will provide us with a complete chart of the order of priority in the Ifá divination system (ADEGBINDIN 2010, 23).

The Ifá priest usually chants verses from the Odu when consulted. The ordinary Yoruba patronizes the Ifá priest not only because they believe in the predictions (past and future) and pronouncements of Ifá, but because of the aesthetic satisfaction they draw from listening to poetic narratives and chants. This chant is in the form of poetry and is exceptionally rich in style and language. The 256 Odu is very important in the Ifá divination system. It "is regarded as praise songs to *Esu*" (EZE 1998, 174). It is also worth noting that the whole of the literary corpus known as ese Ifá is based on the Od*u* (NWOSIMIRI 2019, 2020, 2021).

In recent times, there have been changes regarding divinatory procedures or rituals, etc., due to Western civilization, which also led partly to the neglect of divination. Though still in practice, Ifá divination is not as strong as it used to be. Ifá priest:

> Have diminished and their patrons and audiences have become Christianized, Islamized, or marginalized by modern economic trends, large performances by Ifa priests involving the entire community, such as could be seen in festivals twenty years ago in almost every Yoruba town, now seem to have deteriorated to the point there are some small towns where there are no Babalawo, let alone Ifá festivals. (ABIMBOLA 2000, 180)

This clearly shows the effect of change and modernity on African cultures. Abimbola also elucidates the inclusion of lines, phrases, or sentences from neighbouring languages such as Nupe, Fon, Ewe, Gun, or Gan. He further explains that some of its equipment, like the beaded objects, performance, opa orere, and the use of musical instruments, etc., have been replaced because most of them are no longer being produced in Africa. Regarding the retention of rituals, he explains that the African diaspora, like Cuba's and Brazil's, appears to be more conservative than continental Africa. It seems to be the

case that their conservative nature is because they have lost some good parts of the sacred literature and the Yoruba language as an everyday vehicle of thought. Consequently, deciding to pay greater attention to the observance of numerous details of rituals. Given the above, it is evident that some things have been retained, and many have been lost because (of the idea) of change. This, I think, questions the importance of the equipment.

The conservative nature of the African diaspora and the flexible nature of continental Africa begs the question of whether we are implicitly asked to accept the idea of change or deliberate creativity as an integral part of the tradition of Ifá, and not as something foreign that has had a significant impact on the practice of Ifá. Whether the change is integral or foreign, chances are that more parts of the tradition of Ifá will be lost deliberately or unintentionally since a good part of it has already been lost. So, what does this say about the practice of Ifá? It says that if this change persists, the tradition of Ifá will undergo a massive transformation that its rituals or core aspects might cease to exist or be replaced with something different. This action is like throwing away a baby after nursing it for years. Even if change is a part of the world order, it is evident that it will have or has had a significant impact on the practice of Ifá (divination) (NWOSIMIRI 2019).

The point I want to make is the idea or impact of change in the Ifá divination process. To this, one might argue that with or without change, in any divination system—the tradition of Ifá, the ability to give information about future events is still the same. He/she might further argue that the ability to acquire information about future events and the outcome does not necessarily depend on the ritual. While I am disposed to accept that this is the case, I would like to argue that it is evidently clear that Ifá divination has lost a significant part of the sacred literature due to the idea of change. Aside from the fact that the outcomes are still the same, the methods are now different. This, I think, questions the uniqueness of the divination process. In this case, arguably, I can say that it is either Ifá divination has lost its ritual uniqueness or its uniqueness in the ritual is fading away.

How the idea of Change has meddled with the African sense of Community

Idang elucidates that "since culture is carried by people and people do change their social patterns and institutions, beliefs and values and even skills and tools of work, then culture cannot but be an adaptive system" (2015, 100). This means that since people who carry culture can change their beliefs and values, one can adapt to a changing culture. The implication of this is that culture is not static but dynamic. Like other cultures, African culture is dynamic and changes from within and outside its environment. The dynamic nature of culture makes it adaptive to change. As people try to find meaning in their existence, they change their ways of life as a response to the meaning they have found.

As far as the history of human civilization goes, Africans have attempted to change, develop, and modernize their societies and traditional system. W. Emmanuel Abraham corroborates this view by asserting that "since its beginnings in Africa, human culture has responded to great changes in its physical and social environments by creative adaptations and adjustments… (1992, 30). Hence, it will be correct to say that some of the cultural values will either be retained or lost during the process of change. Though Africans appear to be impervious to change, change has been happening.

Before the arrival of colonizers in Africa, African societies had good and well-organized cultural practices centred on their religion. Their cultural practices were very effective and revered as they efficiently addressed the community's needs. Africans have religious activities, rituals, social and community life, and moral and economic life that are at the centre of their values and practices and devoid of European influence. Still, the arrival of the colonizers in Africa brought about change in African cultures. The change in African cultures is due to "the complex structure of colonialism induces a pattern of subjective formation in which the native actually begins to perceive him or herself as an inferior, assimilates the procedures of this disorientation, and begins to despise herself and her culture as actually inferior" (EZE 2012, 257).

Africans emphasize togetherness and a sense of community (life). The community is the guardian of the individual. In Africa, the community is not "prior to the individual and the latter does not pre-

exist the community. The individual and the community are not radically opposed in the sense of priority but engaged in a contemporaneous formation" (EZE 2008, 386). An individual sees him or herself existing in a community and in relation to others. Through socialization and the love and concern that the household and community have extended to him or herself, the individual *cannot* now see himself or herself as anything apart from his/or her community. In the community, "one cannot realize one's true self in opposition to others or even in isolation from them" (METZ and GAIE 2010, 275). To develop one's humanness or become fully human, one needs to be in a community with others.[4]

As a community, one practice that unites African communities is the idea of storytelling. This plays a pivotal role in many African cultures. For example, in the Igbo culture in Nigeria, storytelling was used as a method in the early stages when bringing up children and cultivating character, and to know more about the community and what it takes to live in the community. Here, stories that are told reflect their communal identity. Reverend H. M. Dandala divided the storytelling into five major methods, and they are (1) storytelling: fables, (2) storytelling: history and myths, (3) storytelling: instruction and exhortation, (4) symbolism and praise-singing, (5) experience and community monitoring (1996, 72). Different ethnic groups have a way of telling stories. Some have various storytelling ceremonies or rituals, creating a sense of community. The stories told are created by and for the community. This can be considered traditional education, and there are moral lessons attached to every story. It is important to acknowledge the relevance of language because it is quintessential to African culture. Without language, the stories would probably not have been told because it is in language that things and names have meaning within their cultural milieu. Also, no interaction or meaningful cultural activities would have happened without

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[4] Lesley Le Grange elucidate that "Being able to play, to use one's senses, to imagine, to think, to reason, to produce works, to have control over one's environment are not possible without the presence of others. These capabilities can only be expressed in interdependent relationships with other human beings… Grange further explains that Ubuntu "conveys the idea of becoming human, the notion that humanness unfolds as an ongoing process in relationship with wider human and biophysical communities" (2012, 143).

language. Thus, the idea of change has meddled with the idea of storytelling in Africa. Storytelling is hardly practiced now. The idea of storytelling is a practical communitarian lifestyle, and it creates a family atmosphere among African people.

Africans emphasize the idea of community life. But over the years, this idea has been experiencing a wave of change. It is true that an individual in African culture is allowed to attain his or her full potential with the help of the community, but the undeniable fact is "that colonialism brought into Africa new political and economic relationships that ultimately resulted in the pursuit of interests to the detriment of the common good" (OYESHILE 2007, 235). The idea of the individual and the community in the African community has not been scrutinized then as it is now. Over the years, there have been debates among scholars over the status of individual and community. The most projected peculiar understanding by many Africanist writers of African communitarianism advances a priority of the community over the individual (EZE 2008, 386). Léopold Sédar Senghor, for example, asserts that "Negro-African society puts more stress on the group than on the individuals, more on solidarity than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the communion of persons than on their autonomy" (1964, 93–94). Also, according to Gyekye (1998, 320):

1. The human person does not voluntarily choose to enter into human community, that is, community life is not optional for any individual person.
2. The human person is at once a cultural being.
3. The human person cannot – perhaps must not – live in isolation from other persons.
4. The human person is naturally oriented toward other persons and must have relationships with them.
5. Social relationships are not contingent but necessary.
6. Following from (4) and (5), the person is constituted, but only partly…, by social relationships in which he/she necessarily finds him/herself.

All these, he says, "presupposed the priority of the cultural community in which the individual person finds him/herself"

(GYEKYE 1998, 321). Besides these two scholars, Ifeanyi Menkiti, Dismas A. Masolo, Bernard Matolino, and many others have tried to debate whether the community is prior to the individual or the individual is prior to the community, or the community takes precedence over the individual. Of course, individuals are appreciated and seen as contributors to the community's survival. Talking about the argument of whether the community is prior to the individual or the individual is prior to the community, or if the community takes precedence over the individual, Michael Onyebuchi Eze writes:

> It is argued that since the idea of a person within the sub-Saharan African milieu is social, it follows that the community good is prior to individual right[s]. The primacy of the community means that the individual is necessarily secondary; his right to be may be trumped in the fulfilment of communal ends. This is a position I disagree with. Indeed, I argued that the relationship between the individual and the community, constitutive of African communitarianism, does not need to engender a radical dichotomy of ontological dualism. The relationship, in my view, is contemporaneous; neither the community nor the individual is prior to each other. (2012, 250)

The above shows that neither the community nor the individual is prior to each other, and they both engage in a simultaneous formation. Here, the individual and the community are "in a constant mutual dependency" (MASOLO 2002, 22).

Africa is losing its sense of community. Because despite the claim "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am," the community life and the current reality appear to be different from what has been purported by African people. For example, many African communities are not ready to embrace and see the need to include homosexuals or LGBTIQA+ people in African communities. But before now, this exclusion of homosexuals in African communities was non-existent. It should be noted that while I am aware that the LGBTIQA+ people encompass a wide range of sexual orientations, gender identities and expression, and sex characteristics, in some parts of this paper, I will employ homosexual or

homosexuality as key terms to represent the discourse in the disciplinary landscape that I engage. The usage of the terms homosexuals or homosexuality may be argued to be outdated and derogatory. However, these are widely used terms in the context I am dealing with. These terms are prevalent and are still universally used by people who are not cognizant of the LGBTIQA+ initialism. My selection and usage of the terms are based on the fact that they are contextual and relative to different discourses. In the discourse of African philosophy, the terms are still used and remain applicable (and can be used).

Homosexuality is the umbrella term used to describe Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender. Homosexuality dates to ancient civilizations, though popularly known as same-sex relationships. Homosexual practices or same-sex relationship is not new to humanity. Homosexuality was "a term initially introduced in the West to control social relations, while labeling those engaged in same-sex relations as deviant" (MSIBI 2011, 56). According to Brent Pickett (2021), the concept 'homosexuality' was coined in the late 19th century by an Austrian-born Hungarian psychologist named Karoly Maria Benkert. Similarly, Thabo Msibi notes that "the invention of the "homosexual role" developed around the nineteenth century in the West to denote a kind of sickness for those attracted to the same sex" (2011, 56). Given this, homosexuality is seen by some people as a "physical, psychological and social sickness, the phenomenon of perversion, decadence and decay" (RUSE 1988, 197). Based on this, homosexuality can be seen and perceived as synonymous with ill-health. It is worth noting that I am cognizant of the fact that homosexuals (in this case, Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals) were more commonly found or identified centuries ago in Africa, but for the sake of this paper and for the sake of inclusion, given the contemporary discussion, I will use the LGBTIQA+ more.

In recent times, there has been an increase in the condemnation of LGBTIQA+ people. More specifically, in Africa (African communities like South Africa, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ghana, etc.), LGBTIQA+ people have been discriminated against, tortured, abused, and excluded by and from the community. For example, in South Africa, there have been several attacks and brutal murders of LGBTIQA+ people. At least 20 LGBTIQA+ individuals were killed

across South Africa between February and October 2021. Despite these crimes, there has been a lack of action in pursuing the murderers and protecting LGBTIQA+ people. LGBTIQA+ people are members of the community, yet they live in fear in their various communities. LGBTIQA+ people "suffer from unprecedented stigmatization, societal stereotypes and xenophobic tendencies" (AYUK-ETANG and MUNGE 2020, 327). Corroborating this view, Vasu Reddy, Surya Monro, and Zethu Matebeni elucidate that:

> Active hostility towards gender-diverse and non-heterosexual people in Africa is still pervasive, and deliberate, sustained anti-gay expressions are evident realities for the majority of African queers. More specifically, homosexuality, bisexuality, pansexuality, transgender, and other forms of gender variance and other non-normative sexed and/or gendered identities are still essentialized in terms of culture. (2018, 2)

Some possible reasons for the aforementioned are because for most African people: (1) anything other than heterosexuality is essentially un-African, (2) unnatural, (3) immoral, and (4) it is seen to pose a cultural threat to most African communities. According to Reddy, Monro, and Matebeni, "LGBTQ, in its perceived 'un-Africanness,' still signifies excess and promiscuity to many African people" (2018, 2). Elsewhere Monro affirms this when she says that "efforts to secure safety, recognition, and human rights by African LGBTQ people are undercut by the framing of homosexuality as "un-African," largely as the result of the legal and religious assemblages associated with colonialism" (2020, 321). Msibi corroborated this when he said that "homosexuality has become more virulently opposed, contested, and denounced, particularly by political leaders, as un-African, with the potential of destroying African traditions and heterosexual 'family values'" (2011, 55).

Munamato Chemhuru (2012), in his work "Rethinking the Legality of Homosexuality in Zimbabwe: A Philosophical Perspective," argues passionately and fervently "that same-sex sexual relationships and marriages are an epitome of unnatural sexual perversions that are not only alien, but perceived as taboo" (2012, 1).

He asserts that "same-sex relationships remain alien, travesty, unthinkable and difficult to justify… generally value systems are sacrosanct to the philosophies of communitarianism and 'unhuism' among other values that formed the mainstay of… African communities at large" (CHEMHURU 2012, 1). He further asserts that "homosexual relationships and marriages remain unthinkable and at the same time a cultural threat to… communities in terms of their values" (2012, 18). The criminalization of LGBTIQA+ people in some African countries is "often a product of religion, morality, and a biased justice system... Same-sex practices are often considered violations of the moral ethos of the African society" (OKPADAH 2020, 138). Because of this, laws have been enacted against the LGBTIQA+ people in some African countries like Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Nigeria, Cameroun, Senegal, and others. These countries have castigated LGBTIQA+ people and have signed laws against LGBTIQA+ practices, arguing that such practices are un-African (AYUK-ETANG and MUNGE 2020, 327). This is why Reddy, Monro, and Matebeni assert that "the greatest threat to being queer in African geopolitical contexts is the withdrawal of rights by the state, resulting in renewed violence against African queers" (2018, 2). This shows the exclusion of LGBTIQA+ people from the African communities.

Many Africans have paid less attention to and shown little interest in LGBTIQA+ (people). However, a critical look at these reasons made me question whether these reasons are sufficient for such exclusion and lack of attention and interest paid by many contemporary Africans in addressing the problems faced by homosexuals in African communities. The discrimination and exclusion of homosexuals in African communities is problematic because it goes against the idea and nature of African communitarianism that emphasizes the group over the individual. Also, it goes against the dictum: "I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am." In other words, it goes against the idea of the 'We' – community and the idea of inclusion. This is the effect of the idea of change. Thus, upon critical reflection, I see the need to address this in view of African communitarianism. Hence, there is a need to deconstruct and reconstruct African communitarianism to make space for LGBTIQA+ people. And it is essential to underscore that because

of this exclusion and discrimination, the individual finds him/herself living as an outsider away from the community.

Given the above, the individual or the LGBTIQA+ people, in my view, is changing by focusing on the self and the choices the individual contributes to their own development as opposed to that of the community. Here, more emphasis is placed on "high values on the freedom of the individual and generally stresses the self-directed, self-contained and comparatively unrestrained individual or ego" (KHOZA 1994, 3). This idea is an ideology of a 'novel self,' as Kwame Anthony Appiah puts it. According to him, this conception of self "is the product, surely, of changes in social life" (1992, 83). These changes in the individual's social life clearly advocate for the emancipation of the individual from the community through individual thought. Thus, this clearly shows how the idea of change is meddling with the African sense of community, thereby forcing the individual or LGBTIQA+ people into detaching from the community. Here, the individual will endeavour to preserve him/herself and his/her own distinct nature as an individual (LGBTIQA+) (MASOLO 1997, 290). The individual, in this case, is seen as an end in herself (and is of supreme value), and the society only standing as a means to individual ends (KHOZA 1994, 3).

Conclusion

The above shows that African cultural practices and the African sense of community have been changing over the years. Thus, in place of the usual traditional way of concluding that summarises what has been argued for, I wish to point to some aspects of change worth mentioning. European fortune seekers' long series of invasions were attracted to the continent by self-interests. Some of these self-interests include prestige, economic, and political interest. These self-interests came with the idea of change which is evident in some material aspects of African culture such as the style of dressing, music, dances, food, models of house, etc. These alien elements are now regarded as the ideal idea of civilization. As a result, some African ways of doing things started becoming archaic, primitive, and unacceptable, even to Africans themselves. Accepting change through embracing the Western culture has led to the collapse of some African cultural values and practices. This can be seen in the African languages, complete

rejection of some religious and cultural traditions, some inclusion of alien elements to cultural practices, communitarianism, family sharing of stories, and many more.

Thus, it is clear that the advent of modernity appears to be meddling with African cultural practices, bringing about change in African communities. Since this is the case, what can we expect in the future? Should we expect cultural genocide, or cultural erasure or disappearance? That is if it is not happening already. Although it is evident that since the early beginnings in Africa, human culture has inventively adapted and adjusted to changes in its physical and social environments but, in its current state, the changes in African cultures are at their most serious and pervasive. For this reason, and because of my arguments thus far, I can confidently say that the idea of change and modernity is negatively meddling and will continue to meddle with African cultural practices and the African sense of community.

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