

LEVITES INITIATIVE FOR FREEDOM AND ENLIGHTENMENT (LIFFE)

Vision

Our vision is to reconcile sexuality and spirituality for Africans, irrespective of tribe, culture, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Mission

Our focus is to provide spirituality and sexuality enlightenment, develop talents especially in music (entertainment) and promote the sexual reproductive health and religious rights of all LGBTI persons through education, human development and policy advocacy.

GOALS:

Levites Initiative for Freedom and Enlightenment is a non-government, nonprofit organization, founded in 2016, with the aim to educate, empower, and promote sexual reproductive health and religious rights of sexual minorities with a major focus on LGBTI community.

OBJECTIVES:

As an organization, our two major objectives are Education and Policy Advocacy.

EDUCATION:

Our educational initiatives are divided into Spirituality, Music, sexual health and non-sexual health educational programs. At such we discuss sexuality and spirituality issues, engage in skills development and human empowerment in singing and playing of music instrumentals, create awareness on (HIV/AIDS, STIs), organize support group network for PLWHIV, host capacity building and workshops at grassroots level, among others.

POLICY ADVOCACY:

We represent, promote, defend and advocate for the religious tolerance, cultural acceptance and social inclusion of LGBTI persons in the affairs of the church, tribal community and the state. We also advocate for the separation of the church from the state. Thereby, engaging with religious leaders, traditional rulers and state actors in dialogues on the issues and plights (blackmail, extortion, mob attack, state sponsored violence, discrimination, poor health care etc.) of LGBTI community in Nigeria. We also assist them in understanding the concept of sexual orientation and gender identity.

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Sex is the biological difference between male and female or intersex.

Gender is a social construct of being a male or female especially in reference to social or cultural difference rather than biological ones. This is the feeling, behavior, conduct of either male or female as constructed by the society or cultural beliefs. Gender imprints in us which social role we should perform..

Gender Identity is a personal experience of one's own gender. Gender identity can correlate with assigned sex at birth, or can differ from it. This is how a person sees themselves as man or woman, sometimes in between.

Gender Expression is the way a person shows, acts, behaves, performs or expresses himself/herself/their selves.

Sexual Orientation is an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attraction to persons of the opposite sex or gender, the same sex or gender, or to either sexes or more than one gender. These attractions are generally subsumed under heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality while asexuality (the lack of sexual attraction to others) is sometimes identified as the fourth category. This refers basically to the sex of those whom one is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to.

Sexuality is the total expression of who we are as human beings which covers a broad spectrum, and is also deeply personal. Human sexuality is the way people experience and express themselves sexually. This involves biological, erotic, physical, emotional, social, or spiritual feelings and behaviors. Due to the fact that sexuality is a broad term, which has varied over time, it lacks a precise definition. The biological and physical aspects of sexuality largely concern the human reproductive functions, including the human sexual response cycle. Someone's sexual orientation can influence that person's sexual interest and attraction for another person. Physical and emotional aspects of sexuality include bonds between individuals that is expressed through profound feelings or physical manifestations of love, trust, and care. Social aspects of sexuality deal with the effects of human society on one's sexuality, while spirituality concerns an individual's spiritual connection with others. Sexuality also affects and is affected by cultural, political, legal, philosophical, moral, ethical, and religious aspects of life. Sexuality is basically understanding the sexual feelings and attractions we feel towards others, not who we happen to have sex with. There are different types of sexuality, and it can take time to figure out what fits right with you. Our sexuality is meant to give us quality lives and enable us to impact and influence others. Sexuality starts at birth and ends at death. If

someone is giving you a hard time about your sexuality, to find out what to do, you can talk to us.

Understanding sexuality

Everyone's sexuality is different, and it's not necessarily as simple as being 'gay' or 'straight'. Some people are attracted to only one sex, and others are attracted to a diversity of people regardless of sex or gender, with a lot of different preferences in-between.

Sexuality can be confusing

Don't worry if you aren't sure about your sexuality. It does not matter if you know what you like and stick with it or if you like to experiment. What is important is that you feel comfortable with the sex you are having and the person or people you are sharing your sex life with. Interest in sexual activity typically increases when an individual reaches puberty. Opinions differ on the origins of an individual's sexual orientation and sexual behavior. Some argue that sexuality is determined by genetics, while others believe it is molded by the environment, or that both of these factors interact to form the individual's sexual orientation. It is not at all unusual to feel attracted to someone of the same sex and many people experience crushes or very close friendships with someone of the same sex as they are growing up. For lots of people this does mean that they are a gay guy or a lesbian, and they go on to have relationships with people of the same sex. For others, their feelings may change and they will find that they are more attracted to the opposite sex, or even both sexes. Exploring and managing strong feelings is often part of the experience. In time, you'll find that you're drawn mostly to men or to women, or to both, or to neither. In the meantime, try to relax about it.

LABELS:

People use a few common labels to identify their sexuality. Your sexuality isn't defined by who you have sex with – it's about how you feel and how you choose to identify yourself. The important thing is that you choose what label that feels comfortable, or you choose no label at all. You might find, like many others have, that the label you choose changes over time.

Straight

Attracted mostly to people of the opposite sex or gender.

Gay

Attracted mostly to people of the same sex or gender (refers to guys – and often to girls, too).

Lesbian

Attracted mostly to people of the same sex or gender (refers to women).

Bisexual

Attracted to both men and women.

Pansexual

Attracted to romantic and sexual partners of any gender, sex or sexual identity. ('Pan' means 'all'.)

Polysexual

Attracted to romantic and sexual partners of many but not all genders, sexes or sexual identities. ('Poly' means 'many'.)

Asexual

Not really sexually attracted to anyone.

Some people also choose the labels '**queer**' or '**fluid**' as a way of expressing themselves by their own personal feelings.

Sexuality is a spectrum

Sexuality is not fixed and who you are attracted to can change over time, or even week to week! In fact, who you find yourself attracted to is not really something you can choose or control, which is part of the reason that sex and relationships can be so confusing.

We're not all the same

One really important thing to remember is that sexual feelings, sex and relationships can be confusing, exciting, scary and wonderful. Whoever you are attracted to, and the way you feel when you fancy someone is the same whether you like boys, girls or both. People often think that being gay means you can't have a family or get married. In fact, this is not true and plenty of gay men and women have children naturally, foster or adopt. Gay couples can also legally marry in many countries.

When it comes to safer sex and avoiding sexually transmitted infections it also does not matter who you are having sex with, so it is important that you know how to protect yourself whether you are gay, straight or bi.

Dealing with people who don't like your sexuality

It's important to recognize that we're all different, and that the things that feel right for us are different from the things that feel right for someone else. We should be respectful of and positive about other people's sexuality or sexual relationships, and support their right to explore their sexuality in a safe, consensual and responsible way.

If you need help

It's never okay for someone to harass you or make you feel bad about your sexuality. You never have to deal with this kind of treatment from others on your own. There are a number of services that we can offer to support if you're being harassed or bullied based on your sexuality.

Sexual intercourse

The totality of the physical and mental interplay between humans in which the explicit or implicit goal is bodily union and, ideally, the expression of love and affection.

VARIOUS PATTERNS OF HUMAN SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

Vaginal

Sex: Sexual union between a male and a female involving insertion of the penis into the vagina

Anal Sex: is when a penis or other object is inserted into a partner's anus. Like any other sexual behavior, some people find it very pleasurable and others don't. Some people are curious about it, and others know it's not something they're comfortable with. There is nothing wrong with engaging in anal sex, but whether it is right for you is something only you can decide.

Oral Sex: is a sexual activity in which the genitals of one partner are stimulated by the mouth lips or tongue of the other. This could involve sucking or licking their penis (fellatio), vagina, vulva or clitoris (cunnilingus) or anus (anilingus).

Fleutorosexuality: this is the act of deriving pleasure by rubbing sexual parts against the body of the other.

Fetishism: is a sexual fixation on a nonliving object or non-genital body part. The object of interest is called the fetish while the person who has a fetish for that object is a fetishist.

Voyeurism: the practice of gaining sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity.

Exhibitionism: This is the displaying or exposing of the genitals, breast or buttocks in public or semipublic spaces.

Sexual Orgy: is a sex party where guests freely engage in open and unrestrained sexual activity or group sex.

Metrosexual: is a man (especially one living in an urban, post-industrial, capitalist culture) who is especially meticulous about his grooming and appearance.

Sadomasochism: Sadomasochism is the giving or receiving pleasure from acts involving the receipt or infliction of pain or humiliation.

Coprophilia: is the paraphilia involving sexual arousal and pleasure from feces.

Urophilia: being sexually aroused by the sight of urine or someone urinating, being urinated on or by urinating on someone else, drinking urine or having someone else drink urine, or even just the thought of urine.

Gerontosexuality: is a distinct preference for sexual relationships primarily or exclusively with an elderly partner.

ABUSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

Paedophilia: is a psychiatric disorder in which an adult or older adolescent experiences a primary or exclusive sexual attraction to prepubescent children. This simply means having sex with children or minors.

Pederasty: refer to a sexual relationship, or to copulation between older and younger males.

Rape: is a type of sexual assault usually involving sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual penetration carried out against a person without that person's consent. The act may be carried out by physical force, coercion, abuse of authority, or against a person who is incapable of giving valid consent.

Incest: is sexual activity between family members or close relatives. This typically includes sexual activity between people in a consanguineous relationship (blood relations), and sometimes those related by affinity, stepfamily, those related by adoption or marriage, or members of the same clan or lineage.

Necrophilia: is a sexual attraction or sexual act towards corpses.

Bestiality:sexual intercourse between a person and an animal.

DETERMINANT FACTORS OF RIGHT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS LENS.

1. Is the sexual intercourse or behavior consensual?
2. Is the individual/s of consensual age?
3. Is the individual/s mentally healthy and stable?

DETERMINANT FACTORS OF RIGHT SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR THROUGH HEALTH LENS.

1. Is the sexual practice risky?
2. Are there risk reduction and preventive method.
3. Is the risk reduction available, accessible and affordable?

***ALL SEXUAL PRACTISES ARE RISKY.**

TOUCH CONTINUUM: is a tool developed by Cordelia Anderson in 1977 as part of a child sexual abuse prevention project, to help children/youth/adults identify what type of touch fits into each category. This includes where and how a person touches another. The concept was made to be part of broader education and skill development. The initial concept was focused on helping children learn the difference between different kinds of touch and that they had a right to say "no" to touches they didn't want. However, a key part of the message was also that no one has a right to pressure, trick or force anyone else into touch. When this tool was developed, touch was often equated with sex, so many were concerned about all touch being sexual, or in some way leading to sex and therefore were hesitant about touch. Part of the purpose of this tool was to clarify that just as all touch was not equated with sex, not all touch was equated to sexual abuse. The key was to learn the importance of caring, helpful touch and be able to discern when it changed or when it was harmful or misused. Touch is our first sense in infancy. All of our information initially comes through the skin.

PERSONAL SPACE BUBBLE: is the space we create around ourselves. This is the area around a person, approx. 1 - 2 feet (depending on culture), that you should not enter without their (verbal or non-verbal) permission to do so. First, how big are these bubbles? According to the American anthropologist Edward Hall, whose 1960s research on the topic still stands today, humans are actually enveloped by bubbles of four different sizes, each of which applies to a different set of potential interlopers. The smallest zone, called "intimate space," extends outward from our bodies 18 inches in every direction, and only family, pets and one's closest friends may enter. Next in size is the bubble Hall called "personal space," extending from 1.5 feet to 4 feet away. Friends and acquaintances can comfortably occupy this zone, especially during informal conversations, but strangers are strictly forbidden. Extending from 4 to 12 feet away from us is social space, in which people feel comfortable conducting routine social interactions with new acquaintances or total strangers. Beyond that is public space, open to all. It is important to keep in mind that personal space of course varies depending on culture and context, and that there are significant individual differences, so these numbers should just be taken to reflect the average. Infants don't mind if you put your face directly against theirs and give them kisses. It's because they have not yet formed their own personal space bubbles. Our personal space bubbles start forming between the ages of 3-4 and they are a fixed size around the time that we are in adolescence. Scientists have confirmed that personal space bubbles are socially and culturally constructed. But they are also formed with the help of a part of our brain called the amygdala. The **amygdala** is the part of our brain that feels fear and is activated when there is a perceived threat to our safety.

SPIRITUALITY

There is no single, widely agreed definition of spirituality. Surveys of the definition of the term, as used in scholarly research, show a broad range of definitions ranging from uni-dimensional definitions such as a personal belief in a supernatural realm to broader concepts such as a quest for an ultimate or sacred meaning, transcending the base or material aspects of life, and/or a sense of awe or wonderment and reverence toward the universe. There had been some difficulty in trying to study spirituality systematically i.e., it impedes both understanding and the capacity to communicate findings in a meaningful fashion. Indeed, many of spirituality's core features are not unique to spirituality alone; for example German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (a famous atheist) regarded self-transcendence, asceticism and the recognition of one's connection to all as a key to ethical living. Spirituality is sometimes associated with philosophical, social, or political movements such as liberalism, feminist theology, and green politics. Spirituality is a universal human experience, something that touches us all. People may describe a spiritual experience as *sacred* or *transcendent* or simply a deep sense of aliveness and interconnectedness. Some may find that their spiritual life is intricately linked to their association with a church, temple, mosque, or synagogue. Others may pray or find comfort in a personal relationship with God or a higher power. Still others seek meaning through their connections to nature or art. Like a sense of purpose, personal definition of spirituality may change throughout one's life while adapting to owned experiences and relationships.

- You go to church every Sunday and you say your prayers every day. Does this mean you are a spiritual person? No.
- You belong to spiritual group and are devoted to following the teachings of the group. Does this mean you are a spiritual person? No.

WHAT THEN DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SPIRITUAL PERSON?

Being a spiritual person is synonymous with being a person whose highest priority is to be loving to yourself and others. A spiritual person cares about people, animals and the planet. A spiritual person knows that we are all One, and consciously attempts to honor this Oneness. A spiritual person is a kind person. So, you can go to church every Sunday and say your prayers every day, without caring about loving yourself, others and the planet. You can practice yoga and meditate every day without being conscious of what is loving and what is not loving in your thoughts and actions. You can belong to a spiritual group and devotedly follow the teachings, yet still be judgmental toward yourself and others in your daily life. There are many people who do not practice a religion, who do not meditate, pray or belong to any group, who are very spiritual people. These people naturally do care for others. They think about how they can help. Their thoughts are kind rather than judgmental toward themselves and toward others. Meanwhile, there are many religious people who are anything but kind. We all know of religious people who are extremely judgmental, righteous, and outright mean. Being spiritual is a personal business. As a sense of spirituality develops in a person, it creates the courage and strength to make informed decision on life's issues.

CAN YOU BE BOTH RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL?

Of course, yes. But only when you are operating in your religion from your heart rather than from the learned dogma of your mind. The experience of God should be that God is the energy of Love that created us and sustains us. God is Spirit and God is Love. Anything that is not of love, peace, joy, truth and kindness is not of God. Praying to God does not mean that you are allowing the spirit that is God rather the love, peace, joy, truth and kindness that is God should guide our thoughts and actions. Practicing yoga, prayer or meditating does not mean that you have invited the love that is God into your heart, or that you are turning to that ever-present love to learn about what is in your highest good, and the highest good of others and the planet. In order to be a spiritual person, then kindness should be the guiding light; kindness toward yourself, toward others, toward animals and toward this beautiful planet. Recognize that we all have the spark of love that is God within us, and learn to honor that love so that you can know and experience the Oneness of all that is. Knowledge is important in order to attain and maintain spirituality. Until our minds govern our bodies by taking away all things that are detrimental to our body, health and mind e.g. Anger, selfishness, wickedness, hatred, junk food, unsafe sex etc., until we are renewed from inside, we cannot claim to be spiritual.

RELIGION

Religions are shared collections of transcendental beliefs that have been passed on from believers to converts, which are held by adherents to be actively meaningful and serious and are either based on formally documented doctrines (organized religion) or established cultural practices (folk religion). This is any cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, world views, texts, sanctified places, ethics, or organizations that relate humanity to the supernatural or transcendental.

ORGANISED RELIGION

This can also be known as **institutional religion** in which belief systems and rituals are systematically arranged and formally established. Organized religion is typically characterized by an official doctrines or dogmas, hierarchical or bureaucratic leadership structure and a codification of rules and practices. Organized religion can be essentially an attempt to force particular beliefs on people or even just persuade or manipulate others into such beliefs. The illusion of religion is the promise of an eternal reward for an elected few, and infinite punishment for everyone else. That is a narcissistic mindset that keeps adherents both comforted and terrified; a virtual mental prison to which the follower is consciously unaware. This is a practice where the official doctrines or dogmas are supreme and superior to an individual. Organized religious practices are blind to an individual's personality and individual needs. Most of our world's major religions each assume that it is *their* faith alone that is the

“absolute truth” and refuse to concede that those traditions may be mistaken. Instead, they discover ways to force conflicting information to *adapt* to their own doctrine; no matter how effective the evidence is at actually *disproving* the rationality of that particular religion. Organized religion exploits, blackmails and teaches inequality. Organized religion does three things effectively, divides people, controls people and deludes people. People who follow the beliefs outlined by organized religion are only looking out for themselves. This leads to inequality, greed, lust, and pain. Most religious supporters are not mindful of the fear that has been instilled in them, often from birth. It is a fear that is so subtle that it goes undetected for much of the follower’s life. It is so deeply embedded that it is not even recognized as fear, but as truth; when in reality, it is a most destructive form of control. Religion segregates people into clusters of believers and non-believers, making human unity and peace nearly impossible. It teaches people that those who disagree with them on a variety of life’s issues are perceptively evil and unworthy of their friendship, or even of their humanity. The problem with this is that it perpetuates a cycle of division in societies. That division causes an insurmountable distraction that enables the internal corruption that destroys nations. Those in power are well aware that a community divided amongst itself has no strength to withstand tyranny or corruption. But, a society unified and aware is able to make lasting changes to benefit all. Therefore, for human unity and peace to ever become a part of our experience, we must become more aware of how our beliefs divide us and work to reconcile this division by placing our *humanity* above our religious contentions. Religion also treats the LGBTI community with disdain, even to the point where some countries prescribe death as a punishment for not following the religious definition of what sex should look like. The problem with this is that homosexuality can be found in many species, not just amongst humanity. Anyone who has done their research knows this. Unfortunately, religion has not caught up to this reality. Although homosexuality has existed for millennia, religion *still* persists in fighting what comes natural to much of nature. Is it a ‘God’ that gave us permission to interrogate and murder people based on sexual orientation, or is it the people who wrote our religious texts and simply did not understand or agree with that part of nature? Religion facilitates erroneous rationalization of the attempts to remove basic rights from others. It prevents people from living in peace as a community and within their own lives. It forces entire groups of people to work tirelessly to create and preserve rights that should be available to them already.

LGBTI HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

- Human rights are equal and inalienable to every individual irrespective of religious or social norms.
- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.(Article 1, Universal declaration of Human Rights, 1948).
- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Human beings of all sexual orientations and gender identities are entitled to the full enjoyment of all human rights. (Principle 1, Yogyakarta Principle, 2006)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights: is an international document that states basic rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled. The Universal Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. Motivated by the experiences of the preceding world wars, the Universal Declaration was the first time that countries agreed on a comprehensive statement of inalienable human rights. The Universal Declaration begins by recognizing that ‘the inherent dignity of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’. It declares that human rights are universal, to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are or where they live. The Universal Declaration includes civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy. It also includes economic, social and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health and education. The Universal Declaration is not a treaty, so it does not directly create legal obligations for countries. However, it is an expression of the fundamental values which are shared by all members of the international community. And it has had a profound influence on the development of international human rights law. Some argue that because countries have consistently invoked the Declaration for more than sixty years, it has become binding as a part of customary international law. Further, the Universal Declaration has given rise to a range of other international agreements which are legally binding on the countries that ratify them

YOGYAKARTA PRINCIPLE: is a 35-page document about human rights in the areas of sexual orientation and gender identity, published as the outcome of an international meeting of human rights groups in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in November 2006. The Principles were supplemented in 2017, expanding to include new grounds of expression and sex characteristics, and a number of new principles. The Yogyakarta Principles are a set of principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. The Principles affirm binding international legal standards with which all States must comply. They promise a different future where all people born free and equal in dignity and rights can fulfil that precious birthright. The Principles and the supplement contains a set of precepts intended to apply the standards of international human rights law to address the abuse of human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and intersex people.

AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES RIGHTS RESOLUTION 275: was adopted at the 55th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights in Luanda,

Angola, 28 April to 12 May 2014. The adoption of resolution 275 was historic, being the first time that the African Commission made a pronouncement about LGBTI rights, and responding to the increased attacks against LGBTI personal across Africa, and the passing of “anti-homosexuality laws” in places like Nigeria and Uganda. The resolution is an important rejection of the claims made by some that LGBTI rights are somehow incompatible with “African culture”. The resolution argues States to end all acts of violence and abuse, whether committed by State or non-state actors, including by enacting and effectively applying appropriate laws prohibiting and punishing all forms of violence including those targeting persons on the basis of their imputed or real sexual orientation or gender identities, ensuring proper investigation and diligent prosecution of perpetrators, and establishing judicial procedures responsive to the needs of victims.