

HOW I RESIST



Voices of the Nigerian LGBT

Visibility for the Nigerian LGBT

#HOWIRESIST:

VOICES OF THE NIGERIAN LGBT

VISIBILITY FOR THE NIGERIAN LGBT

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Campaign Curator: Walter Uche Ude

Cover/Campaign Typeset and design: Prince Seyi

Layout: Rapum Kambili

#HowIResist: A Campaign Dedicated to the Voices and Visibility of the Nigerian LGBT

In a collaborative effort, a number of LGBT young Nigerians came together to lend their voices to a campaign engineered to provide visibility to the Nigerian LGBT community.

They are young professionals. They are people in relationships. They are individuals with struggles. They love. They live.

And every day of their lives, they resist.

They resist the prevarication that they are living a lifestyle or that they are demon-possessed or in need of spiritual guidance. They resist the unjust laws that seek to shut them in as prisoners or shut them out in the shadows. They resist the fellow countrymen and women who seek to invalidate them. They resist the lies that they do not matter.

They resist by daring to live authentically and love without fear.

They resist from a place of shadows, but they resist all the same. In their everyday lives, they tell you: "I am here."

Over the next several days, there'll be photo updates put up that marks the #HowIResist campaign, a campaign which is a response to prejudice, a determination of survival, and a statement of the fact that there are people among us who just want to live and let live.

—Walter Uche Ude

Curator

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Introduction

I can change the story. I am the story.

—Jeanette Winterson, *The Powerbook*

In this century truth has become fiercely personal, its subjectivity and multiplicity celebrated through debate. On the one hand rests the power of an individual to say, *I am, therefore it is true*; and on the other hand, from wider society, comes the response that says, *Of course you are, but we don't have to believe it, or care*. One is thus tempted to lose hope in the concept of a universal truth—a truth that concludes once and for all polarizing conversations that should never have arisen in the first place. The first thing that strikes you about the generous contributors to this book of declarations is the

personalization of what should be everybody's truth, almost as though the validness of gays, lesbians and bisexuals is the business of queer people alone.

Be that as it may, when it comes to truth, someone has to begin the process of owning and insisting on it until it becomes commonly owned and taken for granted.

In January 2014, Nigeria woke up to a baffling new law, the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act: LGBT persons now risked jail time of up to 14 years. The law had been signed at the twilight of the previous year (December 2013), a development that

somehow didn't make the news until a few weeks later, as though its diabolism was the most inconsequential thing. In the scrambled LGBT community, the new law was greeted with panic; there were stories of hurriedly cancelled dates, deleted hookup apps, and unfriended Facebook contacts. The debates around the new legislation were often hesitant and analytical with the legalese; and they skirted around the heartbeat of queer people themselves. Very little was said of the agency of homosexuals and bisexuals, the autonomy of their bodies, and their right to refuse to debate the validity of their being.

But that has changed a bit now, as the #HowIResist campaign shows. Since 2014, the conversation around queer people has refused to die down. In an era of peak television from Hollywood, where one can—in every show—expect to find at least one LGBT character (ranging from the show regulars to the minor), more and more queer

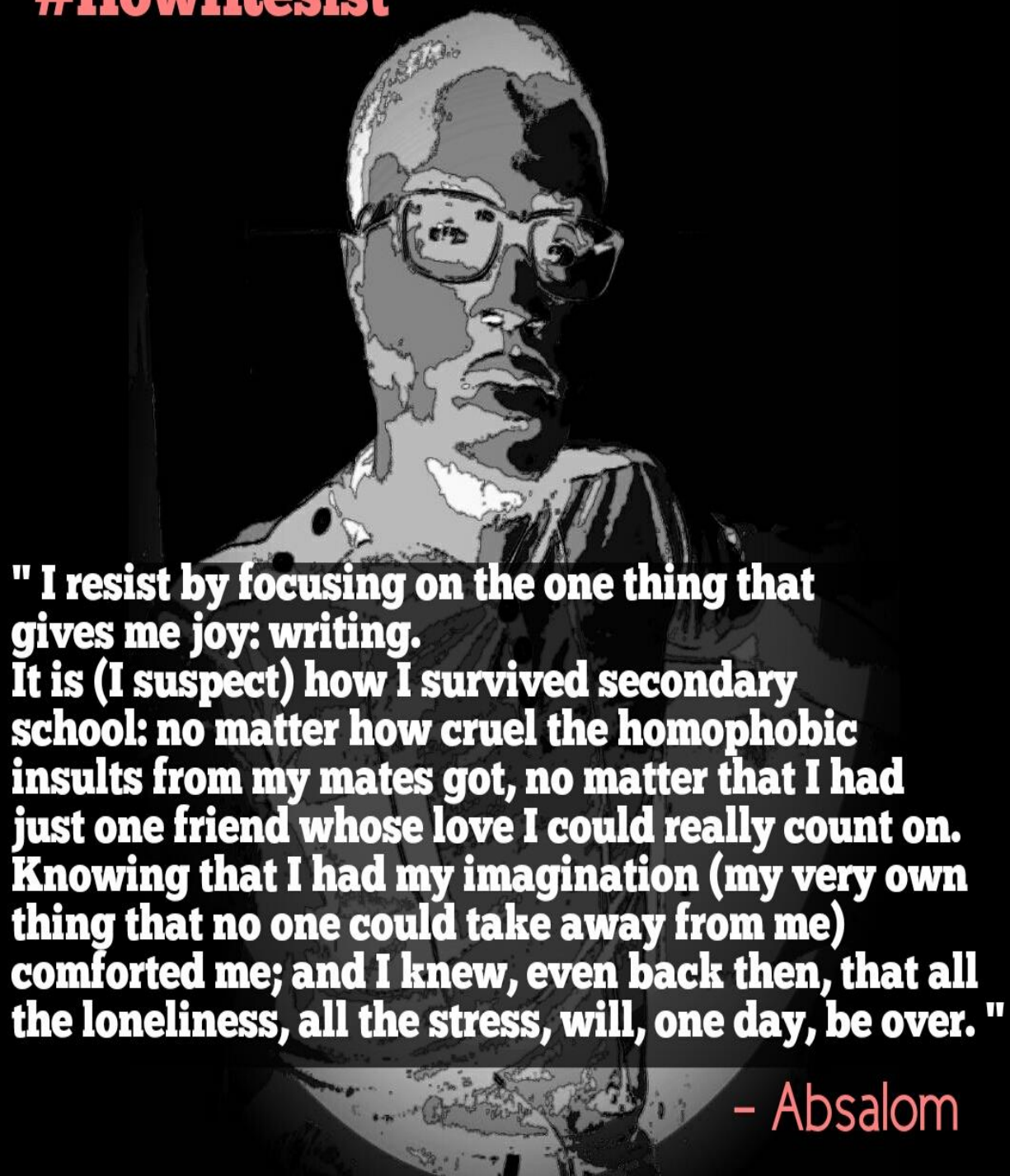
people in Nigeria are beginning to see that there is a destination, a life, outside of heterosexist restrictions. There is now an increased impatience with homophobia, an eagerness to embrace dignity, a reluctance to please, and a re-evaluation of the moral standards to which we had earlier held heterosexual allies.

The bisexuals, lesbians and gays—women and men—who have shared their stories in this campaign sneer at conformity, are unapologetic about the specificity of their experience and the insularity of their interpretation of same, and they choose to recall themselves—their beings—from the spaces that have shamed and battered them. In just a few lines, they have left a message for Nigerian society—that if it expects total silence and cowering from them, it would have to wait a really long time.

—Absalom

campaign 1

#HowIResist



" I resist by focusing on the one thing that gives me joy: writing. It is (I suspect) how I survived secondary school: no matter how cruel the homophobic insults from my mates got, no matter that I had just one friend whose love I could really count on. Knowing that I had my imagination (my very own thing that no one could take away from me) comforted me; and I knew, even back then, that all the loneliness, all the stress, will, one day, be over. "

- Absalom

#HowIResist

" In 2011, I told my mum I liked boys. She was petrified. But that didnt stop her from giving me the best in education, the care, the love...

I was faced with challenges back then. But I resist, with the support of my family. If my family accepts me, I'm sure the world should accept me as well. "

- Alex

#HowIresist

**"My story is a complex one,
with a scary heterosexual
engagement, a painful breakup,
and finding love.**

**I started my journey of truth
a few months ago, and it's
been one hell of a journey.
But I do not regret any bit of it.
I am a queer Nigerian woman
and owning my truth has been
the best part of my life."**

– Asa



#HowIResist

"All my life, I have learnt to own my story, share my experience and let my narrative balance the bias associated with queerness in Africa.

No matter how much criticism I have received, yet I Resist through rolling out more campaigns and statements that can change and promote sexual diversity because I am HUMAN First."

- Awele

#HowIResist

"A wig, a stroke of lipstick, a gorgeous dress... They never fell under the category of "feminine" for me. To me, these were all things I felt good in, that I wanted to put on. I don't identify as trans, and even though I don't do labels, for the sake of identity, this is me: effeminate, gender fluid, gay. Born into this heavily anti-diverse clime, where total self expression is not easy. So each day for me is a battle, a battle to live my life and wear my skin without fear.

Each day, I resist. I resist by owning my effeminacy as completely as I can. By radiating so much self love. By dripping my colors as messily as I can. Society would tell you that if you want to be accepted, portray yourself using a level of normalcy familiar to the world. I resist that. I resist every day by living far beyond any level of normalcy. I create my own path."

- Ayanna

campaign 2

It is time to look inwards into the deplorable mess of cultural, religious and legal restrictions that we have tired ourselves in and open our hearts, minds and spirits to the joy, progress and advancement that truly equitable and fair laws can bring to a thirsty nation.

That is not a gay agenda. That is an equality agenda. It is not an equal debate if those who are against gay peoples have rights and freedoms that gay people don't have. You are able to get married, walk about freely, speak openly about who you had a date with yesterday, but they can't. How can you quarrel with them wanting that? How is that a 'bad' 'agenda'?

Ladies and gentlemen, you cannot love a person if you deny the person rights and freedoms just because you don't approve of how they live their lives.

That is not love. That is wickedness.

–Chude Jideonwo

#HowIResist

" Loving and staying happy seems to be restricted to a certain community. Why does love have to come with segregation and unacceptance? The society is the demon they say, but did you try to fight it?

I resist the anti-LGBT clime by not letting the society be the deciding factor on my happiness, on who I love and who I should be with. I resist by staying true to myself until the war fades and a rescue team comes by.

Love is Love, let's keep preaching this. "

- Becca W

#HowIResist



" I resist by speaking up more and educating this monochrome society on why my multi-coloured love is indelible. "

– Bloom

A person wearing a dark hoodie is shown from the chest up, facing forward. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with a brick wall and a window. The text is overlaid on the person's hoodie.

#HowIResist

In my own little space,
I RESIST
by refusing to let the
HOMOPHOBIA
of the society filter through.
I will keep my fight against the
pressure to conform.

Not to bend to the standards
society has set for me as a
(gay) man but to teach
LOVE & ACCEPTANCE
of one's true self to all who
care to listen; because in doing this,
I create a better environment
for my unborn kids (gay or straight)
to thrive.

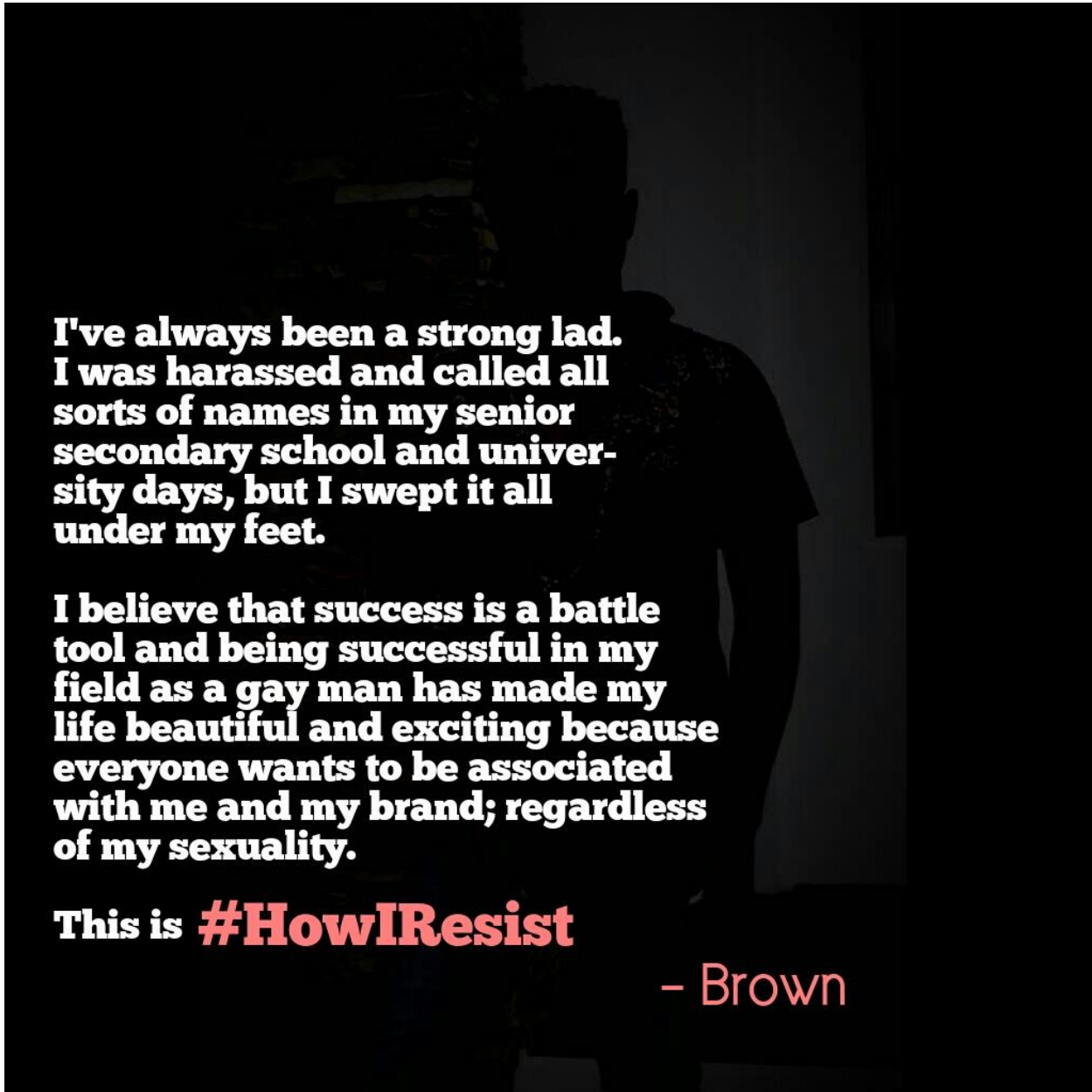
- Brad

#HowIResist

**" Realizing I am different had me
depressed for a long time.
Denying who I am almost brought
the blades to my wrists...**

**Now I wake up every morning,
accepting who I am, walking the
streets with my head held high.
Without a care in the world.
Brave enough to not conform to
societal norms.
Resisting makes me the best
version of myself. "**

- Brandon



I've always been a strong lad. I was harassed and called all sorts of names in my senior secondary school and university days, but I swept it all under my feet.

I believe that success is a battle tool and being successful in my field as a gay man has made my life beautiful and exciting because everyone wants to be associated with me and my brand; regardless of my sexuality.

This is #HowIResist

– Brown

How I Resist

When I was a child, I observed that my mother was quick to yell at me for something I did wrong. It was either that I sat with my legs wide open or I was a little too aggressive because I played soccer with boys. She would chastise me for not knowing my place. I remember her lunging at me, hitting me, when I refused to hug a guest who wanted to compliment me for my good grades in school. I did thank him, but I refused his

hug. It was not merely the brown patches of sweat around the arm pit of his grey shirt that annoyed me; it was his eyes, too, the way they hovered around my sprout of breast.

So, I was always at loggerheads with my mother. I disliked domestic chores. I hated dresses. I would rather climb trees and challenge boys. My mother watched all these, hell-bent on setting me straight before the larger world sank its jaws into me. Try, she did. She was always either chasing after me or jabbing her chubby hands under the bed to reach me where I hid. I was neither her first daughter nor her last child, but between the two of us, we kept each other busy.

I got sober at the age of nine. That's when I started menstruating. I was afraid to tell her about the blood trickling down my legs. "She will kill me!" I muttered to myself. "She will say I did something wrong." Terrified, I ran into the room I shared with my brother and locked the door. I scrambled around for an old dress, and then shoved it between my legs. My heart was thumping. There was nobody I could talk to. I couldn't talk to my elder sister. She hated my guts and was

everything I didn't want to be. Obsessed with marriage and motherhood, she taunted me about how I would never find a man to marry me. What could be worse than not finding a man to marry? I cried myself to sleep.

A loud knock made me scramble to my feet. I ran to the door without realizing the rag between my legs had fallen off. My mother had followed a line of ants to my room. She followed it to where my blood-stained dress lay. I knelt and begged her not to beat me. I tried to tell her I didn't know what had happened. To my shock, she gathered me into her arms and said, "My little girl has become a woman,"

ruffling my hair before reaching out for another old cloth. She ripped a rope out of it, wrapped up the remaining piece, and tied the rope around my thighs while my small frame trembled. She strapped the rag around the rope and between my legs. I gazed into her eyes for an explanation, but there was no expression on her face. All she said was, "Now you must really stop playing with boys!"

Later, I told myself that all my mother's harshness about my tomboy ways must only have been her way of getting me ready for the world, because when I left home for a Catholic boarding high school, I saw my mother everywhere in the society. It was a society that wanted me to be a particular way and tried to suffocate what was different about me. When I didn't gleefully crawl into its suffocating laws, it tried to shame me. My deliverance from the demons of homosexuality, not my growth as a human being, was what was important. I had to date men.

Somehow, I found ways to resist, to preserve myself for myself. Mainly, I buried myself in books. I acquired degrees, won awards, and became a professor. I have become many other things too, but heterosexual is not one of them. I am a mentor, a teacher, a writer, a publisher, an activist, a fighter for women's and LGBT rights. I am a mother of three beautiful adopted nieces. I am lesbian, and proudly so.

— Unoma Azuah

campaign 3

You must first accept yourself. You must first approve your own existence, in whatever form you exist. You must first realize that you do not need any validation outside that which you give yourself. You must end the fight you are fighting against yourself.

–Kayode Ani

#HowIResist



**" I resist with my voice and these hands
that pay emphasis to speech.
I resist with my thoughts in written
words sent out into the world.
I resist with my presence, six feet-four,
in hostile spaces, where I can't be ignored.
I resist because I won't be dismissed. "**

– Chiedozie



#HowIResist

"I resist by telling myself that it doesn't matter what rules they put up or how bad they portray my kind. I'll always allow my heart to feel what is right; and what is right is LOVE."

– Chris

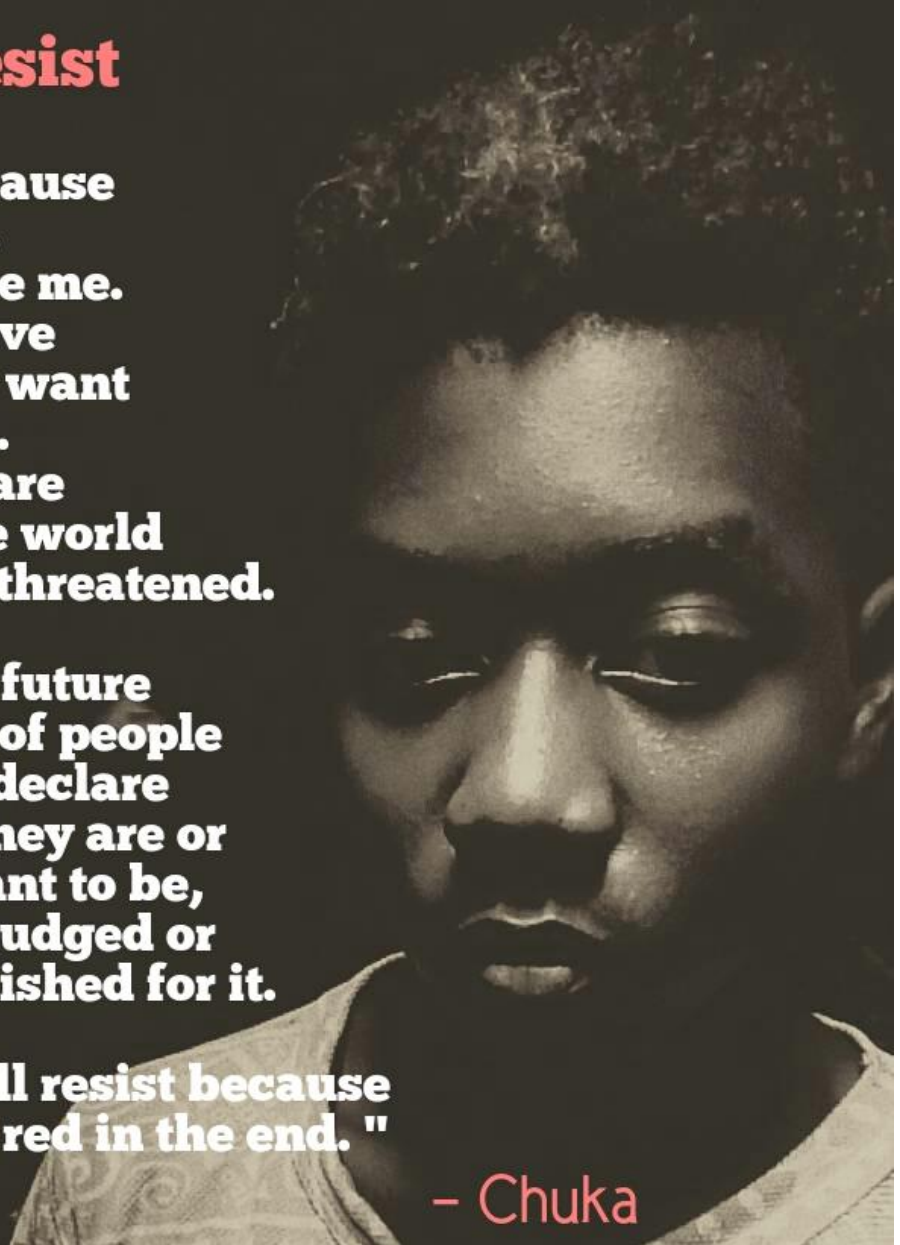
#HowIResist

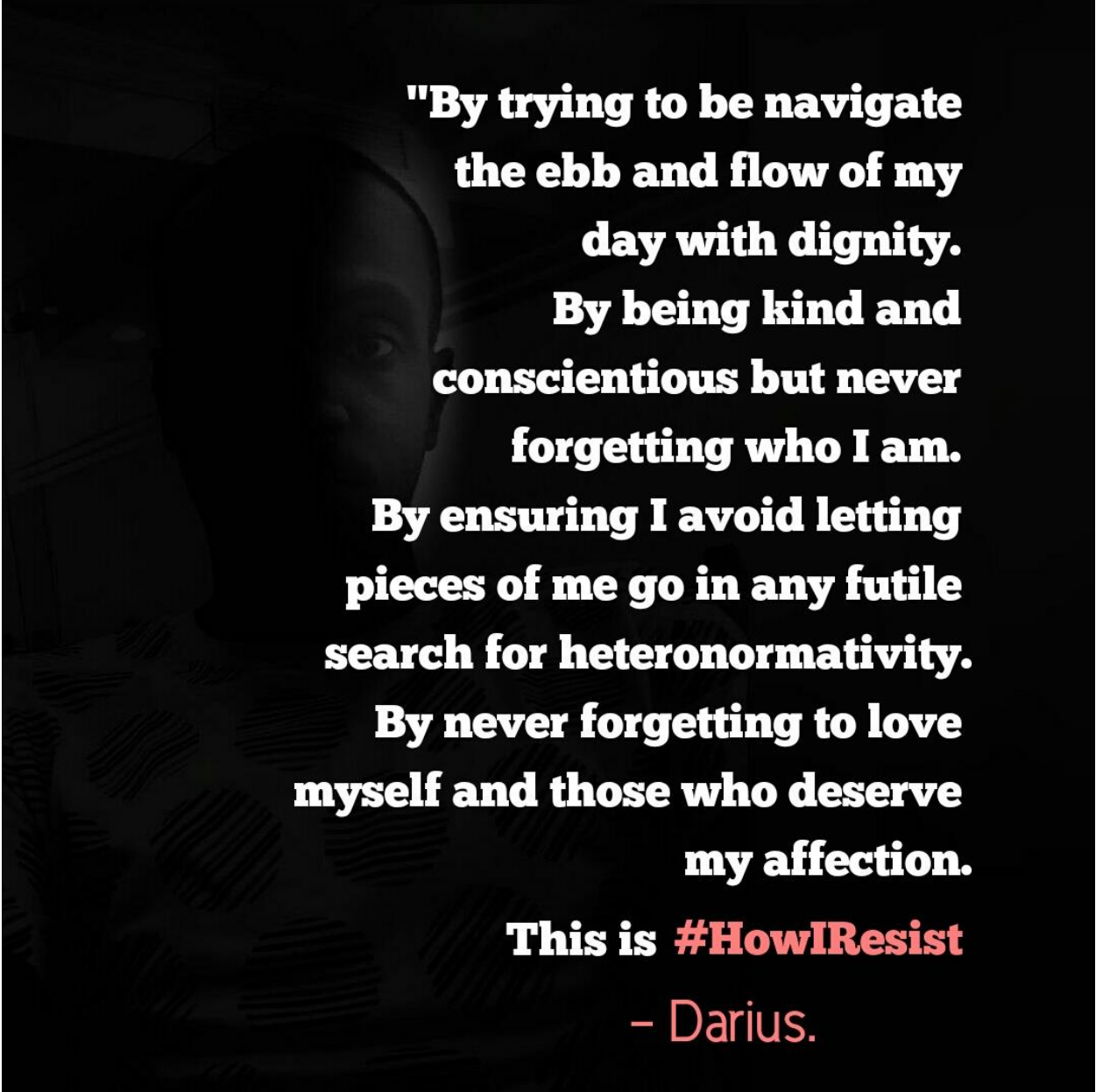
**" I resist because
I am human.
I'm free to be me.
I'm free to love
whosoever I want
without fear.
I'm free to bare
myself to the world
and not feel threatened.**

**I'll resist till future
generations of people
like me can declare
freely who they are or
who they want to be,
and not get judged or
brutally punished for it.**

**We should all resist because
we all bleed red in the end. "**

- Chuka





**"By trying to be navigate
the ebb and flow of my
day with dignity.
By being kind and
conscientious but never
forgetting who I am.
By ensuring I avoid letting
pieces of me go in any futile
search for heteronormativity.
By never forgetting to love
myself and those who deserve
my affection.
This is **#HowIResist**
– Darius.**

#HowIResist

**" I live my life full of fear
Fear of judgement, ridicule and abandonment.
I'm afraid of the peril that lies outside this lonely
little closet. Or perhaps, knowing this will be the
release I've been looking for.
So I'll take a chance...**



**That's #HowIResist;
By believing without a shadow of doubt
that I'm human. I'm normal. And I have
the right to love whom I love. And
perhaps one day, to proclaim it to the
whole wide world. "**

- CJ

campaign 4

Sexuality is not a lifestyle. It's not a sexual act. It's not a disease needing a cure.

It's life itself.

It's like being a black person in a city where every other person is white. It's like being a five-foot person in a class of six-foot people. You will always be a minority, but you're not a lifestyle.

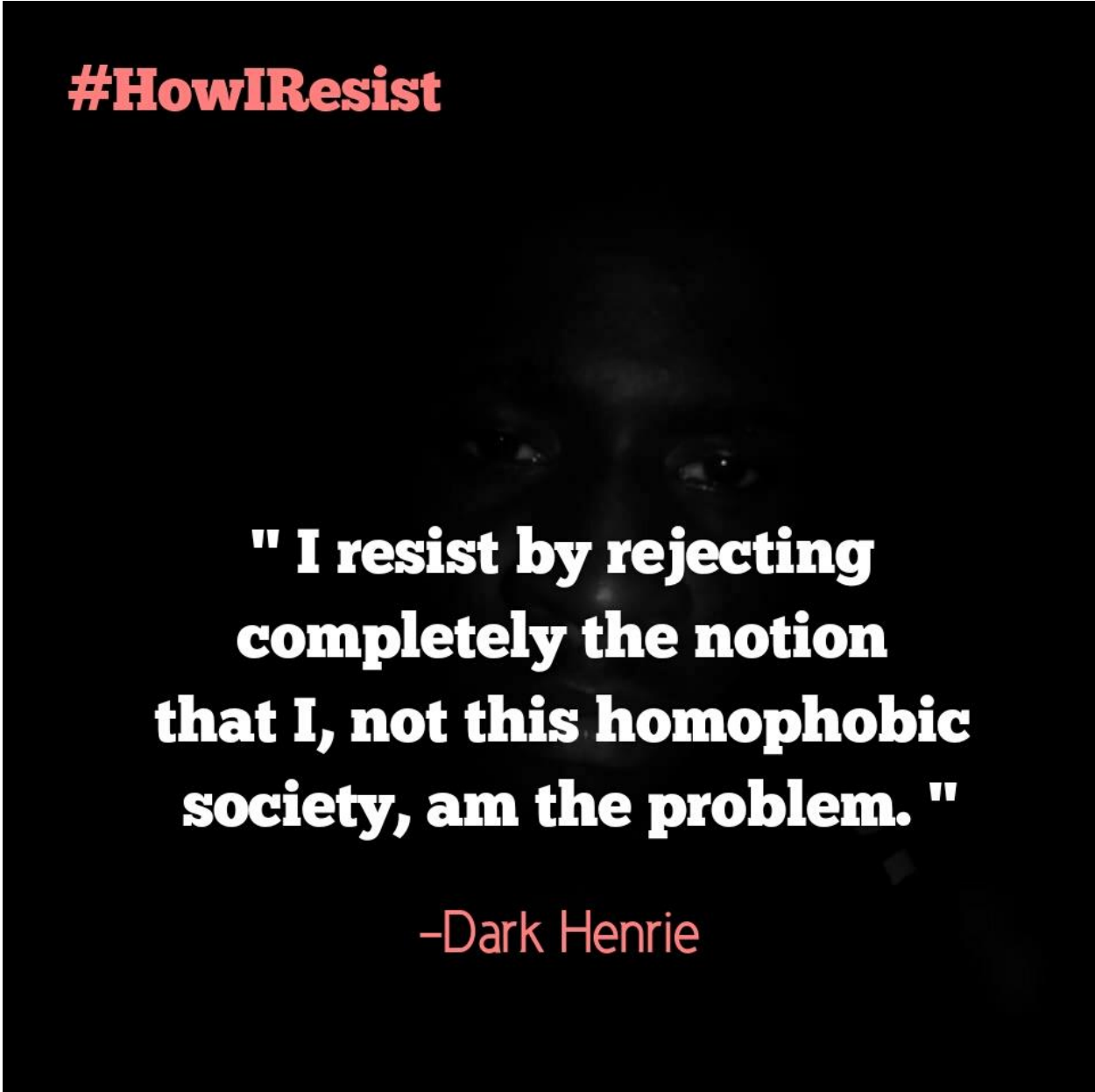
You are life. You are valid.

Some people are gay and don't need to explain why. They don't need pity or validation.

They just want to #Live

– Kenny Brandmuse

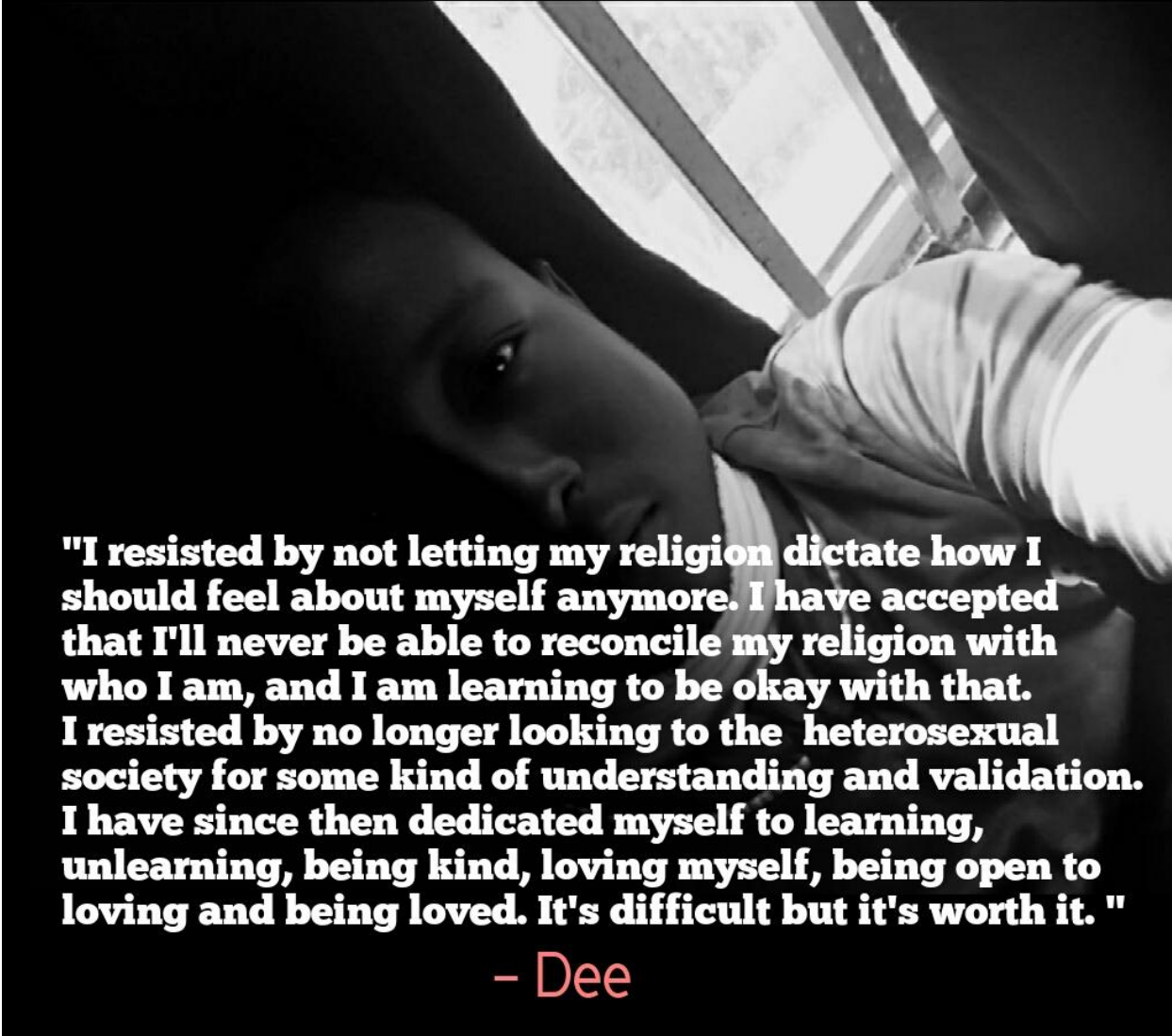
#HowIResist



**" I resist by rejecting
completely the notion
that I, not this homophobic
society, am the problem. "**

-Dark Henrie

#HowIResist



"I resisted by not letting my religion dictate how I should feel about myself anymore. I have accepted that I'll never be able to reconcile my religion with who I am, and I am learning to be okay with that. I resisted by no longer looking to the heterosexual society for some kind of understanding and validation. I have since then dedicated myself to learning, unlearning, being kind, loving myself, being open to loving and being loved. It's difficult but it's worth it. "

– Dee

#HowIResist



"I realize that the media is a powerful tool for social change, and so, I write.

I resist when I write honest stories that mirror the realities of different people.

I believe representation in the media, regardless of its form, is pertinent, as it gives us a certain sense of reaffirmation."

– Cisi Eze

#HowIResist

**"Every other day, I stare
at that mirror whose cracks
I've memorised over the years.
My changes are evident;
physically, emotionally, mentally,
psychologically. Yet, one thing
stays the same: my desire for men.
I realise it can't change. It doesn't
change.
So I resist by being fully accepting
of this reality, and rising above
all that say it's wrong.
I resist by being like every other.
Ordinary. Human.
I resist when I live."**

– Delle

#HowIResist

**"By refusing to be silenced.
I refuse to be a murmur
without a face. I am resisting
by being bold, even in the face
of oppression, and by meeting
ignorance with love.
May the lost be found;
may the dead be at peace;
may the living be safe."**

- Deviantus

campaign **5**

The law that criminalizes homosexuality ... shows a failure of our democracy, because the mark of a true democracy is not in the rule of its majority but in the protection of its minority—otherwise mob justice would be considered democratic. The law is also unconstitutional, ambiguous, and a strange priority in a country with so many real problems. Above all else, however, it is unjust. Even if this was not a country of abysmal electricity supply where university graduates are barely literate and people die of easily-treatable causes and Boko Haram commits casual mass murders, this law would still be unjust. We cannot be a just society unless we are able to accommodate benign difference, accept benign difference, live and let live. We may not understand homosexuality, we may find it personally abhorrent but our response cannot be to criminalize it.

– Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

#HowIResist

"In a society where ignorance, constant ridicule and absolute contempt for who you are and who you love is reality, I resist by standing by my choices.

The choice to love myself against all odds, living, loving and being more than perceptions dictate of me. And the only reality that truly matters is that of self love.

Everything else pales once you find and choose that happy place."

– Abrams



#HowIResist

**"I live my life knowing I can
only live once, and I've got to
make the best of it.**

**I try not to live for anyone,
or for what others expect of me.
My country isn't the safest place
to be myself to the fullest,
but it sure is home for me, and
I resist every form of homophobia
by living a safe, sagacious but
purposeful life with the hope for a
better tomorrow."**

– Dubem



#HowIResist

"Nobody is born hating another person. People learn to hate. So when I see a homophobic person, I try to teach them to love. Maybe they will learn.

I do this to contribute to making this world a better place, where one can love without fear. I refuse to be unhappy, because my sexuality is gold. My sexuality is peace.

And so I resist by waking up every morning, fulfilled with the thought that with each passing day, every thing gets a little better for me and people who love like me."

- Duke



#HowIResist

**" I resist because I believe
that love has no name, no sex
and no sexuality.**

**I resist because of the hope for
the day when men can love men
and women can love women
without looking over their shoulders,
without fear or penalty.**

**I resist for the day when the
rainbow will touch the Nigerian
sky in its full splendour. "**

- Hilanzok

#HowIResist

"I resist by explaining the multiverse theory to every homophobe that comes my way. I tell them that they are probably flaming queens voguing on Drag Race in several universes."

- Eggsy

campaign 6

Anything that can happen is by definition natural. If two women can find a way to sexual pleasure, then by the obvious evidence nature already allows it. If a man can wear what we now call 'female clothing' and not fall down and die because of it, then it is by nature natural. Nature allows a massive spectrum of possibilities; it is us humans that limit the possibilities with our fears, taboos and phobias, not nature.

– Chude Jideonwo

I Urge You to Resist

Dear LGBT Youth,
“God did not create you gay,” she once said, when my coming out was still fresh and painful. I visited her the thirteenth year of my self-exile; she whipped out multiple versions of the Bible to prove her point. I was home for her 70th birthday celebration. Few days before, at my now-husband’s birthday party, I had proposed to him to marry me. It was a unique experience for our Nigerian LGBTI family present at the party. I was home from my 13 years of self-exile for celebrations and not to debate biology and the Bible. If you would believe that Mary conceived Jesus without having intercourse with a man, why not my being gay, something proven to be natural to us humans and even to the animal kingdom? I know and respect the Bible and I know and respect my truth too; let God take care of the situation, case closed. I had reached the stage

of self-acceptance and so would not allow anybody drive me off the rails of truth back to the dark closet of self-deceit and self-loathing.

I am John Adewoye, 58, Nigerian-American, gay, male. I loved to cross-dress as a kid. I resisted my mother's opposition by learning how to tie my wrapper myself. The sisters of Notre Dame were my alter ego. When I cross-dressed, I mimicked them, wished, even, that I could become one of them. No way, that was all I got at home in response to my feminine self-expression, except when it came to helping my mama with her headgear.

I was seven when I started elementary school. The feminine traits made school a hell. Other kids saw the gayness in me and nicknamed me Obinrin—girl. They knew I preferred to squat when I peed. They observed me cross my legs, like a lady, as I sat in a chair or on the ground. They told me I spoke like a girl and walked like a girl. I was teased, bullied and constantly

in physical conflict. I began to resist my homosexual nature at the same time as I owned my nickname and loved it.

Life at Our Lady and St. Kizito Minor Seminary was great. Even though I had grinded on guys before then, it was where I really had my early pleasurable sexual experiences with guys. I was in the school's comedy group called "Alawada", performing under the stage name, Memunat. Unfortunately, that was where I first experienced my first bite of Biblical homophobic attack through the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. My self-resistance doubled, though silently. I am not gay, I would say to myself. That was where I also got to know that marriage to a woman would not resolve my same-gender sexual attraction. Oh! That was where I first spotted my space in the Bible, the Eunuchs, Matthew 19:12:

*Born that way,
made that way by others,
made myself that way for the sake of heaven!*

I concluded that I was indeed meant to be a Eunuch through the Catholic

priesthood because of my lack of attraction to women.

I got into to the Major Seminary of Saints Peter and Paul. Another beautiful stretch of years with its stress and anxiety. There I read the knockout passage in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (6: 9 and 10) that denied heaven to homosexuals. Isn't that something? How could I end up in hell after giving all to Jesus Christ, merely because I involuntarily gravitated towards men? I left for the United States in search of freedom from homosexuality; instead, I gained the freedom to be homosexual. A new life started. I would no longer be in the closet. I would drop anything, *anything*, that encumbered my freedom. I would, will, resist positively by standing for marriage equality. I will resist by positive lawful actions of supporting asylum seekers worldwide. I will resist by making myself a celebrated gay man.

That is where I am today!

Yours,

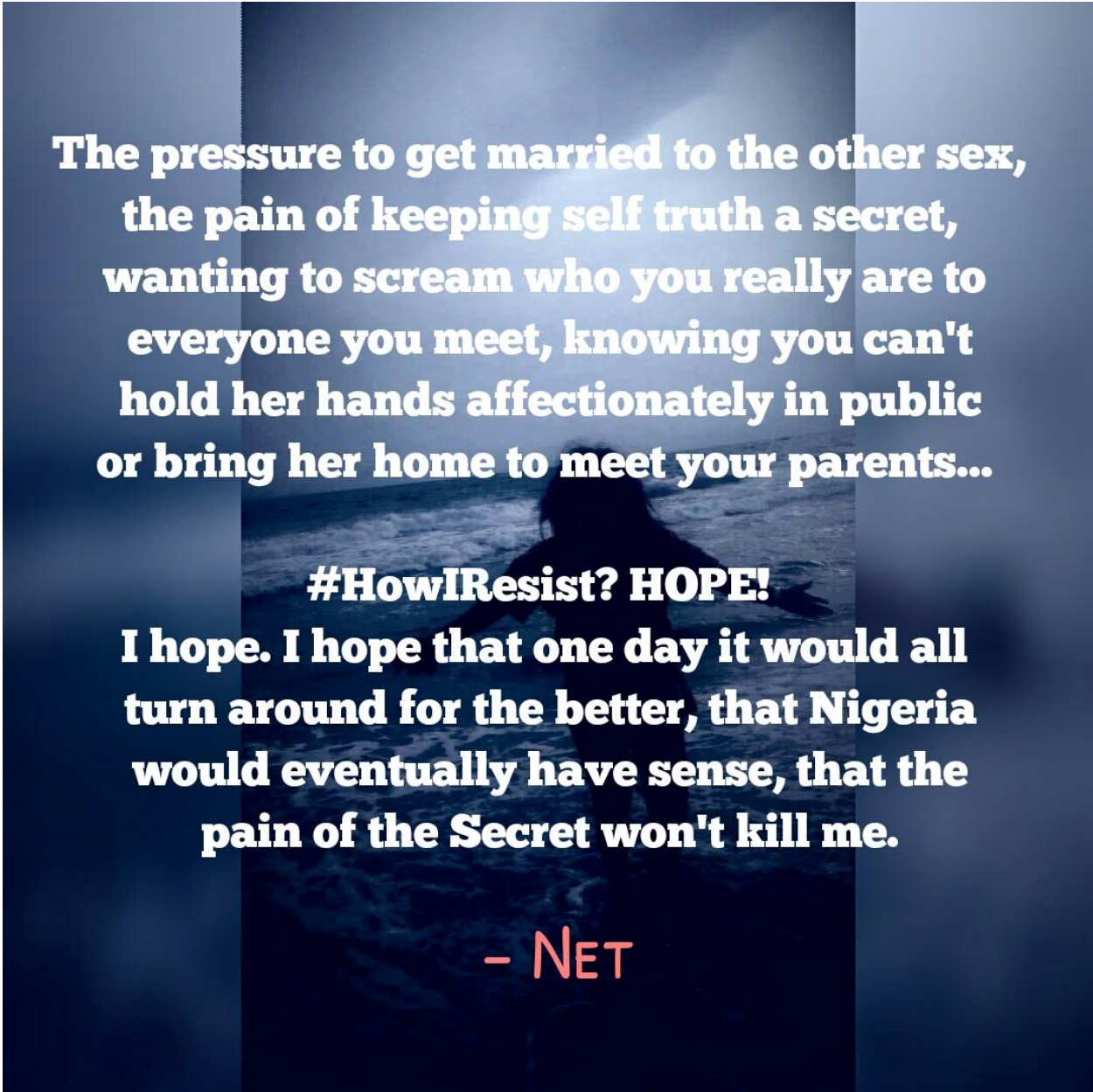
—John Ademola Adewoye

#HowIResist

September 2010 was the turning point for me; the day I realized I could no longer continue to act like who I am not. I called every member of my family and within minutes I was out to every-one. The sense of self I felt afterwards became my determination.

**And so,
I resist by being
me every moment of my
life. The love and accept-
ance of family helps with
my courage and continuous
fight and resistance.
I will continue to resist.**

- Ekpo (Junior)



**The pressure to get married to the other sex,
the pain of keeping self truth a secret,
wanting to scream who you really are to
everyone you meet, knowing you can't
hold her hands affectionately in public
or bring her home to meet your parents...**

#HowIResist? HOPE!

**I hope. I hope that one day it would all
turn around for the better, that Nigeria
would eventually have sense, that the
pain of the Secret won't kill me.**

- NET

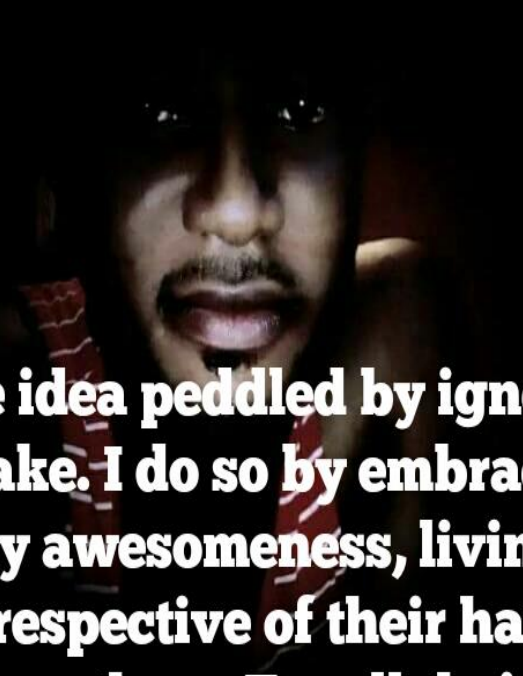
#HowIResist



" Living in a world filled with so much hate, where friends and even family would scorn you, the guy down the street could assault you, and even the law enforcement would humiliate and blackmail you just for being who you are... The trick to survival is always to select your own family and friends who choose to love you. Wake up every morning remembering that it's us AGAINST them and working 10 times harder to beat them in every way. That is #HowIResist. "

-Enobosowo

#HowIResist



"I resist the idea peddled by ignorance that I'm a mistake. I do so by embracing every shade of my awesomeness, living my truth irrespective of their hate. The joke is on them. For all their hate, they are the mistake to humanity. Knowing this gives me joy, one of the tools I need to resist."

- Fabby

#HowIResist

**"I resist by living.
By waking up every day
and living life, in a society
that'd rather I do not exist.**

**I resist by refusing to just
survive, by flourishing
and being fucking awesome
at what I do.**

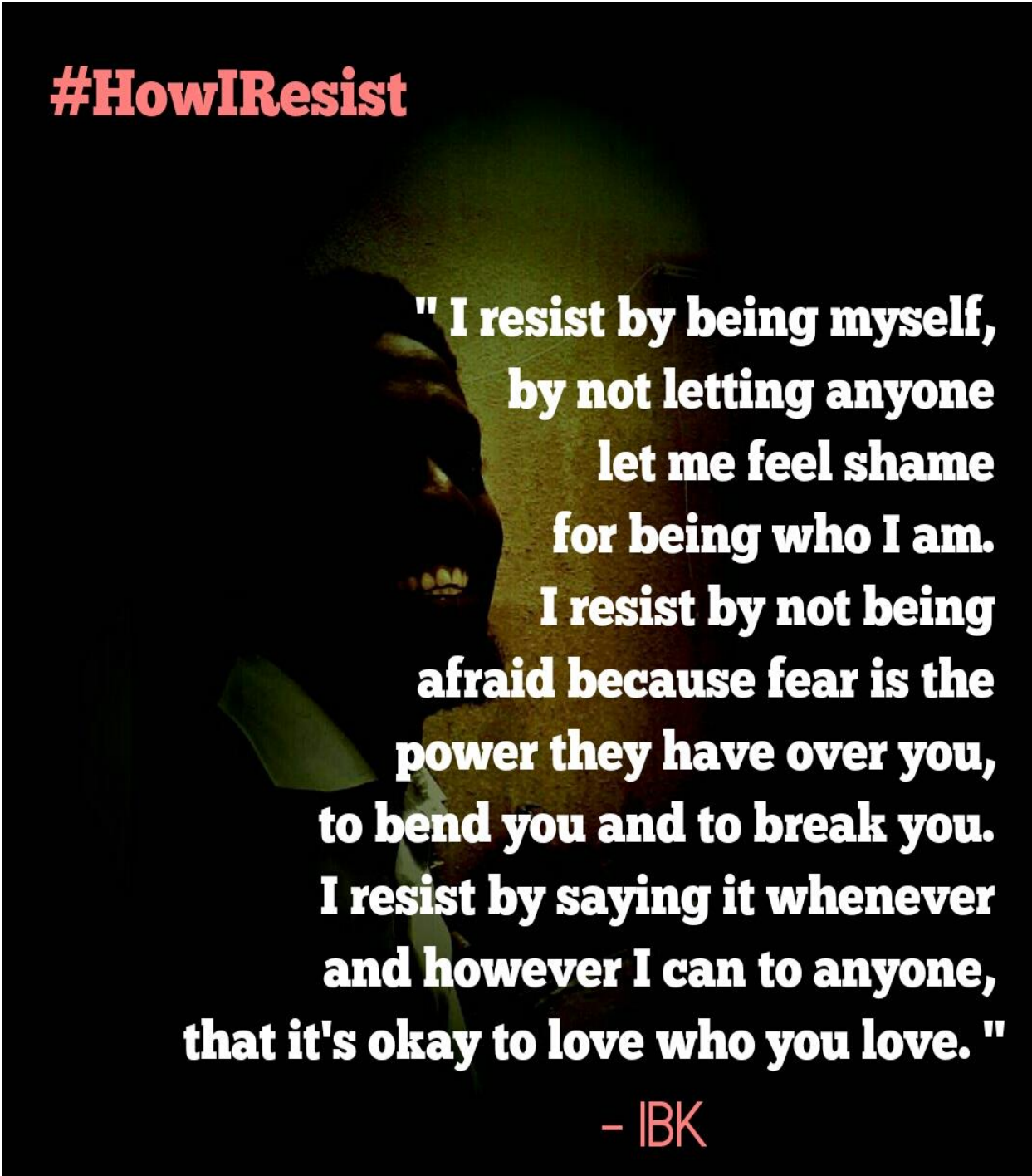
**I resist by hoping too,
hoping that one day that
this society will finally get
its head out of its ass."**

- Jebudiah Simmons

campaign **7**

Do not believe the lies: your neighbour's sexuality remains none of your business and will never affect you if you do not want it to. Claims to the contrary are simply baseless. The argument against homosexuality is not about the so-called African values but about social and political power. It is a distraction from the failures of some leaders in their countries. Instead of developing economies, they expend all their energy on policing what consenting adults do in their bedrooms and pretending heteronormativity is a defeat of neo-imperialism. The only defeat of imperialism we need is economic success and the subsequent eradication of poverty. What happens between sane adults in bedrooms we will never enter should be none of our business.

#HowIResist



**" I resist by being myself,
by not letting anyone
let me feel shame
for being who I am.
I resist by not being
afraid because fear is the
power they have over you,
to bend you and to break you.
I resist by saying it whenever
and however I can to anyone,
that it's okay to love who you love. "**

- IBK



#HowIResist



"I came out to my family at the age of 19, and since then, despite the horrors of being an unapologetic gay man in this anti gay clime, I've resisted by living my truth as boldly as I can every single day, by educating and overturning homophobia in everyone I come across, and by living strictly by my rule of nonconformity. I wake up everyday determined to always be the red splash on a blank white canvas."

– Kainene

#HowIResist

" I resist by refusing to succumb to the societal pressure of marrying someone of the opposite sex. I shall live my truth and do what makes me happy, as the society won't come to my rescue during my sad and depressing times in an unhappy marriage. "

– Garrison



#HowIResist

**"I resist by learning not to give a damn
about people's opinions. I'm literally not
affected by the homophobia of this
country."**

– Iliana

#HowIResist



"Over the years, I've come to realize that when I give people 100% access, they seem to find a way to influence my life decisions and I'm done having any of that. So I act detached, angry and snobbish to the extent that everyone keeps their silly opinions to themselves out of fear of what I may say or do.

I resist by being so determinedly self-preservative, that contrary opinions looking to influence my life and peace of mind stay away."

- Francis

Defiance 101

Because freedom is not dished out on a platter of gold, the oppressed in any oppressive system have to come to a consensus. “We *need* to overthrow this system at all cost.” To achieve this, the oppressed must speak up and act out. As people are wont to express themselves differently, we see that there are several ways to topple that systemic oppression. A resistance, a movement, fuelled by those suffering the brunt of injustice, and those who support them, emerges. This is the ideal scenario.

Unfortunately, in every oppressive system, there are oppressed folks who internalise the systemic discrimination to the point they side with those who squash them with their boots. Uncle Ruckus, in the adult swim “The Boondocks” is *that* black man who sides with white folks to spew racism. Misogynistic women perpetuate toxic ideas

that are harmful to women. This is how some queer people epitomise homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic ideas, which drag us several steps backwards.

Internalised homophobia has always been a coping mechanism people in the Nigerian LGB(T)Q community employ. Often, we see vituperative attacks on social media, and even in intimate spaces, being perpetuated by queer folks. They clothe wicked words, saying, “It is sarcasm.” Then again, Freud once wrote: “Wit is hostility masquerading as humour”.

“I have a friend who is married. She goes to events and I know about three women she has dated over the years. But on her Facebook page, she is so homophobic! She is covering up and that is what everybody is doing,” writes KZ in *She Called Me Woman: Nigeria’s Queer Women Speak*.

We are defiant in the face of systemic oppression, yet these folks spew a narrative

that is detrimental to their own existence in the spaces they inhabit. What are they trying to prove?

We (LGBQ people, and allies) all have platforms, and the question is what do we do with these platforms at our disposal? It does not necessarily have to do with the media. What do we do in spaces we inhabit? How do we put the message of acceptance across? Do we bring in educative facts, and not simply our sentiments?

How many Nigerians know that we borrowed the Buggery Law that influenced the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA)? How many Nigerians have painstakingly gone through the law? Do they know that two heterosexual people of the same sex are not allowed to be affectionate in public? Siblings are not spared from this ridiculous law. Have they realised that the law is not against anyone having any kind of sexual orientation?

It gets more interesting that Chapter 21, Section 214, of the Nigerian Criminal Code criminalises any kind of sex that goes against the “order of nature”.

Any person who-

- i) has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature

- ii) has carnal knowledge of an animal; or

- iii) permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature

is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for fourteen years.

This implies that heterosexual couples who have anal and oral sex are culpable. Some desperate people link sexuality with incest and paedophilia. How often do we educate them that incest and paedophilia are not sexualities? That “A sexual orientation is an enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction (or a combination of both) to persons of the same sex or gender, opposite sex or gender, or both sexes or more than one gender”? That both heterosexuals and LGBTQ folks can be incestuous or paedophilic, and that, in Nigeria in fact, the sheer number of heterosexual men, both reported and protected, who molest and abuse underage girls is staggering? If, then, we can tie these things to sexual orientation, we can rightly say that heterosexual men are paedophilic abusers, can we not?

So far, LGBQ folks and allies have contributed differently to bring about a society that understands having a different

sexual orientation is not so evil. In recent times, we have seen LGBTQ representation: *She Called Me Woman: Nigerian Queer Women Speak* curated by Azeenarh Mohammed, Chitra Nagarajan, and Rafeeat Aliyu; *When We Speak of Nothing* by Olumide Popoola; Chinelo Okparanta's *Under the Udala Trees*, Unoma Azuah-edited *Blessed Body*, Kito Dairies, The 14 Anthologies, Rustin Times, to mention a few. Consistency turns milk into cheese. If we keep having more media representation, telling these stories, splaying out the realities of closeted and out individuals, we would enlighten people on LGBTQ issues.

"New things are absurd until we get used to them," says Patricia Rice and Dorothy

Parker says, "Heterosexuality is not normal, it is just common." It is going to take some getting used to for most of the Nigerian population to see difference as normal. Media is powerful. To understand a culture, it is easier experiencing it through their media. "Talking" on social media is not enough. Now is time to open books, articles, and journals in a bid to understand sexuality.

It is high time we brought in logic, not only feelings, while engaging with homophobes, biphobes, and transphobes. Education, via media, is a valid way of defying and resisting a system of oppression. But what happens when people decide to stick with wilful ignorance?

— Cisi Eze

campaign 8

I want to say (because I study medicine and I know) that gay people aren't sick. If they are, they are only in the way ALL humans are sick, flawed and broken. Just love your neighbor please. Like yourself. Don't overdo it, but love despite the differences.

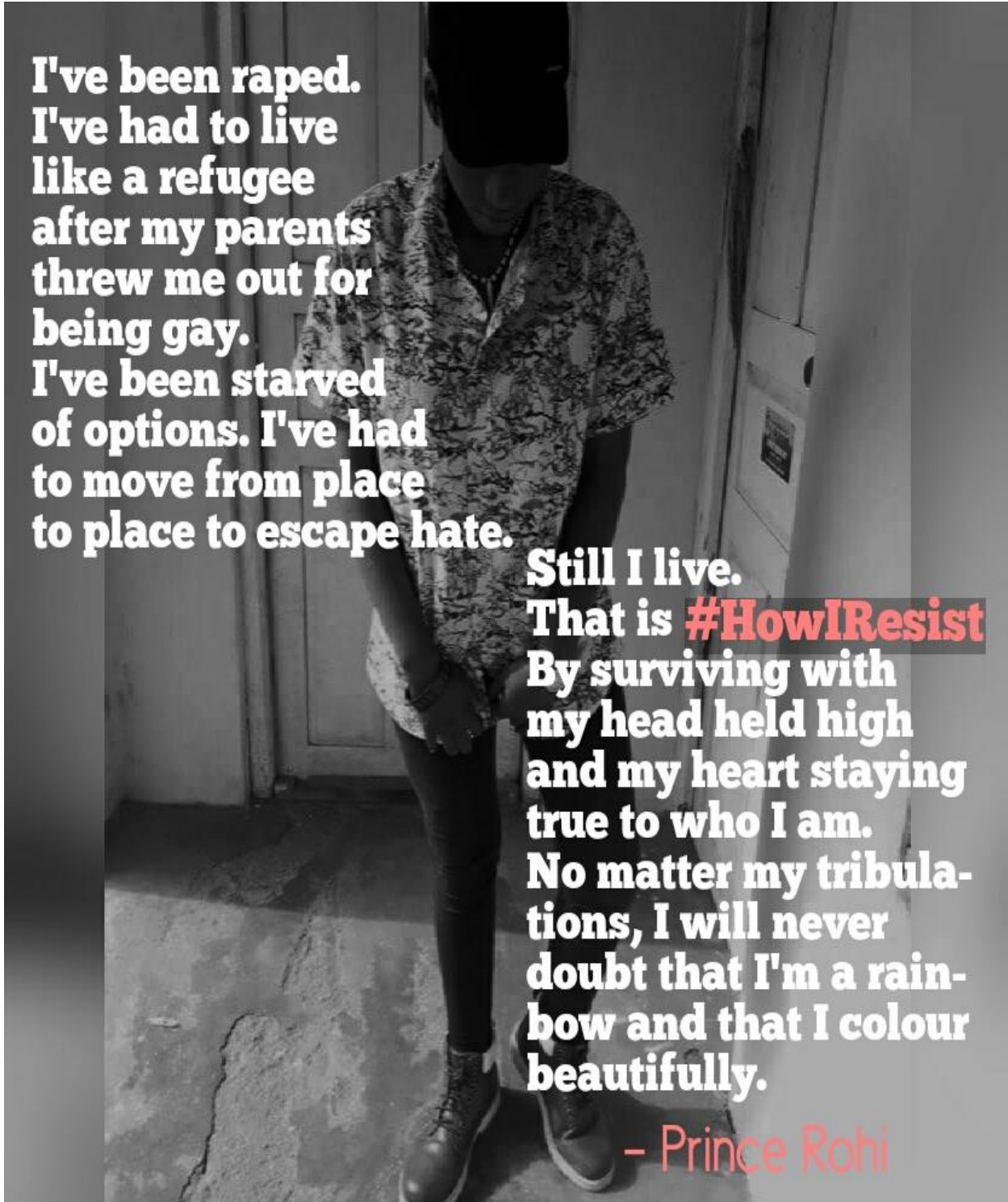
And I was asking myself: what if it was Jesus who needed help, would he have let a gay person help him? After all, his PA, Mary of Magdala, was a prostitute. And he let an unclean woman with incredibly long hair touch him.

See?

I know some Christians would gladly watch their gay children die. Some would rather die than receive help from a gay person. Y'all think you're Christians? You are Callous! Y'all think you're Holy? You are Hellish!

Gay people are not demons, not angels, just People.

– Hannu



**I've been raped.
I've had to live
like a refugee
after my parents
threw me out for
being gay.
I've been starved
of options. I've had
to move from place
to place to escape hate.**

**Still I live.
That is **#HowIResist**
By surviving with
my head held high
and my heart staying
true to who I am.
No matter my tribula-
tions, I will never
doubt that I'm a rain-
bow and that I colour
beautifully.**

- Prince Rohi



#HowIResist

**" I love myself rather than
love the idea of other
people loving me.
I endeavour not to follow
in order to be accepted.
I Am Who I Am.
As a gay man in Nigeria,
I resist by being ME and
living my TRUTH. "**

- JBoy



#HowIResist

**"I love sex.
Nigerians hate my kind of sex.
Every time I lay with a man,
I like to imagine a homophobic
Nigerian is somewhere dying
a slow, painful death.
And so I resist by having a lot
of sex."**

- Jazz

A person's silhouette is centered against a background of a sunset or sunrise sky with soft, colorful clouds. The person's head and shoulders are visible in dark silhouette. In the top left corner, there is a dark blue rectangular box containing the text "#HowIResist" in red. In the lower center, there is a semi-transparent dark grey box containing a quote in white text. At the bottom center, below the quote box, is the attribution "- Kayode" in red text.

#HowIResist

"I resist by loving myself, and telling myself the truth: that I am deserving of love, that I am equally human despite the laws put up to break me down."

- Kayode



#HowIResist

"I resist by speaking up about and educating myself and those within my sphere of influence of sexuality and addressing homophobia, rationally everywhere I am."

– Jay Armstrong

campaign 9

Being different is not a good reason to discriminate against a group of people. And just because something is lawful doesn't mean it is just. Human history is filled with examples of stupid and unjust laws. There used to be a time when women and black people were denied the right to vote in America. Apartheid was once lawful in South Africa. Black people used to be slaves with zero human rights. Arresting and humiliating gay people for no other reason than being gay is not a good way for the society to treat difference. It diminishes us. We must give up this idle preoccupation with the sex lives of other people.

– Ijabla Raymond



#HowIResist

"I resist by wearing the tag LESBIAN as unapologetically as I can. I resist by making each day count in my own personal fight against bigotry and homophobia."

– Nwamaka

#HowIResist



**" By waking up
every morning and
living for me. "**

- Kennedy

#HowIResist

I resist by educating myself that I am a full human being deserving of all the things society says I can't have.

I resist by using my resources and influence to do whatever I can to help.

I resist by helping others behind me, holding doors for them to pass through for I know that when we have the numbers, we will have a seat at the table.

– Dennis Macaulay



#HowIResist

**" I resist by constantly telling myself
that contrary to the teachings of the
church, there is nothing abominable
about who I am. "**

- Jon Snow

#HowIResist

"Growing up, I thought I had a damning demon within. I isolated myself and created my own space to cage this monster from the binding light, afraid to let the world see it.

Now, I have reached a point where I can't hold out any longer. For each day I grow, I understand that what I was told of this demon was false. I learn the angles and shapes of the indelible scars within me and I want to show the world that these scars are beautiful. That this "monster" has wings as colorful as the rainbow. SO I RESIST. I resist and throw away my cage. I resist for those still in their cages, hoping they'd realize that who they are is all shades of beautiful and perfect."

- Law

campaign 10

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 freedoms begin to erode.

– Barack Obama



#HowIResist

**I resist by being human first
before any other label.
By waking up everyday with
the understanding that people
are different and that diversity
is okay. I resist by striving to
make everyone around me
understand this too.**

– Walter



#HowIResist

" Homophobia robs humanity, denies one the right to live his truth even in secret

I resist by being aggressively pro-LGBT, by being unapologetically vocal about the dangers of hate, about the need to live and let live.

I resist by constantly preaching and practicing the kind of self-love and acceptance that is untrammelled. "

- Tobi

#HowIResist

"I resist by endeavouring to be the best in all I do. This is so that I am standing above my homophobic peers when I tell them to shut up with their rubbish.

I strive to make the success in my life a testament of how my sexuality is not the curse the world believes it is, but one of the many reasons I'm blessed."

- Queen Blue Fox



#HowIResist

"I resist by insisting upon my existence.

By standing in the light, seen.

**By saying "Yes, I'm gay" when asked who I am,
when the expectation is that I shrink in the face of
that question.**

**I resist by knowing when to slide into the dark,
waiting, waiting. I resist by waiting.**

**Waiting for the time when I am fully in charge of my
well-being, when I can finally say to mum and dad,
"This is who I am", and then face the world fully,
knowing that the last dark corner of my
life has seen the beam of light."**

– Rapum

A black and white portrait of Reuben Silungwe, a Black man with short hair, wearing a dark zip-up jacket with glasses hanging from the collar. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred brick wall.

#HowIResist

"My sexuality is my spirituality, my humanity, my body, and my health.

I resist any attempt to consider me inadequate because I do not fit into the presently common gender and sexual binaries, which are in themselves inadequate, to explain who I am.

I live to thrive amidst the avoidable homo-prejudice and discrimination."

-Reuben Silungwe

campaign 11

Homosexuals have to be of their best behaviour—pious, humble, quiet. Talking about everything else but their sexuality—otherwise they're the reason for the homophobia thrown at them. If a homosexual makes a post with even a little sexual content, then that post is part of the reasons why homosexuals are hated in the country. If a gay man solicits for sex from a straight man, that very act of soliciting is enough to brand the whole gay community as perverts and idiots.

Well, bullocks! It might not be the most preposterous of the opinions and social proclivities of heterosexual people—this idea that gays must continue to hide their sexuality—but it ranks right up there.

It is not too much to ask that, if you're an activist especially a heterosexual one, you understand that homosexuals just want to be free to express themselves as much as you do. That you understand that the very purpose of your advocacy is to make homophobia obsolete, not to hold homosexuals to higher standards of morality than you would straight people.

– Godswill Vesta

#HowIResist

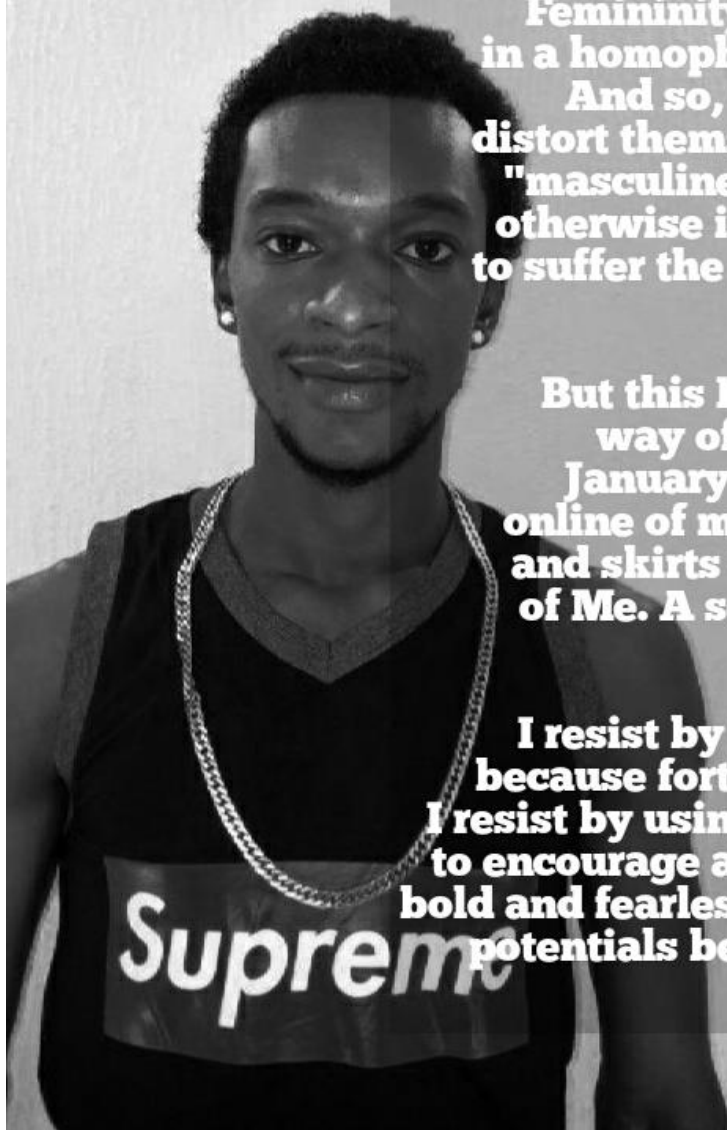
I resist homophobia each passing day by surpassing the low standards my family and the society set for me.

Being gay doesn't make me any less human, decent or capable of being successful.

I resist by investigating, studying and writing about the issues that affect LGBT+ Nigerians. I hope my work can influence positively the portrayal of LGBT+ Nigerians in the media. Because seeing bold, gay-themed, well-made films, music and books really saved me from a dark place.

– Ikedi

#HowIResist



Femininity in men is often reviled in a homophobic place like Nigeria. And so, effeminate men have to distort themselves to conform to the "masculine" appeal. Because to be otherwise is to get labeled gay and to suffer the scourge of homophobic prejudice.

But this I would not let get in the way of my talent. On the 1st of January 2018, I released a video online of me dancing in high heels and skirts to Britney Spears' Piece of Me. A sequel to previous dance videos I've released.

I resist by being bold and fearless because fortune smiles at the bold. I resist by using myself as a statement to encourage all LGBT Nigerians to be bold and fearless, refusing to limit their potentials because of what anybody might think.

- Socrates Uduk



#HowIResist

**"I know who I am,
I understand who I am
and I love who I am.
The journey to this point
was rough, and I actively
tried to change myself,
but thanks to a solid
support system, I began
to see the light and grad-
ually become the light."**

- Santa Diaba



#HowIResist

**I resist by being
in love with the
very person society
said I shouldn't love.
I'm alive, breathing
the same air as those
who hate me.**

**I am in love and happy
against all odds.**

My name is **Vina Fenty,
and I am real and still
resisting.**

#HowIResist



"I came out to my family as a bisexual man on the 20th of November 2017. Though they are not cool with it, they are silent about it. I suppose it has something to do with my absolute acceptance of myself. However, I have come face to face with homophobia in various ways, and with the help of my friends in and out of the LGBT community, I'm here, standing tall to tell my stories.

**I will survive. We will survive.
I have hope."**

– Prosper

Resisting Together

It would be virtually impossible for the average Nigerian to ignore the progress achieved in recent years in raising LGBTQ awareness and bringing the fight against homophobia to the fore in Nigeria.

This progress has been facilitated in no small measure by dedicated Nigerian-based advocacy agencies and numerous LGBTQ individuals using their social media profiles to

fight for LGBTQ rights. A shining example is this awesome HowIResist campaign initiative that highlights how Nigerian LGBTQ individuals resist homophobia by educating those close to them.

On a broader scale, I think the fight for gay rights in Nigeria would benefit enormously from having a few people who openly identify as LGBTQ leading the charge. Unfortunately, due to the hostile homophobic climate in Nigeria, such openness would more than likely lead to the ultimate sacrifice for such individuals. For that reason, using social media is currently the most viable alternative available to us and should be used efficiently and responsibly.

At this stage of the fight for LGBTQ rights in Nigeria, I believe the struggle could use a uniform narrative online in achieving its goals and not appear dysfunctional to the average Nigerian.

Yes, we are all aware of the age-old rivalry between the individual letters in the LGBTQ acronym. Such rivalry, where for example gays feel that bisexuals are not gay enough and should not be at the table, is the luxury afforded the LGBTQ

community in less hostile countries where their rights are recognised and enshrined in legislation.

Something we are yet to achieve in Nigeria.

And even within the Nigerian gay groups, there is a burgeoning dissonance between Nigerian gays at home and those in the diaspora, where the former feel those living outside the country are not exposed to the daily open hostilities towards gay people at home and as such cannot really advocate for them. This assertion may be correct, as far as the level of exposure to physical danger.

However, those of us living abroad are still subjected to online homophobic abuse from the Nigerian public the same as those resident in Nigeria. Some of us have been ostracized by friends and family members because we came out as gay and continue to fight online for gay rights in Nigeria, much to the indignation of our loved ones who feel that shame has been brought to the family name. We may be free to walk around the streets, holding our partner's hand in the West, but until our brothers and sisters can do the same in Nigeria, we are not all truly free.

Again, such discord does not help the struggle, as it takes the focus away from its aim, which is to achieve legitimacy in Nigeria. And besides, every little bit of altruistic advocacy, no matter its source, helps to raise awareness globally on the Nigerian issue and should not be sniffed at.

If the goal of this virtual movement is to dispel homophobia in Nigeria, we should be more accepting of each other's differences and show a united front.

Resisting together is more effective than resisting individually.

—Kere Dim

A close-up photograph of a person's eye, heavily adorned with makeup. The eye is dark and looking slightly to the left. The eyelids are coated in a shimmering, metallic reddish-brown eyeshadow. The eyelashes are coated in a thick, dark mascara. The skin around the eye is also covered in the same shimmering makeup, with some areas appearing more textured or glittery. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

HOW WE RESIST

Visibility for the Nigerian LGBT.

campaign 12

Ladies and gentlemen, boys, girls, and GQs, check your fathers and your mothers, your brothers, sisters and colleagues. That's how we start to get *there*: a small voice in an office, a firm tone at dinner table, gentle correction, intense debate where necessary. That's how we stop being outlined in chalk, by filling the outlines of our persons, complete with cast shadows, silhouettes and souls. That's how we stop being cardboard and start being human in all its appreciable glory, with all the boundaries humanity affords. We have to say we are here, not only as a rebuttal, but, more importantly, as a statement of fact.

When someone says something homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic at work, perhaps even to you or directed at you, how do you react? Do you let it slide because it's the easier thing to do?

In the end, easier for whom?

– Chiedozie



#HowIResist

**" I figured I couldn't hide my effeminacy.
It was either I owned it or hid in shame.
So I owned it. With a lot of confidence.
And that unsettled them and scared
them off. You cannot shame someone
that has nothing to be ashamed of.
I continue to resist by wearing my skin
confidently. "**

- Onyx

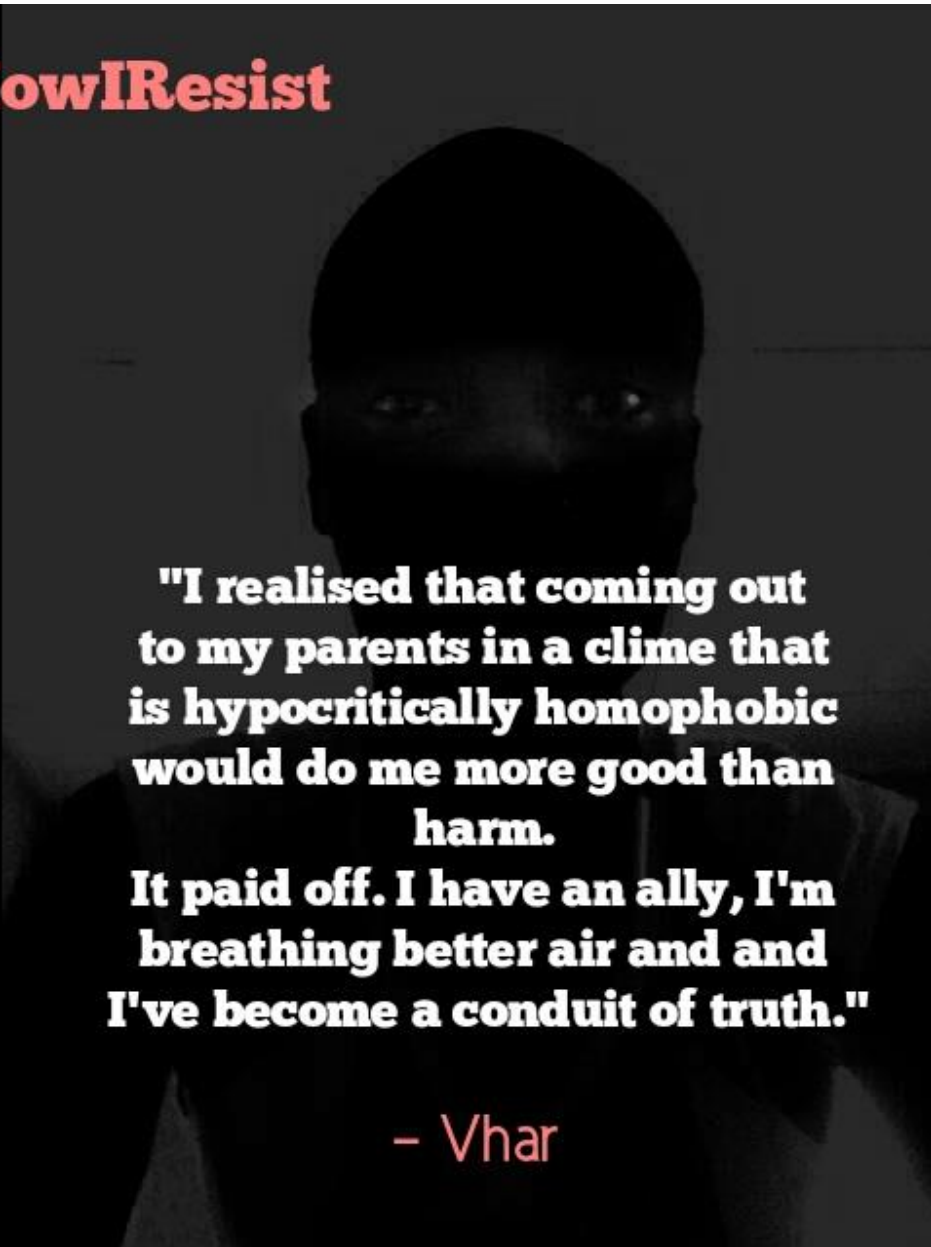


#HowIResist

**"I love facts. Objective facts.
You don't argue about them. They just are.
I resist by teaching and re-teaching
homophobes that as a matter of fact,
we're here, we're queer and we ain't
going nowhere."**

– Vhagar

#HowIResist



**"I realised that coming out
to my parents in a clime that
is hypocritically homophobic
would do me more good than
harm.
It paid off. I have an ally, I'm
breathing better air and and
I've become a conduit of truth."**

- Vhar

#HowIResist

**" I resist by being
the best I can be,
striving with what
I can control, and
moving on from peeps
who think GAY is the
root of all evils..."**



**...I resist because I know,
one day, we'll get to the
point of acceptance as a
country.**

**I resist because it stopped
to matter what they feel
or think about who I am.
Those who really matter
already see within. "**

- Nex



#HowIResist

"Living in a society where what you wear describes your sexuality, on countless occasions, I have been called "Homo" because of how I dress.

I usually raise my shoulder high and shrug it all off. It doesn't change who I am or make me stop wearing my flowing chiffon kimono and mesh drapery tops. I remain true to my self."

– Mang

campaign 13

Someone should have told you that you were not what people said you were. That might have emancipated you from the expectations of a million voices judging you from a distance, which you believed as gospel. You might have found your identity independent of the shouts from the crowd or the cutting words of the critics.

Someone should have told you that you were loved as you were; not because of anything you did or won or achieved or made, but simply because you were lovable. It may have saved you from so restlessly striving to earn what you already deserved.

I can't undo the brutal omissions you endured in the past, or the time you've squandered or the peace you've surrendered as a result.

I can only give you these words now, as a firm and steady spot to plant your foot and pivot as you begin again down another road, one with far fewer demons hiding in the shadows to ambush you.

So stop to listen to the whisper in your ear, that breaks the long and heavy silence and says that you are free. Feel the lightness that only love brings.

Somewhere along the road someone close to you should have told you all this, but they didn't.

So I am telling you.

Be encouraged.

– John Pavlovitz

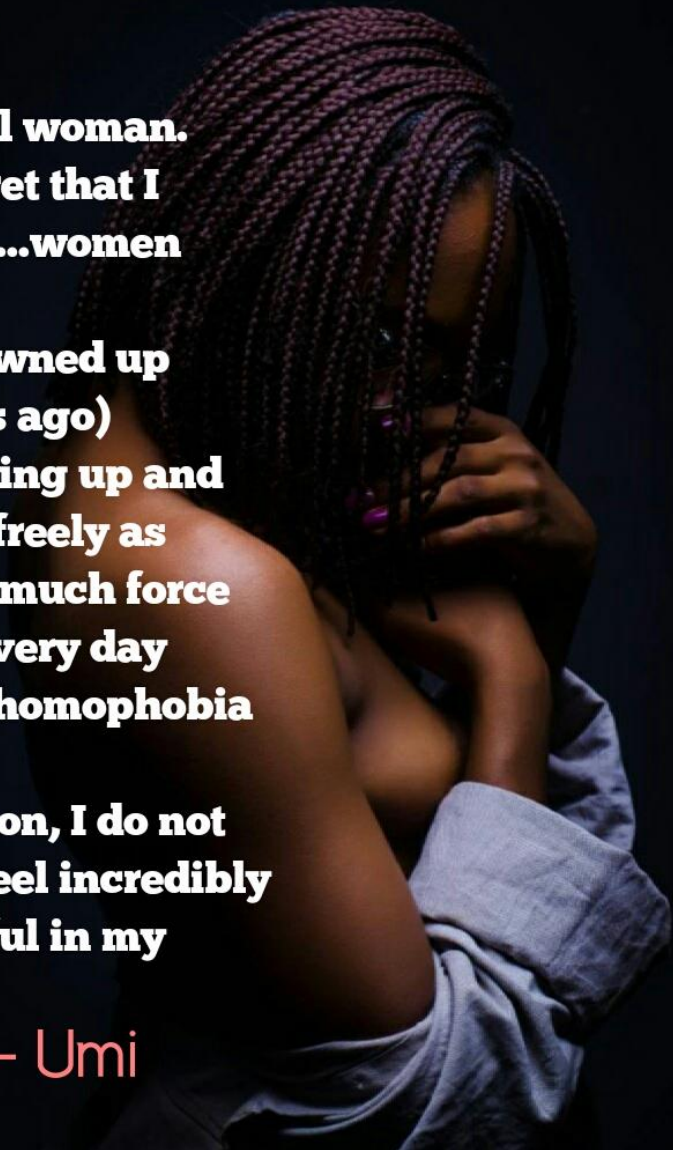
#HowIResist

"I'm a proud bisexual woman. It's never been a secret that I like men and women...women a little bit more.

For me, life (since I owned up to my truth four years ago) has consisted of waking up and living and loving as freely as I can, and pulling as much force as I can behind me every day in the battle against homophobia and bigotry.

I do not seek validation, I do not seek reassurance. I feel incredibly beautiful and powerful in my difference."

- Umi





#HowIResist

I resist by looking at everyone through the lens of humanity whatever their Gender Identity may be.

I resist by being a success and creating a positive impact in the lives of others.

I resist by using my space to create a voice for the often-voiceless transgender and intersex community in Nigeria.

- Mystique



#HowIResist

" I resist by refusing to let society dictate to me how I should live, by being the flaming queen I originally was before an asshole boyfriend changed that, by shutting down homophobia however and wherever I can.

My family may not like that I'm gay, but I'll be damned if I'll live a lie just to please them. My reality is my truth and I'll fight everyday for my truth because I'm human and deserve to be treated with the basic decency all humans deserve. "

- Mitch

#HowIResist

**" They bullied me in school.
"Womanman", "Boygirl"
were monikers for boys
of my kind who preferred
glam, prim and proper to
the usual rambunctious
nature of the others.
But I learnt. I learnt how
frightened they were of me.
I learnt how to stare them
down, every single one of them,
made them swallow their voices,
reduced them to whispers all
without violence.
It's a shame to them that a 'sissy boy'
can do what they can and much more,
in more civilized fashion.**

**And that's how I resist, by being the best MAN
I can be, no matter what labels
the world throws at me. "**

– Peaches



#HowIResist

**" I resist by keeping in mind that
my life is what I make of it.
And that my happiness will not be
dictated by anyone.
It's not black and white.
It's got the beauty that deserves colours. "**

– Masked Man

campaign 14

Our responsibility as Nigerians and denizens of this world is to be part of the solution. Our responsibility as persons of faith is the entrenchment of peace and dignity for all as demanded of us by our religious beliefs. Our responsibility as gay persons is to understand that the LGBTQ rights movement, while focused on protecting sexual minorities from violence and abuse, is rooted on the notion that all humans are entitled to live freely, happily and in prosperity. We recognize this and work in whatever strides to attain it. We must work hard to tackle violent extremism which threatens our continued existence from different fronts. We must fight to set virtuous examples through our lives by discrediting and marginalizing any extremist interpretations of religious beliefs in whatever forms they appear.

– Edafe Richie Okporo



#HowIResist

**" I don't live as a homophilic person.
I just live but I also correct people
who express homophobic sentiments.
Let them know everyone is human and
one man's meat isn't another's poison. "**

- Prince Seyi

#HowIResist

**" I resisted when I fell in love
with a man and planned
a future with him.**

**I resisted when I shut down
the expectation of marriage
to a woman by family.**

**I continue to resist when I speak,
when I act, when I am.**

**I resist because to succumb is a lie
I will not live with. "**

- Pink Panther

#HowIResist

**Someone once said,
"...to kill a problem,
to say they are evil,
to erase them from
history is either not
write about them or
to write horrible ste-
reotypical stories
about them."**

**I resist by writing us,
by documenting our
struggles, our beauty.
I resist by saying that
we are here and we are
beautiful and we don't
have to beg to be seen
as humans because we
are already human
enough for the world.**

- Romeo

A person is shown from the chest up, wearing a black t-shirt with the word 'BOY' in large white letters. They are also wearing a rainbow-colored Apple logo. The person's hands are raised near their face. The background is a dark, textured grey.

#HowIResist

**" I gave this some thought.
How exactly do I resist?**

**The saying "charity begins at home"
has been echoing in my head.**


**I believe I resist by accepting who I am
completely, and accepting people for
who they are without judgement,
because the world is full of color and
we are the colors in all the various hues
and highlights.**

**I resist by standing against internalized
hate and homophobia, because one can
only love and appreciate you as much
as you love and appreciate yourself. "**

- Rodney

#HowIResist

**A decade ago,
I loathed myself
for feeling this
way and did
everything to
make it stop.
Nothing was off
the table, inclu-
ding suicide.
The shame that
made me think I
was undeserving
of life was over-
whelming.**



**It took faith to
believe that I
was deserving
of life, love and
longing. Despite
having been beaten,
bruised and black-
mailed since then,
living my truth is a
light that has given
me a new lease of
life.**

-Sense8

campaign 15

A crime is a crime for a reason. A crime has victims. A crime harms society. On what basis is homosexuality a crime? Adults do no harm to society in how they love and whom they love.

–Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Fabulously Fighting Homophobia

I wanted to start this piece by talking about the resistance—or lack of it—back in the day. But then how old am I to know anything about “back in the day”? The visibility of my entire LGBT existence has been post-draconian law.

The “How I Resist” campaign clearly goes to show things are changing, the law be damned. We might live in a really homophobic country but it doesn't mean we can't speak up. Our speaking out comes in various forms; some speak out by trying to greatly educate and influence the entire country while others do so by influencing their immediate environment.

The Nigerian LGBTQ community is resisting with its voice, its campaign, its innate desire to just be left alone for its people to love

who they want. No matter how hard the entire country fights back, the community resists.

The resistance however is not smooth. There are those who wish for us not to speak out, to cower in fear, hide in the shadows, because to them, it is really risky to be the voice of dissent. How do you call the notion of love a bad thing? How does that make us dissidents? It shouldn't be and should never be a crime to simply love. To those people, maybe it's time to look away if it's become too painful to watch.

Nigeria hasn't gotten to that level where LGBT acceptance will be mainstream. This might not even happen in my generation, but there is hope in the horizon. This campaign tries to chronicle exactly that.

Hope!

That word might not fully capture the spirit of this campaign. Fight. Struggle. Survival. Visibility. Acceptance. Love. These words all seem just about right to describe it.

To use the word, *hope*, makes it seem as though all these affirmative words won't come to pass. On the contrary, that's not the case. No matter how old or young we are, we can attest to the fact that things are changing. Despite the law, some of us choose to be activists in our own spheres, not tolerating homophobia in any form.

Hope helps us to see that the future looks very bright, especially when you look at where we're coming from. Hope helps us believe that all our actions and struggles will lead to a positive end, one where we're allowed to freely love.

A friend of mine once said my LGBT walk has been easy, that I've not had to fight societal demands at every turn. At first, I didn't agree with him. How dare he diminish my struggle, however little that may be? I however have come to realise that all our struggles are not the same. It's not about who has resisted the most or who has lost the most from the struggle to find acceptance. This campaign has shown us that resistance comes in various forms and actions.

We have seen women who want to be left alone, who pull out of a marriage so they can find happiness. We have read about the man who shatters every notion of homophobia in his workplace, the one who chose to find peace by accepting himself, the countless others who fight societal pressure because, in the end, their happiness matters most.

The landscape is changing. I don't think our older ones had it this way and I believe the much younger ones will have it even better. The resistance is exactly that—a resistance. This would eventually lead to acceptance and ultimately to peace.

This campaign has shown that there is visibility, that we are not an imagination, a whisper around wine coolers. LGBTQ people exist, and we are here to stay. We have always been here; only, this time, we are choosing to resist the pressure, we are choosing to tell our stories, to speak out and let the world know that we are here, we are queer and we are fabulously fighting homophobia at every turn.

Welcome to a New Era. Deal with it.

—Colossus

A person is shown from the chest up, holding a camera to their eye. They are in a closet, with shelves of folded clothes visible on the left. The lighting is warm and slightly dim. The person is wearing a dark jacket over a light-colored shirt.

#HowIResist

"For the longest time, I've been semi out the closet, so it won't take you so long to guess correctly that I'm queer. Because of this, I'm talked about in hushed tones, and sly remarks come my way. But I resist them all by giving no fucks and staying my fab self. YOLO 🙌"

- Moya

#HowIResist



" I've been homophobic before because I wanted to be accepted by friends. I've lied to family in the past because I wanted to conform.

Although these were horrible things, doing them has taught me that there isn't a switch anywhere that can make me 'normal' and that the world is full of selfish hypocrites who try to take the speck out of your eye when they conceal the planks in theirs with sunshades.

So, I have learnt to live fabulously for myself. I go out everyday even more confident in my abilities. Every experience I have as a gay person becomes a material for my art. I'm crossing every river as I approach it and am looking forward to the glorious day when a river washes the keys to this closet right into my palm. "

- Ox



#HowIResist

"I always believed my sexuality was life's melting pot, next to being human, cutting through race, religion and several other labels society assigns to us before we are born.

I also believe in peace, and love. I believe in a utopia where my sexuality is as irrelevant as the size of your index finger.

I resist homophobia calmly. My pen is a big mouth, and my written words are deafening chants against homophobic attacks.

In years, I believe through literature, we will win the war against homophobia for our children."

– Rysie



#HowIResist

**"To be yourself in a world
that has made it illegal to do
so can be deflating.**

**I resist by speaking up in the
face of injustice and calling
out bigotry whenever we
encounter each other."**

-Swan King



#HowIResist

I don't let the outside judge my inside.

I am what I feel, what I feel is me.

This is #HowIResist

- Zee

campaign 16

The test of how we make a law should not be disgust or distaste; it should be its verifiable negative impact on society, not whether or not we like lizard egusi soup...

What makes us expend more energy asking for young gay men to be jailed and killed than for all our past leaders to be rounded up and jailed? How is Dino Melaye more 'natural' and 'human' than Ellen DeGeneres?

What kind of stupid ass system of mores and laws arrives at such a pointless, ridiculous conclusion?

– Chude Jideonwo

#HowIResist

I am here today, standing tall, with my head held high. Determined never to let the homophobic tide get to my being ever again. I own my space and call the shots.

I resist ANYONE, whoever (s)he may be, having the power to erode my space with bigotry and homophobia. I'll keep resisting till there's nothing left to resist.

**I am HUMAN!
I MATTER!
I'll KEEP LIVING!**

- Tee

#HowIResist

" I was taught that whatever you are feeling or going through, religion comes first and is always right.

My heart has bled, I have shed tears, I've been made fun of, threatened, misunderstood, hated for who I am.

I RESIST by giving myself so much love, attention, self appreciation and motivation, because though it's hard, CHANGE is COMING.

It's inevitable and you either get onboard or you get off.

I AM ON BOARD. "

- Meche Nelson



#HowIResist

"I resist by spreading love and acceptance and teaching the younger ones that who you love does not matter because love rises above all labels."

– Paula

#HowIResist

**" I resist by finding peace in WHO I AM,
by refusing to conform to the
heteronormative construct
put up by society, and by
having zero tolerance for
homophobia in whatever
form it may take. "**

- Tonie



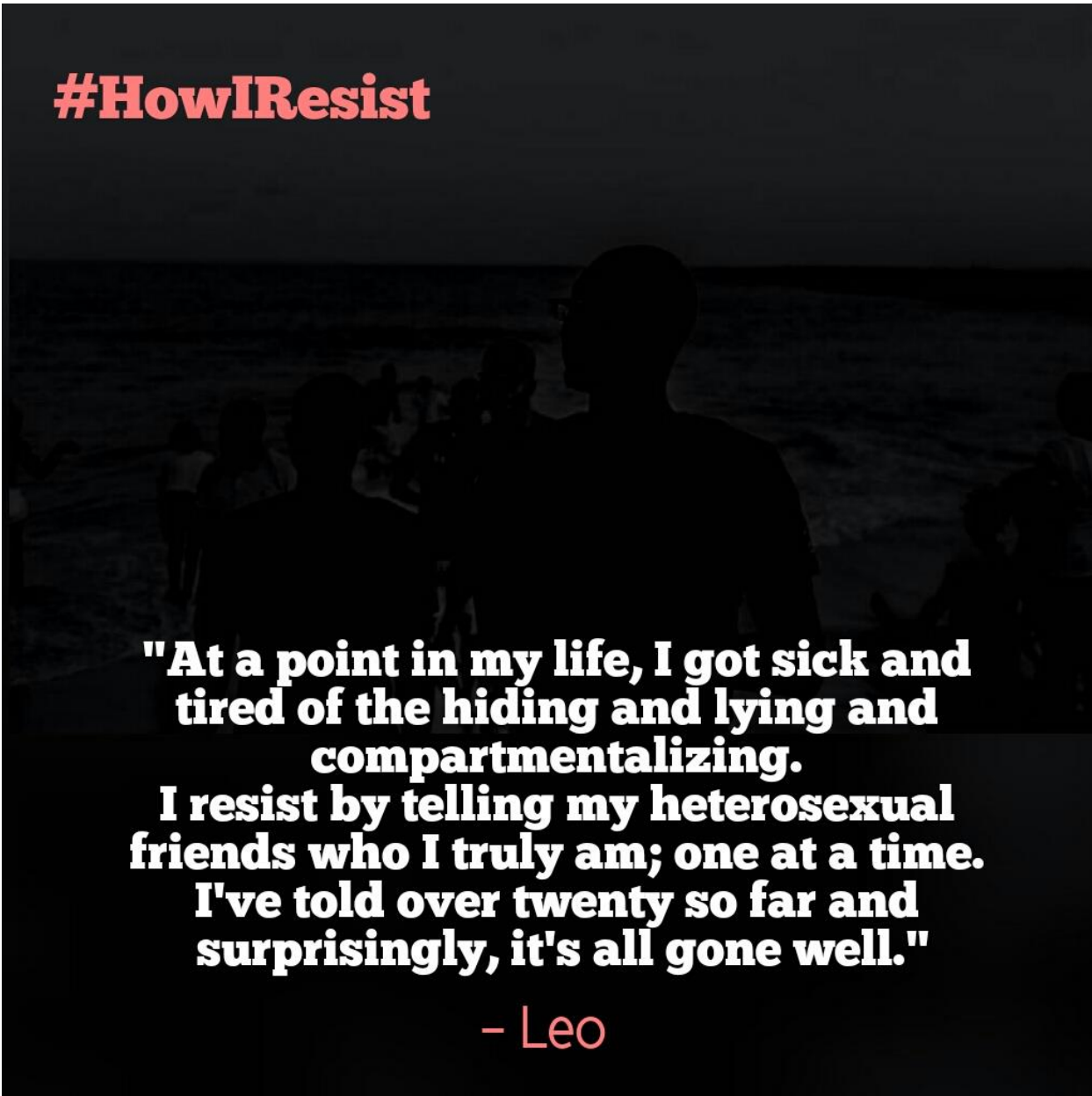
#HowIResist

"I resist by not giving a damn what people say, so long as I am being true to myself. We only get one life, and mine is mine alone."

– Red

campaign 17

#HowIResist

A dark, moody photograph of a group of people silhouetted against a bright sunset or sunrise over the ocean. The people are standing on a beach, and the water is visible in the background. The overall tone is somber and reflective.

"At a point in my life, I got sick and tired of the hiding and lying and compartmentalizing. I resist by telling my heterosexual friends who I truly am; one at a time. I've told over twenty so far and surprisingly, it's all gone well."

- Leo

Growing up as a gay man first, in a very religious family and second, in a society rife with homophobia, I was crippled with the fear to live.

Teaching myself to really live, pursuing success and happiness, and working everyday to improve my abilities, and the innate qualities that are the essence of my individual humanity (because I want to teach society that first, I am human) is **#HowIResist**

– Alexander



#HowIResist

Overtime, the love for myself and who I am, being different, has increased. It's no longer an issue of what the society says, but an issue of what my heart wants.

I resist by correcting people's negative impressions about what "being different" entails. I've learnt to cut off people who think my kind of love is wrong type.

I resist by surrounding myself more with people of the same family. With them, I find my peace.

- Heartbeat



#HowIResist

**I resist because I chose
to write my story in a**

**way that portrays my
truth, devoid of all nega-
tivity and hate the homo-
phobic world is spewing.**

**I resist because I want to
be remembered as he who
lived his life truthfully.**

– Mu'iz

#HowIResist

**I resist in my decision
to be great because
I am greatness itself,
not because I seek your
acceptance or validation.**

**I resist in my decision to
no longer shrink myself
because I was afraid the
limelight would show too
much.**

**I resist in my decision to
live true everyday and to
say "fuck you" to your
idea of normal.**

**And, everyday, with every
breath, every step and
every choice I make,
I will resist.**

- UC

campaign 18

What I know for sure is that speaking your truth is the most powerful tool we all have.

– Oprah Winfrey



#HowIResist

**I resist by speaking up
against any form of
homophobia, by striving
to be a good ambassador
of the LGBT community
by my actions and words.
I resist by letting people
know that love is a beau-
tiful thing, no matter who
is involved.**

– Dunamis

#HowIResist

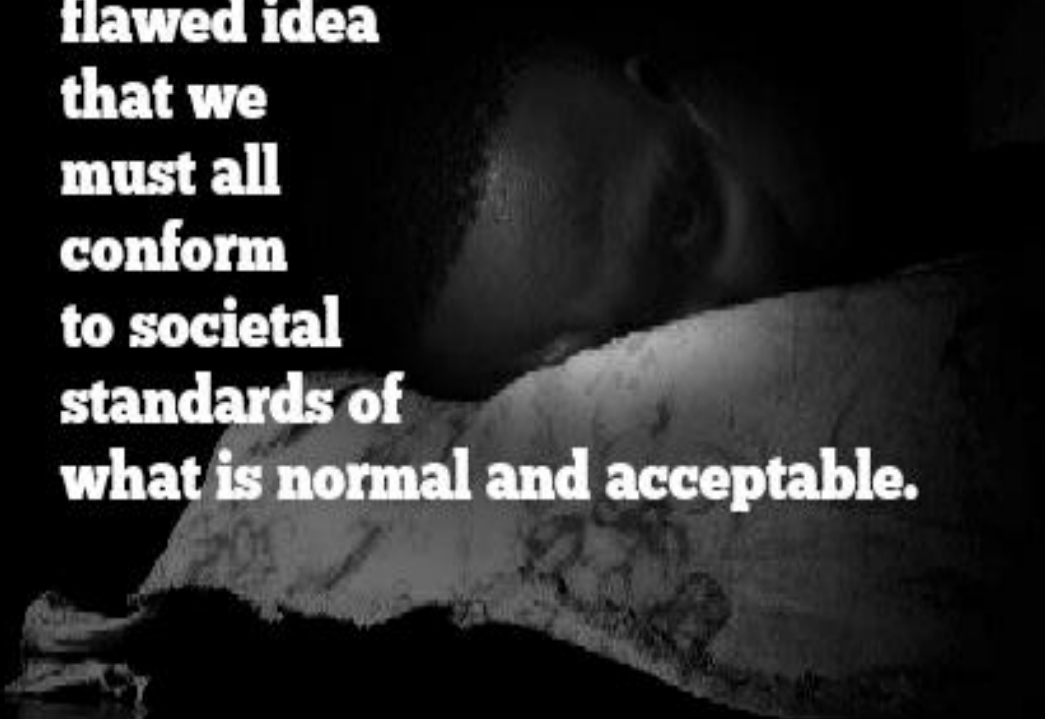
**"In 2016, I waved
goodbye to religion
and what society
would like to think
of as normalcy.**

**I chose to walk the
path of self awareness.
Everyone saw me as
abnormal.
I resist by walking in my
own path, doing what
pleases me, living my own
life regardless of what
people may think or say.
In the end, I'm my most
trusted friend."**

- Ijele

#HowIResist

**I resist by refusing to accept the
flawed idea
that we
must all
conform
to societal
standards of
what is normal and acceptable.**



– Jay



#HowIResist

**New every morning, I love Me.
I tell Me that it's okay to be Me
even if some days, I don't believe it.**

**I resist when I take time out of all
the chaos to go to the bathroom,
look in the mirror and say,
"My name is Charles and I am valid."**

- Charles

#HowIResist

**I resist by living by my own terms,
setting my own rules and sticking
by them.**

**I resist by fighting against every
societal norm that tries to deprive
me of my humanity.**

**I resist by loving people around me
irrespective of what makes them
different from me.**

**I resist by owning my identity and
loving every aspect of it.**

- Jimmy

campaign 19

We are supposed to “let your light so shine before men” through our lives and work (Matt. 5:16).
Light does not make noise.

But what do we find today? We find born-again warriors of the faith who insist instead on forcing others to live by their moral standards using the laws, the courts, the police, fear, oppression and intimidation to force others to adopt their own moral codes.

– Chude Jideonwo

#HowIResist

**I resist with love,
a necessity in a
world full of hate
and discrimination
for people who
choose to embrace
their truth and live.**

**I resist by daily put-
ting out my best
energy into the world
and accept nothing
less.**

**Many have fought
and didn't make it and
so my resistance comes
from an inspiration to
fight and make it.**

I resist by choosing life.



– Nonso

#HowIResist

I resist by letting people be who they are and learning to love them for who they are.

I resist by embracing the differences that make us unique.

I resist by standing tall irrespective of the situation or circumstance I find myself.

I resist by being true to myself and loving me unconditionally.

– Klaus U.

#HowIResist

**I resist by letting love
lead, by speaking up
against homophobia...**

**...occasionally trolling
homophobes who think
they have the right to
demand that others
love like them.**

**I resist by living my
truth unabashedly**

– Lucifer



#HowIResist

I wake up everyday, telling myself that I have to be better than who I was yesterday because nothing hurts the homophobe like the success of that which he hates.

I resist by preaching the message of love and tolerance in any opportunity I get because I want to leave the world in a much better place for my kids.

- Tahlee

#HowIResist

**I accept all the
hate and all the
love because I
understand that
I am that much
stronger because
of it.**

– Ronie

campaign 20

At the core of many of the problems that plague humanity is the lack of empathy.

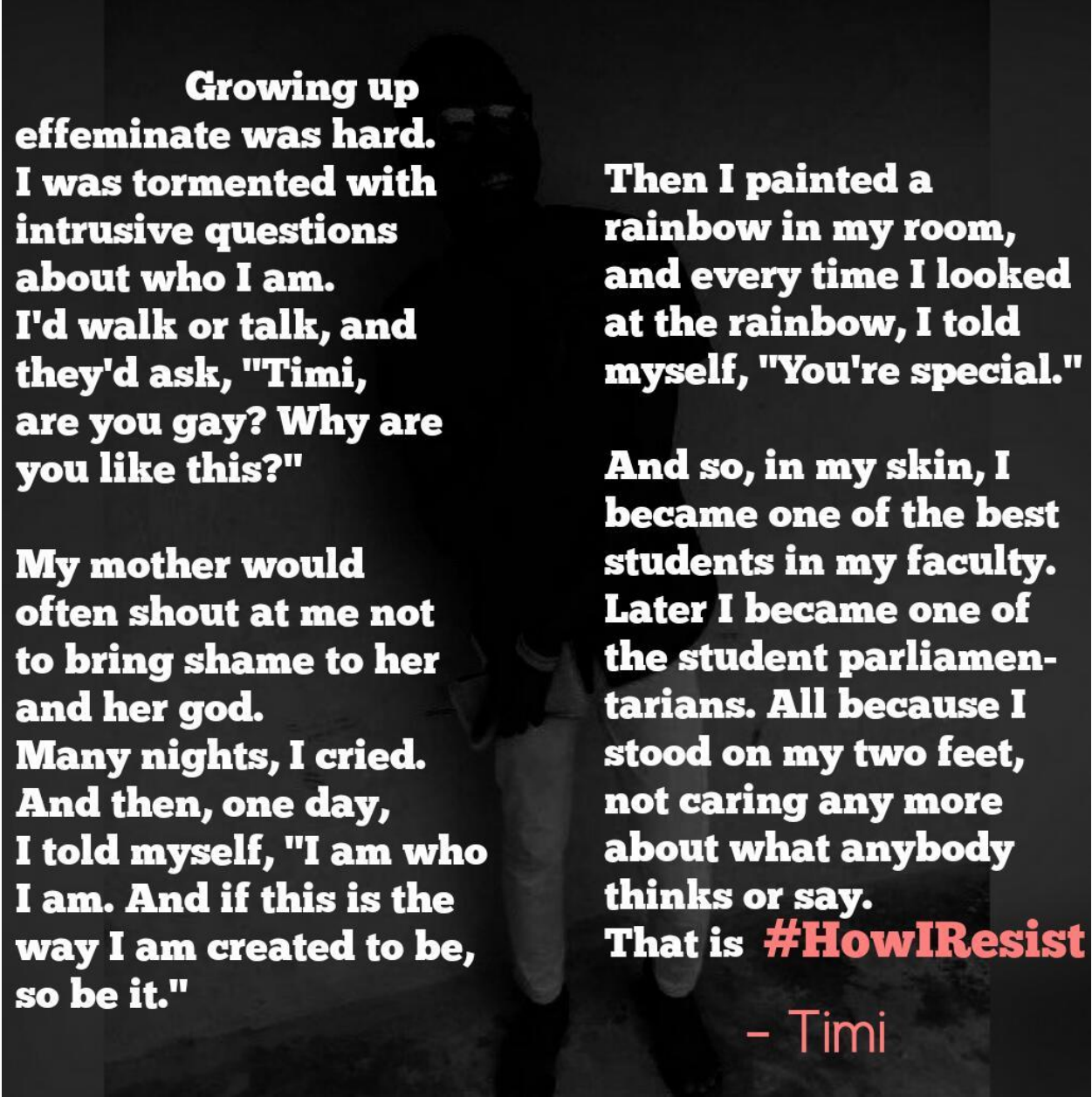
The moment you are able to empathize with somebody, the moment you are able to look at another man and put yourself in that person's shoes, the problem is half solved.

Because once you're able to empathize, once you're able to imagine what it's like to be something, essentially, vicariously you're that thing. And you'd be able to understand the problems that person is going through. And as an individual, you'd be more interested in not causing more problems for that person. Instead you'd be more interested in showing compassion and alleviating that person's problems.

And that's the only way we as a society can begin to move forward.

At the core of everything is empathy and information.

– Dami Ajayi



Growing up effeminate was hard. I was tormented with intrusive questions about who I am. I'd walk or talk, and they'd ask, "Timi, are you gay? Why are you like this?"

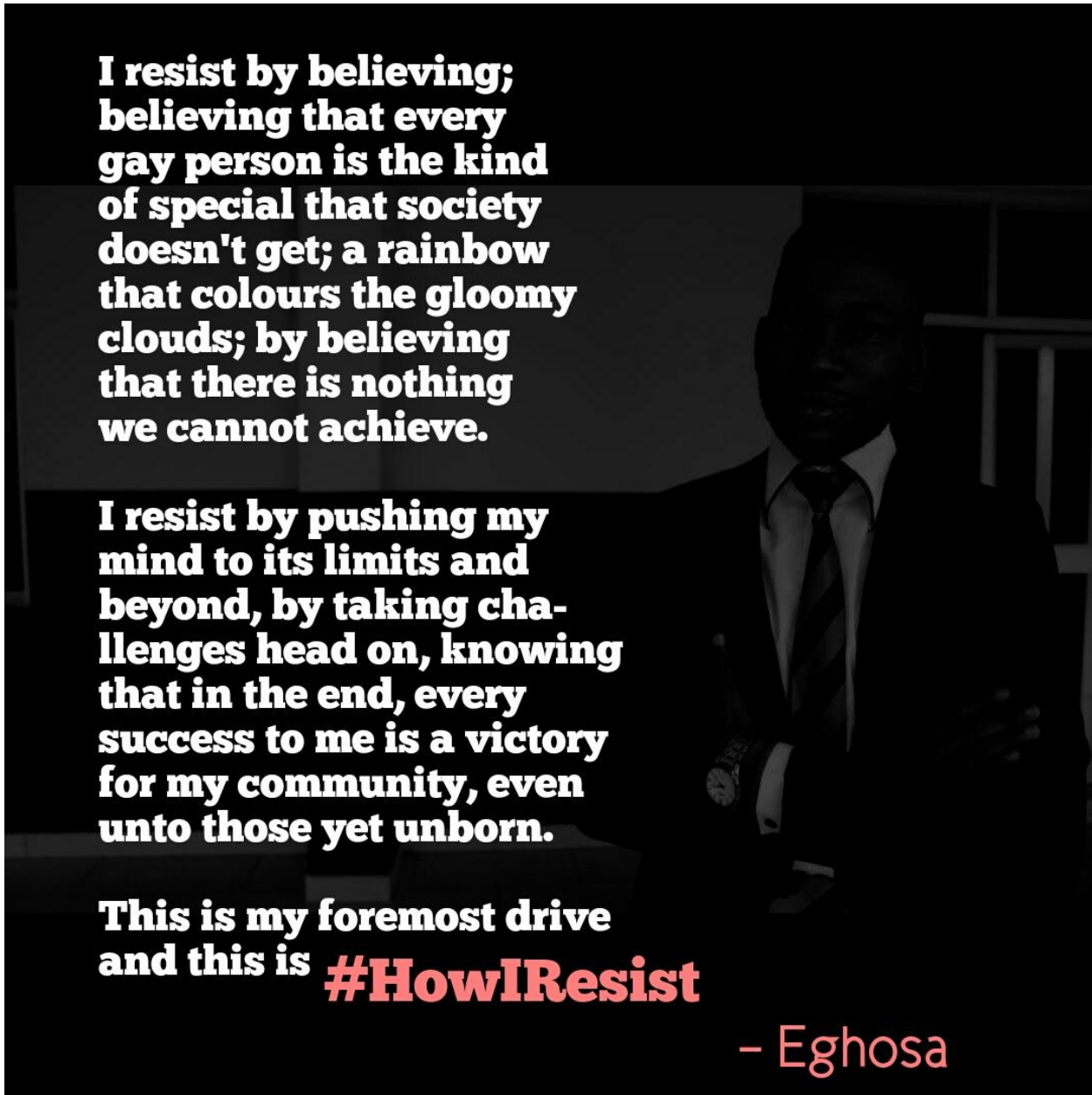
My mother would often shout at me not to bring shame to her and her god. Many nights, I cried. And then, one day, I told myself, "I am who I am. And if this is the way I am created to be, so be it."

Then I painted a rainbow in my room, and every time I looked at the rainbow, I told myself, "You're special."

And so, in my skin, I became one of the best students in my faculty. Later I became one of the student parliamentarians. All because I stood on my two feet, not caring any more about what anybody thinks or say.

That is **#HowIResist**

- Timi




**I resist by believing;
believing that every
gay person is the kind
of special that society
doesn't get; a rainbow
that colours the gloomy
clouds; by believing
that there is nothing
we cannot achieve.**

**I resist by pushing my
mind to its limits and
beyond, by taking cha-
llenges head on, knowing
that in the end, every
success to me is a victory
for my community, even
unto those yet unborn.**

**This is my foremost drive
and this is **#HowIResist****

– Eghosa

#HowIResist



**"I resist the norm by
endeavouring to be
the truest version of
myself I can possibly
BE every single day.
By proudly showing
my support for equal**

**opportunities for love
in a society that's
firmly against it.**

**I resist the norm simply
by knowing that the
NORM does not exist"**

- Reverend

#HowIResist

**I resist by telling myself
that I'm not a mistake.**

**In the past, I've fasted
and I've prayed to rid
myself of what I felt was
something wrong.
And still I stayed the same.
Which tells me that there
isn't anything wrong.
And so, I took a chill, and
I accept myself and love all
of me everyday that I live.**

— Spencer

#HowIResist

When I was young, my mother once told me, "Happiness is not what you pick up on the road."

I have come to realise that her words actually meant "To be happy, you must be willing to pay the price."

The price of distancing yourself from people who hate you (including blood family members) and creating a small family of people whose friendship means family (unconditional love).

I resist by making my Happiness about not owing anyone an explanation for my truth.

— Swandragon

campaign 21

Imagine you are a married, heterosexual person, and imagine your life up to this point altered in only one way, that instead of being partnered with someone of the opposite sex, you had partnered with someone of the same sex. All of your shared experiences are the same. All of your loving moments are the same. All of your times of joy, hope, even suffering, alike in every way save for one. How, then, would it be sinful if the only variable is that you are sharing these experiences with someone who shares your gender? How would you be violating what Jesus calls the greatest commandment: that we are to love God and neighbor?



#HowIResist

**I resist with love...
By loving because
we're all one and
the same - HUMAN!!!**

**I love because that's
more natural than
any other emotion.**

**I resist with my voice!
I speak up against
homophobia, because
we shouldn't be judged
by our sexuality.
We're created as we
are - whole and enough.**

- Golden



#HowIResist

**I resist by existing,
by being me. I mean,
the vibranium thick-
skinned me!**

**I resist by running
into burning buildings
of homophobia and
ignorance to save those
who want to be saved.**

**I resist by staying true
to what I believe in,
regardless of whether
or not they are respected.**

**I keep resisting for
myself and for those
around me, one selfless
act of love at a time.
Call me Captain Gay-merica.**

- Henry



#HowIResist

I resist being treated or categorized as subhuman just because I'm gay.

I resist being defined as merely a sexual object because of the stereotype that blacks have big dicks.

I resist succumbing into living a false life by imbibing education and independency as a gateway to freedom.

I walk with my shoulders high because I see you as you. It is your problem if you see me as just a gay man and not as Me.

- Simba

#HowIResist

As a teenager, I allowed barbed words veiled in scrutiny dictate how I reacted to my sexuality and the experiences that shaped my reality.

And because I saw myself through blurred lines, I hid underneath layers of conformity and slowly lost myself to silence and the consciousness of what is demanded of being male in Africa.

Learning to resist did not come easy. It came because I sought for answers, first, from within of what I knew to be my truth.

Truth that I am here, real, human, flawed, queer, male and Nigerian. That only I can create narratives worthy of the truth within, through which the world can see my existence.

And so, I resist, creating and owning each of my narratives.

– Elias Andrevn



#HowIResist

Growing up in a very religious family, I quickly became aware of how homophobic my environment was, filled as it was with people who draw the strength for their hatred from the pastor on Sundays in church when he screams, "All homos will rot in Hell!"

But I resist with love, knowing that I have to love in order to be loved for who I am.

I endeavour to show this love everyday and constantly remind myself that all I need is love to overcome all the heartaches of homophobia.

– James Chuks

campaign 22

The LGBT community is not a danger. It's not a threat. They're not saints and they're not sinners. They're a bunch of people no different from you, from everywhere and anywhere, who just want to love themselves consensually and are asking to be left the FUCK ALONE!

How hard is that?

#HowIResist

If you do, people will talk. If you don't do, people will talk. So what do I do? I resist by being fabulously me, pink shorts, flowing weaves and everything.

I sashay out of that closet with a nice Beyoncé song playing in the background, my eyes on the people who matter to me, my back to those who can't deal with my colours.

PS: The knife is for y'all homophobic jerks, 'Cos this bitch is done being the victim

– Facade

#HowIResist

I am in love with a woman, and I try as much as I can to talk about it.

I am still that responsible woman I was, before I fell in love with a woman.

This, in a way, proves a point that my sexuality has nothing to do with my personality, and the way I adore my relationship makes people see that same-sex relationships are as valid as heterosexual relationships.

That there is no definition of normalcy because the majority of the population does a particular thing.

– Onugbo



#HowIResist

**I resist by refusing
to associate with
homophobia, lest the
hate contaminate my
being.**

**It is an effort each day
to dig deep inside me
for all the reasons why
I'm deserving. And I
can only achieve that in
an environment of love.**

**Loving myself is key,
the only way for me
to be happy.**

- Seun



#HowIResist

**I resist by being the
truest person I can be,
owning my shit,
knowing I have a few
friends that I love and
who love me back for
who I am.**

**I resist by being the
boss bitch that I am...
And if you don't like it,
you leave and stay the
fuck away from me.**

– Lorde



#HowIResist

I resist by advocating for and giving proper sensitization about the LGBT community, in clearing myths & misconceptions. By teaching that love is a beautiful thing that knows no gender.

I resist by stating my stand as a gay man while achieving the heights anybody can.

I resist by refusing to conform to expectations of society, religion or cultural beliefs.

- Koksy

I Know a Boy

I have known this boy since he was a kid, when he would put on his mother's shoes and tie his aunt's headgear, look in the mirror, smile at his reflection, and saunter into the afternoon, satisfied with himself. I knew when he and the other kids played *Mum and Dad*, how sometimes he played Daddy because, well, everybody with a penis was daddy. But he played Mummy more often because that was how he really saw himself, in the streamlined light that he saw all mums, going to work and to the market, cooking, kissing Daddy. He had kissed a number of girls before, but when he kissed the boy whose wife he was, he knew this was what he wanted, to be of another boy.

I know that when this boy turned ten and went to boarding school, he saw, for the

first time, the ugliness of who he was. Boys like him, boys whose hips swayed as they walked, were laughed at, ridiculed. The word was *sisi* if the other boys were in the mood for laughs and *homo* when they wanted to be mean. Our boy, one of the brightest and loved kids in the school, did not want to be these ugly words. Especially not when the chaplain stood at the pulpit and said that boys who kissed other boys were like maggots on a dead man's face. Not *kissed other boys*—there was no space for tender euphemisms within those crowding walls: *Boys who violated other boys*, he said. Violated: That word, so brutal it kept our boy up most nights, kept his eyes wet as he sent pleas to heaven: *Change me*. Our boy, who wanted to know love like his peers did, smuggling letters to girls they liked, would turn down a boy he liked. No, he would say. Take your letter and your kiss, go. Repent.

I know the day he decided to walk like the other boys, talk like the other boys. He

was sixteen. All his teenage years, wasted warding off boys who hated the way he walked, boys who spat the ugly word in his face, *homo*. All those years wasted on anger and tears, to what end? And so he began to walk straight, squaring his shoulders, tuning down his gestures until he arrived at what we have today: A sauntering lump of indecision, sometimes elegant, mostly ordinary, too ordinary.

I do not know the exact day our boy decided to love himself, cannot tell the specific disposition of the sky, whether the air had been cold or worn the balmy gloves of April, but I do know that one day I saw him and he was *glowing*. Why, you are glowing, I said, and he smiled and told me that he had all he needed. He still wanted to finish school, break out in his career, find a boy to love shitless. Yet he had found the centre, the core of all these revolving needs. He had found himself.

And his people.

At twenty-two, our boy was at a house party with other boys like him, sipping vodka mixed with Coke. Grinding his ass against another boy's groin, the speakers blasting the song on everybody's lips, the night electric with freedom.

I have known this boy for as long as I can remember, seen the things he's been through, and when I look at him today, I think: *Damn*. On Facebook and on the streets, I see his people, boys and girls like him. They are young and they are angry. They talk loud, they talk fearless. The boys, and girls, who called them ugly names and made them feel like peeling paint, hideous and invisible—they do not know what to say when they see the pictures captioned, *My love*. They do not know how to react to this beauty, this radical, intrepid beauty, this inexorable rising from the pyres into blinding light.

—Arinze Ifeakandu



APPRECIATION

This anthology is an endeavour that was made possible by a people who came together with the common interest of championing humanity. It is a true community effort, an indication that there is good in mankind if we put our minds to it.

First and foremost, I would like to thank Rapum Kambili, editor of the 14 Queer Art anthologies, for his dedication to the task of bringing these different expressions together into this one material. Because of my acquaintance with the brilliant editions of the Queer Art anthologies – *We Are Flowers* and *The Inward Gaze* – I knew there was no other person I could count on to bring this endeavour to fruition. In the same vein, I would like to thank a close friend of mine, David Igbokwe, whose persistence and indefatigable zeal has been a major push to the actualization of this book. Sometimes you need people to impress upon you the urgency of the force of good, and David Igbokwe was one such people.

This entire exercise would not have been possible without Kaynna and Seyi, who took the words of those who contributed and framed them beautifully, as well as designing posters and covers for this campaign.

I would also like to acknowledge the essayists who contributed their thoughts and expressions in the form of write-ups – Absalom, Unoma Azuah, Kere Dim, Cisi Eze, Colossus, Arinze Ifeakandu and John Ademola Adewoye. If words are a powerful means of effecting change to a society's status quo, then these people have created a movement with the things they had to say through this anthology.

I truly, truly also appreciate every person who contributed his innermost hopes and aspirations that constituted the main body of the anthology. The pictures, the words – the power behind them, the promises they evoke, the defiance they inspire the rest of us with. It has truly been a magical journey, acquainting myself with these mini stories, and I count myself lucky to be among those who have been afforded a glimpse into the souls of so many beautiful people.

It is also humbling to realize that these few are representative of a larger community of people, of Nigerians who are courageous enough to live and love, even when the circumstances around them do not permit it; who are daring enough to be their truth, even when a lie offers more comfort; and who resist everyday of their lives when with their very existence, they say over and over again: "I am Queer. I am Here. And I am Going Nowhere."

—Walter Ude

