RAINBOW RESISTANCE

Pride as a Decolonial Memory

It always starts as a whisper.

That whisper creeps into a girl in Accra and tells her the way her heart beats faster for her best friend is not something to be ashamed of. It tells a non-binary teenager in Nairobi, that their quiet edge does not equal weak. A whisper that defies silence.

We can call that whisper memory, though it is not the kind narrated by polite historians or taught in colonial classrooms. It lives inside bone and blood and breath instead of inside dusty archives and neat timelines. It thumps in ululations stitched to secret weddings.

This is what pride means over here. It shrugs off the rainbow logos and the quarterly corporate feel-good posts, and roots itself in the stubborn habit of remembering. Because we remember, even if they tried to make us forget. Long before missionaries arrived clutching scripture and man-made statutes, the body already understood how love ignores "neat" categories. Before the British criminalized same-sex desire with imported penal codes, before French and Portuguese colonial administrations shamed our spirits into hiding, we existed. We existed and we loved.

We danced in skins that shifted between the masculine and the feminine, between the earthly and the spiritual. We had names for what we were. Words not written, but sung, painted, braided, and buried in stories.

Then came the forgetting. Or rather, the forced forgetting.

Sylvia Tamale puts it plainly: colonialism wanted both the land and the stories written on it. It policed desire, declared queerness an import, and hammered gender into one "neat" box. Laws were rewritten overnight, ceremonies fed to flames, and even the spirits were given new names. Anti-sodomy laws and gender norms weren't African inventions; they were British exports. Ifi Amadiume tells us that gender fluidity existed in Igbo societies long before European binaries took hold. And Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí dismantles the very idea that biology defines womanhood or manhood, showing how African societies often organized by seniority, lineage, or spirituality rather than sex.

The intruders announced that the rainbow flag had no pole in these skies. Except it always did. It still does.

They told us that queerness was foreign. But what was foreign was the fear.

Yet even in the fear, we have always remembered.

A Ugandan grandmother carries a different tale. She recalls a time when being a woman meant the work you did and the kin you chose, not just the body you wore. Female husbands kept households running; bonds between women were law. Some voices from Nigeria cite the Igbo tradition, where

there was no single script for maleness or femaleness. Along the southern Swahili coast, terms such as *shoga* or *msenge* once sparked laughter instead of hate and poison.

Such fragments and memories refuse to fade into academic footnotes. They survive in soot-marked walls, drift through the lullabies mothers murmur, and wait for someone to notice them again.

And they are being noticed.

People are noticing. A lesbian couple in Kigali raises a child in quiet joy. A trans man in Mombasa stitches buttons by day and dreams of top surgery by night. These lives present a stubborn refusal to disappear. It may look small, but it is an act of decolonial resistance. Pride, in this space and season, leans more toward quiet supplication than loud spectacle.

And the people carry their own small stories.

Like the story of Amina, who was outed in her village and fled to the city, only to find a chosen family who wrapped her in protection and possibility rather than judgement and pity. Or the story of Kofi, who binds his chest each morning not for anyone else's comfort, but for his own becoming. Or the story of Mbali, who told her church that her Maker wrote the rainbow into her marrow and maybe, just maybe, the Maker forgot to clear that with the elders.

Every story becomes a brick, stubborn and unapologetic, in a house we are building ourselves. Its roof will not bow toward the colonizers' mansion, but will lean instead toward room enough for all our shadows.

African feminists keep reminding us that freedom which stops at the ballot box still leaves the heart chained. That is to say, liberation must be total and intersectional or it is not liberation at all. Just a performance.

Sylvia Tamale presses for us to tear apart the colonial grammar of gender and sexuality, to trace lineage back to the definitions that sang with our ancestors' voices. Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí notes that the rigid boxes the West calls gender, rarely mapped onto village life until the colonizers wrote those lines in ink, then dared us to color inside them.

When June rolls in and Pride marches forward, the banner we carry is not one of mere tolerance. We stop begging for table scraps. We honour our ancestors—the ones who danced in secret, who refused to lie, who carved out tenderness where there was only terror. We honour those who could not live out loud but still lived.

And we honour ourselves.

Because to be queer in Africa is more than dodging stones; it is re-braiding the whole flag. Colonial lies fade when we tug the thread, and fresh cloth appears. The stubborn declaration slides out: ***I am here, I have always been here, and I refuse to leave.***

So let us gather. Not just in protest, not only in pain, but in joy. we meet-in the street, in a dusty yard, under a baobab-and joy sits at the center. Someone stirs ugali; another bursts into a lullaby bent on a different melody. Let us paint rainbows not just on flags but on walls, on cheeks, on the sky itself.

This is not Western mimicry. This is ancestral memory reborn.

This is Rainbow Resistance.

And it is ours.