

I am Akan, the group leader of Changing Attitude Nigeria (CAN) here in Jos, the capital state of Plateau. CAN is a pressure group within the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), a group which seeks for the protection and rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people at large.

I am from Nkanu local government area of Enugu state, Nigeria. I was born into a family of six of which am the third child. I have four brothers and a sister. Though I was born into a family who belonged with the Assemblies of God family I later became a member of the Anglican family here in Jos.

Both my parents still alive and they both know about my sexuality. They have refused to say anything about it to me apart from my mum, who always in her prayer makes mention of it and always rebuke that spirit in our house saying it's an evil spirit, but never has she said it to me.

Right from my younger age I have noticed that I have feelings for the same sex as myself. When I see men I fall for them more easily than a female. So I will say that I was born with it, it is an inborn thing. I never made myself that way, but I grew up to find myself this way. I know very well that God made me this way. One thing I know I did when I knew what I was - I never condemned myself. I have always loved the way I am and nobody can tell me anything that will make me change my mind. It is something that I feel in me and I love myself. I have seen occasions when people insult gay people and I begin to ask myself why? I ask different questions like, AM I NOT HUMAN like them? Most especially questions are asked in a place like Nigeria where it is seen as a taboo, but that has not given me any reason to deny myself.

The Bible has said so many things about gay people which I am not here to talk about, because if God so loved me and made me this way, then the best thing for me is to love myself and serve God who has made me this way.

As I can recall very well, in the year 2003, I went with some of my friends to a party in Port Harcourt where I was arrested with some others and we spent two good weeks in the police cell. Then it was a hard time for me, because my father got to know about it but as I have said before, he never said anything to me. If not for God's intervention and some people who stood by us then, it would have been a different story. I was there in person and I can tell how it feels like when your society does not accept you and you have a lot to offer to your society. You just feel like an outcast. But I have always drawn courage from people like Mr Mac-Iyalla who have been bold to come out from the closet.

Now after that incident in Port Harcourt, my father told me to leave my home base town of Warri and go back to school for my direct entry which I was not ready to do then. He also told me not to make gay friends again, which I know I can't do without.

But back in Jos I got the invitation to attend the first meeting of CAN in Abuja, from November 25th - 27th 2005. For the first time in my life I noticed gay Christians coming together to form a group. I never imagined it happening in my life and it made me feel relieved. I asked myself this question, How can Christians who are gays come together to form a group? For the first time I found myself being accepted and also that I can work for God and still be myself.

With that spirit I came back to Jos and opened the CAN chapter of Jos group which has been growing in numbers. But there was a shock waiting for me, because I forgot I was still in Nigeria and people here have a different view of it. The meeting was always held in my room and each Sunday my room was full with gay people having our meetings, not knowing that people around have been watching and also reported the issue to my landlord who told me to leave his house. That was a trying moment for me. I wrote to the group then and I was assisted in some ways, only for me again to find out that I have also been reported to my church in which am a member of the choir and I was also told to leave the choir.

Then I asked myself again, does God really hate me that much? I never gave up, I joined the Anglican family but in a more careful way to also protect myself. I left the compound and moved to another place where I am now, but our meetings are no longer held in my house but in a member's house who feels comfortable with it and it has been moving fine.

One thing about life is that people will never stop talking about you until you die. I hear a lot about me and I take it as a way of making people know who I am and also come to accept me.

There is one thing I always encourage myself with, that was when I saw Rev Colin and Rev Rufus at our last meeting in Togo and also Mr Mac. When I saw them I got courage from them to keep up the good work. It is not easy to be gay in Nigeria and accept yourself, but with God on our side we, the CAN leaders and members shall get to our destination.

I must not fail to say here that the Jos group of CAN is growing at a rate we have never imagined. God is helping us and we look forward to a day when we shall live as others in our country Nigeria.

Akan
Jos Group Leader

I am very happy with this privilege and opportunity given to share my experience with the rest of this organization (Changing Attitude). It was very hard for me to believe it, when my leader in Ibadan requested me to make a write up explaining and sharing my experiences with the rest of the groups at large. I don't know where to start and what to even say because myself or I rather say my whole life as a lesbian is full of stories and experiences.

Generally, I am happy that I am a Christian who belongs to this noble organization that fights for the living of all people irrespective of sex. My dad was an Anglican and I used to be an Anglican but presently I am a worshiper at the Redeemed Christian Church Of Christ. Above all I am also happy that I am amidst the group of people who promote the true love of God and let the whole world realize what it means and takes to be a true and real Christian.

My name is Biola Onyekotsuru, I came from a polygamous African family of four wives. My native home is at Ijebu Ode in Ogun State of Nigeria but I reside most times in Ibadan, Oyo State. I am a final year student of education at the University of Ibadan, learning to become an educational economist.

I would rather consider myself as someone who fights for the rights and living of the female gender all across the states or anywhere I find myself. In my school I am known for a lot of activities which promote the living and human rights of the female gender even while in secret sometimes.

I grew up amidst so many men and I realized there was a lot of obsession on the female gender. This had really stimulated my negative reaction towards men. I formed the first female club in my secondary school and I was usually called a Tom Boy even amidst my class mates. With time I started to have the feeling of belonging to someone.....I mean I needed to love and I need to be loved by someone. It was at this point that I realized that I had got no passion for any male gendered person. I was subjected to lot of wooing from men around me but I usually turned them down and some said I am too tough for them to confront.

I had a best friend of mine whom we really have the affection and feeling for each other - we are just like best partners. I would say she is an instrument which God uses to let me know my real self. Her sister was to have a wedding and I was in their house to **August** the occasion. That night we both made love even when we could not really talk about or define what happened that night. The next morning we greeted ourselves with a good smile but didn't ever talk about the incident. She left for England after the wedding and that was how I realized that I am created in a special way. It's hard for me to share my experience with people around me because I am always looking at myself as an outcast and a demonic human. All I am sure about is the fact that I have got no feelings for the opposite sex even when I play with them or if I ever force myself to get involved with them. I have got more time and attention for my female friends

When I got into University, I met a lot of people that I would consider to be in my shoes. I had lovers and I really appreciated myself for whom God had created me. I had those friends that we are in Clubs together and even when people saw us moving in cliques and forming clubs they took us to be in an evil, secret cult. Some would say we are cultists and gave us names like Jacibel, White Togs, Black bras, Eagle suckers, Evil Panty, to mention just some out of many others. I could not count the number of times

that I had been called upon by the University Board just to explain myself on some of the allegations that are filed against me by the students and some lecturers, that I am noticed to be a cultist or some would say that I am an evil proclaimer on the campus. I am always monitored and this has made learning to be difficult for me since it is not possible for me to show my true identity as a lesbian and I am sure and know that I am being monitored.

But my experienced at home was the toughest and really hard to cope with, but I am happy that the bible says we should rejoice that Jesus has overcome the world. I am always confident with this portion of the scripture. My mum called me and asked me if I ever got a boy friend and I told her that I don't have any and probably I have no feeling for any male around me. She took me to the Church Pastor to pray for me. I was told to fast by the Church Pastor to fast and pray for three days, since he said it's a demonic attack on me. I did all that but nothing changed about me. It's a pity I could not tell my worried mum that I am a lesbian. My dad stopped me from moving around with my brothers when they told him that I had got no boy friend. It was brought to their notice by an unknown source that I am into an evil occult group in my school. Dad came to find out about it and he embarrassed me with his action at school. They took a lot of actions which I would say have had no impact on me.

Along the line I met a woman who says she wanted to start an organization that promotes female gender right in my University but was kicked against by the school authority with no reason or explanation. It was along the line that my friend that had left for England called me on the phone. I told her about a lot of the things I had being going through recently and he directed me to another friend who introduced me to my group leader Omoba. I never knew Omoba was a gay because she only told me that Omoba is a plain person and he has got little affection for the female gender too. I met him and we kept on with our lives. Most times he looked me up at school and we were very close to the extend that most friends of mine thought I am going out with him. It got to a point that I had to come out openly to tell him my true identity. He laughed and smiled and he told me then to be strong and he encouraged me to carry on. I was amazed because my feeling was that he would stop being my friend but he is always encouraging me. About a month after I told him my true identity, he now came out to tell me that he is a gay too. I was happy and relaxed and very confident in him. We go to parties together with lot of my friends and even to clubs sometimes when he is free. When he told me about Changing Attitude all I could do was to accept the offer and be very happy that I could meet people coming together as an LGTBI group. Above all it is a Christian organization which promotes the teaching and the love of Christ in the Church.

So many times I had confrontations with people that said to my face that I am a lesbian. Some sent sms text messages to my phone that i will rot in hell if I don't repent and change from my evil ways. Some would say it's good to taste a real man and tell the difference. Some would say I am under a curse already to have gotten myself involved in such activities .I had been evicted from an apartment that I rented in school because the landlord of the house said I am a cursed child and he doesn't want his house to be affected with such curse. I am not intimidated with all this because I am sure God made me to be whom I am. I know and love to do what I enjoy most as a person. I enjoy being a lesbian and it has been my source of happiness even when I am in an environment that is very tense for me, to do it the way I want.

I am happy that I met someone like our group leader who has been a real source of

encouragement to me. At the start, I was scared of coming to his house for the weekly meeting because anything could happen but he assured me of our safety and his teaching from the word of God, is just too brilliant for me. He is rather my Pastor. Telling us his own stories, I am much more confident that I can still move mountains too. I am sure from one of his teachings, he told us that the changes will start from us all and our strongest instrument to make change is LOVE. He gave me more confidence and more hope and to be assure that with time the whole of Nigeria, Africa and the world at large will come to accept the creation of LGTBI people.

Once again I am happy that I have this opportunity to be able to express and share my experience with people, especially with my group Changing Attitude. My prayer is that we grow from strength to strength and the wisdom that we all need to carry on with this good work that has been given to us from God shall be made manifest to the whole world at large. We are always praying for Davis Mac-Iyalla and the rest of the members of this organization. God shall be with us, so close to us, and he shall always be our refuge and strong tower.

Ibadan Group Member,
Biola

1,737 words

Hello there, I am Charlie Adepetu. I am 26, the 4th in a family of five boys. I am from Lagos state in Nigeria. Though my Dad was not really a Christian he always encouraged us to go to church and we all grow up in the way of the Lord. We all are very strong Christians.

I had always been the quite easy going member of the household. My shyness made me to be alone most of the time but gave me the ability to understand my body more than any body else. With this I discovered my attraction to fellow men who liked me more than to ladies.

I had an erection at seeing a naked man but when our house help had stripped in front of me asking for sex I ran. My female classmates felt so comfortable about me that I could tell you the colour of their pants and which of them is in a monthly cycle. But the doctrine at church made me worry about this, so worried that I thought I was hell bound. I had to start keep secrets about my sexual life. When it finally came out in the open everyone around me made me feel so odd with what I really am. Even the prayer group I was then interceding for in the church kicked me out. My mum sent me to Oto churches for deliverance and you know what a week of dry fast night vigils and vigorous prayers. I felt so comfortable in the arms of my gay friend that night.

My brothers threatened me and the church criticized me. Actually the church became the last place I wanted to go here with the members of the Christ family making me feel unwanted. Even if I was a sinner I think I stood a better chance in heaven at that point in time than they did because Christ told us he really came for the sinners, not the righteous. The bible also says that I shall know the truth and it shall set me free. If the deliverance could not change that then I guess I was born to be this way.

Now though I can't say it to the face of my mum that I am gay (because it hurts her to hear that) I am happy that I am what I am and I am living it well.

This is a nice group that an Anglican friend of mine introduced me to. You are really doing great, keep up the good work. I am glad to be in this group.

434 words

Calvary greetings to all Christian brothers and sisters who believe in the true love of Christ for us all. My name is Omoba Kunle which by the grace of God, I am the leader of Changing Attitude (CAN) group in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

I hailed from Igbajo in Osun state of Nigeria, I was born in Ibadan where I reside till this present moment. I was born into a Christian family of seven children of five girls, two boys which I happened to be the last born of all and I am still the only one that still remain single. I was taught in a Christian way and I gave my life to Jesus Christ through an open Christian Crusade organised by my Church in the Year 1993. Since then I have been living and willing to be like Christ Jesus.

I grew up as a member of the Baptist Church and I am very well known with a lot of activities in the Church. I love the truth to be preached in the Church of God. I was the youth leader then in the branch of the Baptist Church I attended and I was known even to the State association level. I am the leader of a male youth forum which is known as Royal Ambassador. I worked with a lot of Reverends and Pastors in searching for the truth about the Christian faith. This helped me a lot knowing about the Christian faith and its beliefs. In my search for the true word of God I was known with a lot of practical activities in the church which always encouraged a lot of young males and females around me.

I grew up with little affection but likeness for females even when I grew up and have them as my sisters. A lot of youths around me noticed this in my behaviour but I am sure they could not tell much about it. All this happened to me, while I could not really tell much about this feeling about me but I am always confident with the help of the Holy Spirit that I am an able person. While others are having girl friends even in the church, I was left out of this and some were saying a lot of bad things about me.

I hadn't realised my true self until I got into my senior class in my high school when I met a lot of people from all over the country and they let me know that I am a gay and I realised it by myself. I had attended a male single high school. A lot of senior boys loved to be around me, until one finally told me he is in love with me. It was hard for me to believe but thanks to God that he was experienced enough to tell me a lot of things about myself. We were able to form a small school club then which only those that were in the club knew our true identity. We were caught sometimes by the school authority and we were all punished and nearly suspended from the school. We were all taken to the school counsellor who told us a lot of things, which was basically that it is evil to be involved in the same sex activities. Since we all denied our existence as a gay group, even though none could really believe us. Our Club was banned and we were encouraged to be in some other clubs in the school. We left high school but some of us still keep contact till today.

I left the school to work, where I met a white man who really encouraged me to be bold and accept the way God had created me and that it is not a sin to have accepted whom God had made me to be. I was back to the church to let everyone know about the true Christian faith, especially the youth in the church, since everyone in the church are always condemning the same sex activities in the church. With my true realization of myself, I was able to condemn some evil messages preached by the church Pastors and Reverends since I was very sound in the Bible.

They all wondered where I had got the courage and inspiration to confront them anytime they say things that are not really established in the Bible. I could remember someone asked me if I had ever been into a theological school and I am sure it was the Lord's doing then, since I could not really explain where I got all this inspiration from. This led to my exit from the Baptist Church even when it could not be really explained to the youth of the church but they were always saying I am in the church to antagonise the true faith and teaching of Christ. My both parents were not happy most times with my attitude and my reaction to some of the teaching in the church, even when they confirmed with me that I am right. They always said we meant it that way and it has been a

faith and teaching that is accepted by all the Christians but I am always asking them to tell me what the Bible really says about such issues and teachings.

Some youths were able to realize their true identities and I am happy that I left with a landmark in the church. I still have a view of them as a member in my group (Changing Attitude) even till this present day. I was introduced into an Anglican Church where I worship till this present time but I would say, it's no different in all the churches here in Nigeria. Oh, some youths in the Anglican church where I attend know I am a gay and my activities in promoting same sex activities in the Christian church and amidst the people of Nigeria and Africa at large. I have been ever cautioned not to get myself into any trouble and I am sure that God is really helping me.

Nevertheless, talking about my experience as a gay, I would say it has not been easy to cope with since you are not generally accepted by your own people and all the religious leaders are always preaching against our identities. My parents are not sure of my true sexual orientation even while they guess sometimes, aside from my brother whom I told personally that I am gay.

He was not happy with my sexual orientation which led to a lot of radical moves by him. We were into fishery partnership business together even before I told him. My openness to him led to the break up of our business. He made some moves and the business empire was destroyed, which led me to a zero level. I have no access to any of the money we both realised from the business we had both run over the years since I trusted him with the financial profit of the business.

He lives in the United State of America and all the contacts I have in Nigeria to try and get money from to establish myself were blocked by him. He told me that I really want to suffer myself and he promised and assured me a real hell on earth. He was of the opinion that being a gay is a western ideal and culture and that he is sure I would change my mind after a lot of punishment and torture by him.

A lot of threats were gotten from him and he even promised to kill me if I let any of my parents know about my sexual identity. He told the owner of the house where I live that he is not responsible for the payment of the rent any more and I am sure he told the woman that I am a gay or got myself involved with a bad organisation. It took me long time to change the mind of the woman that owned the house where I live even when she was not really satisfied with my explanation. I had to pay the house rent after my brother lied to me that he had paid. The owner of my house knew me to be of good character and that was the reason why she allowed me to carry on with the rent of the house in a city where it is hard to get accommodation.

I told my brother that I am not evil and that I am a true Christian and God made me to be who I am. There is nothing anyone could do to change who God has made me and my orientation as a gay. I am happy with the advice I got from my able leaders in Changing Attitude (CAN). I was encouraged and was able to move on and start another life even though it has not been very easy.

My brother is always referring to the story about the City of Sodom and Gomorra in the bible. He is of the opinion that God will destroy anyone that gets himself involved with same sex activities and the city in the Bible was one of the examples he used. I was able to speak with him twice and all I could get from him was total rejection and he even warned me to depart from contacting any of his family members. I am always praying to God to open my brother's heart and inner mind just to let him realised what the true love of God is all about.

I have had the cases of my members that were rejected at home due to their sexual beliefs and practices. Some were mocked at their various schools and that had made learning to be very difficult for them. I am happy with the existence of Changing Attitude because through the group, some lost hopes were restored. My members are happy with the fact that there are a lot of people around that have the same beliefs as theirs. There are times that I always encourage them even with my stories and a lot of stories from all other groups. It has been a great help in encouraging

my group members. Teaching them to accept whom God had created them and to let them accept the real teaching of Christ. I am always telling them that love is the principal and basic thing in the Christian faith and if this love could be shown to the whole world, every human will come to the realisation of it and we will all live in one accord and one faith. I always encourage them to live as Christians and to let people around them see them as true Christians. I told them to show all people the true fruit of the Spirit as preached by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:20. We have a lot of good testimonies at our weekly family meetings which are always held in my house and I am always encouraged with all the testimonies .We have been able to assist and help one another in true Christian love and faith.

God is doing wonders in the Ibadan Changing Attitude group and we are always expanding at every blessed day. We started with few people but now to the glory of God we are increasing in numbers and we even have lesbian sisters in our midst. We are always hoping and looking for the day that every Nigerian, every African and every human will accept our true identities and change their evil orientation about us. My prayer is that God will make Changing Attitude to achieve her global goals, missions and aims. We shall live from strength to strength in one love and harmony.

Ibadan Group Leader,
Omoba Kunle

Patrick Okafor

I am a Port Harcourt group Leader of Changing Attitude Nigeria (CAN), a pressure group within the Anglican church working for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people within the Anglican church, and in wider society within Port Harcourt and Bayelsa.

I am from Sagbama local government area in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. I was born in Benin city. My family are Anglicans. I have 8 siblings comprised of four sisters and four brothers. I am the seventh upspring. My dad died when I was seven years old. My mother is living and well.

After the death of my dad, I was fostered by my half sister who was living with her husband in Lagos. It was a middle class family with all the love any parent could give a child but I was lonely growing up then with hardly any friends or playmates. My foster parents felt I would be negatively influenced if I was allowed to mix with other kids in the neighborhood. So most times then in my room, I made up imaginary playmates and friends whom I had playing with me.

As a child, I felt attraction for other boys but then I didn't pay any attention to those awakenings because I felt all other kids felt the same way too. Back then, I knew there was something different and special about me, but I didn't know exactly what it was. I was quite shy during my primary school years but I became a bit more out going during my high school years where I went on to be a class prefect and later on the school's social prefect. I was a much too serious student then to even engage in conversations with peers that would lead to my discovering true orientation.

I was a late bloomer in the sense that most things kids of my age or class knew or had experience about sex and sexuality were things I had not heard of or done so I was always so protected and guided at home.

The issue of sex education is not something that was discussed at home, coupled with the fact that I didn't have playmates to talk things over with so I came to give a name to who I was when a class mate of mine in my fourth year in high school said that I was behaving like a homosexual.

The sermon in my local church of St John's Anglican church in a satellite town of Lagos was also preaching against homosexuality as a sin that was unforgivable by God. The preaching usually mentioned the interpretation of Sodom and Gomorrah relating to homosexuality. We were taught in church that there were "sins that were greater than all other sins" such as "homosexuality and murder" and those who engage in the act would burn in an eternal flame for all eternity.

So for years to come, I hated myself because I felt if the sermon says that God hates homosexuals and which was what I am, then God hates me and I would burn in endless flames for eternity. I was crushed and depressed. This was even more difficult, the more so because I have a great passion for God and the mission to spread his gospel to all around. I wanted to be a Reverend or Priest or someone that spends most of his time in church doing God's work. For that reason, I kept myself chaste until I was 24 years old, hoping and waiting for the calling. I probably was discouraged because of the constant preaching against homosexuals. This got me depressed because I couldn't understand why God would create me and put me in the "eye of the storm" when I haven't done anything wrong.

The depression lingered with me throughout my teenage years; I was very unhappy and insecure. I prayed to leave home for the university so that I won't be a source of embarrassment to my family because I felt as time went on, they would know. I also thought that if I leave home for the university, it would change the way I feel about myself (the inferiority complex and all) or maybe God might just turn me into a heterosexual, but that didn't happen. Instead my feelings for my own gender became more intense because young people on campus parade themselves as the epitome of heterosexual symbols. Young boys and girls engage in heterosexual relationships and there I was feeling loss more than I ever was. Students on campus would make mockery of

anyone that is found to be gay or those with tendencies. There had been cases of people that had to leave the university because they couldn't stand the shame and pressure from peers after they were found to be gay or lesbian. At this point I felt it wasn't such a good idea to have left home in the first place.

I decided to get really involved in church activities on campus thinking it would be a safe place to hide. Was I wrong?! I was welcomed with the preaching of my early years that homosexuality is a sin all over again! I felt like I was between the devil and the deep blue sea, the depression now sets in again. This time I tried to commit suicide by taking an over dose of sleeping pills. If not for the timely intervention of my room mate who discovered me and took me to the campus clinic where I recovered. I probably would have died.

My whole life, what I desired the most was to be worthy of God's love, but how could this come to be when all I hear from the only place I go for refuge (the church) is total condemnation.?

In all this whirlwind of life's events, I met somebody that left a lasting impression on me that led me to be the person that I am today. He was a member of the choir of St Andrews Anglican church, University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom state where I worship. He is a fine young man with a beautiful voice named Chris Anifalaje. Immediately our paths crossed we both knew the other was gay.

We instantly formed a platonic friendship that exists till this day, 10 years after. He was more experienced than I was, both in the studying of the scriptures and gay relationships.

My biggest problem then was spirituality and sexuality, the possibility for their co-existence in my life. He helped me in understanding the Bible and what God says about his greatest creation - His children which comprised, White or Black, Poor or Rich, Homosexuals or Heterosexuals etc.

I studied the Bible and then understood that:

The Bible says that God created us in his own image.

The Bible says that God's love for his children is unconditional.

The Bible says that God is constant; His love for his children is constant.

The Bible says that before God, no man is righteous.

The Bible says that the Grace of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ is big enough to accommodate all of us, be you Poor or Rich, Black or White, Gay or Straight.

The Bible says that there is no condemnation for all who love God and serve him.

The more I studied the Bible with Chris, the more I came to realize that what God says about me is different from the sermon that was being preached to me in church. I came to know that all the blessings that the Bible profess above are mine just as much as it is of a heterosexual Christian.

The more I studied the Bible at my own quiet time the more I understood it. I found I could walk around the depression and state of insecurity and inferiority complex that used to reduce me to noughts. I became a happier and a more fulfilled person and it reflected on every aspect of my life. My school grades went up. I didn't care what people thought of me, but what God thought of me. My confidence soared. I found myself in a position where I was able to help other young people that were in doubt of their sexuality and spirituality on and off campus.

I graduated from school a fulfilled young man.

I got my first job as an intern on the LNG gas project on the island of Bonny in Rivers state. I was trained as a safety officer on the job. I was in position to employ labour. I used the opportunity to empower a lot of gay young men that were unemployed along side straight ones as well. My popularity soared and detractors came along to blackmail me.

First, the detractors started by using industrial paints in writing boldly on the gate to the site and

on the toilet walls "Safety Patrick is a homosexual" thereby outing me to the whole work force of over 15,000 men on site. They didn't stop there; they wrote anonymous letters to my director that I was unfit to do my work because I am gay.

The controversy went on in site for weeks. At one point, I thought I could live through it and still keep my job and sanity. But I just couldn't. It just happened that the topic of homosexuality became what was being preached about in fellowships and also the subject of discussions amongst workers. Each day, I tried to keep my head up but it was hard. With the whole controversy on, my boss called me and told me that they were going to terminate my appointment so as to stop the "scandal" as he called it. I lost a lucrative job that would have been a spring board to higher grounds.

I got another job in an oil servicing firm which I was able to sustain for 1 year 4 months. My colleagues didn't feel comfortable working with me because I wasn't promiscuous with women. They believed in term game, after work hours they cruise bars picking up girls and having multiple orgies and since I didn't share the same preference with them, there just was no way I could work with them. They made working in that establishment very difficult. At the end, I had to resign.

I got another job as an English tutor to Italian nationals working in Agip. My job was to teach new arrivals the basic fundamentals of English. I was good at my job and my students and I got along so well that they would invite me for dinner parties in their homes and sometimes restaurants and clubs. All this drew attention to me from indigents around. One particular evening I went out with some of the Italians for dinner. Days later a young man traced me out and demanded 1 million naira. He allegedly accused one of the Italian experts of groping him which to the best of my knowledge was not true, He went further to accuse me of planning the whole incident. He threatened to do bodily harm to my person if I didn't let him have his blackmail fee from the Italian.

I didn't take the threat as seriously as I ought to have until this young man along with several other men attacked me on New Year's Eve, beating me almost unconscious, taking my phone, camera and money. The injuries I sustained during the beating have left me with physical and emotional scars for life.

Davis Mac Iyalla came to my rescue. At that point I couldn't go to the police because of the "dust" I felt it might raise. He insisted and went the extra mile by accompanying me to the police station to write a statement. He spent his own money to get me a lawyer to take my case should the matter go to court. Unfortunately for the boy that assaulted me, he got killed in a cult cross fire before the police could arrest him. This experience is one that will be engraved in my memory for life.

Presently, I am engaged in an oil and gas job by a sub-contractor to Agip as a safety officer. Our main project currently is the installation of fire fighting equipment at one of Agip's oil fields.

I try to be more careful and guided this time around. I spend most of my spare time doing charitable work for CAN and the Anglican Church in Port Harcourt. I am in a trial relationship with a loving and gentle soul. We're taking one day at a time praying for good health and happiness, but most of all security.

Through it all, I have become a stronger, more determined and focused man. I couldn't have been more sure about my sexuality now than I ever have been. If I have a choice to come back to this world again, I would still want to come back as my very own self, because the whole events in my life only made me to be a more unique, complex, giving and special person.

I am at a point in my life where I can proudly say I am a gay Christian who is worthy of God's love. No approval desired or required of anybody except my Master Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ who died on the cross of Calvary to redeem my soul.

Patrick Okafor
CAN Port Harcourt.