Twitter Thread by Akin Akíntáy■■ ■■■■ #European



Akin Akíntáy■■ ■■■■ #European
@forakin

I'm a human being in the amazing diversity of our humanity, who just happens to be black, British, with Nigerian heritage and gay.
I'm mainly defined by my humanity with every other distinguishing factor a facet of my person and personality. I need to co-exist with all people. /1

Many of the rights, privileges, and freedoms I enjoy today have been hard fought for over long periods of time from when things were chimerical and unacceptable to a situation where they are accepted, popular and encoded in policies and laws. It's a process. /2

We have causes we each espouse and much as we would want everyone to follow and subscribe to our causes, we are rarely ever equally persuaded in the same causes, yet, we need a broader group of allies to make advancements in society. Activism needs temperance and conciliation. /3

Before my time, there was activism for human rights, against slavery, for democracy, to give the poor a say, to give women the vote and representation, for children and so on. I was actively involved in gay activism in the UK, others globally for AIDS research. /4

All these causes drew from the greater and diverse pool of our humanity to make progress, in the process people who did not originally believe in the causes needed persuasion and in it did not happen overnight. We cannot win causes with hothead activism alone. /5

We need people in the streets just as much as we need people in the corridors of power where the change we seek can be promulgated and given the force of law. The former is agitated, the latter is negotiated. The former can bring attention, the latter starts implementation. /6

Challengers of the system and bargainers with the system have to find some common ground in the pursuit of goals to achieve them. Challengers alone or bargainers alone will not help causes to the desired end. This is critically important with LGBTI+ causes in Nigeria. /7

On formulating public policy, let me refer to Anthony Trollope.
"Many who before regarded legislation on the subject as chimerical, will now fancy that it is only dangerous, or perhaps not more than difficult. ..."

https://t.co/eUmKC7FsXT /8

"And so in time it will come to be looked on as among the things possible, then among the things probable; and so at last it will be ranged in the list of those few measures which the country requires as being absolutely needed. That's the way in which public opinion is made." /9

On most things, especially LGBTI+ issues in Nigeria, we are not at the same starting point. In a very conservative and religious societal setting as Nigeria, we must expect the broadest range of viewpoints. Not just Nigeria, but anywhere you have millions of people. /10

We need to find the common ground on which to fight causes, usually from a broader human rights perspective in the quest for a better celebration of our humanity. There will be disagreements, but the art of persuasion involves respecting other views too. /11

I know not everyone can understand or accept my homosexuality, that does not mean they are homophobic, I can make allowances for the fact that they do not have that frame of reference. We can start we just being human beings respectful of each other. /12

My father does not understand my homosexuality, things came to a head with a very public revelation that he asked me to leave the gay world. We had an exchange of opinions and we laid a new foundation of our relationship with him saying, “You are my son, I cannot reject you.” /13

With that, my father began a journey of understanding his son better, what my life is, what my goals are, who I choose to love, how I want to live my life. It is a process, it will be a long process and I will patiently travel that road with him, not forcing him either way. /14

I see the same with Bolu Okupe, his father, Dr Doyin Okupe has to work from his frame of reference to include the particularities of differences he may neither understand nor accept at this time. However, critically, he said, “He (Bolu) is my son.” His journey has begun. /15

In my view, I do not believe either father to be homophobic, they are on difficult journeys of recognising their sons are not like them. It will take time. More importantly, they did not deny or disown their sons, they found an accommodation that might grow with time. /16

It is important that we realise these matters are viewed from different perspectives and appreciate we would never all agree, that itself does not make the other homophobic, but engagement can only begin with respect even of contrary views, listening, and discussion. /17

Progress for LGBTI+ rights in Nigeria will only come from engaging our common humanity, respecting diverse opinions whilst expressing our better persons and personalities. Not from pile-ons and cancel culture as it will danger our causes. /18

When these discussions and arguments move to threatening lives and livelihoods, we become a braying mob and defeat the purpose and advancement of our cause for which too many lives have already been lost and destroyed. It is totally

unhelpful. /19

Our conduct can both win or lose allies. We need to be making friends, building bridges, creating opportunities for engagement, putting our best selves forward and shifting the Overton Window to the right with equanimity. We must always go high regardless. /20

Finally, I am not promoting a gay agenda, I am just asking that we all find ways to live peacefully with each other and work to abrogate legislation that seeks to make any other person less human than it other. We can all do this in consideration of the other. Thank you. /21

Reference material:
Understandably some fathers will not get to acceptance

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https://t.co/YKN7g7Hlrc
Some fathers have to acknowledge the sexuality of their children in some way, and that is them well beyond reprehensible denial. We can work from there. /22