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Addressing a Crisis of Imagination: A Social Justice Lens for the Cinematic Representation of Queer Persons with Physical Disabilities in African Films

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Addressing a crisis of imagination: a social justice lens for the cinematic representation of queer persons with physical disabilities in African films

By David Nnanna Ikpo

In crisis situations, persons with physical disabilities and queer persons, who are already vulnerable and face discrimination on their grounds of their immutable identities are subject to increasing hardship at the hands of the public owing to how the assumptions made of them and the meanings associated with them. This study recognizes the double jeopardy that queer persons with disabilities face, particularly queer men with physical disabilities. This study also recognises that cinematic representations are path through public imagination and perceptions of the minorities are curated. As such cinematic representations of queer persons with physical disabilities can be reconfigured to guide the public imagination towards the inclusivity of queer persons with disabilities. However, cinematic representations of queer persons with physical disabilities are almost non-existent. It appears that queer persons with disabilities simply do not exist in film, and as such they do not exist in public imagination and are not catered for law and policy. This translates to increased vulnerability. The erasure of queer persons with physical disabilities from public imagination translates to a 'crisis of imagination'. This crisis of imagination as a result of displacement and erasure is borrowed from Ndopu's description of the consequence of erasing 90% of children with disability from the world's classrooms through the unjust sustenance of ableist structures. In the field of cinematic representation and attitude focused human rights advocacy, this study addresses the erasure of queer persons with physical disabilities through the conceptualization of international best practices with transdisciplinary, decolonial, crip, queer and critical disability theoretical groundings. This study, through a social justice and human rights lens, reads against grain of hegemonic cinematic representations in order a chart a more social justice compliance addressing of the crisis of imagination that erases queer men with physical disabilities.