

Standpoint: Adventures from Our Bedrooms – Blogging about diverse erotic experiences

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"It is our hope that the blog provides a safe space where African women can openly discuss a variety of sex and sexuality issues with the intention of learning from each other, having pleasurable and safer sex and encouraging continuous sex education for adults."¹

'Adventures from the Bedrooms of African Women' began in January 2009 with the goal of creating a safe space where African women could discuss any sexual related issues without judgement or fear. My co-blogger Abena Gyekye, and I are of the opinion that there aren't enough spaces where African women were speaking up for themselves when it came to matters of sex. As African women our sexuality appears to be always hijacked by someone else – whether its hip hop musicians presenting black women as 'strippers and hoes', or the still dominant image of African women as non-sexual, matronly 'Aunt Jemima'. We knew that our experiences didn't fit these norms and we wanted to discuss what goes on in our 'bedrooms' with other African women. Being able to have safe discussions about sex in an online forum is important because of the contradictions many of us are presented with when it comes to sex. Some of us have grown up in conservative societies that police women's sexuality, yet have been the victims of child sexual abuse. Some of us are told that homosexuality is a sin yet had relationships with women whilst we were in boarding schools and had no concept of sin. Some of us have had little or no access to comprehensive sex education, but are surrounded by images of sexualised women in magazines and on screens. How are we supposed to find our true sexual self in this contradictory sexual climate?

'Adventures' differs from other blogs that focus on sex in several key ways. 'Adventures' is sexy without being gratuitously sexual, highlights the sexual agency of African women, and encourages a sense of sisterhood and

solidarity through the sharing of sexual experiences. Women read posts and think, “*I can relate to that...*” In response to ‘On being a born again virgin and my sexual drought...’ Damidwif made the following comment:

“...the things you say mirror what’s going on in my own life and my own feelings...”²

Kinna commenting on the same post stated:

“Fantastic! The drought made it possible for you to write this. And this is important because there are so many women, married and single, who endure long periods of drought.”³

The experiences I write about are not uniquely mine, but resonate with the thousands of women who log in to www.adventuresfrom.com on a regular basis. In a busy month over 10,000 people will access ‘Adventures’, during quiet periods when the blog has not been updated regularly traffic will fall to around 6,000. Between October 2010 and May 2011, I ran a survey via Adventures to determine the gender of readers, out of 499 people that answered the poll, 55% described themselves as women, 42% described themselves as men, 0.8% described themselves as transgendered, 0.6% described themselves as intersex and 1.6% selected the category ‘other’.

Part of what makes ‘Adventures’ unique is the sense of community on the blog, and the reflection of a multiplicity of African women’s voices. Encouraging guests to contribute content to the blog has ensured that we have content penned by women (and a minority of men) from all across the continent and Diaspora. Guest contributions so far have been sent in from all across the continent including South Africa, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Additionally, readers directly drive the content of the blog by requesting posts on subjects that they are interested in reading about, or want to hold a discussion on. One such request led to a post entitled “Sex tips for women who sleep with women or chronicles *a la* ‘share and share alike’. A reader commenting on this post stated:

Whilst I have never had a sexual experience with another female, I have certainly [sic] had dreams to that effect during which I felt very aroused. However, after waking up I felt a little embarrassed and slightly baffled as to the meaning of such a dream, as I have never had such desires [sic] in a conscious state...⁴

The sense that your thoughts, desires and feelings are ‘normal’ is for me one of the key strengths of ‘Adventures’. Being able to discuss dreams of sexual experiences with another woman, for example, is not a conversation that is easy to have in many traditional spaces. However, in an online space, which has the luxury of relative anonymity alongside an open-minded community of women and men, it is easier to open up about your inner ‘freak’, fears and fantasies.

Although I have always written with African women as my primary target audience, African men have claimed a space on the blog by commenting on posts, and sending in guest contributions. Indeed, one of the most popular posts on ‘Adventures’ was by a male guest contributor. ‘Guest Contributor Anthony: How to eat Pussy...From the Giver’s Perspective’ generated 79 comments from women and men – the highest number of comments any post has received on ‘Adventures’. ‘The pussy eating series’, as I like to think of it, started with me posting a picture I had my photographer friend take of a young man we saw on a beach wearing a T Shirt with the strap line “Eat Pussy”. In many of our African societies, cunilingus is still very much a taboo subject, so it was fascinating that the original post ‘Eat Pussy’ led to 3 guest contributions on the subject, two of which were from men. Anthony states:

“Let me get straight to the point, pussy eating is quite a turn on for me. There’s no feeling like the feeling you get when you realise you can give intense pleasure to your woman. To have her moan and scream as you eat her out. And when she reaches the big O, that sense of accomplishment and pride that comes with the knowledge that you’ve given her total satisfaction (and the knowledge that she’ll be coming back for more).”⁵

For over two and a half years now, ‘Adventures’ has been part of my life and has become part of my identity. People describe me as a ‘sex blogger’ or a ‘sexpert’. Women I have just met open up to me about their innermost sexual fears and desires. That can be a very humbling experience. A few men have asked if I would consider creating a space where men can discuss their sexual concerns – my response has usually been that I am happy for anyone to start ‘Adventures from the bedrooms of African men’. Writing ‘Adventures’ has been a sexually empowering experience for me. I have had to push myself to be true to my writing. I cannot ask women to demand equality in the bedroom if I don’t demand that of myself. I have to be open and share

details of my sexual life if I want others to do the same. Sometimes I have to push myself past remnants of fear so that I can engage openly with readers. Other times I have to hold back so I do not titillate needlessly. At all times, I have to protect the trust of people who generously share their stories and experiences with me. It is my hope that 'Adventures' continues to grow, and that it remains a safe space where African women can openly discuss sex and their diverse erotic experiences.

Endnotes

1. Adventures from the Bedrooms of African Women, <http://adventuresfrom.com/about> Accessed: 2nd October 2011
2. <http://adventuresfrom.com/2011/09/29/on-being-a-born-again-virgin-and-my-sexual-drought.html#comments>
3. Ibid
4. <http://adventuresfrom.com/2009/02/08/sex-tips-for-women-who-sleep-with-women-or-chronicles-a-la-share-and-share-alike.html>
5. <http://adventuresfrom.com/2009/09/04/guest-contributor-anthony-how-to-eat-pussy-from-the-givers-perspective.html>