

Filename: SIMON020418
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18/04/02

Today on 18th/04/2002 I was at a certain grocery store within our trading center. This shop has just been rented. The shopkeeper is a newcomer to the trading center, he has a motorcycle¹, and is married with children. He is also running a video shop. I was with my friend Black, he was buying cigarettes in the shop. No sooner than we left the grocery store than a certain girl came. She was just laughing and smiling at him but not buying anything, so we knew that there was something like a relationship. The man [shopkeeper] said, 'I was just waiting as you said you would come at night at the video. Why didn't you come?' (The girl just laughed).

Then we left the place. As we were going I asked my friend Black about them, he said everyone knows that they are in love and that the girl comes now and then to the grocery store, and he added, 'My friend, at M___ AIDS will never end because it has now come to the point that young girls like this one sleep with that man because of money.' He continued, saying that 'Because of money and properties he has young girls, especially here, and girls want casual sex because they want Maluwa soap (Maluwa – a type of cheap, ordinary, local, uncovered, unwrapped soap).' And I asked if he knows indeed that there is a relationship among them? My friend said yes indeed, even the way they conversed, the man was asking her why she failed to come at night and watch the video. Then I said yes indeed, the way they conversed it seems they are in love. Black said AIDS here in M___ Trading Centre is so high because of these young girls, school girls at that, and they don't even consider their age, fancy, the ages of that girl and the man. And I said indeed there is a great difference. (The man is about 36 and the girl probably 15).

And I said to my friend, 'Maybe the man protects himself from contracting AIDS by using condoms since he knows that AIDS has made the world is so dangerous.' My friend said, 'No! People don't consider using condoms because they want to feel sweetness. That's why you will see that, especially here at M___ Trading Centre, especially shop owners, they go for many partners and girls don't refuse them because of their wealth, not that they are going to get their whole wealth, no, but if they are given soap and a few kwachas then they feel superior.' And I said, 'Even knowing that their partners have spouses?' My friend Black said 'Yes, they even chat with the partner's spouse, and some even fight when they are caught doing *chiwelewele* (sexual intercourse). That's why the radio says in Malawi as many as 500 are getting AIDS every day. And I said, 'But don't the girls sense that maybe they will get AIDS?' My friend said, 'Friend, I tell you people nowadays don't seem to be afraid of this dangerous disease, they just aim to fulfill what they need, especially sex and not assistance at all. The world nowadays is worse, Satan is more powerful and controlling the world. You see that nowadays very few people are satisfied of what they have, everyone has a great desire to have sex. You will see that there are sugar dads (sugar dee's), these are the ones [very involved in]spreading this incurable disease AIDS and you see that a girl age 10 can sleep (*kgonana* – Chichewa – "Having sex) with a 30-something year old man.. I asked, 'Why is this so?' My friend said 'This is so because of what I said already, that Satan is controlling this world. Even though we hear from the radio about AIDS and its bad consequences, we still continue practicing adultery. And another thing I know is that these sugar dees, most of them know that they have AIDS and they have the bad tendency of wanting to spread this disease to the young girls who might not have AIDS.' Before we could continue our discussion, my friend was called by a certain friend of his who sat at a carpenter's shop and asked him to share the cigarette that my friend was smoking. He went there and in this way we separated, and then off I went home. (I wanted to learn more from him, but since it was his best friend he took a long time smoking cigarettes – I failed to achieve [what I wanted] , I always try to find as many [things to write in the diary] as I can.)

¹ Unusual, a sign of wealth.

25/04/02

Today on 25th/04/2002, I was chatting with my friend—not a close friend but I can say my friend, I knew him because of another friend of mine who chats a lot with him. He is a radio repairman at M___ Trading Centre. He is a great friend to my friend Mdoka T___, who works at T___ Maize Mill. I was chatting with this friend in his office (where he works repairing radios), which is near the T___ maize mill. At this time the mill was not working, it was said because the bearings had broken. During the course of our chatting I asked this friend ‘Where has my friend Mdoka been since the mill is not functioning?’ My friend said, ‘He (meaning Mdoka) has escorted a certain lady who stays far, in the hilly area.’ And I asked, ‘What time did he go there?’ My friend said, ‘Mdoka left I believe about 10 a.m., he saw a girl, I can say woman, when she was coming from the market crossing this tarmac road (M3). She had a baby at her back’, he concluded. And I asked, ‘Do you know that particular woman?’ My friend said, ‘Mdoka has a lot of girls, particularly girlfriends (*zibwenzi*), I see many of them coming to the mill. To tell you the truth, Mdoka is my friend, we didn’t just start chatting here at M___ but we come from the same village at M___, and even at M___ everyone knows about him. He doesn’t want to see a girl with his eyes alone, he wants to sleep with her as well.’

I was laughing, and said, ‘But he’s married, why is he going with other sexual partners?’ My friend said, ‘Mdoka is that kind of person, now the relationship with his spouse is not good because of his bad character, going with other partners. His spouse heard the rumour that he goes with partners and asked him, but he challenged her that he really goes for them and if she wants to divorce him then she is free to do that. Even today he has escorted another girlfriend, challenging his wife.’ My friend asked me if I am married and I said indeed I am married and he encouraged me to remain faithful to my spouse alone and said, ‘I do tell this friend (meaning Mdoka) that he should trust his spouse alone because nowadays there is AIDS, and I tell him that the sexual relationships he has, most of them love him hypocritically, they only love him because of money, and I warn him that he can lose his job because of wasting of money. But he doesn’t understand. I know that everyone has his own time, even if he is advised he can’t understand and obey because it’s his time, which he thinks he is enjoying without knowing that he is asking death to come upon him fast. Nowadays even on the radios AIDS is proclaimed every day. The majority hear it but they don’t change, why? (he asked himself) because (he answered himself as well) of time.’ I had already said that, ‘It’s this time!’

I asked, ‘When he tells his spouse he must be going, what does his spouse respond?’ My friend said, ‘Nowadays women have no power, they are the ones who are innocent and victimized and faithful. And my friend is fast with ladies. He thinks those dying of AIDS wanted [?], forgetting that they caught it [like his wife will], he has a spouse yet he goes after sexual partners. Women are the same. (he ended).’ He was busy repairing the radio. I provoked the issue, ‘And the wife must indeed love him, why isn’t she going to her home because she’s afraid of catching AIDS?’ My friend said ‘Indeed it’s like that. She doesn’t seem to be going. For example one day she was packed by the husband and ordered to her home but she cried and said who will take care of the young kids she has? And her husband said then there’s no need to be questioning him about his moves. And it seems that nowadays she doesn’t ask anything even when he moves at night.’ I asked him where did he hear this? My friend said, ‘From Mdoka himself and from my wife one day after the day this incident happened in his marriage. My wife and his wife chatted. And I said, ‘He must change before it is too late!’ My friend said, ‘I believe he will change, but he will already have AIDS. The truth is that these men, Mdoka and his friend Ken, are womanizers. But friend, women are the same. We want to feel sweetness. For example, when you were proposing your wife you regarded her as more beautiful than another one and you were fucking her three times a day. But after having children with her you start looking at another one as beautiful, and then you gradually become bored with her as well, meaning that women are the same.’

And I asked him whether he knows someone, perhaps his best friend, who is faithful? My friend said his best friend is at M___ and more specifically at S___ village, where his friend is very faithful to his spouse. And I asked him ‘Why he is faithful?’ My friend said ‘He is faithful because of his nature – he was born innocent. Another reason is that he was anointed as a deacon of the church and wants to be setting a pious example as a follower of Christ. I asked him how old his friend was, and what was his religion. My friend

said his friend belongs to the C.C.A.P. [Presbyterian] church and is a choir member. He's 40 years old, a bit older than he himself is, he said he is 38. And I asked him whether other people around S___ village know as well as he does that his friend is faithful? My friend said, 'At least some people know that the man is faithful because they witness on their own that the person had a church wedding. Since that time they never heard any rumor that he has another partner – even I have never seen that.' Then I asked if people admire him for this? He said 'People admire him a lot'. And I said, 'Then is it because he's faithful that he became your friend?' He said, 'No! He was my friend before that because we went to school together and belonged to the same church.' And I asked, 'How far did he go in school?' My friend said 'He went up to form 2 and failed it and stopped schooling and then married this spouse who he is still staying with.'

And I said, 'And are you faithful to your spouse?' My friend said, 'Yes, I am faithful! This is not the time to be unfaithful, there is an incurable epidemic, AIDS. Those who are not faithful are the ones who will contract this disease and die of it, but those who are innocent and faithful, who trust their spouses alone, are the ones who are going to survive this crucial crisis.' (He said: *pa mulili wovutitsitsa wu* -Chichewa.) And I said, 'Sometimes it is very difficult for both of you to be faithful. One may be unfaithful and contract the disease and give it to someone!' My friend said, 'Yes indeed, and it's what is commonly happening because there isn't genuine love. If there is a genuine love among the couple there could be no such thing happening, it happens because of not having genuine love. And sometimes because of imitating the bad behavior of one of the couple. If, for example a husband is fond of going with other sexual partners, the end result is that the wife also goes for other partners as well in order to avoid *tsempho* or *kusemphana* (in Chichewa). (There are certain old beliefs which says if a man goes for other sexual partners and a wife doesn't, it means the man is bringing salt into the house to his wife because she seems to be tasteless, without salt, and therefore the wife begins to develop swellings, an oedermic condition meaning the husband has cursed, rather injured or infected her. in the salt into the house to his wife a wife seems to be of tasteless and of no salt and therefore a wife starts developing swellings, an oedermic [sic]condition, meaning a husband has cursed rather injured or infested her. And a condition called *msempho* has occurred, which is only addressed by a wife sleeping with another one apart from her husband but sleeping with her husband [?] (as a remedy to old beliefs)). And my friend said, 'It's because of this, that's why AIDS is rapidly spreading.' He continued, saying that 'Nowadays a wife can only trust his [her] spouse alone and [he should be] dressing her attractively and admirably in order to avoid lusting other attractive, well-dressed ladies. Because we are highly attracted by clothes, but women are the same.' We laughed and laughed and chatted until another customer for him came, and the issue, rather the subject, changed.

27/04/02

Today on 27th/04/2002, morning, I was on my veranda listening to the radio, programme called *Zimene Mwatipempha*. The time was around noon, when letters are read and greetings to concerned people and some messages and songs. I was with my wife this time. A certain letter was read from a certain lady from M___ to a certain woman in A___ greeting her family, friends and as well as both husbands sides greeting them [?] She encouraged her friend to remain loyal and obedient to her family (*banja* – formal for husband). The letter ended, 'Only if we are faithful and ask our Lord by praying to him shall we come to combat AIDS.'

After the letter, there was a song called "Ndiwe Nonstop" by Cos Chiwab, a Malawian singer. This was the first time I thoroughly heard this song and what it really says. My wife knew it, and she dared me to listen to the song critically and to try to write it in this diary. The song was going like "Ndiwe Nonstop Edina – ("You are a nonstop woman (Edina)! – that's what it really means. The song went on saying, but in the vernacular, 'We don't seem avoiding AIDS (*matenda*) and more especially Edina. One verse said that Edina takes luggage when she goes to entertain visitors. Here the singer was mentioning rest houses. The song was too long and fast, I was unable to jot down the points mentioned. Another verse criticized the Banja La N___ clinic where people go to learn and start following family planning methods. The singer criticized Banja La N___ clinic because of its introduction of family planning methods. 'How can she starts practicing child spacing while she has no child?' (probably referring to Edina) and concluded saying that 'If a person comes to the clinic for a family planning method she should come with her husband.' Then my wife said, 'Did you understand what the song says?' I answered. And she continued saying that

‘Indeed the singer is right because this is what really happens at Banja La N___, young girls are aborting at Banja and some are dying. This is encouraging prostitution, because girls will say it can’t be possible for me to get pregnant, forgetting about getting AIDS.’ I agreed with her. We chatted and chatted, this time about other famous singers as well.

29/04/02

It is today on 29th/04/02 evening at 9:00p.m. I was listening the radio program *Za M’maboma* (a programme that the MBC [Malawi Broadcasting Company] has. It announces different amazing issues that happened on that particular day in different villages by reading letters that people had written to inform the general public of especially amazing things that had happened. Among the issues was one where it said, “A majority of the women in L___ village of T/A [Traditional Authority] N___ in O___ District are very worried that their marriages are to break apart because of two very beautiful and attractive prostitutes who are new there. They dance very seductively with their husbands at the beer centers in O___ district as well as in the trading centers around there. These two prostitutes are well dressed and dance very seductively with new styles, and men are very attracted and seduced.’ The news added that they always dress very high and short with long slits skirts [?] and the news said that the women are challenging that they [the prostitutes] are going to high-jack their husbands. The announcer said that as he was speaking, one of the two prostitutes has already high-jacked one of the husband and the marriage ended because the spouse was afraid of contracting HIV/AIDS.

Another issue followed, saying that a husband found his wife doing adultery (*alkuchita zadama* – Chichewa) – with his laborer. The news said when the wife was asked she said she did it because she wanted a child (her husband is infertile). The news ended by saying that the marriage has ended. This led to a talk with my wife. I said, ‘Indeed some women challenge. They choose to contract AIDS provided they have a child.’ My wife laughed and said, ‘People, especially we women, we think of the short term, forgetting about the disease. A lot of young school girls are being chased from school because of pregnancies especially at M___ village, our village, where all three ladies found at D___ are pregnant and the way I see the remaining one going around, she is going to take a pregnancy as well.’ I laughed and I asked her where she sees her moving around? And my wife said ‘I meet with her every time I happen to visit the market, say going or coming from the under-five clinic and even from the grain mill as well. She just moves around without anything special to do other than wanting men to sleep with, even married men are silly enough and fed up with their lives do it.’ I laughed. And she asked, ‘You are laughing, maybe you are one of the “silly men?”’ I was just laughing and I said ‘I don’t play dirty games, anyway there is AIDS.’ And my wife said, ‘[? and not only be the truth that to those who says Christi/Christo should enter into the kingdom of God or?] because you trust the condoms perhaps. But why? It can expire. The radio announces another type of Chishango² condom which the government has yet just established? Why is the government recommending the new-fashioned type every day? It means the old ones have faults. Shouldn’t they stop wasting money on this but rather make us aware of AIDS? They are only after money. Men think of enjoyment, especially because they are drunk. And the end result is contracting AIDS. Those prostitutes are clever because they gather in public centers like beer places where stupid people assemble, and they infect them.’ And she concluded saying, ‘The only way to avoid AIDS is to be faithful to each other, to trust and depend on each other. If a man drinks he should make sure it’s beer and not girls as well.’ We chatted and chatted.

² Chishango condoms are marketed by Population Services International, which is supported by USAID. These condoms are sold in small shops, bars, etc. around the country.