

“Girl, You Are a New Species of Crazy”: An Analysis of Criticisms on YouTube to Dr Stella Nyanzi’s Nude Protest in April 2016

ABSTRACT

On 18 April 2016, Dr Stella Nyanzi, then, a researcher at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) stripped in protest against being evicted from her office by Professor Mahmood Mamdani, Director of MISR. The conflict that had been brewing for years between the two was primarily around Nyanzi’s refusal to teach on the PhD programme at MISR. Though Nyanzi had people endorsing her choice of protest, others criticised her. Drawing on the Othering theory, this paper examines the ways in which criticisms to Dr Nyanzi’s protest were represented on YouTube. First, Nyanzi was framed on the social media platform as mad. Second, Nyanzi was regarded as having contravened behaviour expected of ‘educated people.’ Third, her stripping was framed as unholy and unAfrican. Fourth, Nyanzi’s undressing was labelled criminal. Nyanzi’s othering served to discredit her protest. Many of Nyanzi’s critics neglected to engage with the issues that she raised.

INTRODUCTION

On the 18th of April 2016, Dr Stella Nyanzi, then, a researcher at the Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) at Makerere University in Uganda undressed in protest after a protracted disagreement with the Director of the Institute, Professor Mahmood Mamdani. Nyanzi had refused to teach on the doctoral programme convened by MISR arguing that she had been hired as a researcher and not a lecturer. Having had enough of the resistance, Mamdani had Nyanzi’s office locked as a sign of her eviction.

Following Nyanzi’s protest, a full length video and snippets of the protest were posted on various YouTube channels and other social media spaces such as Facebook. Also posted on YouTube were media reports of the protest itself as well as subsequent decisions that the university reached to resolve the stalemate. There were also videos on YouTube of discussions and interviews regarding the protest with academics, lawyers and activists. These videos were first broadcast on television in Uganda. People who were interviewed by the media were polarised on the matter. While there were those who empathised with Nyanzi and supported her choice of protest, there were others who were critical of her. In light of the criticisms, this paper examines the ways the

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denunciations of Nyanzi's protest were constituted. In that regard, this paper responds to the following questions:

- How were the criticisms to Dr Nyanzi's protest constructed in videos and comments posted on YouTube?
- What were the likely implications of the identified constructions for Nyanzi and her choice of protest?

About the protagonists

Stella Nyanzi holds a PhD in Medical Anthropology from the University of London. Her research interests include "sexualities, reproductive health, health policy, youths and children, alternative healing therapies, and race" (Nyanzi's profile on academia.edu). The profile goes on to mention that Nyanzi has experience in qualitative research and has done ethnographic studies in Uganda, the Gambia and Tanzania. Nyanzi is active on social media, particularly on Facebook where she describes herself as a "die-hard Facebooker who loudly speaks [her] mind based on [her] banal experiences of life." In a video published on 19 April 2016 by NTVUganda, Nyanzi said the following about herself: "[...] I am not just a feminist...I am a radical queer feminist [...]." A narrator in a video published on 19 April 2016 by NTVUganda states that: "Stella Nyanzi has a reputation on social media of being a free-spirited PhD holder who doesn't care much about the conventional roles expected of women in Uganda's conservative society." Nyanzi credits her mother for having raised her and her sisters to be strong and self-reliant (Video published on 19 April 2016 by NTV Uganda).

While there are hints on social media of who Nyanzi is beyond being an intellectual, the same cannot be said of Mamdani. The dominant representation of Mamdani encountered online is that of an almost larger-than-life academic and author. Mahmood Mamdani is a "Herbert Lehman Professor of Government in the Department of Anthropology and Political Science and the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University where he was also director of the Institute of African Studies from 1999 to 2004" (MISR website). Mamdani holds a PhD in Government from Harvard University and his work explores "the intersection between politics and culture, a comparative study of colonialism since 1452, the history of civil war and genocide in Africa, the Cold War and the War on Terror, and the history and theory of human rights" (Columbia University website).

The conflict

In an article on Stella Nyanzi, bwa Mwesigire (2017) explains that Nyanzi has always been employed at Makerere University as a researcher, first by the Law, Gender and Sexuality Research Project (Faculty of Law and Human Rights and Peace Centre) and then later by MISR. bwa Mwesigire (2017) elaborates:

The advert to which she responded to, for the MISR job, specified that her tasks would include research. There was no teaching required for her, according to the advert and the terms of her employment. However, over time, she was required by her line supervisor, the MISR Director Prof. Mahmood Mamdani to teach alongside her research. The rift over whether she was supposed to teach or not, caused the crisis at MISR in April 2016 when she stripped to her nickers in protest of Mamdani's attempts to remove her from her office.

In a communication titled "A Memo from the Director on Dr. Stella Nyanzi's Current Position at MISR" posted on the MISR website, Mamdani traces the events prior to April 2016 that gave rise to the conflict with Nyanzi. Mamdani states that in 2013, Nyanzi agreed to teach on the PhD programme convened by MISR. Mamdani argues that it was on the basis of Nyanzi's agreement that she was "confirmed in university service by the Appointments Board at its meeting of 28th October, 2013." Also in 2013, Mamdani argues that he agreed to support Nyanzi's fellowship to the University of Cape Town on the understanding that "her position requires her to teach doctoral students registered for studies leading to an interdisciplinary PhD in the Social Sciences." Mamdani further elaborates that in August 2014, Nyanzi reneged on her previous commitments because she argued that her "[...] contract with Makerere University [did] not include any teaching duties [...]." Mamdani said he then sought advice from the Director of Human Resources who did not respond to him. Mamdani concludes the memo by arguing that:

Since her appointment at MISR, Dr. Stella Nyanzi has done only private research. So long as she spends her time exclusively on private matters and personal research, MISR can only offer her a seat in at the MISR library. The day she begins teaching in the PhD programme, she will be provided an office by the institution.

Giving her version of the conflict in an interview published on YouTube on 19 April 2016 by NTV Uganda, Nyanzi explains: "I am not a teacher...I don't think PhDs are taught like children are and one of my first points of resistance was asking me to teach in class [...]." Responding to the issue about going back on her word regarding teaching, Nyanzi said: "I was under duress...ok...I was under duress. The situation at the time [...] there was a lot of conflict...I was a new entrant...I didn't know the history. I saw big names [...] leaving in disgrace...I saw people shamed [...] I said ok [...]" (Video Published on 19 April 2016 by NTV Uganda).

In view of Nyanzi's resistance, Mamdani notes: "[...] I said to her...you are not teaching...you are not participating in institutional research...you don't need the office...you can go to the library...that was it" (Mamdani in a video published on 21 April 2016 by NTVUganda). It was after this eviction that Nyanzi took off her clothes in protest.

Naked protests

Deliberately taking off one's clothes publicly in protest against perceived injustice has a long history that dates back to eleventh century England when Lady Godiva rode a horse naked

through the streets of Coventry (Lunceford, 2012). Godiva is said to have been protesting against her husband's heavy and crippling tax burden that he had imposed on the citizens of Coventry.

In Africa as is the case in other parts of the world, there are numerous examples of women stripping or threatening to strip as an act of protest. In what is largely known as the Aba Women's Riots of 1929, for example, Igbo women organised themselves in protest against policies imposed by the British colonial administrators (Ukeje, 2004). The protest lasted almost three months. In a different protest, Shanklin (1990) writes about the Kom Women's Rebellion of 1958-61. The protests by women of the Kom and Kedjom areas of the Western Grassfields (modern day Cameroon) were sparked by changes that the women "interpreted as systematically decreasing the power of women farmers" (Corby, 2011:4). Commenting on the tactics that the women protesters deployed, Corby (2011:5) writes: "At some of their protests the women stripped naked and painted themselves in oil and red cam-wood powder before staging public disruptions of meetings. Had men attempted the same sort of disruptions they would have been forcefully removed, but officials had no idea of how to deal with naked *anlu* women."

More recently in 1992, a group of elderly Kikuyu women, mothers of some political prisoners went to Nairobi to protest against their sons' incarceration and demanded that they be released. These elderly women used a combination of strategies which included a hunger strike and stripping naked in Uhuru Park when the police came against them with brute force. Commenting on the impact of the protest, Tibbetts (1994) contends that the women contributed to the release of the prisoners. In a separate protest that took place in 2002, women in the Niger Delta (Nigeria) threatened with the "curse of nakedness" as one of their protest strategies in response to the violence citizens were subjected to as a result of a collusion between the government and multinational oil companies (Ekine, 2008). Explaining the "curse of nakedness," Ekine (2008:80) writes: "The stripping off of clothes, particularly by married and elderly women, is a way of shaming men, some of whom believe that if they see the naked bodies they will go mad or suffer great harm." In Liberia in 2003, Leymah Gbowee together with the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace threatened to strip, forcing the warlords in that country to reach an agreement during the peace talks (Prasch, 2015).

In 2012, between 80 and 100 women from the Amuru District in Northern Uganda stripped naked to contest and block their imminent removal from land they considered theirs. The women stripped in front of representatives from the Local District Board and surveyors of the sugar company that wanted the land for sugarcane growing (Martiniello, 2015). Also in Uganda, more recently, Engineer Barbara Allimadi and her fellow activists staged a half-naked protest in which they stripped to their bras in front of the central police station in Kampala. They were responding to the sexual assault of Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) activist, Ingrid Turinawe by the police.

In South Africa (2016), university students took off their tops as a way to speak back to power. At the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, three students took off their tops

during the #FeesMustFall protest in response to police brutality on that campus. At Rhodes University in Grahamstown, female students took off their tops in protest against sexual violence on their campus. The students also drew a reference list that named and shamed alleged rapists who worked and studied at the university. In early 2019, a former University of South Africa Centre for Early Childhood Education female employee staged a naked protest at the Union Buildings in Pretoria. In her protest, she alleged that she had been a victim of sexual harassment at her former workplace.

While there are numerous accounts of naked protests that have taken place on the African continent, Tamale (2016) contends that there has not been much analyses of these protests. Tamale (2016:1) observes:

It is quite surprising that even though such protests have taken place at many different times and places in African history, there is very little historical, anthropological or sociological analysis of the phenomenon, especially with respect to the case of Uganda. As academics, we have left comment to the journalists, the political pundits and the radio talk show hosts and hostesses.

In view of Tamale's observations, this paper contributes to building knowledge on the topic, focusing specifically on the ways criticisms of Nyanzi's naked protest were constituted on YouTube. For Communication Studies scholars, this research might be interesting to them as it shines the spotlight on an atypical and radical method of communicating one's frustrations when other forms of communication appear to have failed. This kind of communication is hardly written about in the field.

Though scholars like Tamale (2016) frame Nyanzi's actions as a 'demonstration' that can be discussed in the same breath with the abovementioned protests, this position is, however, not without contestation. Mamdani (2017) terms Nyanzi's actions as a "stunt" that cannot be placed at the same level as the protests alluded to above.

1. THE OTHERING THEORY

This paper draws on the Othering theory to inform the analysis of the way in which criticisms to Dr Stella Nyanzi's protest were constituted on YouTube. The Othering theory provides a useful scaffold for this paper considering that taking off one's clothes in public is generally frowned upon in most countries in Africa. It is almost anticipated that such a remonstrance will be met by heavy backlash and othering. Reflecting on her initial reactions on seeing Nyanzi's naked body, Tamale (2016:2) explains the following in her inaugural professorial lecture:

[...] I was shocked and horrified; embarrassed and ashamed. I thought my friend had completely lost it and must confess that I was left traumatized by the incident for several days. With hindsight, however, I now realize that my emotive response to Nyanzi's protest was in keeping with societal attitudes that associate nakedness—especially the nakedness

of a grown woman—with shame, perversity and taboo. When I rushed to MISR to try and remove Stella, I was responding to the impulse of my socialized brain and habits. Society constructs the female naked body as profane, indecent, shameful and sexual, never to be displayed in public. Women must therefore cover their bodies, particularly the areola, nipples and curves of their breasts, their butts and especially the *mons pubis*.

The Othering theory was originally coined in the context of post-colonial theory (Jensen 2011) and is often linked to power relationships. Johnson et al (2004:253) contend that "othering is a process that identifies those that are thought to be different from oneself or the mainstream and it can reinforce and reproduce positions of domination and subordination." Johnson et al (2004:254) further argue that: "By talking about individuals or groups as *other*, one magnifies and enforces projections of apparent difference from oneself." In *othering*, there is the normalisation of the idea that 'the self/we/subjects/the centre' is better than 'the other/them/objects/the marginalised other.' 'The self' is constructed as superior or the norm while 'the other' is constituted as inferior or deviant (Borrero et al, 2012; Pickering, 2001; Riggins, 1997). Far from the categorisations being natural, Powell and Menéndez (2016) contend that they are socially constructed.

Krumer-Nevo (2002:304) contends that "Othering is used mainly against those in the margins of society – women, the disabled, the poor, people of minority ethnic background or people who belong to any other minority group because of their 'race' or sexual preference." Said's book titled *Orientalism* (1978) discusses the value judgements that were embedded in the binary distinctions that were often made between the East and the West. The East or the Orient and its people was framed as the 'inferior other' in relation to the people from the West or the Occident who constituted themselves as the 'superior self.'

Writing on the effects of othering, Peternelj-Taylor (2004:133) contends: "The consequences of othering include alienation, marginalisation, stigmatisation, oppression, internalised oppression, and decreased social and political opportunities [...]." Uda (2017:4) argues that constituting groups of people as the 'other' threatens their security and quality of life because "Otherness produces a sense of isolation, of apartness, of disconnectedness and alienation [...] a feeling of being on the edges, on the margins, or on the periphery [...]."

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This paper takes a qualitative approach to analysing videos and comments posted on YouTube regarding Nyanzi. Purposive sampling, a non-probability technique was used to select information rich sources that were included in the study (Palinkas et al, 2015; Teddlie and Yu, 2007). The videos were found on YouTube using the search words 'Stella Nyanzi.' While the search yielded several pages with videos, only the first ten pages contained videos with content related to the protest. A total of 202 videos were considered for analysis. With the exception of the first page with 22 videos, the other pages had 20 videos each. A screening process then took place; videos that did not directly relate to the protest and videos in Luganda were left out of the analysis. The researcher is not conversant in Luganda. Luganda is among the main languages in Uganda, spoken by over five million people.

In terms of the method of analysis, this paper makes use of thematic analysis, a qualitative analytic method to identify, examine and report patterns in the data. Braun and Clarke (2006: 6) explain that: “[thematic analysis] also often goes further [...] and interprets various aspects of the research topic [...]” The six phases of doing thematic analysis discussed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were useful in informing the analysis that was done in this paper. It is, however, important to note that the process of doing thematic analysis in this study was not linear, rather it was iterative. Analyses of meanings embedded in texts was not a once-off event, rather, it was a process of reading and re-reading the texts, moving backwards and forwards between phases (Nowell, et al 2017). This process allowed the researcher to know the data more closely, thus assisting in the modification and refinement of the analysis.

The first phase according to Braun and Clarke (2006) involves familiarising with the data. This took part during the data collection stage as well as after formal data collection ended. In this study, the ‘data’ was essentially the contents of the selected YouTube videos as well as the comments left below each video by YouTube users. The second phase was coding. This involved developing succinct codes that categorised the data that responded to the research questions. This process started when data was gathered and entailed noting potential patterns in portions of the videos and in comments by YouTube users. From the codes, broader patterns (themes) were identified, this was the third phase. Themes that were identified were around madness, criminality, misalignment with behaviour expected of learned people as well as behaviour diverging from holy and African ways of being human. The fourth phase involved refining themes. This was not a once off activity; this was a process that took place through to the write up stage. The fifth phase was intertwined with the previous phase; the refining of themes. This happened concurrently with the defining and naming of themes. It also involved determining the ‘story’ of each theme. The final phase was the write-up.

While the identified themes will be discussed separately, the themes are far from being neat categories. There were instances when there were overlaps between the themes. Reflecting on the limitations of this study, as already stated at the beginning of this section, only videos and comments in English were included. This potentially means that the researcher missed out on other ideas that were expressed only in Luganda. Another limitation is that the focus on YouTube and not other more popular social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter might have resulted in the exclusion of rich discussions that might have gone on regarding the protest. YouTube was selected for analysis because videos of the protest as well as subsequent videos by media houses and individuals were initially posted on the platform.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Constituting nyanzi as mad

A recurring idea in the news reports and the comments by YouTube users was that Nyanzi’s stripping was evidence that she was insane and needed to be committed to a mental health institution for psychiatric examination. In a video, ‘Dr Nyanzi Survives Arrest and Mob Attack’

(Published on 25 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda), a reporter narrated the following: "[...] the Inspector General of police, Kale Kayihura has ordered that Dr Stella be arrested wherever she is and be referred to a mental facility for examination." Speaking in the same video an unnamed police officer elaborated: "We are committed this time to arrest her on sight if she dares (to strip in public)...in fact I think this time we shall take her [...] for medical examination...we presume she is mad."

It is interesting to note that most of Nyanzi's critics who left comments below the videos largely spoke of Nyanzi as the 'inferior other' because they presumed that she was insane. One person wrote: "[...] they should take her to Butabika for checks up. (Butabika is Uganda's referral hospital specialising in mental health). People who have PhDs they say have some mental illness of books" (YouTube Comment). Also referring Nyanzi to a mental health institution, a YouTube user wrote: "[...] let Stella go out of (the) University indefinitely [...] in fact Stella should go to Butabika Hospital (for) head check-ups" (YouTube Comment).

Conveying the same thoughts, other YouTube users wrote: "SN (Stella Nyanzi) needs medical attention" (YouTube Comment). "Being a Doctor (PhD holder) does not mean one cannot be insane. There is some insanity in Stella Nyanzi" (YouTube Comment). "Girl, you are a new species of Crazy" (YouTube Comment). "[...] let us not demonize her...she needs help... serious mental admission [...]" (YouTube Comment). "[...] this Stella Nyanzi typically fits the bill of a mad professor..." (YouTube Comment).

In medicine, most doctors and nurses in the majority of instances usually make diagnoses based on some form of examination of the patient's condition. Granted, there are some health practitioners that jump the gun, but usually, they do not make diagnoses merely based on assumptions and pedestrian observations. The prescriptions that doctors write for their patients are based on 'facts.' In the Nyanzi case, it is interesting that the self-styled psychiatrists who were quick to label her as crazy did not show evidence of having spent time to understand the 'patient' and the circumstances surrounding the protest. Simon Kaggwa Njala, a presenter on the show 'Morning Breeze' on NBS TV made the following observation after comments by Dr Tanga Odoi, the Chairman Makerere University Convocation in an interview: "[...] you don't seem to make a diagnosis of what could have caused this [...]." Dr Odoi responded by dismissing the idea of engaging in a discussion about the causes of a protest. His focus was primarily on Nyanzi's act of stripping (Published on 21 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda).

Constructing Nyanzi as mad is not surprising given that women are generally regarded by society as 'emotional/irrational' while men are largely viewed as 'rational.' Implicitly, being 'irrational' is depicted as being problematic (Debold, 2012). Elaborating on the above 'rational/irrational' schism, MacCallum (2002:89) states that:

The dualism of mind/body is essentially a Western construction [...] Feminists argue that this dualism is gendered; male characteristics are associated with the mind and

female characteristics with the body. Mind is privileged over body. Men are thought to be rational, able to transcend their bodies, reason and this allows them to 'speak universal knowledge' (Longhurst 1997, p. 491). Women are associated with their reproductive body, tied to nature and the instincts, rhythms, desires of their body, incapable of rationality (Longhurst 1997). Rationality identifies masculinity and, conversely, femininity is associated with the non-rational, hysterical, Other. So, even when men experience madness it is associated with femininity. Men are rational; women are not.

Nyanzi's critics were not willing to consider the protest in light of who Nyanzi was as an academic/activist as well as in light of the events that surrounded the protest. Even when Nyanzi's detractors did not have exhaustive knowledge of her, they nonetheless still commented and categorised her as the 'crazy other.' Quoted by Allison (2017), Adriaan van Klinken, an associate professor at the University of Leeds who knows Nyanzi states: "She [Nyanzi] is not afraid of using her own body and sexuality to publicly address and transgress conventions of 'decency' and challenge those in power." Van Klinken continues:

She has been framed by some critics, including the Ugandan government, as a 'crazy renegade', but in fact she stands in a long tradition of radical feminist and queer thought in which 'the personal is political', in which the body is a site of political protest, and in which sexuality is linked to power. For Stella, such beliefs are not merely intellectual – she is not an armchair queer philosopher – but requires concrete social and political action. This has put her increasingly in a position where she publicly criticises those in power [...]

Framing Nyanzi as insane allowed the people making the quasi diagnoses room to evade engaging constructively and critically with the issues Nyanzi was raising. The label almost prematurely closed any form of intellectual dialogue with Nyanzi. Constituting Nyanzi as crazy also served to marginalise her as a person deserving to be treated with dignity and respect; the label made it easy to dismiss her offhandedly. The label also legitimised any form of punitive action that the university, the police and the public would take against Nyanzi, the 'crazy' woman. Writing in the context of *othering*, MacCallum (2002:89) adds that: "Constructing people as mentally ill positions them as Others and relegates them to the position of passive objects of psychiatric knowledge and their own knowledge and experiences are routinely obliterated."

Countering the idea that dominated social media posts that Nyanzi was mad, Godiva Akullo, a feminist lawyer contended that contrary to the popular belief, Nyanzi was not crazy. Akullo argued that Nyanzi was a highly educated woman who consciously took off her clothes publicly in protest. In a discussion on the programme, 'Morning Breeze' (Published on YouTube on 19 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda), Akullo elaborated:

[...] When you look at the facts of this case...Stella Nyanzi has been employed by MISR since 2011...this is a medical anthropologist with about 15 years of research

experience under her belt...this is a woman who understands Ugandan culture because her research has been in rural south western Uganda and in urban central Uganda and her research is on sexuality and gender issues...so this is a woman who understands Ugandan culture. Secondly, she is a *nalongo* (mother of twins)... she understands her culture as a Muganda. This woman did not wake up in the morning and decide to undress just like that...she understands the implications of what she did. I have been hearing a lot of people saying 'oh...Stella Nyanzi is crazy...she has gone mad' she is not mad...this woman is not mad. She woke up in the morning and made a conscious decision to protest her perceived oppression in the manner that she did [...]

Instead of hastily dismissing Nyanzi as crazy, Akullo urged Ugandans to read Nyanzi's actions in the context of who she is, her expertise and the circumstances that surrounded the protest.

3.2 The nude protest and 'educated' people

Some of Stella Nyanzi's critics condemned her nude protest on the grounds that it was an affront to what was expected of 'highly educated people.' By undressing in full view of the cameras, Nyanzi was regarded as having behaved as an "uncivilised, uneducated and barbaric" other (Jensen, 2009). Following simplistic and binary logic, Nyanzi's detractors argued that 'educated people' were expected to be rational thinkers, the opposite of 'uneducated people' who were presumed to be irrational. 'Educated people' were regarded as belonging to an elite class of people, 'a high calibre of people' as some of the critics articulated.

Speaking about the protest, Father Simon Lokodo, the Ethics and Integrity State Minister, contended that Nyanzi's actions were not befitting of a woman "well-groomed in Science and Technology" (Video published on YouTube on 18 April 2016 by NTVUganda). Also commenting on the protest, Dr John Senyonyi, the Vice Chancellor of the Uganda Christian University said: "Undressing oneself is totally uncalled for. For an educated person, have you failed to reason? Have you failed to dialogue? Have you failed to talk? (Video published on YouTube on 18 April 2016 by NTVUganda). In media interviews with some students at Makerere University, interviewees "frowned upon (Nyanzi's) act" (Words by NTVUganda reporter) because her protest did not align with what was expected of "an educated person" (Video published on YouTube on 18 April 2016 by NTVUganda).

Also operating largely within the abovementioned 'Us' versus 'Them' dualism, Deus K. Muhwezi, the Secretary for Publicity with the Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA) said the following: "It would be so far-fetched for one of us...a member of staff...a PhD holder...a responsible Ugandan...a mentor...I mean...to strip naked in this country before cameras and even go ahead to post several other videos that portray us as hooligans...(is) irresponsible" (Published on 21 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda). Commenting on the protest, Dr Tanga Odoi, the Chairman Makerere University Convocation, said:

That is one of the most unfortunate happenings in Makerere...especially for someone of high academic calibre. The last degree that a university gives [that's a] PhD. A university is a place where brains meet and conflict...but the conflict must not be extended to personalised issues like going naked [...] You can disagree in office... you can disagree with anybody but that disagreement must be within the confines of social respect and integrity [...] the worst issue is that she planned all this [...] I would have taken very stern measures not to protect Nyanzi but to protect the ladies...their integrity and protect the staff whose students will strip naked before [them] very soon [...] (Published on 21 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda)

Not only was Nyanzi's protest condemned because her nudity was deviating from behaviour expected of 'educated people,' she was also accused of setting a bad example for the students at Makerere University who look up to her. An unnamed student had this to say about the protest: "It is really not right. It is practically wrong [...] we look up to her [...]" (Video published on YouTube on 18 April 2016 by NTVUganda). A YouTube user argued that Nyanzi had failed to act as a role model on various levels: "[...] As a sane mother, you ought to be an example and role model [...] having a PhD is not a measure of intelligence or emotional stability. This woman is clearly unstable and is a bad example to all women given that she is well educated and a highly placed researcher" (YouTube Comment). Looking at the comments by the students and some YouTube users, it is interesting to note how the power dynamics between the 'Us' and 'Them' was somehow subverted. According to the Othering theory, it is those with power who usually constitute those with less power as the 'inferior other' (Krumer-Nevo, 2002). In this instance, students and YouTube users (presumed to have less education and less power than the PhD holder) 'othered' Nyanzi. This seeming reversal of roles only makes sense in light of the first theme discussed in this paper in which Nyanzi was positioned as mad. All the power that her education would have ordinarily afforded her was eroded when she was relegated to the 'crazy other.'

While Professor Augustus Nuwagaba's comments were generally critical of Nyanzi, it is interesting to note that Nuwagaba was one of the few opponents who attempted to explain the protest in light Nyanzi's academic discipline. Although he did not condone Nyanzi's choice of protest, he, nonetheless, said it was in keeping with acceptable ways of protest in her discipline. Nuwagaba's comments were ironically contrary to most critics who labelled Nyanzi's protest as not being consistent with how 'educated people' behave. Nuwagaba explained:

[...] I think Ugandans need to know that Dr Stella Nyanzi has a PhD in what is called sexuality and queer theory. Now [in] sexuality and queer theory [...] they talk very much with body language...they use the body to express their ideas and put across and transmit [...] [their ideas]. So, therefore, in blaming Dr Stella Nyanzi we need to give her the benefit of the doubt...probably she was playing it out from her profession if that is what is accepted among sexuality and queer theorists (Published on 22April 2016 by NTVUganda)

Taking a position similar to Professor Augustus Nuwagaba, another YouTube user also could appreciate Nyanzi's choice of protest given her training. The user, nonetheless, still framed the protest as uncanny. The YouTube user wrote: "[...] As an academic, she studied youth sexuality which partly explains her rather bizarre comments [...]" (YouTube Comment).

Disavowing Nyanzi's mode of protest on the basis that it was not in line with accepted codes of behaviour expected of 'educated' people worked to primarily perpetuate and preserve the idea that university lecturers and researchers (particularly holders of doctoral degrees) were exceptional human beings who were above the level of 'ordinary' people. It served to cement the 'Us' versus 'Them' dichotomy between the 'intellectual elites' and the 'rest of society.' It is then not surprising that Nyanzi's critics were anxious that should university students follow 'Nyanzi's example' en masse, there was the possibility that the sharp distinction between the elites and the masses would become blurred. At the heart of the aforementioned frame was a desire by the elites to preserve their privilege, power, respect and everything else that came with being the educated select. This desire inadvertently ends up masking the internal struggles of university staff as they try to perform the part of the educated, rational and respectable academics even when they have come to the end of themselves.

Breaking ranks with behaviour expected of 'educated' people also meant some level of freedom from control for Nyanzi. Given that the university took action after Nyanzi's protest almost seems as her 'radical' and 'unexpected' behaviour was a prerequisite for change to take place. Commenting on the history of disregarding expected codes of behaviour in Uganda, Allison (2017) argues that Semakula Mulumba, an independence advocate's conduct when he responded to the Bishop of Uganda's invitation to dinner challenged the status quo. Allison (2017) elaborates:

[...] in Uganda, radical rudeness has history. In the 1940s, independence advocate Semakula Mulumba responded to the Bishop of Uganda's dinner invitation with a blistering 18-page letter that castigated the bishop and all that he represented. The letter broke all decorum, and deliberately so: it was part of a campaign to undermine the complicated system of manners and protocol imposed by the colonisers, and adopted by too many of the country's elite. Mulumba and his colleagues understood that these manners were actually a form of control.

3.3 Condemning the 'unholy act' and the 'cultural taboo'

In a country in which most people identify as Christian, it was not surprising that some of Nyanzi's critics constructed her protest together with her cussing as "unholy." By stripping in view of the public, Nyanzi was defying all ideas of what it means to be a 'good and respectable' woman (Hungwe, 2006). One YouTube user made the following comment: "[...] You claim to be a Christian, but if Christ were here he wouldn't have condoned such [a] character [...]" (YouTube Comment). In the video, 'Makerere University under Pressure to Sack Mamdani/Nyanzi' (Published on 21 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda) it was reported that several church

services at the St Francis Chapel at Makerere University were being dedicated to Dr Nyanzi who they felt needed spiritual help. Reverend Canon Amon Turyahabwe of the St Francis Chapel was reported to have been planning to visit Nyanzi at home for counselling. In the same report, Reverend Canon Amon Turyahabwe was quoted saying: “We have prayed over it [...] this morning I was finding out where she (Nyanzi) operates from...I have intention to visit her personally.”

A police officer who was not named in a video posted on YouTube said the following: “[...] the words she is using are very obscene and whatever she is doing is very unholy...very unholy...it is being condemned left and right [...]” (Published on 25 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda). In addition to criticising Nyanzi on the basis of what people perceive as acceptable within the Christian religion, Dr Tanga Odoi, the Chairman Makerere University Convocation also contended that the stripping was against conventional cultural norms. Odoi asked the following rhetoric questions in a video published on 21 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda:

[...] You don't mind the social, cultural norms of Buganda where your parents or you grandparents were buried? [...] look at the village that you come from...how are you an example? Are you a positive or negative (example)? [...]

Condemning the protest because it was not in accordance with “Ugandan ways of doing things,” one of the guests on the programme, ‘On the Spot,’ Professor Augustus Nuwagaba from Makerere University made the following disclaimer on behalf of Makerere University and the country at large:

Somebody may think this is the Ugandan way of solving problems...I want to insist... if I can turn myself into a Public Relations Officer for both Makerere and Uganda at this very moment...that this is also not the Ugandan way of doing things [...] For us the way we were brought up...we completely abhor...we don't accept the behaviour which Dr Stella Nyanzi portrayed...this is absolutely unacceptable...there could have been another way in which she could have expressed the dissatisfaction [...] (Published on 22 April 2016 by NTVUganda).

An interesting observation is that the same discourse on culture was also used by Nyanzi's supporters to articulate the gravity of Nyanzi's protest. In the video, ‘Makerere research fellow, Dr. Stella Nyanzi, protests eviction from office by stripping naked’ (Published on 18 April 2016 by NTVUganda), an unnamed Nyanzi ally said the following: “Stella's stripping [...] for us culturally is a curse...it's a curse to see a mother undress...it's a curse to see a mother completely naked exposing her nudity...it operates as a curse for the people who push her to that point [...]”

Constructing Nyanzi's stripping as unholy and an affront to cultural norms works largely to discredit her and her protest. As argued in a previous discussion, labelling the protest in the above ways served to pre-empt any possible discussions regarding the circumstances that

led Nyanzi to protest. Akullo, a feminist lawyer argues that condemning Nyanzi's stripping on the grounds that it is a cultural taboo shows a:

[...] selective understanding of African culture and the tool that is a nude protest [...] even in Chiganda culture...I am not a Muganda so I am not an expert but Stella Nyanzi is a Muganda [...] we know the implications when someone says they will undress for you especially when it's a woman who is older than you or in her case a mother of twins...we know the implications...these are not things that are new... we have the words for it in our languages. So we can't say this is contrary to our cultures...she is actually using a tool that is available to her within her culture to express her displeasure [...] I really don't see a conflict between culture and the form of protest Stella chose (Discussion on the programme, 'Morning Breeze' published on YouTube on 19 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda).

Being a 'good' religious woman or a 'good' Muganda woman serves the interests of patriarchy. Writing in the context of Zimbabwe, Hungwe (2006:44-45) goes further to argue that:

[...] the distinction made between "respectability" and "unrespectability" [among women] serves a patriarchal agenda [...] As long as women occupy space allocated to them, they remain "respectable", but once they start redefining public and private terrain, they run the risk of being judged as depraved and "unrespectable" in the eyes of society.

3.4 Criminalising Nyanzi

Another idea that emerged from analysing YouTube content is that Nyanzi was an outlaw who had contravened laws such as the Anti-Pornography Act. Some of the videos that were posted on YouTube (not by the media in Uganda) constituted the protest as pornographic, for example, 'Makerere's STELLA NYANZI plays porn in UGANDA- new' (Published on 22 April 2016).

In a video published on YouTube on 18 April 2016 by NTVUganda, the reporter noted that the police had summoned Nyanzi to record a statement regarding her indecent protest. The Police Spokesperson, Fred Enanga contended that: "Her nakedness is supposed to be subjected to criminal investigation" (Video published on YouTube on 18 April 2016 by NTVUganda). In a video titled, 'Dr Nyanzi Survives Arrest and Mob Attack' published on 25 April 2016 by the NBS TV Uganda, the reporter announced the following: "Following Dr Stella Nyanzi's nude protest at MISR, criminal case number GEF04 of 2016 was opened [...] until now, police have not come into contact with her. [...]" The reporter continued: "[...] under the anti-pornography law...nudity is criminal and punishable [...]"

While various groups of people, the police included were calling Nyanzi a criminal, ironically, Nyanzi constituted the police as the criminals. In a video titled, 'Makerere research fellow,

Dr. Stella Nyanzi, protests eviction from office, strips naked' (Published on 18 Apr 2016 by NTVUganda) Nyanzi said: "The police in Uganda are criminals...they did not protect me when I needed protection...now you have come to protect Mamdani."

Responding to the allegation that Nyanzi had committed a crime contravening the Anti-Pornographic Act, Godiva Akullo, a feminist lawyer contended that Nyanzi's undressing was far from pornographic. She elaborated: "[...] she (Nyanzi) did not do it to make anybody feel sexually excited or to incite sexual feelings in anybody...No! [...] she made it clear what she was doing...she said...'I am undressing myself symbolically to show [...] the rot at MISR [...]" (Discussion on the programme, 'Morning Breeze' published on YouTube on 19 April 2016 by NBS TV Uganda). Making a similar point, Tamale (2016:13) argued:

When women bare their nakedness to the public they are not engaging in sexual provocation. Rather, they are drawing on dominant gender norms, challenging and subverting them to draw attention to their plight. As powerless people, they mobilize their bodies as a powerful resource, thereby transforming the negative associations of nudity into positive power.

Contrary to people who said Nyanzi breached the law by undressing herself, Tamale (2016) argued that Nyanzi had in actual fact not contravened any written law in Uganda. Tamale (2016:2) explained:

Most people are shocked when they learn that there is absolutely no written law in Uganda that prohibits public nudity *per se*; there is no bar against displaying the naked body. She may run the risk of crossing established social and religious norms, but she certainly committed no penal offence.

Tamale (2016:3) further explained that though Nyanzi had not broken any codified law, the "living law" or the "unscripted customary and religious laws" makes it "illegal" and "immoral and unethical to exhibit our bodies in this manner."

As noted in preceding discussions, constructing Nyanzi as a criminal worked to delegitimise her and her concerns as well as to marginalise the issues that she was raising through the protest. The spotlight was shown on her alleged criminality and possible consequences at the expense of discussing the events that led her to strip in protest. MacCallum (2002:91) argues that one of the effects of Othering is that it "steals the voice of the person/people constructed as Other." While this might hold true in contexts such as psychiatric nursing in which MacCallum was writing, in the Nyanzi protest, Othering her did not steal her voice. During the protest she spoke back and actually 'othered' her detractors like the police. Nyanzi constantly pushes and speaks back to those in/with power on social media and in her activism. In April 2017, for example, Nyanzi was arrested for criticising the Museveni government for going back on one of its 2016 electoral promises around providing free sanitary pads for school-age girls across Uganda (Peralta, 2017).

4. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

While many people watch almost on a daily basis women's near naked bodies in advertisements (without much public objection), ironically, women who take off their clothes in demonstration are mocked and 'othered.' This is because "naked female protesting bodies [...] represent defiance and agency" (Tamale, 2016:31). Tamale further contends that: "female naked protests represent a resistance and subversion of the dominant scripts engraved on women's bodies—scripts of subordination, passivity, sexuality, subservience, vulnerability, etc. Hence through the process of naked protests, women engage in a re-scripting and reconfiguration of their bodies" (Tamale, 2016:32).

While there were people who publicly supported Nyanzi, there were others who lambasted her. This paper discussed how the criticisms to Nyanzi's naked protest were constituted in videos posted on YouTube as well as comments made by users. Though the frames were discussed separately, it is essential to note that all of them coalesced to discredit Nyanzi and her choice of protest. It was interesting to note that Nyanzi's critics were largely not interested in engaging with the issues that Nyanzi was raising that led to the protest.

In all the aforementioned themes, binary and hierarchical categorisations of people were normalised and reinforced; 'mad people' versus 'sane people,' 'the educated' versus 'the uneducated,' 'holy people' versus 'profane people' and 'criminals' versus 'law abiding citizens.' The lure to this kind of thinking is understandable; it is simpler to think in terms of black and white than to imagine people as complex and messy beings who do not always fit into dual categories and sometimes take up seemingly oppositional identities simultaneously. The danger with dichotomies is that while one group of people is celebrated as 'normative,' the inferior 'Other' is concurrently constituted. As discussed in the paper, there are serious consequences for people who do not inhabit what is considered as the norm or those people who are seen as transgressors. Once labelled as 'insane' or 'uneducated,' for example, not many people are willing to engage with you seriously, intellectually. Instead of labelling people, I contend that it is important to move beyond tags to a point where everyone's humanness is valued and their voices heard.

Although this paper did not focus on analysing the Mamdani/Nyanzi conflict itself, it would have been interesting if some of the videos and the YouTube users unpacked analytically what it is that was under contestation. According to Mamdani, Nyanzi was attempting to preserve her personal privilege of not teaching in a space where other academics at MISR were teaching. Nyanzi on the other hand contended that she was challenging masculinist authoritarianism at the institute. This would have been an interesting debate. One can, however, appreciate the allure of the 'theatre' of the event as well as aspects of the tabloid culture that pervades YouTube that made focusing on intellectual analyses highly unlikely. In typical tabloid style, it seemed appealing to sensationalise Nyanzi's nudity by framing it as pornographic and a confirmation of madness and criminality.

Reflecting on the 'Othering' theory, the study largely supported the key ideas proposed by the theory. There were, however, some findings that could potentially add texture and nuance to the

theory. While the 'Othering' theory presents those who 'other' as predominantly powerful, in this study, there were instances when those who can be considered as having less power like students actually critiqued and 'othered' Nyanzi who ordinarily would be among those with power by virtue of possessing a doctoral degree. Though not explicitly stated in the theory, there is almost an assumption that 'othered' people are passive and silent; this is not always the case. When one looks at Nyanzi in action in the YouTube videos, one sees a different picture. Contrary to the idea of the 'passive other,' Nyanzi was very vocal. She spoke back to her critics and sometimes 'othered' them. Her 'speaking back' was actually animated on the walls of her Facebook page. Also interesting was that not only do the 'othered' people speak back, sometimes allies of the 'othered' people also challenge the 'othering.' This was evident in this research when an unnamed student at MISR and Godiva Akullo eloquently presented arguments that countered the simplistic labels that were placed on Nyanzi.

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