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African Ontology, Albinism and Human Rights

Introduction

I am a person with albinism. I have lived with my family and worked in a small town in Southern Nigeria for nearly a decade. My wife is a coloured (black) woman and my kids are too. As an individual, I have lived in this space for decades. I had my childhood here and my education in this small town. I only left this town for my graduate studies and then returned back to work in the university. So I am quite well known in this town. But when I move around town with my family, there is always this gaze of awe from people who know me quite well and those who do not. They wonder how a person with albinism could have a wife and children with melanin. Some tell me right to my face that I am not only fortunate to have a coloured woman as my wife – they are often in awe that she agreed to marry me – but to have children who do not have albinism as I do. What is responsible for the attitude of community members to what they see about me and my family. In one word: representation. These lived experiences just described show how powerful deeply entrenched representations of a group made manifest in beliefs can be. How a group of persons are presented and represented over time to a community of selves, codified as forms of beliefs determine largely how members of such a community of selves understand, relate with and perceive members of such a represented group. As Richard Dyer aptly puts it in *The Matters of Images* (1993: 1),

> How a group is represented, presented over again in cultural forms, how an image of a member of a group is taken as representative of that group, how that group is represented in terms of spoke for and on behalf of (whether they represent, speak for themselves or not), these all have to do with how members of groups see themselves and others like themselves, how they see their place in society, their right to the rights a society claims to ensure its citizens. Equally re-presentation, representativeness, representing have to do also with how others see members of a group and their place and rights, others who have

the power to affect that place and those rights. How we are seen determine in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation.

The representation of albinism as a form of disability in African communities is so deeply rooted in African ontology or understanding of being that it determines the way other members of the community view and treat such persons. Such representation of albinism in Africa are largely inimical to the health and wellbeing of persons with albinism and deprives them of the enjoyment of fundamental human rights. In what follows, I begin by exploring and analysing how albinism is often negatively represented as a radically different in African ontology. I then proceed to examine how such deeply entrenched representation of persons with albinism in African ontology deprives them of the enjoyment of fundamental human rights as contained for instance, in the UDHR in general and the CRPD in particular primarily because the enjoyment of such rights depends in the first place on being human, and persons with albinism in African communities are perceived as not human enough to enjoy such rights. I further discuss two level of hopes needed to be explored to overcome these deeply entrenched yet negative representation of persons with albinism: the individual level and the social level. I conclude by highlighting the importance of critiquing representations by members of a community for the enjoyment of rights by persons with disability

African Ontology and Albinism

African ontology consists of an analysis of African conceptions of the nature of being, of what is or exists and, by implication, what does not exist. Such conceptions have been so interwoven into the African cultural fabric that persons within African communities accept them uncritically as objective and factual and live their lives on the basis of such conceptions. African ontology conceives of being as consisting of a lively and active interaction between visible and invisible entities and forces. Visible entities cannot be conceived of as independent or separate from invisible entities and forces, and vice versa. An African ontology also consists of a study of the hierarchical categorization of beings or entities predominant in African thought systems. It can be deduced from many African cultures that from the apex to the bottom of this hierarchy, there are the Supreme Being, the divinities (primordial and deified), the ancestors, manipular spirits, the human person, animals, plants and natural resources. These beings interact and their

interaction is made possible due to the presence of vital force. Hence the theory of being that has become popular in scholarly literature about African ontology is the vital force theory (Imafidon, 2019: 29). The sort of interaction and relations that take place among beings in this hierarchy is such that higher beings are believed to have higher forces than lower beings and are thus able to manipulate and influence the wellbeing lower beings. But a just and fair interaction is made possible because the highest beings in the hierarchy – the Supreme Being and the divinities – are believed to be ultimately good in their dealings with humans and have the power to protect lesser beings from the evil manipulations of manipular forces.

In the category of the human being, different African cultures have quite detailed and specific characterisation of both the descriptive and normative features of the human person. But a general consensus among African theorists of personhood is that a human being is only regarded as a person if he or she possesses the ontological and normative qualities required of a person by the community (see for example Gyekye 1984; Gyekye 1992; Menkiti 1984; Oladipo 1992; Ndubuisi 2004; and Oyeshile 2006). The ontological or descriptive qualities consists of bodily norm and structure or descriptive features of the body as conceptualised by the community. The normative qualities consist of socially expected behavioural pattern that a human being must exhibit. It involves living a community accepted life style and exhibiting social behaviours endorsed by the community. The lack of the ontological and normative qualities of a person calls the personhood of a human being into question in various ways. Interestingly, with particular reference to the normative qualities, a human being can be a person at a given point in time and fail to be so at another given point in time to the extent that he or she has failed to live a community accepted life style. To be sure, this calls into question the extent to which an African person is allowed to exert his or her freewill, autonomy and authenticity. This is however not our primary concern in this chapter. Our focus here is the extent to which lack of the ontological qualities or failure to fit into the bodily norm of the community leads to the denial of personhood for a human being. A case in mind in albinism.

Albinism as the lack of, or presence of very little, pigmentation is a form of disability common in a number of African communities. In African conceptions of being, persons with albinism may in all respect visibly appear to be human except, of course, for the lack of pigmentation, but they are, in fact, excluded from the category of human beings. Rather, persons with albinism are viewed asstrange, unusual beings. Understanding persons with albinism as

strange, unusual beings in these senses is much felt in African societies. Their unusual nature stems not only from their visible physical difference but also from the ideas about the nature of their being presented and represented down the ages in the worldviews of African traditional societies (Imafidon, 2019: 39).

What the evidences from African ontology show is that, persons with albinism do not fulfil all the requirements for a being to be called a human being. Hence, in African societies, the linguistic connotation of persons with albinism like every other connoting word, although naming a person clearly suggest otherwise. Among the Yoruba people, for instance, persons with albinism are called *afin*, which means 'horrible'. It is common among people in South Africa to refer to a person with albinism with the isiZulu expression *isishawa*, which means 'cursed'. In Zimbabwe, persons with albinism are referred to in isiXhosa as *sope*, a word used to indicate that such persons are possessed with evil spirits. In Tanzania, persons with albinism are referred to as *zeruzeru*, an Swahili word meaning 'ghost people'. Hence a person with albinism is not viewed the same way a human being is viewed as possessing certain essential ontological qualities such as coming into being with a destiny chosen before the Supreme Being. Rather, the coming into being of a person with albinism is viewed as an outcome of a curse placed on the child bearer, the husband of the child bearer or the family at large due to some wrong doing, or the result of the punishment received by child bearer, the husband of the child bearer or the family at large from a higher force (such as an ancestor or divinity) due to some wrong doing. Hence a family that gives birth to a person with albinism is seen as unfavoured by some higher forces and faces ridiculing within the community of selves. For this reason, persons with albinism are conceived as a human other, *something* different from the approved and accepted notion of a human being (Imafidon, 2019: 40). By implication, if persons with albinism are not considered as being human in the way melanin-privileged Africans are, then it logically follows that such persons would have challenges enjoying the same rights that melanin-privileged Africans or humans in general enjoy. And this leads us to the challenges that the coinage 'human rights' could face.

Human Rights and Albinism

After the Second World War and particularly since 1945, there has been a shift in legislative focus from natural rights to human rights for quite obvious reasons. The concept of natural rights

was ultimately linked to the concept of natural law which became an issue of great controversy after the ugly experiences of the world wars, the ensuing controversies about the nature of the human being and what is by nature entitled to him or her. Peter C. Myers explains that,

> The transition has… been called the "rights revolution" of the 20th and 21st centuries, and so, too, it is aptly named: "Natural" and "human' rights… [and] signifies a radical change in the understanding of rights (2017: 2)

He explains that this radical shift was necessitated partly because of the limitations of the natural rights perspective particularly its specific account of human nature.

> According to that account, human beings by nature possess certain specific faculties that entitle us to rights because they render us capable of responsible action… [But] human rights are conceived not as the exercise of human faculties but as the fulfilment of human needs. The transition from natural rights to human rights is a transition from a *faculties*-based to a *needs*-based account of the basis of rights (Myers, 2017: 2).

Similarly, the popular phrase prior to the 20th century, 'the rights of man' became anachronistic and stale because it was too gender sensitive (Weston, 1984: 257). Hence, 'human rights' became the best denotation for the rights to be enjoyed by humans although not without difficulties. For instance, since enjoying such rights is intrinsically linked to being human, and since being human is yet another essentially contested concept in different spheres and contexts, it would follow that if within the community of selves in which I live, I am not for whatsoever reasons considered as a human being, I would most likely be denied the opportunity to enjoy such rights. At best, I would most likely have to put up a fight to enjoy such rights as we are right now doing. In most human societies, when a human being clearly shows that he or she has become un-human, say, a rapist, or a serial killer, the system denies such a person of some rights such as the right to freedom of movement (Article 13 of UDHR) and those rights are not restored until he or she proves that he or she is human enough again to enjoy such rights. So what exactly does it mean to be human? At what point do humans decide that a fellow human is no longer human enough to be treated as such? Persons with albinism are denied the enjoyment of many

human rights in African societies simply because the socio-cultural system does not see them as human enough to enjoy such rights. And we shall return to this point shortly.

According to the Global Citizenship Commission (2016: 81), 'the framers of the UDHR led by Eleanor Roosevelt, envisaged three parts to the postwar human rights enterprise: a set of general principles; the codification of these principles into law; and practical means of implementation.' I believe the first two parts are not the major problems. The general principles are pretty much in order, faces only minor difficulties and can be revised as has been done in the last decades. For instance, the core principle of equality and non-discrimination which prohibits any form of harmful distinction made on the basis of race, sex, religion, colour, political opinion, and I dare add, bodily norms, is widely accepted as a fundamental principle in international human rights law. These core principles have also been fundamental in, and has formed a basis for, the fight and agitation for the rights of persons with albinism. Human rights advocacy such as that being done by the United Nations Independent Expert for the Enjoyment of Human Rights by Persons with Albinism, Ikponwosa Ero is an advocacy and agitation for instance, for non-discrimination and equality. This and similar advocacy is yielding some fruits today.

The pursuance of the acceptability of such principles in the legal systems of societies has reasonably also been achieved and more can be achieved. Compared to the happening in many nation states and societies say, in the 1950s and 1960s, we could say with some sense of conviction that the core principles of human rights have been entrenched into the legal framework of human societies today more than before. For instance, many African nation states now have clearly codified in their legal systems laws that protect the rights of persons with albinism although implementation remains a problem. For instance, the National Policy on Albinism in Nigeria was developed by the Nigerian government as a response to the many challenges faced by persons with albinism and is meant to improve the status, wellbeing and rights of persons with albinism. And this of course, owes largely to the agitations for the rights of persons with albinism by The Albino Foundation in Nigeria.

However, the third part of the post war human rights enterprise – means of implementation – is the one I find daunting and very challenging to achieve. It is very difficult to implement laws concerning the human rights of persons with albinism in a society where people have the seeming conviction that such persons are not really persons. A lot of coercion would be required in such circumstances to make people treat persons with albinism in ways that do not

deprive them of their rights. And this has mostly been the case in many African societies: the use of law enforcement agencies to *compel* people to do what is right. The problem with this approach is that it shouldn't even be the case in the first place. Persons with albinism should be able to enjoy human rights in a social context where many if not all are convinced that they should and deliberately support such an arrangement by their action or inaction.

The problem of implementation of human rights particularly for persons with disabilities in general and for persons with albinism in particular is also the major problem confronting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its applicability in African societies. Since it took effect in 2008, the CRPD has become one of the most important United Nations treaties and advocacy tools used for advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities and persons with albinism. As expected, the contents of the treaty is quite impressive and comprehensive; the general principles guiding the treaty such as principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, accessibility, equality between men and women, full and effective participation and inclusion, respect for inherent human dignity and autonomy, and respect for the evolving capacities of children and for the preservation of their identities (CRPD 2008) are all essential in enshrining the respect for, and prevention of the abuse of, the rights of persons with disabilities. But the challenge remains implementation in African states. Lord and Stein (2013: 97) puts this aptly,

> African states strongly embraced the adoption of the CRPD, along with its Optional Protocol. The Working Group that developed the foundational text of the treaty included delegations from seven African nations. Likewise, the lone seat allocated within the Working Group to represent national human rights institutions was held by a South African Human Rights Commissioner. Sixteen African countries signed the CRPD on the first day it opened for signature, and 34 have ratified it, contributing to a rapid entry into force. In addition, 18 African states are party to the Optional Protocol to the CRPD, thereby assenting to its complaint procedure and procedure of inquiry. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has included experts from the continent, and the current Special Rapporteur on Disability is South African. Also significant is the declaration by the African Union of 1999-2009 and 2010-2019 as African Decades for Persons with Disabilities. The CRPD has therefore been enthusiastically embraced on the

African continent, but so too have prior human rights treaties, with uneven subsequent progress. By the same token, the CRPD challenges Africa's states parties – as it does states parties from all regions of the world – to ensure treaty implementation in a manner that responds to broad obligations while being duly consonant to domestic social and legal norms.

With all fairness to the CRPD, it does establish a system of monitoring and implementation which incorporates persons with disabilities as part of such monitoring in articles 31 to 40. It anticipates several hindrances to implementation and addresses them (Lord and Stein 2013). However, cultural, beliefs, ontologies and interpretation of disabilities, which continue to prohibit implementation of CRPD are not directly addressed. Hussey, MacLachlan and Mji (2017) rightly explain attitudinal barriers as a major hindrance to the implementation of the CRPD, advocating the need for a mindset change around disability in Africa. In their words, "a challenge to the practical implementation of the CRPD, therefore, lies in overcoming barriers of attitude, which may also be associated with culturally –based beliefs. Some of the attitudinal barriers indicated by participants [in their study] clearly illustrated the importance of cultural interpretations of disability." For example, they quote one of the participants who explained one of such culturally-based beliefs about disability that could hinder the successful implementation of the CRPD thus: 'It is a cultural thing to hide your child with a disability. You do not want people to see this because in some cultures, it is seen s, you know, "the gods, the forefathers are frowning upon the family", and you know, cursing you.'

With specific reference to albinism, it is true that African States and non-governmental organisations and advocacy groups for persons with albinism are working hard to implement and secure rights for persons with albinism. Take for instance, the right to education in Nigeria. The right to education is a universal human rights for all persons enshrined in several United Nations treaties such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the CRPD and the World declaration for education for all. The Nigerian government makes this possible for all including persons with albinism to attain at the very least, basic education for all. The Albino Foundation (TAF), the Nigerian advocacy non0govermental organization also works hard to ensure that persons with albinism secure the rights to education. The TAF website shows clearly that it has set up the Education Trust Fund in 2017 aimed at ensuring that persons with albinism especially children

with albinism who are not in school due to one reason or the other have access to quality education with the goal of reducing the number of out-of-school children with albinism in Nigeria, improve school enrolment among children with albinism and reduce illiteracy level among the vulnerable population.[1] TAF also shows in its website that it has a Scholarship Education Grant that is aimed to provide scholarship grants for persons with albinism to cover tertiary and post-tertiary opportunities).[2] These are no doubt fine initiatives in pursuance of the right to education for persons with albinism. But from lived experiences of persons with albinism in Nigeria today, these efforts have not combatted the social exclusion, prejudice, discrimination and maltreatment that persons with albinism face in the Nigerian society. In fact, accessing education is still difficult because although in theory, the enjoyment of the right to education has been made possible, it has not taken away the challenges of exclusion and discrimination that children with albinism, for example, would face in classrooms such as name-calling by fellow classmates, isolation by children with albinism, and maltreatment and insults from class teachers due to inherent deeply entrenched beliefs about albinism that such teachers and students hold. Hence, the approach thus far for securing the rights of persons with albinism have largely ignored the important roles cultural interpretations and beliefs play in stalling effective implementation.

Therefore, attitudes emerging from cultural beliefs, interpretations and ontologies of disabilities remain one of the most important factors to consider in implementing the CRPD. In fact, as the study conducted by Hussey, MacLachlan and Mji (2017) shows, such culturally-based attitudinal barriers are either a direct cause or an influential factor for all of the other types of barriers such as political barriers, financial barriers, health system barriers communication barriers and accurate data barriers. This is because cultural interpretations of disability perpetuate and deeply entrench social exclusion because it is what most community members, including persons with disabilities believe in and accept to be the truth about disabilities. It is not only non-disabled members of the community that accepts and live by these beliefs, even persons with disabilities in such communities do; they see themselves as, for example, the curse of the ancestors or a lesser human being and this makes it even more difficult to assist such ones to recognize and fight for their rights. Take for example, the cultural belief mentioned above that

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[1] https://albinofoundation.org/donation/ihvntaf-ovc-project-for-vulnerable-children-in-fct/
[2] https://albinofoundation/org/donation/scholarship-education-grant-project/

persons with albinism are not considered as human beings. This culturally influenced belief about the being and ontology of persons with albinism makes it difficult for community members to understand and accept the need to respect the 'human' rights of such persons. It also makes it difficult for a person with albinism to accept her rightful place in the human society.

So, beyond the advocacy taken place in legal and political circles, which I believe are very important, there is the need to pay a careful and closer attention as well to culturally influence factors that are very important in overcoming the false ontological representation of disability in general and albinism in particular in African societies, factors and beliefs that have become so deeply entrenched. We need to explore options to make implementation easier and productive. And this is important not just for albinism issues but for disability issues in general. The next section discusses two of such options,

Two Levels of Hope

In this section, I explore what I call two levels of hope in overcoming deeply entrenched cultural but false representations and beliefs about albinism that veils the nature of the being of persons with albinism as no less than a human being and that, by implication, make implementation of the core human rights principles as it affects persons with albinism in many African societies difficult to attain. There are (i) the individual level; and (ii) the social level.

The individual level

From our discourse of African ontology, we can deduce the difficulties a person with albinism will be confronted with in enjoying basic human rights since he or she in the first place, is not considered a person both ontologically and normatively speaking the same way melanin-privileged Africans are. He or she already lacks the intrinsic worth or value that a melanin-privileged African enjoys simply because the latter fits within the community-accepted structure of being (See Imafidon, 2019b: 1-16). As I have explained elsewhere,

> A human being in an African community lacking some features of personhood expected
> of her in the community would therefore be denied the intrinsic worth of a person who
> has the required features for being a person. In African cultures, persons with different
> forms of disability; a foreigner; a terminally, contagiously, mentally, or visibly ill person;

and an immoral person who fails to live by the ethos and ethical standards of the community would make the list of persons whose worth will be called into question in African communities. Such persons will be seen as have lesser or no worth compared to African persons with intrinsic worth living within such communities. A person with albinism or a person with angular kyphosis, for instance, would not be regarded as persons understood in the ontological and normative senses discussed above. Rather, they would be seen ontologically as a queer human other, providing varying theorizations as to the nature and features of such othering (Imafidon, 2019b: 8).

Hence, overcoming the cultural representation of his or her being is essential for earning communal acceptance and recognition, overcoming the representation and, by implication, breaking down the barriers that inhibits his or her enjoyment of fundamental human rights. Put differently, a person with albinism living in an African place needs to deliberately earn his or her worth and value within the community of selves. What is obvious from our discourse so far is that with reference to persons with albinism, there are two categories of persons within an African community: the melanin-privileged black African who has an intrinsic value for being black and enjoy the privileges and rights that results from being recognized within the cultural framework as a full human being ontologically speaking, and the person with albinism who is denied such privileges and rights. The worse that could happen – and it does happen – to a person with albinism is to imbibe, accept and live by such representations and ideologies. He or she must rise above such categorisation and earn his or her worth and respect in his or her society:

> It would involve a determined and consistent effort to ignore the mocking and jesting, name-calling, hatred and discrimination; it would involve developing a positive outlook and being around those who encourage that positive outlook; it would consist of going against all odds to keep oneself safe and unharmed, educated and enlightened, healthy and beautiful. Like every other quest to find a meaningful existence, getting these done will not be easy. It would require perseverance and determination (Imafidon, 2019: 105).

Many persons with albinism have done it successfully through a deliberate and consistent effort:

Today we know of Salif Keita, the Malian artist who was once ostracised by his family and his community because of his albinism, which is considered bad luck in the Mandinka culture, but still made his way to stardom. We know of his adopted daughter, Nantenin Keita, a Paralympian athlete with albinism who has also done very well for herself. Ikponwosa Ero, a young Nigerian girl, has risen beyond all challenges and stigmatisation to become the current independent expert on albinism for the United Nations. Beyond these examples of persons with albinism that have risen to stardom, every community in Africa with persons with albinism has a few examples of such persons rising above the peculiar challenges faced by persons with albinism to become successful medical doctors, tutors, journalists and the like (Imafidon, 2019: 106).

To be sure, not everyone with albinism in particular or disability in general would or should become notable persons in the respective communities in which they live. But simply challenging these representations and living outside of usual expectations is sufficient. To be honest: it doesn't make all the stigma and discrimination go away, but it does make authentic and meaningful existence possible. This end result of such efforts by individual persons with albinism is that they provide instances and some solid grounds for others in the community to question and become skeptical of the truthfulness and factualness of cultural representations and stereotypes of albinism. The more persons within a community challenging these representations of albinism in African places, the easier it becomes for the enabling environments for persons with albinism to enjoy fundamental human rights to flourish. Therefore, individual persons with albinism have important roles to play in making implementation of the core principles of human rights possible and they should deliberately do so.

The social level

At the social level, the state needs to prioritize the pursuit of enlightenment for its members. Enlightenment is the key to unfolding the falsehood of the representations of albinism in African to the public. From personal experience, I notice that in relating with an enlightened person, we both forget about the fact that I am a person with albinism. It does not even come up in the first place. The more enlightened persons African societies have, the easier it would be for persons

with albinism to enjoy human rights. But what do we really mean by Enlightenment or being enlightened? Despite Immanuel Kant's racist representation of Africa, I beg to borrow here his apt description of the term in his 1784 lecture as I find it very useful in making the point:

> Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. Sapere Aude "Have courage to use your own understanding!"--that is the motto of enlightenment.

Kant adds,

> Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a proportion of men, long after nature has released them from alien guidance (natura-liter maiorennes) nonetheless gladly remain in lifelong immaturity, and why it is so easy for others to establish themselves as their guardians. It is so easy to be immature. If I have a book to serve as my understanding, a pastor to serve as my conscience, a physician to determine my diet for me, and so on, I need not exert myself at all. I need not think, if only I can pay: others will readily undertake the irksome work for me. The guardians who have so benevolently taken over the supervision of men have carefully seen to it that the far greatest part of them… regard taking the step to maturity as very dangerous, not to mention difficult.

Hence an enlightened person refuses to believe things or accept any claim for which he or she has no evidence for or he or she cannot validate. This in no way means that every enlightened person becomes a social deviant or rejects every social norm for reason of not wanting to do things or believe things merely because others do or believe them. Rather, it implies having a grasp of the manifest and latent reasons for a belief or claim and holding on to it not because others do, but because we have strong basis for doing so and rejecting those that are not rationally defensible. To make enlightenment possible in this sense, there is need to explore the education system in both formal and informal in African societies as a means of enlightening the public. A reconstruction and awareness education and training exercise is strongly needed for

personnel in key social institutions as well as for persons with albinism. This will reduce the level of false beliefs and ideologies about albinism in such spaces. Reconstruction education, often attributed to the 20th century philosopher of education, Theodore Brameld, holds that

> the goal of education is to assist the educated to address social questions through a curriculum that focuses on social reforms and a constructive criticism of ideologies and beliefs inherent in societies… Awareness education on the other hand consists of education targeted at providing reliable and current information and knowledge to the educated. It is not just about providing information, but the information must be factual, current, reliable and heuristic (Imafidon, 2019: 114-115).

Hence, a reconstruction and awareness education would facilitate the overcoming of false representation of albinism in African societies and provide an enabling environment for the enjoyment of rights by persons with albinism. Stakeholders in public education such as the formal schools, religion, town hall meetings, governmental and non-governmental organisations, media houses and the like must take the lead in providing such enlightening education. Continuous and consistent advocacy and policy-making can make this possible.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, the implementation of human rights remains one of the major challenges that well theorized human rights treaties such as the UDHR and the CRPD face due to various barriers in different spaces and contexts. Such barriers include political, financial, health related and gender related barriers. But as argued in this paper, a common denominator of these other barriers, a factor that tends to ignite other barriers and is key in hindering the enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities in African cultures is the cultural factor resulting from cultural norms and interpretations, beliefs, representations and cultural ontologies. The treatment of persons with albinism in African places as not deserving of the rights and privileges enjoyed by those defined by the cultural norm as non-disabled persons is simply a case in mind. What is clear from the discourse thus far is that the challenges faced by persons considered unusual in different social contexts around the globe are more often than not socially and culturally defined and ignited. The need to publicly and actively challenge, question and interrogate these culturally

defined norms, interpretations and representations of the disabled and the unusual in different social contexts by those individually affected and by various interested stakeholders and social groups is indeed imperative. Exploring the two levels of hope discussed above is essential for ensuring that the dignity and human rights of persons with albinism and with disability are deeply entrenched in the society.

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