**Arya (Queer Family) | Duration 43:00**

A: So, my name is Arya Jeipea Karijo. My name is also part of my story, because it's not the name I was given, it’s the name I’ve chosen for myself. Yeah. So growing up, let's see. Damn, that was a long time ago. So, I don't know. I think I've learned a lot of things from… from my birth family. And I know, so probably one of the most one value I will say is my mom always had this thing of, if we went to school and worked hard and stuff, we would kind of get back the life we used to have when we were kids. So, we grew up in a really well-off family and then my dad and my mom had a breakup at some point. And then we lived with my dad for a couple of years, then he remarried and he kicked us out.

I: Oh wow.

A: And yah, so my mum had to, like take our transfer from Eldoret, come to Meru, start a life again from scratch for us and then we had a whole bunch of like, really poor years, where we used to struggle for everything, food, getting kicked out of houses, things like that.

I: How old were you at that time?

A: I think when my mum came back for us, I was in class 8, I was 14 and yeah, I guess my our last-borns were 10, they were in class 3 at that time.

I: Oh, so you have siblings?

A: Yah, we are we are six. So, my mom and five of us. So, there is big sis and there is me, and then there is my bro, and then the last-borns are twins. Well, I mean, we're not kids now, we’re like a really old family. The last-borns are 34 this year.

I: Wow. Oh gosh, that's… Okay, alright. We are not going to calculate and figure out how old you are.

A: Numbers person.

I: Yah, we’ll do the math after this. So, when did you decide to build your own family or when were you starting to think about building your own family?

A: This kind of happened. It wasn’t like a conscious decision that, oh, I'm gonna have children, I'm gonna do this. It was kind of a process, because those first days there were people who I cared about who were in the activism spaces, you know, working for women’s rights and LGBT rights.

I: So, tell me about building your own family.

A: Okay, so yah, that was interesting. It went… It wasn’t something I thought of in advance. You know the way people say, oh, I’m gonna have children, I'm gonna, I don’t know, get married, I'm going to make a family, no it didn't work out that way. So, ours was more different, it was more of we all like cared about each other, stuff we were going through separately and then finally decided now, it makes sense if we go through life together. So, it was me choosing them and them choosing me. So, it kind of worked both ways, yah. So…

I: That’s really beautiful. So, what does the word family mean to you as you understand it?

A: I think for me, based on how my family has come about, I think there's a huge part about choice and so it's choosing to love. That’s what constitutes family. Whether it's for me or for regular “normal families”, there's always the element of choice that's always ignored. When that couple come together and decide to build a family, they choose, when they decide to keep a baby they choose, when they decide to go and adopt, they choose. So, when me and my girls and my son decided to live together as a family, we choose. So, there is that huge part of choosing. And well I mean for, again, normal regular families, there is the part of the blood part, which in biology you give birth to a child and all that. And, yeah, so and maybe that obscures the choice part a lot but for us choice is the only thing that makes it… that makes it make sense for us.

I: When you talked about there being kind of a separation between the normal and maybe what you have, which is different from that, is there really a separation between the two or is family family?

A: I think family is family but societal perceptions. I mean, there's always this whole idea that… that family has to be that… well, like in our society, typically family is supposed to be that man and that woman who choose each other, go to church, get married, call the whole clan and then they're expected by society to deliver babies for the…

I: To maintain and grow the society.

A: Yah, so that’s kind of typically what society defines family as. And even, I don’t know, in Kenyan Constitution when there’s that whole Article 45 about family, they didn't think of families like what I have or families of the single mom who adopts a child or the lesbian woman who decides she's having a baby and so those were not thought of, they just thought of…

I: the typical nuclear

A: what I'm calling the typical nuclear family.

I: Yeah. So, who are the members of your family?

A: Well so… well, our family is unique in in two ways. One, well, in a couple of ways but yeah, I think the first thing that is common to all of us, we are all, we are all, we still are all involved in activism work. So, I mean, not as a profession but as part of our lives. So, like one of my girls is a photographer, but when there is demos and matches she’ll be there. There’s a performing artist but them they use their artwork for activism. So, I think that's, that's a rare thing to find, like, and me I come from a research background. But yeah, then I started speaking about human rights, about transgender rights and yeah, I found now I have a family who’s constituted of activists. So, I think that will be the first interesting thing. Second one, I guess that a majority of us are queer, except one person. So, again, that's, that's interesting. So, in terms of sexuality, lesbians and in terms of gender, there is me who is a trans-woman, there is my son who is a trans-man. And we have a gender non-conforming person. So, it’s one of those… it’s a family where all these things, which don't come naturally to society, you know, calling people with their right pronouns and accepting that when your daughter comes, she’s not necessarily gonna bring a man, it’s going to be girlfriend. Yeah, so it's those kinds of things. I think that's also an interesting part of us. And then the third thing is that we are all adults, so my son is 24. That makes it a bit complex, because I think of a 10 year gap between the oldest of my children and myself, which, in the typical family, if that happened then it would mean someone was married off at 10 years old.

I: That's true actually, that’s true.

A: Yeah, but for us being a family of choice, that happens. And yeah, it… yeah, so being adults, there’s there’s that wall, there’s a lot of societal things that come into play, like if you’re adults, should you like take responsibility or does the person who is the parent need to be stepping in as much as she is? As much as I do? So, stuff like that, yeah.

I: So, tell me about your position as mother, how… because is it as we understand it, being that you are the kind of like the parental figure in the household and how are you how are you navigating that and how are you defining it for yourself?

A: Navigating, well I’m not sure I’m doing a good job at navigating.

I: That’s what all mothers say secretly.

A: So, yeah, a lot of times, there's always that whole imposter feeling syndrome you’re there like, this is not… I'm not this thing. But yeah, but then there is times and I think what's been really interesting, I don't know if it's the same with regular families, I think, in my children's lives, just based on the fact that I don't know, being queer, being activist, there is things maybe other parents have never had to consider, like stuff to do with mental health and, and things like that, what's going to be a trigger? And yeah, so and yeah, there is all that and then also there is this stuff, where if they're going through something, a heartbreak or a financial thing or a job thing, then I can be there for them, yeah. I mean, it's nice. It's also it's also I think also a bit different. Given our age differences, there is that thing of, oh mom, you look good today. No, you need to step up to can't be looking like this, while other transgender women out there slaying, so.

I: Well, at least they’re giving, you know, fashion advice.

A: Yah.

I: They’re looking out for their mom.

A: Yeah, a lot.

I: And how long have you guys lived together in this way as a family?

A: I think since March this year. I think we’ve had 6 months together.

I: Oh, so it’s only 6 months together? Wow.

A: Yeah, we've been tight knit, I think let’s say last year, the march against femicide. That would be the one place where we all met. I mean, we all knew each other but if we were to trace back where, like our connection and bonds started, would be last year’s march against femicide.

I: In your opinion and in your experience now, do you think the term family should be expanded to include other kinds of connections and relationships? And if so, what else should we consider as family or which other pairings or yeah, basically, which other connection should be considered as family?

A: Well, I mean yeah, it goes back to what I was saying. The choice part is largely ignored. So, when if there is one, two, three human beings who choose to be together, then that then we should start thinking of it as family. And so that, the choosing, yeah… and there's a lot of relationships which people need to start seeing as possible families. The polyamorous, I can't call it a couple, the polyamorous relationship, so there is three, four people in a relationship together. Maybe two or three of them live together and again, yeah, that should already be seen as family. There is lesbian couples living together. I mean, as much as our law, as much as our law criminalizes it…

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah, we should… the fact that it’s two human beings who are choosing each other. That's family.

I: That should be enough.

A: Yeah.

I: Does religion play any role in your life or in your, in your children's lives?

A: Well, I think religion has kind of… Has it evolved for me? I think for my children too, cause one, like I said, we're a queer family. And so more of mainstream religion teaches us that our existence is wrong and so there is that whole struggle first, where you have to find out, you know, if I came from a supreme being, from a god, from a divine, then just I can't be wrong just by my existence. And so, there is that whole part where you have to explore, what does God mean for me? What does the… what's my connection to the universe? Things about purpose. And I know for me, that's been a bit of a journey for me personally, because I grew up in a very Catholic family. My sisters are still very Catholic, so…

I: Story of my life as well.

A: So yah, so and a lot of times, we always found answers in the, like teachings of the church, and this is how you are supposed to live life, until me being transgender came up and there was no answers any more. And so, for myself it’s more of like, you know, I don't I don't want to hear about this part of your life. We can talk, we can be nice to each other, we can talk, we can work together, cause we did a lot. We… like I said, we are a very driven family, because my mom always put this as the path for us to get back to… is it a better life or a good life? It is a good life, yeah? So, we do a lot of consulting work together. So, they are like yeah, we'll do that but this other part of your life, I don't know about it. So… so there is that, I mean, so so religion… and you know, if… I always think to myself if the church, if maybe one day, the bishop said, you know, trans people are okay, queer people are okay, that would be the one thing my mum just needs for acceptance.

I: But the new Pope might just do that. He feels very progressive.

A: I hope so. I mean…

I: Yeah.

A: Yeah, so, so religion was a big part of my… I was named after the Pope, so...

I: Oh wow.

A: That’s how big it was. So, and so for me, it took a while. I guess nowadays, I'm very open to sorry… I mean, I'm not so much on the dogma and stuff. I believe in a lot of values, in love, in freedom, in gaining knowledge, which I think is what in the Christian teachings, when, when they talk about the image of God they're not talking about a man, they're talking about all these three particular qualities. And so, there is stuff I pick from my Catholic bringing, there is stuff I pick from a lot of Buddhist teachings, about impermanence and all that. I even explore things, like what are they called, the zodiacs, Yoruba religion, so like I've really freed myself to explore. Two of my children are still Christians. Ronnie has a wall cross in his room.

I: Wow.

A: I gifted it to him, it came from my mom and when I realized he has like strong Christian beliefs, I was like, okay here is a crucifix. Reybian and Sisi are exploring, they've been part of an affirming church, which accept queer people.

I: That's wonderful, here? Based in Nairobi?

A: Yeah.

I: That’s really wonderful.

A: So, they were part of that and even if they're not actively going to church, they still, like use the teachings from that. And that's mostly Reybian. Sisi, I'm not sure of their beliefs.

I: They keep shifting.

A: Yeah. But, yeah, there is…

I: It sounds like you've really built a home where a lot of things are possible.

A: Yeah.

I: Even if it's just from the basis of questioning things and exploring.

A: Yeah, I mean, just gender and sexuality are like core parts of being human. And, when life has thrown you this curve, where you need to question that, I think opens everything else up for questioning. So, your faith, relationships, what family means, yeah.

I: So, tell me about your household and we're here in your really beautiful house. So, tell me how do you run the house? Do you divide tasks and you mentioning earlier your responsibilities as a mother. So, tell me how you run your household.

A: So initially, there is the thing I mentioned about all of us being adults. And so, the first couple of months, it was always, I'm not gonna like put a rota of tasks, we're just going to, that one we’ll just take responsibility and do things. But then what happened over time, you'd find people would be doing a lot and then these others would be happy to just let things flow. And so…

I: What? Like dishes and you know, tidying up?

A: Yeah. I mean, everyone had their thing. Reybian likes to clean up. I think he’s made like that. I think Maryliz likes cooking. So, it was always like, yeah, this can balance itself out. We don't need to have like a hard-wrought thing and this is how you do things. I think that and I do dishes a lot, because of… I mean, it also helps me… I don't know how to explain but cleaning dishes

I: It’s kind of therapeutic.

A: Yes, exactly.

I: Yeah. I get it. I get it completely. With some music on.

A: Okay, interesting, yes.

I: Just chilling. Even cleaning the house can be very therapeutic. It's kind of like you're working something in your mind.

A: Yeah, for Reybian, music and cleaning the house. Me, I'll do music, cleaning the dishes. So, it kind of worked and then I think the only thing we had to put down as a rule was to be conscious of the other person who's gonna do it. So, even if you’re not going to do the dishes, just don't just dump and if you could difficult possibly just clean it, if it’s just one plate, then you don't need to accumulate it. And then, I guess the other thing we did was a rota of food, because I mean, with Corona everyone in the house would just be like, one month, gas done, food done. They’re like what?

I: That’s true. I didn't know. There is the Corona weight, there is the Corona stress. It’s a lot.

A: Yeah, so we finally had to do like a rota, this is what we're gonna eat and then if we stock up for like, food for the household, it’s food for the household. If anyone else needs to snack in between, you need to take care of yourself.

I: And then what about the other financial obligations? So, even things like shopping in the house, rent, are you able to distribute that or do you… are you taking on the majority of that?

A: No, I take the majority of that. If I ask for help, it’s when I’ve like completely ran out. I’m like kids, I’m out. Who has cash? We need food. Yeah, so yeah, but, yeah it took… I think also that was part of the reason why we came together, cause everyone was struggling separately. I was like you know, let’s stay together, let’s see how we can you know, build ourselves from this, yeah.

I: Super. I mean, you've talked of this already, because in your role as mother and because of the specific needs of your household, you do take on a lot of the important expenses but what about decisions about what the family does? Do you sit and talk together or how does that run?

A: Yeah, we have… So, I mean, like I said, our family is built on choice. So, unlike other families, the children also chose the parent. And so, a lot of the values we live for, like, we've had to discuss and agree. So, let me see if there’s an example. So, one of us had some trouble with… so it involved with the law and all that. And we were like, so this is it, we need to like get the person out of it so, and doing that meant like, sacrifice for everyone. So, I mean the money was mine, but it was more of we agree this is what er stand for as family. If any of us was in trouble, we’d go all out. And yeah, so there was that whole conscious decision, that yeah it’s going to affect our budgeting for the next month and we’re going to struggle but…

I: this is important to us.

A: Yeah, this is what counts.

I: That’s really wonderful. What about things like… what would you guys do for leisure or before Corona? Were you guys going out together, were you, you know…

A: Well, yeah before they did a lot of…

I: Or during Corona, who knows?

A: Well, we’ve had a lot of interesting birthdays over the year.

I: Oh yeah, you did mention that the birthdays were back to back.

A: Yeah, so, I think that’s the only interesting thing we’ve done post Corona. Before Corona, the girls will got out a lot with each other, They do sleepovers and stuff.

I: Actually, what is the age range of your children?

A: 24 to 29.

I: Oh wow, they're really pretty close in age, yeah.

A: We're again not going to discuss your age.

I: What do you… what are your views on marriage?

A: It's interesting. So, I think the way marriage is constituted right now, I don't know if it's for other countries but for Africa, for Kenya specifically, the way it's considered right now, it's just an oppressive institution for women.

I: I completely agree. It’s really [UNINTELLIGBLE] to be honest.

A: So, yeah, and because it's… the idea of it is really nice, it’s like two people would love each other and who are going to grow as individuals together but then what happens is the two people come together and all the initial noble goals of loving each other, growing as individuals, they just disappear and they start meeting societal expectations. So, where are the babies? How should you look financially or how should you present yourself in society? And it’s… it becomes such drudge work, like, it’s like cause you’re I mean, at weddings I have a lot of friends who get married and they’re in weddings, and there’s a time I used to sing at weddings, so…

I: Oh wow. So many talents.

A: Yeah, with, with a group, so. So, I’d be… we’d be there, and the thinking was always that they look really good together but then inside, you’re also afraid for them. Because one year, two years down the line it’s like it’s no longer that happy, blissful, hopeful thing they got into. It’s now like a burden they’re carrying. So, it becomes drudgework and I don’t know, a lot of times when, like last year when the LGBT Community had the repeal case and when the judges ruled, they said you know, they’re protecting marriage and they’re protecting the family. And for me, I though about it and it was… I felt they were not actually protecting the interests of the couple in the marriage. The interest… they were protecting the interests of society. They were invested in the interest of society in that particular thing, because right now marriage and family is like a unit. It’s supposed to be the unit that fosters love and caring and all these nice values for society but right now it’s the unit of extraction. So, all adverts, all the billboards, they have the picture of… from mortgage to margarine spread, the family is what’s used in the billboard. And they count on that to keep the couple, the married couple, like working, not questioning systems. I mean, the couple will be in there/ The education system is terrible for their children, but they’ve just been put in this, it’s like a cog. They have to keep working, questionless, they won’t ask why does my child have to carry all these books? Or they could carry a tablet. They won’t question…

I: Which tablets? The ones that allegedly are supposed to be provided by the government?

A: Yeah. Things like… they won’t question why these tablets never happened. So, and it’s in the interest of a lot of corporates and sometimes governments to maintain that non-questioning kind of a family, kind of a marriage, where people are just caught up in the day to day. Just chasing something that maybe is not real. And so for me I feel yeah, a lot of times marriage has been and family also, has been subverted for other purposes than what it was supposed to be for.

I: Do you find that within your extended family, people have also this kind of “radical ideas” of marriage or is marriage as you understand it from looking at people around you, maybe not your core home, because that one is very radical in its composition. But in your extended family, is that how people approach marriage and do people have multiple partners? You know, or are they polygamous perhaps? Or are they remarrying? What is… how is marriage approached by your extended family?

A: If I speak for the family I grew up in, like I said, we’re all like very driven, so we were a very career oriented family. So, none of my sisters are married. My brother has a partner and yeah, it was more of marriage and getting children was never like the main thing. So, I’m kind of off the beaten paths.

I: But kind of close and [UNINTELLIGIBLE] in a way.

A: Yeah, so yeah, it was never the idea. And so, educational goals like, I think there is six masters, one doctorate, and I think they’re bringing there’s going to be more. I’ve not contributed a lot to that. I’m hoping to. But yeah, there is all these educational goals, career achievements, you know. 35 under 35, things like those.

I: Nice.

A: That’s what my nuclear family looks like. Our aunties, uncles, yeah, they still have that whole idea of you know, you need to get married, you know, you have your, all your… and they used that against my mum once. I think last year when I was now living my life openly, like well, someone said it’s not coming out, it’s inviting other people into your life, so…

I: Exactly. It’s always been your reality.

A: So, when a lot of my pictures were on my social media and so one of my uncles called my mum was like oh, your son is becoming a woman. And so, my mum panicked, and she has high blood pressure, and it was a lot of stress for my sisters and everyone and then finally, she stopped picking their calls. And then what happened, is they started calling… well, I would call them neighbors, like very distant relatives from like two generations back and asking them about my mom saying, you know, this woman has pushed her children to education and to work and now none of them are married and they have… she even has a son who is becoming a woman. So, it was like a lot of pressure for… so yeah, yeah. So, my extended family still has the whole concept of you get to a certain age, you produce children.

I: You produce them? Never mind if you want them, or if you’re never the fertility… I am loving that, my weakness. What are your views on same sex relationships?

A: Oh, it's a relationship. It's human relationships. I don't know why people have to constrain themselves to it’s same sex, it's opposite sex. It, it makes no difference. It's two human beings connecting with each other, loving each other. So it's… and I mean, for my family, it's actually the opposite. The only straight person is one out of six. So, that’s really… it’s like we really have to be on board with…

I: You just kind of have to.

A: Yeah, we can’t.

I: Although it kind of feels like it’s a loving environment in which all things are possible.

A: Yeah, yeah, it is. I mean, my daughter can bring a boyfriend, my other girls can bring their girlfriends. And, I mean, there's also the possibility of two of my children dating because they are not my biological children, so…

I: That‘s true.

A: there is all that yeah. So, we have to be like, completely open and I mean, as a trans person, the whole… the whole idea of gender and sexuality kind of excludes people like me and my son, because when sexuality is gendered, it was based on men and women, cishet men and cishet women. So, it kind of… so when people are called homosexual, it’s always referring to cishet women or to cishet men. When they’re called that, right, it’s always again, cishet man, cishet woman. They don’t factor in that people like us exist. And so when you ask for a person like okay, yeah, so I’m a trans woman who’s attracted to the feminine, so I’ll probably date a woman. What are you going to call that? You’re like no, you look womanish or you are some type of a woman and this is also a woman, so that might be a lesbian relationship, but…

I: But it's erasure.

A: Yeah, it’s erasure. It's like we don't we're not supposed to exist at all. So, we weren’t even factored in in terms of sexuality. So, yeah, and, yeah, so…

I: So, in your composition of your family, it is a chosen family. And would you… how would you describe that? Would that be a sort of adoption or is it just a formational family?

A: Well, it's a formation. I know, my son and I are considered being like adoption but it's still… it's not on top of the stack of priorities. We also have to do like our name change and gender affirming, whatever change and all that. And yeah, there's that. So, but yeah it's it's formation, it's formation by choice.

I: This is a strange one, but I guess it still counts. Who leads the task of raising the children?

A: Oh.

I: Now that they’re adults. In this household, how does that work for you?

A: So it's, it's two parts. I mean, there is… there is the part where I considered they've been raised by other parents before, before there were my children. And, that’s why I was saying maybe my considerations have to be like, very different from a regular typical family. So, I have to think of so like if I'm enforcing things like, you know, cleanup, and what I also have to think about, is it a trigger from your previous… from your relationship with your parent and all that? So, yeah, but I will say, as the parent I lead that whole… these were, these are our goals, these are values, like the meeting, we had to discuss how to help one of us that was like, so this is a value. So, like, I have to lead that discussion but then I also trust each one of them to keep me accountable to it and keep each other accountable to whatever we agree and to whatever values we believe, make us make us a family. Well, I mean, there is also the thing that it's, it's an age thing, and I don't know if it happens in a lot of regular families, but just seeing how the socio-economic setup in Kenya right now, I would suspect that a lot of families might have two parent adults. So, 21- to maybe even 30-year-olds. And there's that whole thing of yeah, you want them to be independent, you want initiatives to take off. But then you feel that the safety net has to be there for longer than it used to be maybe in the past, yeah, so there's also that dynamic.

I: How do you navigate things like a combination of maybe traditional and societal rites of passage? So, you mentioned that one of your children is still religious? So, things like baptism, is that still important to them? Is that something they're seeking out? Things like, well, I don’t know if this applies, but things like circumcision, so things that are, you know, make us members of a society in a particular way. Are those kinds of rites of passage evident or not evident, but are they occurring within your family?

A: Well, I guess the one that we've experienced, two of my girls went to see their birth parent, and it was more of like, it was more of like, what do you call it, the marriage part where the couple go to meet the parents and there was that. So, that was interesting, because I mean…

I: What was the intention of that meeting?

A: Well, so my family, unlike regular families, I would say part of the goals is also unspoken goals, but I always hope there's going to be like a good relationship between the birth parents and my children. And so, this happened where the birth parent was finally coming around, like, you know, let me meet, let me meet your girlfriend. And so yeah, that happened. And so, our like suspense watching this thing unfold. And they did it. They went there for a week. So, that was interesting. I mean, it's, you would expect that having set ourselves free from all these norms, like seeing… doing the traditional thing of going to introduce your partner to the parents wouldn’t count but yeah, in this case, it counted and it was like really important for them.

I: That's really, really wonderful. Are there other maybe considerations that maybe regular families don't have, things that they have to navigate? Because you mentioned even earlier things like changing your name legally, and you know, other things like that, that affirm you in your understanding of yourself and your, your presentation of yourself. What are some of those things that you are having to now navigate as an adult, as the mother of this household?

A: Yeah, so well, personally, for me, it's the whole documentation. I know, before this place, the last place we tried to get a house at the negotiation with the owner of the house, he is in the States, and we talked on email and he was like, oh, this is fine. And we sent him our documents, he was like, oh, I understand this is okay. I’ll let you meet my agent. So, he introduced as on email to the agent. And the first thing the agent said was like, so the names you used on the contract and the names on this document are different. I'm like, oh, okay, they’re all my names. What do you want? And he was like oh, send me, send me your ID. And then I sent him the ID, and he was like oh the name on the ID and the name on the passport are different. I'm like, they’re all mine. So you choose what you're comfortable with and then write out the contract with that, I’ll sign. And so, he was like, I’ll use the ID. So, he used the ID and then on the day we were supposed to view the house and I show up, and then he got, like, really uncomfortable. He would sit at the corner, and my girls would all be on this side and the managers of the house would tell him, “These are your potential tenants. Will you go show them the house?” He’s like, “No, it's not finalized.” And so, he took us to see the house and then he ghosted us for like two days and we needed to move from the other place we were living. We had a deadline and we needed to move. So, he ghosted us for two days and the agent who was helping us came and said, you know, “I’ve gone to talk to the management and they say, Wilson is not comfortable, because you showed and you’re a woman and your ID is a man’s. ID.” So yeah, there's those situations and I know there’s times I’ve had my children sign on things, because I couldn't sign because it would cause like, and like M-Pesa, most of the time, most of the times, I let them do it. Because for me, it's going to be chaotic and stuff. And, so there's all that. There is one of the places we lived at that, we were kicked out because we were queer. So we had… the balcony was a bit different from this. It was like you know, the completely closed one and we had the rainbow flag and the keyhole was broken, and we had like a small sticker covering it.

I: Oh, oh, I thought somebody had broken in. Oh.

A: Yeah, so unfortunately or fortunately, the stickers for Outright, Outright International. It's like a whole LGBT organization. Someone came. I don't know… they came and took a photo of that and sent it to our landlord and then they made the claim and said we're turning the house. Of course, they couldn’t make the accusation that we are queer, because there's nothing against that in like occupying the premises. So, what they did, they said we were turning the house into an office for Outright. And then it caused all these chaos. People started talking in our WhatsApp group. The manager called us, they were like you know, why don't you add us to the WhatsApp group and we can defend ourselves? And then the Admins refused. And then we were like, okay, send the admins to our house and then we can allay their fears and you know, we were like if it’s the Christian who are worried, we’ll even put a cross. We’ll even put a crucifix. We put a crucifix outside the door, and we took off our sticker. And then finally the… well, so we tell the manager to send them to our suite. We can talk, this doesn't have to be such a big issue. If they're afraid of something they can tell us. They were like, no, you know, they're saying you’ll teach their daughters. Like, but who do I even interact with?

I: This whole idea of teaching gayism.

A: We don't see each other. Yeah, exactly. And they caused so much chaos. Finally, the owner of the house, he lives in Mombasa, he is not even in Nairobi. He called us and he was like, “People, it's Ramadan, and I can’t rest.” I’m getting calls every day. So what I’ll do, I’ll refund your money, give you like a whole month.

I: So tell me about building a home for your family. What has that reality been for you?

A: I think for us it’s also been tied to the fact that we’re all queer, so to our queerness. So like, the last place just being kicked out because of a flag or a sticker. I mean, we didn't see that one coming but it happened and then also finding a place that would accept us was a bit hard. But this place here, they are like really nice. I think the manager edited the contract to show intersex people and other genders. Like, he just changed it all to fit to us. And he copied me in one of the conversations with the lawyer and he was like, oh, the lady who runs the house is possibly intersex or transgender and so, that's why we have to make this accommodation. And so, it was very unique, but I think it gave me hope. I mean, there's some goodness in the world.

I: Yeah, not just accepting but also really fully seeing you in your essence.

A: Yeah.

I: Yeah. And how many… so how many homes have you moved in and how long have you lived in either places?

A: We’ve moved twice. I mean, thrice, counting the first time we all came together. And then second time. So, I think three times. Yeah.

I: And do you see yourselves living together for you know, as long as possible. So, like kind of like in the understanding of a family, kind of like that family is forever, or do people do people drift away? Or what do you see?

A: Well, living together, no. It’s, I mean, like most of the goals that we are all working towards to, when they get achieved they are possibly going to take us apart. So, like, if any of my children decide to get married and start their own house or family, if some of their careers take off. I mean, they’re all… we’re an adult family, so if careers take off, yeah, that’s going to pull us ahead but being family, I think we’ll always be that. So, if I move somewhere else and one of them wants to come stay, it will be my daughter coming home. Yeah, so...

I: So they’ll always be your children?

A: Yeah.

I: Okay. So tell me about a special memory or something that you hold dear in your heart for your family. Like when you think this is a moment in time that okay, this are really my people.

A: Ah, let’s see. I think the interesting one was Mother’s Day. And they were like oh, happy Mother’s Day and so, one said mother of lesbians. And so, I use that as my hashtag now online. But yeah, that was… it was really special.

I: Did they do something special for you maybe altogether?

A: Well, yeah. We were together in the house. I think we’d stopped having common dinners cause we realized our routines were like very weird. But yeah, it was it was nice. Was there wine? I think there was wine, yeah but the words were like the most touching.

I: Ah, that’s beautiful.