



Friends New Underground Railroad

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Praise Wancha: “The caring sister went ahead to tell me how such evil was trying to eat me up, to make me a lesbian.”

— A Friends New Underground Railroad Story

I am called Praise Wancha, born in Mbale Nkokonjeru. I lost both my Parents to HIV/AIDS when I was hardly a year old (so am told) so I was taken on by the little sisters of Saint Francis in an Orphanage they supported.

I was loved and appreciated, I didn't know I was an Orphan till the age of 12. Though I had so many questions, I really never minded the answers, after all I had so many “mothers” around me who loved and cared for me so much.

One thing in life which really bothered me was that I never had a father figure, kids at school used to tell all sorts of stories about their fathers, well it was really hard for me to miss what I didn't know.

As I grew into teenager hood, something was not strange but rather different, I was attracted to fellow girls. I tried fighting it and caused more pains in my heart. I was confident enough to go and openly tell one of the sisters about my internal struggles. The caring sister was so touched and she explained to me what it means, and she went ahead to tell me how such evil was trying to eat me up, to make me a lesbian. We prayed and we were in agreement with God that it will all be well.

Little did I know that I was being stalked and watched closely by all the sisters and the Mother Superior.

Despite my efforts to force my self to get attracted to boys in school, I failed, the more I tried the more I hate to even associate with boys within the high school.

This was hard for me, these internal struggles made my class grades and marks drop, to heal my self, I started becoming so stubborn and bullying other students and a tomboy.

Chance came my way when another girl who was different from other students joined our school, it didn't take long for us to start dating, we even made agreements to start sharing a decker-bed. This landed us into trouble and just before our final exams we were both suspended.



The sisters weren't impressed and I was put into isolation and asked to dedicate my self to a life of prayers, this made me become suicidal and I attempted to take my life on more than 3 attempts. Inside me, I came up with a plan to run away. I lied to one of the sisters that I wanted to go for confession to the father. The sisters were impressed, so I was allowed to go.

I never returned, I disappeared. This took me to a whole new world, a life of drugs, crime and scandals. This drew a lot of attention to me and my other fellow gals, so we decided to move to another town. We just kept on moving from one town to another. We risked so much. At 21 I looked as though I was an old woman of 50 yrs, drugs had taken a heavy stand on me, I accepted to seek for help. I did some little research and it landed me into the hands of one activist who changed my life. This man who has lived his life for others talked to me and he was the first person who made me feel that there is hope in life.

He worked with other volunteers to help me fight my drinking and drug problems, he had created safe spaces for lesbians and we socialized and even start thinking big, some of us were even enrolled into life skills training, where I learnt making baking. By 2013 I was making a living by baking cakes, I had both gay and straight clients.

But when the Ugandan government went harder on the gays, there was a lot of unrest within our community and when the radio stations started outing our names and addresses, Uganda wasn't home after the president signed the AHB into law. Several of us went into hiding and by July of 2014 we had gotten help to leave Uganda, thanks to a rather little known Organization called FNUR. These guys rock despite all the criticisms they managed to save some of our lives without so much long waiting. They coordinated with people on the ground and we were transported out of Uganda.

Am now settled in Kigali Rwanda where am living my life, earning a living by making cakes for all sorts of events. Thanks FNUR for saving my life and God bless you all.

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Please make a donation to support the work of Friends New Underground Railroad so that we can help other people like Praise Wancha.

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Thanks!