

WHAT IS FREEDOM OF BELIEF?

Written by

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LIVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE Nigeria Series #1

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FADE IN:

EXT. NORTHERN NIGERIA - ESTABLISHING - DAY

MONTAGE of Northern Nigerian countryside, Jos, freeways, a mosque, church.

ANNE ABOK (V.O.)
We are more divided and polarized
than we've ever been.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "ANNE ABOK - INTERNATIONAL EXEC. DIR., ADVOCATE"

ANNE ABOK
We live, work, and shop in
segregated settlements.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A middle-income apartment building near the university.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

JOY, 20, a vibrant Nigerian college student, places a framed photo of herself with two girlfriends on a shelf next to a cross as she and her MOTHER, 40, unpack from moving.

FELIX SAMARI (V.O.)
Women, youth, and minorities suffer
the most. They want a future where
they can thrive and reach their
full potential...

Joy's brother, GIDEON, 22, bangs open the front door carrying more boxes to unpack. Joy and her mother help him.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "FELIX JOSEPH SAMARI -- COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY OFFICER, FORB TRAINER"

FELIX SAMARI
Where everyone, regardless of their
religious belief or unbelief, has
equal opportunity and rights as
citizens.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "FR. ATTA BARKINDO -- EXEC. DIR. OF THE KUKAH CENTRE,
HEAD OF SECRETARIAT, NATIONAL PEACE COMMITTEE"

FATHER BARKINDO

We have to find ways to agree to
disagree with our neighbor that
does not act, look, or pray like we
do. That is what freedom of belief
seeks to do.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "MARYAM MUSA SAMBO -- ATTORNEY, WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS ADVOCATE"

MARYAM SAMBO

Freedom of religion is a call to
solidarity, respect, and tolerance
based on the sacredness of every
human being.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

As Joy, Gideon, and their mother unpack, Joy's FATHER, 42,
comes out of the bedroom overloaded with a computer bag and
books.

MARYAM SAMBO (V.O.)

It is the expression of the
immeasurable value of every human
being.

Joy takes a bulging bag of books from him and offers to go
with him to the university. He agrees. Joy grabs her purse
and leaves the apartment with him.

GLORIA BALLASON (V.O.)

To promote and protect religious
freedom is not just to promote an
idea or concept.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "GLORIA MABEIAM BALLASON -- ATTORNEY, JOURNALIST"

GLORIA BALLASON

It's a sign of the respect due to
every person. It is an affirmation
of the dignity of every person.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "SHEIKH OMAR FAROUQ MUHAMMAD -- POLICY ADVISOR, PEACE
ADVOCATE"

SHEIKH OMAR

We are created to be male and
female, of different tribes and
nations...

CUT TO:

GRAPHIC: "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Sura 2:256"

"For you were called to freedom...Through love serve one
another. Galatians 5:13"

SHEIKH OMAR (V.O.)

So we can come together and work to
understand each other and grow in
our values and faith.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

FELIX SAMARI

We share a common humanity.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

ANNE ABOK

Freedom of belief is a right we are
all born with. It is one of the
most fundamental rights we have
because it goes to the core of who
we are, how we live and how we
speak.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SHEIKH OMAR

Despite the fact that religious
freedom is a fundamental human
right, it has not received the
degree of protection the law
provides other fundamental rights.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

MARYAM SAMBO

Freedom of religion or belief is an absolute right enshrined in our constitution.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

FATHER BARKINDO

Freedom of belief gives everyone the right to have or adopt a religion or belief...

CUT TO:

GRAPHIC: "FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF IS:

-- The freedom to have, choose, and change a religion or belief.

-- The freedom to practice a religion or belief.

-- Freedom from coercion.

-- Freedom from discrimination."

FATHER BARKINDO(V.O.)

And to practice their belief peacefully as they choose, without any coercion or discrimination.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

ANNE ABOK

It also protects the right of people not to practice a religion or belief.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

SUPER: "PATIENCE LUKA - STUDENT, ADVOCATE"

PATIENCE LUKA

Sometimes religion can be used as a weapon to oppress and control, especially women. But freedom of belief does not mean imposing your religious beliefs on others.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

FELIX SAMARI
Freedom of belief doesn't protect
religion. It protects humans
because it's a human right.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A modern Nigerian university campus.

FATHER BARKINDO (V.O.)
Freedom of belief doesn't mean that
all religions are the same...

INT. FATHER'S UNIVERSITY OFFICE - DAY

Joy and her father place books on the shelves in his office.
Joy admires his diploma.

FATHER BARKINDO (V.O.)
Or that you have to agree with what
someone from another faith
believes.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

FATHER BARKINDO
You can be firmly committed to your
beliefs and still respect a person
who believes differently than you.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

FELIX SAMARI
If we believe what we believe is
true, we shouldn't be afraid of
challenges to our faith.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE OFFICE - DAY

Two students at the university -- MARYAM, 20, wearing an
abaya (or hijab?) and her brother, BASHIR, 21, wearing a kufi
-- chat as they walk down the hall with their backpacks.

FELIX SAMARI (V.O.)

In an open environment, the truth of what we believe will be found out. In free societies, one's faith can become much richer.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

MARYAM

Freedom of belief contributes to building a strong civil society...

INT. FATHER'S UNIVERSITY OFFICE - DAY

Maryam and Bashir stop at the door of the office and look in. Joy glances up from her work and sees them looking at her curiously. Her father sees them as well, but before he can greet them, Maryam and Bashir move on.

SUMAYA HAMZA (V.O.)

To be able to gather with your loved ones builds strength. When you allow people to unite with one another openly, that strength resonates in every area of their lives and across society.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

FATHER BARKINDO

When genuinely embraced, religious freedom not only protects individuals from being persecuted by others, but also against abuses of power by states or governments.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

GLORIA BALLASON

We cannot ignore that in order to flourish...

INT. FATHER'S UNIVERSITY OFFICE - DAY

The Father sees Joy looking concerned and takes her hand.

GLORIA BALLASON (V.O.)
People have to be able to address
their deepest questions of
existence and meaning, both
privately and in community with
others.

INT. INTERVIEW SET - DAY

ANNE ABOK
Freedom of belief is integrated
into every part of who we are.

INT. FATHER'S UNIVERSITY OFFICE - DAY

Joy's father motions to his heart and the need to pray. Joy
nods, and they bow their heads.

ANNE ABOK (V.O.)
It's not just about practicing a
religion. It's about having the
freedom to live out our beliefs.

FADE TO BLACK.