

Priest

Infection

Message

Aloysius Joy Matovu, a veteran playwright, is one of the few Ugandan celebrities to follow in the footsteps of Philly Bongole Lutaaya, the first artiste and public figure to declare that he was HIV positive in the late 1980s. Ahead of today's World AIDS Day, Matovu narrated his story to Sarah Kisakye, a reporter with NVTU, Uganda's leading online television. Below are the excerpts as transcribed by Martin Kitubi

I am Aloysius Matovu Joy, an actor and movie director. I have produced movies, including the famous *Ndiwulira*, which highlights the battle against HIV. I was born in Rakai in 1961, a year before Uganda was granted Independence from the British colonial masters. I grew up hoping to be a priest, and whenever I take on roles in movies as priest, I feel comfortable.

Unfortunately, I never achieved my dream of becoming a priest because my parents were not married in church, which is a requirement.

I could have enjoyed my youth better, but I lost it when I decided to taste some of the "fruits of this world" and the pleasures of the young age pulled me away.

It seems I contracted the HIV

virus at campus, where I lost my virginity.

I was diagnosed with the virus in 2001 at NewHam General Hospital in the UK and my CD4 count was low (around 193 and 194).

My favourite role is when I acted as a cardinal, when I was donning robes of priests, cardinals and bishops. I always had an entry, I go on stage and I give a blessing; "The Lord be with you." And I quote a piece from our Mass because our Mass does not change: "Let us lift our hearts to the Lord..." And the audience could respond, Amen.

And I remember in 2010, during the Martyrs' Day celebrations, I was invited to lead all the Catholic artistes to Namugongo for the pilgrimage, and I had to address that large congregation.

I am working with Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I have lived with HIV/AIDS for close to 20 years and I have a story to tell; I tell

I was a virgin when I got HIV – Matovu



FACT FILE

- Matovu was born in 1961 in Rakai to a polygamous father who had 52 children from 17

women. He says about 19 of his siblings succumbed to HIV/AIDS.

- He is a professional English language and Literature teacher who taught in the UK for over four years, a poet and activist who takes care of hundreds of children, most of whom are orphans.
- Together with Andrew Benon Kibuuka and Charles James Ssenkubuge, Matovu founded Uganda's most successful drama group – Bakayimbira Drama Actors and he has authored more than 40 productions and poems.

it with passion because I know people love it and admire it to the extent that some call me their hero.

I am an English language and literature teacher and I would love to take the message to schools and children in particular. HIV/AIDS in schools is worse, and the reason why I

am concerned is because now people are growing up with no signs or symptoms of HIV/AIDS. Several children were born with HIV unknowingly and today, they have not yet established their status. My fear is that HIV might worsen, strike again and we would lose many people.