

# Equality in Africa: The Ugandan Fight for LGBTQ+ Rights



(image source: <http://www.mambaonline.com>)

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## History of LGBTQ+ Rights in Uganda

Currently, Uganda is known for its fierce persecution of LGBTQ+ individuals. However, this was not always the case. Here is a brief history of the rights of and attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community.

**Pre-Colonial Era-** Uganda is accepting of homosexuality

**1894-** Uganda becomes a British protectorate, adopts British law, including 'sodomy law' prohibiting homosexual behavior between men

**1964-** Uganda gains independence and the right to make their own laws, but does little to alter the sodomy laws already in existence

**2002-** Anti-gay American Evangelical preacher Scott Lively comes to Uganda and begins speaking out against LGBT rights

**2009-** Lively speaks at a conference in Kampala Uganda, months later the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which included the death penalty as a punishment for 'serial offenders' was introduced.

**2010-** Ugandan magazine *The Red Peppers* publishes list of '200 Top Homos' with pictures and home addresses. Violence against those listed ensues.

**2012-** Ugandan government orders ban on Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that promote LGBT rights

**2014-** Anti-Homosexuality Act established, but rejected by the Ugandan constitutional court, US levies sanctions against Uganda for their anti-homosexuality legislation

## The Opposition:

### Main Figures Against LGBTQ+ Rights

As previously mentioned, there are a few individuals particularly opposed to the rights of LGBTQ+ people in Uganda. Below is some information about a couple of them.

- **Scott Lively-** Previously mentioned, Scott Lively was an American Evangelical preacher. Seeing that his Anti-Gay rhetoric wasn't accepted in America, he began preaching it in Uganda. He even spoke before the parliament for hours, shortly before the Anti-Homosexuality Act was accepted. When asked about whether he had anything to do with the law and the harsh penalties against the LGBTQ+ community, he insisted that he wasn't involved. Ugandans, however, will point to Lively as one of the main influences that helped create the law.
- **Martin Sempa-** Ugandan pastor opposed to gay rights, received funding from both American pastors and US government for 'abstinence only' education
- **Yoweri Museveni-** Ugandan president in 2014, tried to enact Anti-Homosexuality Act, which targets not only members of the Community, but their allies, with long prison sentences.

## In Our Corner: LGBTQ+ Advocates and Organizations

While there are many people opposed to LGBTQ+ rights in Uganda, there are also activists working for the rights of the Community.

- **Pepe Julian Onziema-** Onziema is a trans activist. He has faced prison time for handing out flyers promoting AIDS awareness, though the charges were eventually dropped.
- **Bombastic-** *Bombastic* is Uganda's first- and only- LGBTQ+ magazine. So far, two editions of the magazine have been published. The magazine is being led by activist and lesbian Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera.
- **S.M.U.G.-** Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) is an NGO made to advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. Onziema is a leader at SMUG, along with four other advocates. The organization is based in Kampala, Uganda.

## In Memoria: David Kato

On January 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 gay rights activist David Kato was found bludgeoned to death. Kato's death came on the heels of a Ugandan magazine publishing a front cover that featured him, along with other LGBTQ+ activists with the caption 'Hang Them'. Kato was one of the few prominent activists, and had been since American Evangelicals began speaking to the government against homosexuality in 2009. He was raised in a conservative home that rejected same sex attraction, and had since learned to accept himself as a gay man. He was also known as an inspiration to the LGBTQ+ community in Uganda.



(image source: <http://www.oxfamblogs.org>)

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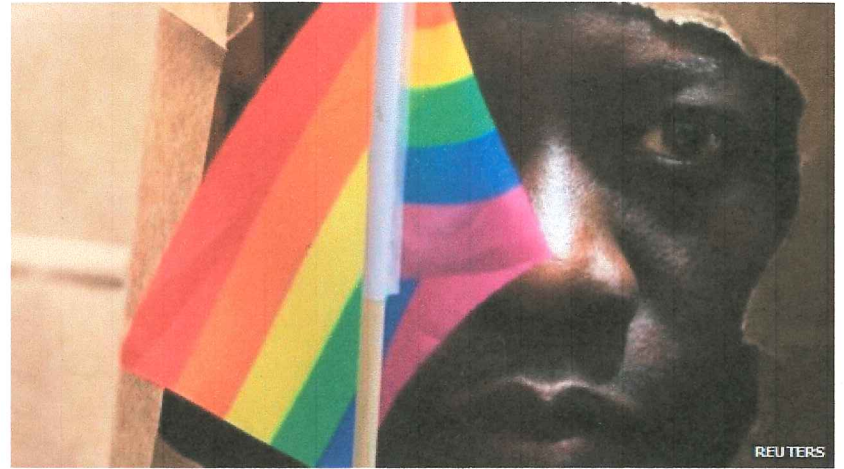


LGBT activists protect identities behind Rainbow masks (<http://www.trbimg.com>)

Activists at Uganda's pride parade (<https://www.festivalsherpa.com>)



Activists in London protest the Ugandan president's visit in 2014. (<http://cdn.pinknews.co.uk>)



A gay Ugandan marching in Boston's pride parade conceals his identity. (<http://news.bbcimg.co.uk>)



Two Ugandans at their country's pride parade (<http://streamafrica.com>)