



BLACK ALPHABET  
FILM FESTIVAL  
CHICAGO

**BLACK ALPHABET  
FILM FESTIVAL  
2023**  
*Soul & Spirit*



# Black Alphabet Film Festival Celebrates 10 Years

Black Alphabet Community,

On behalf of the Black Alphabet Film Festival team, we want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for joining us in this remarkable 10th year celebration. Your presence and support have made this event even more special, and we are deeply appreciative.

Your participation, enthusiasm, and engagement with the films, performances, and stories have made this festival a resounding success. We hope you enjoyed the rich array of LGBTQ+ films and the vibrant expressions of our diverse communities.

As we come together to celebrate "Soul & Spirit" and embrace the resilience and talent within our LGBTQ+ communities, your presence has added depth and meaning to the occasion. Thank you for being part of this unforgettable experience.

We look forward to seeing you again at our future events, and we remain committed to promoting diversity, inclusion, and the incredible creativity within our LGBTQ+ community. Until then, thank you once again for your support, and safe travels to all.

With profound appreciation,

Black Alphabet Film Festival

# FRIDAY ENTERTAINMENT

hosted by Storie Devereaux

6:00 PM

DJ Darryl



7:00 PM

CallMeJimmee



8:00 PM

Pearl Troupe Chicago



9:00 PM

KenChris & the Juiceman Band



# SATURDAY FILM LINE-UP

11:00 AM

Mikey's Army

Womb Envy

A Trip

Kevin

The Dancer

Sunday's Child

Antics

Youssou & Malek

BREAK (10 MIN)

1:30 PM

Kokomo City

Permissible Beauty

Get Free

Still We Thrive

Who Am I Becoming

BREAK (10 MIN)

4:10 PM

for My Brother

Woman Meets Girl

Exposed: Back To Black

Why You Have To Be Black & Gay

Skate

BREAK (10 MIN)

6:00 PM

Why?

A Little Piece Of Heaven

Talkback

# SUNDAY CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

11:00 AM

Visible

Call Me Kuchu

BREAK (15 MIN)

Out Of Uganda

3:30 PM

LUNCH (30 MIN)

4:00 PM

Someone Like Me

Discussions & Stories

7:30 PM

DINNER (1 HR)

8:30 PM

Ugandan Skit

9:00 PM

Pearl Troupe Chicago

9:30 PM

Julie Mutesasira

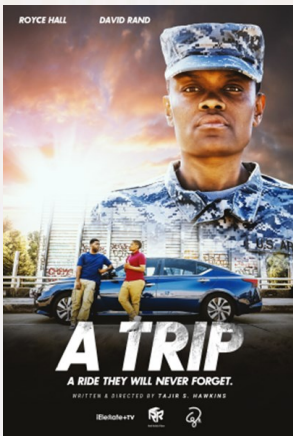
10:00 PM

Ugandan Celebration Experience



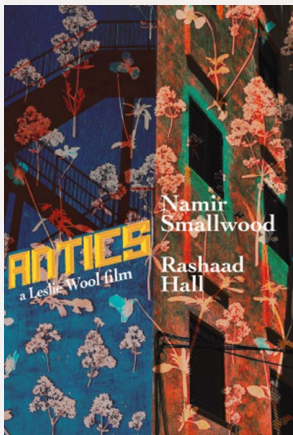
Heaven Gunz, a successful female game developer has lost faith in finding love at 50 after a bitter divorce. Heaven is beautiful and brilliant but growing up on the Westside of Chicago made her a savage, an aspect of Heaven's personality. Her Ex, Malik, knows very well as they face off in a high-profile business battle.

— Angele Cooper



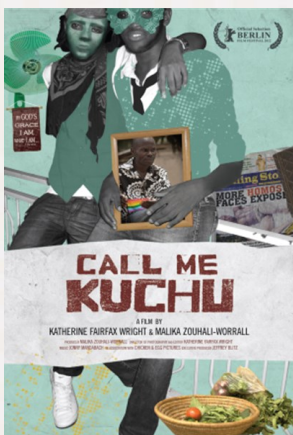
In a world where being your authentic self can come at a price, the same price as serving your country, PVT Seth Malone wants to serve his country and show up as himself fully. A chance ride with the cocky and closed-minded SPC Ryan Keith, Seth realizes he is no longer willing to shrink down for the comfort of others.

— Tajir S. Hawkins



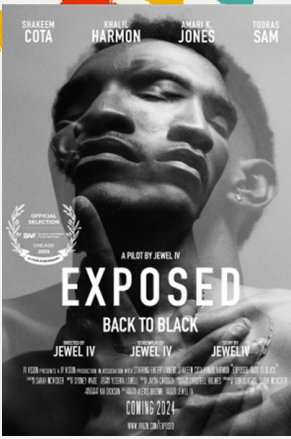
After calling a phone number found on the street, Pinbone Malone get the chance to experience the joys and menaces of masculine friendship.

— Leslie Wool



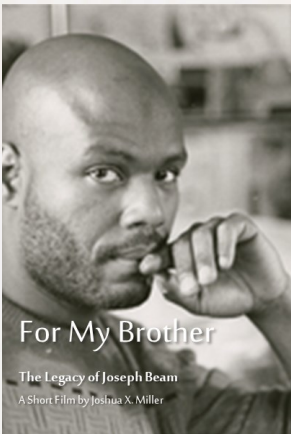
In Uganda, a new bill threatens to make homosexuality punishable by death. David Kato - Uganda's first openly gay man - and his fellow activists work against the clock to defeat the legislation while combating vicious persecution in their daily lives.

— Katherine Fairfax Wright; Malika Zouhali-Worrall



Photographer Marcus Carter must deal with the foreseeable consequences of potentially outing his lover Levi.

— *Jewel IV*



Filmmaker Joshua X. Miller takes a dive into the life of activist, writer, and poet Joseph F. Beam. Through first person interviews of friends, coworkers, and colleagues, a line is drawn between current times and the past. Have we grown? Where do we still need to go, and how can we get there?

— *Joshua X. Miller*



A newly independent drag artist faces an unusual request from a stranger.

— *Ray de Mesa*



A chance encounter with a stranger (Rique) at a record store leads Kevin (Tony Moore) on an over-thinker's journey to discover what this new relationship is.

— *Tony Moore; Wesley Quinn*



## Obama Foundation Freedom Summer

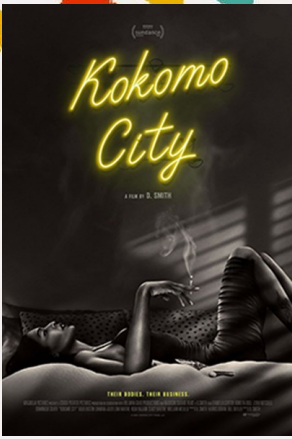
Black Alphabet was a proud recipient of the Obama Foundation's Freedom Summer grant. The support from this grant allowed Black Alphabet to expand its programming which led to the pilot of our Arts, Wellness & Empowerment retreat for young Black LGBTQ+/SGL men.

Through partnerships with Chicago-based professionals and Black-owned businesses, we were able to provide a weekend centered around rejuvenation, self-reflection, and mindfulness. Using art therapy, cooking classes, meditation, and yoga, we created a safe space where participants were able to relax and allow themselves to focus inward, set new goals, and indulge in restorative relaxation.

As we continue to grow and expand we are dedicated to putting our community first, because without them there is no Black Alphabet. This retreat marks the beginning of a new era as we have recognized the need, and have seen the impact retreats like this one have on the participants. We will continue to refine our programming and set out to reach more of our community through art therapy, wellness retreats, and of course our annual film festival programming.

We would like to thank our community partners and mental health/safe space professionals who helped transform the vision into a reality. We would also like to thank the Obama Foundation for believing in the vision and giving us the ability and resources to impact the lives of young Black men in Chicago.





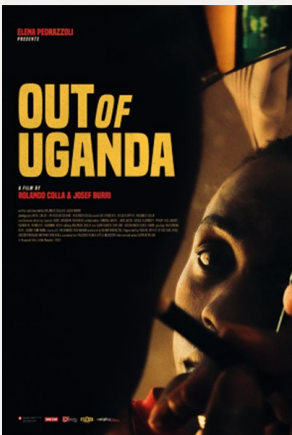
Four Black transgender sex workers tell their life stories in intimate and candid interviews.

— *D. Smith*



Mikey's Army tells the story of 16-year-old Mikey Alvarez who finds himself at a pivotal moment where he must decide whether or not to be open and honest about what he is feeling inside.

— *Andrew Keenan-Bolger*



For those caught in the crosshairs of homophobic hatred in Uganda, there is no safe harbor, and, as *Out of Uganda's* title sadly suggests, the only way for a queer person to be guaranteed their safety is to get out of the country.

— *Rolanda Colla; Josef Burri*



Permissible Beauty brings McAlmont together with photographer Robert Taylor (National Portrait Gallery and Victoria & Albert collections); film director Mark Thomas of Soup Collective; and researcher and producer, Professor Richard Sandell.

— *Mark Thomas*



Returning home to take care of his ailing father, a twenty something finds solace in the intimacy and sanctity of the roller skating world.

– Zoë Hodge



After 11 strangers unite to help a gay youth escape life-threatening violence in Uganda, the unexpected pandemic and conflicting opinions over his best interests test the limits of their commitment and jeopardize his fresh start in Canada.

– Steve J. Adams; Sean Horlor



A reminder that Black people have always thrived because we are made of magic.

– Campbell X



After she's ambushed on her way to an underground fight, an aspiring martial artist who supports herself through sex work must come face to face with her biggest opponent – herself.

– Vanessa Nicholson

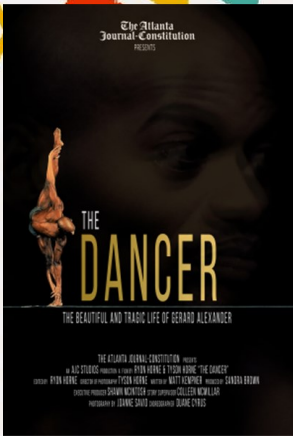


# accelerate

ViiV Healthcare's commitment to supporting community-driven activities that strengthen the health and well-being of Black gay, bisexual, queer, and trans men.

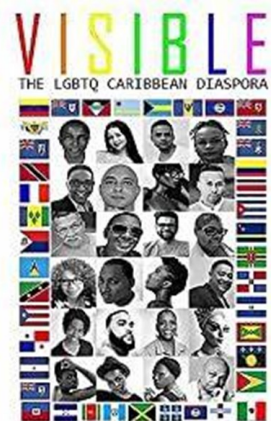
Follow us:





The compelling story of Gerard Alexander, a professional modern and ballet dancer who ended up homeless in Atlanta.

— *Ryon Horne; Tyson Horne*



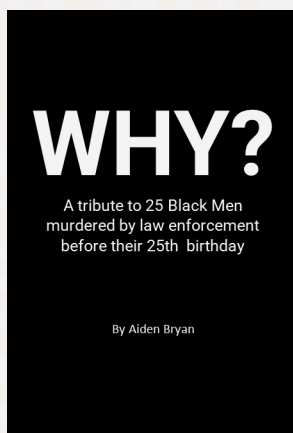
Visible is a groundbreaking feature length documentary with 30 subjects whose compelling and transformative raw portraits and narratives deconstructs what it means to be Caribbean, LGBTQ+, and living in the North American diaspora.

— *Max-Arthur Mantle*



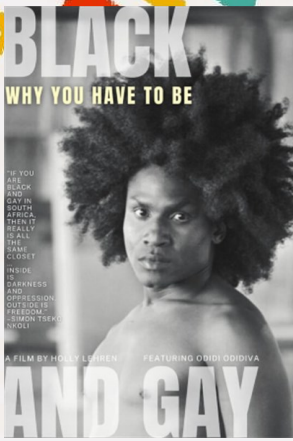
A documentary short chronicling Payton Royce's early stages of gender transition through to gender affirming surgery. It includes footage shot at the time as well as Payton's current reflections on his journey.

— *Odu Adamu; Payton Royce*



A short tribute to Black young men who were murdered long before their time.

— *Aiden Bryan*



This documentary follows internationally renowned drag queen Odidi Odidiva from his formative years to the shaping of his drag persona in the shadow of South African apartheid.

— *Holly Lehren*



As cocktails lead to revealing conversation, chemistry builds between Annabelle, an awkward in her own skin, forty-two-year-old woman, and Tessie, an extroverted, eighteen-year-old sex worker. A surprising moment soon introduces the possibility of a deeper connection.

— *Murry Peeters*



When a gay party boy's estranged small-town best friend shows up expecting him to play baby daddy, even a lover with low-vision and an imaginary drag queen can't stop the womb envy.

— *Jake Horowitz*



Yousou and Malek are in love but they now have to say goodbye. They promised each other to meet at the top of the hill for their last sunset together.

— *Simon Frenay*

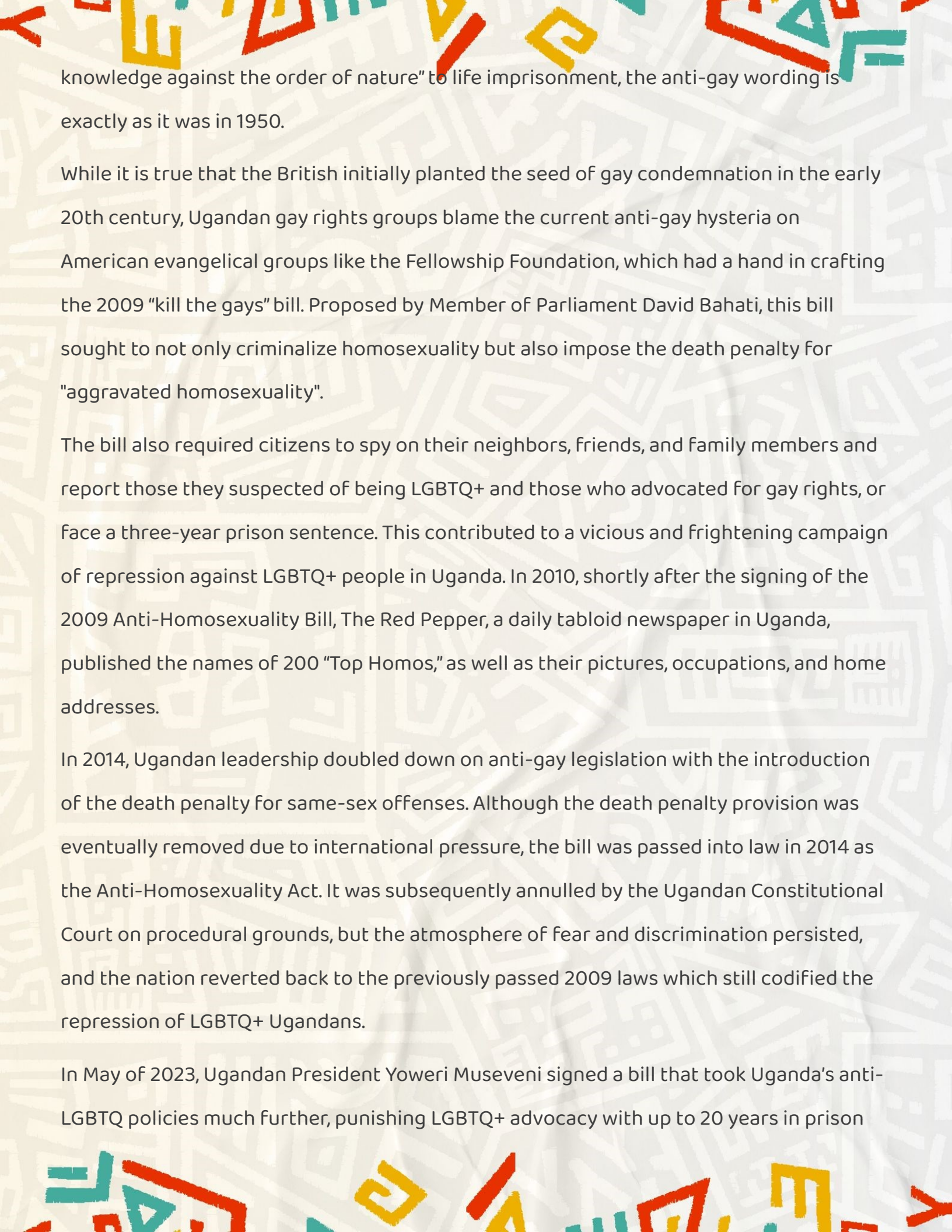
# Uganda's Inclusive Past, Inhumane Present, and Idealistic Future

Uganda, a country known for its stunning natural beauty, and once recognized and honored for its sexual and cultural diversity is now infamous for the ostracism and abuse of homosexuals. The anti-gay history of Uganda is a dark chapter in the country's journey toward human rights and equality. This history is marred by harsh legislation, social stigmatization, and violent persecution against the LGBTQ+ community.

Pre-colonial Uganda was known for being accepting of homosexuality. Feminine *Langi men* of Northern Uganda were called *mudoko dako*, and were wedded to other males. *The misago* women of Uganda refused to be wedded to men and pursued succeeding in their careers while being engaged in sexual relationships with other women. King Mwanga II of Buganda (photo), one of the largest kingdoms in Uganda, was known to be bi-sexual.



The roots of Uganda's anti-gay history can be traced back to its colonial past. In 1894, Uganda formally became a British protectorate, and the laws of the British Empire, including those that govern same-sex conduct, were adopted in Uganda, making homosexuality a criminal offense. In October 1962, Uganda became an independent state and repossessed the right to alter legislation that hardly reflected their pre-colonial traditions and customs. However, the new government put little effort into re-installing its previous legal system. In fact, other than increasing the punishment of "carnal




knowledge against the order of nature" to life imprisonment, the anti-gay wording is exactly as it was in 1950.

While it is true that the British initially planted the seed of gay condemnation in the early 20th century, Ugandan gay rights groups blame the current anti-gay hysteria on American evangelical groups like the Fellowship Foundation, which had a hand in crafting the 2009 "kill the gays" bill. Proposed by Member of Parliament David Bahati, this bill sought to not only criminalize homosexuality but also impose the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality".

The bill also required citizens to spy on their neighbors, friends, and family members and report those they suspected of being LGBTQ+ and those who advocated for gay rights, or face a three-year prison sentence. This contributed to a vicious and frightening campaign of repression against LGBTQ+ people in Uganda. In 2010, shortly after the signing of the 2009 Anti-Homosexuality Bill, The Red Pepper, a daily tabloid newspaper in Uganda, published the names of 200 "Top Homos," as well as their pictures, occupations, and home addresses.

In 2014, Ugandan leadership doubled down on anti-gay legislation with the introduction of the death penalty for same-sex offenses. Although the death penalty provision was eventually removed due to international pressure, the bill was passed into law in 2014 as the Anti-Homosexuality Act. It was subsequently annulled by the Ugandan Constitutional Court on procedural grounds, but the atmosphere of fear and discrimination persisted, and the nation reverted back to the previously passed 2009 laws which still codified the repression of LGBTQ+ Ugandans.

In May of 2023, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni signed a bill that took Uganda's anti-LGBTQ policies much further, punishing LGBTQ+ advocacy with up to 20 years in prison



and proposing the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality” – homosexual acts involving children or members of other at-risk groups, or involving a person who is HIV positive. Lawmakers later added a provision clarifying that the punishments are not for simply being homosexual, but for engaging same-sex relations. All but two members of Uganda’s Parliament who were present for voting on the 2023 bill backed it.

Uganda's anti-gay history is not confined to its laws and politics; it is deeply rooted in societal attitudes. Many Ugandans hold conservative views on sexuality and believe that homosexuality is unnatural or a Western import. This has led to widespread stigmatization, discrimination, and violence against the LGBTQ+ community. Activists and individuals who openly support LGBTQ+ rights face threats, intimidation, and even physical harm.

Uganda's anti-gay history has not gone unnoticed by the international community. Human rights organizations, activists, and foreign governments have consistently condemned the country's discriminatory laws and practices. The 2023 legislation has attracted widespread international condemnation. Despite the hostile rhetoric, draconian policy, and repression, LGBTQ+ rights activists and their allies – including members of Uganda Parliament – have vowed to fight the discriminatory policies in Uganda and the region.

These voices of support have provided some hope and protection for the LGBTQ+ community, encouraging them to continue their fight for equality and justice. However, the battle is far from over. Discrimination and persecution continue, and the struggle for equal rights remains a challenging and ongoing process. Black Alphabet NFP stands in solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community in Uganda, and across the African continent, and our goal is to use the arts and media to publicize the inhumane conditions being perpetuated against our African brothers and sisters, and also to support the fight for LGBTQ+ rights in Uganda and advocate for a more inclusive and tolerant society.



# Key Provisions of Uganda's 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Bill

| OFFENSE  | PENALTY           |
|--|-------------------|
| Aggravated homosexuality (including consensual adult same-sex relations if one is a "serial offender" or has consensual sex with a person with a disability. | Death             |
| Communications that promote or encourage normalization of homosexuality  | 20 years          |
| Providing in-kind or cash support to encourage homosexuality or the normalization of homosexuality.  | 20 years          |
| Providing facilities, office or residential  | 20 years          |
| Any act of homosexuality   | Life Imprisonment |
| Failure to report someone suspected of homosexuality   | 6 months          |
| Failure to report someone suspected of committing any other violation under the law, including encouraging or normalizing homosexuality.                     | 6 months          |

*Some Ugandan residents and refugees claim that, in spite of the harsh penalties imposed by the government, and enforced by local law enforcement, it is still better than the alternative. Often, when misinformed community members encounter someone they perceive to be gay, or catch someone in a same-sex act, they enact "mob justice" which often involves placing a tire around the midsection of the accused person, and lighting it on fire.*

# Black Alphabet Film Festival 2023 Sponsors

