



## **The Black Sex Workers Collective**

### **Statement in response to Uganda's persecution of our siblings through the Anti-homosexuality Bill of 2021.**

Uganda's anti-gay agenda is nothing short of an instance of neocolonialism and the Ugandan government has failed a large swath of its population by once again succumbing to colonial influence. Scott Lively, Exodus International (a failed American ex-gay lobby), and the Ugandan parliament, we, the Black Sex Workers Collective, condemn the hateful roots you have sown. The blood of innocent Ugandans is on your hands. The government has once again neglected sexual diversity in collaboration with a lobby group that failed to gain traction in their own country. We call on the Ugandan government to reject this harmful colonial export. This collaboration in bigotry builds on instead of dismantles the anti-gay agenda of the British imposed Ugandan Penal Code Act of 1950. We will support our Ugandan siblings in fighting for their rights to life and liberty.

The Anti-homosexuality bill of 2021 builds on false assumptions planted during the colonial era. Chief among these is the assertion that “same sex attraction is not an innate and immutable characteristic.” This statement has been accepted to be categorically false around the world and proven by the continued existence of LGBTQIA+ Ugandans in a land that refuses their personhood.

The bill calls for the criminalization of consensual same sex acts, deputizes Ugandans to act as informants, and forces Ugandans to shun and persecute their LGBTQIA+ community members. The bill targets NGOs and nonprofits that seek to serve Ugandans. “On conviction, its [organization] certificate of registration shall be cancelled and the director or proprietor or promoter shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for seven years.”

Troublingly, the bill uses broad strokes to define the promotion of homosexuality, making it illegal to conduct business with LGBTQIA+ persons. The bill prevents Ugandans renting homes to homosexuals, offering sexual health counseling, funding LGBTQIA+ outreach, and embracing same-gender-loving Ugandans.

The bill criminalizes sex workers who entertain same sex clients above and beyond existing prohibitions. The bill makes it illegal with a threat of five years imprisonment to be the “owner or occupier of premises... induces or knowingly suffers any man or woman to resort to or be upon such premises for the purpose of being unlawfully and carnally known by any man or woman of the same sex... commits a felony and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for five years.” This means that in addition to being targeted by the police and government actors for engaging in sex work, LGBTQIA+ sex workers must also labor under the pressure of this anti-gay bill.

The draconian measures in this bill ensures that no Ugandan can escape the reach of the anti-gay agenda. Citizens found to have committed any offence outlined in the bill, even while outside of Uganda, are liable for prosecution.

Ugandan activists are crying out and being ignored by their government. It is our duty as allies from the African diaspora to amplify the voices of our siblings. We must be vocal in our support for the basic human rights of all persons regardless of geographic location. We are engaging in direct actions at the Ugandan embassy in New York and in Washington DC on June 2. We must join our Ugandan siblings in bringing this gross violation to an end. We must put the kind of pressure on the Ugandan government that white ‘Christian’ colonizers used to create this human rights catastrophe.

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June 2, 2021