

# RELIGION, COLLECTIVISM, AND HOMOPHOBIA IN UGANDA

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## Abstract

Uganda is notoriously homophobic and religious. Historically, same-sex relations existed in the country before the coming of Europeans. Christianity and Islam led to the homophobia that permeates and dominates Uganda's economic, social, and political landscape to date. Time may gradually obliterate this homophobia; but strategic litigation, advocacy, and activism should also be intentionally employed to restore dignity to LGBTQI+ persons in Uganda.

## A. Introduction

Uganda is a notoriously religious country. Religious texts used by Ugandan believers predominantly reflect and approve of only the traditional binary gender identities of 'male' and 'female.' They imply that heterosexual marriages are the only divinely blessed marriages. The majority of Ugandans, therefore, are vehemently opposed to the existence of the LGBTQI+ community. Uganda ranks highly among the most dangerous places to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, et cetera.<sup>1</sup>

This essay is an appraisal of the socio-cultural foundations of the homophobia and anti-LTGBTQ sentiments that are so widespread in the country. We do this by examining the religious and traditional foundations; the legal framework; and the institutional framework for oppression of LTGBTQ persons in Uganda. We conclude that Ugandans need time and a mindset change to adapt to the global tolerance of persons that are different from themselves; and that strategic advocacy is inevitable to achieve these changes.

## B. Historical Context

### *i) Religion*

Between 1885 and 1887, Kabaka Mwanga, the King of the Baganda People of Uganda slaughtered 45 of his subjects. Their crime was converting to Christianity. These have now

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1 *Laura Begley Bloom*, Travel Safety Report: 20 Worst Places for Gay Travellers in 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurabegleybloom/2021/03/23/crime-report-20-riskiest-places-for-gay-travelers-and-the-5-safest/?sh=25236bf76d1b> (accessed on 31/10/2023).

been elevated to the status of martyrs by the Catholic and Anglican Churches.<sup>2</sup> The 3<sup>rd</sup> of April is an annual public holiday in Uganda for commemoration of the ‘Uganda Martyrs’ slain by Kabaka Mwangana.

Integral to this story is the fact that in addition to his female subjects, Kabaka Mwangana engaged in sexual intercourse with his male subjects as well. In 1884 when he acceded to the throne, Christianity was just taking root in Uganda. Some converted male court pages started resisting his sexual advances. Among the 45 men who were burned at the stake, some were being punished for refusing to have sex with the Kabaka.<sup>3</sup>

Owing to the growing force of the Christian religion the Kabaka was overthrown in 1888. From that moment on, Christianity and Islam took a strong grip on the community that became present-day Uganda. It came to define politics, economy, and social interactions. Uganda’s first prominent and hostilely antagonistic political parties, the Uganda People’s Congress (UPC) and the Democratic Party (DP) were formed by and for Protestants and Catholics respectively.<sup>4</sup>

By 1917, traditional African marriages involving bride price were deemed ‘mere wife purchase’ and not marriage.<sup>5</sup> The monogamous Christian marriage was deemed the only marriage acceptable before the civil authorities in Uganda. This and a plethora of other African practices were declared repugnant to natural justice. Greatly influenced by religion, Ugandans embraced this downgrading and became contemptuous of their practices and cultures.

They were told that the reward for their adherence to the morality taught by the bible would be blessings. Their new country would be as prosperous as the biblical Israel. In the long run, the requirements of righteousness proved too taxing to be realistic.<sup>6</sup> They realized that even the white people who brought the religion were fast departing from it in their own countries. They started to feign a religious appearance of perfect righteousness for societal acceptance but continued living life as human beings. That heralded hypocrisy in the political, economic, and social landscape of modern Uganda.

2 *Uganda Martyrs Shrine Namugongo*, History of Martyrdom, <https://www.ugandamartyrsshrine.org/ug/about-martyrs/martyrdom> (accessed on 31/10/2023).

3 *John Belvins*, “When Sodomy Leads to Martyrdom: Sex, Religion, and Politics in Historical and Contemporary Contexts in Uganda and East Africa,” [https://www.academia.edu/3697304/\\_When\\_Sodomy\\_Leads\\_to\\_Martyrdom\\_Sex\\_Religion\\_and\\_Politics\\_in\\_Historical\\_and\\_Contemporary\\_Contexts\\_in\\_Uganda\\_and\\_East\\_Africa\\_](https://www.academia.edu/3697304/_When_Sodomy_Leads_to_Martyrdom_Sex_Religion_and_Politics_in_Historical_and_Contemporary_Contexts_in_Uganda_and_East_Africa_) (accessed 31/10/2023).

4 Kakuba Sultan Juma, Multi – Party Politics Dynamics in Uganda, <https://academicjournals.org/journal/AJPSIR/article-full-text-pdf/BFF6FC940693> (accessed 19/11/2023).

5 *Rex v Amkeyo*, 7 E. A. L. R (1917).

6 *Jimmy Spire Ssentongo*, Religion and Democracy in Uganda: A Historical Perspective, <https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Keynote%20address%20by%20Dr%20Jimmy%20Spire%20Ssentongo--Religion%20and%20democracy%20in%20Uganda.pdf> (accessed 31/10/2023).

ii) Collectivism

The modern state of Uganda came into existence on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1893 as a protectorate territory of the British Empire. Since then, the free state that the British established fought and lost the battle against collectivism. The latter drew its validation from the tribal system of traditional Ugandan societies. These were ruled by Kings or chiefs. The individuals hereunder believed that the tribe was supreme, owned the lives of its subjects, and could sacrifice them for causes that would result in its ‘common good.’<sup>7</sup>

Just like wealth and property rights, morality and values were determined by the tribe. Communal values were exalted above individual values. The individual’s duty to the tribe was exalted above his or her rights. Those who breached societal values were at times banished. It was impossible to assert individual rights and freedoms as an argument against the violation of the so-called societal values.

The modern state of Uganda adopted this ideology. The state today promotes this tribal ideology and through the legislature, judiciary, and the executive. For example, in *Bruno Kiywua v Isaac Sserunkuma and Juliet Namazzi HCCS No. 52 of 2006*<sup>8</sup> the courts held that it was illegal for one to marry from one’s clan as it was against the practices of the Baganda.

Homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, gender-altering surgeries, and other practices commonplace among LGBTQ persons are against the collectively held but unwritten values of the community in Uganda. The homophobic sections of Uganda therefore feel justified in violating the rights of individuals to protect the values of the community. The flaws in this disgraceful line of thought will be exposed later in this article.

### C. The Legal Framework

The Penal Code Act Cap 120 provides for the crime of having carnal knowledge against the order of nature. This was the prosecutors’ port of call when faced with cases of homosexuality. The question however was, what does ‘against the order of nature’ mean? Are same-sex sexual relations against the order of nature? What about oral sex then, is it prohibited on the same grounds? The answers provided were never satisfactory for both opposing sides. The dominantly homophobic government then decided to pass an unequivocal law.

The first step was the insertion of Article 31 (2a) in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda of 1995 by way of a constitutional amendment in 2005. This provided that same-sex marriages were prohibited in Uganda. Proponents of homophobia at the time still felt that this constitutional amendment was limited. It was vague about cohabitation, copu-

7 Collin. M. Turnbull, Tribalism and Social Evolution in Africa, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1035315> (accessed 19/11/2023).

8 *Sebidde Kiryowa*, Same Clan Wedding Blocked: The Inside Story, <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1145623/clan-wedding-blocked-inside-story>.

lation, and engagements among other aspects of same-sex relationships. It even fell short of the biblically inspired punishment for sodomy, alluding to the Sodom and Gomorrah story; they maintained that all gay and lesbian persons should be killed.<sup>9</sup>

Thus in 2014, the Parliament of Uganda passed the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014. The speaker of parliament at the time called it a ‘Christmas gift’ for Ugandans. The floors of parliament were filled with leers that could only be justified by the fanaticism of their wearers. Their death sentence for homosexuals had been stamped. Those guilty of homosexuality, the Act provided, were to be imprisoned until death. What had the homosexuals done to deserve such detestation? Their persecutors had no fitting answers but restated that their God abhors homosexuals.

Unknown to them, this Act was fated to a short life. Before a single homosexual had been sentenced, the Act was declared unconstitutional -passed without a quorum.<sup>10</sup> Once again the Constitutional Court of Uganda had brought sense in the chaos that is fanaticism and self-righteousness that permeates Uganda. The donors were retreating in droves. The LGBTQ+ community was exposed to persecution and mob justice. The entire economy and society were doomed to crumble on account of the religious-based imaginations of some Ugandans.

It should also be noted that the constitutional order in Uganda recognizes only the traditional binary gender identities of male and female. All other gender identities such as non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, intersex, gender non-conforming, and transgender are not recognized under the constitutional order.<sup>11</sup> As such it forces all such persons in Uganda to identify with male or female and to refrain from any sexual acts with those of the sex with which they identify.

#### D. The Inter-Religious Council

Religious denominations in Uganda never saw eye to eye during the greater part of Uganda’s history. Protestants fought against Catholics in a bloody conflict and the Muslims were pitted against Christians in land wrangles, power struggles, and theological battles among other things.<sup>12</sup>

Formed in 2001, the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) was supposed to forge mutual understanding among the different denominations in Uganda. The three aforementioned religions hold great sway in its operations. They were trying to forge love among the

9 *Stella Nyanzi & Andrew Karamagi*, The Social-Political Dynamics of Anti-Homosexuality Dynamics in Uganda, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43825974> (accessed 31/10/2023).

10 *Oloka Onyango & 9 Ors v AG*, Constitutional Petition No. 8 of 2014.

11 *Jay Mulucha*, The Anti-Gender Movement in Uganda: A Critical Analysis of its Impact on Trans and Gender Diverse People in Uganda, <https://gate.ngo/the-anti-gender-movement-in-uganda-a-critical-analysis-of-its-impact-on-trans-and-gender-diverse-persons/> (accessed 19/11/2023).

12 *Ssemuli John Bosco*, Religious Conflicts in Uganda: Their Roots and Possible Solutions in Interreligious Dialogue, <http://thesisbank.jhia.ac.ke/2124/> (accessed 31/10/2023).

denominations. But in all their years of operations, the thing that has united them the most has been animosity towards homosexuals.

In pursuance of this, they petitioned the Parliament of Uganda to pass a law sentencing homosexuals to death.<sup>13</sup> They are a curse on society, an abomination! 'Do not be unequally yoked with non-believers,' says the bible, yet the IRCU yoked itself together with the secular arms of the government. Jesus loved the sinner, only hated the sin. Yet the leaders of His churches in Uganda deemed it justifiable for the sinner to be hanged by the neck until he dies.

This action of the IRCU amounted to their public announcement of the inefficiency of religious institutions in Uganda. In soliciting the help of parliament in fastening the hangman's noose around the homosexual's neck, they were publicly declaring their inability to save one from one's sins. Which is their stated primary aim as religious institutions. What then will they plead to show their relevance? Now that they have abandoned the peaceful methods of Jesus Christ and started meddling in government affairs, they should perhaps overthrow governments that are not enforcing morality as defined in their Holy Books.

### E. The Anti – Homosexuality Act 2023

The pleas of the IRCU were heeded by the parliament. This parliament itself, owing to a plethora of its prior failures, was seeking redemption for its soiled reputation. At or about the time they were hosting the IRCU, some Members of Parliament, through covert and overt actions, were stealing iron sheets that had been procured by the government to provide decent shelter for vulnerable and impoverished people of Karamoja, Uganda's poorest region.

Hence with their counterfeit holiness and concern for morals in the August House that day, thieving parliamentarians sat face-to-face with religious leaders and sketched the blueprint for the oppression of the harmless gay and lesbian people in Uganda. Some of the parliamentarians certainly excused themselves from that meeting to consult with their aides about the progress of the ongoing iron sheets theft. Also, religious texts about love crept into the minds of the religious leaders only to be wilfully snubbed. They elected to condemn the homosexuals.

The Act was passed on a second vote by parliament in late April 2023.<sup>14</sup> In the same week, dozens of Ministers and MPs were charged with the theft of iron sheets meant for

13 *Dorothy Nagitta & Peter Serugo*, Religious Leaders to Return Anti-Gay Bill to Parliament, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/religious-leaders-to-return-anti-gay-bill-to-parliament-4125868> (accessed 31/10/2023).

14 *Parliament of Uganda*, Anti-Homosexuality Bill Passed by Parliament in Second Vote, <https://www.parliament.go.ug/news/6672/anti-homosexuality-bill-passed-parliament-second-vote> (accessed 31/10/2023).

Karamoja.<sup>15</sup> In all this, the LGBTQ+ community was the perfect scapegoat. Consensual same-sex intercourse among adults, according to the parliamentarians, is a greater evil in society than corruption. Somehow they convinced Ugandans that the thousands of Karamojong who would die as a result of lack of shelter from the scorching semi-desert sun in Karamoja was nothing in comparison to the *nobody* who would die from expression of affection between consenting adults of the same sex.

## F. Reception of the Act

Homophobia has always been welcome among Ugandans. Just like the 2014 Act which was received with much jubilation from the public, the 2023 Act also excited much celebration among Ugandans. Certain sections of the population took it as though they had been cleared to persecute, lynch, and murder any homosexual persons in their localities.

Thronges of people camped for hours around PMM Girls' School in the Eastern Uganda City of Jinja a few weeks after the Act was passed. Rumour had it that the deputy Headmistress of the school was a lesbian. With rocks and other crude tools, the locals demanded the Deputy Headmistress' head.<sup>16</sup> They felt justified, backed by the law, to lynch her for being a lesbian. Only the intervention of the police saved the deputy headmistress that day.

In the nearby Eastern Ugandan District known as Buikwe, the police raided a massage parlour and arrested the proprietor.<sup>17</sup> This businesswoman was accused of promoting homosexuality at her business premises. Owing to the power of homophobia, the fundamental right of privacy of the person is derogated at will. In Uganda, as things stand, the crime of homosexuality is *suis generis*. It is above a capital crime in such a way that unauthorized persons feel justified to harm, shame, and invade the privacy of lesbian or gay persons.

## G. Challenges to the Act

The Anti-Homosexuality Act has been challenged in the Constitutional Court of Uganda by petitions by academics and activists respectively.<sup>18</sup> The claim therein is that the Act infringes on constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of expression and, the right to privacy among others. A third petition has been filed at the East African Court of Justice by activist

15 *The East African*, Dozens of Ugandan Ministers to Face Trial over Iron Sheets Theft, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/mabati-scandal-dozens-of-ugandan-officials-face-trial-4206608> (accessed 31/10/2023).

16 *Julius Muga*, "Parents storm PMM Girls SS, Jinja over alleged Lesbian teacher," <https://umojastan.dard.com/2023/03/03/breaking-parents-pmm-girls-ss-jinja-over-alleged-lesbian-teacher/> (accessed 29/09/2023).

17 *Tausi Nakato*, Buikwe Massage Parlour Owner Charged with Homosexuality, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/buikwe-massage-parlor-owner-charged-with-homosexuality-4346072> (accessed 19/11/2023).

18 *Machining Kudzai*, Academics File Petition to Annul Anti-Gay Legislation, <https://www.universitworldnews.com/post.php?story=20230629065140135> (accessed 29/06/2023).

Male Mabirizi claiming that the law offends the fundamental and operational principles of the rule of law and good governance under the Treaty Establishing the East African Community ("EAC Treaty").<sup>19</sup> These petitions do not directly link the Act to the aspect of gender values, however, when successful, the stifled gender expression; relations; and roles will be remedied as well.

The petition before the EACJ is peculiar and the first of its kind relating to LGBTQI persons in the region. Immediately after the passing of the 2023 Act in Uganda, there were discussions in the parliaments of Tanzania and Kenya to enact similar Acts. Homosexuality excites passion in all corners of the deeply religious region. The EACJ does not have human rights jurisdiction. They take advantage of judicial activism to adjudicate human rights under the fundamental principles of the bloc as enshrined in the EAC Treaty.

Many EAC Partner States have already expressed their dissatisfaction with this judicial activism. In 2007 the EACJ held that the African Charter on Human and People's Rights was part and parcel of the EAC Treaty.<sup>20</sup> As such it gave a leeway to individuals and non-governmental organisations to enforce their rights through the vehicle of the EACJ.

It should be recalled that Tanzania and Rwanda, both Partner States of the EAC; gave and subsequently withdrew their consent to having individuals and NGOs initiate human rights matters against them directly at the African Court on Human and People's Rights.<sup>21</sup> Tanzania also supported the removal of the jurisdiction of the ECOWAS court to rule over human rights matters.

The initiation of this highly contentious matter of homosexuality in the EACJ is going to be a point of great reflection for EAC Partner States. The pending ruling will determine whether or not the States approach integration with trepidation or with abandon. It will also etch a path for the region to follow in dealing with the LGBTQ+ community, issues of gender identity et cetera.

## H. Fundamental Challenges

### *i) Hypocrisy Apparent*

From the foregoing sections, it is apparent that Ugandan policymakers tow a strict line of morality. It is also clear that they are unwilling to allow any breaches of morality by allowing contemporary constructions of gender roles and norms. However, their duplicity has been exposed by several stillborn legal instruments. These have shown that where the

19 *Precious Delilah*, Anti-Gay Law Challenged before East African Court, Daily Monitor, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/anti-gays-law-challenged-before-east-african-court-4285388> (accessed 27/06/2023).

20 James Katabazi & 21 Ors v The Secretary General of the EAC and the Attorney General of Uganda REF No. 1 of 2007.

21 *International Justice Resource Center*, As African Court Releases New Judgments, Tanzania withdraws Individual Access, <https://ijrcenter.org/2019/12/05/as-african-court-releases-new-judgments-tanzania-withdraws-individual-access/> (accessed 19/11/2023).

immorality sought to be proscribed would have a personal effect on the policymakers, such a piece of legislation is frustrated. This has been exemplified by the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009 cum the Marriage Bill 2023 saga.

This Bill attempted to provide for marital rape, automatic marriage status after two years of cohabitation, and equitable sharing of property at the dissolution of marriage. The policymakers of Uganda had a hard time comprehending marital rape. Male members of parliament argued that it was practically impossible to rape one's wife. Others argued that in their cultures 'consent' means 'force,' that is to say, 'sex anytime, anywhere, anyhow.'<sup>22</sup> As a whole, the matter of marital rape was laughed out of the parliament.

In addition, the policymakers set up the Anti-Pornography Committee to monitor the implementation of the Anti-Pornography Act 2014. This committee made up of religious leaders and people vetted to have exemplary morals, embezzled all the money allocated for the procurement of technology for the control of access to pornography on the internet.<sup>23</sup>

In Uganda therefore, repressive laws and policies are made to create opportunities for graft and theft by granting certain people access to the enforcement committees and funds created under those Acts. As long as the law comes with loopholes that may be utilized for theft, policymakers do not care whether or not it leads to the oppression of vulnerable members of the community.

## ii) Conceptual Difficulties

The farce of collectivism or the 'tribal system' of morals is implicit in its repeated use as a tool for victimising minorities. It focuses on vain ideals like the 'common good' and 'societal morals.' It focuses on society rather than the individual as the starting point for welfare realisation.

Collectivism is based on the intrinsic theory of values which posits that there is a fixed set of morals in some reality independent of the consciousness of human beings.<sup>24</sup> The human mind discovers and must abide by these principles. In Uganda, this set of values consists of the teachings of the Bible, the Quran, and other religious books. Since these forbid homosexuality, it is, therefore, a primary societal value that it must not be practised.

Collectivism also stems from the subjective theory of values which states that morals are dictated by the whim of the individual consciousness, independent of reality and the same must be enforced.<sup>25</sup> This underlies the assumed foot soldiers of the society in readily attempting to lynch lesbian and gay persons. Their consciousness about the 'evil nature' of

22 *Human Rights Watch*, Just Die Quietly: Domestic Violence and Women's Vulnerability to HIV in Uganda, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3f4f59820.html> (accessed 19/11/2023).

23 *Sylvia Katushabe*, "Gov't Team Stuck in Anti-Pornography Fight," <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/govt-team-stuck-in-pornography-fight--4148800> (accessed 03/07/2023).

24 *Ayn Rand*, Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, <https://hobbs4.people.clemson.edu/Capitalism-The%20Unknown%20Ideal.pdf> (accessed 19/11/2023).

25 *Ayn Rand*, Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal, New York, 1966, p.22.

homosexuality, independent of the reality that the practice has never done anyone harm; spurs them to assert their righteousness in shedding the blood of homosexuals.

Historically intrinsic and subjective value systems have been used to justify genocides, 'holy wars,' pogroms, the holocaust, and now homophobia. They undermine the function of thought which is the distinctive feature between man and other animals. Thus the evilness of homosexuality, to them, is not a matter of debate, but the perpetrators must be exterminated. The Bible threatens with curses those who utilise thought to challenge its pronouncements and 'truths' such as the evilness of homosexuality. As such Ugandans act on impulse rather than thought to persecute LGBTQ persons.

## I. The Way Forward

### *i) Adopting Objectivity*

The objective theory of value emphasizes that value is an aspect of reality in relation to man. It must be discovered by man through thought, and not arbitrarily invented by man as in the intrinsic and subjective theories.<sup>26</sup> It is not an attribute of things in themselves. Neither is it an attribute of man's emotional state. But an evaluation of the facts of reality by man's consciousness based on a rational standard of value.

As such, the objective theory is incompatible with the use of physical force, duress, or oppressive laws such as the Anti-Homosexuality Acts. It recognizes the freedom of the individual and the futility of force. 'A value which one is forced to accept at the price of surrendering one's mind is not a value to anyone.'<sup>27</sup> In so far as homophobic policymakers in Uganda try to create values outside the gay or lesbian people's lives, needs, and goals; they divorce the value from its purpose and beneficiaries.

Objectivity would enable Ugandans to realise that homosexuality does not harm anyone. Instead, the oppressive laws deprive LGBTQ persons of their fundamental rights and freedoms. They cause an imbalance in rights and duties leading to a cumbersome duty burden on LGBTQ persons. This burden comprises adhering to some undefined abstraction of societal moral standards to achieve a non-existent 'common good.'

### *ii) Waiting it Out*

Uganda is not as religiously radical, and may never be, as Europe historically was. The religious conflicts in Uganda are dwarfed by the magnitude of bloodshed over religion in medieval Europe. The fact that radicalism and fanaticism receded in Europe lends credence to the hope that the same will happen in Uganda.

In 1950s England for example, homophobia was high and it was not until 1967 when homosexuality became legal in the country. Today homophobic persons in England are the

26 *Ayn Rand*, *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, New York, 1967, p.22.

27 *Rand*, p.23.

exception. Similarly, in the 2000s it was a grave crime for a woman to wear trousers in Uganda. Society felt morally compelled to strip naked any woman who ventured outdoors in trousers.<sup>28</sup> People who still do this are considered archaic. Perchance a similar naturally occurring change in mindset will abate the potency of anti-LGBTQ sentiments in the country.

### iii) Discreet Movements and Social Media

Except for Facebook, all other social media platforms are fully operational in Uganda. In 2023 the Uganda pothole exhibition campaign on Twitter (now X) compelled the government to commence road repair works in the capital, Kampala.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, social media can be leveraged to raise awareness about LGBTQ rights. Support groups; directions to safe havens and to medical facilities that cater for special needs of LGBTQ persons can be shared on social media. Pressure groups to force changes in laws and policies for the benefit of LGBTQ persons can be coordinated on social media.

### iv) Strategic Litigation

Strategic litigation achieved previously ‘impossible’ feats for the feminist movement in Uganda. The promulgation of equality of men and women in the 1995 Constitution was the pedestal on which feminists stood to claim their rights as a whole. For the first time in the history of Uganda, court ordered the government to allocate funds to a social problem in the case of maternal health rights. The three pending challenges to the 2023 Act described herein above, when successful, will restore the dignity of LGBTQ persons overnight. Thereafter, other legal petitions should follow suit to plug holes in the trajectory of the rights and fundamental freedoms of LGBTQ persons.

It has taken nearly three decades after 1995 for most aspects of the oppression of women to be addressed. Well-planned and coordinated legal challenges were made to non-conforming areas of the law in succession, marriage, divorce, education, et cetera. Similarly, LGBTQ persons need to attain the freedom of gender identity and non-restriction to the binary gender distinction of ‘male’ and ‘female.’ Other rights such as privacy, medical care, expression, and association also need to be guaranteed for LGBTQ persons in Uganda.

Activists should study the relaxation of anti-LGBTQ sentiments and initiate appropriate cases in time. Rash moves to force Uganda into accepting homosexuals and other LGBTQ+ persons in the short run will backfire. Politicians gain credit with the electorate when

28 *Womensenews*, In Uganda Rioters Strip Women Wearing Trousers, <https://womensenews.org/2009/09/in-uganda-rioters-strip-women-wearing-trousers/> (accessed 31/10/2023).

29 *Franklin Draku*, How Uganda’s Pothole Exhibition Forced Government into Action, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/how-kampala-pothole-exhibition-forced-government-into-action-4206008> (accessed 31/10/2023).

they voice their animosity towards LGBTQ persons. Religious leaders seek relevance by targeting them. Uganda loves to loathe them, yet many LGBTQ persons call this country home.

## J. Conclusion

Therefore, the historical context of Uganda shows the influence of religion on the social interactions in society. Central to this is the justification for animosity towards LGBTQ persons. Other communities are great examples of mindset change. Ugandan society itself has changed its perception of women. Similarly, we can wait for this naturally occurring change in mindset, or fast-track it through discreet movements, strategic litigation, advocacy, and activism.

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