

Uganda Ratifies Anti-LGBTQ Laws With Support From American Evangelicals

By Ben Miller on February 25th, 2014



For the past two years or so, the world media has been talking about anti-LGBTQ bills in Uganda. Variouslly called the “Kill-the-gays” bills, they have taken various shapes over the last few years. In their latest form they increase penalties against homosexuality in Uganda to life imprisonment for “aggravated homosexuality,” and up to seven years in prison for a person who “aids, abets, counsels or procures” anyone to engage in homosexuality. HIV/AIDS counseling would count in that second category, as would simply declaring one’s own homosexuality or that one thought it was acceptable.

Yesterday, Uganda’s President, Yoweri Museveni, signed the bill into law. Given his statement that the bill was a fight back against “social imperialism — to impose social values of one group on our society,” and the strong reaction of the United States and other Western governments against the law, most reporting (like the CNN link above) presented this as a case of a conservative country battling back against imperial Western-imposed liberalism. This is the same language Vladimir Putin has used to justify his own similar anti-LGBTQ laws.

The truth, though, is far darker, and implicates American evangelicals directly in the writing, funding, and promotion of these policies worldwide. Uganda provides an instructive example of how Western preachers have engaged in Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East to promote murderous policy they can no longer advocate for openly at home.

“The Family,” also known as “The Fellowship,” is an ultra-secretive politically powerful Christian evangelical organization that runs, among other things, the National Prayer Breakfast and a group home in Washington, D.C. in which many Republican Senators and Representatives live. In March 2009, American anti-gay activists, including representatives from The Family, traveled to Uganda to promote anti-gay legislation there. They recruited David Bahati, a Ugandan MP, to join The Family, and The Family’s president referred to him as the family’s “key man” in Uganda.

Seven months later, in October 2009, Bahati sponsored the first version of the Ugandan bill. The Family has had a 24-year relationship with President Museveni, who has visited their facilities in Washington regularly as part of a program unveiled by journalist Jeff Sharlet:

THE EXECUTION OF THE VISION

A. A congressman and/or Senator from the United States will befriend the leader of another country and tell him/her how Jesus and His teachings will help his country and its poor.

B. U.S. leader and foreign leader will select 5 men (mentors) from the foreign country to commit to learn about Jesus and how He will help themselves, their country and the poor.

... We will teach the mentors to confess their sins (known or unknown) and to ask the Holy Spirit of Christ to live in them, and to teach them how to live, what to think and what to say.

(continued)

While the Family's leadership has now said they oppose the Ugandan anti-gay legislation, they have continued to promote it with cash, "moving," in Sharlet's words, "their money into this African leadership academy called Cornerstone...which is run by David Bahati." American evangelicals have made similar trips to Nigeria, which passed its own anti-LGBT laws last month.

Meanwhile, in Russia, several Evangelical American leaders have been deeply involved in anti-LGBT legislation and conference planning there. The National Organization for Marriage's Brian Brown – a figure powerful enough in Republican politics that every major GOP presidential candidate signed his 2012 anti-equality pledge – traveled there last May to meet with anti-gay legislators and testify in favor of the bills. Brown, Benjamin Bull of the Alliance Defending Freedom, Tom Minnery of Focus on the Family, Justin Murff of the Christian Broadcasting Network, and Austin Ruse of the Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute (C-FAM), all of which are large and powerful Christian evangelical networks, returned to Russia in October to help plan the 2014 World Conference on Families that Russian president Vladimir Putin is hosting in the Kremlin.

Meanwhile, in some of the most Republican-dominated of these United States, evangelicals have decided that if they can't get prison time, they can at least recreate segregation. In Kansas, Idaho, and Arizona, Republican lawmakers have passed bills that would allow business-owners to refuse service to LGBTQ people based on their (perceived) sexual orientation or gender identity due to "sincerely-held religious beliefs."

American media conversations about these laws must stop succumbing to the easy story of Western liberalism and Eastern/African conservatism. Those narratives are largely racist, patronizing, and inaccurate. Instead, anyone looking to place blame for this resurgence of anti-LGBT legislation and violence should look to American evangelical groups, and the politicians who carry their water.

Read more: [Uganda Ratifies Anti-LGBTQ Laws With Support From American Evangelicals . NYU Local <http://nyulocal.com/national/2014/02/25/uganda-ratifies-anti-lgbtq-laws-funded-by-american-evangelical-cash/#ixzz36nGHwwoB>](http://nyulocal.com/national/2014/02/25/uganda-ratifies-anti-lgbtq-laws-funded-by-american-evangelical-cash/#ixzz36nGHwwoB)

Under Creative Commons License: [Attribution](#)