



Vincent Warren

*Executive Director, Center for
Constitutional Rights*

From Prejudice to Persecution: Some on the Religious Right Have Crossed the Line in the Anti-gay Crusade

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What are white American evangelicals doing in Africa talking to political and religious leaders about anti-gay legislation? The same thing they're doing in the U.S.: cynically pitting communities of color against LGBT communities. The release of the National Organization for Marriage's [strategy memos](#) on defeating marriage equality lay bare their disrespect for and attempted manipulation of Black and Latino communities.

"Drive a wedge between gays and blacks." Make anti-marriage equality "a key badge of Latino identity, a symbol of resistance to inappropriate assimilation," the memos say. As though there were no Black or Latino LGBT people.

"We are investing resources now in exploring the legal and technological infrastructures needed to export NOM's successful model to other countries," they also say.

But NOM is a relative latecomer to the export business when it comes to promoting and provoking hate abroad. Other evangelicals have been preaching persecution, especially in Africa, for at least a decade.

There's a difference, though, between preaching hate and carrying out persecution, and there's at least one man who has clearly crossed that line. His name is Scott Lively. Lively is the president of Abiding Truth Ministries, the owner of the Holy Grounds coffee house in Springfield,

Massachusetts and the man who -- literally -- wrote the book on how to deprive LGBT people of their rights. Redeeming the Rainbow is a how-to guide on demonizing and criminalizing LGBT people. What he could never get away with in the U.S. -- because it would be illegal and because it would be widely condemned -- he has taken abroad, most notably to Uganda.

Lively's fingerprints are all over the now infamous "Kill the Gays" bill in Uganda -- he was among the leaders of the 2009 "Seminar on Exposing the Homosexual Agenda" that took place a month before the bill was first introduced and he met with the legislators who would go on to draft it -- but he has been actively working to deprive LGBT people in Uganda of their fundamental human rights since at least 2002.

In that time, repression and violence against LGBT people has been increasingly on the rise. Meetings have been raided and shut down. Activists have been harassed, abused by authorities and forced into hiding. Newspapers have called for further erosion of rights, for criminalization of LGBT people and for outright murder. "Hang them" a headline advocated above pictures of LGBT activists. In 2011 one of them, David Kato, was bludgeoned to death in his home. Meanwhile, a variety of anti-gay laws have been introduced and passed, leading up to the Anti-Homosexuality bill now once again before the Ugandan Parliament.

Throughout this time, it was Lively's playbook, Lively's suggested inflammatory imagery, Lively's strategic guidance that anchored the growing anti-gay crusade.

The plain fact is that Scott Lively is a driving force of the campaign to systemically criminalize LGBT people in Uganda, outlaw their ability to meet and advocate and defend themselves, and whip up hatred against them that results in state repression as well as extralegal violence. That is the very definition of persecution. And persecution is a crime against humanity.

Under U.S. law, victims of crimes against humanity in other countries have the right to bring a claim in a U.S. court, particularly when their tormentors are U.S. citizens. Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) this month did just that. Represented by the Center for Constitutional Rights, they filed a lawsuit under the Alien Tort Statute for the crime against humanity of persecution.

This month, we also commemorate what would have been the 100th birthday of Bayard Rustin, renowned and openly gay civil rights leader who worked alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. SMUG's effort is in line with what Rustin viewed as the key task of those fighting for LGBT equality and rights. In *From Montgomery to Stonewall*, Rustin observed:

[T]he job of the gay community is not to deal with extremists who would castigate us or put us on an island and drop an H-bomb on us... Our job is not to get those people who dislike us to love us. Nor was our aim in the civil rights movement to get prejudiced white people to love us. Our aim was to try to create the kind of America, legislatively, morally, and psychologically, such that even though some whites continued to hate us, they could not openly manifest that hate...

U.S. anti-gay crusaders have taken their show on the road and as a result there is a human rights crisis brewing for LGBT people in Uganda. Every day that Lively and his willing accomplices in

Uganda continue to stoke the fires of anti-gay hatred increases the risk of greater repression and violence and the potential for large-scale atrocity. The architects of this crisis, including Scott Lively, must be held accountable for their actions and we must do everything we can to keep the crisis from deepening, to keep the hate from manifesting in anti-gay laws, policies and violence.