



LGBTIQ+

MOVEMENT

IN UGANDA THROUGH THE YEARS

By Kuchu Times Media Group

OUR VOICE, OUR STORIES, OUR LIVES

FOREWORD



There have been many historical events that have happened in the community since then and even during the events you are about to read about that have significantly shaped this movement. From the formation of FARUG, SMUG and SPECTRUM which were the first LGBTI+ organizations to be formed in Uganda, we can now report over 200 organizations, CSO's or organized groups that have joined this fight for change.

There have been dedicated, selfless individuals who have given their lives to fight for the freedom of others like themselves. One is paraphrased saying she's not sure she will enjoy the rights she fights for today but she fights for future generations. The movement has been exactly that, a movement that has involved very many players and it would be unfair to leave out a single name that is why we bring you this history as an abstract.

Due to time, and other constraints we were only able to interview a handful of people who were so kind as to share their time and go down memory lane with us.

There are great stories to be told of the history of the trans movement independently that are not in this publication, or the lesbian movement and gay movement respectively and we shall tell them!

This gives you an overview of the entire LGBTIQ movement as a whole.

We hope you learn something!

Editor,

Kuchu Times Media Group



1995

EXPEL THEM

Interestingly this is something most activists all found out once they started the movement years later that happened to all of them, the same year the same time. Missionary and traditional schools followed a directive from the government to scout and expel homosexuals. Students were asked to write down the names of anyone they suspected to be a homosexual. There was no mode of validation and it came down to the number of lists a name appeared on.

This happened again 17 years later when the government made the same directive in missionary and traditional schools. There was not any change in methodology as even then it came down to the number of lists a name appeared on. This is where the journey of most young activists started from.

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Students were asked to write down the names of anyone they suspected to be a homosexual

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1999

FINDING FAMILY

The movement started out as a social gathering where LGBTI+ persons would meet to hang out every weekend. Before these activists faced individual stigma from family and schools but had never caught the attention of the government or media.

Through these weekly hangouts, they caught the attention of the media and like clockwork every Monday found themselves in the newspapers. These articles could be given credit for the birth of tabloids but I guess we can read about this when tabloids decide to write about their history.

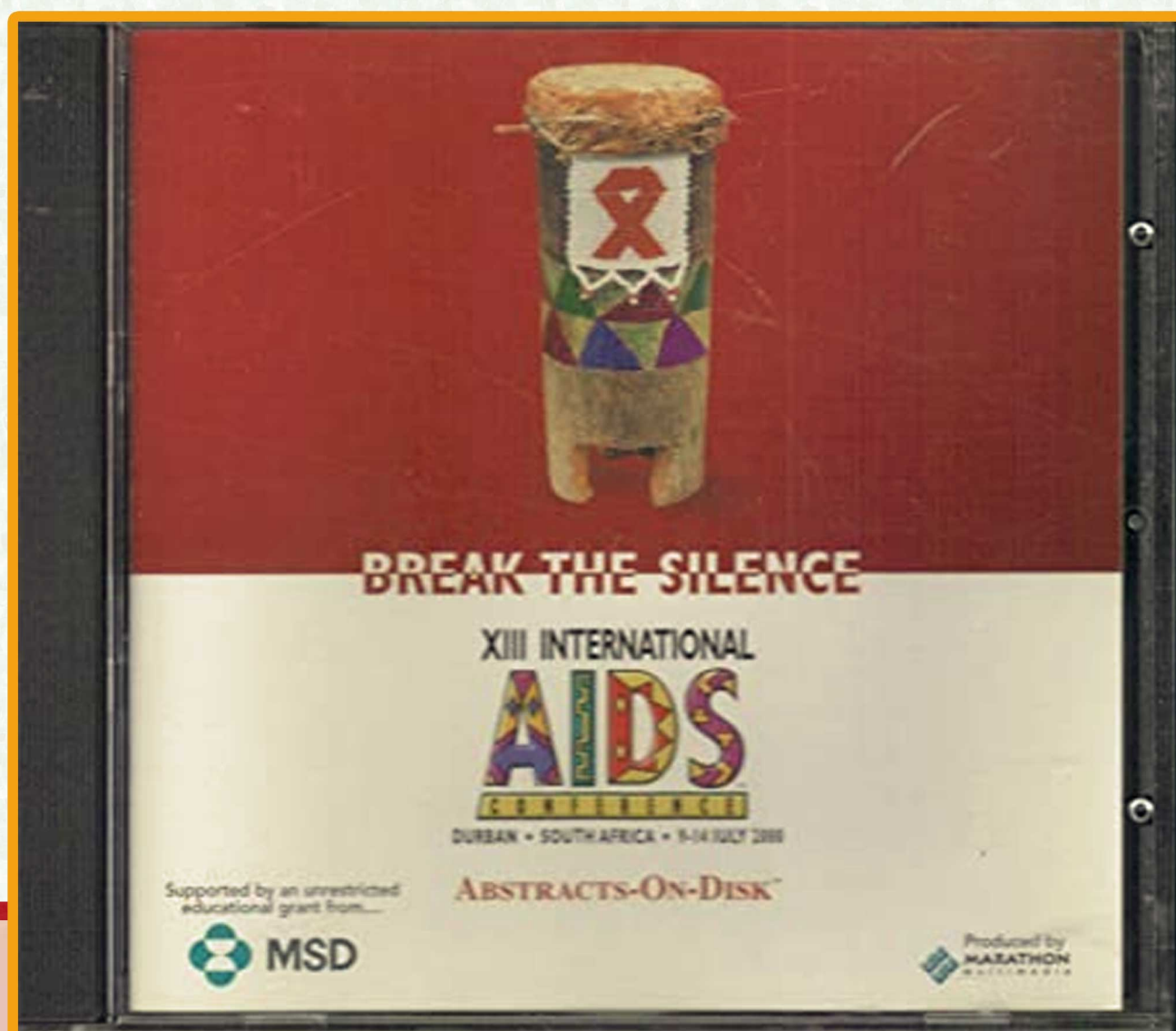


2000

THERE ARE NO HOMOSEXUALS IN UGANDA

The XIII International AIDS Conference was held in Durban, South Africa in the week running July 9-14, 2000 whose theme was, **“Breaking the silence.”** It is from this conference that the president of Uganda was asked why homosexuals are not included in the fight against HIV/AIDS even though Uganda was seemingly leading in the fight against AIDS with the ABC method. His response was there are no homosexuals in Uganda.

This intentional erasing of a whole group of people coupled with the anger from the misinformation by the tabloids led to the shift from a social movement to a political movement and this is where activism began. It was time to make the world know that we are here and we are queer.



EXPEL

HOMOSEXUALS FROM MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

According to the recount of the subjects we interviewed, this was the very first act of active activism where they joined against this injustice. A recount of meeting the Guild president of Makerere university is told where he was very welcoming up until they introduced themselves as people who had come in defense of the gay men they were seeking to expel.

Here we met a group of three gentlemen who apparently ran an organization called Makerere Lesbian Association for lesbians in Makerere but there were not any lesbians. This where the idea of Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG) was born an actual lesbian organization with lesbians in it.

2003

OPENING OF FARUG

This was the first step in organized activism for the group, opening an organization. Although they had zero knowledge of how this would work, they were passionate and learned along the way working with their own resources. The founding members of FARUG were Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera, Victor Mukasa and Taz Musisi (pseudonym).

The vision of FARUG is a society in which the freedom rights and equality of LBQTI people are guaranteed and there is no discrimination based on sexuality and gender issues.



2004

RADIO SIMBA IS FINED \$1000

The activists started out provoking the thoughts of the public on radio stations. They would call in during the late night shows and ask questions like, “this story is about a man and a woman, what about a man and man or woman and woman?” and then quickly hang up.

However with the opening of FARUG the activists were bolder and started to book radio shows. The first radio station that gave them airplay was Radio Simba. In retaliation Nsaba Buturo who was the then minister of ethics and integrity said, “We shall not give them room to recruit more!” and went ahead to fine Radio Simba \$1000 for hosting the LGBTI+ activists on the show.



2009

ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY ACT / “KILL THE GAYS BILL”

The Anti- Homosexuality Act or Kill the gays bill which is now abbreviated to AHA was brought to the floor of parliament on 14th October, 2009 by Hon. David Bahati. The parliament and public literally ate it up and were excited to get rid of the gays as that was around the same time Scott Lively had dedicated his evangelical practice to preaching against gay people.

The funny thing about the public being excited about this bill is they did not read the fine print, the part where parents, teachers, landlord or landlady, doctor, any member of a CSO working in SRHR, religious leaders, business men, anybody could fall victim to the bill's clauses. You could go to jail for sitting on the bus with a gay person.

Homosexuality was defined in such ridiculous ways such as touching another person with the intent of committing homosexuality and was punishable by the death penalty.



2010

HANG THEM!

During the height of the AHA and the nationwide evangelical spread of myths about homosexuals in Uganda, Rolling stone a tabloid that was run by Giles Muhame published an article with 100 names and addreses of LGBTIQ persons in Uganda.

Rolling stone suspended publication in November that same year after the High Court ruled that it had violated the fundamental rights of LGBT Ugandans by attempting to out them and calling for their deaths.



2011

DAVID KATO KILLED IN JANUARY

Following the publishing of names and addresses of LGBT+ Ugandans in the Rolling stone only two months after this, activist David Kato was murdered in his home in Mukono on the morning of 26th January, 2011. The whole community went cold at this point. David's murder was a sad wake up call to the depth of the cruelty of world we live in and how unwanted we were. Some activists actually dropped off active activism at this point and the PTSD from David's death haunts many to date. The entire burial was filled with , 'that could be me's'

Nothing was ever the same after that, true they always lived in fear but it was more of the unknown, "now we knew any of us could be next."



2012

FIRST PRIDE

Ugandan LGBTI activists and LGBTI persons had their first ever gay pride event in Uganda. It was such a powerful moment that even during the AHA chaos there was a sense of belonging. The spirit of togetherness was the glue in the midst of the storm while the whole nation demanded for their heads.

There were week-long events to celebrate Pride which was climaxed with a March. 16 LGBTI persons were arrested that day.

The Monday after the march, Fr. Simon Lukodo announced the ban of 38 NGO's for promotion of homosexuality. Apparently NGO's were receiving funds on behalf of the homosexuals who were recruiting their children. He went ahead to ban workshops and training but the government spokesperson came out to say they did not ban workshops.



2013

CHRISTMAS PRESENT TO UGANDANS

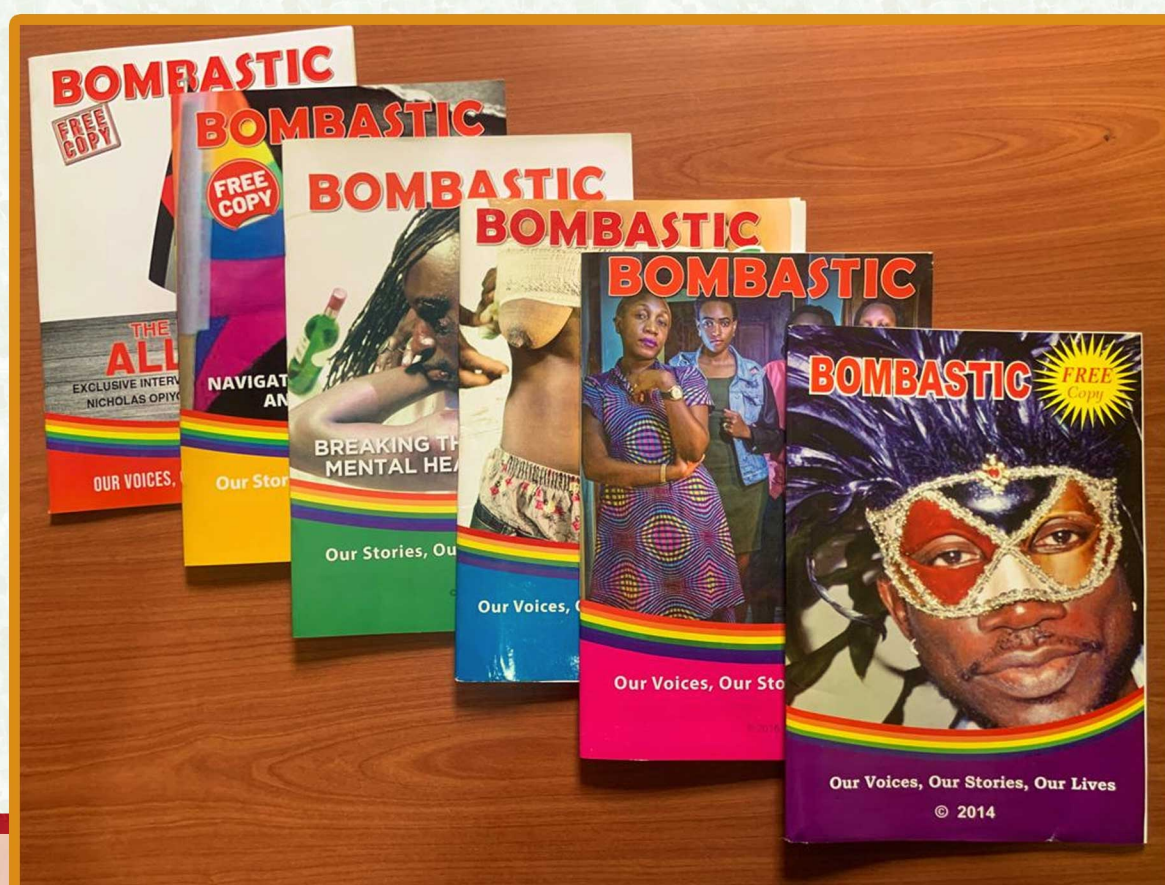
In November 2013 at an International Parliamentary Summit, the then Speaker of parliament Rebecca Kadaga was approached by a Canadian minister who had reservations about the Anti-Homosexuality Bill.

At the airport when she returned she promised to pass the bill as a Christmas present to Ugandans and went ahead to pass it on 20th December that every year without quorum.

Birth of Bombastic:

In December 2013, after the speaker literally promised and passed a bill offering the heads of gay people to Ugandans as a Christmas present, the activists came together to create a media space to tell the stories of LGBTIQ + Ugandans away from the lies of the media.

This is where Kuchu Times Media Group was born and Bombastic Magazine which has had annual publications since then.



2014

SIGNING OF THE ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY ACT

On 24th February, 2014 the president of Uganda to the amusement of many Ugandans and anti-gay propagandists signed the “Kill the gays” bill. By the time it was signed maximum punishment for repeated offenders of homosexuality had been amended from the death penalty to life imprisonment but everything else remained the same.

Shortly after, human rights organizations, individuals, allies and the LGBT+ community appealed the bill, the journey was not easy and many of the people we spoke to confessed to their faith being really low around that time but on 1st August 2014, the constitutional court of Uganda called the act of passing the bill invalid on procedural grounds.

A week after this victory the LGBT+ community in Uganda and allies held a pride event to celebrate this win. This was the most attended of the pride events ever hosted in Uganda. You could see the sigh of relief on everyone’s faces and one was quoted saying, “we shall die another day!”



2021

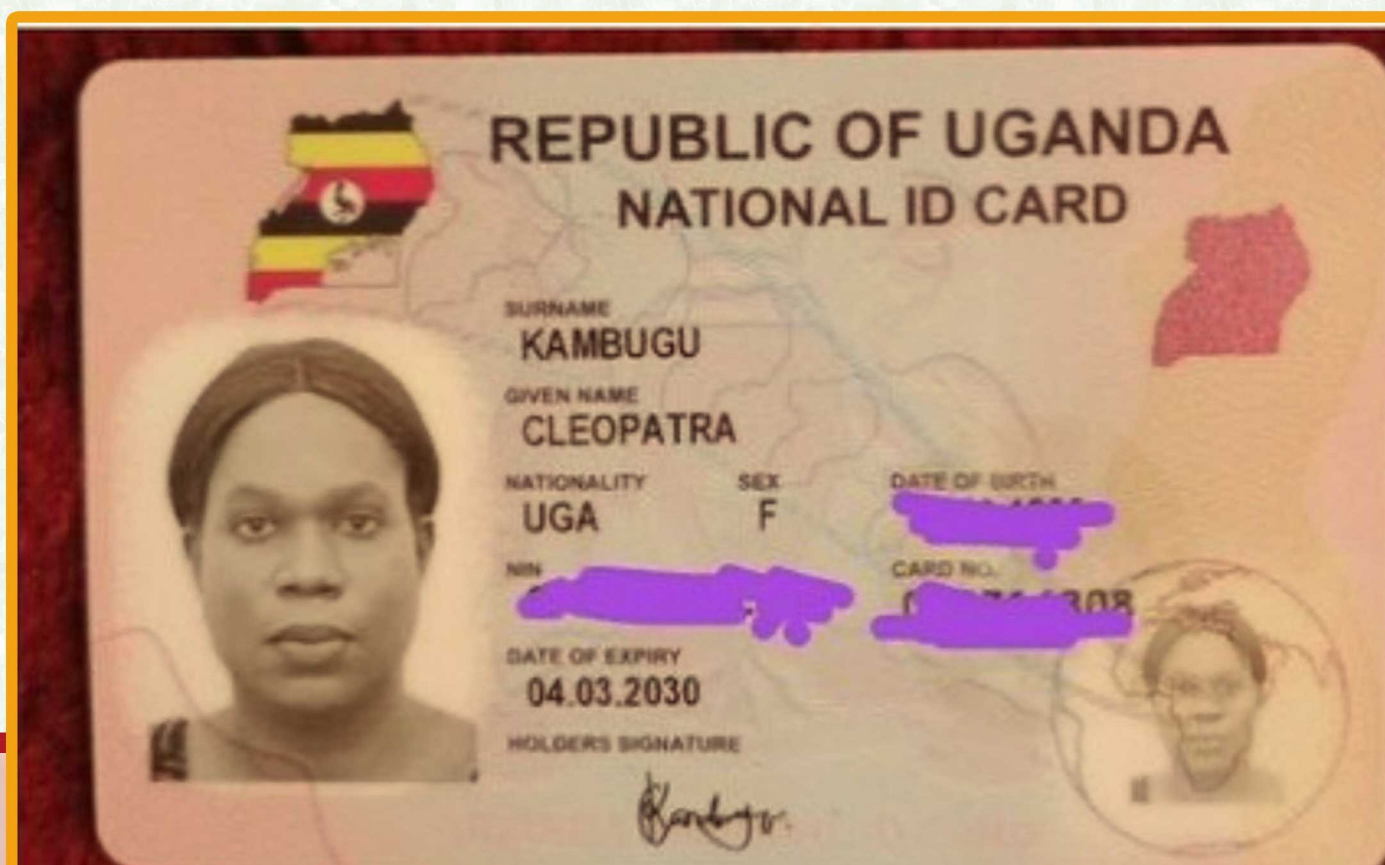
CLEOPATRA KAMBUGU RECEIVES NATIONAL ID

One last but important historical event 2021 Cleopatra Kambugu receives national ID

Cleopatra Kambugu a transgender woman in Uganda last year received her national ID with the right gender from the state. This makes Cleopatra Uganda's first documented transgender citizen and this is a huge win not just for Cleo but for the entire community. This corrected ID will go a long way in making Cleo's life easier to access government and business services that often require the use of a national ID.

Will this be precedent for other transgender and gender non-confirming Ugandans to get access to the same service? Does the government of Uganda now recognize transgender persons and affirmation of a third gender?!

Our Voices, Our Stories, Our Lives





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