

God loves Uganda

By [Jonathan Grieser](#)

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The “Kill the Gays” bill in Uganda has become law. I had the chance to see *God Loves Uganda*, a documentary that gives part of the background of the bill, including the involvement of American evangelicals in advocating for its passage.

Unfortunately, the film is deeply flawed. As I watched, I increasingly felt as if the film maker was attempting to create a mirror image in the U.S. of the events in Uganda. In other words, he was manipulating the story, the imagery, and the emotions of white progressive (LGBT) Americans in his effort to demonize Ugandan politicians, religious leaders, and American evangelicals. Throughout the film, ordinary Ugandan people are silent and passive, objectified and prevented agency, acted upon by American missionaries and activists. It was as if Uganda had become a proxy battlefield for the American culture wars, just as in previous decades, African countries had been proxies in the Cold War.

It’s a story with real victims and real consequences which becomes clear with story of LGBT activist David Kato, his brutal death, and the travesty of his funeral show.

But there’s a larger story that would provide important context—the history of colonialism in East Africa and especially Uganda; the history of Anglicanism in Uganda which began with the martyrdom of Ugandan Anglican converts by the local king when they refused to sacrifice to the traditional gods and refused to accede to his sexual demands. It’s also a church whose archbishop was executed by Idi Amin. There are dynamics of nationalism, anti-Americanism, and anticolonialism that play important roles in the story as well.

I know all too well how African Anglicans have been deployed and manipulated by American Episcopalians over the years as pawns in our internal struggles for legitimacy and the upper hand. It’s been done by both sides and this film often takes that manipulation to another level.

[Jason Bruner provides important background](#) on the complexities within Ugandan Christianity, society, and politics that have played crucial roles in the anti-gay legislation and attitudes. On the Anglican Church of Uganda, for example, he points out that in addition to the importance of conflict within the Anglican Communion and the perception that African Anglicans have become the stalwart upholders of Anglican Orthodoxy, Ugandan Anglicans are also motivated by increasing competition with other Christian groups, especially Pentecostalism.

His essay is a must-read to understand the controversy and the Ugandan context better.

*Originally posted at [Grieser's blog](#)*