



AMERICAN
JEWISH
WORLD
SERVICE

THE JEWISH VOICE FOR LGBTI RIGHTS WORLDWIDE SPECIAL REPORT





Inspired by the Jewish commitment to justice, **American Jewish World Service** works to realize human rights and end poverty in the developing world.

COVER: An LGBTI youth attends a human rights workshop convened by AJWS grantee Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK). PHOTO Evan Abramson

DEAR FRIENDS

The struggle for equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people is not just part of my work at American Jewish World Service (AJWS). It's part of my life story.

In the early '80s, as a member of the New York City Council, I helped fight an uphill battle for a Gay Rights Bill, which, after three failed attempts, finally passed in 1986. In a time when thousands were dying of AIDS and the gay community was fighting for recognition and rights, the moment was a major political and ethical victory.

It wasn't until a year later, when my daughter came out to me, that I realized that the moment was also acutely personal. For so many of us, the ongoing struggle for equal rights is also a struggle for recognition of the dignity and humanity of ourselves and the people we love.

As my work as president of AJWS has taken me into the communities of the developing world, I have found that there are millions of daughters and sons who need our support in *their* struggle. They face discrimination that robs them of education and jobs; draconian laws that view their sexuality as criminal behavior; and cultural beliefs about

homosexuality and gender identity that mark them as tainted or cursed. Many LGBTI people in the developing world face violence and discrimination just for living their lives.

Of course, the struggle for equality and inclusion in the U.S. is far from over (last year's marriage equality victory was a major milestone in the long road ahead), but our movement can help many more people if we extend our efforts to those who have not yet attained the advances that we have won. This is why promoting the rights of LGBTI people worldwide has become such an important part of AJWS's work.

However you identify with this struggle—whether it's through your own experience or that of someone you love or because you are committed to the inherent dignity of all human beings—I hope that you will join us in spreading equality throughout the world. Thank you for your support and your belief in change.



Ruth W. Messinger

President, American Jewish World Service

SUPPORTING A MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

Go back in time, before the fight for marriage equality... further back: before the Stonewall riots spawned the American movement for gay rights. Picture life in our country when police routinely raided gay bars and people had to meet and socialize in secret to avoid arrest.

Where our grantees work, that time is now.

In many developing countries, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people live in constant fear. They're denied jobs, education and health care. They're ostracized, rejected, threatened and assaulted—just for living their lives.

And it gets worse: in 78 countries, people can be arrested for having sex with someone of the same gender. In five countries, they can be given the death penalty.

American Jewish World Service is committed to building movements to fight this injustice. AJWS is the 4th largest funder of international LGBTI work.* We have granted nearly \$6 million to support LGBTI work, and currently fund 51 organizations promoting the rights of LGBTI people in 14 countries.

With this support, our grantees are coming out, speaking out, collaborating and pursuing the same rights that we have sought for ourselves: recognition, inclusion, security and equality. We also advocate on their behalf here at home, ensuring that our government's foreign aid work promotes the rights of LGBTI people worldwide.

Though the problem is vast, we are making progress. Together with our grantees, we are building a future in which all people will be empowered to achieve the full spectrum of their human rights.

*Funders for LGBTQ Issues 2013

*Burma • Cambodia • Democratic • Republic of Congo • Dominican Republic • El Salvador
Haiti • Honduras • India • Kenya • Liberia • Nepal • Nicaragua • Thailand • Uganda*



AROUND THE WORLD

AJWS SUPPORTS

51 GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE PROMOTING LGBTI RIGHTS IN 14 COUNTRIES, SUCH AS...

KENYA Persons Marginalized and Aggrieved (PEMA)

PEMA was founded after the death of a local gay man who was shunned by his family in Kenya's religiously conservative coast. The organization works to reverse discriminatory attitudes that lead to violence against LGBTI people by engaging in dialogue with the public, the police, local chiefs and village elders.



INDIA SANGRAM

In the small west-coast town of Sangli, where LGBTI people face prejudice and harassment and high rates of HIV, SANGRAM is the first organization that provided resources to the LGBTI population. It offers education, advocacy support and a safe space for LGBTI people to come together to organize and defend their rights.



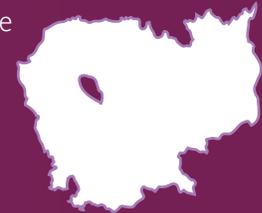
NICARAGUA Grupo Safo

Grupo Safo, a women's advocacy organization, opened the first health clinic in Nicaragua specifically for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, which provides them with comprehensive care and ensures that they are treated with respect.



CAMBODIA Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK)

RoCK brings LGBTI people throughout Cambodia together to confront and overcome the discrimination and ignorance they face in their communities.





Pen Nol and Chhon Nhoeng are a lesbian and transgender couple living in rural Cambodia. ASJWS grantee RoCK works in this community to foster respect for the rights of LGBTI people. PHOTO Evan Abramson

“BEING LESBIAN, WE ARE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST WHERE EVER WE GO... THEY COME TO BEAT US AND SEEK TROUBLE WITH US... SINCE I JOINED ROCK, THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF PROGRESS.”

—Pen Nol, RoCK member

FIGHTING THE ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY BILL IN UGANDA

Being gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex in a place like Uganda is a fearful proposition. Under Uganda's colonial era sodomy law, same-sex relations are a crime. Being LGBTI can cost people their jobs, their loved ones and—when extremists take matters into their own hands—their lives.

In 2009, new legislation threatened Ugandan LGBTI people—an Anti-Homosexuality Bill that proposed to increase penalties for same-sex relations and, in some cases, impose the death penalty. It also threatened jail for anyone who failed to report people they suspected to be gay. The bill intensified fear among the entire LGBTI community and fanned a spate of public death threats, police brutality and mob violence.

When the bill appeared, AJWS fought back.

We have long funded organizations working to end discrimination and violence in Uganda, and when this new threat emerged, we joined our grantees' cause. We increased our funding to support their advocacy and

security and funded a Ugandan coalition against the bill that grew to include 51 local organizations from across the human rights spectrum.

AJWS also took action from the U.S. Guided by the needs of our Ugandan partners, we convened a Jewish coalition against the bill and emerged as a leader of the greater U.S. faith-based response. We were instrumental in recruiting members of Congress to sign letters to President Obama and Uganda's President Museveni, and to cosponsor a resolution that succeeded in being passed by the Senate. AJWS also brought a prominent Ugandan activist to testify before the Congressional Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and to meet with members of Congress, the State Department and key NGO allies.

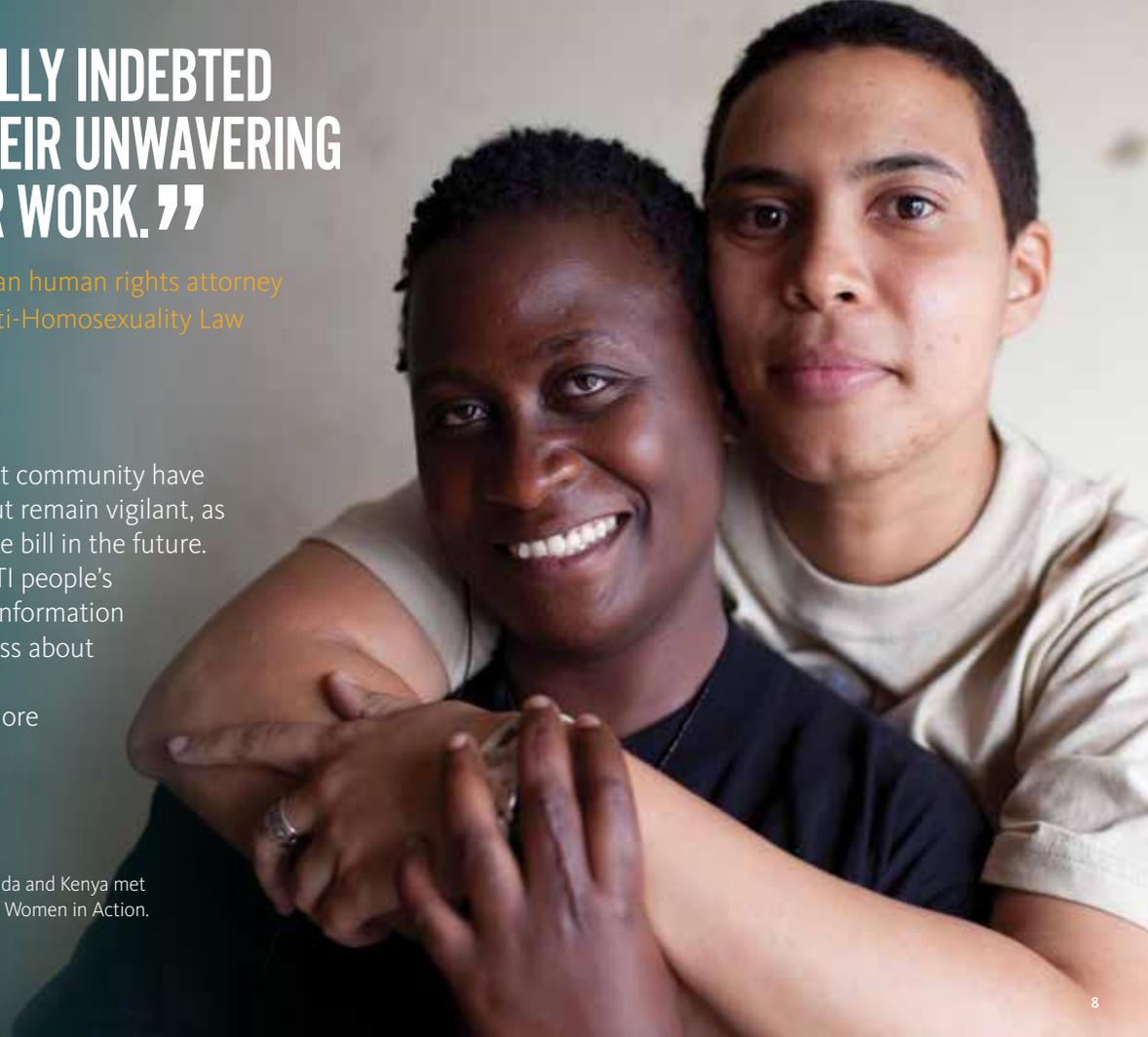
Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni signed the bill into law in 2014, AJWS's grantees refused to accept this loss. With the support of the global human rights community, including a strong U.S. diplomatic response, they challenged the law's constitutionality in courts—and won.

“WE ARE ETERNALLY INDEBTED TO AJWS FOR THEIR UNWAVERING SUPPORT OF OUR WORK.”

—Nicholas Opiyo, Ugandan human rights attorney
who overturned the Anti-Homosexuality Law

AJWS and the Ugandan activist community have celebrated this legal victory but remain vigilant, as lawmakers may reintroduce the bill in the future. They have also increased LGBTI people's access to health services and information and continue to raise awareness about LGBTI rights in Uganda, in the hope of creating a safer and more equitable society for all.

Participants on AJWS's Study Tour to Uganda and Kenya met these LGBTI activists on a visit to Minority Women in Action.
PHOTO Evan Abramson



THE BIG PICTURE: SEXUAL AND GENDER EQUALITY

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people are just some of the groups that AJWS works with in promoting sexual and gender equality worldwide. We also empower women, adolescent girls and sex workers to overcome discrimination, gain access to sexual and reproductive health care and information, and advocate for laws that ensure that all people can live and love in health, safety and dignity.

Our grantees are effecting change by:

- Educating people about their sexuality and rights
- Changing discriminatory attitudes
- Reducing violence
- Supporting survivors of violence
- Pursuing legal justice
- Changing and enforcing laws
- Promoting access to health care
- Stopping the spread of HIV
- Giving women and sexual minorities a political voice
- Putting sexual rights on public agendas



“WE’RE NO LONGER SILENCED. WE NOW HAVE A VOICE.”

—A young gay man empowered by AJWS grantee
Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (pictured).



PHOTO Evan Abramson



“Other people’s dignity should be
as precious to you as your own.”
—ETHICS OF OUR ANCESTORS

For videos, articles, policy papers and more information about our LGBTI work, visit www.ajws.org/LGBTI.
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