Representations of queerness in documentary films and art

1 Introduction

The following project arose from the question of how art can present activism concerning the topic of Africa and queer (in)visibilities. Contents can be certainly distributed with written media such as articles, essays or lectures but what stands in the forefront is imagery. It has the ability to convey messages and being spread across the globe via internet, reaching out to a broad audience. Immediately Zanele Muholi comes to mind since she calls herself a visual activist, a combination of an artist and activist. She unites her reflections, observations and actions on the topic of queer identities in photography, education and film, focusing their representation to her native country, South Africa. However, Africa is the second largest continent in the world and it was important to include countries that show different backgrounds of the LGBT community’s situation which is why Cameroon and Uganda are part of the following discussion.

Beginning the research with a short definition of documentary films the reader is informed about the wide implementation possibilities within this film genre. Thereafter, South Africa, Uganda and Cameroon are presented with respective films by first introducing their legal systems. The reason for looking at these specific countries is, besides their geographic locations and diverse jurisdiction, the availability of documentary films. South Africa, the only state on the continent with a constitution against discrimination of all genders and sexual orientations, is represented by two different documentary films: Difficult love by Zanele Muholi and Fitrah. The dilemma of negotiating sexual diversity and faith by Mouhin Hendricks and his organization The Inner Circle. Uganda, a state where homosexuality is criminalized by law, just recently undergoing a scandal with the Anti-homosexuality act of 2014, is depicted by the films Call me Kuchu by Malika Zouhali-Worrall and Katherine Fairfax Wright and The worlds worst place to be gay which is a BBC Production. Furthermore, the documentary Born this way by Shaun Kadlec und Deb Tullmann which is set in Cameroon is analyzed.

By going into detail of the films, the community's struggles and how it fights to overcome these are presented, creating a space and awareness for the persons concerned and most importantly making them visible.

2 Definition of documentary films

A big debate about the definition of the term documentary exists. The following is based on statements of John Grierson (1898 - 1972), a British documentary producer.

"Any documentarian will hear the name John Grierson mentioned again and again, often cited as the father of documentary filmmaking, and founder of the Documentary Film Movement in Britain in the late 1920s." (Glynne, Andy. 2012. S. 24)

According to him documentary filmmaking describes the representation of reality in various ways. Grierson sees the medium documentary film as a medium of education because of the representation in a realistic way and not in an artistic way. He determines that the basis of any documentary film is the representation of real life by using original scenarios and original performers with actions out of their lifes which makes the whole documentary appear familiar and real. (Grierson 1998: 24-32)
Alphons Silbermann also once said that a documentary, based on reality and without professional actors and script, aims to inform and teach in an enjoyable and hassle-free way. (http://www.aim-mia.de/article.php?id=1534)

„Documentary ideas come from everywhere. Often, although not always, they come from somewhere deep within us. Perhaps we are outraged at some social injustice in the world and want right some wrong. Perhaps we’re particularly interested in a specific group of people, or a cultural facet, or maybe we are enthused about something that happened to us, or to our family or friends.” (Glynne 2012: 26)

3 Representations of queerness in documentary films and art

3.1 South Africa

The first official law against homosexuality in South Africa was constituted in 1872 when ‘sodomy’, an act defined as anal or oral sex amongst men, was passed as a common law crime in the country. With the apartheid era came several more laws to prosecute homosexual activities of men - female same-sex conducts never being stated as illegal in the juridical system. In 1957 the Sexual Offences Act’s section 24 prohibited men to have sexual interactions when more than two people being present, so to say if the conduct happened in a non-private situation. Section 20A made sodomy punishable as an “unnatural sexual offence” with either a fine of up to R400 or a penalty of up to two years of imprisonment, both punishments were also possible. The fine was increased to R4000 in 1988. The law against ‘sodomy’ was enforced again in 1977 and 1987 with the Criminal Procedure Act and the Security Officers Act. In 1982 the Head of the South African National Defense ordered that homosexuality and lesbianism should be fought with matters such as aversion therapy, including shock therapy, behavioral therapy, narcoanalysis, chemical castrations with hormones, medical torture and gender reassignment surgery.

Despite the apartheid government’s harsh and hostile position towards the rights of LGBT South Africans, gay rights organizations formed in the nation with the approach of a constitutional democracy. Openly organizing in the mid 1980s, groups such as the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) or Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) were predominantly white organizations with members from the middle and upper classes, although GLOW’s founder was the black South African and anti-apartheid activist Simon Nkoli.

With the end of the apartheid era, the South African government approved a new constitution, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996. It not only legally ended apartheid but also protected the rights of homosexuals, being the first constitution in the world to do so. The constitution set a guarantee to the right of equality and nondiscrimination of all people. It is found in the Equality Clause of the Bill of Rights, section 9:

9 (1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

9 (2) Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.

9 (3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience belief, culture, language and birth.

9 (4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.

9 (5) Discrimination on one or more grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair unless it is established that it is fair.

Even though these constitutional provisions were set after the apartheid era, violations against the human rights of LGBT community members are still a prevailing issue in South Africa. It is highly recommended to read about developments of current violations in the article The human right paradox of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students in South African education.

Continual social intolerance against LGBT people hints towards a gap in the South African education system to educate ill-informed members of society against homophobia and unfair prejudice against sexual orientation.
These issues are affirmed in the following presented documentaries whose main and very much needed mission is to document, educate and stop homophobia.

2 Van Vollenhoven 2013: 264.
4 Van Vollenhoven 2013: 264

3.1.1 Zanele Muholi’s "Difficult love" (2010)

Commissioned by the South African Broadcasting Corporation in 2010, the documentary Difficult love was produced and directed by Peter Goldsmid and co-directed by the artist Zanele Muholi, who is also the presenter.

The film is a very intimate take on the situation that South African LGBT community members have to face in their country. Included are positions, opinions and experiences not only by experts and researchers, but also by the artist herself, those affected, their circle and South African society. In an interview Muholi states that most important for her was to share who she is and to disrupt the common understanding of "black lesbians" which is mostly violent and hateful imagery towards them rarely showing the love and life of black lesbians.1 The film has been shown in numerous countries and film festivals around the world, most certainly because of the film’s mainstream modality which allows her to reach audiences to a great extent all around the world increasing the quantity of viewers learning and growing from her documentary. Regardless of the critics, positive or negative, the film’s production is what matters to the artist because viewers will process it even if they do not understand or refuse to do so.

3.1.1.1 Analysis

The documentary is constituted by very many, quickly changing and intersecting content sequences while also being accompanied by Zanele Muholi’s photographs. The subject matters build upon each other always contextually leading to another topic concerning the chief contents. For analyzing this film it is important that scenes are not regarded as single statements, opinions or histories but rather as a substantial framework built upon each other.

It begins with a selection of Zanele Muholi’s photographs including the series Being from 2007, intimately showing two women cuddled in bed in different positions. It goes on with the controversy about the former South African Arts and Culture Minister Lulu Xingwana who left the exhibition Innovative women at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg in August 2009 after seeing Muholi’s images showing women involved with other females.2 The former minister claimed them of being immoral and against nation-building. Responding to this accusation is Gail Smith, a journalist and critic, who clearly distincts Muholi’s work from any arousing or sexual content which is that of pornography. Smith underlines that the artist’s work is for educational and societal reflection purposes which is confirmed by the artist herself in the next scene.

The viewer sees Muholi depicted as someone who just woke up, seated in her bed wearing a bathrobe. She introduces herself as a visual activist with radical work based on political issues. These issues are pointed out by the following anti-homosexual positions of African men and women interviewed on the street. Their statements referring to god creating Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, a plea for the Government to set a law against homosexuality, the demonization of homosexuals since an evil spirit would live within them or even the opinion that homosexuality would not be African, emphasizes the LGBT community’s struggle, namely that of a “difficult love”.

Returning to Zanele Muholi she states her reasons for working on the issues of black lesbians. Wanting to show herself and the life of South African lesbians, she shares their backgrounds, their interpersonal relationships, their feelings, their thoughts and their consciousness while pointing out that the history of homosexuality has been deformed which leads to the gender and political analyst Nomboniso Gasa. She validates Muholi’s last statement by stressing the misconception of homosexuality being un-African which has been passed on throughout generations. Furthermore, she says,
There is nothing normal about heterosexuality [...] it's one aspect of [...] sexuality.

Later Smith asks:

If you think that Zanele woke up one day and chose to be lesbian, when did you choose to be a heterosexual?

The artist talks about her own encounter with homosexual visibility in South Africa. Art, galleries and museums did not belong to her vocabulary in the township she grew up in, no images spoke to her, since heterosexual pictorial material predominated in society. Women wearing make-up and dresses were always depicted with men underlining the conservative purpose of a female existence. Muholi's purpose though is to present people in their beautiful natural way:

All I want to see is just beauty. And beauty doesn't mean you have to smile and show your teeth. Just be.

The viewer then encounters throughout the documentary lesbian women who share with Muholi their stories, feelings and destinies. Four of these key stories shall be profiled in the course of the analysis.

3.1.1.2 Viola May

One of those women is Viola May, a black lesbian, who is being photographed by Muholi. She talks about different expectations one has for defining a woman. Is it the monthly menstruation? Is it what a female person wears? Is it how she walks in the street? Both women laugh at her questions. She introduces herself with the words,

I am a woman. I'm a lady. I'm a lesbian that's in love with another woman, so please address me as 'she' or 'Ma'am' for you.

May is represented in the film as a very strong and independent woman. During the photo shooting she stands proudly in front of the camera posing as if she will be on the front cover of Vogue, causing both women to laugh about her behavior. She reveals later in the documentary that she is now 38 years old and trying to conceive a child through test-tube fertilization for the sake of having her own family and refusing to go the easy way of having sexual intercourse with a man which some people even recommended to her. Laughing about the ridiculousness of this advice and becoming very emotional she goes on with explaining her situation as a very lonely process having to go to the gynecologist alone which sometimes causes her to cry all day. But once again she proves the strength inside of her:

You know, celebrate life to it's fullest whether you cry all day or you laugh all day. Celebrate it. It doesn’t really matter. At the end of the day it’s your life that you need to celebrate.

The documentary successfully captures these celebrating moments not only with Viola May, but also with a couple the viewer meets prior to her emotional confession.

3.1.1.3 Petra Brink and Praline Hendricks

Zanele Muholi visits the couple Petra Brink and Praline Hendricks in their shed under a bridge. With a warm welcome they proudly show their private space which they had to flee to after being ejected from a shelter for the homeless for being a lesbian couple. Living with rats is a circumstance they got used to quickly, explaining:

But actually they are our family because they look after us and they actually don’t bother us. [...] They keep the baddies away because they frighten them.

While Muholi takes photos of the women they laugh as Praline shows her computer, CD-Player and an image of Barack Obama who she has replaced in a frame with pictures of her family. The scene goes on with the background stories of the women. Praline explains how she grew up as a tomboy playing soccer and being interested in cars. At the age of 14 she noticed her attraction to the same sex and refused her feelings but was not able to suppress them for long coming out a year later.

The focus changes to Petra who talks about meeting Praline in a Shebeen, an illegal bar, saving her from the man she was with at the time and who lost his fight for her after a year. Shortly after her family and friends found out she was engaging in a lesbian relationship they turned their back on her which made the bond even stronger between Petra and Praline. During photos of them and sequences where the women wash dishes in the nearby river or sit together at a fireplace, they recount their experiences in their current living space:
Many of the people don’t know we’re lesbian. Most think that we’re mother and daughter. So for the seven months that we’ve been here, we’ve lived under that little alias […].

The film clearly points out the unbelievable living situation these two women have to deal with and the invisibility of their existence. This is reinforced by Zanele Muholi’s personal and emotional take on the setting,

I come from a space where I could have a blanket. I could have warm water. I could eat a meal. And have fun with my partner. Whereas I know that there are lesbians who are, who have feelings just like us but they are stuck in spaces like this. […] I wish I could help but I don’t have means to help them.

Saying this, Zanele Muholi does not seem to realize the impact of her documentary since she makes the women visible. Never failing to depict the lesbians in the film as strong females whose love for each other is the most important thing in their life, she creates awareness of the hardships they have to struggle with and the love they radiate from within, strikingly represented in their last shot as Petra and Praline sing songs of praise and thanks to Jesus.

3.1.1.4 Zanele Muholi

The artist herself is portrayed in many scenes during the documentary. While she often adds statements to stories or reports of others, the viewer has the chance to receive an intimate insight on her life, not only by the story of how she met her partner Liesl Theron and the memories they share, but also by the numerous emotional reactions she has to other’s and her own destiny. Muholi recalls her mother Bester Ziqubu Muholi who was a domestic worker for the white Family Harding. As they say, the families had a close bond supporting each other in every way they could. The artist visits the Hardings after a long time to remember her mother who has passed away in September of 2009. She played an important role in Zanele’s life because she accepted the sexual orientation of her daughter as it was teaching her children to also respect not only Zanele, their sister, but also her lovers and partners:

My ex lovers are still welcomed at home by my brothers and my sisters even though my mother is gone because she taught my family to accept and respect the intimacy and love between me and my partners.

The importance is clear when the viewer sees her photographic project on domestic workers. She recalls her mother’s true story while transforming the stereotypical idea of the black domestic worker having a sexual relationship with the man of the house:

In the past and still today we hear the stories of the female black domestic worker being raped or having an intimate relationship with the white male Massa. But let’s queer it and imagine that those white Madams may have loved their black maids, been intimate with them. Maybe because they shared something simply as two women in love or maybe it was a purely carnal relationship based on mutual erotic desire or on the unequal power and labor relations that existed between black women and white women that the white Madams, like the white Massa, took advantage of the situation. We don’t know. And it’s still so taboo to talk about. But, I want to get people talking and looking at race, gender and sexuality in the context of domestic work.

Her mother not only gave her the opportunity and love she needed for growing up as a lesbian woman, but also inspired the artist in her work which is most certainly why she mourns the loss of her mother so much regretting that her mother never had a chance to go to an opening or see Muholi’s work and feel the inspiration and strength she was to her daughter.

Still having the support of her family, she returns to them with her partner Liesl in the documentary. The viewer is introduced to the family-bond and their take on Zanele’s sexual orientation. As soon as their mother has spoken out the respect for her daughter,

there was nothing we could do. After that, even my brothers couldn’t kick her out of the house,

says her sister Ntombizane Muholi. The documentary succeeds to capture this important message since there is no need to eject someone from their home like it has happened to Petra and Praline earlier in the film because of their sexual orientation. Gays, lesbians, trans- and bisexual persons are not to be demonized rather humanized as Gail Smith states earlier. Unfortunately, many homosexuals still have to deal with being diabolized by fellow citizens in South Africa even though it claims to be the ‘rainbow state’ and even bans discrimination of all sorts in their constitution. As Zanele’s sister explains:
Many people dislike lesbians because they fear lesbians will take men’s girlfriends. Men don’t want anyone to be a man except themselves. When you have male feelings they don’t like it. That’s why they end up killing them. They end up harassing them.

A horrible fate many lesbians have to face in South Africa, a terrible phenomenon called corrective rape which is emotionally represented in the film’s next chapter.

3.1.1.5 Millicent Gaika

The scene is introduced with a newspaper headline reading

RAPED FOR BEING GAY,

a magazine’s citation

HE TOLD ME HE’D MAKE ME A REAL WOMAN

and close-ups of a woman’s bitten nails and her severely beaten up face. Following these scenes, is a man outside a shed explaining what has happened. The viewer is introduced to Millicent Gaika who is the victim of corrective rape mentioned in the tabloids before. She looks into the camera before tilting her head upwards revealing her badly wounded neck. Even though she is so heavily hurt, she speaks straight into the camera recalling what has happened to her. After asking the offender for a cigarette light he did not let her go taking her to his shack. As she says, they fought but he overpowered her, choking her, doing what he wanted. In Pilot Africa’s report on the rape the horrific extent is clarified,

He beat her, placing an electrical wire around her neck, pulling tight with enough force to bruise and scar her neck. The air barely reached her lungs, and for the next five hours in this filthy shack, Gaika’s attacker raped and assaulted her threatening to kill her and dump her lifeless body in the river, while promising to turn her into a woman.5

A dreadful crime that is, sadly, common in South Africa especially in its townships.6

Seeing her scars, bruises and swollen face it is the strength Millicent exudes during the interview. She knows about the importance that these brutal images convey. Only by making visible the pain felt to other human beings through documenting media such as photography and filmmaking, understanding, compassion and change may be achieved as Susan Sontag determines in her work Regarding the pain of others from 2003. It allows the viewer to question the world he lives in and his own reality inviting him to spread the information to help focus on the change society needs.

Such images cannot be more than an invitation to pay attention, to reflect, to learn, to examine the rationalizations for mass suffering offered by established powers. Who caused what the picture shows? Who is responsible? Is it excusable? Was it inevitable? Is there some state of affairs which we have accepted up to now that ought to be challenged?7

And the documentary Difficult love conveys exactly these aspects Sontag mentions, most certainly with success because Millicent Gaika’s rapist was sentenced to 22 years of prison giving her the opportunity to find peace after trying to kill herself since she was not able to live with the hardship she was exposed to.8

3.1.1.6 Conclusion of the representational quality of Difficult love

In summary, the documentary represents lesbians as strong women whose bonds with each other is essential to them allowing them to fight for their rights and calling out to the public to create awareness for the issues of homosexuals in South Africa. The viewer observes this not only through the mentioned women above but also throughout the film: the photographs Zanele Muholi took either of the women portrayed in Difficult love or others she encountered during her career, the insight given by further women such as Gazi Zuma or Nkunzi Nkabinde, the lesbian girl soccer event in Kayelitsha near the Western Cape or the group of young lesbian women who visit Zanele Muholi in the Michael Stevenson Gallery where the artist inspirationally reassures them that:

You are more than just one thing. You are a lesbian, you are somebody else’s daughter, you are somebody else’s sister, you are somebody else’s lover, you are somebody else’s aunt or you are somebody else’s mother. It’s part of our history. It needs to be archived. It needs to be shared with so many […] people.
Authentic love, feelings for another human being no matter what gender or sexual orientation may not devalue a human being. Zanele Muholi’s documentary conveys exactly this - that one is worthy of love regardless of gender, race or sexual orientation - and she calls out to the audience to have their own takes [...], go home think about it, create your own meanings because, as Gail Smith fittingly points out near the end of the film,

 [...] the responsibility for changing society cannot lie with the artist, she’s simply expressing her art. [...] the responsibility to change society is society’s which can only be achieved by documenting, archiving and presenting the needed change to the world - a task Zanele Muholi has made her number one priority.

You can’t change the laws without changing the images. [...] It is one thing to say we exist; it is another thing to show it. Art is political, art is about activism. And it’s beyond just the art. I also want to contest the notions of African homosexuality, and I’m hoping that others will come up with similar visual narratives in Uganda, Nigeria, Malawi, Botswana, Lesotho. You’re trying to undo invisibility about what we look like and go through,9 and she fulfills the task exceptionally.

4 Ghassan 2010

3.1.2 Muhsein Hendrick’s "Fitrah" (2013)

Muhsein Hendricks’ Fitrah. The dilemma of negotiating sexual diversity and faith (2013) was directed by Latheem Nair and Muhsein Hendricks in 2013 and produced by The Inner Circle, a non-governmental organization founded by Hendricks in 2004 while it already existed as a small underground support group since 1996. The group’s mission is raising consciousness through spirituality, education and movement building; bringing healing to Muslims who are marginalised based on sexual orientation and gender identity.1

But why is this support for queer Muslims to reconcile with Islam and their sexuality so important? What are the takes on Islam and homosexuality or transgender identities? The organization’s necessity is exemplified in Hendrick’s documentary by presenting the opinions and experiences of several persons concerned, experts, theologians and psychologists. However, Hendricks himself contributes with empowering explanations and statements to the project. Born in 1970, he is the first openly homosexual Imam who struggled with his sexual orientation even trying to suppress it by marrying a woman.

It was not an easy journey because back then there was no support for sexual orientation and gender identity within Muslim communities and so I sought to learn Islam for myself, study Islam for myself and find out why is a merciful and compassionate God rejecting people with a different sexual orientation and yet they don’t choose to be like that. That somehow was an injustice for me and I needed to find the truth and that’s why I studied Islam.2
Finishing his studies at the age of 29 he came out and devoted his life to the research and education of what Islam determines about sexual diversity building an organization offering empowerment programs of three months, constant support and events that are being practiced not only in South Africa but in other countries such as Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, France, Netherlands, Belgium and Kenya.

3.1.2.1 Analysis

The word ‘fitrah’ is an Arabic term and can be translated with ‘nature’ as to how god has created man. Everything a Muslim does has to fit in with his ‘fitrah’ making it an obligation to accept one’s own sexuality and that of others. As can be read in the introduction above, the acceptance is a very difficult process represented in the film. It is sub-divided into eight chapters that are reminiscent of the stages a queer Muslim might have to face when reconciling his or her sexual orientation or gender identity and Islam.

Every chapter includes many perspectives of those affected and of experts from countries around the world such as South Africa, Malaysia or India. The scenes are predominantly interview situations, rarely showing close-ups, only of those directly affected.

The documentary begins with the statement:

This documentary is dedicated to all queer Muslims who have fought and fallen in the struggle for love, acceptance, recognition and justice within Islam

giving a first hint as to what is to be expected in the film which is confirmed by statements of the interviewees such as:

If you are saying you are a better Muslim, good for you. I don’t think you are.

Muhsin Hendricks introduces the viewer to the issue of homosexuality being greatly debated in Islam often being talked off as a major sin with a necessary death penalty, a punishment many queer Muslims fear. They see no possibility in reconciling their sexual orientation and religion which often leads to either suppressing the sexuality or neglecting the religion. A regretful situation Hendricks tries to resolve within his educational work. He asks questions such as where the condemnation of homosexuality in Islam comes from and what to think of these justifications. The answers are given in the chapters Seeking help from religious leaders and On Sodom and Gomorrah which shall be presented below.

3.1.2.2 Homosexuality and Islam

Muslims that identify with queer identities may it be homosexual, bisexual or transgender mostly face very hostile reactions from common believers or religious leaders. These views are exemplified in Hendricks’ documentary especially with the interview of Sheikh Abduragmaan Alexander, a senior Imam and member of the Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa. He emphasizes that in his opinion the Quran describes homosexuality as being an unnatural abomination, asking:

Can a person be gay and a Muslim at the same time? I might ask, can a person be a Muslim and a thief at the same time? The homosexuals, the thieves, the robbers, the murderers, we need to reach out and solve and see where we can cure these people and help them become back on the straight path.

A statement that is followed by affected Muslims confirming their experiences of being hostile because they were regarded as sinners going to hell. Some even spared themselves the advice of spiritual leaders since they could feel the judgment even before seeking help.

Following these negative attitudes is Muhsin Hendricks’ explanation that the prophet himself has blessed the differences in opinions amongst his people which will always prevail around many social issues within Islam. He later goes on with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah being the main reason for the demonization of homosexuality in Islam removing it from anti-homosexual claims.

The Koran only speaks about the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Koran doesn't use the word homosexuality. It’s only a term that was coined in the 18th century, and the Koran was a 7th century book. The story has been interpreted for years to refer to the atrocities of Sodom and Gomorrah as homosexuality so what I do is I unpack it. One of the principles that we learn when we study the Koran is that you can't quote a verse from the Koran out of context. It has a context, it has a history, there's a real particular purpose. So, I say, 'Let's do the same with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.' We look at the archaeological findings, we look at what historians say about Sodom and Gomorrah, and once we piece that together we find that the story was really about economic exploitation, inhospitality to guests, rape, molestation, homosexual practices that were related to idolatry.
As Doctor Khaleel Mohammed, professor of Religious Studies at the San Diego University, clarifies earlier homogenous opinions and prejudices about homosexuality within Islam were imported, handed on throughout generations and accepted as being a sin. What needs to be considered though is something Hendricks states in an interview:

One of the principles of Islam is to be honest. We need to be authentic. Asking people to deny their sexual identity means to deny them the possibility of being authentic. If we lie to ourselves and to one another, we cannot be good Muslims. [...] the Qur’an is a poetical masterpiece, and what comes with poetry, is many different interpretations. In my eyes, the beauty of the Qur’an lies in its emphasis on healing and mercy. [...] The Qur’an states that God is the most compassionate, the most merciful, and that is how we, as Muslims, must conduct our lives.⁸

Dr. Sa’diyya Shaikh from the University of Cape Town’s Department of Religious Studies supports Hendricks’ statements in the course of the documentary by asking:

Would god create human beings with a particular sexual orientation and then demand of them to repress that sexuality, or never act it out, or to accept the orientation as god given but never act upon it?

This thought provoking question is what represents the work of Muhsin Hendricks and The Inner Circle who have successfully reached out to many queer Muslims as shown in the documentary, like Ibrahim and Reyaaz whose stories shall be introduced in the following.

3.1.2.3 Ibrahim

The first queer Muslims to be introduced is Ibrahim, a Somali refugee, who left his home in fear of a death-punishment for his sexual orientation. He speaks in a very calm and honest way about his experiences and hardships in life while he is either seated on a sofa or walking on a pier by the ocean. His life has not only been dominated by this fear but also by shame and guilt since, as he states, even only talking about homosexuality would be a sin against Allah because it would question him. Later on, in the film’s chapter Pain and trauma, the viewer learns that Ibrahim was raped by six men which caused him more shame since he was positive no one would believe him. As the film moves on, the possibilities and mission of The Inner Circle are introduced, and Ibrahim is portrayed again, this time as a believer wearing traditional clothing after what was presumably a religious prayer with other Muslims including Muhsin Hendricks. He states:

After I met Muhsin and The Inner Circle I learned a lot and I revisited the faith.

3.1.2.4 Reyaaz

Secondly, the documentary presents Reyaaz, a Muslim transgender man, who realized at an early age that he was not like the girls around him. He was attracted to the same sex and caught in the wrong body but had nowhere to turn to. What he knew was that homosexual people existed, but only when he researched on what he thought were symptoms of feeling trapped he came across transgender identities. Sadly transgender people belong to another minority that is most often not accepted within Islam. Jill Butterworth, a psychologist interviewed for Fitrah, remarks that rape victims blame themselves and almost never seek help. The only help they find is suppressing their identity, pretending it does not exist, comparing it to a fever with alcohol and drugs as a narcotic to their pain or suicide as their only ‘cure’. Reyaaz admits that he also turned to drugs at one point in his life. He asked himself why Allah would lay such hardship on him although he has created Reyaaz that way, a question he was only able to answer after meeting Muhsin Hendricks and The Inner Circle where he felt accepted and found a safe space as he says in the documentary. Following this statement, we see him, as Ibrahim before, in traditional clothing, smiling into the camera, presented as a fulfilled Muslim who could reconcile his sexual identity and religion.

3.1.2.5 Conclusion on the representational quality of Fitrah

Islam is the second largest religion worldwide making it very difficult to capture the overall situation of the community, but Muhsin Hendricks set a milestone with the research on and presentation of the discussion of homosexuality, queer identity and Islamic religion. Not only was he able to represent opinions of a wide range of experts and researchers, he also offered a platform to persons affected including South Africans, Indians, Malaysians and Europeans. The documentary's content is not limited to a certain group or country, but is as widespread and diverse as Islam. In an interview Muhsin Hendricks states his reasons for producing the film and what happened during the making as follows:
Initially, I wanted the film to collect the narratives of queer Muslims and to document their personal struggles. Many people don’t know anything about these things, and prejudice is so common that I wanted to provide some substantial information. But as things evolved, the film became a documentary that showcases the negotiations that queer Muslims make between religion and sexuality. They often have massive problems. To numb feelings of rejection, for example, there is a lot of alcohol and drug misuse. Others leave the faith because they feel overwhelmed. It is important to point out that people can leave their faith, but one cannot shed one’s sexual identity. There is a serious risk of suicide. I personally know of five cases. The film tackles these issues from the personal, theological and scientific perspectives. It is not something you can watch with your feet up and relax. It is a very engaging documentary. I hope it will start discussions wherever it is screened.9

Since Muhsin Hendricks is not an artist like Zanele Muholi it is interesting to reflect on an artist’s perspective on this particular issue. How does an artist present (in)visible issues on homosexuality, queer identity in Islam except for documentary films? Taking a look at South African artist Igshaan Adams who has worked with The Inner Circle and Muhsin Hendricks gives answers to this question.

3.1.3 Igshaan Adams

Adams was born in Cape Town in 1982 and raised in a community classified as ‘coloured’ under the apartheid regime. His background is very special since his Christian grandmother brought him up with Islam because that was the religion of the artist’s parents. As identity struggles have been displayed in Muhsin Hendricks’ film Fitrah, for example with Ibrahim, who is a friend of the artist, Adam’s life displays similar processes. At a young age he discovered his homosexuality which conflicted with his religious beliefs. As he pointed out in the interview I conducted with him on 28th January 2015 he went through different stages in reconciling his sexual orientation and Islam, similar to the phases described in the documentary. He even took part in the three month empowerment program by Muhsin Hendricks which was his final step in reconciling his identities.

Adams captures one of the most defining phases in an untitled work from his exhibition Jou ma se poes (2009) portraying himself in a fabric collage as a woman with Islamic prayers carved into the frame. He did not want to ignore being gay but it felt that his orientation needed to be contained by Islam as he said in the interview. Later in 2011 he created the work In between which captured the time of his transformation from living secularly to living very religious breaking off contact with his friends and family, isolating himself and meeting new people that helped him to understand Islam.

For the installation he covered the floor with Islamic prayer mats that were stitched together in the direction of Mecca cutting and sowing a snake into the carpets, making it slither through the space. As stated in the press release of 2011 the snake

serves as antagonist in this sacred environment. In Islam as in Christianity and Judaism, the snake is a symbol of deceit and treachery. Yet, historical records from cultures across the world reference the snake as a symbol of knowledge, and of the energy of transformation within needed to reach spiritual enlightenment.

During his reconciliation phase he often dreamt of this snake which arose from a pool when a young boy in his dream threw something in the water. Dream after dream the boy and Adams tried to deceive the snake. On the 27th night of Ramadan, the opening night of his exhibition, the artist dreamt of the boy who was then grown asking him about his identity, and the answer was “I am you”.10

Queer Muslims often face difficult stages in life when trying to reconcile their sexual orientation, gender identity and religious beliefs. Igshaan Adams sets an example of making visible his personal struggle in his artworks. The works Untitled and In between are only a glimpse into the artist’s expertise in capturing these phases and giving them their necessary visibility.

1 http://theinnercircle.org.za/
3 Hamada 2014.
5 Sabra 2014.
6 Please note that this article focuses on South Africa.
3.2 Uganda

3.2.1 Historical context

In many African countries the LGBTI community is associated with abuse of human rights and a life of fear. Political and religious leaders as well as community leaders have joined forces to condemn homosexuality which they also call an un-African taboo and disease imported from the West. Many of the existing anti-sodomy laws are colonial legacies. These laws are now commonly used to defend the local and traditional culture and values from pre-colonial societies that originally tolerated and accepted same-sex relationships. The imposition of anti-sodomy laws and penal codes has resulted in unnecessary persecution and violence against LGBTI people in many African countries. Therefore these people were excluded from society and stigmatized. That makes it hard for the affected persons to gain access to public services such as health care and education. [1]

Legislation to homosexuality as a crime is not a problem of the 21st century. It began in Uganda in the Constitution of 1950 and the Penal Code of 1955. The Criminal Code from 1950 indicates that same-sex relationships are illegal under paragraphs 145, 146 and 148. Section 145 Unnatural offenses implies that acts “against nature” [2] can be punished by life imprisonment. It is stated that:

„Any person who ...
(a) has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature;
(b) has carnal knowledge of an animal; or
(c) permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature, commits an offence and is liable to imprisonment for life.” [3]

Section 146 Attempt to commit unnatural offenses implies that these violations can be punished by seven years in prison [4]:

“Any person who attempts to commit any of the offences specified in section 145 commits a felony and is liable to imprisonment for seven years.” [5]

And the last paragraph of the Penal Code of 1950 which deals with the punishment of same-sex relationships is paragraph 148 Practice Indecent practices. Inappropriate practices imply a seven-year prison sentence as a result. [6]

“Any person who, whether in public or in private, commits any act of gross indecency with another person or procures another person to commit any act of gross indecency with him or her or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any person with himself or herself or with another person, whether in public or in private, commits an offence and is liable to imprisonment for seven years.” [7]

The law came at a time when the situation in civil society in Uganda as a whole, not just for LGBTI members, deteriorated. The Ugandan constitution in 1995, however, was very progressive in their recognition of the rights of every citizen. In this regard there came up specific provisions for marginalized groups such as women, children and disabled people. [6] Homosexual relationships have always been forbidden as in Article 31 (3) of the constitution of 1995 - "marriage shall be entered into with the free consent of the man and woman intending to marry" - although Article 21 (1) of the constitution stands for equality and non-discrimination for all people. Furthermore there is paragraph 145 of the Penal Code specified in Section 120. The Criminal Code is still from colonial times and has not been revised ever since. [9] The Anti-Homosexuality Bill was first introduced by MP David Bahati in 2009. The anti-homosexuality law had some hurdles, several revisions, political confusion over whether a final version includes the death penalty or not. In addition people wondered if Yoweri Museveni, president of Uganda, will veto. The bill failed. The anti-gay law violates the Constitution of Uganda because it says that the state is responsible to protect human and civil rights organizations. This means that the Anti-Homosexuality Act contradicts and violates also the right for protection against discrimination listed in Article 21, the right of privacy, Article 27, the right of freedom of expression which can be found in Article 29, the protection of minorities, articles 36 and the legal principle set out in in Article 38. [10]

Each time the law was re-inserted into the discussion worldwide protests emerged as well as condemnations of international politicians, human rights organizations and especially the United States. The president of the United States of America, Barack Obama, called the Anti-Homosexuality Act “odious” and said that it would be “unconscionable to target gays and lesbians for who they are”. [11]

On November 21st in 2012 the bill was reintroduced again in parliament, this time without the requirement of the death penalty, and it was hoped that it would be adopted by the end of that same year as a kind of “Christmas gift” for Ugandan citizens who asked for it, as stated by Rebecca Kadaga, speaker of the parliament of Uganda. [12]
But the attempt failed and so the law was not passed until December 20th 2013 by the Ugandan parliament. Nevertheless, even if the death penalty was removed from the law it still contains provisions that violate the basic human rights of Ugandan citizens. On February 24th 2014 president Yoweri Museveni signed the bill which came into force on March 10th 2014. The new law thus attacks the human rights of affected Ugandans and their friends, family and all others who are in contact with them. [13]

The law tightens the existing legislation against LGBTI people and prohibits any kind of sexual relations between persons of the same sex. In case of violation it could come to life imprisonment for homosexuality. This includes ‘heavy’ homosexuality, recidivism of sexual acts between people of the same sex, the intentional touching between people of the same sex, same-sex acts of HIV-infected people or against the will of the opposite, as well as same-sex marriage. There are seven years imprisonment for the support and advice of homosexuals, for attempted homosexual acts and for the management and visiting of a location of LGBTI activists. For people who provide locations or material for LGBTI activists there can be a prison sentence of five to seven years and an additional fine. The law of February 2014 violates not only the Ugandan constitution but also the international conventions that Uganda has signed. [14]

Activists live in great fear of being persecuted in public and their privacy. Many members of the LGBTI community do not leave their homes to protect their friends and family and because of the fear to get attacked or of forced evictions. They have to live in complete isolation. The act consolidates homophobic people to exercise violence against LGBTI members. [15]

After the adoption of the law of February 2014, several international institutions stopped their funds for Uganda, such as the World Bank which sent an annual loan of $ 90 million to Uganda to support the health care system in the country. The reason for this is the examination of the impact of the legal situation on the development goals. This was followed by countries such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and the U.S. to rethink their cooperation and funding. [16]

In August 1st 2014 the Constitutional Court of Uganda picked up the law and declared it invalid and a void as the speaker of the parliament acted illegally and allowed a vote without the necessary quorum of the members of parliament. Despite the suspension the laws of the pre-anti-homosexuality act still exist and can therefore be used to arrest LGBTI people. [17]

[3] Criminalisation of homosexuality, Human Dignity Trust
[6] Criminalisation of homosexuality, Human Dignity Trust
[9] Situation of LGBT persons in Uganda
[10] Protest gegen verschärfte antihomosexuelle Gesetzgebung in Uganda

3.2.2 Malika Zouhali-Worrall and Katherine Fairfax Wright’s "Call me Kuchu"

Summary

Call me Kuchu is devoted entirely to the personal stories of LGBTI activists in Uganda. Main activist is David Kato. He is joined in his work and especially in his lawsuit against the Ugandan newspaper Rolling Stone. David is a “Kuchu”, a term that homosexuals use for each other. David does not hide even though it is dangerous in Uganda. Together with other homosexuals he established the organization SMUG - Sexual Minorities Uganda. The fight against the homophobic society in Uganda brings defeats but also successes which are shown in Call me Kuchu.

Basic Conditions
Call me Kuchu is a documentary by the filmmakers Katherine Fairfax Wright and Malika Zouhali-Worral. In 2008 these two coworkers first met in New York where they discovered similarities about their work, journeys and living in East and Central Africa. Eighteen months later Malika Zouhali-Worral contacts Katherine Fairfax Wright and informs her about the idea of making a documentary on the LGBTI community in Kampala, Uganda. At that time a debate existed in Uganda of taking death penalty as a penalty for homosexuality into the law. Both filmmakers were researching about the history of LGBTI rights and activism worldwide. In doing so, Uganda came up very fast because of the big and active community that ran activism on any level compared to other African countries. Activists brought the community together to clarify about health care. Seeing the active work of these people Katherine Fairfax Wright and Malika Zouhali-Worral knew that they have to document it. They were angry enough about the former situation to sit in a flight to Kampala just two months after their initial phone call. Before their flight they had already contacted Human Rights Watch and David Kato, the most public living gay man and LGBTI activists in Uganda. David said, according to Fairfax Wright: "Yeah come, this needs to be documented!" [3] Katherine Fairfax Wright, film scholar and anthropologist, already had experiences in film and film production and Malika Zouhali-Worral, filmmaker and journalist, brought previous knowledge from her work at CNN as a journalist and videographer. [4] At this time these two filmmakers financed the production by themselves. Later they got support by fundraising and a grant, the "I believe in you grant" of the Chicken & Egg Pictures [5], a grant to support female documentary filmmakers. Upon their visit in Kampala they met with David Kato. David gave them names, addresses, numbers, telling them who to tell which aspect of the story, who they should and should not get in touch with. They started filming from noon till night people who gave them permission to film. David supported their work. They then took notice of meetings of LGBTI activists which sometimes brought them into trouble because not everyone agreed with it. They had to get used to the two filmmakers from New York to openly face and present themselves in front of the camera. After a few weeks, the filmmakers flew back to New York where the materials were processed and requests were made for financial support. Before they got the "I believe in you grant", the filmmakers questioned whether they should really stick to it to make a documentary or simply should only provide various short shots online. [6] Due to numerous financial supports they decided to complete the film as planned to show the LGBTI activist community in Uganda and how they manage to protest against homophobia. [7]

‘During our first days in Kampala, Member of Parliament David Bahati told us: “There is no longer a debate in Uganda as to whether homosexuality is right or not. It is not a human right.” Indeed, as we began researching this film in Kampala we were tempted to believe him. But soon after we met David, one of the first publicly gay men in Uganda, we were shown a very different reality - a reality we were compelled to explore because it seemed to be largely ignored by the international media.” [8]

They wanted to create something which is based on intimate and honest portraits and human stories and also mentioning persecution and empowerment to inspire the audience to strengthen the Kuchus in Kampala and get an insight into a different perspective, a view which was ignored at the time by the media. [9]

Analysis

The documentary is filmed with a shaky hand-held camera and selects deliberate blurring. Although these uncertainties create a sense of urgency they also require patience from the viewer. For their documentary the American directors came very close to the persons concerned with their approach. The activist’s experiences are displayed without any explanatory comments or dramatic background music, but they still show the urgency and force of the struggle against homophobia to the audience.

Call me Kuchu follows David Kato and other homosexuals of the LGBTI community for one year and shows their activities as activists. Nevertheless, many people from their social surroundings do not know about their sexuality, some of those affected dare to talk on camera about it. The reason is that they work as LGBTI activists and they want to reach people worldwide with their work. Call me Kuchu gives them a platform through which they can send information out in to the world.

The film’s opening scene shows a garden party at which two men are celebrating their love together with their friends. These two men have been a couple for over nine years, but they still cannot celebrate a real party since it would be too dangerous. Therefore they are incognito and without colorful dresses, explains Long Jones. The vibe of this scene is happy, everyone is in a good mood, celebrating, dancing and enjoying the festive atmosphere. Yet they are surrounded by a high fence which gives them the security they still need - even without costumes. This scene shows the audience that they have in spite of all joy of life. And for all of them love is a reason to celebrate. “Few of them know that I’m what I’m. Apart from a cousin of mine, he knows who I’m. And a best friend of mine, he knows. But even this one does not know exactly.” Sentences David says when he shows his home and the people around him in the following scene. In front of the camera he is not afraid to show his true identity and talks openly about his sexuality as a gay man and also about a trip to South Africa in 1992 where he had sex with a male prostitute for the first time. “It was my first time. It’s when I opened my eyes at 28! I thought it’s nice.” When David talks about his first sexual experience with a man, he sits in front of his house, smartly dressed in a floral pattern shirt with relatives at work in jeans and t-shirt around him. South Africa opened his eyes and he wondered: “Is this the real thing? We are not pretending.”

After six years he decided to return to Uganda with one goal in his head: “I wanted to begin the fight to liberate people”. The camera shows David’s large land and house situated in the middle of greens. “They call me the rich one, as if I am rich without power.” David is represented as generous, honest and likeable man.

In the next scene the camera focuses on smart leather shoes worn by a person walking on an ordinary Ugandan red sandy path. Again a well-dressed person. The audience gets to notice that there is another person walking next to the mentioned one. Short time after the audience can take a look at both of them from behind. We can see two men, one too formally dressed for these road conditions, wearing black suit pants, a white shirt and shiny leather shoes while the man next to him is wearing just jeans and t-shirt.

“I’m the first gay man to be open in Uganda. The very first gay man.” His name is Mbale and he seems proud representing himself as the firstouted man in Uganda. He collaborates with David at SMUG [1] and documents violence and discrimination committed against homosexual people. Mbale says: “They came and arrested just us. Because they just got us in the same room.” The camera focuses on his hands that he moves around nervously. Mbale sits in front of a rainbow flag, the international symbol for gays and lesbians. “You go outside. They undress you naked to see whether I’m a man or a woman.” A close-up of his hands showing his long fingernails comes up. It seems as if the American filmmakers wanted to draw attention to his feminine streak. “They had no evidence so they had to write all of those things [...] he has pinholes in here, he uses creams. Those are the things people did show thesis have been practicing what? Homo.” The camera goes back into detail and rests on Mbale’s left ear pierced by an earring. The filmmakers Malika Zouhali-Worrall and Katherine Fairfax Wright show Mbale leaving SMUG from behind a gate which gives the feeling of being in imprisoned.

The following scene presents Naome Ruzindana. Her shiny face shows a big laugh. Shortly after the atmosphere gets more private, Naome is sitting on her bed and tells her story.

“I’m a lesbian. I have two children [...] in the fifth year [of marriage to her husband] that’s when I realized I was just wasting his time and mine as well. So I decided to walk away with my kids and started a new life.”

After finishing the sentence she laughs merrily. Naome uses the platform to show that she is happy with her decision. It was not her husband’s fault, it was her who had to realize that she was gay and that the only way of becoming happy was standing by that. During a tour through her house a prayer banner is shown with the inscription: By god’s grace I am what I am. Naome is a full-time activist and founded the organization Coalition of Lesbians. She keeps talking further about her life while the camera is already outside, filming her house. It shows a window with a grille in front of it embedded in a high wall: Naome’s house. This frequency visualizes that even though she seems happy there can be danger any times because of her sexuality. “Nobody wanted to come out of the closet. So I meant I had to go introducing myself to everyone until I got people that were willing to work with me”, says Naomi.

When Stosh is presented she is getting a haircut by a friend. Her hair will be gone up to the last centimeter. “At home we were told if you cut your own hair you are a witch.” Shortly after that scene Stosh gets visited by Naome and they talk in detail about Stosh’s situation which Naome had already read about in the newspaper. Stosh’s identity and address was printed in the Rolling Stone. Naome has come to encourage Stosh who has not slept for days because she was afraid of getting attacked at night.

“Friends may leave you. Parents may leave you. Family may leave you. But you stay with your strength. The strength is within you and it’s you that makes things possible. And you always have to know that there are people who support you. And there are people who love you the way you are.”
The fact that he works for indirect call for help. It’s almost a cry for help, an even suicide. We are really going back into Amin’s regime.” He wants to make clear that urgent steps need to be done. Help and support to prevent this law is needed quickly.

David Kato talks who is sitting at his desk in the SMUG office. “I really just do not know who is going to convince people to remove, not to go ahead with this bill.”

Then David Kato talks who is sitting at his desk in the SMUG office. "I really just do not know who is going to convince people to remove, not to go ahead with this bill." He looked questioningly into the camera. “But otherwise we might find many of our friends either out of this country, others committing even suicide. We are really going back into Amin's regime.” He wants to make clear that urgent steps should be done. Help and support to prevent this law is needed quickly. It's almost a cry for help, an indirect call for help.

Bishop Senyonyo shows up for the first time in the documentary and says: “If we are against the LGBTI people brings himself and his family in danger. Bishop Senyono meets with Frank, also a LTBI member. Bishop Senyono tells Frank that he has a great plot on which one could build a larger and more secure center for the LGBTI community.

The next scene shows news reporting an attack in Kampala which the LGBTI community gets accused for. David buys a newspaper in the city, it’s headline refers to an article on this topic. He says: "So this one makes me panic: because now they are taking us to be traitors. Here they say new evidence shows homos giving support to Kony, ADF Al - Sahab." That situation shows once again what the LGBTI community gets blamed for. But this documentary gives them an opportunity to show their innocence.

The activists want to educate and enjoy working for activism. Long Jones makes jokes about the size of condoms and enjoys the company of his friends. Unfortunately these moments of happiness get interrupted by negative events - motivated by homophobia - which are happening in Uganda. Here you can see that they get confronted in every life situation with that topic and that the issue never lets go.

At home with Stosh. Stosh is sitting with a friend on the bed and tells her history. Stosh was raped as a teenager, it was a corrective rape by which she was not only getting pregnant but at the same time she also got HIV positive. When she told her family about it they just said that Stosh loves boys very much and that she is always playing with them and guys are her thing. Shortly after the camera observes Stosh getting dressed. First the shell, a shell that makes her breasts flat and reduces them. Furthermore she wears a blue checked men shirt and black gym shorts. She likes to dress like a man. That this situation is shown immediately after the statement "boys are her thing" was probably deliberately chosen. But even if "boys are her thing" it is still no excuse to deny a rape. Because she was too young for a birth, according to her superiors, her child was injected in the womb and came out dead one week later. "I tried so much to commit suicide. But everything I tried never worked out. Maybe I was supposed to live for a reason, for a purpose." Stosh is crying. "People want to know our stories. That's one reason I decided to come out. No matter what." This scene shows that Stosh was very desperate. A suicide attempt is usually a call for help but still she did it again and again and got no help from her family. Only in the LGBTI community she found help and at the same time a new family. Stosh points out why she outed herself and why she decided to represent herself in front of the camera. She wants to document her story and pass on to others who are dealing with the same problems, so that they can also draw new courage.

Bishop Senyonyo shows up for the first time in the documentary and says: "I’m not a gay person. I have a family. And my family has definitely been worried a lot.” The fact that he works for the LGBTI people brings himself and his family in danger. Bishop Senyono meets with Frank, also a LTBI member. Bishop Senyono tells Frank that he has a great plot on which one could build a larger and more secure center for the LGBTI community.

The first thing the bishop praises is the high secure fence. “There’s a lot of room for counseling and all that, and prayers which is very important because some of us need to reconnect back with god.” The LGBTI community has to fight with the daily destinies and that is why some of them lose faith in god. But Frank shows how important it is to have faith and wants the others to find their way back to god.

This conversation demonstrates that these people have so much positive energy that they do not give up but giving each other new courage. Call me Kuchu displays how much cohesion there is in the LGBTI community in Uganda. Everyone strongly supports each other because outside the community they have no one. It works like a big family where everyone is there for each other and helps where they can.

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In the next scene Naome meets with the Reverend H. M. Nyanzi, someone who represents the opinion: “I need you to talk with homosexuals and see how you can help them”, says Naome although she knows exactly that the Reverend Nyanzi is having a dialogue with a homosexual person. Naome continues: “I have spoken with a lot of them. Yeah and they have their grievances about you people”. By using the emphasis “you people” she shows that she is different from him. The Reverend replied: “So preach to them and change them. But do not support them.” Naome is looking away, generally she hardly looks him in the eyes. She looks towards the camera. The Reverend laughs and Naome who finds it hard to laugh about this, says because of her sexuality and forces herself to laugh. Nyanzi makes statements like, “Change them. It’s your role”. Meanwhile Naome plays with her ring on the thumb, looking down, grins and replies: “Instead me, I defend minorities. So because they also exist.” Naome defends the minorities of the LGBTI community but from a different perspective, not from the perspective of her gay self. Through this dialogue it is showing how they must behave in front of people who do not support the work and actions of the LGBTI community.

Due to the change of perspective these people talk to her and give Naome an opportunity to educate the homophobic population. Naome continues: “The one I’ve met are natural. They are born homosexuals. When you meet a homosexual and he or she tells you what exactly she goes through, how she realized she was one, maybe you would understand.” Initially Naome remains neutral and speaks of “she or he” and then switches to “she”. This makes clear that she speaks of herself in third person. The whole time she looks down, which could be attributed to lying about her sexuality. The conversation ends with a sad face of Naome because she could not convince the Reverend. He stays with his views. The LGBTI activists have to fight constantly with that defeat. “Those behaviours [of a prostitute and a thief] are learned. Even the homosexuals, it is learned behaviour. It is just learned behaviour. God could not have got examined kind of people and then in the end he condemns homosexuality.” This conversation shows to Naome that there is simply no chance to change the solid views of these people, in whatever manner, whether as homosexual or heterosexual or as a friend and confidant.

During the next section David Kato tells his dream to create a gay village. “Victor here. Naome here. Then we begin a gay village. It will be better when we are together in our solidarity. So we get funds together, we help people around synthesis. At the end of the day they will like us and say ‘no they are not bad people’” He still has dreams, dreams about that more people in Uganda understand him and his sexuality and accept it. The idea of building their own village shows that living together strengthens them and provides security for them. While David shows his bedroom, with all the books on homosexuality in Africa, explaining that there he can do what he wants. No one can disturb him when he is reading one of these books for example. It also shows that David is very well educated and informed about the situation because his goal as an activist is to obtain equality and freedom for all someday.

He is proud to be a community leader and promises to stay and continue to fight. The camera shows a close up of his face. It shows discomfort and anxiety. Fear of being attacked anytime.

David sits in his living room waiting for the news. “I have to listen to the news. There I am. Did you see me? And Naome, Pepe, Kasha.” In the news a discussion between LGBTI activists, David, Naome, Pepe and Kash, and the pastor Maale is shown in which the activists demand the Anti-Homosexuality Bill to be reconsidered. When the discussion between David and Maale appears, David calls out: “This old bitch. Ugly poo!” After the interview a narrative voice says that you are now awaiting what David Bahati, the author of this act and the cabinet is saying. David laughs. “I have to laugh at this. Let them fight. They are pulling air! The will not manage. Garbage!” Shortly thereafter, he calls Pepe in order to evaluate the news with him and ends the conversation with “a luta continua [the struggle continues]”. This is the motto of the fight of the LGBTI community. “Life is not static! It moves! Things change! Now we have to push the dialogue by force. What have I done? I’m an educated enough. I went to best schools in Uganda. I’m proud of that. I’m a tax payer,” he says showing his ID. David is proud of himself, his work, his education, his background and his sexuality. That makes him thoughtfully.

David shows his despair. It shows that the lives of all homosexuals in Uganda are in despair. They have already fought so much, went to their limits and still feel powerless. David already begins to blame himself for that and he starts to give up.
Another part of the interview with the editor of Rolling Stone is shown and then the last session is shown in court where the activists as well as the Rolling Stones employees are present. David said that police officers outside the courthouse said to him: "He is one of them." David said: "They wanted to chase me. That's why I do not want to go to court when I do not have anyone from Human Rights Commission. When there is someone at least if anything happens, someone is documenting, seeing what's going on." Documenting in any way helps David and his friends and gives them protection. Here it is clear that David is very dependent on protection. Without protection he feels much more uncertain especially since no one is on the spot that would document the truth. No one would make a statement for a homosexual.

The judgment of the trial: LGBTI activists win.

"It must be noted that this application is not about homosexuality per se, it is about fundamental rights and freedoms. Clearly, the call to hang gays in dozens tends to tremendously threaten their right to human dignity. Court would upon that account issue the injunction sought by the applicants, restraining the respondents from any further publications of the identities of the persons and homes of the applicants and homosexuals generally."

For the first time we see all happy in a public place. They fought for something hard and won the battle. For this reason a great celebration starts in the evening. On the plot of Naome, it is already dark outside and everyone can be how he feels most comfortable. The fences are high and they can be all to their selves. There is a small travesty fashion show.

[1] Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG)

3.2.3 Scott Mills' "The worlds worst place to be gay?"

Summary

In The worlds worst place to be gay Scott Mills travels to Uganda where the death penalty could soon be introduced for gays. The Radio 1 DJ finds out what it's like to live in a society where people like him get pursued. He meets those who lead the hate campaign as well as LGBTI activists and students and reports his experience.

Basic conditions

The world's worst place to be gay is a production of BBC Three. BBC Three is a public television channel of the British Broadcasting Corporation, BBC, since 2003. [1] The target group of the transmitter are people aged 16 to 36 years. In addition to drama, comedy, sports and news documentaries are included in the program of BBC Three. The highly acclaimed documentaries of the transmitter reflect experiences of young people on their journey through the world. [2] In this context, the documentary The world's worst place to be gay originated. This documentation was filmed in October 2010 [3] and first aired on 14.02.2011 on BBC Three in the genre of factual and format documentaries. The production and direction were led by Chris Alcock. [4] Moderator of the documentary The world's worst place to be gay is the homosexual Radio 1 reporter Scott Mills. [5] Since the age of 17 the today 40-year-old Britan from Southampton works as a radio host and he leads this profession he since 1998 from BBC Radio 1. [6], "In this movie I'm going to try and find what it is like to be harassed, beaten and to live in fear of your life just: because of your sexuality." [7]

Analysis

The documentary form of The world's worst place to be gay differs, as already mentioned, from the one of Call me Kuchu. The documentary is directed by a radio host, the English radio DJ Scott Mills. He is therefore the subject of this film because his experience with gay people, and the opponents are shown and commented by his voiceover. Unlike Call me Kuchu one can see that Scott is the one who asks the questions and the people of Uganda, the interviewees answer. Accordingly, the respondents are less likely to tell what is most important to them, they are just mostly answering the questions of Scott Mills.
The world's worst place to be gay

The world's worst place to be gay within the documented travel is as follows: city scenes, meeting with one or more persons concerned or opponents, city scenes, short clips by homophobic opponents, demos, worship, people on the street, followed by an evaluation of the day by the host. The whole event is accompanied with music. The scenes of everyday life in the city of Kampala and the surrounding area are shown accompanied with African pop music while stories of negative experiences of the affected people are indicated with sad instrumental music.

At the beginning of the documentary, the film is summarized within one and a half minute, based on excerpts from the documentary. Thereupon the host introduces himself and some excerpts of his life as a DJ are shown as well as from his everyday life and his previous research on homosexuality in Uganda before the camera joins him to the airport. Scott compares Uganda and the UK and gives a historical overview of how to deal with homosexuality in Britain. He emphasizes that life as a gay man in Britain was never a problem for him. "So I'm gay. Big deal you might think and in this country it really isn't. I can be who I want to be and for the most part, nobody gives a damn." This is followed by a summary of the status of homosexuality in Africa and particularly Uganda.

"It's in Uganda though where things are really hotting up. Homosexuality is already illegal but a new bill has been proposed that will seriously ramp up the punishments for being gay. I've never been involved with gay rights but the way things are in Africa make me wanna get out there and see what's really going on."

Just before departure and after his research, the English radio host has fear written all over his face. "As a gay guy why was I going to a country where just being myself can get me beaten up, arrested or even killed?" After arriving in Kampala, Scott started interviewing people on the street about homosexuality before meeting with homosexuals. The people interviewed by Mills are all of the same opinion that homosexuals belong in prison or even killed.

"All this talk about killing homosexuals wasn't helping my nerves but even here there are still a few people who refuse to give in. In London the best place to meet gay guys is in a gay bar, I didn't expect to find one here but surprisingly there is somewhere that tolerates people like me."

Scott Mills travels to the T, a bar. Outside there is still light and there are quite a few men on the spot who are celebrating the end of the day with friends. The DJ asks Long Jones who one already knows from Call Me Kuchu: "Is this the only place where you feel safe in Kampala?" And he replies: "Yeah, so far it's the only place, o.k. there is another place. In this bar homosexuals feel safe. Between their homes and the LGBTI centers, such as this bar, there is always the danger of being attacked and assaulted because of their sexuality.

Mills sits at a table together with three guests. One of them is wearing sunglasses even though dawn appears. He asks the men how it is to be gay in Uganda. "On my side its tough cause I want to get freedom but it's difficult" answers a man in his mid-twenties who is getting tapped on the shoulder by another person. They all feel isolated, they cannot live as the people they are. But the tapping on the shoulder symbolizes once again that they support each another.

But the men are interested about the sexuality of the English host. "Can I ask you, are you a gay, too?" Scott answered with the affirmative. He had the intent not to tell anyone of his homosexuality in Uganda unless the questions are asked by gays. Furthermore, it was also forbidden for him to publish this in order to avoid any possible danger. From 12:23 minute the camera moves through the bar, everyone is drinking, dancing, men hold hands, hug each other and forget all the dangers around them. They are just having fun without thinking about the danger outside. Scott also is asked to dance by some men.

"These people are very brave to come out here and be in this bar however it's a really friendly and fun place where they can just be themselves like I can be in every bar in London. This is the only place they could come."

The next day Scott wants to find out more about the people who he had previously met earlier in the day in the bar and visits them at their home. He meets Joseph on the road, who leads him to his house. Joseph is very nervous about the attention generated by the camera. A friend and roommate of Joseph comes by and orders to turn off the cameras immediately because the area is very homophobic.

However, the camera stays on the sly. Scott is shocked by the circumstances. But since no one get a job because of their sexuality and her family has banished them, there is no other option for Joseph and his friends but to live in the slum. People point to the floor where one can see a small river of feces running through the slum. They say that some friends of them were already sick. "The slum is for the poor, the bottom of the society and that's where you are when you are gay." This is much generalized since other homosexuals live in normal houses such as Naome, Stosh and David. Then it goes into the house which is a twenty square feet of space where five people live and sleep. "We don’t have blankets we are having only that one blanket and others we are using those bed sheets there which are not enough." Watching the suffering of other people is the motto of many documentaries and also of The world's worst place to be gay. These people do not get support outside their LGBTI community. "The people in the road, in the area, like me is a monster because I'm gay." Another continues:
"Even my parents, even if I call them they cannot pick my phone, even if I call my sister, they hate me, even my brother, even my family, any of my family members, so the only family I have are these ones you are seeing here. We feel so sorry that they cannot accept us because that's what we are, we are gays, we are born gays, we shall live gays and we shall die gays."

Back at the hotel Scott evaluates the day. “If you wanna see what homophobia does go there.” The next day dawns. The sunrise is shown and it goes on with recordings from the city. In the background Scott inform the viewers about the Ugandan newspapers and how they deal with homosexuality. Newspapers, such as The Rolling Stones, Onion and Red Pepper out, humiliate and give information about homosexuals in their paper. And as before in Call me Kuchu the editor of Rolling Stone magazine has his say.

David Kato is also briefly mentioned in this documentary. “But some people have fought back.” Scott says, referring to David, who is shown in the city along with Kashina. David is busy on the phone. Shortly after pictures of David’s funeral appear and Scott gives information about his death from the off.

The next scene shows matatas on the road and Scott tells where he is going to that day. The trip leads to Stosh, also known from Call me Kuchu. She was outed by the newspaper Rolling Stone as a lesbian and has been pursued since. For this reason Stosh hides. Scott meets Stosh for the first time. The platform is dangerous because no attention can be drawn up. Stosh hides when she is opening the door and opens it only so far that Scott just fits in. The situation makes Stosh nervous because she is afraid to get discovered by homophobic people. In Stosh house the camera is filming through the outside window. The viewer has the feeling that he or she would look out from prison because behind the window glass is a grid and the house is enclosed by a high fence with metal spikes on. Stosh and Scott take the car to the areas where Stosh has bad memories.

She is sitting in the van not wanting to go outside and shows the locations of the city where she had to feel the homophobia of the population. Her face is anxious. “Somebody threw a stone when I got back to the gate they were silent yapping and I was like, ‘how could this happen?’ These guys, my friends, were starting shouting and all that.” Stosh makes the audience aware that even your own friends join forces against you when they learn about your homosexuality. The outing or the being outed changes your life but if you hide it does too. There is simply no free life with homosexuality in Uganda.

**You can’t stop people from harassing you when they want but what I know is that in the place I am at least nobody will just start harassing me because everybody minds their business, everybody is doing their own stuff. So I’ll hang on. It’s my life because what I know is that I’m not going to be scared away from that place again. No!”**

The tour continues to the place where she first realized that she loves women and what it means to be gay in Uganda. They drive to the house where she grew up. Scott and Stosh go to the garden of the house. “Before we would come and play hide and seek from the wall then we come and hide in this side,” Stosh laughs as she talks about her beautiful memories. “It never used to be something serious but as a child you are attracted to someone of the same sex. So you found yourself being attracted to girls for the first time.” “Yeah”, Stosh looks at the playground and laughs, “I was a child.” As a child she could be free. No one cared about sexuality as children are all the same. It shows that she had a great childhood until the incident.

Below she talks about her rape while her voice is gradually weaker, she looks down, biting her lip. She is obviously uncomfortable while thinking about those memories. The camera focuses her golden cross chain with the writing ‘I have called you by your name you are mine’ while she continues to speak: “I was a tender person at all time.” The focus of the camera goes back to her face. While telling her story you can see her standing at the fence, Scott two meters behind her. Stosh is crying and wiping her tears away with her shirt. "That's how, that's how it is, so he was trying to teach me how to sleep with men.” Scott hugs her, they go and Scott continues her story from the off. Stosh did not only conceive of this correction rape but was also infected with the HI-virus and tried to commit suicide.

Another famous LGBTI activist is Frank Mugisha Uganda. Frank asks Scott to join him to a radio interview in the west of the country. After a long drive Scott, Frank and driver Steve explore the nightlife. In the bar Frank said that he would wish gay DJs who play music in schools and clubs in Uganda. He says that there are some but do not come out.

Scott and Frank are in the radio interview at Vision Radio 89.1 FM. Homosexuality as a subject of a radio debate is a large and dangerous subject for the radio station as others were threatened to close. The DJ of Radio Vision is sitting together with another man, two women, Scott and Frank in the studio. Frank is presented by the DJ as a LGBTI activists but not very seriously, and the second man laughs. Frank is by himself since the DJ and the other three studio guests do not take him seriously and Scott may not manifest himself for his own protection. “What makes you think it (homosexuality) is wrong?” asks Frank and a female guest answers: “In the beginning it was Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve.” The second female guest continues: “Homosexuality came in like something to Africa, like an alien would come.” The English radio DJ leaves the studio. Frank is now completely on its own. Not even the camera stays with Frank but follows the British DJ who would like to have a say but cannot. The arguments of the opponents go on back in the studio. “God created man for woman not man for man.”
The Ugandan DJ says the studio number that people can call for questions and comments. Frank has his arms folded on the table, looks down and takes off his head, looks to Scott and laughs, he seems desperate. More LGBTI opponents are led to the studio by call. Frank laughs, wants to say something but is not allowed to speak. Again and again Frank tries to express and defend the LGBTI community, but no one lets him get a word until he bangs on the table with his finger pointing at his opponent, he stands up and says: "I'm just saying what I'm feeling inside my soul because I was born like this. I was born like this." Everyone laughs around him except for Scott. One can see a close up shot of Frank's face. He looks sad and desperate because he did not have the chance to say what he wanted. "I'm pretty much disappointed." In contrast to the Ugandan media, the external produced medium provides a platform for gay identities to have their say. Here no one interrupts them.

At the end of the documentary Scott visits Joseph and his roommates again and brings them some gifts. They tell Scott about another attack on a friend because of his sexuality. Sad music is played in the background and Scott says that every time he is meeting up with the group something bad happened, another homophobic act. But Joseph and his friends stay positive. Joseph says:

"I was created in God's image. I know am normal just like other people and I know I can succeed in life just like others. I feel bad when they harass me, when they abuse me but I don't think that's the end of the world I know it will be better someday."

Supported by hopeful music it comes clear again how much hope these people have even though there are new setbacks daily.

3.2.4 Comparison. "Call me Kuchu" and "The world's worst place to be gay?"

The work was targeted to answer the questions: How are homosexual identities represented in Uganda and how are homosexuals given a platform to present themselves and their situation through the medium documentary?

After analyzing the documentaries there came up significant differences as well as many similarities. *Call me Kuchu* and *The world's worst place to be gay?* are both produced after the introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2009. For this reason, it is in both documentaries an issue since it is precisely at this time the LGBTI society has become even more united and their activism strengthened significantly.

Both documentaries embed their scenes with music shaded images of Kampala city and the surrounding area. The scenes in which homosexual identities are represented are surrounded by scenes of homophobic society. These scenes are interviews with LGBTI opponents, such as local newspapers, pastors or people on the street, news about the Anti-Homosexuality Act, attacks on homosexuals, speeches by members of parliament, like David Bahati, or recordings of worship, led by homophobic, American pastors. There is always an interplay between pros and cons against the LGBTI community accompanied by urban and rural images. The biggest difference is the form of documenting and the intention of the documentation. *Call me Kuchu* lets Ugandan performers stand in the focus whereas *The world's worst place to be gay?* has the English radio host Scott Mills who is the focal point. Katherine Fairfax Wright and Malika Zouhali-Worrall can not be seen or heard once in their documentation. They leave the spotlight only to the Ugandan performer and thus give them a greater opportunity to use this platform as a medium of representation. They leave the judgment of discrimination to the viewer and give opportunity to the activists to report their perspective unbiased. *The world's worst place to be gay?* also creates a platform for the LGBTI people but this documentation was likely produced for creating a comparison and to allow the radio host to tell his experiences. Therefore, it is clear to say that in *Call me Kuchu* the LGBTI community has much more chance to speak. In *Call me Kuchu* the general focus is on the LGBTI community because exactly that was the intention of the American filmmakers.

"Main stories that were getting out there and being reported on were stories of persecution to the LGBT community, all of which was of course happening and it was very important that that got out there," said Zouhali-Worrall. "But it seemed that no one was actually aware that there was this activist community there that was actually working very hard to change the situation and in some cases actually succeeding in making steps toward changing the situation there." [1]

In *The world's worst place to be gay?* the LGBTI community has a lower chance to represent itself as the ratio of the pros and cons of LGBTI scenes is more balanced and, additionally, the radio host usually takes center stage and talks about his experiences and adventures.

Strikingly however was that the representatives of the LGBTI community were almost identical in both films which is a sign that not all want to stand in front of the camera. In general not all homosexuals in Uganda have been outed and therefore there was no wide range of people who would be willing to speak in front of the camera since it could put them at risk. In both documentaries David, Stosh, Long Jones, Frank and Kasha are seen.
The documentation *Call me Kuchu* has taken on the task to document the work of LGBTI activists, especially David Kato. The selected scenes show how much work these people do in the fight against the Ugandan homophobia. It quickly becomes clear that those who dared to come out, all work as activists and their sexuality is also in their private lives a daily topic of conversation as repeatedly new things raise that concern them such as articles of *Rolling Stone*. It is a daily struggle for justice and never lets them live in peace. Through the medium of documentation they have got created a way to draw attention to themselves, to their personal circumstances, to their work, to the inhuman laws with which they are confronted and the general living in a homophobic society as a homosexual.

‘The film's trailer gives voices to some of them, like Stosh. 'People want to know our stories. That is one reason I decided to come out, no matter what', said Stosh.'

They want to tell their stories to hold up their fight. Nevertheless the platform is very dangerous. In both documentaries situations are described showing that the company of a camera always brings excitement and thus people who have not outed publicly as well as people who are already outed could be in danger. Some meetings have to be at secret and isolated places, as LGBTIs already live in hiding. So, it is important that the camera team draws no attention.

However, the documentary *The world's worst place to be gay* represents less the struggle of the activists but keeps all the way to Susan Sontag's statement *Regarding the pain of others*. This film takes more a look at the suffering and the daily struggle of homosexuals against the homophobic society.

‘Im Zeitalter der Kameras soll die Wirklichkeit neuen Anforderungen genügen. Es kann sein, daß das Wirkliche nicht erschreckend genug ist und daher noch betont werden muß; oder es muss nachgestellt werden, damit es überzeugender wirkt.’

It turns out that intention and framework are key determinants for the representation of those who are affected, in our case homosexuals. In summary it can be said that documentary is a suitable medium for representation of homosexual identities in Uganda.

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3. [Sontag, Susan, 2005, S.76.](#)
4. [Sontag, Susan, 2005, S.76.](#)

### 3.3 Cameroon

#### 3.3.1 Historical context

“It’s regrettable that our country stands out as one of the few countries in the world that regularly prosecutes people for same-sex conduct,” said Dominique Menoga, executive director at CAMFAIDS, a Yaoundé-based organization. “Cameroon’s government says it’s committed to respecting human rights, but its actions, when it comes to sexual and gender minorities, suggest exactly the opposite.”

In Cameroon gay people get discriminated, stigmatized, marginalized and endangered by the government, by law and by the civilian population. They are harassed, arrested, abused or even killed if suspected of being homosexual. Article 347 of the Cameroonian Penal Code which forbids homosexual acts, was introduced on September 28 in 1972. The sexual act between people of the same sex may be punished with imprisonment of six months to five years and fines of up 20.000 to 200.000 CFA Francs (30,00 to 304,00 Euros). Article 52 (3) of Ordinance Number 81/2 of June 1981 also says that: “no marriage may be celebrated: if the spouses-to-be are of the same sex”. [2]

The former President of Cameroon Ahmadou Ahidjo defined the law in 1972 without the traditional National Assembly’s review. [3]

The Article 347 of the Cameroonian Penal Code therefore leads to violation of the international human rights standards and their own Constitution. The standard human rights are assured by the International Convenant on Civil and Political Rights, ICCPR. The ICCPR is one of the treaties that the Constitution of Cameroon has integrated. These rights protect freedom, privacy, freedom of expression and the right of non-discrimination. The Constitution itself offers strong privacy assurances. Cameroon is also a member of the Commonwealth which has a agreement that opposes discrimination. [4]
They are no records existing about how the Article was enforced before 2005. In May 2005 the first law execution that was published was a mass arrest. 32 people were arrested in a nightclub in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, because the police suspected these people are homosexuals. Still most arrests against homosexuality are not grounded on evidence. The law enforcement relies on confessions which are mostly gained through ill treatment and torture. After the mass arrest the Minister of Justice as well as the Vice Prime Minister of Cameroon justified the Article 347. The media also created an increasing of homophobia. People take the article into their own hands and report other people who they suspect as homosexual even family members. [5]

The president Paul Biya of Cameroon said at a consultation in Paris at the beginning of 2013 about homosexuality in his country that “minds are changing”. Still he did not make a promise to actual decriminalize homosexual behavior. [6]

“We are calling on our government to stop waiting around helplessly for minds to change, and instead to show a bit of courage. The government should decriminalize same-sex conduct, withdraw charges against those who are currently being tried for homosexuality, and inform the public that this is a matter of upholding fundamental rights.” said Yves Yomb (executive director at Alternatives-Cameroun) [7]

3.3.2 Shaun Kadlec und Deb Tullmann’s "Born this way"

Summary

"Born this way" documents the LGBTI community in Cameroon. The documentary focuses especially on Cedric and Gertrude who have to live in secret with their sexuality but also support the LGBTI community in a homophobic country.

"Born this way steps outside the genre of activist filmmaking and offers a vivid and poetic portrait of day-to-day life in modern Africa. Lyrical imagery, devastating homophobia, the influence of western culture and a hidden-camera courtroom drama mysteriously coalesce into a story of what is possible in the global fight for equality." [1]

Basic conditions

"We only knew that we would determine the structure and content by listening to the people who agreed to share their stories and their lives. Relatively simple questions guided our shooting: Who are you? What are your lives? What does it mean to be gay right now in this part of Africa?" [2]

Kadlec and Tullman had to stay undercover while shooting with their video cameras, because for shooting a documentary in Cameroon you need government permission.

We followed two main subjects as they went out into the world to confront their own challenges and then returned to Alternatives to regroup with their friends, to figure things out, to treat each other’s wounds and to build up their courage to go out once again.
One challenge to all of this was Cameroon’s laws. It is illegal to shoot documentary footage without government permission. We filed for a permit under the cover of doing a film on HIV/AIDS prevention, but when they said that we needed to have a government observer with us at all times, we realized that we would have to stay undercover.

4 Further information

4.1 South Africa

It is highly recommended to study Muhsin Hendricks article *Islamic texts. A source for acceptance of queer individuals into mainstream Muslim society* which was published in *The Equal Rights Review* in 2010 and elaborates on many passages of the Quran, eliminating misconceptions that often lead to anti-homosexual interpretations.