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***GOD LOVES UGANDA PREMIERES ON INDEPENDENT LENS
ON MONDAY, MAY 19, 2014 ON PBS***

**Academy Award-winning filmmaker Roger Ross Williams explores the role of the
American evangelical movement in fueling Uganda’s recently enacted Anti-Gay
Legislation**

(San Francisco, CA) — One of the most acclaimed documentaries of the year, *God Loves Uganda* explores the role of the American evangelical movement in Uganda, where American missionaries have been credited with both creating schools and hospitals and promoting dangerous religious bigotry. The film follows evangelical leaders in America and Uganda along with politicians and missionaries as they attempt to eliminate what they deem “sexual sin” and convert Ugandans to fundamentalist Christianity. The film records the tense atmosphere of fear created when a virulently anti-gay bill wins widespread support. Signed into law in February 2014, the Anti-Homosexuality Act mandates a maximum sentence of life imprisonment for engaging in homosexual activity as well as imprisonment for those who provide aid or counseling to members of the LGBT community. Produced and directed by Academy Award®-winning filmmaker Roger Ross Williams, *God Loves Uganda* premieres on *Independent Lens*, hosted by Stanley Tucci, on Monday, May 19, 2014, 10:00-11:30 PM ET on PBS ([check local listings.](#))

Using vérité, interviews and hidden camera footage, the film allows American religious leaders and their young missionaries that make up the “front lines in a battle for billions of souls” to explain their positions in their own words. Shocking and enlightening, touching and horrifying, *God Loves Uganda* reveals the conflicting motives of faith and greed, ecstasy and egotism among Ugandan ministers, American evangelical leaders and the foot soldiers of a theology that sees Uganda as a test case, ground zero in a battle not for millions, but billions of souls.

Visit the *God Loves Uganda* companion website (<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/god-loves-uganda>) which features information about the film, including an interview with the filmmakers and links and resources

pertaining to the film's subject matter. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions, preview clips of the film, and more.

Roger Ross Williams on *God Loves Uganda*

I grew up in the black church. My father was a religious leader in the community and my sister is a pastor. I went to church every Sunday and sang in the choir. But for all that the church gave me, for all that it represented belonging, love and community, it also shut its doors to me as a gay person. That experience left me with the lifelong desire to explore the power of religion to transform lives or destroy them.

That desire took a new form when I visited Africa to make my film *Music by Prudence*. I was struck by how intensely religious and socially conservative Africans were. There was literally a church on every corner. People were praying in the fields. It was like the American evangelical Christianity I had known but magnified by Africa's intensity. The more I learned about religion in Africa, the more intrigued I became. It was as if the continent was gripped with religious fervor and the center was Uganda. I took my first trip to Uganda and discovered that it is the number one destination for American missionaries. The American Evangelical movement has been sending missionaries and money, proselytizing its people, and training its pastors for a generation; building schools, manning hospitals, even training political leaders. Its President and First Lady are evangelical Christians, as are most members of its Parliament and 85% of the population.

In both Uganda and the U.S., I began meeting some of the missionaries who have helped create Uganda's evangelical movement. They were often large-hearted. They were passionate and committed. Many of them were kids from America's heartland. And they were, I began to discover, part of a larger Christian evangelical movement that believed that Biblical law should reign supreme – not just in people's hearts but in the halls of government. This movement, fueled by American money and idealism, had produced a noxious flower – Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which made death one of the penalties for homosexuality.

Committed to the idea that God wanted all forms of "sexual immorality" eliminated from the earth," it was the reason why Uganda had dismantled its successful AIDS program in favor of an abstinence policy. I thought about following the activists, brave and admirable men and women who were fighting against these policies but I was more curious about the people who, in effect, wanted to kill me. Notably, almost every evangelical I met – American or Ugandan – was polite, agreeable, even charming. Yet I knew that if the bill passed, there would be blood on the streets of Kampala.

What explains that contradiction? What explains the murderous rage and ecstatic transcendence? In the well-known trope about Africa, a white man journeys into the heart of darkness and finds the mystery of Africa and its unknowable otherness. I, a black man, made that journey and found – America.

About the Main Subjects

Jesse and Rachelle Digges moved to Uganda in 2008 to establish the Digges Mission Base, which trains and mobilizes missionaries in partnership with the Kansas City-based International House of Prayer (IHOP.) They return to the United States regularly to raise funds and secure sponsorships for their ministry.

Lou Engle is one of the most prominent leaders of the Evangelical Christian Right; he is best known as the co-founder of “The Call” solemn assemblies. Engle has focused much of his ministry around the issues of abortion and homosexuality. Engle resides in Kansas City where he is part of the leadership team at the International House of Prayer.

Jono Hall is the Director of Media at the International House of Prayer. The IHOP Media Team, led by Hall, streams 24/7 live prayer, broadcasting more than one million hours of video each month to hundreds of nations around the globe.

Rev. Kapya Kaoma was an Anglican priest in his native Zambia; he now works within the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts. In 2009, while conducting research on the inhumane treatment of LGBT peoples in Uganda, Kaoma was forced to flee when his safety was jeopardized by the same violent sentiment he had come to investigate.

David Kato was an influential Uganda LGBT activist who was murdered in 2011.

Pastor Robert Kayanja is Senior Pastor of one of Uganda’s largest congregations, the Miracle Centre Cathedral. An evangelical, Kayanja endorses the work of American missionaries all across Africa. He is one of the top five wealthiest people in Uganda.

Pastor Scott Lively is an American author and activist best known for his staunch opposition to LGBT rights. His 2009 campaign against homosexuality in Uganda served as inspiration for the “Kill the Gays” Bill. He is currently standing trial in U.S. Federal Court on charges of inciting the persecution, torture and murder of gays in Uganda.

Bishop Christopher Senyonjo is a LGBT rights activist from Uganda. In the early 2000s, as a result of his affiliation with LGBT groups, his titles were revoked by the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda. Despite this condemnation, Senyonjo has continued his work and in 2012 was awarded the Clinton Global Citizen Award.

Pastor Martin Ssempe is founder of Uganda’s Makerere Community Church. He supports “abstinence and fidelity only” in the fight against HIV/AIDS and supports legislation that proposes the death penalty as punishment for acts of homosexuality.

Rev. Joanna Watson has been a missionary in Uganda since 2002. She has been affiliated with IHOP since its inception and mentors young Ugandans training for ministry.

CREDITS

Directed and Produced by	Roger Ross Williams
Producer	Julie Goldman
Supervising Editor	Richard Hankin

Editors	Benjamin Gray Richard Hankin
Line Producer	Carolyn Hepburn
Associate Producers	Paige Ruane Casper de Boer Betsy Ford
Director of Photography	Derek Wieseahn
Original Music	Mark degli Antoni
Writers	Roger Ross Williams Richard Hankin Benjamin Gray

About the Filmmaker

Roger Ross Williams (Director/Producer) also directed and produced *Music By Prudence*, winner of the 2010 Academy Award® for documentary short subject. He is the first African American to win an Oscar® for directing and producing a film. He has produced and directed dozens of hours of non-fiction programming for major television networks and cable channels and has won numerous awards for his work. Currently Williams has several projects in development, including a feature narrative film about the African American Baptist church titled *Black Sheep*.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of independent filmmakers. Presented by Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding from PBS and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The senior series producer is Lois Vossen. More information at www.pbs.org/independentlens. Join *Independent Lens* on Facebook at www.facebook.com/independentlens.