

# Death penalty for gays? Uganda debates proposal

By **KATHARINE HOURELD and GODFREY OLUKYA (AP)**

**KAMPALA, Uganda** — Proposed legislation would impose the death penalty for some gay Ugandans, and their family and friends could face up to seven years in jail if they fail to report them to authorities. Even landlords could be imprisoned for renting to homosexuals. Gay rights activists say the bill, which has prompted growing international opposition, promotes hatred and could set back efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. They believe the bill is part of a continentwide backlash because Africa's gay community is becoming more vocal. "It's a question of visibility," said David Cato,

who became an activist after he was beaten up four times, arrested twice, fired from his teaching job and outed in the press because he is gay. "When we come out and ask for our rights, they pass laws against us." The legislation has drawn global attention from activists across the spectrum of views on gay issues. The measure was proposed in Uganda following a visit by leaders of U.S. conservative Christian ministries that promote therapy for gays to become heterosexual. However, at least one of those leaders has denounced the bill, as have some other conservative and liberal Christians in the United States. Gay rights activists say the legislation is likely to pass. But the bill is still being debated and could undergo changes

before a vote, which has not yet been set. The Ugandan legislation in its current form would mandate a death sentence for active homosexuals living with HIV or in cases of same-sex rape. "Serial offenders" also could face capital punishment, but the legislation does not define the term. Anyone convicted of a homosexual act faces life imprisonment. Anyone who "aids, abets, counsels or procures another to engage of acts of homosexuality" faces seven years in prison if convicted. Landlords who rent rooms or homes to homosexuals also could get seven years and anyone with "religious, political, economic or social authority" who fails to report anyone violating the act faces three years. Gay rights activists abroad are focusing on

the legislation. A protest against the bill is planned for Thursday in London; protests were held last month in New York and Washington. David Bahati, the legislator sponsoring the bill, said he was encouraging "constructive criticism" to improve the law, but insisted strict measures were necessary to stop homosexuals from "recruiting" schoolchildren. "The youths in secondary schools copy everything from the Western world and America," said high school teacher David Kisambira. "A good number of students have been converted into gays. We hear there are groups of people given money by some gay organizations in developed countries to recruit youth into gay activities." Uganda's ethics minister, James Nsaba Buturo, said the death sentence clause would probably be reviewed but maintained the law was necessary to counter foreign influence. He said homosexuality "is not natural in Uganda," a view echoed by some Ugandans. "I feel that the bill is good and necessary, but I don't think gays should be killed. They should be imprisoned for about a year and warned never to do it again. The family is in danger in Uganda because the rate at which vice is spreading is appalling," said shopkeeper John Muwanguzi. Uganda is not the only country considering anti-gay laws. Nigeria, where homosexuality is already punishable by imprisonment or death, is considering strengthening penalties for activities deemed to promote it. Burundi just

banned same-sex relationships and Rwanda is considering it. Homophobia is rife even in more tolerant African countries. In Kenya, homosexuality is illegal but the government has acknowledged its existence by launching sexual orientation survey to improve health care. Nevertheless, the recent marriage of two Kenyan men in London caused outrage. The men's families in Kenya were harassed by reporters and villagers. In South Africa, the only African nation to recognize gay marriage, gangs carry out so-called "corrective" rapes on lesbians. A 19-year-old lesbian athlete was gang-raped, tortured and murdered in 2008. Debate over the Ugandan bill follows a conference in Kampala earlier this year attended by American activists who consider same-gender relationships sinful, and believe gays and lesbians can become heterosexual through prayer and counseling. Author Don Schmierer and "sexual reorientation coach" Caleb Lee Brundidge took part; they did not respond to interview requests. A third American who took part in the conference in Uganda, Scott Lively, said the bill has gone too far. "I agree with the general goal but this law is far too harsh," said Lively, a California-based preacher and author of "The Pink Swastika" and other books that advise parents how to "recruit-proof" their children from gays. "Society should actively discourage all sex outside of marriage and that includes homosexuality... The family is under threat," he said.

Gay people "should not be parading around the streets," he added. Frank Mugisha, a gay Ugandan human rights activist, said the bill was so poorly worded that someone could be imprisoned for giving a hug. "This bill is promoting hatred," he said. "We're turning Uganda into a police state. It will drive people to suicide." Buturo played down the influence of foreign evangelicals, saying the proposed legislation was an expression of popular outrage against "repugnant" practices. But activists like Cato argue anti-gay attitudes are a foreign import. "In the beginning, when the missionaries brought religion, they said they were bringing love," he said. "Instead they brought hate, through homophobia." Susan Timberlake, a senior adviser on human rights and law from UNAIDS, said such laws could hinder the fight against HIV/AIDS by driving people further underground. And activists also worry that the legislation could be used to blackmail or silence government critics. Cato said he thinks the Ugandan bill will pass, perhaps in an altered form. "It's such a setback. But I hope we can overcome it," he said. "I cannot believe this is happening in the 21st century."

Associated Press Writer Katharine Houreld reported from Nairobi, Kenya.

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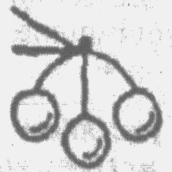
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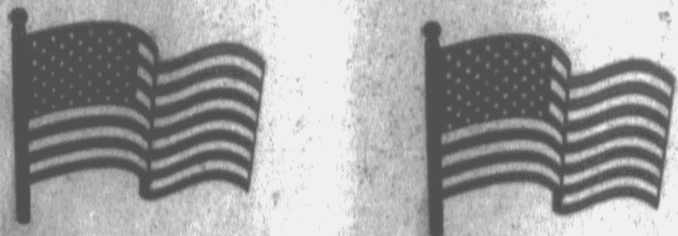


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- \* Rent a bike instead of a car on your next vacation.
- \* Walk the terminal when your plane is late.

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**\* Be open to different options.** What's ultimately important is **Before you know it, being active will become second nature.**

New York Times raises eyebrows with gift guide for people 'of color'

A new addition to the New York Times annual Holiday Gift Guide has sparked a minor uproar after a blog devoted to critiquing the paper termed it "racist." Included in this year's guide, which was published in November, is a page titled "Of Color/Stylish Gifts." This first-time feature is described by the paper as "gifts created for and by people of color." After going virtually unnoticed by critics for a month, the guide's been widely slammed in the past week as a collection of "backhanded insults" which are "bordering on offensive" and "out of touch." The "Of Color" section was compiled by African American reporter Simone S. Oliver and can be found inside the "Style & Travel" section of the 2009 Gift Guide. Its

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## New Chair of the National Black Chamber of Commerce Leads Organization Upstream

by Pharoh Martin

NNPA National Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Sherrie Gilchrist, the first woman to chair the 95,000-member National Black Chamber of Commerce, says she will focus on business empowerment and education as difficulties mount for small African-American owned businesses in a turbulent economy. "The primary focus is bridging the empowerment gap in our communities and I think if we can accomplish that it'll be a great year," said Gilchrist, who has sat on the board of the Black business advocacy group since 2000 and has headed the Tennessee Multicultural Chamber of Commerce since its inception in 1999 as its president and chief executive officer. Under Gilchrist's NBCC chairmanship, which begins in January, the Washington-D.C.-based organization will undergo a total restructuring in order to strengthen its reach at the local level. Amidst America's ailing economy, already hard on small businesses, she will be tasked to hold NBCC's local affiliates accountable and to assure that the national chamber is able to provide the chapters the necessary support and expertise to forge growth. As a part of its strategy, the Chamber plans to write and publish a number of new training manuals for their local chapters and, under Gilchrist's leadership, will unveil a new affiliate evaluation process that local chapters must meet to be certified as viable NBCC chapters. "Training is going to be a big factor," says Harry Alford, NBCC co-founder, president and CEO. "We will be training the trainers so we can provide people in Cleveland, Denver and places that have local chapters [with information] that will be viable to their communities and help start new businesses that help provide capital access and

create jobs." Gilchrist will have plenty on her plate for her first year with small businesses operating in the faint economy that shows double digit job loss nationally and diminished banking opportunities that are sorely needed to expand resources. Small businesses are also tremendously affected because they must remain competitive with large companies in order to attract quality employees, who desire benefits such as health care. "Many of the difficulties that face small businesses are tenfold than those that face large corporations," Gilchrist said. "But the burden - although 80 percent of the businesses in America are small businesses - [is that] the larger corporations get the major discounts. Small business owner pay three times the price point per individual employee than a large corporation. Although we are not against large corporations getting a discount for a number of employees, but it should not be triple the amount that small businesses pay." Gilchrist is hopeful that the economy will make a significant recovery in the next 12 to 18 months and that the NBCC can help eliminate some of the disparity gaps that exist in the Black employer and employee sectors. NBCC leaders naturally anticipate obstacles. But, as small business advocates, they sometimes encounter hurdles in unexpected places. For example, when President Obama held a forum on "Jobs and Economic Growth," at the White House Dec. 3 to seek job creation ideas, the forum included union leaders, economists and corporate executives but not much in the form of representation of the small business sector. Alford observes, "There were no small business people there! We weren't invited," Alford said. "The U.S. Chamber of Commerce wasn't invited. The Federation of Independent Business wasn't invited. They didn't have one small business there! So what are they doing?

## JUDGES WYNN AND DIAZ NOMINATED BY OBAMA TO FOURTH CIRCUIT COURT

[WASH., DC] President Barack Obama has nominated NC Courts of Appeals Judge James A. Wynn Jr. to US Circuit Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. This makes the second time since 1999 that Wynn has been nominated to the 4th Circuit. At the time, Sen. Jesse Helms of NC blocked President Bill Clinton's confirmation Judge Wynn, who resides in Cary, is a former US Navy attorney and currently also

serves as a military trial judge. He has served on the NC Appellate Court since 1990, took a break when appointed to the NC Supreme Court in 1998 where he failed to win election, the returned to the state Court of Appeals where he currently serves. Pres. Obama also nominated Superior Court Judge Albert Diaz of Charlotte, the first Latino named to a NC Superior Court bench, to the Fourth Circuit Court.

## Tyler Perry's Mother Dies: Madea Character was Based on His Mom

Filmmaker Tyler Perry received some bad news Tuesday. Perry's mother, Maxine Perry, died at the age of 64. On his website, Perry made a brief announcement of his mother's death: "Willie Maxine Perry, February 12, 1945 to December 8, 2009, thank you for all your prayers."

## Bryant Gumbel Announces He Has Lung Cancer

Bryant Gumbel announced today that he is battling lung cancer while filling in on 'Live! With Regis and Kelly.' The 61-year-old, who is the host of HBO's 'Real Sports,' said a malignant tumor and a portion of his lung were removed in a surgery two months ago. "We had told a few people. We told my family, obviously," Gumbel said. "I even kept it from my staff at 'Real Sports.' So I'm okay for the time being."

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