



DANGEROUS LIAISONS

The American Religious Right & the Criminalization of Homosexuality in Belize

*A Special Report from the Southern Poverty Law Center
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THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER is a nonprofit organization that combats hate, intolerance and discrimination through education and litigation. Its Intelligence Project, which prepared this report and also produces the quarterly investigative magazine *Intelligence Report*, tracks the activities of hate groups and the nativist movement and monitors militia and other extremist antigovernment activity. Its Teaching Tolerance project helps foster respect and understanding in the classroom. Its litigation arm files lawsuits against hate groups for the violent acts of their members.

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About the Report

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Executive Summary

For most of American history, LGBT people in this country have been stigmatized, imprisoned, violently attacked and severely discriminated against. And today, they are still the population most likely to be victimized by violent hate crimes, according to the FBI. But the modern gay rights movement, which began with the 1969 explosion of frustration known as the Stonewall riots, has made unexpectedly dramatic progress, especially in the last few years. Discriminatory policies in the military and elsewhere have fallen like dominoes. Polling has shown huge and positive shifts in public attitudes toward gay men and lesbians. Thirteen states have approved same-sex marriage. And in June, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional the Defense of Marriage Act, ruling that legally married same-sex couples must receive the same federal benefits that heterosexual couples receive. At the same time, the Court overturned California’s Proposition 8, a ballot initiative that banned same-sex marriages in that state.

All of this has left the American hard-line religious right, which spent decades demonizing LGBT people and working to keep them in the closet, on the losing side of a battle that it now seems incapable of winning. As a result, these groups and individuals have increasingly shifted their attention to other nations, where anti-gay attitudes are much stronger and violence against the LGBT community far too common. In places like Uganda, where legislators since 2009 have been pushing a law that would impose the death penalty for the Orwellian offense of “aggravated homosexuality,” U.S. religious ideologues have given aid and comfort to the authors of barbaric legislation. More and more, they are doing the same in other countries around the globe.

Now, this international battle over the constitutionality of anti-sodomy laws has moved to Belize, a Central American country where the government and an array of far-right religious forces are defending the draconian statute known as Section 53, which punishes same-sex “carnal intercourse against the order of nature” with 10 years in prison. Though Belize is tiny, the battle has attracted numerous American groups — including the prominent Christian legal powerhouse Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) — on the pro-criminalization side, providing advice to anti-gay bigots in Belize.

The ADF is a serious organization. Founded in 1994 by 30 prominent Christian leaders in response to what they saw as “growing attacks on religious freedom,”

the organization has an annual budget of more than \$30 million, a staff of 44 in-house lawyers and 2,200 allied lawyers. Its board is stacked with luminaries not only from the religious right, but also with partners from powerful law firms and captains of industry.

The ADF believes that religious freedom is under attack worldwide. It has in recent years built an international legal network and placed staffers overseas because it sees “a risk of winning a domestic battle while potentially — in time — losing the world.” Its website states that it is active in 31 foreign countries and describes a number of global initiatives. But it makes no mention of its criminalization work.

There is great hypocrisy here. Surely such work, providing legal or other counsel to keep a law on the books that lands gay people in jail for consensual sex, violates the oft-stated principle of the religious right that their theology teaches to hate the sin, but love the sinner. Perhaps that is why neither the ADF, nor any of the other American religious groups involved in Belize, say a word about their involvement in the Belize case on their websites. They also refuse to speak to the press about the case.

Their work is fanning the flames of anti-gay hatred that already exists in many of the countries where they are injecting themselves. As in Uganda, American groups have been propagandizing about the “recruitment” of young schoolchildren, the allegedly depraved and diseased lives of LGBT people, the pedophilia that is supposedly common among

gay men, and the destruction of Christianity and the institution of marriage that they seem certain ending anti-LGBT laws will lead to. This vicious propaganda, born and bred by American ideologues, has found fertile soil across the globe.

The Belize case is important. Overturning Section 53 could lead to the demise of similar statutes in a dozen other Caribbean countries that belong to the Commonwealth of former British colonies. This would mark a major step forward in securing full human rights for the LGBT community. It also could affect the even larger battle of the United Nations to influence scores of countries that signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which took effect in 1976, to outlaw statutes criminalizing gay sex and to prevent anti-LGBT discrimination.

In the United States, the issue of criminalization of gay sex abroad and similarly harsh attacks on LGBT people have split the religious right, leaving groups like the ADF that take extreme positions more and more isolated. In 2009, Rick Warren—one of America’s most prominent evangelicals, the author of the bestselling *The Purpose Driven Life* and the pastor of the Saddleback megachurch in California—denounced Uganda’s proposed death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality.” And in March, Focus on the Family spoke out against anti-gay proselytizing. “We’ve created an animosity,” the group’s president, Jim Daly, was quoted saying in *The New York Times*. “We’ve said we hate the sin and love the sinner. But

when you peel it back, sometimes we hated the sinner, too. And that’s not Gospel.” Still, Focus’ vice president for government and public policy, Tom Minnery, sits on the ADF’s board, and the group has refused to comment on the situation in Belize.

Focus’ position on criminalization may be ambiguous, but one thing is absolutely clear: What American groups like the ADF are doing amounts to pouring fuel on an exceedingly volatile fire. They are aiding and abetting anti-LGBT forces in countries where anti-gay violence is endemic. And as *The New York Times* wrote in a 2010 editorial regarding Uganda, “You can’t preach hate and not accept responsibility for the way that hate is manifested.” In Belize, the situation is so bad that the lawyers for the LGBT activist who filed the Section 53 case worry that they only have one plaintiff, and he could be assassinated at any moment.

There could perhaps be no greater manifestation of hating the sinner, to borrow Jim Daly’s words, than bringing the full weight of the criminal law down on him or her. But that is exactly what the ADF and others involved in advocating for criminalization are trying to do. The leaders of these organizations should explain how their goal of protecting religious liberty and marriage requires countries to condemn members of the LGBT community to long prison terms. And Focus on the Family, like Rick Warren, should state clearly where it stands on the issue.

DANGEROUS LIAISONS

Outlawing Homosexuality in Belize

The Alliance Defending Freedom (until last year Alliance Defense Fund) is a Scottsdale, Ariz.-based legal organization founded in 1994 by 30 prominent Christian leaders in response to what they saw as “growing attacks on religious freedom.” A powerhouse with an annual budget of more than \$30 million, the ADF’s website says it works “tirelessly to advocate for the right of people to freely live out their faith in America and around the world.”

With a staff of 44 lawyers and an additional 2,200 who are allied with the organization, the ADF works globally because it sees “a risk of winning a domestic battle while potentially – in time – losing the world.” Among other things, the group is dedicated to protecting students’ freedom of religion, human life from the moment of conception, and traditional marriage. Its website states that it is active in 31 foreign countries and describes a number of global initiatives. But one aspect of its international work goes unmentioned.

For three years, a ferocious legal and public relations battle has been waged in Belize, a Central American country of some 356,000 people, over an existing criminal statute that can lead to imprisonment for private sexual acts between consenting adults of the same sex. The fight is over the constitutionality of Section 53 of Belize’s criminal code, which prescribes a 10-year sentence for “carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any person or animal.” The ADF and a few other hard-line U.S.-based religious-right groups have joined this fight, providing legal and other advice to those seeking to keep LGBT sex illegal in as many countries as possible.

Although Belize is small, the stakes of the legal battle are high. Belize is already a hotbed of anti-gay hatred in a region where a dozen other countries have similar anti-sodomy statutes on the books.



Violence aimed at LGBT people is prevalent, and hatred for the LGBT community is apparent. Graffiti on a major structure in downtown Belize City, for example, says, “Kill the Faggots.” The country’s immigration code bars LGBT people, along with the disabled or mentally ill. The outcome of the Belize case is likely to affect the life of the LGBT community not just in Belize, but throughout the Caribbean and the Commonwealth of Nations.

The ADF’s legal work in Belize is an odd initiative for an organization committed, by name, to “defending freedom.” Nowhere does the ADF explain how jailing members of the LGBT community furthers its goals of protecting “religious liberty, the sanctity of life, and marriage and family.” Indeed, the ADF so far has refused to answer any questions about its Belize initiative, one that puts it at odds with an increasing number of prominent, mainstream Christian organizations.

A Global Battle

The legal battle in Belize is only the latest in a wider struggle that is simultaneously being waged in countries in Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America, among other regions. Overturning Section 53 in Belize could presage the upending of similar statutes in another dozen countries that belong to the Commonwealth of former British colonies, particu-

larly those in the Caribbean, where several countries are part of a single legal system that culminates in the Caribbean Court of Justice. It is also part of an even larger international battle, with the United Nations increasingly pressuring nations, including Belize, to live up to commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a treaty that took effect in 1976 and outlaws discrimination of many kinds but does not specifically mention sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Section 53 case began in September 2010 when a Belizean man, Caleb Orozco, and his LGBT-rights organization, United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM), jointly filed suit in the Supreme Court of Judicature, Belize's highest national court. UNIBAM's lawyers argue that Section 53 violates provisions of the Constitution of Belize that recognize individual rights to human dignity, to be free from arbitrary or unlawful interference with one's privacy, and to equal protection under the law.

Because of his activism, Orozco's life is now at risk. The situation is so dangerous that he lives and works out of a fortified office. At a court appearance in May, he was protected by armed guards. On the road, his car is met with shouts of "faggot" and a hail of garbage. He has been physically assaulted in the streets and threatened with death. He is so vulnerable, in fact, that his lawyers openly worry about having Orozco as the only plaintiff in their civil case; they need a back-up in the event of his assassination.

It's not only the opponents of gay rights who are getting help from abroad. UNIBAM is supported by the International Commission of Jurists, the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, and the London-based Human Dignity Trust, all of which have filed briefs supporting Orozco's case and have official status as "interested parties." The American Embassy in Belize, too, has supported UNIBAM, providing money both to battle anti-LGBT perceptions and to help those with HIV.

In the May hearing before Belize's chief justice, one of UNIBAM's lawyers, Trinidadian Christopher Hamel-Smith, argued that Section 53 presents a man like Orozco with "an intolerable choice, which no citizen should ever

have to make, to live as a law-abiding citizen by suppressing his sexuality, or abandon all hope of ever living as a law-abiding citizen." He added that the effect of the criminal statute was to deprive Belize's LGBT community of equal protection of the law.

UNIBAM and its lawyers also have argued that Belize's anti-LGBT laws, like those of many other nations, are simply leftovers from the laws against "buggery" (anal sex) that were imposed by the British. In essence, they are saying that anti-gay legislation is a remnant of colonialism unrelated to Belize's native culture.

On the other side, defending Section 53 and its criminalization of gay sex, is the government, including both the prime minister and the attorney general, and an alliance called Church Interested Parties (CIP). CIP includes the Roman Catholic Church in Belize, the Belize Church of England Corporate Body and the local Evangelical Association of Churches.

Standing with the pro-criminalization forces are U.S. groups and individuals that have rushed to join the fight. A local group, Belize Action, is headed by Waco, Texas-born Christian missionary Scott Stirm, who has railed against the "unacceptable" gay lifestyle, attacked alleged LGBT efforts to "go into the schools and teach our kids," and claimed that gay tourists come to Belize for "a new exotic location in which to corrupt local youth for a dollar or two."

One U.S. group, Extreme Prophetic Ministries of Phoenix, lists support for Belize Action as one of its projects. Led by Patricia King, the ministry has been known to pray in mortuaries in an effort to raise the dead. One of its ministers, Caleb Lee Brundridge, reportedly traveled to Uganda in 2009 for an anti-gay conference that helped promote a proposed "kill the gays" law there.

Belize Action's website links to various U.S. activists who oppose gay rights. Those include anti-gay "researcher" Paul Cameron, who has produced a series of defamatory and entirely bogus "studies" that purport to show the depravity, violence and disease associated with homosexuality.

Both Belize Action and Extreme Prophetic Ministries declined to discuss their activities.



Caleb Orozco



Christopher Hamel-Smith



Scott Stirm

Representing the Haters

Belize Action's website has said repeatedly that lawyers supplied by both the ADF and the New York City- and Washington-based Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute (C-FAM) have joined the court fight. "The Christian Community has obtained the legal services of int'l attorneys Terry McKeegan, Piero Tozzi and Brian Raum from CFAM and ADF, International catholic [sic] and evangelical organizations that assist in fighting abortion and homosexuality cases internationally," said one such post.

Though the ADF is coy about its work in Belize on its website, its views on Belize have leaked out. Without mentioning its role in the case, the ADF sent out an "Alliance Alert" last December that updated the battle in Belize. It highlighted a rally by Belize Action against "the homosexual agenda of UNIBAM" under the headline, "Christians 'Stand Firm' Against UNIBAM." On its website, the ADF says it went into international work because "radical international allies" of groups like the ACLU have been working to foist a "pro-homosexual agenda on the Body of Christ in Europe, Canada, Latin America, and elsewhere." It complains that these groups are pushing for "radical new 'rights' that will advance the homosexual agenda, destroy marriage and undermine religious freedom." In response, the ADF says, it "coordinates, funds, and litigates important cases with our global allies that have the potential to set legal precedents that could silence and punish Christians." Its most recent available tax returns say it spent \$65,000 on "human rights legal work" in Central America and the Caribbean in 2009 and 2010.

Though the group's role in Belize is absent from its website, the ADF, like many prominent American religious-right groups, has supported criminalization in the past in this country. In the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* case, the ADF submitted an amicus brief supporting the



Belize is a hotbed of anti-gay hatred, partly the result of propaganda spread with the help of U.S.-based Christian Right groups.

U.S. sodomy laws that were ultimately struck down in Texas and 13 other states. The same year, ADF President Alan Sears wrote a book, *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*, that is still sold by the ADF. In it, Sears complains that "once one state law protecting marriage and regulating sex is found to be unconstitutional, all others are fair game, such as laws against pedophilia, sex between close relatives, polygamy, bestiality and all other distortions and violations of God's plan." Overturning the sodomy laws, he added, would cause "desensitization toward deviant behavior."

Like the ADF, C-FAM is heavily focused on global anti-LGBT work, charging that international law is advancing a "radical social agenda" that needs to be stopped. It has claimed that UN efforts to further LGBT rights will lead to "hate crime charges being brought against Christians" who oppose "the homosexual agenda." In 2012, its president, Austin Ruse, attacked a UN global study of anti-LGBT violence, saying it was a "dishonest" ploy to legitimize homosexuality. The group also has lauded Scott Lively, a U.S. pastor who is infamous for his claim that gay men orchestrated the World War II Nazi Holocaust and who went to Uganda to speak against the LGBT community, lending support to the "kill the gays" bill there. Like the ADF, C-FAM does not mention its role in Belize on its website. It does, however, report favorably on the pro-Section 53 movement.

Repeated requests for comment from the ADF and C-FAM, submitted via E-mail and telephone over a period of months, produced no response from either.

Questioning Criminalization

A number of globally prominent Christians, including South Africa's Archbishop Desmond Tutu, have unequivocally denounced criminalization of gay sex and all anti-gay discrimination. And in the United

States, the issue of criminalizing gay sex and the harsh attacks on LGBT people have split the religious right, leaving groups that take extreme positions, like the ADF and C-FAM, more and more isolated.

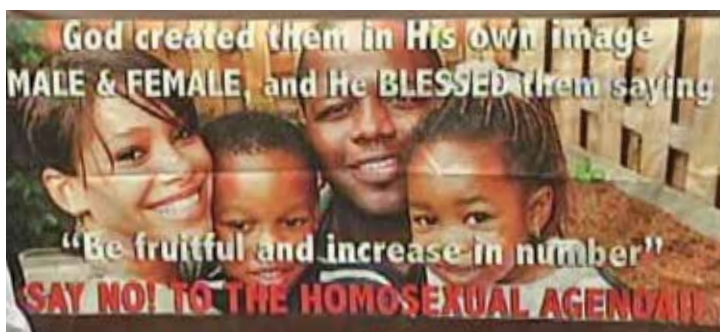
Andrew Marin, an evangelical who has worked to build bridges to the LGBT community, predicted this schism in 2010. More recently, Warren Throckmorton, a professor of psychology at Christian Grove City College and another evangelical moderate, said that groups still backing criminalization are “becoming pariahs.” “Many evangelicals,” Throckmorton added, “are very much against criminalization.”

For some, the change in position has been a winding one. Rick Warren — one of America’s most prominent evangelicals, the author of the best-selling *The Purpose Driven Life* and the pastor of the Saddleback megachurch in California — is a case in point. Warren traveled repeatedly to Uganda for his AIDS ministry and was well aware of the proposed law to apply the death penalty in some cases involving gay sex. In early 2009, journalists revealed that Warren had, beginning in 2005, repeatedly invited Martin Ssempe, a Ugandan pastor and vigorous proponent of the death penalty for gay sex, to speak at Saddleback. In October 2009, Warren distanced himself from Ssempe, saying he had severed contact with the Ugandan pastor two years earlier. Finally, in a Christmas 2009 video, he called the proposed legislation “unjust, extreme and un-Christian toward homosexuals.”

For some groups, change has come with contradictions. Focus on the Family has been the powerhouse of the U.S. religious right for many years and has frequently leveled harsh criticisms at the gay community. But since its president, Jim Daly, took over from James Dobson in 2009, the group has become more moderate. “We’ve created an animosity,” Daly was quoted saying in *The New York Times* in March. “We’ve said we hate the sin and love the sinner. But when you peel it back, sometimes we hated the sinner, too. And that’s not Gospel.” At the same time, however, while Focus on the Family is presumably against criminalization — or, in Daly’s words, “hating the sinner” — the group’s vice president of government and public policy, Tom Minnery, is a board member for the ADF, the group that has provided lawyers to help Belizean homophobes defend Section 53. Asked

about that apparent contradiction, Focus officials initially promised the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) a statement on its position on criminalization. But in the end, the group declined to provide such a statement.

For some hard-line activists, change may not come at all. Scott Lively, the pastor who blames gay men for the Nazi war machine, lobbied for Uganda’s proposed law. Paul Cameron, whose Family Research Institute publishes anti-gay studies, has traveled to Russia and Moldova, formerly a part of the Soviet Union, to talk about the evils of LGBT people. And televange-



The billboard above is part of Belize Action’s fearmongering anti-LGBT campaign, one that borrows heavily from the rhetoric of U.S. groups.

“We’ve created an animosity. We’ve said we hate the sin and love the sinner. But when you peel it back, sometimes we hated the sinner, too. And that’s not Gospel.”

Focus on the Family President Jim Daly

list and Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson’s American Center for Law and Justice, described recently by the liberal Political Research Associates as “the key organization involved in ensuring African constitutions and laws criminalize homosexuality,” has opened affiliate offices in Brazil, France, Israel, Kenya, Pakistan, Russia, South Korea and Zimbabwe, where it has been involved since 2010 in helping to redraft that country’s constitution.

Adding Fuel to the Fire

One of the more remarkable aspects of the battle in Belize is the degree to which the anti-gay rhetoric now employed there has been lifted directly from anti-gay propaganda developed by the Christian Right in the long battle over gay rights in the United States. That was not always the case, Belizean LGBT-

rights activists told the SPLC in a series of interviews last year. Belizean culture was certainly unfriendly to gay people, these activists say, but the now-frequently brandished propaganda, such as the oft-repeated idea by Section 53 supporters that gay men are recruiting children and that they are pedophiles, has been imported from the American anti-gay movement.

“This is all a foreign influence,” said the head of a local organization, who, like most of those interviewed, did not want to be named for fear of retribution. “These arguments are not from here. They start with pedophilia, and then, ‘They are coming after your kids.’ It’s just about instilling fear about gays.”

Many of the arguments were distilled in the amicus briefs filed by religious-right organizations in the *Lawrence* case. In its brief, for example, the American Center for Law and Justice argued there is “an extensively documented health risk of same-sex sodomy” and added that a ban on sodomy “permissibly furthers public morality.” The ADF’s brief said the “true objective” of the plaintiffs was to clear a path to further gay rights, such as adoption.

The Family Research Council and Focus on the Family, two of the largest Christian Right heavyweights, claimed that protecting marriage was the issue and that criminalization was a reasonable answer. “States may discourage the ‘evils’ ... of sexual acts outside of marriage by means up to and including criminal prohibition,” their joint amicus brief said. The groups added that it was constitutional for Texas to “choose to protect marital intimacy by prohibiting same-sex ‘deviate’ acts.”

Many U.S. groups also have argued that gay sex is essentially the moral equivalent of incest, bestiality, and pedophilia. They say that gay people will live short lives and molest children at rates way out of proportion to their numbers (a particularly egregious, and false, allegation). They claim that school anti-bullying programs and the like are simply subterfuges for LGBT people to “recruit” new partners. And, basing their argument on the idea that being gay is a choice, they assert that because gay people cannot “reproduce” biologically, they must go out and convert straight people to homosexuality to maintain their numbers.

All of these arguments are alive and well in Belize.

The CIP, the alliance of Belizean churches defending Section 53 in court, has circulated a pamphlet contending that gay people are “after the kids,” and want to “lower the age of consent” for sexual activity.

It also reiterated the longstanding U.S. argument that “homosexuals cannot reproduce; therefore, they must recruit.” In its court documents, the CIP describes homosexuality as “morally repugnant,” “socially undesirable,” and akin to “incest, prostitution and drug use.” Sodomy, the CIP argues, should be illegal for the same reasons that bestiality is.

The Rev. Canon Leroy Flowers, president of the local Council of Churches and head of the Anglican church in Belize, made similar arguments at a 2011 forum put on by Belize Action, according to *Amandala*, Belize’s main newspaper. “They’re after the kids,” he said. “The UK [United Kingdom] approved same-sex marriage years ago; now they’re having court battles to lower the age of consent.”

Similarly, an advertisement published this May in Belize’s largest newspaper warned that overturning Section 53 would result in moral decadence, same-sex marriage, and other ills. Echoing arguments commonly voiced by U.S. groups, the ad claimed that protecting gay rights would lead to the loss of freedom of speech and religion. The ad was paid for by the Militia of the Holy Spirit, an ominous-sounding group run by Belizean evangelical and anti-gay activist Louis Wade Jr. Despite the intervention of American groups like the ADF into the legal fracas, the ad depicted the court battle as a foreign attack on Belize: “Stand against this new cultural imperialism! Defend religious liberty! Defend Belize’s independence against foreign laws and foreign values. Defend our Constitution!”

Fear and Loathing in Belize

The fearmongering in Belize may be based on false propaganda, but the resulting hate and violence is very real – and terrifying – for LGBT people. For even the casual observer, it doesn’t take long to get a palpable sense of a community under siege.

A report released this March by the Chicago-based Heartland Alliance, a human rights group focused on disadvantaged and “endangered populations” around the world, found that the LGBT community in Belize is routinely subjected to violence, even from law enforcement officials. The report cited, among other violent crimes, the bludgeoning death of an openly gay doctor and the murder of a politician’s gay brother in his own home. It also noted that border officials have regularly detained and harassed visitors they suspect of being gay.

The atmosphere has grown even more frightening since the filing of the challenge to Section 53. The



In Uganda, the *Rolling Stone* newspaper published the names, addresses and photos of 100 gay men in 2010 with a bright yellow banner that read “Hang Them.” Twenty-three days later, an LGBT activist on the list was murdered in his home.

country’s leading newspaper, *Amandala*, has played a particularly egregious role in stoking anger. In a column in May, Editor-in-Chief Russell Vellos wrote that “homosexuals prey on children and teenaged boys” and went on to describe the “evil” acts that “one man could do to another.” “Get up and help fight this evil in our midst,” Vellos wrote. The paper’s comment section is rife with calls for violence. “Let them burn!” one poster said of gay people. “Let the sharks eat their body parts,” said another.

As the latest hearing in the case opened this May, *Amandala* ran a front-page headline that played off UNIBAM’s name: “BAMers go to bat today.” The headline was an ugly joke. The phrase “batty boy” is often used in Caribbean countries as a slur for gay men, akin to the American use of “faggot.”

Several Internet posters have called for Orozco’s assassination, something that weighs heavily on the minds of many of Orozco’s friends and backers. After all, it happened in Uganda, where a similar battle over the criminalization of gay sex has been raging for several years. In 2010, a newspaper there published front-page photos and the home addresses of

gay men, including LGBT activist David Kato, under the headline “Hang Them.” Twenty-three days later, Kato was murdered in his home.

There is virtually no sign of official concern for the fate of Orozco or other LGBT people in Belize. Prime Minister Dean Barrow has vowed to defend Section 53 and has criticized President Obama for opposing the criminalization of gay sex. In fact, there is not a single major political party or political figure who has come out in favor of overturning or even modifying the country’s draconian statute.

On the contrary, the defenders of Section 53 have been particularly caustic in their arguments. Louis Wade Jr., who runs the Militia of the

Holy Spirit and is a close ally of Texas evangelical Scott Stirm, said in a video in May that the case was about opposing the “false god of carnality.” “Mark my words, it starts with one lawsuit... . If they get their way, the next set of lawsuits will be against the social security board ... [and then] church and religious denominations across the nation when they refuse to marry homosexual couples. And then the final set of mass litigation will be against people who stand up and say that this ... is wrong.”

For his part, Stirm was considerably blunter. The case brought by Orozco and UNIBAM, he said, is “an orchestrated plan of demonic darkness to dethrone God from our constitution and open massive gateways to demonic influences and destruction that will affect generation after generation to come.”

Through it all, the UN has been paying attention to the developments in Belize. This March, the Human Rights Committee of the UN’s Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights issued a report that called on Belize to review its constitution and legal code “to ensure that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity are prohibited.”



The case brought by Orozco and UNIBAM is “an orchestrated plan of demonic darkness to dethrone God from our constitution and open massive gateways to demonic influences and destruction that will affect generation after generation to come.”

Scott Stirm

Texas-born evangelical Scott Stirm heads Belize Action, one of the country's fiercest opponents of the push to decriminalize gay sex. He has alleged that LGBT people want to “go into schools and teach our kids.”

It also asked Belize to “ensure that cases of violence against LGBT persons are thoroughly investigated.”

Second Thoughts

There has been some minimal support shown for UNIBAM in Belize. In January 2012, local Jesuits and Sisters of Charity, both Catholic orders, boycotted a mass at Holy Redeemer Church that was held to criticize UNIBAM. Priests who spoke about this asked that their names not be used for fear of being punished by the national church hierarchy, even though the Vatican has taken a stand against the criminalization of gay sex. “My heart goes out to the LGBT community,” said one Jesuit priest who cited that stand. “If they are out, they

can be killed. Caleb has certainly taken his life into his own hands. The anger around this issue is incredible.”

In the meantime, Caleb Orozco is hunkering down, awaiting a court ruling that is expected in August, even though there is much to suggest that he will lose the case. If so, he says, he and UNIBAM intend to appeal it to the next level and, ultimately, to the Caribbean Court of Justice. They cling to the hope that the Belize case will become a landmark LGBT rights decision.

“Everyone in the Caribbean is watching the case closely,” Orozco said at the time of the May hearing. “Our LGBT friends want to know how to succeed.”

CRIMINALIZING SEX

Six U.S. Anti-Gay Groups Abroad

In recent years, and especially since the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* Supreme Court decision striking down U.S. anti-sodomy laws, religious-right organizations that oppose LGBT rights have taken their struggle abroad, where public attitudes toward gay people are often far harsher than in the United States. In effect, these groups are fighting an ideological battle overseas that they are increasingly losing at home on such policies as the military’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” approach that the Obama administration ended in 2011. The rapid pace of states legalizing same-sex marriage — 13 at press time, with Illinois also considering a similar move — and changing attitudes toward sexual minorities also have added to these groups’ sense of desperation, leading to their putting more and more effort into their anti-LGBT work in other nations.

Six major U.S.-based groups are key to this effort and have taken their cause to foreign governments or international bodies like the United Nations. They range from purely religious organizations to legal groups and represent a range of faiths, from evangelical Christianity to Catholicism to Mormonism. Each has, in one way or another, sanctioned the idea of criminalizing gay sex — putting people in prison as a punishment for private, consensual sex between adults. Lawyers from two of the groups — the Alliance Defending Freedom and the Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute — are advising a coalition in Belize that is seeking to defend the Central American country’s criminalization statute in court. Three of the groups — the Alliance Defending Freedom, the American Center for Law and Justice, and United Families International — filed amicus briefs in the *Lawrence* case that sought to defend U.S. sodomy laws that effectively outlawed gay sex. Four of them have consultative status at the UN, giving them special access and input to the deliberations of the UN’s Economic and Social Council, which was established to promote economic and social progress and fundamental human rights.

Some of these groups are also part of the so-called “Baptist-burqa” alliance that brings together anti-gay Christian groups and anti-gay Muslim groups, many from countries that punish gay sex with penalties that can include death. These are truly strange bedfellows, given that many of these same Muslim countries repress or even outlaw Christianity, some-

thing that the U.S.-based Christian groups apparently are willing to overlook in their eagerness to take on the LGBT community.

What follows are profiles of six key U.S. groups active abroad.

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

President: Alan Sears

Headquarters: Scottsdale, Ariz.

Website: www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org

The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) was founded in 1994 as the Alliance Defense Fund (the name was changed in 2012) by a group of high-profile activists of the American religious right, including James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family; D. James Kennedy, leader of the influential Coral Ridge Ministries (now Truth in Action Ministries); and Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ. Its board is stacked with prominent law firm partners and Christian Right heavyweights like Focus on the Family’s Tom Minnery, Campus Crusade for Christ COO John Rogers, and former USA Radio Network President Mark Maddoux.

With an annual budget of \$30 million, a staff of 44 lawyers, and another 2,200 lawyers allied with the organization, the ADF specializes in legal work where it believes religious freedom is being violated. It says its work is needed because the ACLU and others “have been working aggressively” to impose “an anti-Christian, pro-abortion, pro-homosexual agenda on the Body of Christ in Europe,

Canada, Latin America, and elsewhere. ... By using foreign and transnational law to re-interpret and re-write established precedent, they seek to validate the enforcement of radical new rights that will advance the homosexual agenda, destroy marriage, eliminate Christian religious liberty, and impose an aggressive anti-life agenda on us all.” The organization’s biggest recent case was *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, where California’s Proposition 8 referendum, barring same-sex marriage in that state, was challenged before the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court overturned the law on technical grounds in June, thereby legalizing same-sex marriage in California.

The ADF has a record of sharp anti-gay bigotry. Its president, Alan Sears, co-wrote a rabidly anti-gay 2003 book, sold by the ADF, called *The Homosexual Agenda: Exposing the Principal Threat to Religious Freedom Today*. The book is filled with anti-gay diatribes and argues that the demise of anti-sodomy laws will lead to overturning “laws against pedophilia, sex between close relatives, polygamy, bestiality and all other distortions and violations of God’s plan.” Also in 2003, the ADF sent out a “prayer alert” that said overturning the laws would “be an affront to our Constitution, to our nation’s heritage and history, and to God’s Word.” It filed an amicus brief defending anti-sodomy laws in *Lawrence v. Texas*.

Today, the group is increasingly committed to international anti-LGBT work. Its website has an entire section, marked “Global,” that describes its work around the world for “religious liberty, the sanctity of life, and marriage and family.” In January 2010, the ADF secured special consultative status at the UN. The following year, it sent out an alert celebrating a foreign law that punished LGBT advocacy of any kind with a 10-year prison sentence. The group’s senior legal counsel on global issues is Piero Tozzi, a hard-liner who also is a former senior fellow at the Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute (see below). Tozzi and ADF lawyer Brian Raum are now advising groups defending the constitutionality of a statute that criminalizes gay sex in Belize.

Tozzi spoke at the 2012 World Congress of Families (see below) in Madrid, Spain, warning of legal efforts to institute global protections for LGBT people and at a 2011 Jamaica pro-criminalization conference. Another key staffer in the ADF’s international work is Roger Kiska, who is currently based in Vienna, Austria, according to the ADF, where he is developing an allied attorney network in Europe. Last year, Kiska was elected to the advisory panel of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), a European human rights agency. In 2011, Kiska crit-

icized FRA as a pawn of the “homosexual agenda.”

AMERICAN CENTER FOR LAW AND JUSTICE

Chief Counsel: Jay Sekulow

Headquarters: Washington, D.C.

Website: www.aclj.org

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) was founded in 1990 by Pat Robertson, the televangelist who also began the Christian Coalition and the Christian Broadcasting Network, where he hosts “The 700 Club.” Robertson, who remains board president, said he started the group to “stop the ACLU in court” after, he said in 2011, God spoke to him and told him such an organization “will be needed as never before.” The group says it “engages legal, legislative, and cultural issues by implementing an effective strategy of advocacy, education and litigation.”

Along with the Alliance Defending Freedom, the ACLJ is one of the main U.S. religious-right legal powerhouses, and it has built partnerships with an array of Christian Right groups, including the rabidly anti-gay American Family Association. It argues that the government is hostile to Christianity and claims that the Founding Fathers did not intend a strict separation of church and state.

The ACLJ is particularly active in battles over marriage equality and helped draft the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, the federal law that defined marriage as the “legal union of one man and one woman” but that was struck down by the Supreme Court in June. It filed an amicus brief supporting efforts to keep sodomy illegal in the 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* Supreme Court case.

The ACLJ is led by Jay Alan Sekulow, a messianic Jew and a former general counsel for Jews for Jesus; his son, Jordan, began serving as executive director after a stint on Mitt Romney’s unsuccessful 2012 presidential campaign. Sekulow argues that “Satan’s legions” have “perverted” the First Amendment to the detriment of Christians, and says that Christians face persecution today. “If you are a God-fearing Christian, then powerful forces in our culture say YOU are the dangerous radical that needs to be censored, chastised and even punished!” Sekulow wrote in 2009. “It is as if ‘open season’ has been declared in the courts on Christians.”

The group has a strong international focus, representing clients not only in the U.S. but also in “international tribunals around the globe.” It has affiliates in France, Israel, Kenya, Pakistan, Russia, South

Korea and Zimbabwe, where a new constitution is being drafted. The ACLJ is involved in that drafting and has allied itself with the human rights-violating Mugabe regime. It has also worked in Kenya to criminalize gay sex. Political Research Associates, a liberal group that analyzes the far right, has described it as “the key organization involved in ensuring African constitutions and laws criminalize homosexuality.”

The ACLJ also dabbles in other issues. According to its website, it opposes reproductive rights and “ObamaCare”; supports Arizona’s draconian anti-immigrant S.B. 1070 law (most of which has been struck down by the Supreme Court) and government promotion of religion in schools and elsewhere; and campaigns against Islamic Shariah law and the Park51 Islamic center in New York City. Indeed, it is so anti-Muslim that, despite its much-ballyhooed support for the “freedom of religion,” it insists that Muslims cannot be loyal Americans.

CATHOLIC FAMILY & HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE

President: Austin Ruse

Headquarters: New York, N.Y., and Washington, D.C.

Website: www.cfam.org

The Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute (C-FAM) was formed in 1997 to monitor and influence social policy debates at the United Nations and other international institutions. According to Political Research Associates, which has extensively researched such organizations, it was founded by principals of the virulently anti-abortion and anti-gay Human Life International (HLI), a group formed in 1981 that bills itself as “the largest international pro-life organization in the world.”

C-FAM’s current president is Austin Ruse, who has been a promoter of working with conservative Muslims against gay rights since at least 1999. In 2005, he predicted that although “our enemies” will call it an “un-holy alliance,” “victory will come” in the battle over gay rights in venues like the UN from this “potent alliance between Catholic and Muslim countries.” Its board is composed of three conservative activists: Robert Royal of the Catholic Faith and Reason Institute, Monsignor Anthony Frontiero of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and John O’Sullivan of Radio Free Europe. (O’Sullivan formerly was an editor at the conservative *National Review*, where he promoted the work of immigrant-basher Peter Brimelow, known for his racist VDARE website,

and edited Brimelow’s nativist book, *Alien Nation*.) One of C-FAM’s lawyers, Terrence McKeegan, is advising the anti-LGBT coalition working to keep gay sex a serious crime in Belize. McKeegan also is listed by specialguests.com, a television and radio booking service, as available to describe the “twisted details” of the “inside story” of the battle in Belize, where pro-LGBT groups are described as “bullying” the Central American country.

A former C-FAM staffer, Pierro Tozzi, is now with the Alliance Defending Freedom (see above) and works with that group advising the anti-gay coalition in Belize. Tozzi is still listed on C-FAM’s website, however, because he continues to blog for the group. In one such post, attacking the so-called Yogyakarta Principles that were drafted to help make international law more protective of LGBT rights, Tozzi includes same-sex attraction on a list of societal ills along with “suicide, contraception, abortion and euthanasia.” All of those ills, Tozzi says, “would mean the end of the human species,” unlike laws against same-sex marriage, which he argues are designed “to promote the future flourishing of the human species.”

C-FAM, like the Alliance Defending Freedom, repeatedly refers to the “homosexual agenda” and claims that international law is advancing a “radical social agenda.” “Homosexual groups are becoming more active at the UN as annually they pressure the UN Human Rights Commission to include homosexuality in the interpretation and implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” the group said in a 2006 post on its website. “This would result in hate crime charges being brought against Christians and others who oppose the homosexual agenda.” Another website post describes anti-gay activist Scott Lively — who has accused gay men of orchestrating the Nazi Holocaust and has worked in Uganda to promote the infamous “kill the gays” bill there — as merely advocating “for remedies focused on rehabilitation, not punishment.”

At the 2012 edition of the Conservative Political Action Conference, C-FAM president Ruse decried a global study of violence against LGBT people that was approved by a UN body and condemned arbitrary executions. Ruse said the report was essentially a devious ploy. “Everyone knows the strategy has little to do with protecting homosexuals from execution but rather with introducing a new term that can then be turned into an elaborate justification for a new international norm,” he asserted. Elsewhere, Ruse claimed more countries would support efforts

to protect LGBT people from violence around the world, “except that they know the inherent dishonesty in the effort and they know where such efforts are really going.”

FAMILY WATCH INTERNATIONAL

President: Sharon Slater

Location: Gilbert, Ariz.

Website: www.familywatchinternational.org

Family Watch International (FWI), “Promoting Family Based Solutions to World Problems,” was founded in 1999 by hard-line Mormon activist Sharon Slater, who still leads it today. The group has managed to acquire UN consultative status, but only under its original name of Global Helping to Advance Women and Children. Slater and her group have been heavily involved in anti-abortion work at the UN and in Africa, but she has also publicly called on African leaders to resist what she describes as UN efforts to promote homosexuality. In 2009 and 2010, FWI worked to kill language in the UNAIDS program that Slater claimed would result in the “repeal [of] laws against adultery, fornication, oral sex and sodomy.”

In January 2011, FWI hosted a conference on how to battle UN initiatives that was attended by 26 UN staffers from 23 countries. Later that year, Slater keynoted a Nigerian Bar Association conference where she reportedly called on attendees to resist the UN’s attempts to decriminalize homosexuality. (Gay sex is punishable by up to 14 years in prison in that country and, in northern, heavily Muslim areas, gay people are sometimes stoned to death.) She told her audience they would lose their religious and parental rights if they supported what she called the “fictitious sexual rights” of LGBT people. Slater and her organization also strongly support so-called “ex-gay” therapy that purports to be able to “cure” gay people of their attractions; she spoke at the 2012 conference of the National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), one of the best known groups pushing such therapy. FWI’s website promotes NARTH’s “ex-gay” materials.

Ugandan pastor Martin Ssempe, who has a master’s counseling degree from a U.S. Bible college, was listed as an FWI volunteer in Uganda until 2009. Then, a wave of bad press about that country’s “kill the gays” bill resulted in several U.S. groups distancing themselves from Ssempe, who had vigorously pro-

moted the death penalty for LGBT people and who also was convicted in 2009 of conspiring to destroy a rival Ugandan pastor’s reputation by falsely accusing him of homosexual acts.

In an interview with Warren Throckmorton — an evangelical Christian and Bible college professor who has criticized the anti-gay rhetoric of many religious groups — Slater said FWI opposed the repeal of anti-sodomy laws, “not because we want them [gay people] in jail, but because the repeal of these laws creates a climate where other special rights are demanded.” She agreed the issue was “complicated” and conceded that criminalization “may seem like a restriction in personal liberty” but ultimately concluded that “nations have the right to regulate sexuality.”

UNITED FAMILIES INTERNATIONAL

Location: Gilbert, Ariz.

President: Carol Soelberg

Website: www.unitedfamilies.org

United Families International (UFI), founded in 1978, is related to Family Watch International (FWI), sharing a hometown and also Sharon Slater, the current FWI leader who was president of UFI from 2001 to 2006. Like FWI also, UFI has Mormon ties and consultative status at the UN, where it “works to educate UN ambassadors and delegates on root policies affecting the family.” It claims to have been “successful in affecting the outcome of numerous UN conference documents and in promoting respect for the family, marriage, life, religion, parents and national sovereignty.” The group is stridently anti-abortion and anti-gay.

In the early 2000s, UFI was already running a website, defendmarriage.org, whose goal was to stop “the effort by homosexual activists and their liberal allies to force the legalization of same sex marriage [which is] the most serious new threat to traditional marriage and the family.” In 2003, it filed an amicus brief supporting the continued criminalization of sodomy in the *Lawrence v. Texas* case. As recently as this March, UFI said in a web posting that the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which was discussing various LGBT issues at the time, “has lost its direction and is simply focusing on forcing abortion and unrestricted homosexual sodomy on the third world.” Also at the UN, UFI has allied closely with Muslim anti-gay forces.

UFI currently distributes a 42-page booklet, *Sexual Orientation*, that is rife with anti-gay pseudo-science and distorts legitimate research on sexuality in order to portray homosexuality as dangerous and deranged. The publication claims, for instance, that LGBT people suffer high rates of mental illness and problems as a result of their same-sex attraction, not because of discrimination and hatred directed at them. It goes further, alleging that pedophilia is widespread among gay people (an allegation refuted by relevant scientific groups) and claiming against the vast bulk of the evidence that gay people can be “cured” of their sexuality. On its site, UFI says, “Discrimination against homosexuality is not faulty or incorrect, but rather based on a notable distinction necessary for the perpetuation of a healthy society.”

WORLD CONGRESS OF FAMILIES

President: Allan C. Carlson
 Headquarters: Rockford, Ill.
 Website: worldcongress.org

The World Congress of Families (WCF) was founded in 1997 by Allan Carlson as a project of The Howard Center for Family, Religion & Society, which has consultative status at the UN. Carlson, a longtime conservative activist who was appointed in 1988 by President Ronald Reagan to the National Commission on Children, blames feminism and socialism for what he sees as the “decline” of the family. A scholarly book, *Globalizing Family Values*, described his WCF project as “the first sustained attempt by [Christian Right groups in] the UN to construct a permanent, global, interfaith institution.”

The WCF functions as a hub where American religious-right activists are able to work easily across denominational lines. From the very beginning, the group included Jewish and Muslim anti-gay activists in addition to Christian ones.

The WCF is best known for its biannual world conferences, where speakers and sponsors have comprised a “Who’s Who” of the American religious right, including representatives of particularly hard-

line groups like the American Family Association, Americans for Truth About Homosexuality, Concerned Women for America and the Family Research Council. In the 2012 conference in Madrid, Spain, WCF’s co-conveners were the Alliance Defending Freedom (see above), the Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute (above), and Focus on the Family. In 2010, Sharon Slater of Family Watch International (above) boasted from the podium about her group’s alleged role in helping to stop the UN from signing on to HIV guidelines that included a call for ending the criminalization of gay sex.

Slater was merely echoing rhetoric common at the conferences, where many speakers have supported such criminalization. And the WCF itself has weighed in, too. A speech on its website calls for rolling back decriminalization measures and describes other gay rights laws as “pernicious and ominous developments.” In an April 2009 newsletter, the WCF lauded the government of Uganda’s efforts to pass its infamous “kill the gays” bill, saying that the country’s “stand against homosexuality has been condemned by international groups seeking to advance the homosexual agenda” but that Uganda “will not bow to foreign pressure.” The newsletter linked to a WCF press release saying that the group was “dismayed” by the U.S. decision to support UN decriminalization efforts that it described as “not needed.”

The WCF doesn’t limit itself to opposing decriminalization. This year, it fired off a “leadership letter” protesting the support that officials at the U.S. embassy in the Czech Republic gave to an LGBT pride parade in Prague. “We cannot imagine a worse form of cultural imperialism,” the letter said, “than Washington trying to force approval of the ‘gay’ agenda on societies with traditional values.”

These profiles rely heavily on materials from People for the American Way’s Right Wing Watch and Political Research Associates of Somerville, Mass.

EYE OF THE STORM

An LGBT Activist in Belize

Belizean Caleb Orozco has been fighting for the rights of LGBT people in his Central American country for nearly a decade. In 2006, he and a few allies founded the United Belize Advocacy Movement (UNIBAM) to help stem the tide of AIDS in Belize. Four years later, in 2010, Orozco and UNIBAM brought suit in the Supreme Court of Judicature of Belize to challenge the constitutionality of Belize’s draconian Section 53, a criminal statute that bans “unnatural sex” (punishable by 10 years in prison) and is part of Belize’s colonial legacy of British “anti-buggery” laws. The plaintiffs are represented by lawyers with the University of the West Indies Rights Advocacy Project with the support of the International Commission of Jurists, the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, and the Human Dignity Trust. On the other side, backing Section 53, is an alliance of Catholic, Protestant and evangelical Christian churches, as well as Belize’s prime minister and attorney general.

Orozco’s activism has been met with violence and verbal attacks, and the case he filed has roiled highly homophobic Belizean society. Facebook pages dedicated to the controversy overflow with anti-gay rants, as does the *Amandala* newspaper, which has editorialized savagely against Orozco and UNIBAM. Belize-based pastors Louis Wade Jr. and Scott Stirm, who is affiliated with Phoenix-based Extreme Prophetic Ministries, have accused UNIBAM of trying to bring the gay “agenda” to Belize with the aim of harming children. In addition to Extreme Prophetic Ministries, other American evangelicals have joined the fray, with the U.S. legal group Alliance Defending Freedom reportedly advising the Belizean religious alliance supporting Section 53. All of this has meant that Orozco finds himself forced to live and work out of a heavily fortified office. His situation is so dangerous that his attorney told the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) that she wishes she had additional clients in the case because of the very real possibility that Orozco will be killed. Such a murder would not be unprecedented.

In Uganda, a country going through a similar battle over laws criminalizing gay sex, a newspaper in 2011 published photos and home addresses of gay men, including LGBT activist David Kato, under the headline “Hang Them.” Twenty-three days later, Kato was murdered at his home.

The SPLC interviewed Orozco about his activism, the dangers he faces daily, and the role of American evangelicals in fomenting hatred in Belize.



Since filing a legal challenge to Section 53, the Belize law criminalizing gay sex, Caleb Orozco has faced relentless harassment and has been violently attacked. He fears for his life.

Describe your experiences with threats and violence.

About a year ago, I was trying to make my way from the bank when one fellow says, “Tell him faggots don’t walk my street here.” Then a second fellow says, on the other side of the street, “Friend, I don’t want you to get hurt.”

I tried to move up to the police substation to try to get away from all that, and then I saw two guys on bicycles in the middle of the street, looking at me. I knew that they were up to no good so I tried to divert into a smaller street. When I did, I saw one of

them pass me, and as I was thinking I was safe, a second one came up to me. Knowing that I was on the streets alone, I decided to turn, looking for a bottle or a gun or something. I didn't see one. And the second I turned my head back, I was hit with a beer bottle that knocked out two of my teeth.

The result of that was intense stress. The stress was so intense that I couldn't concentrate. I became nauseous.

About a week or so ago, I was going to the bank when somebody started yelling "faggot" and that kind of thing at me. A little later, I was out and some guy made a gesture like he was holding a gun and said, "Bam," while I was driving past him.

I cannot walk the streets among a crowd any more. I get really anxious. And I remember this parade that was done at either Christmas or New Year's, where I was trying to get to a bus, walking through a crowd and, every few feet or so, someone would yell, "See UNIBAM there, see UNIBAM there."

Because of this national debate, quite a few people are not saying "batty-man" [a derogatory term for gay men] or "faggot" anymore. They're saying UNIBAM.

What inspired you to become an activist in such dangerous circumstances?

I suppose I'm one of those obvious gays. I can't help that. I realized growing up I would be labeled, criticized and insulted, threatened, even if I wasn't a public figure.

My realization that social change doesn't come without sacrifice and a personal cost came about a decade ago, when I attended a meeting on discrimination at the Alliance Against AIDS. I realized that I was perpetuating my own discrimination by remaining silent. So I decided from then on that if I was going to be insulted, threatened or killed, I was going to be insulted as a human rights defender.

Given the situation, how do you protect yourself?

Freedom House [a U.S.-based nonpartisan human rights group] has sent me some money for transportation. I don't walk in the mornings; I ride a lot. After the attack, I gave up my bicycle and purchased a car, and because I don't drive, my sister drives me around. She's exposed to a lot of what I've experienced. And my house and office are fenced off, so for the most part I no longer walk very far in the streets.

How has your life changed since you became the de facto spokesman for LGBT people in Belize?

I didn't feel as vulnerable [before]. I used to have a

very clever mouth. I would answer back everything. But over the years, I have learned to selectively answer people and move on.

Now, when I experience insults or threats, my worry isn't for me. My concern is for my family members, because they are not used to experiencing the hate along with me. My two sisters and my mom, they're the rock that keeps me standing.

Aside from violence, how does homophobia affect LGBT Belizeans?

The issue of discrimination isn't just about violence. It's about losing basic needs, like food, clothing and shelter.

If, for example, you're living with a family and they don't agree with who you're attracted to, you're likely to lose your house. If you're in an environment where you are working for a family member, they can let you go.

In education, not every school is horrible, but [there are some] which will penalize you for the way you express yourself.

For the police, the issue of your orientation or your gender identity becomes paramount instead of the crime you've been subjected to. They may laugh at you for reporting the crime because of your sexual orientation or gender identity, and you will feel discouraged that the institutional support just isn't there.

In my mind, these are the social and structural issues that need to be addressed. And our work is made more difficult by the lack of confidence our people have in the justice system. And there is no definition of rape [in Belize] that is inclusive of men, so though gay sex is criminalized, rape [of men] is not.

Can you say what is driving anti-gay hatred in Belize?

The people who are riling up things or speaking up the loudest are the evangelicals. And part of the problem is, because they have a platform on TV stations, it allows them to deliver their visceral message in a way they couldn't otherwise.

The people from the Alliance Defense Fund [renamed Alliance Defending Freedom in 2012] came down to do some training, and they infused [these anti-gay] ideas. They're using [anti-LGBT sentiment] as a tool to coordinate or organize and mobilize membership. They're advancing [the American idea of] dominion theology, which speaks to [religion] controlling politics, business, education, arts and culture.

Beyond the evangelicals cultivating fear, people don't understand how LGBT people are. And LGBT

people are in a Catch-22 situation. If they make themselves visible, they really don't know the outcome that will be. At the same time, not making themselves visible, they perpetuate their own mistreatment. And [in Latin America] there's this idea that you shouldn't violate what a man is supposed to be, that violation is unacceptable.

So things were better before the ADF came to town?

I didn't feel as insecure. The majority of people had a live-and-let-live attitude toward gays, which is, "Do your thing, just don't bring it to my house."

But the controversy really gave people permission to express their hate in a way they didn't see they had permission to before.

Are there small victories that help you keep going?

I got a package from New York from someone I don't even know to say, "I admire you and your work." I don't know who that is. When I was assaulted, \$600 was raised for my transportation needs, from people I didn't even know. There's a lot of that. A lawyer from London who wants to help with the legal review. And a woman who wanted to see if she could organize a mom's march. That was yesterday.

And what are the hardest parts?

Being so public means everybody shies away from you. You have to be really strong and that is the price I pay.

The work continues, but because I'm in the middle of it, I'm not blinded by admiration [for what has been done so far]. I'm blinded by my own frustration, because I'm in the middle of something that isn't moving fast enough.

A TIMELINE

LGBT Rights and International Organizations

Global development of human rights protections for LGBT people has followed a torturous path over the last seven decades, and has only really begun to take shape in the last 20 years. Even today, with the United States and others pushing harder for such protections, international organizations like the UN have remained largely confined to monitoring abuses and advocating better legal treatment.

1945

The United Nations (UN), with a charter that calls for “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,” is established.

1948

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is adopted by the UN General Assembly. It is not a legally binding document, but sets a standard of achievement to be sought by all member nations.

1959

The Organization of American States (OAS), a regional body now consisting of the 35 nations of the two American continents, creates the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to promote the observance and defense of human rights in the Americas.

1966

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is adopted by the UN General Assembly as a multilateral treaty. Like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the document requires that rights be recognized

regardless of race, religion and other factors, but does not mention sexual orientation or gender identity. It also guarantees the right to marry, although same-sex marriage is not mentioned.

1976

The ICCPR takes effect after being signed by the required number of countries.

1990

The World Health Organization decides to remove homosexuality from a list of mental disorders in the International Classification of Diseases, a change that first appears in its 1992 edition. “Transsexualism,” however, is still listed as a “gender identity disorder” under “mental and behavioral disorders,” a classification that remained as of press time in 2013.

1991

Nicholas Toonen of Tasmania, an island that is part of Australia, files a complaint with the UN Human Rights Committee alleging that Tasmania’s anti-sodomy law, which he argues only applies to gay men, is a violation of his rights under Articles 17 (right to privacy) and 26 (equal protection

before the law) of the ICCPR. The Tasmanian AIDS Council, under pressure from the Tasmanian government as a result, fires Toonen from his job as general manager.

1994

The UN Human Rights Committee rules Australia is in breach of non-discrimination obligations of the ICCPR treaty. In response, the Australian commonwealth passes a law overriding Tasmania’s criminalization of homosexual sex. *Toonen v. Australia* becomes a landmark human rights complaint and an oft-cited reference used by the committee and other treaty bodies in rulings. In the wake of the *Toonen* decision, UN experts become more active in working against abuses of LGBT people, although the decision technically applies only to the Tasmanian case.

2003

Brazil presents a resolution to the UN Commission on Human Rights calling on states to promote and protect the human rights of all people regardless of sexual orientation and expressing “deep concern” about violence against LGBT people. The Brazilian resolution also calls on the UN High

Commissioner for Human Rights to be more attentive to human rights violations on the basis of sexual orientation. The resolution elicits strong opposition, and further discussion is postponed until the next commission session in 2004.

2004

Brazil withdraws its resolution in the face of stiff opposition from a variety of quarters, including the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Vatican, and a network of Christian organizations based in the U.S. and elsewhere.

2005

The first “International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia,” coordinated by the Paris-based IDAHOBIT Committee, is held on May 17 to raise awareness of LGBT issues and to commemorate the day in 1990 that the World Health Organization decided to remove homosexuality as a mental disorder from the International Classification of Diseases.

2006

Meeting in Indonesia, the International Commission of Jurists, the International Service for Human Rights and human rights experts from around the world adopt the Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Although the 29 principles were meant to guide the UN and other governmental bodies, they are not adopted by member states and therefore have no legal authority.

June 2008

The OAS approves a resolution titled “Human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity”

that expresses concern about violence directed toward LGBT people in the Americas and instructs the OAS’s Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs to include the resolution on its agenda when addressing the UN General Assembly. The document is remarkable because some of the countries that support it are Caribbean nations that still criminalize homosexual sex.

December 2008

France and the Netherlands, on behalf of the entire European Community, sponsor a non-binding declaration in the UN General Assembly, backed by 66 European and Latin American countries, condemning homophobic human rights violations. (That number had risen to 97 at press time in 2013.) An opposing statement, drafted by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and supported by 57 countries, calls the declaration an attempt to normalize pedophilia, among other things. The Bush administration declines to support the French declaration because, it says, that might be seen as an attempt by the U.S. government to interfere with states’ rights. At press time, neither statement had yet garnered the needed number of signatures, and therefore neither is official. Still, the French/Dutch declaration is the first in UN history to explicitly suggest that human rights protections should be extended based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and it is hailed by human rights activists.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference tries, and fails, to remove “sexual orientation” from a formal resolution introduced at the UN by Sweden that condemns summary executions based on sexual orientation.

March 2009

The Obama administration announces that it will support the French/Dutch declaration of 2008, reversing the Bush administration’s position.

November 2010

In a vote seen as a great disappointment by human rights activists, the UN General Assembly’s Third Committee removes “sexual orientation” from the 2008 Swedish resolution that addresses summary, extrajudicial and arbitrary executions. Middle Eastern, Caribbean and African nations including South Africa vote for the deletion, even though South Africa’s 1996 constitution includes explicit protections for LGBT people.

December 2010

Approving an amendment proposed by the United States, the UN General Assembly restores the reference to “sexual orientation” in the Swedish resolution addressing summary executions.

June 2011

South Africa submits a resolution to the UN Human Rights Council condemning human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the first UN document to focus on such violations. The resolution also requests that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights draft a report that details the situation of LGBT citizens worldwide. The resolution is approved and the report is published in December. It finds that 76 countries have laws that criminalize people on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, with five using the death penalty. UN High Commissioner Navi Pillay calls for repeal of all these laws.

November 2011

The OAS' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights creates the Unit on the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Persons to build support for protecting LGBT rights in the Americas.

December 2011

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton addresses the UN's Palais des Nations on International Human Rights Day about violence and discrimination against LGBT people, and announces a new Global Equality Fund to support groups working on LGBT issues. On the same day, President Obama issues recommendations to end anti-LGBT violence and discrimination worldwide.

December 2012

"Leadership in the Fight against Homophobia," a special event to commemorate International Human Rights Day, is held at the UN, with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon denouncing violence against LGBT people. The event is organized by Human

Rights Watch, the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

March 2013

The 57th Session of the UN's Commission on the Status of Women ends without any resolutions mentioning sexual orientation or gender identity. Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the UN, expresses disappointment.

The UN Human Rights Committee issues a report noting that Belize "lacks any constitutional or statutory provision expressly prohibiting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity" and calling on it to review its constitution and legislation. The committee also expresses concern about "reports of violence against LGBT persons" and asks Belize to submit a report on these issues, as required for those nations that, like Belize, signed the ICCPR treaty. At press time, Belize had yet to submit its report.

April 2013

The U.S. State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs announces a strategy for engagement on LGBT issues in the Western Hemisphere. It includes expansion of public outreach and awareness, collaboration with multilateral partners, and direct engagement with other countries.

South Africa and Norway host the International Conference on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, where 200 governments and NGOs discuss introducing a second sexual orientation and gender identity resolution at the UN. The conference concludes with a call for a special UN mechanism to monitor human rights abuses based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

May 2013

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issues an anti-homophobia video message. "The Riddle" is posted on the OHCHR's YouTube channel.

CRIMES OF THE CARIBBEAN

‘Buggery’ and Beyond

An unusually high proportion of countries in the Caribbean still criminalize gay sex, a legacy of the status of many as former British colonies that inherited these laws. For much of its history, the British Empire had stringent laws against “buggery” (anal sex) both in Great Britain and in its colonial possessions. Like Belize, all the Caribbean countries with anti-gay-sex laws belong to the Commonwealth of Nations, made up predominantly of former British colonies. In the United Kingdom, the process of decriminalizing gay sex began in 1967 with the Sexual Offenses Act, which still precluded various forms of private gay sex. Today, the United Kingdom has a civil union law that protects gay relationships in ways similar to marriage and there has been an effort in the past two years to decriminalize gay sex in the entire Commonwealth, where 41 of 53 member states still retain such legislation. The Commonwealth Lawyers Association in 2011 called for decriminalization and, that November, British Prime Minister David Cameron used a Commonwealth summit to threaten the withdrawal of British aid from countries that fail to respect gay rights. What follows is a list of Caribbean nations that still criminalize LGBT sex.

Antigua and Barbuda

Crime: Buggery, serious indecency
Who can be prosecuted: Men and women
Penalty: Up to 15 years in prison

Barbados

Crime: Buggery, serious indecency
Who can be prosecuted: Men and women
Penalty: Up to life in prison

Belize

Crime: Carnal intercourse against the order of nature
Who can be prosecuted: Men and women
Penalty: 10 years in prison

Dominica

Crime: Buggery, gross indecency
Who can be prosecuted: Men and women

Penalty: Up to 10 years in prison

Grenada

Crime: Unnatural connection
Who can be prosecuted: Men
Penalty: Up to 10 years in prison

Guyana

Crime: Buggery, gross indecency
Who can be prosecuted: Men
Penalty: Up to life in prison

Jamaica

Crime: Buggery, gross indecency
Who can be prosecuted: Men
Penalty: Up to 10 years in prison

St. Kitts and Nevis

Crime: Buggery
Who can be prosecuted: Men
Penalty: Up to 10 years in prison

St. Lucia

Crime: Buggery, gross indecency
Who can be prosecuted: Men and women
Penalty: Up to 10 years in prison

St. Vincent and the Grenadines

Crime: Buggery, gross indecency
Who can be prosecuted: Men and women
Penalty: Up to 10 years in prison

Trinidad and Tobago

Crime: Buggery, serious indecency
Who can be prosecuted: Men and women
Penalty: Up to 25 years in prison

*Source: Human Dignity Trust.
For a map of all countries that criminalize gay sex, see: www.humandignitytrust.org*



MEDIA AND GENERAL INQUIRIES

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