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David Iffrig

Washington University in St Louis

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Toward a Better Understanding of...

The Politics of the Visibility of Gays and Lesbians in Ugandan Media

David Iffrig

Mentor: Shanti Parikh

This project analyzed the recent evolution of the debate on gay and lesbian rights in Uganda. The media is a compelling point of academic examination, for it acts as a conduit for voicing anxieties that surround social and political issues. It is important to note that what is said is equally valuable to the discussion as what is omitted or silenced. In deconstructing the claims forwarded by dissidents of gay and lesbian rights, this project exposes and analyzes the ideological underpinnings that affect the way that debates about homosexuality are dealt with and worked out in contemporary Uganda. The primarily state-owned, Ugandan newspaper, New Vision, is the primary source of articles and editorials for this project. Particular attention is paid to articles published between 2004 and 2012 that focused on gay rights, anti-gay rhetoric, opinions of secular and religious leaders, and significant historical events that establish the etiology of the debate. Analysis of newspaper articles reveal that the vocal majority of Ugandans draw upon on conservative and traditional interpretations of “African-ness,” the structure of the family, the role of reproduction, and the Bible in making their claims that homosexuality in Africa is a Western import and is thus un-African.