



Top Achievements

# LGBT RIGHTS

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# TOP ACHIEVEMENTS LGBT RIGHTS in 2014

**LGBT people in Jamaica continue to face discrimination in their daily lives – a fact that is discussed in the media both locally and internationally.**

However, in the midst of it all, there have been significant strides made in the race towards equality and it would be remiss of us to not highlight these achievements.

## More Voices Added to 'We Are Jamaicans' Campaign

The 'We Are Jamaicans' video campaign that was launched in 2013 continues to see great success. In 2014, we saw the release of several more videos from LGBT persons and allies. One of these videos was done by international supermodel Nell Robinson, who reached out to the campaign organizers after viewing some of the videos on YouTube. Robinson's touching video was released in June and, to date, has been viewed over 5,000 times.

## The UWI Great Debate

We reached another milestone in

March when J-FLAG partnered with UWI Leads to stage the UWI Leads Great Debate. The parliamentary style debate saw four teams from tertiary institutions across Jamaica, namely Mico University College, University of Technology and University of the West Indies Mona and Western Campuses debate the motion 'This house would prosecute employers for all forms of discrimination'. The Great Debate also sparked a lot of activity on social media, particularly on Twitter. The 24 hour period leading up to the debate saw in excess of five hundred tweets being made about the topic, as a result of a twitter competition encouraging the use of the event hashtag.

## UTech promotes tolerance and respect through UTech Cares

In 2014, the University of Technology once again made



UWI Great Debate winners pose with trophy  
Photo credit: Petchary's Blog



Lisa-Gaye Bender receives \$10,000 UTech Cares cash prize | Photo credit: UTech News

headlines - this time for the launch of its UTech Cares Project. The Project, which was launched at the university on February 14, 2014 aims to integrate core values, improve attitudes towards respect and tolerance, and build awareness. Under the UTech Cares Project, a number of activities and initiatives have been implemented to increase visibility and the overall effectiveness of the programme. The project has yielded much success as evidenced by the improved attitudes of university students and academic community towards diversity and respect for others.



The Respect Jamaica Advisory Board pose for pictures at the launch  
Photo credit: Digicel Foundation



J-FLAG's advocacy project participants standing outside of Jamaica's Parliament.



Police at the scene of a crime in May Pen, Clarendon

## Leading Private Sector Companies launch Human Rights Programme

Another major win for the human rights movement in Jamaica came this year with the launch of the Respect Jamaica programme. Respect Jamaica is a corporate Jamaica initiative which attempts to engender positive changes in the Jamaican society. The programme addresses discrimination related to colour, race, class, sexual orientation, those with special needs, the youth and elderly, as well as gender, religion, politics and environmental conservation. The Respect Jamaica programme calls on all Jamaicans to stand in support of the marginalised and vulnerable in our communities – whoever they may be – to build our nation. The Respect Jamaica Advisory Board and partners reads like a "who's who" of corporate Jamaica, and we hope that their collective influence can bring about much needed change in the human rights landscape in Jamaica.

## Police Officers Go Beyond the Call of Duty

Throughout the year, J-FLAG received several reports from LGBT people commending members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) for their improved treatment of members of the community. Special commendations go out to officers in May Pen, Clarendon who showed much compassion and went above the call of duty to a 16 year-old who was being attacked by a large mob in that town in June because of the teen's sexual orientation and gender expression. We commend the persons who secured the teen until the police arrived.

## Civil Society Calls for Greater Protection from Sexual Abuse

Also in 2014, as part of the review of the Sexual Offences Act, parliament invited submissions from the public. J-FLAG joined other civil society organisations and responded to this call and made recommendations to

amend the Act to be more inclusive and to allow for just and effective remedies for ALL victims of sexual violence. J-FLAG also partnered with Jamaica AIDS Support for Life in the hosting of a public forum to discuss the Act in Montego Bay in November. Presenters included Carla Moore, Damien Williams, and Nicolette Jones who spoke on marital rape, expanding the definition of sexual intercourse and rape, the use of, and need for gender neutral language in the Act, and adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights.

The #SOARreview hashtag gained traction on Twitter partly due to the support by media practitioners and other organizations. Through the Twitter discussions, persons were able to learn about key issues with the current law. There was a projected reach of over 100,000 and a possible impact of over 480,000 persons. J-FLAG also promoted a sub-hashtag, #RapeisRape.

### Christ Church Observes International Human Rights Day

International Human Rights Day in December was observed at Christ Church in Vineyard Town, Kingston. The sermon delivered by Father Sean Major-Campbell, urged the congregation and by extension the Jamaican population to uphold and respect the rights of each citizen, live together in peace in spite of our differences, speak up in defense of the human rights of the vulnerable, and to use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as our guide to healthy living. In solidifying his message, Fr Sean washed the feet of two lesbians as a demonstration. He also invited a transgender male FJ Genus to share his experiences living in Jamaica. Several other organisations including Respect Jamaica were at this Mass.

December 10 to celebrate 16 years of advocacy and activism by J-FLAG. The event, which was staged at the Knutsford Court Hotel in Kingston saw J-FLAG and its partners and supporters (including Her Worship the Mayor of Kingston & St Andrew, Senator Angella Brown Burke) come together to enjoy an evening



Fr Sean Major-Campbell washes the feet of two Jamaican lesbians



Audi Brevett receives her certificate from Dr Kevin Harvey

### LGBT Culture and Entertainment at its Best

The LGBT event calendar was jam packed last year in a way that has never been seen before. Events of all kinds and sizes are becoming more frequent—sometimes weekly, which are usually peaceful in venues that some years ago, the LGBT community could not have entered much less rented to stage an LGBT event.

On November 16, J-FLAG in partnership with Lavender Tales hosted a cultural soirée - PRISM - in recognition and celebration of the International Day for Tolerance. The show featured performances by many talented LGBT dancers, singers and poets. The show was the first of its kind in a very long time in the local LGBT community and was well received, with many patrons already looking forward to the next staging.

The LGBT came together again on International Human Rights Day,

of music, dance, poetry, food and fellowship. The overview of J-FLAG's work over the years opened many eyes to the struggles and triumphs of the LGBT community in Jamaica over the past couple of decades.

### Youth & Community Workers Take Steps to Promote Tolerance

2014 was the year for building partnerships. One such partnership occurred between J-FLAG and the Youth Division of the Ministry of Youth, Sports & Culture. Together they initiated a pilot sensitization workshop for youth and community development practitioners to raise their awareness about the needs of LGBT youth so they can better engage with them in their programmes and activities.

The programme was a success. The participants greatly appreciated the engagement, and felt they had a better understanding of LGBT issues as well as how to address stigma



Kat CHR Performing at PRISM on International Day for Tolerance

and discrimination.

### Government Entities Promote the Rights of LGBT Jamaicans

The National HIV Programme of the Ministry of Health and the National Family Planning Board continue to do great work to promote the rights of LGBT Jamaicans. In 2014, they partnered with J-FLAG to sensitise healthcare workers on how to deal with members of the LGBT community and establish LGBT friendly public health facilities to ensure greater access to health services. This partnership continues to bear fruit as



Neila Ebanks performing at the Larry Chang Human Rights Symposium

improvements have been noted in the delivery of healthcare to this vulnerable group.

### Transgender Issues Take the Spotlight

In July 2014, on the one-year anniversary of the murder of transgender teen Dwayne 'Gully Queen' Jones, a one-hour investigative special was aired on All Angles, a highly popular television programme. Jones was a transgender teen, whose vicious murder in July



Homeless youth, Krissy poses in the New Kingston Gully | Photo credit: Vice Media



Jamaican Transgender Activist, Tiana Miller on local tv show All Angles. Photo credit: Television Jamaica

2013 gained the attention of the local and international media. The human interest approach taken by the All Angles host Dionne Jackson-Miller highlights a major move in the right direction in the coverage of LGBT issues.

Also in July 2014, fashion blogger and transgender woman, Ashley was interviewed in depth by Emmy award winning journalist Cliff Hughes for his programme Impact. The enlightening interview was another display of the improvements in local coverage of LGBT issues (and issues affecting the transgender community in particular). Transgender woman and activist Tiana Miller was also featured in Buzz Magazine.

It should be noted that both of these programmes appear on the same TV station - Television Jamaica (TVJ).

### Parliamentarians Seek Solution to Address Homelessness

The issue of displacement and homelessness among members of the LGBT community continued to make headlines in 2014. The coverage and handling of the issue by some leaves a lot to be desired. However, commendations must be

given to several politicians for their response to the issue. Julian Robinson - whose constituency has some of the most visible members of the LGBT community who are homeless - has been actively working towards a solution. He recently announced that funding has been secured to help address the situation. Lisa Hanna, the Minister of Youth and Culture announced in 2014 that her ministry was in the process of developing new services, initiatives and programmes to address issues affecting various sections of the youth population including (LGBT) individuals. The Mayor of Kingston and St Andrew and Councillor for the Trafalgar Division are also working assiduously with different stakeholders to address homelessness.



Senator Angela Brown Burke at J-FLAG's 16th Anniversary



# J-FLAG

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