



**INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

80 Maiden Lane, Suite 1505 New York, NY 10038 USA
Phone: +1 (212) 430.6054 • Fax: +1 (212) 430.6060 • Email: iglhrc@iglhrc.org
www.iglhrc.org • fb.com/iglhrc • [@iglhrc](https://twitter.com/iglhrc)

July 28, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write on behalf of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) to urge you to take the opportunity presented by the U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit next week to substantively engage the continent's leaders in dialogue to support the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Africans.

We are thankful for your expressed commitment to the promotion of human rights for everyone, everywhere, including LGBT individuals in Africa. We believe this summit provides a critical opportunity to engage U.S. trading partners on the continent to recognize the basic rights of LGBT Africans. Investment in Africa offers the U.S. leverage to achieve positive change for a population that has been penalized and marginalized.

Research confirms that, while Africa has seen tremendous economic growth over the past decade and a half, millions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans individuals are prevented by discriminatory homophobic and transphobic laws and practices from benefitting fully from this growth. This has a devastating cost in the lives of individuals identifying as, or thought to be, LGBT. It also hampers economic growth, generally, generates preventable health costs, and results in the inefficient use of public resources for health, education, and housing.

Specifically, I hope you will use this summit as an opportunity to:

- Reinforce with African government trade partners the fact that discrimination against LGBT individuals violates eligibility requirements under the U.S. Africa Growth and Opportunity Act;
- Demand guarantees from African government trade partners that violence against LGBT individuals will be fully, independently and fairly investigated with those responsible held to account; and
- Require that the U.S. Trade Representative develop a plan in Africa to implement the 2011 Presidential memorandum to advance the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.

I am enclosing information detailing the multi-layered cost of homophobia and transphobia in Africa and the U.S. trade and aid interest in select African countries.

I wish your administration every success in developing new alliances for African economic development and hope your effort will be a springboard to support the human rights of all Africans.

Respectfully yours,

Jessica Stern
Executive Director
International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission