



August 1, 2014

Dear Chief Executive Officer,

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 (LGBT) Africans.

Pushing for the protection of equal human rights for all is not only a moral imperative, it makes good business sense.

Violence motivated by discrimination, such as homophobic and transphobic violence, has a significant productivity cost. In addition, where lack of police protection against vigilante justice renders daily life dangerous for employees who are, or are thought to be, LGBT, corporations cannot fully realize the human potential available to them. In extreme cases, companies are forced to ignore their own employment policies—which may be very inclusive—to protect the safety of their employees.

Your company's investment in Africa offers a unique opportunity to ensure that you're the U.S. leverage to achieve positive change for a population that has been penalized and marginalized, and to address the productivity and opportunity costs to your business that are directly related to discriminatory laws.

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

Adopt and implement LGBT-inclusive personnel policies for all staff, regardless of nationality and location.

Recognize same-sex couples and their families with full, equal access to all company benefits, also for those who are stationed in Africa.

Ensure that global health coverage includes complete health benefits for transgender employees.

Work with the United States Trade Representative's Africa Office to explicitly raise and address the productivity cost of homophobia and transphobia in all trade talks.

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 you every success in your endeavors in Africa, and would be happy to talk further with you about generating ethical trade relationships and personnel policies that support all employees.

Respectfully yours,

Jessica Stern
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International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
New York City