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## Resisting or Reinforcing the Neoliberal Present?

**The LGBT Struggle for Democratic  
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Prince Karakire Guma

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## Theme

This paper provides context as well as impetus for the re-articulation of social movements and civil society activism as a way of resisting forces of exclusion, marginalization and dis-empowerment in the neoliberal present.

## Reflection

It is the responsibility of any constitutional government to balance wishes of the dominant groups with the protection of minority groups, while protecting the constitution. While no society is insulated from the problem, the Global South, especially Africa exhibits perhaps the greatest intolerance for LGBT space and rights in neoliberal times.

## Suggestions and propositions

It has therefore become imperative to allow space for civic activism and advocacy of individuals and populations “without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status” (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). Ultimately, this study is an attempt toward achieving this end.

## Abstract

The ascendancy of neoliberal ideals and aspirations in Uganda has dramatically changed the citizenship terrain, leading to structural, tactical, and strategic exclusion and dis-empowerment. It has also drastically led to enormous shrinkage and fragility of democratic space. Consequently, different groups of collective identity, including lesbians and gay men, have for the last two or so decades created cohesive movements seemingly in opposition to neoliberalism. The LGBT struggle has over the last decade become more and more visible, often responding to neoliberal effects of exclusion and dis-empowerment in ways that reflect attributes of a critical movement. Of course, while this emerging movement is part of an apparent broader resistance to neoliberalism, it sometimes seems to serve the role of reinforcing neoliberal policies, discourses and practices.

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Using the case study of Uganda's gay/lesbian struggle for democratic space, I explore our understanding of how social movements and civil society activism act to resist and/or to reinforce the neoliberal present.

## Introduction

The last decade has seen tremendous transformation in centers of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) political and socio-economic utility, with non-profits, bars and clubs occupying an immense part of LGBT life. What is even more phenomenal is the rate at which gay men and women have migrated to the capital city, Kampala. While data relating to the extent of such migrations is more difficult to quantify, or even ascertain, evidence can be inferred by considering the proliferation of gay-owned and gay-friendly businesses and nonprofits in recent times. While Kampala may not necessarily be a unique agglomeration of counter-cultural phenomena in the region, the apparent trend is consistent in major African countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa and Malawi where gays have generally migrated into different cities, occupying formerly abandoned urban spaces that do not necessarily share the counter-cultural uniqueness. This decade has also witnessed enormous structural, tactical, and strategic exclusion and dis-empowerment. In addition to The Penal Code Act (1950) which has since 1950 been used as a tool for and source of repression of people presumed to be homosexuals, President Museveni in 2005, signed a constitutional amendment that made same-sex marriages illegal (Republic of Uganda, 1995: 31[2A]). Compounding this whole scenario was the tabling of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill (2009). In the sections that follow, I seek to show how these events have drastically led to enormous shrinkage and fragility of democratic space in Uganda, and how through social movements and civil society activism LGBT are acting to resist and/or reinforce the neoliberal present. The subsequent section takes the reader through a review of the material and methods before proceeding to literature review, findings and discussion, and finally, conclusions.

## Material and methods

This study is designed as sociological explanatory case study which follows the analytic technique of explanation building grounded in neoliberal theory. In this technique, the researcher analyzes the case study data by building an explanation about the case. Explaining a phenomenon involves stipulating a presumed set of causal links about it, or *how* or *why* something happened. Focusing on Uganda, the research not only lends itself to a detailed empirical study, but also on secondary and library-based sources – books, journals, monographs, reports and Internet sources. These sources were supplemented by contacts with identified Ugandan institutions, scholars and researchers who have vested interest and expertise on the broader subject of democracy, neoliberalism and citizenship. By using multiple sources of data, I was able to construct a more valid interpretation of events through a convergence of evidence.

## Framing the debate

One critical element of living in a constitutional democracy is the recognition that there are certain rights that trump the general will. Such a recognition offers a dramatically different view from those of the dominant neoliberal approaches. In fact, while neoliberal forms of the state also carry with them

notions about democracy and how its constructed (Gaventa, 2010), such notions are rather 'thin' and 'anaemic', and are also 'restricted' and 'delegative' at best (Munck, 2005: 66). Notions of democracy in a neoliberal context do not elaborate symbolic frames through which liberal democratic tenets can be actualized (Wacquant, 2009). It focuses *not* on the struggles of citizens, but on a uniform set of institutional designs and approaches such as elections, representation and the rule of law (Carothers, 1999). Such a view perceives citizens only as voters who express their consent from time to time, but leave governance to the elected rulers and informed elites (Gaventa, 2010: 61). Rather than seeing democracy in its 'thicker' and 'deeper forms' in which citizens mobilize and struggle to express their voice and claim their interests (Fung and Write, 2003), 'the new democracy does not [necessarily] play the role expected by liberal theory as the protector of rights (Gaventa, 2010: 61). It is not surprising therefore that the civil society has been made to focus on 'market participation as the route to empowerment' in contrast to a more rights-based approach that includes activism. Consequently, discontenting groups such as minority groups have been tending more towards the *private* economy than *public* action. In other words, more and more of the functions of collective life have been removed from the democratic accountability of the *public* sphere, assigned or even transferred to *private* corporate control (see, Gaventa, 2010).

Beyond the confrontation with democratic action and accountability, a comprehensive view of neoliberalism concerns how the rise of market forces has totally altered the citizenship terrain, radically intensified structural exclusion and discrimination, challenged many assumptions about traditional patterns of authority, and questioned ways in which rights are protected (Smith-Carrier and Bhuyan, 2010). Over the last two or so decades, neoliberalism has reshaped the terrain of citizenship in ways that challenge our understanding of how citizenship is constructed and the sites in which it is claimed. It has transformed citizenship into a privilege that is increasingly inaccessible for minorities, blocking their participation in national and international life. It has exacerbated intolerant behaviour and policies, fomented the break-up of the social and cultural fabric of the peoples, while at the same time weakening indigenous mechanisms of democracy (Wacquant, 2009; Munck, 2005).

While such confrontations may be justifications for what Duggan (2012) referred to as the 'brutal reign of neoliberalism', the global economy of neoliberal capitalism has sometimes provided opportunities for identity construction, democracy, and popular activism (Gaventa, 2010). Particularly, the spread of popular television sitcoms and mini-series that air in Uganda, women feminist scholars and activists, expressions of sexual identity for gay men, and international laws that establish guidelines for sexual behavior, have all led to the emergence of popular demand for lesbian and gay rights and freedoms. This way, political and economic policies associated with neo-liberalism have been able to shape different aspects of contemporary lesbian and gay politics, including the commercial gay scene, the everyday lives of lesbians and gay men, and the notions of agency and self-sufficiency. However, the major criticism of neoliberalism lies in its self-undermining notions *against* collective struggles and *for* the disempowerment of institutions that makes agency and self-sufficiency impossible (Fung and Write, 2003; Wacquant, 2009; Munck, 2005). The section that follows presents the formation of popular struggles by lesbians and gay men – as individuals and also in collectives, and how this struggle *threatens* and/or *strengthens* dimensions of neoliberal theory and imaginaries.



## The LGBT struggle in neoliberal Uganda

Every LGBT movement in every society possesses a unique strategy for struggle that is directly related to how it all started. The LGBT struggle in Uganda is largely motivated by three major trends. The first two include: the emergence of 'homophobia and homophobic violence (in its current nature), and the emergence of a self-consciously gay community. These key trends according to Ward (2013) are 'arguably, products of modernity and globalization.' The third, and perhaps most critical structural force that has provided an arena for the consolidation of LGBT activism in Uganda is Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's neoliberal project (since the early 1990s) which has succeeded in privatizing the public sphere, leading to what urban critics Michael Sorkin and Mike Davis refer to as 'the end of public space' and 'destruction of truly democratic urban spaces' (cf. Crawford, 1995). Museveni's political and economic framework – sometimes referred to as the Musevenomics – apparently justified and even shaped the development of the LGBT struggle into what we know it today. It led to increased urban redevelopment, and its consequences such as loss of public space, and overwhelming consumerism, privatization, media liberalization, state intrusion into private life, and the contemporary death of collective life. Consequently, these trends diminished the democratic dreams of ordinary (and especially minority) citizens. Sometimes the state embarked on the policy of total harassment, and other times systematic extermination of such movement. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Museveni government has drastically marginalized minority populations, and the LGBT perhaps more than any other group of minorities.

### Beginnings of the Struggle

While there is no specific evidence, it is largely believed in the LGBT community that the LGBT rights movement grew mostly as a response to escalating attacks on LGBT persons that began in 1999 when the New Vision, a state-owned newspaper, reported that President Museveni had ordered the arrest and imprisonment of homosexuals. The New Vision newspaper quoted Museveni as saying: 'I have told the Criminal Investigations Department to look for homosexuals, lock them up and charge them.' Upon these attacks it became imperative for LGBT Ugandans to socially and privately 'mobilize' and 'organize'. The first public homophile organizations were formed during this time. A number of them were largely small-scale groups composed of predominantly men and especially transsexuals. During their first years, the organizations often had difficulty persuading people to join. Recruitment was impeded by the stigma attached to homosexuality and by the harsh penalties exacted for homosexual identity. Even service orientated initiatives required a lot of brevity and courage, as they were often squashed by a largely heterosexual society. This made such efforts (however public) less visible. A case in point is when in 2002, a heterosexual Anglican bishop, Christopher Ssenyonjo, was expelled from the Church of Uganda for associating with LGBT persons through his counseling unit. In addition to setting up a counseling unit for LGBTI persons, Ssenyonjo was later to establish *Integrity Uganda* as a branch of *Integrity USA*, the Episcopal Church's LGBT outreach organization after his expulsion. He also found a community center where LGBT persons could safely gather, and housing and employment for those who were forcibly 'outed' (Burroway, 2010). This way the retired Bishop was able to stand up for the LGBT community in times of crisis and great danger.

But while such barriers to organization were common place at the time, the homophile movement was nevertheless expanding. By 2003, there were several gay and lesbian organizations in Uganda, including Freedom and Roam Uganda, Right Companion, Lesgabix, Icebreakers Uganda, Integrity Uganda, Spectrum

Uganda, and Gay and Lesbian Alliance. Most of these acted as support groups, with very few engaged in activist work to improve their minority status. Moreover, the different groups according to Tamale (2003) were not connected in any way. It was not until March 2004 that Sexual Minorities in Uganda (SMUG) was founded as a loose collection of about 18 LGBTI organizations in Uganda. It was almost the lone 'visible' element in the struggle together with its founder, Victor Mukasa, and was able to make progress, particularly in negotiating informal incorporation and building underground legitimacy for its cause.

By 2005, a few activists including David Kato, Jacqueline Kasha, Frank Mugisha and others were beginning to gain courage to participate actively in promoting awareness through public debate and social mobilization, modeling their strategies on South African non-profit organizations, majority of members in such organizations opted to sustain their memberships mostly underground and almost exclusively through cyberspace. The avoidance of public visibility by gay and lesbian organizations can be explained by the severity of Ugandan law that carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment (Tamale, 2003). The exceedingly hostile context in which lesbians and gays lived and worked made it extremely difficult for homosexuals to demand their rights with a unified voice (Tamale, 2003).

Consequently, the few organizations that were fast emerging were mostly underground and adopted names that conveyed little explicit information about sexual identity. And yet, they still attracted severe counter-responses from the state. For instance, the Minister of Ethics and Integrity at the time, Nsaba Buturo ordered the police to investigate and 'take appropriate action' against a gay organization at Makerere University (BBC, 2005). Gay rights activist Kizza Musinguzi was also jailed at just a round the same time and subjected to four months of forced labor, water torture, beatings and rape, for speaking out against anti-LGBT violence. In October 2004, the state also through the Uganda Broadcasting Council, fined Radio Simba over \$1,000 and forced the station to issue a public apology for hosting a discussion that involved a lesbian and two gay men, where they called for tolerance and greater understanding of LGBTI people (BBC, 2005). The government Minister of Ethics and Integrity at the time Nsaba Buturo told the BBC's 'Focus on Africa' that Radio Simba's programme had committed a criminal offense by telling listeners that homosexuality was 'an acceptable way of life'(BBC, 2005).

Homophile groups at the time were lone in the struggle for visibility. They were often alienated and were sometimes avoided by many mainstream organizations including feminist and human rights associations. According to Maurick, et al (2005), such organizations claimed that it was impossible to fight for a group of people that were invisible, and that homosexuals themselves had no choice but to lead the way by speaking out for themselves (Kiragu and Nyong'o, 2005). Also, it is important to mention that the Ugandan public (political, cultural and academic) sphere was still almost absolutely heterosexualized. There was only but a handful of public persons like Sylvia Tamale and Bishop Christopher Ssenyonjo who were willing to help raise awareness about the LGBT issues. By keeping away from such issues, persons from the mainstream organizations remained part of the LGBT problem, maintaining an environment silence and criminalization in as far as issues of homosexuality and homosexuals respectively were concerned.

By 2007, the lesbian and gay struggle for space in Uganda gain even more visibility through increased populist activism. During this time, two specifically spatial issues caught the attention of LGBT activists: the segregation of homosexuals and the violence against persons perceived to be homosexuals. While the activists' approach to each of these problems illustrated no particular ideological perspective on the role of space in the constitution of their homosexual

identities, it was able to establish a small and tight-knit community. Through courageous efforts and astounding underground work, homosexuals hoped to establish an improved and visible community. Homosexual activists adopted a conventional form of social affiliation, solidarity and awareness that led to the homogenization of the gay community, and the proliferation of anonymous gay enclaves in Kampala city, thereby inhabiting and transforming public spaces into urban spaces that were in ways Western-like.

In August 17, 2007, SMUG led by Victor Juliet Mukasa held Uganda's first ever LGBTI human rights press conference at the Speke Hotel in Kampala. Many of those who attended the press conference wore masks and gave only first names, because they were fearful of identification and arrest. Mukasa, who had been forced to flee temporarily into exile in South Africa in fear of her life after police raided her home in 2005, had now returned and spearheaded the campaign. During the same time, she was also able to pursue a civil law suit against the government ministers who had sanctioned the raid on her home. Speakers at the press conference protested the police's harassment of law-abiding LGBTI people, its persistent demand for sexual favors and personal bribes in exchange for release from custody, and trumped-up charges, brutality and harassment. They called for an end to homophobic discrimination in the legal, education and health systems. The language of delivery was Luganda, an impressive strategy, as homosexuals were often told they had no place in Uganda as homosexuality was not African.

### **Toward the Crystallization of Struggle**

By October 2009, the battle lines were drawn and the Anti-Homosexuality Bill (hereinafter, 'Bill') was thrown in as the trump card for the anti-gay group (Hugo, 2012; Anti-Homosexuality Bill, 2009). A first term little known Member of Parliament (MP) David Bahati introduced the Bill in Parliament that would inadvertently lead to stringent legislature against LGBT. The Bill which was colloquially named the 'Kill the Gays Bill,' originally proposed to mete out several severe punishments that would have seen jail sentences increased to life imprisonment and the death penalty for 'aggravated homosexuality' (Anti-Homosexuality Bill, 2009). While these sanctions were not strange to the gay community and indeed represented a cyclical pattern of abuse under an administration that was known for its human rights violations, the proposed legislation whipped up homophobia in Uganda and drove many homosexuals out of the country. They were widely perceived as both a step back to strides made throughout the world in the protection of human rights and promotion of sexual diversity. The contents in the Bill captured global attention and were also immediately denounced by the U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, and by numerous Commonwealth countries. While 'the Bill is now in abeyance following the directive from President Yoweri Museveni to 'go slow on the matter,' it did (and still) set(s) challenging conditions, struggles, and agenda for the hitherto repressed and submerged homosexualities, their ability to come out, as well as their democratic space for activism (The Sunrise 2012).

While the Bill is by and large an attack on the most fundamental principle of the human rights framework, its foundations are reminiscent of a neoliberal agenda. The Bill was particularly framed by conservative right-wing Pentecostal pastors and American evangelicals through a series of seminars and conferences under themes such as "exposing the homosexual agenda" that clearly laid out strategies on how to support further criminalization of homosexual practices and demonize homosexual people by enticing vulnerable populations, those in lower income brackets, politicians and decision-makers. It was clear therefore that the anti-LGBT movement gained its legitimacy in the West rather than in Uganda. Consequently, they were later to find themselves

endangered by their own-made threats, as their efforts mobilized the LGBT community into even greater political activity. The Bill's tabling has led to the emergence of a brave and more organized form of activism, with LGBTI persons literally fighting for their lives.

The formation of the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law (CSCHRCL) in October 2009 is a case in point. As a counter-action to the Bill's tabling, the CSCHRCL's composition of over 40 LGBTI and mainstream organizations has been a key player in coordinating both local and international efforts around sexual rights, and against the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. The CSCHRCL, through its common goal, steadily worked to advocate for democratic gay and lesbian space in Uganda. While challenges did exist as to how to reconcile the interests of mainstream vis-a-vis gay rights organizations, the CSCHRCL nonetheless enhanced the LGBT struggle. Through the CSCHRCL, the LGBT community acquired more energy, support, and zeal than was the case two or three years before the Bill had been tabled.

Beyond CSCHRCL efforts, SMUG in a ground-breaking move in March 2012 filed a federal lawsuit against a U.S.-based American evangelist and self-described world-leading expert on the 'gay movement,' Scott Lively, in federal court in Massachusetts, accusing him of violating international law by inciting the persecution of LGBT community in Uganda. The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) filed the lawsuit in the United States District Court in Springfield, Massachusetts for his involvement in orchestrating anti-gay homophobic violence and persecution in Uganda. Lively was sued under the Alien Tort Statute (ATS) that provides federal jurisdiction for any civil action by an alien, for a tort only, committed in violation of the law of nations or a treaty of the United States. The suit alleges that Scott moved beyond 'mere' hate-mongering when he became a kind of persecution consultant and strategist with the aim to silence and criminalize LGBT advocacy. It portends to his decade-long active participation in the conspiracy 'to persecute persons based on their gender and/or sexual orientation and gender identity.' The Judge on August 14 2013 ruled that persecution on the basis of sexual orientation was indeed a crime against humanity and that fundamental human rights of LGBTI were protected under international law. The ruling provided a different and perhaps an alternative pathway for defending civil and political rights and for seeking justice for victims of persecution which is an integral element of Uganda's LGBT democratic space.

### **The Struggle amidst Renewed Anti-Gay Vigilantism**

While local courts are highly regarded as corrupt and unreliable spaces for seeking civil and political justice, the LGBT community have won key legal and political lawsuits at the hype of the pending Anti-Homosexuality Bill that threatens the very existence of the homosexuals. One of such successes was the January 2011 High Court case against a weekly Ugandan tabloid Newspaper Rolling Stone (no relation to the U.S. magazine by the same name) which had been sued for libel, invasion of privacy, and incitement of violence. Rolling Stone, in October 2010 had published an article on its front page revealing the identities of 100 suspected gay men and women under the headline, 'Uganda's Top Homos,' crossed by a yellow ribbon reading, 'Hang them!'. The LGBT community bravely went out in public and tried their minuscule chances in a corrupt system thereby exposing their very identities, an attempt that made them criminal, and struggled for their democratic freedoms. High Court Justice Kibuuka Musoke on January 3, 2011 ruled that Rolling Stone had indeed threatened Kato's and the others' 'fundamental rights and freedoms,' including their constitutional right to privacy (Hugo, 2012). The High Court Justice ordered 1.5 million Ugandan

Shillings worth of compensation for each of them. It also issued an induction prohibiting any further publication of the identities and addresses of people the tabloid had labeled as ‘homos’. Victory in the lawsuit was a defining moment for the LGBT community:

Not long after the Rolling Stone demanded that ‘homos’ be hanged, and only three weeks after the landmark success for the LGBT community in the high court case, David Kisule Kato, was reportedly bludgeoned to death on 26 January 2011 at around 2pm. Because of his reputation as the *first* openly gay man in Uganda, and brave activist and figurehead of the tight knit gay community meant, Kato’s murder was not taken lightly. His colleagues in SMUG and the entire LGBT community played a key role in publicizing his death as an act of hate. By so doing, they were able to re-articulate their call for tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion.

It is imperative to note, however, that Kato’s death occurred at a significant time in the struggle for LGBT democratic space that had been forged anew with the tabling of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. This moment inadvertently led to contentious debates about what Kato’s murder meant, how he would be remembered, and what those memories meant for the future of the LGBT community and its struggles in the country. The debates formed a moment in the public consciousness that transformed Kato into an international icon of unmatched appeal. It was a transformative moment in the ongoing discourse over the status of gays and lesbians within Ugandan society as rallies, vigils and memorials were held around the world in Kato’s honor, and became the new poster martyr for the LGBT rights movement in Uganda. His murder became an important memory, with his story told every where in the newspapers, blogs, publications, theater pieces, and in documentary films like ‘They Will Say We Are Not Here,’ ‘Call Me Kuchu,’ and ‘God Loves Uganda.’ Some of these pieces and films have won key awards. The international and prestigious David Kato Vision & Voice Award (DKVVA) that recognizes leaders who work to uphold the sexual rights was also established in 2011. These developments have inadvertently opened up the insidious workings of the tightly-knit Ugandan LGBT struggle to the rest of the world.

### **Playing ‘Pride’ Politics – the Ultimate Struggle**

Despite the government’s persistent bans on LGBT activism, the Ugandan LGBT community on August 4<sup>th</sup> 2012, organized its very first gay pride parade in its effort to acquire legal rights and public visibility. The historic parade was sheltered in Entebbe, about 20 miles from Kampala. It was generally considered a significant moment for the LGBT community as it sought to symbolically bring the community from ‘stigma’ to ‘pride’ and turn ‘reluctant queers’ into ‘gays of identity.’ It also sought to protest government’s mistreatment of the LGBT population as well as its attempt to adopt harsher sodomy laws that would include ‘life imprisonment’ for ‘aggravated homosexuality’ (Anti-Homosexuality Bill, 2009).

Although the parade was broken up by police, it was generally considered by the LGBT community as successful as it drew almost a hundred people. Besides, that the LGBT were able to pull it off at all gave the community newfound confidence in their urge for democratic space. That several people suffered arrests and interrogations was not strange at all given that at other times there had been broader and more sweeping clampdowns and crackdowns often in response to smaller events like workshops and meetings that occurred in private spaces some of which had no *direct* relation to the LGBT community. Such crackdowns, it can be presumed, are designed to send the message to the entire Ugandan LGBT population that the authorities are in complete control. Nevertheless, a successive Parade was held a year later in August 2013 and it

was largely peaceful and was apparently better organized than the first which gave the community even more hope with some announcing that it was only a matter of time before they were able to march through the streets of the capital, Kampala. Because of its success, it was largely envisaged as a beginning to an emergent form of political strategy – the ultimate symbol of LGBT visibility and as such crucial to Ugandan LGBT politics.

What could be observed about these parades is the commercialization of the events, something that clearly distinguishes them as a neoliberal inspiration or establishment. As Begonya (2009) notes, one thing that has been quite phenomenal in the neoliberal times, is the queer consumerism which, apparently, has paved way for the emergence of a political gay struggle and activism that has increasingly sustained a unified lesbian and gay community. Just like the American pride parades, the Ugandan version is closely linked to political activism and is based on ‘pride of being gay’ and ‘coming out’, which quite takes benefit out of the ‘cause’, and dissolves the intended ‘revolutionary’ spirit of the local context in which LGBT people suffer and even die every year. A parade that centers upon an upper-class notion and Western conceptions of sexual openness would not be able to genuinely constitute and reproduce social identities, meanings and relations. What is at stake now is not just the right to walk down a public sidewalk, but on how the people in the community are able to exploit the event in such a way that it means to them as Africans and as Ugandans of identity.

## Conclusions

The question ‘are popular struggles for democratic space a resistance to or a reinforcement of the neoliberal present’ is particularly poignant in present day times as it provokes deep debate about struggles for democratic rights and space within the ‘global’ economy of neoliberal capitalism, while at the same time, alluding to larger questions about democratic citizenship within the complexity of the *state* in the neoliberal present. Indeed, this problematique is even more complex in Uganda as one can hardly study the Ugandan gay and lesbian struggle without feeling that it constitutes a form of neoliberal politics even as it is (albeit not necessarily unequivocally) anti-liberal. Attempts to portray the movement as either inferior to neoliberal political activity are more less convincing, as the movement’s responses against exclusion and dis-empowerment is basically a fight for space and recognition within the neoliberal system. Such a struggle is no more than a political struggle against the forces of neoliberalism whose demands – which include ‘the-right-for-diversity’ to be respected, and for ‘the other’ to be included with tolerance as the bridge – seem largely fair. This link becomes even more significantly complex especially in the neoliberal city where gay consumer-citizens represent the successful integration of minorities into the mainstream – hence serving the role of reinforcing neoliberal policies, discourses and practices.

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