

# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

JAMAICA. ONE LOVE? NO LOVE.

## SHORT SYNOPSIS :

THE ABOMINABLE CRIME is a story about a mother's love for her child and an activist's love for his country - and their lives hang in the balance.

When you are outted in a homophobic society, how much are you willing to sacrifice?

Filmed in five countries, THE ABOMINABLE CRIME explores the impact of violent homophobia through the eyes of gay Jamaicans.

Simone, a young lesbian mother, survives a brutal shooting. Now she must choose between hiding with her daughter in Jamaica or escaping alone to seek safety and asylum abroad.

Maurice, Jamaica's leading human-rights activist, is outted shortly after filing a lawsuit challenging Jamaica's anti-sodomy law. He escapes to Canada, but risks everything to continue his activism...

## KEYWORDS :

Homophobia, Jamaica, Caribbean, Activism, Discrimination, Gay, Lesbian, Marriage Equality, Religion, Violence, Immigration, Asylum, HIV/AIDS, Politics.



# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

JAMAICA. ONE LOVE? NO LOVE.

## LONG SYNOPSIS :

This is a story about a mother's love for her child and an activist's love for his country, and the stakes are life and death.

THE ABOMINABLE CRIME, named after the Jamaican law that criminalizes homosexuality, tells the story of two gay Jamaicans, who are forced to confront and the violence and homophobia that is endemic to their society.

It features Simone Edwards, a gay Jamaican mother, who must face the most wrenching choice imaginable a parent can make. She can continue to live in hiding in Jamaica and risk being found by the anti-gay gunmen who already shot her twice-- or leave her young daughter behind while she ventures abroad in an uncertain bid for asylum.

When we first meet Simone, she is hiding at a safe house in Kingston, Jamaica. She is recovering after being shot twice by anti-gay gunmen from her community. She is with her seven-year old daughter, who witnessed her mother's shooting.

Through Simone and her daughter we come to understand the personal consequences of Jamaica's extreme brand of violent homophobia.

Simone also explains that if her hiding place is discovered, the gunmen who attacked her will likely return to kill her and her child.

Simone turns to the only gay support group on the Island. J-Flag's job is to document anti-gay attacks also offers help to gays seeking to escape from Jamaica.

We meet Karlene Williams-Clark, the director of J-Flag, who explains the context of Jamaican homophobia – and the tragic consequences it has for so many gay Jamaicans. We also hear from leading political and religious figures in Jamaica, who explain the origins of their homophobia, yet deny that violence against gays exists.

Despite Karlene's best efforts, Simone's hopes are crushed, when she is summarily turned down for a visa to travel to the US.

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## LONG SYNOPSIS (CONT.):

Maurice Tomlinson is Jamaica's leading gay activist. He is living with his husband, Tom in Toronto, Canada. A few months earlier, Maurice had filed a lawsuit to overturn Jamaica's anti-sodomy law – and when he was outted by a local newspaper soon after, his address and work schedule was published on the Internet, and he began a target of dozens of credible death threats.

But Maurice decides to return to Jamaica – to continue his legal activism. He returns to Jamaica after Simone discovers a way to get to Holland without an official entry visa. The second half of the film interweaves Maurice's tension filled return to Jamaica – with Simone's experiences as an asylum seeker in Holland.

It is not easy. Separated from her daughter, she begins to learn Dutch, finds a new girlfriend, and tries to overcome the fear she felt being gay in Jamaica and make a new life for herself in a strange new land.

These deeply personal stories take our characters on an amazing journey through five countries -- and reveals, among other things, the roots of homophobia in Jamaican culture, the deep psychological and social impacts of homophobia on the lives of gays and lesbians, and an intimate first person view of the risks and challenges of seeking asylum abroad.



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## PEOPLE:



### DIRECTOR / PRODUCER

**MICAH FINK**, the founder of Common Good Productions, is an award-winning producer, director and writer specializing in international affairs, public health, and environmental issues. He is also on the faculty at the Graduate Program in Social Documentary at the School For Visual Arts in NYC.

Recent projects include producing of CNN's "Memo to the President with Fareed Zakaria" (2013), serving as a Segment Producer for seven hours of Al Gore's "Climate Reality Project," (2012), and directing and producing "Mann V. Ford" a feature documentary for HBO (2011).

Micah's work has been recognized with several Emmy nominations, two Cine Golden Eagle Awards, a Silver Screen award, and an International Film and Video Award. He was a Japan Society Fellow in 2008 and a Kaiser Media Health Fellow in 2005. Micah has a MS in Journalism from Columbia University and a BA in Comparative Literature from Cornell University. Over the last fifteen years, he has worked on more than three dozen films for PBS Wide Angle, National Geographic Explorer, National Geographic Wild, Frontline, WNET, The Teaching Channel, and ABC News.

You can learn more about Micah's company, Common Good Productions, and see examples of his work at [www.commongoodprod.com](http://www.commongoodprod.com).

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### EDITOR / CO-PRODUCER

**KAREN SIM** began her documentary filmmaking career as an editor on Maro Chermayeff's Juilliard, a 2-hour special for the PBS series American Masters. She then further honed her skills in storytelling by working with Frontline producer/director Ofra Bikel, editing a number of her films, including the Emmy award winning An Ordinary Crime and The Burden of Innocence. Since then, she edited Saint Misbehavin': The Wavy Gravy Movie and worked with Liz Garbus as her producer and editor on a number of projects, including COMA, Shouting Fire: Stories from the Edge of Free Speech which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and most recently ROBOT for Focus Forward Films which premiered at the Los Angeles Film Festival.

# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

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MAURICE TOMLINSON



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SIMONE EDWARDS



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gsfla

STEVE ROTHHAUS'

G A Y S O U T H F L O R I D A

The Miami Herald  
MiamiHerald.com

## Grindr for Equality promotes upcoming documentary about LGBT people in Jamaica

Posted to Facebook by [Grindr for Equality](#)

Common Good Productions needs help telling the important story of GLBT citizens in Jamaica and their daily struggles. Stories like this can have the power to change a social dialogue and could help people that deal with extreme hatred daily. [Watch the trailer](#) for yourself and if you are able, please donate.



Posted by Steve Rothaus at 01:29 PM in [Bisexual](#) [Business](#) [Current Affairs](#) [Gay](#) [Lesbian](#) [LGBT Media](#) [Politics](#) [Religion](#) [Travel](#) [Web/Tech](#) [Weblogs](#) [Workplace](#) [Youth](#) [Permalink](#)

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/gaysouthflorida/2013/02/grindr...>

# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

JAMAICA. ONE LOVE? NO LOVE.

<http://whatnottodoc.com/2013/02/15/in-the-works-an-abominab...>

## what (not) to doc

FEBRUARY 15, 2013 · 1:31 PM

### In the Works: AN ABOMINABLE CRIME

The harrowing experiences faced by a lesbian and a gay man reveal a culture of intolerance in Jamaica.



Referred to by human rights groups as the most homophobic place on earth, Jamaica maintains draconian sodomy laws and has been notable for its high incidence of anti-LGBT violence and rhetoric, especially in its popular music. In a culture where the denial of dignity and rights to LGBT people is a given, director Micah Fink profiles two individuals who have faced persecution and near-death because of their sexuality: Human rights activist and lawyer Maurice, forced to flee the country fearing death threats after the media reported on his marriage to a man, and young mother Simone, gunned down just outside her own home. Their stories reveal the faces of the victims of homophobia and the consequences of a country seemingly unwilling to deal with such human rights abuses.

Fink is currently in the midst of a [Kickstarter](#) campaign for \$35,000 in post-production funding. There are only two weeks left to hit his target, but the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting will match contributions made, so those interested in supporting the project will see their donations count double. To keep updated on the project, visit its [Facebook page](#), and for more on Fink's previous work, check out his [website](#).

To viewers living in countries that have afforded more protections to its LGBT citizens, films like Fink's offer a stark reality check about the conditions faced daily by others around the world. What does it mean when one's own country proves so dangerous that asylum elsewhere may be the only option to live safely? For every LGBT person who seeks refuge in a more welcoming country, how many others from his or her land are unwilling or unable to leave a place like Jamaica, or Uganda, or scores of other nations that criminalize homosexuality? Stories like Maurice and Simone's should make viewers, gay or straight, think twice before choosing to take a vacation in Jamaica and supporting the economy of a country that doesn't protect all its citizens – unless recent promises by the Jamaican Prime Minister to counter discrimination actually bear results in legal reforms and societal attitude shifts.

*Note: If you have a feature documentary currently in production or post-production and would like to be*

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## New Film About Homophobia in Jamaica Features Lesbian Mom



February 5, 2013

Jamaica has one of the worst records in the world on LGBT rights. Male same-sex relationships are punishable by up to 10 years in jail, and homophobic attitudes, harassment, and hate crimes are endemic across the LGBT spectrum. Filmmaker Micah Fink wants to tell the stories of two Jamaicans affected by homophobia, one of whom is a lesbian mom.



Fink has done projects for PBS, National Geographic, CNN, and HBO, and garnered three Emmy nominations, two Cine Golden Eagle Awards, a Silver Screen award, and an International Film and Video Award. His previous works include *Glass Closet: Sex, Stigma, and HIV/AIDS in Jamaica*, a five-part series for PBS World Focus "exploring the links between AIDS, homophobia, anti-gay violence and skyrocketing HIV infection rates in Jamaica's gay community.

His new project is *An Abominable Crime*. Here's a short summary and trailer from the Kickstarter site where he is trying to raise funds to complete the film:

What is AN ABOMINABLE CRIME about?

AN ABOMINABLE CRIME is a documentary that explores the culture of homophobia in Jamaica through the eyes of two Jamaicans who are forced to choose between their homeland and their lives — after their sexual orientations are exposed...

This film tells the stories of...

Simone Edwards, a young lesbian who survives being shot down outside of her home by anti-gay gunmen and must choose between living in hiding with her daughter in Jamaica or traveling alone to seek safety and asylum abroad.

Maurice Tomlinson, a human rights activist and lawyer, who experienced an avalanche of death threats when his marriage to a Canadian man is revealed by a Jamaican Newspaper. Does he dare to return to Jamaica to continue his activism?

Why make a documentary about gay Jamaicans?

Homophobia is a human rights problem, and the struggle for equal treatment of LGBT people is a global human rights issue.

# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

JAMAICA. ONE LOVE? NO LOVE.

(1 of 3)

## Equalitopia

BLOG

Equalitopia is an application that will organize and analyze the LGBT movement around the world.

Kickstarter-backed Documentary 'An Abominable Crime' Aims to Expose Homophobia in Jamaica [Interview]

Do you think of Jamaica as a country where gays and lesbians are hunted down in the streets? Micah Fink, an award winning producer, director, and writer, aims to expose homophobia in Jamaica with his documentary, An Abominable Crime.

An Abominable Crime is a documentary "that explores the culture of homophobia in Jamaica through the eyes of two Jamaicans who are forced to chose between their homeland and their lives — after their sexual orientations are exposed..."

Equalitopia had the pleasure of interviewing Micah Fink about the project:

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### Equalitopia: Could you briefly tell us about yourself?

Micah Fink: I'm a film maker with more than 15 years of experience producing films about critical social issues. I've made films for CNN, National Geographic, HBO, and PBS. I've made a number of films about HIV/AIDS, particularly one called AIDS Warriors for PBS Wide Angle — which was filmed with the Angolan military just after the end of their civil war — and was the first look at the impact of HIV/AIDS on a national military. That work led me eventually to produce a series of short films on Jamaica for PBS — because the Island has one of the highest HIV infection rates in the world (nearly 32 percent in the gay male community). So why should the virus thrive in Jamaica — more than elsewhere? The answer was two cultural factors — a deeply rooted culture of homophobia (which we explore in the current film "An Abominable Crime") as well as the crippling legacy of 19th century anti-gay laws inherited from the British Empire. This realization led me to begin work on "An Abominable Crime."



# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

JAMAICA. ONE LOVE? NO LOVE.

(2 of 3)

## Equalitopia

BLOG

Equalitopia is an application that will organize and analyze the LGBT movement around the world.

### **With almost \$7,000 raised and 18 days to go, how are you feeling about your Kickstarter campaign?**

I am amazed by Kickstarter and the response we've gotten so far. We've gotten so many donations and messages of support from people around the world who have heard about Jamaica — but never really understood the details. Why is Jamaica so violently homophobic... why are so many people being forced to run away from their homeland?

### **How do you feel about the media coverage of homophobia in Jamaica?**

Apart from the coverage of the "murder music" — popular Jamaican dance hall music that calls for the murder of gays and lesbians — there has really been very little coverage of this issue. Human Right Watch did a report nearly a decade ago — but for the most part this remains little reported and little understood. I'm hoping that this film will allow a global audience to connect with Simone as a mother — and with Maurice as a husband — to understand the devastating impact that homophobia has had on their lives... Gay rights are human rights — and this film makes that reality clear on a powerfully intimate and personal level. Also, even though "gay flight" is now a reality for many LGBT people — I don't think a film has ever been made depicting the journeys and experiences of those being forced to seek asylum abroad because of discrimination based on their sexual orientation.



### **What impact are you hoping this film will have?**

I'm hoping that this film will help encourage Jamaica to rethink its embrace of anti-gay laws and anti-gay violence — and also help to humanize the lives and experiences of its victims so they become impossible to ignore.

### **What has been the toughest part of making this film?**

Making a film about lesbians and gays in Jamaica (we've filmed there six different times) is fraught with the most obvious dangers and risks, not just for the film crew, but also for our main characters whose lives were constantly at stake. The courage and dedication of both Simone and Maurice can't be underestimated — and I am in awe of both of them.

# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

JAMAICA. ONE LOVE? NO LOVE.

(3 of 3)

## Equalitopia BLOG

Equalitopia is an application that will organize and analyze the LGBT movement around the world.

### **With your time in Jamaica, what's one thing you've learned that might surprise most people?**

I think most people think of Jamaica as a vacation paradise — but they seldom venture beyond the beaches and resorts into the real Jamaica. If they did, I think they would discover the reality that was lived by Maurice and Simone is quite a brutal one — and I think their feelings about the country (lovely as it is) might change.

Some sources mention differences (both legally and public opinion) between gay men and gay women in Jamaica. Does the film deal with both male and female homosexuality in Jamaica?

We have two main characters. Simone is a Lesbian mother. Maurice is a gay man. While their experiences are similar — class, education and gender all shaped their lives in very different ways. Maurice is a well educated Lawyer. Simone was a hair dresser. Class definitely softens the impacts of homophobia in Jamaica — because those who have privileged lives travel in private cars and can avoid public transport and can afford more privacy in every aspect of their lives. But that said, I heard over and over again, how Jamaica is a very small Island nation — and once your privacy is breached, regardless of your gender, the consequences can be quite abrupt and quite deadly.

### **So far, how has the reception of this project been?**

The Kickstarter campaign is the first time the film has been publicized, and so far the response has been very encouraging. We also just got an amazing show of support for the film from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting is going to match all donations going forward — to help us get to our \$35,000 goal. All the money raised will go directly into producing the film — and we've got just 21 days left in the campaign — so I'm really hoping we make it!

### **Why should people contribute to your Kickstarter project?**

People should contribute because "An Abominable Crime" tells a story that should be told.

While progress on LGBT rights is being made remarkably quickly in the US — and even in the UK — there are still places in the world — like Jamaica and Uganda — where people are being killed for their sexual orientation.

Jamaica is unique because it is a country that depends on tourism as its main source of revenue — and if the "tourists" were aware of what was happening — and voted with their feet — I think the reality on the ground in Jamaica might change very very quickly. The police would take anti-gay crimes seriously - and prosecute them. The government would rethink the anti-Sodomy law, and, in the end, LGBT lives would likely be saved. That's why I think people should contribute to getting this story out into the world.

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JAMAICA. ONE LOVE? NO LOVE.



DOCUMENTARY EXPLORES DANGEROUS WORLD FOR GAYS IN JAMAICA: VIDEO

02/20/2013

UPDATE: Posted this earlier this month (Feb 1) but thought I'd repost because the filmmakers have received an important boost and [these Kickstarters](#) have funding deadlines.

The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting is offering us a special challenge. The Pulitzer Center has generously offered to match, dollar for dollar, up for \$15,000 on all future Kickstarter contributions to the film - every dollar donated over the next 19 days will be doubled!

This week I got a chance to see a rough cut of *An Abominable Crime*, a documentary from filmmaker Micah Fink which explores homophobia in Jamaica through the eyes of two people — Simone Edwards, a lesbian seeking asylum abroad after an attempt on her life by anti-gay gunmen, and Maurice Tomlinson, an activist and lawyer threatened after marrying a Canadian man and being exposed by the Jamaican press.

Fink is seeking funds to finish [his film on Kickstarter](#). It's a moving exploration of Jamaica's culture and a touching look into the lives of gays and lesbian who seek asylum and safety in other countries to protect themselves from human rights abuses in their own.

If you feel moved by the trailer, you can help out [here](#).

Check out the trailer, [AFTER THE JUMP...](#)



# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

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The logo for 'EXPRESZO' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font with a white outline and a drop shadow. It is set against a background of colorful, overlapping diamond shapes in shades of green, blue, purple, and yellow.

HÉT TIJDSCHRIFT, DE ONLINE COMMUNITY,  
DE BELANGENVERENIGING VOOR LESBO-  
HOMO-, BI- EN TRANSJONGEREN.

## **An Abominable Crime**

(page 1 of 2)

**21 februari 2013, Redactie**

**In Nederland hebben we het maar goed : we kunnen trouwen, kindjes adopteren en hand in hand over straat lopen. In veel andere landen in de wereld is homoseksualiteit echter nog steeds verboden en leven homo's, lesbiennes, biseksuelen en transgenders in constante angst. Documentairemaker Micah Fink uit New York volgde een aantal mensen uit Jamaica, een land waar het niet vanzelfsprekend is om homo te zijn. Expresszo stelde hem enkele vragen over zijn nieuwe film.**

### **Waarom wilde je deze film maken?**

Ik was erg ontroerd door het verhaal van Simone, die ik heb ontmoet bij het maken van een programma voor PBS. Ze is een alleenstaande moeder en werd neergeschoten op straat, simpelweg omdat zij lesbisch is. Om aan haar belagers te ontsnappen, moest ze doen alsof ze dood was. Daarna is ze haar huis weer ingegaan en heeft haar dochter onder haar bed verstopt. Ik vond dat echt vreselijk om te horen. Ik heb zelf een joodse achtergrond en ik ben opgegroeid met mensen die de Holocaust hebben overleefd. Een verhaal zoals dat van Simone deed me heel erg aan die periode denken. Ik wil graag aan mensen laten zien dat dit soort dingen nog steeds gebeuren.

### **Wat zijn de gevaren die homoseksuelen in Jamaica tegenkomen?**

Homoseksualiteit is weliswaar illegaal, maar wordt niet direct vanuit de overheid bestraft. Officieel staat er 10 jaar werkstraf op, maar dit wordt in de praktijk bijna nooit uitgevoerd. Het is vooral de homofobie van de bevolking die wordt gestimuleerd door dit soort wetgeving. Als mensen weten dat je een battyman bent (het woord dat men in Jamaica gebruikt voor homoseksuele mannen en vrouwen) dan loop je gevaar. Er is veel geweld tegen homoseksuelen en omdat er geen wetgeving is tegen dit soort misdaden, komen de mensen die zich hieraan schuldig maken er gemakkelijk mee weg.

### **Had je geen problemen met de autoriteiten en de lokale bevolking bij het maken van deze film?**

Nee, niet echt, zolang je discreet bent is er geen probleem. De meeste mensen weten niet wat je gaat filmen als je met een cameraploeg bezig bent.

# THE ABOMINABLE CRIME

JAMAICA. ONE LOVE? NO LOVE.

## Hoe ontmoeten homoseksuelen elkaar in Jamaica?

(page 2 of 2)

Homoseksuelen ontmoeten elkaar vooral in het geheim. Er is een echte underground scene. Alles moet in het geheim, want als je herkend wordt als homo, dan heb je echt een probleem. Zo is er een keer een foto uitgelekt van een homoverjaardagsfeest. De mensen die op deze foto stonden ontvingen gelijk doodsb bedreigingen. Mensen leven in constante angst. Omdat homoseksualiteit illegaal is kunnen mensen ook geen campagnes voeren tegen HIV, die specifiek op homoseksuelen is gericht. Jamaica is daardoor het land met het grootste aantal HIV-besmettingen: maar liefst 32 procent van de homo's is seropositief.

## Je hebt ook in Nederland gefilmd. Wat vind je van de situatie van homoseksuele asielzoekers hier?

Simone is heel goed opgevangen in Nederland. Toen ze op Schiphol asiel ging aanvragen, barstte ze in tranen uit. De vrouw van de immigratiedienst legde toen een hand op haar schouder en zei: "Alles komt goed, je bent veilig nu". De problemen die asielzoekers ondervinden is vooral psychologisch van aard. Simone moest haar dochter achterlaten. Eerst heeft ze geprobeerd asiel aan te vragen in de Verenigde Staten, maar daar werd haar aanvraag afgewezen. Toen ze hoorde dat ze in Nederland misschien terecht kon, is ze gelijk op het vliegtuig gestapt. Simone is nu heel gelukkig in haar nieuwe thuisland. Het is goed dat Nederland mensen als Simone zo warm onthaald.

## Wat kunnen wij in Nederland doen om de problemen van homoseksuelen in landen zoals Jamaica te verbeteren?

Het is vooral het immigratieproces wat het probleem is. Mensen moeten via een ander land binnen komen om asiel aan te kunnen vragen. Daarnaast moeten ze nog eens heel lang wachten op hun visum. Ze zitten daardoor heel lang in onzekerheid. Dat is misschien ook het doel van deze film: om mensen te laten zien hoe lastig het is voor homoseksuele vluchtelingen om hun eigen huis en haard te verlaten en naar een ander land te komen, waar ze helemaal op zichzelf zijn aangewezen.

## Je bent nog bezig met het financieren van deze film. Wat ga je doen als je niet genoeg geld bij elkaar krijgt?

Ik ben ervan overtuigd dat we uiteindelijk genoeg geld bij elkaar krijgen, al duurt het misschien wat langer. Het maakt mij niet uit wanneer deze film uitkomt, als hij maar uitkomt. Het is een verhaal dat verteld moet worden, een menselijke verhaal met een happy ending, want Simone wordt uiteindelijk weer met haar dochter herenigd. Het zou mooi zijn als de film ook op de Nederlandse televisie wordt vertoond. Daarvoor ben ik nog op zoek naar een geschikte partij.

*Micah Fink probeert via Kickstarter het benodigde budget voor de film in te zamelen. Wil je de trailer zien, meer informatie of wil je bijdragen aan de totstandkoming van de film, kijk dan op <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1944650317/an-abominable-crime-violence-and-homophobia-in-jam>*

*Tekst: Chris Zomer*