

A person is shown from the back, wearing a vibrant red cape, looking out over a landscape at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange and yellow, with the sun low on the horizon. The person's silhouette is dark against the bright background. The entire image is framed by a white border.

I AM SAMUEL

DISCUSSION GUIDE

f @ t in v



TABLE OF CONTENTS

04	SYNOPSIS
05	USING THIS GUIDE
06	THE CREW
07	THE KENYAN SCENARIO
08	A QUEER KENYAN SAFARI
10	TERMINOLOGIES
11	THE CONVERSATIONS
16	BUILDING ALLIES
18	BECOMING AN ALLY
19	RESOURCES



FILM SYNOPSIS

Samuel grew up in the Kenyan countryside, where tradition is valued above all else. He is close to his mother, but his father, a local pastor, does not understand why he isn't married yet. After moving to the country's capital, Nairobi, searching for work and a new life, Samuel falls in love with Alex and finds community and belonging. Despite the threat of violence in the city and of rejection by Samuel's family in their rural home, the couple move between their co-existing worlds, hoping to find affirmation in both.

Key messages from the film:

01

Love, family, and acceptance are issues that everyone deals with.

02

If you are queer, the discussion around family affirmation is more challenging.

03

Everyone deserves to love and be loved.

04

No laws should prevent people from loving and being loved.

USING THIS GUIDE

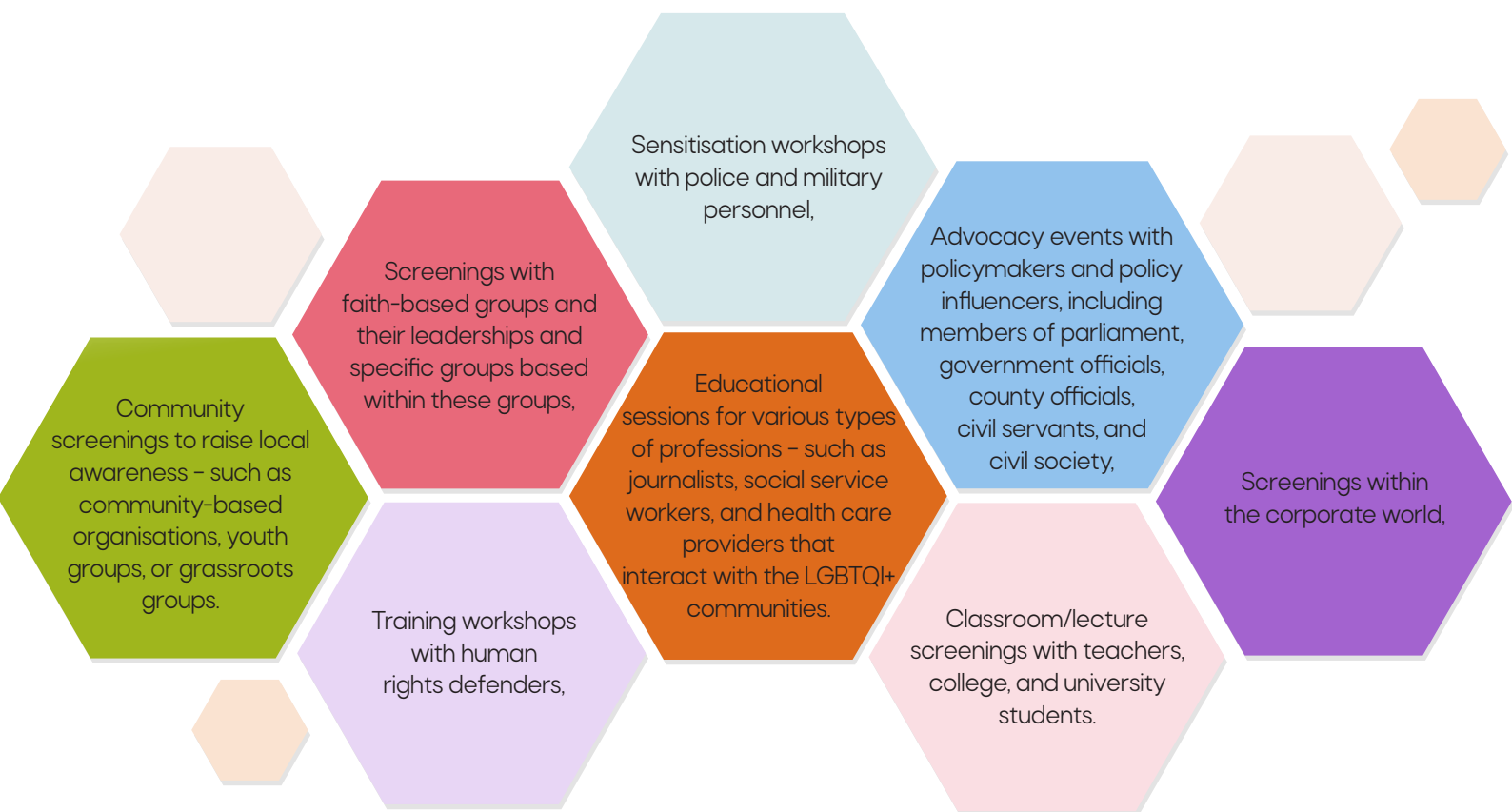
Karibu! Welcome!

This guide is an invitation to create dialogues around a film on a very divisive subject in Kenya, across various parts of the African continent. As you work with this guide, consider it a key to opening minds and shedding light on **homosexuality, bisexuality, and transsexuality or queerness or LGBTQI+ matters**.

It is anticipated that the audience you will be working with will have questions on the correct terms to use, which is what this guide is setting out to do: to inform, educate, and empower.

The purpose of this manual is to stimulate constructive and meaningful conversations, and hopefully action, towards fighting the discrimination being faced by the LGBTQI+ community in Kenya and the wider African continent. Using this guide, the facilitators should feel at liberty to choose and adapt its content to fit their specific needs and audiences.

The guide is intended to accompany screenings of I Am Samuel in a variety of contexts, such as:



We hope that the documentary screening and the conversations that follow will deepen understanding of the conditions under which LGBTQI+ people live in Kenya and other countries where same-sex loving, homosexuality and the different ways of gender identity is either criminalised or stigmatised.

THE CREW



Pete Murimi

Director/Producer

Peter Murimi is an award-winning Kenyan TV documentary director focusing on hard-hitting social issues, from extra-judicial killings to prostitution. He is a recipient of the 2019 Rory Peck Award and the 2004 CNN Africa Journalist of the Year Award. He has worked as producer/director on several documentaries, and “I am Samuel” is his feature directorial debut, filmed verité style for five years in his home country.

“Through my storytelling, I want to empower the people who allow me into their lives to document their stories so that their voices can be heard. It is rare for a poor, uneducated gay man to be given a platform to tell his story from his point of view, particularly in Kenya, where such love is not accepted by society. Although it is not illegal to be queer and to fall in love, homosexual intimacy is criminalised under colonial-era laws. People who identify as queer can’t love or live openly and face the threat of assault, abuse, and discrimination.

In Kenya, money and privilege can buy some privacy and security if you are gay. Many Kenyans are poor and reside in rural areas or informal urban settlements where they cannot afford to hide dangerous secrets like their sexuality. Their voices are unheard, and their issues are rarely discussed in the media or by mainstream policymakers. This film needed to capture the reality of being poor and gay in Kenya – an experience shared by millions of LGBTQ+ people worldwide.”



Toni Kamau

Producer

Toni Kamau is the youngest female African documentary producer to be invited as a member of the Academy for Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences – Documentary Branch, Class of 2020. As a creative producer, director, and founder of “We are not the machine Ltd,” a Kenyan based production company, she tells stories of outsiders, rebels, and change-makers. She has several documentaries to her name that have been aired on Al Jazeera, MTV Europe, and BBC Africa. The Sundance Special Jury Prize winner “Softie,” produced by Toni and directed/produced by Sam Soko, premiered at Sundance Film Festival 2020 in the World Cinema Documentary Feature Competition. “I am Samuel” is her second feature as a producer.

“We live in an incredibly diverse, complex, wondrous world, and there is no greater way to express the wonder of what it means to be human than through the art of documentary storytelling. As a producer committed to diversity and inclusion, I firmly believe that everyone must have the right, freedom, and space to share their authentic lived experiences. But more importantly, it is crucial that we as documentary filmmakers tell their stories with the utmost respect and empathy.

The entire film team behind “I am Samuel” is incredibly grateful to Sam, Alex, their family, and friends for letting us into their lives for over seven years. We hope that their lived experience will have a lasting impact on you and your loved ones, and hopefully start important conversations about queer love, family and affirmation.”



THE KENYAN SCENARIO

The LGBTQI+ community are largely ostracised in Kenya and are often seen as mentally ill, immoral, or un-African. Hate speech from politicians and religious leaders is prevalent and legitimises the violence and discrimination that LGBTQI+ people face from private citizens. Hate crimes against LGBTQI+ people, including mob violence, are common. Therefore, with the criminalisation of homosexual sex, the LGBTQI+ community do not seek police protection for fear of further victimisation, outing, or abuse. The country's Penal Code outlaws 'carnal knowledge against the order of nature and indecent acts between males, whether in public or private.' These acts are punishable with up to 14 year imprisonment.

In 2019, Petition 150 and Petition 234 were brought before the High Court by three organisations: NGLHRC, GALCK & NYARWEK. The petitions asked the court to declare the relevant sections of the Penal Code unconstitutional because they violate various constitutional rights including the right to privacy, freedom of expression, health, human dignity, and the right to freedom from non-discrimination. However, the three-judge bench dismissed the petition, finding that the petitioners failed to convince the court that the clauses were used to discriminate against sexual and gender minorities. The bar insisted that the clauses did not discriminate against sexual minorities or violate their constitutional rights to privacy and equality. The judges also argued that they would, if abolished, open the door to same-sex marriage, which is unconstitutional in Kenya. Organisations immediately mobilised to appeal the judgement, and the Repeal 162 movement is slowly gaining momentum.



A QUEER KENYAN SAFARI

1999

ISHTAR MSM

The first queer organisation in Kenya

2000

CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW PROCESS

A group of gay men present themselves as an interested party in the review process of the Kenyan constitution.

2006

WORLD AIDS DAY

The first-time LGBTQI+ Kenyans are allowed to march in the streets of Nairobi alongside other HIV/AIDS activists.

2007

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

Queer Kenyans make their presence felt at this global civic society event that was held in Nairobi, Kenya. A tent dubbed the Q-Spot conducted talks on homosexuality and engaged with the Kenyan public. Within the community, this is taken to be the birthplace of the movement work in Kenya.

2008

IDAHOBIT

In May, Queer Kenyans placed an advert in the Daily Nation to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia, and Intersex people.

2009

DENIS NZIOKA

An LGBTQI+ and sex worker activist, and who ran Kenya's first safe house for queer persons in 2009, and was the first Kenyan to publicly come out on national television.

CIVIL UNION

Charles Ngengi and his partner, Daniel Chege Gichia, become the first Kenyans to have a civil union in London, the United Kingdom, on October 17.

2012

DAVID KURIA

Kenya's first openly homosexual candidate for public office during the 2012 electoral process.

2014

AUDREY MBUGUA

Kenyan transgender activist who in July 2014 won a court case that gave her group, Transgender Education and Advocacy, the right to be registered with The National Council of NGOs in Kenya. In October 2014, she won another case forcing the Kenya National Examinations Council to change her name on her academic certificates.

BINYAVANGA WAINAINA

Arguably Kenya's most high profile openly gay personality. The acclaimed international writer came out publicly in 2014 with the article, 'I'm a Homosexual, Mum.'

INVISIBLE - STORIES FROM KENYA'S QUEER COMMUNITY

Published in 2014, is an anthology from the country's LGBTQI+ community. Written by Kevin Mwachiro, this book was the first of its kind in the country.

STORIES OF OUR LIVES

Kenyan film, released in 2014. Created by the members of The Nest Collective, a Nairobi-based arts collective, the film is an anthology of five short films dramatising true stories of queer life in Kenya. The movie was

consequently banned by the Kenya Film and Classification Board (KFCB) for promoting homosexuality in March 2015.

2015

NGLHRC

The High Court ruled that the group, the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC), could register with Kenya's NGO board with the words "gay" and "lesbian" in its name.

2016

REPEAL 162

Eric Gitari, an activist who was then the Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC), filed a petition challenging the Penal Code 162-165 that criminalised homosexual sex. The case is popularly known as Repeal 162.

SAME LOVE REMIX

The video by rap artist Art Attack provided a Kenyan take on the popular song Same Love by US singers Macklemore and Ryan Lewis.

2018

ANAL EXAMINATION RULING

In March, a Mombasa based court ruled against a law that required Kenyans to undergo forced anal examinations when suspected of same-sex relations.

RAFIKI

Kenyan drama film directed by Wanuri Kahiu. Rafiki is the story of a romance that grows between two young lesbians. The film had its international premiere at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival and was the first Kenyan film to be screened at this annual event.

2019

RAINBOW FLAG

In December, the rainbow flag is hoisted on top of the highest mountain in the country, Mt Kenya, by a queer activist who was part of a team of human rights defenders who summited the mountain.

TERMINOLOGIES

Ally | A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQI people.

Asexual | The lack of a sexual attraction or desire for other people.

Biphobia | The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, people who love and are sexually attracted to more than one gender.

Bisexual | A person emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender, or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Coming Out | The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

Gay | A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women, and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

Gender dysphoria | Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

Gender expression | External appearance of one's gender identity is usually expressed through behaviour, clothing, body characteristics or voice, and may or may not conform to socially defined behaviours and characteristics typically associated with being masculine or feminine.

Gender identity | How an individual perceives themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender non-conforming | A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

Homophobia | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

Intersex | Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy.

Lesbian | A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

LGBTQI | An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex."

Non-binary | An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in-between, or as falling completely outside these categories.

Outing | Exposing someone's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or gender non-binary identity to others without their permission.

Pansexual | Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously—sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.

Queer | Often used as a catch-all to include the many parts of the LGBTQI+ community. This term was previously used as a slur but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQI+ movement.

Sexual orientation | An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

Transgender | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Transphobia | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who identify themselves as transgender.

Transitioning | A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, physical anatomy, which may consist of hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgeries, and legal transition, including changing legal name and sex on government identity documents.

THE CONVERSATIONS



Immediately after the film, you may want to give the audience a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen, or pose a general question (examples below). Re-emphasise that the space in which this discussion is conducted is safe, secure, inclusive, and respectful of the various expressed views. Highlight language or terms that may not be harmful, derogatory, sexist and othering/excludes a people group. But also, it is important to note; all this could be new territory to some individuals. Offer a space of grace and learning. However, be aware of challenging positions within the room and be prepared to referee or find teaching points.

After the conversation, be sure to leave time to consider what actions can be taken. Planning the next steps can help people leave the room feeling informed, empowered, and hopeful, even under circumstances that may seem complex and uncomfortable.

Here are initial questions that can be asked to the audience to reflect on before being conducted in an open plenary discussion:

- If you were going to tell a friend about this film, what would you say?
- Having watched this film, what was familiar to you and what caught you by surprise?
- What would you tell someone that the movie *I Am Samuel* is not?
- Having watched the film, do you think your perception of the LGBTQI+ community has changed?

Please state your reasons why.



CONVERSATION 1

The Film

(Audience response)

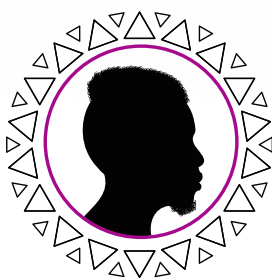
“ The movie was different because it did not show that we are all about trauma, but I was holding my breath for the better half of the movie. There was no absolute tragedy. It ended well. I am happy this movie shows the intersectionalities. ”

AIM: *This is an opportunity to give the audience time to air their thoughts on the movie. It is hoped that everyone will have an opinion or two on what they have seen.*

- Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly striking or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?
- Describe a moment in the movie that made you uncomfortable, and please explain why?
- What question would you pose to the following members of the cast:



Samuel



Alex



Mama Samuel



Baba Samuel

- Were there any points of conflict in the movie that stood out for you, and how do you think they were handled? How would you have handled it?
- What did you also learn about the city of Nairobi, the country, and presumably a culture outside of your comfort zone?
- Are there critical issues that are important to you that the film does not address? What are they?

CONVERSATION 2

Coming Out and Coming Home

(Audience response)

“ This movie shows that the narrative of coming out is not a straight line. It is a little more complex. This story is authentic, and it shows that coming out is a constant conversation. ”

AIM: *This conversation looks at the aspect of coming out to family members, friends, and relatives. It is anticipated that participants will be equipped to create an enabling and safe environment for disclosure around sexuality with family and friends at the end of this discussion.*

- Samuel's mother used the word 'twins' to describe Samuel and Alex. Do you think this was her way of recognising Sam and Alex's relationship? Are there other words that you may have heard that would indicate a similar form of acknowledgement?
- What advice would you give to a parent whose child is LGBTQI+ and has difficulty coming to terms with their child's queerness? (Ask for illustrations from the film).
- Had you ever thought about LGBTQI+ people being parents of the children?
 - o Do you know of any queer parents with children?
 - o Are they any different from other parents?
- There are cases of adults who themselves are hiding their sexuality from their spouses and children. If they came up to you and confided in you, how would you support them?
- What role do you think cultural and religious practices have played in limiting sexuality and expression? Are they mutually exclusive, or can they exist comfortably side by side?
- Do you think the movie has made you more accommodating of individuals from the LGBTQI+ community and individuals who don't seem to fit it in with society?
- Has the movie heightened a sense of empathy within you towards the LGBTQI+ community?



CONVERSATION 3

Allyship

(Samuel)

“ A new name has been added in our home when we pray, jina hilo ni Alex. ”

AIM: *At the end of this discussion, the audience should be made to feel that they, too, have a part to play in fighting discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community. Expose them to low hanging fruit that exist within their spaces.*

- If you overheard someone sharing a misconception about the LGBTQI+ community, do you think you would be able to speak out?
 - Suggest ways bridges can be built between the general society and the LGBTQI+ community.
 - How do you think we can become a more inclusive and respectful country? Please answer with practical steps.
 - How do you think you can agitate for the LGBTQI+ community in the spaces that you occupy?
 - Has this film offered you new ways to think about the LGBTQI+ community?
- o And what are some ways you can see yourself advocating for inclusion, challenging phobic attitudes and remarks, and speaking out on discrimination?



CONVERSATION 4

Group Exercise

If possible, ask the audience to break into responsibly-sized groups that allow for an equal amount of expression and exchange of ideas. Please re-emphasise that the space within which this discussion is taking is safe, secure, inclusive, and respectful of the various expressed views. Re-highlight language or terms that may not be harmful, derogatory, sexist and others/excludes a people group.

Pose the following questions to the group on how to they can take active steps to be allies. Please note that this could be an opportunity to learn or create home-grown solutions and develop suitable cultural and social references that could be beneficial to the movement. As the facilitator, this would be an excellent point to gauge any mind shifts and the feel of the room before offering steps on how to become an ally.

01 How can I tell if someone I know is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer?

02 What should I do if I think someone is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but they have not told me?

03 How do I make myself more approachable to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?

04 What kinds of things might a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender go through when coming out?

05 If someone wants advice on what to tell their roommate, friends, or family about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, how can I help?

06 How should I respond to heterosexual friends or co-workers who feel negatively about LGBTQI+ persons in the office, my social circles, or other networks that I am a part of?

07 How can I support LGBTQI+ people without my sexual orientation becoming an issue?

08 How can I respond to people who object to LGBTQI+ people for religious reasons?

09 How can I respond to homophobic and transphobic attitudes?



BUILDING ALLIES

As the facilitator, you can offer these suggested responses to the questions on allyship.

1

How can I tell if someone I know is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer?

- Assumptions can be misleading. The critical thing to remember is that it is likely that someone you interact with may be queer and try to be sensitive to that fact. There isn't one type of queer.

2

What should I do if I think someone is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, but they have not told me?

- Create an atmosphere where that individual can feel comfortable being open with you. Present yourself as open and approachable by indicating that you are comfortable with this topic and supportive of the community. Make known you are available to listen.
- If the person is already out to themselves and feels that you are worthy of their trust, they may tell you. Also note, that they may not have told you because they do not want you to know.

3

If someone wants advice on what to tell their housemates, friends, or family about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, how can I help?

- The individual must decide when and to whom they will reveal their sexual orientation or gender identity. Listen carefully. Reflect on the concerns and feelings you hear being expressed. Ask them whether they have considered issues surrounding their safety and security and the consequences of coming out. This is still Kenya!
- Go online and see what local resources are available that can be helpful to both of you.

4

How should I respond to heterosexual relatives, friends or co-workers who feel negatively about a person who is LGBTQI+ either at home, work, church, school, college, university, relations, and family?

- Speak to the person. Sometimes even privately - but speak. Help them see that they are talking about a person, not just a sexual orientation/gender identity. Have adequate information to appropriately discuss the myths and stereotypes that often underlie such adverse reactions. Highlight the similarities between LGBTQI+ people and heterosexual people. Be clear with others that while they have a right to their own beliefs and opinions, you will not tolerate such comments or discrimination.

5

How can I support LGBTQI+ people without my sexual orientation becoming an issue?

- Are you ready to be guilty by association? Take time in advance to think through how you might respond to this. It is, however, rewarding.

6

How can I support LGBTQI+ people without my sexual orientation becoming an issue?

- The religious and moral argument is often used against the community. Therefore, make sure you do not get boxed into arguments based on references that are often taken out of context. Tap into their humanity. It can be helpful to point out that identifying as a religious person is not necessarily incompatible with supporting LGBTQI+ people. There is a great deal of diversity among the religious communities regarding beliefs about same-gender sexuality and trans identities. There are several LGBTQI+ individuals in Kenya whose faith is an integral part of their lives.

Hopefully, after watching the film, the un-African argument against homosexuality will not arise. However, if it does come, it would be a good time to reflect on the movie once again and reference the lives of other Kenyan and African members of the community who are openly queer.



BECOMING AN ALLY

The facilitator can offer these guidelines to assist the audience in becoming allies of the queer community.

- ✱ Please note that coming out to others can be an anxious process. The individual worries about rejection, ridicule, exposure to violence, and the possible loss of family, friends, home, education, employment, and societal standing. Furthermore, many within the community may have or still experience feelings of guilt, isolation, depression, suicidal feelings, and low self-esteem.
- ✱ Be knowledgeable of the language used. Try to learn for yourself, and if you are unsure of something, ask for clarification.
- ✱ Use inclusive language, and do not be dismissive of terms or language that the community uses.
- ✱ Call out, speak out and report homo/bi/ transphobic statements that you hear or read online. Be a role model by confronting others who make homo/bi/transphobic jokes or remarks. Use your position of privilege/influence/straightness.
- ✱ For most trans people, however, coming out is not the ultimate goal. Many trans people strongly identify as a man or a woman and simply want to be recognised as a man or woman. So, use their name and pronoun.
- ✱ It is not your business to out someone. It is your business to be respectful of each one's journey.

RESOURCES

ORGANIZATIONS

Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya

<https://www.galck.org/>

INEND

<https://www.inend.org/>

ISHTAR MSM

<https://www.ishtarmsm.org/>

JINSINAGU

<https://jinsiangu.org/>

National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

<https://www.nglhrc.com/>

None On Record

<https://www.noneonrecord.com/>

PEMA KENYA

<https://pemakenya.org/>

SUGGESTED ONLINE RESOURCES

Africa is Queer

<https://www.okayafrica.com/to-be-gay-and-african-in-2020/>

Afroqueer Podcast

<https://afroqueerpodcast.com/about-us/>

Bisi Alimi Article

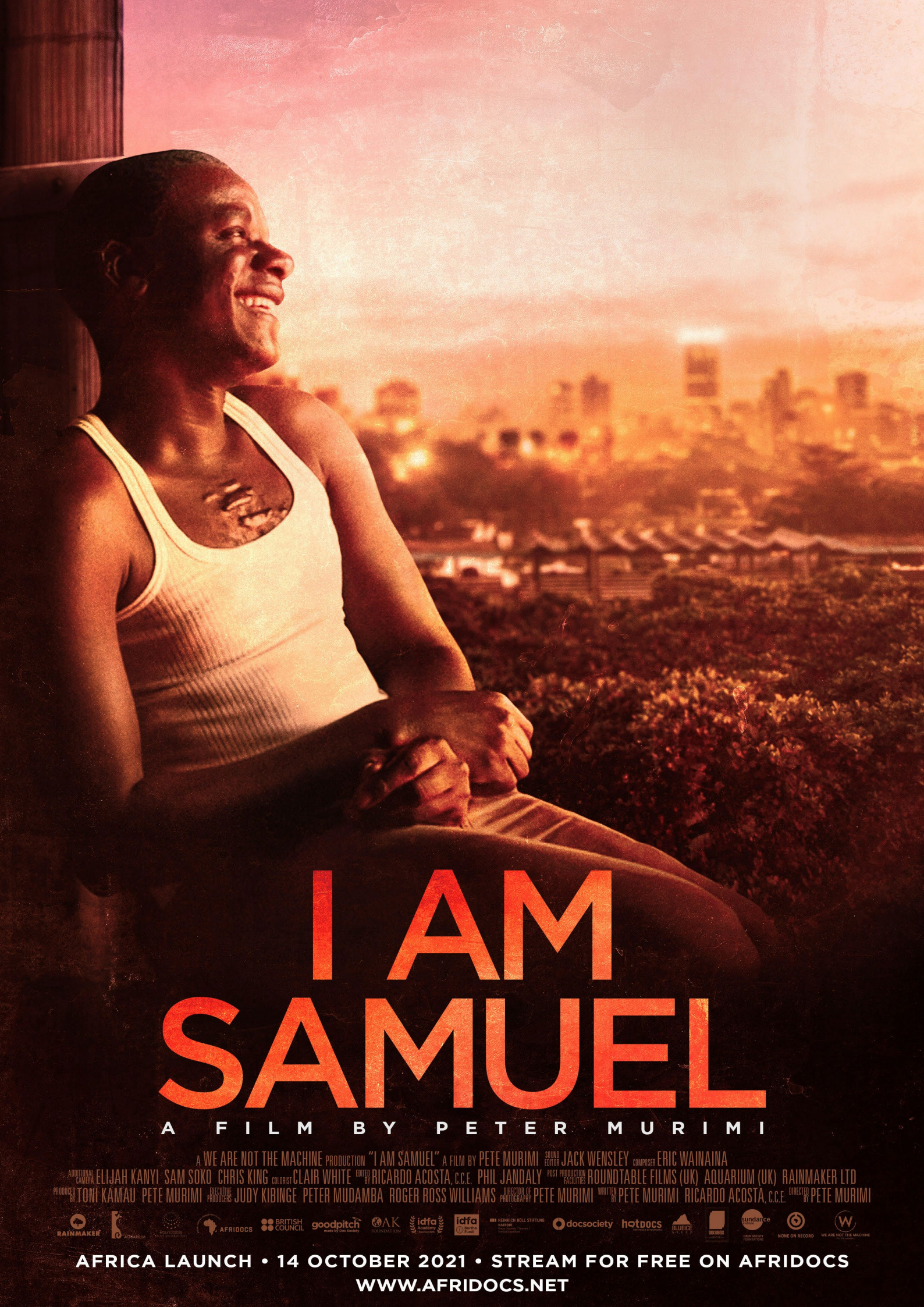
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/09/being-gay-african-history-homosexuality-christianity>

Forging Paths for the African Queer

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-african-law/article/forging-paths-for-the-african-queer-is-there-an-african-mechanism-for-realizing-lgbtiq-rights/E1CA925A8742E229C7DB42B63D5B76E6>

Six LGBTQI+ African Figures from history

<https://africasacountry.com/2020/07/six-lgbtq-figures-from-african-history>



I AM SAMUEL

A FILM BY PETER MURIMI

ADDITIONAL CAMERA ELIJAH KANYI SAM SOKO CHRIS KING COLORIST CLAIR WHITE EDITED BY RICARDO ACOSTA, C.C.E. PHIL JANDALY POST PRODUCTION FACILITIES ROUNDTABLE FILMS (UK) AQUARIUM (UK) RAINMAKER LTD
PRODUCED BY TONI KAMAU PETE MURIMI EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS JUDY KIBINGE PETER MUDAMBA ROGER ROSS WILLIAMS DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PETE MURIMI WRITTEN BY PETE MURIMI RICARDO ACOSTA, C.C.E. DIRECTED BY PETE MURIMI



AFRICA LAUNCH • 14 OCTOBER 2021 • STREAM FOR FREE ON AFRIDOCs
WWW.AFRIDOCs.NET