



National Black Justice Collective

Post Office Box 71395
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www.NBJC.org

His Excellency John Dramani Mahama
President of the Republic of Ghana
Jubilee House
Accra, Ghana

Your Excellency,

We write to you today on Juneteenth — a date that marks not the arrival of freedom, but the long delay of it. A date that reminds us that liberation declared is not liberation delivered, and that freedom, when it comes, must come for all of us, or it is not yet free.

We write to you as members of the African diaspora. As descendants of those who were stolen. As people who have watched Ghana stand tall on the world stage and call the nations to account for the transatlantic slave trade, for centuries of theft, and for the generational wound that will not close without repair. We have been proud of that leadership. We have felt its pull. Many of us have answered the invitation to return — and many more of us were preparing to.

We write to you now because that pride is in tension with grief. And because in our tradition, love speaks — even when the truth is hard.

On the Legislation Before You

Ghana is currently considering legislation that would criminalize Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+/Same-Gender Loving (LGBTQ+/SGL) people — imposing penalties, surveillance, and imprisonment on Ghanaian citizens for who they are and who they love. We are asking you, with urgency and with love, not to pass the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill, 2025.

We want to be precise about something: the legal frameworks undergirding this legislation are not indigenous to African culture. Anti-sodomy laws and criminalization statutes were tools of British colonialism, imposed on African societies as part of a broader project of domination and cultural erasure. To enforce these laws is not to honor African tradition — it is to honor the legacy of the colonizer. The reparations movement, which Ghana has championed, calls us to dismantle that legacy. We cannot dismantle it selectively.

Historians, anthropologists, and African scholars have documented the existence of gender and sexual diversity across precolonial African societies. Being LGBTQ+/SGL is not a Western imposition; the criminalization is.



On the Reparations Contradiction

Ghana has been a moral leader in the global push for reparations. The Year of Return and Beyond the Return were not merely tourism campaigns — they were declarations of kinship. They said to millions of displaced Africans across the world: *you are still ours. Come home.*

We received that invitation. It moved us. It changed us. Some of us came. Many more of us wanted to.

But Black LGBTQ+/SGL people across the diaspora — in the United States, the Caribbean, Brazil, Europe, and beyond — are now asking a question we should never have to ask:

Does the invitation include us?

A reparations movement that excludes queer and transgender Africans and diaspora members is a partial movement — and our people know too much about partial freedom to accept it without grief. You cannot call the world to account for the dehumanization of African people while simultaneously legislating against the humanity of queer Africans. Moral authority is not divisible. It does not hold on the world stage while collapsing at home.

On the Economic and Diaspora Cost

We also want to name what is rarely named in these conversations: the economic cost of exclusion.

Black LGBTQ+/SGL travelers represent a meaningful and largely undercounted segment of diaspora tourism. These are people with deep ancestral ties to the continent, hunger for connection, and the financial means to invest in the communities they visit. They were among those most moved by the Year of Return — not as casual tourists, but as people seeking their roots.

Many have now quietly removed Ghana from their travel plans, not out of political protest, but out of fear for their physical safety. That fear is legitimate. And it is a direct consequence of the legislative direction Ghana's government is pursuing.

The loss is not only economic. It is relational, spiritual, and generational. Ghana stands to lose the full return of a diaspora it invited home — and that loss will compound over time.



On the Witness of Saint Pauli Murray

We cannot write this letter without invoking a name that belongs to this moment as much as any living voice.

The Reverend Dr. Pauli Murray — poet, priest, legal architect, and prophet before their time — stood at the intersection of African liberation and queer dignity long before the rest of the world had language for either. Dr. Murray lived and loved outside the boundaries of what their era would sanction, writing privately of a gender identity and romantic life that did not fit the boxes assigned to them, and whom many scholars today recognize as transgender or gender nonconforming. And yet, this same queer, gender-expansive Black American was called to serve Ghana's founding moment. It was Dr. Murray who authored the first textbook on Ghana's constitution and taught the first course on Ghanaian law — pouring their brilliance into the legal infrastructure of a nation that had just done something the modern world had never seen: become the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to break free from British colonial rule.

Dr. Murray understood the magnitude of Ghana's freedom. They chose to serve it fully, even as their own full self could not yet be seen or named.

The Episcopal Church, recognizing the sweep of that life and witness, has since canonized Dr. Murray as a saint — Saint Pauli Murray, whose feast day is observed each year less than two weeks from now on July 1st, whose legacy now belongs to the communion of those the Church calls holy.

Saint Pauli Murray helped write the legal foundation of Ghana's freedom. Ghana is now considering legislation that would have made Murray a criminal. That is the wound within the wonder. We do not believe Ghana has fully reckoned with that irony. We are asking you to.

Our Appeal

We are not your adversaries. We are your family — scattered by the same violence, shaped by the same history, sustained by the same hope for repair.

We are calling on Ghana's leadership — in the executive and in civil society — to:

- **Reject** the criminalization legislation in all its forms
- **Protect** LGBTQ+ Ghanaians from state and community violence
- **Extend** the homecoming invitation to all members of the diaspora, without condition
- **Lead** — not only in demanding repair from the world, but in modeling repair within your own borders



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The Adinkra symbol *Funtunfunefu Denkyemfunefu* — the two crocodiles sharing one stomach — carries this teaching: though we may compete and conflict, we share a common destiny. What nourishes one, nourishes all. What poisons one, poisons all.

Ghana — your LGBTQ+ citizens share your stomach. Your diaspora shares your stomach. We are bound by the same history, the same wound, the same hope. You cannot legislate some of us into disappearing without diminishing all of us.

We are watching. We are hoping. We are still, despite everything, reaching toward you.

With respect, love, grief, and an unbroken belief in repair,

Adjoa A. Aiyetoro

Adrienne George, Founcer, Black Women in Europe Social Media Group

Akiko Cooks, Executive Director, No Racism in Schools #1865

Aliya White

Andre' White

Betty Ruth Lozano

The Braxton Institute for Sustainability, Resiliency and Joy!

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We Are Revolutionary

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