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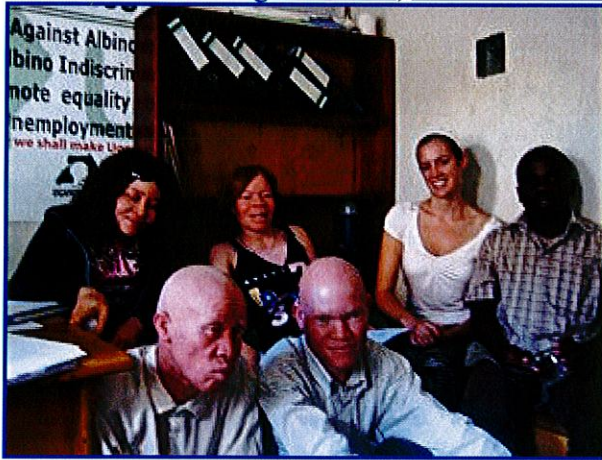
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Written on May 21, 2010 at 2:56 AM by [Barry Comer](#)

The Human Rights Case of Persons with Albinism in Uganda

Filed under [Creating Solutions](#), [Culture & History](#), [Education & Family](#) [7 comments](#)



Members of the Uganda Albino Association

In the temperate cycle between evening and twilight, Ugandan families prepare dinner. Living to the cycle of seasons and nature's clock, there is a quiet pace that breaks the sounds of day. Chickens and goats are settling down, the air becomes more still and windows glow with an evening light. The daytime sounds in the neighborhood are folding into evening's blanket.

In this part of Africa, situational expressions resemble the possibility of a more harmonious life replete. Without the distractions of the Mediterranean north, the validation of life in many homes is family. The simplicity of our perspective is natural among the artificial streaming sofa digitized life. Without context and tactile, we have beaten the mysterious, the gentle beast back into secure remission.

In Uganda, many things are as they seem and naturally pointed out. "If you are American, you are referred to as American. If you are Arab or Japanese, someone will remind you in referenced conversation" – Kelly Allen, [Beloit College](#). Although politically incorrect to a Western ear, there is an unashamed documentation of the outsider.

Spending four months among any population creates a heightened sensitivity. For Allen, it became a learning experience that tasted another society within the melange. Her research-driven experience revealed a race within a race, and a people marginalized to fringes and distance. Her paper "Oppression Through Omission: The Human Rights Case of Persons with Albinism in Uganda" is the coordinated research of interviews, dedicated peoples and passion to "throw light into dark".

Ms. Allen describes the myth and mythology of Albinism saying, "The overarching theme of myths and misconceptions associated with albinism is the idea that a child with albinism was a demon or a curse. Similar to beliefs surrounding persons with disabilities, it is not uncommon for an albino child to be considered a curse from God, placed on the family for something bad the family had done. Another suggested source of the child could be that the ghost of a colonialist impregnated the mother. In a similar vein, sometimes a father will assume that the mother has cheated on him with a white man. Outside of the family, a common myth surrounding albino persons is that they don't die, they disappear. Children are taught to run from albino persons; 'An Albino will eat you up!' "

"When a group is defined as anything less than human, acts of discrimination become acceptable."

She continues, “Tanzania and other neighboring countries share similar beliefs surrounding Albinism as Uganda, which have allowed witchdoctors in these countries to exploit these superstitions in order to pursue their own economic gains.” “When a group is defined as anything less than human, acts of discrimination become acceptable. The most devastating construct in Tanzania and Burundi is the myth that certain body parts of an albino person can bring wealth.”



Tanzanian Children
With Albinism

“So far, Uganda has yet to have any documented cases of albino persons being killed for the purposes of witchcraft. However, it is highly feasible that the trend will carry over into Uganda, where they are considered a bit sub-human”, Allen concludes. However, Earl Morningstarr of [The Morningstarr online](#) news magazine reports that trials have recently begun in Tanzania. In the past few months, as many as forty albinos have been savagely murdered. Witch doctors use their skin, bones and genitals for ritualistic purposes or fetishes. From businessmen to a Ghanaian politician, albinos are believed to help make the “owner” rich and successful.

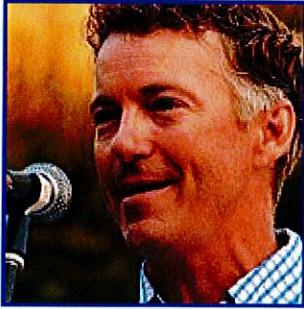


Kelly Allen - Uganda
2010

Progressively articulated by France’s “[Déclaration des droits de l’Homme et du Citoyen](#)” in 1789 and furthered globally by the “[Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(UDHR\)](#) 1948, protection for all peoples are affirmed as a fundamental right. In Uganda “[The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda \(NUDIPU\)](#), 1987”, speaks directly to the stigmas, profiling and segregation of peoples with albinism. However neither of these contemporary “articles of faith” have created the persuasive argument or political will to legislate.

Legislation becomes an imperative when the cause affects everyone and not the few. People such as Tanzanian journalist [Vicky Ntetema](#)’s exposés have helped to establish a political groundwork. [The International Women’s Media Foundation \(IWMF\)](#) has announced in Washington, D.C., that she will receive one of its 2010 “Courage in Journalism Awards” at a ceremony later this year.

Ironically, the protection of human rights is often challenged because of exclusivity.



Rand Paul

Courageous behavior is not an exclusive right owned by a group, gender or person. Ironically, the protection of human rights is often challenged because of exclusivity. During the current primary election cycle in the United States, Libertarian candidate Rand Paul is stirring national attention by challenging aspects of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Interviewed by [Rachel Maddow](#), Paul would not answer her question whether he would have voted for federal legislation outlawing segregation in private workplaces. His responses were undisciplined, sheering into cloudy arguments using First Amendment rights as cover. Libertarian without the wiser interpretation of his father, Congressman Ron Paul is a reminder that many moments of courage need to exist – universally.

Comparing the United States' political system and Uganda's social ambiguity is not inconsistent nor a dramatic pause. The relevance stuns the imagination, bridging points between developed and developing nations. Although socially and historically different, the U.S. and Uganda demonstrate that disparate peoples share a common bond in the social network. If the point is taken to another corner of debate, all are vulnerable when some challenge reason for political or social gain.

There is serious need for immediate action...

Ms. Allen concludes by writing, "The ambiguity and general ignorance surrounding the condition of albinism, specifically in Uganda, causes gross violations of human rights from both the public and private sphere, which prevent access to resources and perpetuate a state of neglect and abuse among persons with albinism. There is serious need for immediate action to be taken, particularly in regards to education and general advocacy regarding albinism in East Africa. There must be an accepted definition and understanding of the condition, which requires accurate and official information that is both quantitative and qualitative."

Her research is impactful and demonstrates the clarity of a curious and intellectual mind. The conversation and parenting of our world's peoples has never been more accessible. The willingness to challenge the heart is debatable.

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