



## Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality

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### For immediate release

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***NB: Individual interviews can be arranged on the phone, in person or via satellite.***

## Saint Lucia continues to uphold dangerous and discriminatory laws against marginalised populations

**(Castries, April 4, 2018)** Saint Lucia - a former British Colony which attained independence in 1979; maintains its adopted constitution that continues to discriminate and marginalise women, children and the gay and lesbian community. Meanwhile, Great Britain is a leader in the equality movement, having eliminated all laws that discriminated against vulnerable groups.

Further, Great Britain has allocated substantial funding through the [Equality & Justice Alliance](#), to work closely with former colonies to amend, reform and create laws that equally protect every citizen. Saint Lucia has fully committed to this process, which was presented at the most recent Heads of Commonwealth meeting in London last year. To date, despite witnessing firsthand the destruction and dehumanisation these post-colonial laws permit, the Government of Saint Lucia has failed to start the conversation on amending old laws and enacting new legislation to create a more equitable society.

Women and girls face discrimination from entrance into school, where patriarchal gender norms are reinforced by teachers and a community that discourages education and involvement in certain areas of endeavour, particularly \*STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and sport. The few notable examples have fought, and are still fighting, an uphill battle for inclusion, recognition and equal pay.

Women and girls are at additional risk of poverty, sexual harassment/violence and domestic abuse, when made vulnerable due to lack of family planning options, early pregnancies, and lack of social support systems. These hamper their ability to engage fully in the workforce and provide emotional and financial support for their families.

Gay and lesbian youth are likewise discriminated against and bullied. Many therefore hide their identity and live in isolation and fear. These youth are more likely to suffer serious health effects, including depression, anxiety and suicide and are more likely to drop out of school, which has a lifelong effect on their earnings. Youth who are openly gay/transgender or perceived to be gay, experience violence, death and suicide as a consequence.

These discriminatory laws continue to feed the ingrained negative social attitudes towards women, children and LGBT persons and necessitate the avoidance strategies they employ for fear of being assault-

ed, threatened, harassed or killed. It also increases the difficulty for human rights groups who risk being accused of destroying the family unit or “recruiting” young people into homosexuality.

It's shocking to realise that in 2019, we have no anti-discrimination laws to protect women, children and the LGBTQ community. The time is now to protect Saint Lucians equally. Updating our laws to help end unfair discrimination is long overdue.

We (***United & Strong, the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity & Equality & Raise Your Voice Saint Lucia Inc***) stand together to offer safe spaces, mentoring, counselling and other critical support to women, children, and the LGBTQI community in need. Contact us at 4500976, 4509498 and 7234227 or reach out to us on social media.

Meanwhile, we ask our elected officials to remember to love their neighbour, to protect the vulnerable among us, to see that we are all created in God's image, that we are all one. Religious freedom is one of the founding values of our nation but is not a license to discriminate.

— ENDS —

Find photos of media contacts here: [Press photos](#)

Find related video from Caribbean LGBTQ advocacy here: [ECADE on YouTube](#)

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**United and Strong Saint Lucia Inc.** is a member organisation of ECADE, with the vision of equality and human rights for all and working to eliminate stigma and discrimination, reduce inequality and protect human rights and lives.

Learn more at [www.unitedandstrong.wordpress.com](http://www.unitedandstrong.wordpress.com) or email [unitedandstrongslu@gmail.com](mailto:unitedandstrongslu@gmail.com)

**Raise Your Voice Saint Lucia Inc.** is a member organisation of ECADE, which advocates for and on behalf of victims of gender based violence and for improvements within the social, judicial and public systems that affect women and children.

Learn more at <http://www.ryvslu.org> or email [raiseyourvoiceslu@gmail.com](mailto:raiseyourvoiceslu@gmail.com)

**The Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality Inc. (ECADE)** is a network of organisations working across the eastern Caribbean. Drawing on The Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law”, ECADE works to increase the competence of activists and conscientise the people of the eastern Caribbean for the advancement of LGBTQI and marginalised populations in the region.

Learn more at [www.ecequality.org](http://www.ecequality.org) or email [info@ecequality.org](mailto:info@ecequality.org)

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