

Queer Sexualities and the Reconstruction of Alternative Modes of Being in Kenyan Society in the Film *Rafiki*

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Abstract

The government of Kenya, through the Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB), has sustained a war against screening and promoting locally and internationally produced films featuring queer social imaginaries in the country. In 2014 and 2018, KFCB banned two locally produced films, *The Stories of Our Lives* and *Rafiki*, largely because these films were seen as valorising queer sexualities. The ban triggered animated debates regarding the triad of artistic freedom, censorship and the country's moral compass. Consequently, persons leading queer lives are compelled to operate within various liminal spaces as a way of subverting hostility from the public. Focusing on *Rafiki*, this article explores how the filmmaker reconstructs alternative modes of being in society by portraying practices through which queer individuals claim and inhabit social spaces in Kenya. By representing the livability of queer lifestyles, the filmmaker not only confronts conventional moralities but also spurs debate on the future of queer individuals in Kenyan society.

Key words: liminal spaces; livability; queer film; queer social imaginaries; representation; visibilisation