

= Murder of Lenford Harvey =

Lenford " Steve " Harvey was a Jamaican activist who campaigned for the rights of those living with HIV / AIDS in Jamaican society . In November 2005 he was abducted from his home and murdered in a robbery that some commentators believed was also a homophobic hate crime . Openly gay , Harvey had worked for Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL) since 1997 , becoming the group 's coordinator for Kingston . In this position , he focused on distributing information and services surrounding HIV / AIDS to the most marginalised sectors of Jamaican society , among them prisoners , sex workers , and lesbian , gay , bisexual , and transgender (LGBT) people . In 2005 , he was selected as the Latin America and Caribbean Council of AIDS Service Organizations ' project coordinator for Jamaica .

In November 2005 , three men carrying guns broke into his home , removing any valuables . They asked if he was gay , and when he refused to respond they kidnapped him , later shooting him dead and dumping the body elsewhere . The police subsequently arrested four individuals and charged them with murder in the furtherance of a robbery . The accused remained in police custody for almost ten years before the case came to court . At that point , the police dropped their murder charges against two of the accused . The other two , Dwayne Owen and Andrew West , went on trial and were found unanimously guilty of murder by a jury . Although prosecutors had requested capital punishment in the case , the judge sentenced them to life in prison with a minimum of thirty years before becoming eligible for parole .

= = Background = =

= = = Harvey 's biography = = =

In 1997 , Harvey became involved with Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL) , an organisation that was a partner of Christian Aid . He became the group 's Kingston co -oordinator , and in this position primarily worked to ensure that the marginalised groups within the country ? including prisoners , sex workers , and lesbian , gay , bisexual , and transgender (LGBT) people ? had access to information about the HIV / AIDS virus . He was selected as Jamaica 's representative at the Latin America and Caribbean Council of AIDS Service Organizations . He was also a registered delegate to the conference of the People 's National Party . In the week preceding his death , Harvey led JASL 's annual candle @-@ lit vigil in memory of those who had died as a result of AIDS .

= = = Anti @-@ LGBT sentiment in Jamaica = = =

In 2006 , Time magazine asked whether Jamaica was " the most homophobic place on Earth " , and answered that it " may be the worst offender " . The country 's laws criminalising same @-@ sex activity between males were introduced in 1864 , during the British colonial administration . According to the Sexual Offences Act of 2009 , any man convicted under these laws must register as a sex offender . These laws have been cited as contributing to wider homophobic attitudes among the Jamaican populace , including the view that gay people are criminals regardless of whether or not they have committed any crime . Anti @-@ LGBT perspectives have been furthered by the island 's conservative Christian churches . Many reggae and dancehall songs , among them Buju Banton 's " Boom Bye Bye " , call for the killing of gays . Writing for the International Business Times in the summer of 2013 , the journalist Palash Gosh noted that while Jamaica was " awash in crime and violence , gays and lesbians are particularly prominent targets of wanton brutality . " In the summer of 2013 , Human Rights Watch carried out five weeks of fieldwork among Jamaica 's LGBT community , reporting that over half of those interviewed had experienced violence as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity , sometimes on more than one occasion .

= = Murder = =

On the night of Wednesday 30 November 2005 , three armed men broke into Harvey 's home , confronting him and his two roommates and demanding money . The intruders said " We hear that you are gay " and while the two room mates denied this , Harvey ? who was openly gay ? remained silent . The two room mates were bound and gagged while Harvey was forced to carry valuables to the criminal 's car . At gunpoint , they forced him into the car and abducted him .

Two hours later , Harvey 's corpse was found at Pinewood Terrace , a rural area far from his home ; his body had gunshot wounds in the head and back . Harvey 's clothes , suitcases , jewellery , cellphones , and watches were recovered by police . Reporter Gary Younge expressed the view that the killing " appears to have been a homophobic attack " , while an editorial in The New York Times noted that " the Harvey killing has the earmarks of a hate crime " .

= = = Arrest and trial = = =

Following investigations , in 2005 police arrested four individuals ? Dwayne Owen , Andrew West , Ryan Wilson , and Chevaughn Gibson ? charging them all with committing murder in the furtherance of a robbery . The accused were from an area known as Vietnam in Grant 's Pen . Defence lawyers repeatedly complained that the prosecution had been late in handing over relevant documents to them .

The case was brought before the Home Circuit Court on April 24 , 2014 , however it could not proceed because important documents had not been served on the defence . The witnesses for the case , who included ten police officers and two civilians , were bound over . Senior Puisne Judge Gloria Smith stated that no further adjournments of the case would be permitted , ordering the Director of Public Prosecutions to make full disclosure to the defence , and insisting that the trial must start on May 19 . In her words , " This case has been going on for far too long and has reached the point where something must happen . " However , on that date the trial was postponed again due to the unavailability of a courtroom , being rescheduled for June 1 . At that date it was again postponed , this time due to a shortage of available jurors , with the new date being set for July 7 .

In early July 2014 , the prosecution announced that they were dropping all charges against Wilson , who was declared free to go after over eight years in prison . They had determined that at the time of the murder he had been in custody at the Constant Spring Police Station . The prosecution also stated that it was dropping the murder charges against Gibson , who would instead be charged with misprision of felony . After a three week trial , in late July a twelve @-@ person jury unanimously found both Owen and West guilty of murder . The state prosecutors , Kathy Pryce and Karen Seymour Johnson , requested that Owen and West face the death penalty . However , in November Justice Lloyd Hibbert sentenced them to life in prison , stipulating that they must serve a minimum of thirty years before becoming eligible for parole . He stated that in sentencing the pair he took into account the fact that they had already spent a decade in custody . In December , both Owen and West launched appeals against their conviction .

Independently of the Harvey case , West was also charged with being involved in the murder of Jamie Lue , a financial analyst at Alliance Capital Limited , who had been abducted , robbed and killed in December 2005 .

= = Reaction = =

In December 2005 , the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV / AIDS (UNAIDS) issued a statement expressing the view that " Harvey 's death is a profound shock and loss not only to the AIDS movement in Jamaica and the Caribbean , but to the whole world " , furthermore calling on the Jamaican government to ensure that Harvey 's killers be found and convicted . Rebecca Schleifer , a researcher with Human Rights Watch 's HIV / AIDS and Human Rights Program , stated that Harvey was " a person of extraordinary bravery and integrity , who worked tirelessly to ensure that some of Jamaica 's most marginalized people had the tools and information to protect themselves

from HIV / AIDS " .

According to Peter Tatchell of the British LGBT rights organisation OutRage ! , " It is thanks to the efforts of Steve and his colleagues that many Jamaican men and women - both gay and straight - have not contracted HIV . They have helped save hundreds of lives . " The Guyanese Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination issued a press release condemning Harvey 's killing and calling for the perpetrators to be convicted .