



KIMAHLI POWELL

Born: Canada

Organisation: Rainbow Railroad

Kimahli Powell has been advocating for human rights for over 20 years, including for young people, the African/Caribbean/Black community, people affected by AIDS and for the LGBT+ community.

holds a degree from the University of Ottawa and an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Victoria, and before becoming the executive director of Rainbow Railroad - an organisation that helps LGBTQ+ people emigrate to Canada from countries where homosexuality is illegal - he worked for the HIV Legal Network, where he helped launch a challenge to Jamaica's anti-sodomy laws.

"I've been invested in social justice for most of my career. But my own background gives me an affinity for Rainbow Railroad. Although I'm a cisgender gay male who was born in Canada, my parents were from Jamaica, a country that criminalises same-sex intimacy. I both understand the privilege that comes with being born in Canada, as well as the risks that are associated with being in a country that criminalises same-sex relationships. So that, and a real desire to tackle the challenges that we face globally, is why I really invested in Rainbow Railroad."
(Human Rights Watch, January 2022)

Powell has helped over 4,000 LGBTQ+ refugees since becoming executive director of Rainbow Railroad. In 2021, the organisation received over 8,500 requests for help.

In 2019, Powell received the Steinert and Ferreiro Award, which recognises LGBTQ+ leadership in Canada, and has been named in Out Magazine's annual Out100 list of influential LGBTQ+ people.

"We don't exist because we feel that people have to flee. If people want to relocate to another country, there are many immigration pathways that they can use. Usually, people reach out to us because they have no choice. And so, I truly believe and hope that we have a society where everyone can live without persecution wherever they want. And there are times when things are not looking great. So, it's a long journey. But until everyone has human rights wherever they live, we exist to provide support for those who have no other choice." *(EBANMAN, April 2022)*