# Challenges and Inclusivity at Lagos Fashion Week Amid Intolerance Towards LGBTQ Community



Lagos Fashion Week has been a prominent event in the African fashion industry since its inception in 2011. It serves as a biannual showcase that attracts top design houses, major sponsors, and international audiences. Despite Nigeria’s conservative and deeply religious environment where LGBTQ people face significant intolerance and violence, Lagos Fashion Week has historically functioned as an inclusive space for marginalized communities.

Nigerian labels like Orange Culture and Maxivive have used the event to challenge gender norms and address issues of sexuality and identity through their fashion. However, increasing hostility towards non-binary and gay people has threatened this inclusivity.

In 2014, Nigeria enacted the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA), which bans gay marriage, same-sex relationships, and gay rights groups, with severe penalties. This law has influenced the fashion industry, leading to incidents like the cancellation of Maxivive’s Spring-Summer 2023 show, allegedly for being "too gay."

The event has faced internal pressure, leading some labels, such as Tzar Studios and Weiz Dhurm Franklyn, to hold underground private shows to maintain free expression away from the official event's constraints. Despite setbacks, these private presentations allow the continuation of inclusive and boundary-pushing fashion.

Prominent figures like Kayode Timileyin, the founder of Queercity Media, continue to advocate for greater inclusivity in fashion. Still, challenges remain, as evidenced by the backlash against transgender model Fola Francis and other non-binary models who participated in previous shows but faced discrimination.

Lagos Fashion Week representatives have not responded to requests for comment on these issues.