Within the rhetoric of anti-/gay sentiments transacted between the Jamaican state, its popular culture Dancehall and international gay rights critics lies a discourse of race, internationalism and sex/uality. Implicated also in this conflict is a decided fear of the ‘other’ – whether from the metropolitan ‘gay loving west’ and, or the backward provincialism of the ‘darkened natives’ of the ‘Global South’. Jamaica could benefit from a more balanced articulation of its objections – moral and otherwise, to certain explicit representations of homosexuality; that is, in the wider contexts of the need for international cooperation and diplomacy in its own self interests. Thus, while, it is certainly not the intent of this paper to suggest a radical overhaul in cultural attitudes towards difference in Jamaica it is by no means ruled out.

However, of greater concern here is a call for tolerance which foregrounds recognition of the extent to which blockades presented to Jamaica’s tourism and popular culture are not pure in their intent. Through a desk top survey/analysis of recent discussions surrounding Jamaica’s Charter of Rights and Prime Minister Bruce Golding’s announcement on British TV that ‘gays are not part of his Cabinet’ and, more contemporarily, the controversy which erupted between Reggae artiste Buju Banton and the United States gay lobby, this paper explores some key strategies aimed at facilitating tolerance in Jamaica. In addition, through a select analysis of specialist interviews this paper also aims to unpack some of the longstanding and vexed issues of race relations, power, international access and perceived xenophobia internalized and expressed as fear of the ‘other’. Thereby, suggesting that Jamaica urgently needs to alter its current position in its quarrel with the international gay lobby.

Key words: gay, Jamaica, discourse, ‘batty-boy’, Dancehall, Trans-national, identities