There is an ethical code humans have. It is not something we are necessarily born with; however, it is developed over time throughout adolescence into adulthood. It is simply a sense of right and wrong. We have a decision to make when we find ourselves in a situation that challenges that. We can go against our code or we can do what we believe is according to our ethics, the right thing. When something goes against our ethics and infringes upon the rights of others, we must do something, but that takes courage. Combine ethics with courage and it is moral courage, which is much greater than standing in the face of adversity or protesting evil. Moral courage is standing up for what one believes in when there is nothing to gain and possibly everything to lose. A person who would risk his/her life for the freedom to be who he/she is without fear and sacrifice everything so others can do the same has moral courage. Frank Mugisha exemplifies that definition.

Frank Mugisha is an openly gay man in Uganda, a country where being a homosexual or engaging in any sexual activity with the same sex is outlawed. He is leader of Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) which advocates for the rights of LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning) citizens. Currently, the Ugandan government is working on a bill to make homosexuality punishable by death or life imprisonment. This bill also includes punishment for anyone who knows a homosexual and does not turn them in as well as anyone who speaks out in defense of any LGBTQ people. The “Kill the Gays” bill was first introduced in 2009 and could pass any day now. When Mugisha spoke on the issue to Huffington Post, he bluntly stated, “If the law is passed the way it is right now, I would go to jail, and I would be killed” (Mugisha).
Frank Mugisha and SMUG’s advocacy for the human rights of LGBTQ Ugandans has been remarkable. He has spoken out against the homophobic leaders of his country and made great moves to stop the “Kill the Gays” bill. SMUG has lobbied and worked with other human rights groups to campaign against the government’s plan to disgrace and dehumanize homosexuals. Mugisha displays moral courage because he does what is not easy. Homosexuals and their advocates in Uganda are often ostracized. SMUG’s only supportive religious leader in Uganda, Bishop Christopher Ssenyonjo, was disowned by the church when he came out in support of homosexuality (Mugisha). Mugisha risks losing the support of friends and relatives for being gay and helping others like him. Any day, he could be killed not only if the law passes, but possibly by angry ultra-religious Ugandans or radical supporters of the anti-gay bill. Knowing what is at stake, he continues to fight daily not just for himself but for all LGBTQ Ugandans to have the same freedom and rights as everyone else. Frank Mugisha has given a voice to the LGBTQ people who have been silenced by their oppressive government.

I am a lesbian teen in America. It is much easier and safer for me to be public about my sexuality in my country; however, it is not easy to deal with the people who fear or hate me because of whom I love or to whom I am attracted. I cannot imagine what my life would be like if I could not be open about who I am, for fear of being detested by my family and peers, jailed or murdered. I admire Frank Mugisha because he is saving lives and risking his own life by fighting for LGBTQ people. It is amazing that he even had the courage to come out as a gay man in his incredibly homophobic country. It inspires me to want to do more to help LGBTQ people who are not as fortunate as me, like those who may not have been able to be open about their sexuality or those who have been abused or degraded for it. The world needs more morally
courageous people like Mugisha who will persevere and sacrifice to defend their ethics and protect others.

The hateful actions of the Ugandan government are echoes of the Holocaust and the Nazis’ hatred. Along with homosexuals, the Nazis campaigned to persecute and terrorize Jews, Sinti-Roma, Jehovah’s Witnesses, mentally and physically disabled people, and political opponents. Over 100,000 men were arrested under a law against homosexuality and around 50,000 were convicted while an “unknown number were institutionalized in mental hospitals” or castrated (“Nazi”). Between 5,000 and 15,000 homosexuals were held captive in concentration camps, many of whom were beaten, murdered, or starved to death or died from disease or exhaustion. A significant amount of people did not survive this time of terror, but because people stood up for their ethics, a small percentage of the victims of the Nazis were liberated. Today, 70 years later, in a country far from Germany, homosexuals still must live in fear and secrecy. One would think that after such a monstrosity so long ago, people would be against persecuting others. Unfortunately, there is still ignorance and hate in Uganda and around the world. Frank Mugisha is a hero simply by being open about his sexuality and speaking out against injustice. People who did the same, who spoke out against evil and inequality, saved so many lives and helped end the Holocaust. Not everyone has the courage to put a stop to such moral degradation. Without Mugisha and people like him who will defend their ethics and save lives, Uganda could be headed towards genocide.