

## **Keynote Speech Global Philanthropy Forum**

**October 18, 2023**

Hello, my name is Matthew Hart, and I am the Executive Director of the Global Philanthropy Project. How is everyone tonight?

This is a room of advocates, practitioners, strategists, and visionaries who are working on global issues. The people in this room are in positions of remarkable power and influence. Collectively, we impact, inform, and decide the flow of billions of dollars. The conversations we have here together can have world-changing ripple effects.

I am so very happy to be here with you. I'm grateful for the opportunity of this invitation to speak with you all. I feel real humility to be up here, recognizing so many remarkable people in the room, including many who have helped mobilize LGBTI development assistance and grantmaking and many other strategic efforts to meet the extraordinary challenges and opportunities our communities are experiencing. Thank you to the Global Philanthropy Forum for the privilege and responsibility of representing this work.

The Global Philanthropy Project, is a collaboration of 23 foundations working to expand global philanthropic support to advance the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (or LGBTI) people in the Global South and East. Since 2009, GPP has been mobilizing increased and more responsive funding for global LGBTI movements. At the same time, we have been developing shared analysis and strategic responses to the opposition that aims to block and turn back LGBTI human rights and bodily self-determination. I'll be sharing more about that work tonight.

## **[GPP Context]**

Let me offer a bit of background into GPP's path to centering this work: In 2018, GPP convened a donor conference and published new research focused on funding at the intersections of Faith, Religious Fundamentalism, Human Rights, and Social Justice. Held in Botswana, this convening brought together 280 attendees to build solidarity, strategy, and momentum around resistance to using religion to harm or advance discrimination against LGBTI people worldwide.

We asked the question:

How does radical faith fundamentalisms and authoritarianism collude in their weaponization of LGBTI people, our bodies, families, and lives to seize and consolidate state power and build authoritarian regimes?

For many attendees, it was the first opportunity to genuinely see and grapple with the scale of the opposition's coordination beyond the geographic or issue-based focus of our institutions that might have solely focused on our mandate issues like abortion access, or migration or climate, LGBTI or sexual rights.

### **Let me take a moment to address a term:**

I'll be using the phrase "anti-gender" to describe the opposition.

This term is increasingly relevant worldwide, but it's not as widely used in the U.S. context. I'm describing a worldview that there are two sexes, male and female, each with strict cultural and family roles ordained by god and that this is the natural order of life. For these groups, even the idea that gender exists is ideological. They are saying "anti-gender" to deny the existence and the lived experience of people who are gay and lesbian, transgender, intersex, or anyone else committed to self-determination of our bodies and life choices. While this term focuses on gender, the opposition weaponizes and leverages this conceptual frame to build power for much wider anti-rights and anti-democratic agendas.

In 2020, GPP published ***Meet the Moment: A Call for Progressive Philanthropic Response to the Anti-Gender Movement***. This report analyzed the funding of key global anti-rights organizations that use LGBTI communities as scapegoats. We compared those organizations' funding and activities with the data on global LGBTI funding as documented in our biannual report *Global Resources Report*, which tracks government and philanthropic support for LGBTI communities, *and* with an analysis of the progressive philanthropic responses among our members and partners.

**The findings offered a clear call to action:** enormous financial resources are flowing to these anti-rights movements, yielding both the attrition of human rights infrastructures and the increasing rise of authoritarianism.

**We found that progressive movements and their philanthropic partners were outspent by hundreds of millions of dollars each year.**

Specifically, we found that in the 5 years of 2013-2017, LGBTI movements worldwide received a total of \$1.2 billion, while the top 10 anti-gender organizations received at least \$3.7 billion – **more than triple the LGBTI movement funding.**

**So, outspent- CHECK**

Despite this, in our 2020 research looking at the philanthropic responses, we found that the majority of progressive funders **did not yet have a focused strategy for this work**, and the overall field development in this area was nascent.

It was a stunning collective recognition.

Our opponents have massive scale.

They have superior coordination.

They have the upper hand, *for now*.

We realized that we needed greater coordination and sophistication on our part to win.

Yet, our institutions' geographic or issue-based foci were disparate and lacked aligned action.

## **We had to get ourselves organized**

In the past three years, there has been a great deal of development within global philanthropic movements to recognize, comprehend, and address the growing threat of this “anti-gender” opposition. We have a lot more work to do, but I am eager to report that we are a long way from the findings of 2020, and GPP has been instrumental in mobilizing this development. In March-June 2021, GPP held a four-month online “Global Rights Summit” called “Shimmering Solidarity” focused on grantmaker responses to the anti-gender movement and related anti-rights agendas.

We partnered with other **key funder networks including:**

- Funders Initiative for Civil Society,
- Gender FundersColab,
- Peace and Security Funders Group and
- Elevate Children’s Funder Group.

Together, we built a **big tent** that brought together donors focused on climate, children, gender justice, abortion, and closing space and LGBTI issues. The summit served as an opportunity for aligned colleagues to build shared analysis around anti-rights attacks and strategize toward multi-sectoral progressive philanthropic responses. Over 480 grant makers participated. It is widely understood as a cascade point for this work. Following that summit, GPP convened an ongoing donor task force on these issues, which meets monthly with over 60 grantmaking organizations represented - more research and convenings are coming.....

## **[The Challenge]**

Aspiring authoritarian political attention is focused on leveraging a fear fantasy – that the rights of LGBTI people represent a fundamental threat to nation, family and faith. Successfully distracting attention away from their attempts to consolidate state power.

**I’ll scale out to some examples of how this shows up in our current context:**

- 64 countries criminalize consensual same-sex sexual acts. In 7 of those, the maximum punishment is death.
- 52 countries have laws that restrict the freedom of expression on LGBTI issues.
- In 72 countries, there is no possibility for trans people to change their gender marker to align with their identity.
- In at least another 18 countries, trans people can only do so if they go through surgery or sterilization.
- Amid war, Russia's parliament extended a 'gay propaganda' law to apply in all circumstances and to all ages.
- This law effectively prohibits the positive or even neutral portrayal of so-called 'non-traditional sexual relations.' Later this was expanded again
- The Polish Law and Justice Party has encouraged the declaration of LGBT-ideology-free zones", as the ruling party drives an authoritarian agenda undermining democratic norms and institutions like the judiciary, a free press, and a thriving civil society
- Conservative political leaders across the US have weaponized our community, particularly trans people,
- 419 anti-LGBTI bills have been introduced in state legislatures this year alone,
- This prompted the Human Rights Campaign for the first time ever to declare a national state of emergency for the LGBTI community.

Each of these examples reveals how a contorted manipulation of

- Cultural rights,
- Manufactured moral panic, and
- Weaponized concepts about gender

are being deployed by those who seek to consolidate power and seize the functions of the state and FORM A REPLICABLE SYSTEM. These

activities directly result in escalated violence against LGBTI communities worldwide.

- In the past few months, public violence against LGBTI communities has erupted in Uganda, Senegal, Cameroon, and Ethiopia.
- This year, gay pride was again attacked in the Caucus country of Georgia, while terror attacks against the Pride Parade in Vienna and in the US state of Idaho were thwarted by authorities.
- A gay club in Norway was the site of a violent and deadly attack on the eve of their 2022 Pride Parade.
- The violent reverberations of the anti-gay purges in Chechnya, in which gay men were rounded up and tortured,
- and the disappearance of women accused or suspected of being lesbian all continue as we speak.
- Here in California, two months ago, Laura Ann Carleton was murdered for displaying a rainbow flag.

### **[Institutional Responses Needed]**

**Tonight, I want us to confront and rethink two orthodoxies.**

**The first** is that "bigotry and persecution facing LGBTI communities only impacts a minority of people."

**The second** is that, as a result, these issues are not a key focus area for philanthropists interested in impact at scale.

I want to counter these misconceptions as we come to clarity about how gender and sexuality are front and center to so many current geopolitical contestations.

While conversations within philanthropy tend to repeat the necessity of "breaking out of our silos," that truism has been **put into action** as a community of funders connect the dots between the shared attack we are facing and the crucial need for a shared response.

**If your institution is committed to**

- **Democracy,**
- **Bodily self-determination,**
- **Sexual rights, and health,**
- **Freedom of movement**
- **Open Space or the impacts of rising authoritarianism,**

**I propose you have a duty and an obligation to engage courageously and boldly in this work.**

**IF YOU DO JOIN:**

You will join a

- joyous,
- strategic,
- disciplined,
- courageous,
- and innovative

community of grantmakers, development professionals from leading governments, advisors, and high-net-wealth individuals.

### **[Good News]**

Since GPP was founded, documented LGBTI funding outside of the U.S. has increased from \$35 million in 2010 to \$136 million in 2020. We celebrate this increase and also heed the extremely small amount of funding that is still focused on LGBTI communities, even amid this heightened level of attack.

LGBTI communities received only 35 cents of every \$100 philanthropic foundation funding and only 4 cents of every \$100 of government development aid.

## **STILL**

I look ahead with clear eyes, determination, and joy at our shared work. Global LGBTI liberation requires "both/and" strategies. Together, we support LGBTI movements and fight to stop or block the harm of oppositional forces.

Now, I see you scratching your head.... Like, ok, Matty, what can we do?

Tonight I offer five recommendations to financially support LGBTI communities:

### **1. Refuse the silo and collaborate courageously.**

- a. We know that working with unlikely allies across philanthropy can unleash innovation and big new money.
- b. Let's dare to see and reflect the profoundly intersectional lived realities and
- c. fund to win, defend, and secure the rights of LGBTI communities and all those impacted by attacks on LGBTI human rights.

### **2. Learn, Listen, Fund, repeat.**

- a. Fund research, accompany your grantee partners, and hear their calls for changes in approach, amount, and strategies.
- b. See the LGBTI people, groups and communities *in your existing portfolios* and ask how you can support them.
- c. Commit to fighting for these changes in your own institutions. Be that voice in the rooms that others don't have access to. Then, do it again.

### **3. Fund where it matters.**



- a. Work with trusted intermediaries and interlocutors to get money to front line movement leaders and organizations.

#### **4. Fund boldly.**

- a. Trust community-based groups and regional intermediaries with unrestricted and multi-year grants.

#### **5. Join Us.**

Political freedom and social transformation need all of us; there is much work ahead.

Let's reach toward the liberation of independence in

- Bodily self-determination,
- Freedom of movement, and
- Freedom of association

While we also reach for each other in

- Interdependence,
- Connection,
- and solidarity.

Let's come together and fight for and fund for LGBTI inclusion in broader systems and

simultaneously build solutions beyond those that continue to fail LGBTI communities.

Social transformation is not binary.

I invite you to join GPP and build on the success of the past decade that began to finance and capacitate the movements fighting for LGBTI liberation.

Before I turn it over to Roger Dougherty, the President of Horizon's Foundation and an expert panel that includes Frank Magishu from SMUG and Jennifer Lu from OutRight International,

I have one last thing to invite you to consider.

Tonight, let's step together into this generational opportunity for philanthropy to act boldly to safeguard, secure, and expand the political, social, and economic rights of LGBTI people through strategic and courageous financing, grantmaking, and accompaniment.

I can't wait to do this work together.