Progress and Pushback: The State of Global LGBT Human Rights

Today, more than ever, countries around the world are coming out strongly in support, or in rejection, of LGBTIQ rights, widening the gap between these two factions. What is seen as the promotion of equality by some, is seen as cultural imperialism by others. Are we ready for a global LGBTIQ rights agenda? Are we showcasing leadership, or are we perpetuating cultural imperialism? Have we learnt lessons from what went wrong during colonial times, or are we making the same mistakes again?

With this high-level panel, we will explore these topics and more, and have a discussion about the future of LGBTIQ rights, and of LGBTIQ people, internationally.

Panelists and Moderator

Panelist – Urooj Arshad is the Associate director at International Youth Health and Rights at Advocates for Youth, where she manages a project of the International Division that builds the capacity of youth-driven organizations in the global south. She is a steering committee member of the Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity (MASGD), which addresses the intersectional impact of Islamophobia, homophobia, and transphobia. Urooj was selected to serve on the U.S delegation to the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Panelist – Graeme Reid, director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Program, is an expert on LGBT rights. He has conducted research, taught and published extensively on gender, sexuality, LGBT issues, and HIV/AIDS. Before joining Human Rights Watch in 2011, Reid was the founding director of the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa, a researcher at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research and a lecturer in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies at Yale University.

Panelist – Cynthia Rothschild is an independent activist and consultant with a focus on United Nations advocacy and policy, sexual rights, LGBT issues and HIV & AIDS. A trainer and facilitator, she is the author of Written Out: How Sexuality is Used to Attack Women’s Organizing and the editor of Gendering Documentation: A Manual for and about Women Human Rights Defenders. In 2011 and in 2015, Cynthia consulted with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, where she made significant contributions to the UN’s two ground-breaking reports on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Panelist—Justus Eisfeld is a trans man and board member of Callen-Lorde Community Health Center. He is also a serial co-founder of trans* organizations worldwide: GATE – Global Action for Trans* Equality, Transgender Europe and the Dutch Transgender Network all carry his signature. Recent work interests include funding for trans* communities and global HIV policy. He is a co-author of the report 'The State of Trans* and Intersex Organizing'. Justus lives in New York with his husband Johnny and their dog Gemma.

Moderator – Michael K. Lavers is the International News Editor for the Washington Blade, which is the oldest LGBT publication in the U.S. Michael joined the Blade staff in 2012. He has been in his current position since June 2015. Michael has reported from the United Nations, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Honduras, Colombia, Peru, Chile, the Netherlands, Hungary, and the U.S. Deep South, among other places.