

NEW YORK INSTITUTE  
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**DIVING DEEPER: Key Issues in Funding Global LGBTQI Rights**

**Topic 1: Organizing as Funders to Advance Trans\* and Intersex Movements Worldwid**

July 14, 2014

2:15-3:30 pm

***Speakers:***

- Sarah Gunther, Associate Director of Programs, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
- Justus Eisfield, Co-Director and Co-Founder, Global Action for Trans\* Equality
- David Scamell, Associate Director, Sexual Health and Rights, American Jewish World Service

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Justus described the human rights funding landscape for trans\* movements, and ways that the philanthropic community can have an effect in promoting these often-underfunded movements. When Global Action for Trans\* Equality (GATE) began 5 years ago, they carefully considered the biggest obstacles trans\* groups faced. Funding was one of the most pressing issues. Five years ago, they could count the numbers of people funding trans\* work on two hands. As a result, one of their three main focus areas is building trans\* movements and funding them.

David said that this session would continue a conversation begun between funders and trans\* and intersex groups at a meeting called “Advancing Trans movements Worldwide” in Berlin(see document). Before this meeting, there had never been a designated space for global trans\* movements and groups to get together and strategize, or for funders to join the conversation. Wellspring, OSF, and GATE got together to understand the funding landscape. The meeting also included a disparate group of funders who wanted to get into funding trans\* movements, but hadn’t gotten past funding LGBT groups.

Justus said that one of their findings was that there is a lack of resources for trans\* organizing. The movement needs to have strong engagement with funders that includes both as equal partners. The three previously mentioned organizations set up a working group, and put out an open call to the international trans\* movement to get a sample of activists to meet in Berlin. They aimed to have this sample be representative in terms of gender, geography, size of organizations. From the funder side, they tried to get a variety of institution types, as well.

GATE and AJWS were working on a report on the state of the trans\* movement. They conducted some very basic donor mapping, which helped shape the conversation in Berlin. Trans\* activists have been around for a long time, but most of the organizations are quite new. 54% of groups had budgets of less than US\$10,000. Only 5% had budget over USD\$250,000. The trans\* movement is underfunded globally. Trans\* activists in Western Europe have the same limited access to funds as activists in Central America, and the Pacific. The disparity between global north and global south doesn’t really apply to trans\* movement. There is need everywhere. Cisgender led groups working for trans\* rights have much more access to resources, which shows that funding isn’t necessarily facilitating the goals it wants to happen.

A poll of trans\* groups about their biggest funding needs found that almost all groups want to work on improving social attitudes and support groups. However, most groups would also like to expand into health care and social services, but don't have the money to do it. Most human rights funders don't consider these things human rights, but the community is so desperate that in many cases, these services are precursors to rights.

Barriers to finding funding include:

- Inexperience with fundraising
- Complicated proposal forms
- Ability to manage grants
- Legal registration in their home countries.

A barrier from grantmaking side is the difficulty of finding grantees. One way funders can help out is to name whether they are explicitly funding trans\* groups, or LGBT groups in general. This will help trans\* groups decide whether to spend their time applying for a grant, since staff is so limited. Justus mentioned one group that had to fill out over 50 different application forms for their 50 different funders. That doesn't include reporting...

Sarah said that while the situations faced by these communities is bleak, there is a lot of momentum both on the donor and the activist side. The vast majority of donors are going to increase their funding on trans\* and intersex issues.

Justus pointed out that when you look at the areas on which trans\* groups are working, HIV prevention work is not at the top of the list, even though healthcare is. The extremely high incidence of HIV in trans\* groups is more of an expression of all the other things that go wrong for trans\* communities, rather than an inherent issue to the population. Trans\* groups are vulnerable because they don't have access to health care and in many cases are ostracized. Taking away these obstacles will reduce HIV in these communities.

## Q&A

**Funders Concerned About AIDS is trying to do more data-tracking to understand this landscape. Has anyone explored the diversity of the intersex condition, and the intersex community? As a funder, how do you navigate this and become more educated?**

Justus: When designing the survey, we thought it would be a missed opportunity not to include intersex movements. While intersex and trans\* movements sometimes overlap, they don't always. This conversation needs to happen independent of the trans\* conversation, but also in conversation with. There are some funders who are working more explicitly with intersex orgs.

A participant said that Arcus has worked with intersex organizations, but not very consistently. One project they are planning is to write a report that will focus on intersex organizations, provide them with an opportunity to make the case for funders about what needs to be funded. Even in an LGBTQI context, there's an assumption that there's an inclusion of the T, and also the I. Often, the L, the T, and the I are underresourced (and how is Q funded at all?). After funding the LGBTQI movement under the assumption that a rising tide lifts all boats, Arcus realized this isn't the case, and that they need to work with these groups individually.

Sarah: Intersex is treated as a tag-along to the T, rather than its own distinct issue. Many funders are getting more comfortable working with trans\* groups, but are still unfamiliar with intersex.

**Is the discrimination faced by intersex people distinct? What do we need to do as institutions to understand this?**

David: Outside of the US, funding for intersex groups is less than \$300,000. Trans\* groups receive \$2.4 million. In the past year or two, there have been forums that have recognized these issues.

There are a number of global trans\* conferences, and some intersex activists attend those conferences. There are some intersex meetings that take place that don't include funders. Funders can help provide resources so that these groups can have these meetings. There is only one intersex group with paid staff in the U.S., and they have two paid staff.

**In terms of organizational development, is this about getting their advocacy people on board? Grantwriting? Developing other core functions of recognized organizations? Having done a big study, is there an assessment about where these groups are?**

Sarah: The groups first want to organize and network with other trans\* groups. They want peer learning and skills training. There are groups that already have phenomenal experience with fundraising, grantwriting. These needs vary tremendously by region and even what a region is. Peoples' priorities depend on where they're located, in terms of their capability to do activism.

David: How we as funders can support this is by looking at who is making the decisions. Are they trans\*? Who's in charge? What does it mean that trans\* groups are now saying they're doing intersex work? Is this genuine?

**What were some outcomes from the Berlin meeting?**

Dave: Engaging intersex activists.

Sarah: for Astraea, it was the process of going through their archive. Digging through their grants and understanding what it meant institutionally that they had been funding trans\* for quite a while. They also made the first intersex grant, but realized they didn't have a strategy to follow through.

**At the Red Umbrella Fund, we've seen a lot of sex worker organizations that are reaching out to trans\* sex workers, and including them on their boards. However, in some regions, groups of trans\* sex workers are organizing separately. That is also happening at the regional level. It's important that these groups set their own agenda, but it's also important to have conversations about what it means to work separately. How can you go forward? Make one grant to one group, and not the other? How do you support nascent movements? As a funder, how do you deal with the issues and work with these different groups?**

**Already, the funding is distorting what people want to work on—HIV, sex work. Is there a way that we can prioritize leadership development, and other issues that the trans\* groups say that they would like to work on?**

**As human rights grantmakers, we say we'll fund advocacy, we'll fund the hard, long-term things. In the case of trans\* and intersex, are the communities are in such crisis that we need to integrate**

**health, education, social service before we can get to the rights? OR how can we get health, education, social service funders on board to work with these communities?**

**Recommendations:**

How can we as funders enact the recommendations from the Berlin meeting?

- Funding safe spaces and security. In places that homophobia comes up, it's really the trans\* community that bears the brunt of the public violence.
- Leadership and capacity building
- Networking opportunities
- Support for community-based research projects that are trans\* led or designed to be in tune with needs of trans\* groups
- Be explicit that we are funding on Trans\* issues specifically, and not just LGBT
- Streamline application processes and procedures.
- Align grantmaking priorities with the priorities of the trans\* movement itself.
- Providing non-financial support—brokering relationships with other funders.
- Hire intersex and trans\* staff as consultants to help fund intersex and trans\* movements.

David: The Global Philanthropy Project will set up a trans\* working group. It's still very nascent. In order to increase effective funding/get people engaged, we need to work with a lot of these recommendations.

**Was there lower hanging fruit coming out of the Berlin meeting?**

Justus: There is a lot of low-hanging fruit: legal gender recognition, access to healthcare, making healthcare available to your grantees. Most grantees don't have health insurance that will help them access hormones or surgeries. Look at your theory of change and see how trans\* groups fit into it.