

# Organizing for the Year Ahead: Countering Anti-LGBTQ Persecution and Violence in 2023

*Panelists: Brandon Wolf, Gin Pham, Heron Greenesmith, Kwyn Townsend Riley*  
*Moderated by Koki Mendis*

01/31/2023

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you all for joining Political Research Associates today for a briefing on Organizing for the Year Ahead: Countering Anti-LGBTQ Persecution and Violence in 2023. For those of you who are new to PRA, or Political Research Associates, we are a social justice research and strategy center dedicated to blocking the advance of oppressive, anti-democratic movements and to building a just and inclusive democratic society. Over the past four decades, PRA has researched, monitored, and publicized the agenda and strategies of the U.S. and global Right, revealing the powerful intersections of Christian nationalism, White nationalism, and patriarchy. PRA produces investigative reports, articles, and tools; advises social justice movement organizers; and offers expert commentary for local and national media outlets. Our core issue areas span reproductive justice, LGBTQ rights, racial and immigrant justice, civil liberties and economic justice. We have just launched a new five year strategic plan and are entering a period of increased investment in growing our organization and achieving our vision of inclusive feminist democracy. Relevant to folks in this room, in the course of our strategic plan, we are establishing a dedicated strategic partnership team to strengthen relationships and availability for our invaluable movement partners. So stay tuned for future developments.

Before we get into it, I want to express how deeply grateful we are to you, our audience, for joining us today, and for most of you in the room for your incredible work fighting violence and injustice. And we are particularly grateful to be joined by our four incredible panelists today: [Brandon Wolf](#), a nationally

recognized LGBTQ civil rights and gun safety advocate, who currently serves as the press secretary for [Equality Florida](#); Gin Pham, Communications and Outreach Manager for the [Transgender Education Network of Texas](#), and a co-founder of AQuA (Austin Queer Agents); [Heron Greensmith](#), a senior research analyst here at PRA (PRA's own) and a policy attorney with over a decade of LGBTQ advocacy and experience; and Kwyn Townsend Riley, an organizer who envisions a future for all and fights with a Black queer feminist lens as a member of [BYP100](#), who is currently working within higher education.

Thank you very much to our esteemed panelists and to you, our wonderful audience for joining us today. Please note, as you'll have noticed, the webinar will be recorded and the recording, along with the transcript, will be distributed by email and on PRA's website in the next few days. Audience members, feel free to introduce yourself in the chat so we can see who all is with us. We encourage you to use the chat to engage in the conversation, and also expect the chat to remain free from rhetoric that may be harmful to our panelists and attendees. Anyone who does not comply with these expectations will be removed from the webinar. Okay. With those housekeeping notes out of the way, let's get started. I'm just going to pull up our discussion questions for today.

So before we dive into the analysis of the current moment and the year ahead in anti-LGBTQ organizing, I'd like to hear each of you on our panel today—oops, lost my thought and my spot. I would like to hear each of you name one component of the just and liberated society that you're building in your work. What is one vision for the near future or something that you're already seeing developing in the field that keeps you engaged and forward looking? So who would like to take a crack at this first?

**Brandon Wolf:** I'll go first. I—first of all, thank you so much for having us and thank you for this really important conversation. Because, you know, as folks know, we're in a really precarious time in the LGBTQ civil rights movement, in the fight for justice and equality for all people. And I think it's good to start by centering ourselves on what's possible. Right? What are we actually fighting for? Because so much of the time, especially here, I feel like we're on the front lines down here in Florida, in many ways—it feels like we're always talking about what we're fighting against. We're always talking about our opposition. We don't get enough time to talk about what we're fighting for. And I also am grounded, before I sort of get into my vision of what's possible in the future, I'm grounded in how that fight for something we can't quite see yet or we can't quite comprehend yet is what has always driven LGBTQ people in our civil rights movement. I think about the riots at Stonewall, which were a resistance against the violent enforcement of laws that were telling people what kind

of clothes they could wear, what kind of makeup they could wear, how they could cut their hair. And at that time, when people picked up bricks and threw them at police officers and finally fought back, they didn't do it because they imagined that we would have AT&T's logo in rainbow decades later, or that there would be massive pride parades rolling down the street. Right? They they did it because they imagined a world where people weren't being dragged out of bars in handcuffs for simply expressing their identities.

So I think now in this moment, it's that idea of what's possible, what's just beyond my comprehension, what is so incredible, and positive, and uplifting just over the horizon, that's worth fighting for. And so one of the things that has kept me fighting in this moment is the idea of a world that finds value in the ways in which the LGBTQ community has learned to express themselves outside the structures of oppression. And there is a sense of irony in the way that the Right Wing is threatened by our existence, right. Because the Right Wing are the ones who pushed us from society, who told us, you don't belong in this sandbox, so you're going to have to go and form your own. They're the ones who told us that your jeans are too skinny, or your wrists are too flimsy, that you don't fit the standard idea of what masculine or feminine looks like in society. And so you don't belong here anymore. And in doing that, the Right Wing forced LGBTQ people and our allies to go build our own ideas of what's possible, our own ideas of the potential of who we can be. And in the end, that's the thing that threatens the Right Wing so much about our existence—that, you know, the very same structures of oppression that tell them that boys can't cry, or that girls only wear pink are the ones we've found language to move around. Those are the systems of oppression and structure that we have learned to exist without needing. That is something the Right Wing finds threatening. But I have immense hope that just over the horizon, just past these obstacles we're fighting, is a society that actually finds value in the language we've created, that finds value in our ability to audaciously express ourselves rather than seeing it as a threat. So that's what keeps me fighting in this moment.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Brandon. I love that. So much setting too, that you did for this conversation. You really grounded us in sort of a more broad, liberatory movement that is really exciting to integrate this conversation into. Gin Pham, Kwyn—Sorry, Gin, Kwyn, Heron, who would like to go next?

**Kwyn Townsend Riley:** I can go next, I try to wait like five Mississippi seconds.

**Koki Mendis:** No, we're all about eager beavers today.

**Kwyn Townsend Riley:** Yes. So hey y'all, again, so humbled, so honored to be among these panelists, and just here to talk with y'all. One humble pill that I had to swallow as a mobilizer, as an organizer is that I am fighting for a world that I may never see, or may never participate in. And that's just to not only critique how long it's going to take for actual liberation to be emphasized and to be actualized and to be institutionalized, but also just to humbly say, like, I'm really not fighting for myself. I'm really fighting for other people. And so something that I have been reflecting on to answer this question is the importance of art. And I mean, not just like paintings, but like books, and movies and, TV shows, and fashion and makeup. And I just love—one thing I love about being queer is not only how we do live audaciously, but full in color, full in loudness, full in messiness, and just, we really do exist and continue to draw and color outside lines. And so when I think about the society that I'm fighting for, I see all of the art that has been, I don't wanna say undone, but unincluded, when we think about historical artifacts. And when I think about artifacts that are collected in museums, I want people to include Moonlight. I want people to talk about Pose. I want people to talk about Beyonce's album. Artifacts and collections like that I think are really, really important to me as well.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Kwyn. I really love—I also love the selflessness that you highlight in the struggle that we're in. And yes, to all the art that you named, that's what makes life beautiful. Gin, Heron.

**Gin Pham:** I'll pop in. Yeah. Thank you for having me. And thank you for everyone that's joining us today. I continuously envision this. Even before I came out, I envisioned a world in which I could exist wholly, fully and kindly. Right? I think one large portion of it is that queer and trans lives, wellness, it can't simply be bought, it can't seem to be traded or given to one another. It is always within communities, always within participation between one another and conversations such as this one. But even past that, right, it reminds me every day of the way that we have to consistently try to answer the question of, how do we define human rights? How are trans rights human rights? And the way that we do that is considering this form of whole solidarity in which we understand that we are interconnected even further down in the way that we talk about how you know—and thank you for laying that groundwork in terms of Stonewall and the way that art moves us to create, it moves us to do. We have to move one another to understand that we are never completely having one's own rights, not one person, until all of us have our rights. And that was first said to me in a quote from Martha P. Johnson, right—Marsha P. Johnson. And so I continuously tried to bend and build and create a world in which all my loved

and liked ones can walk with me. And even if I'm not there, I can still see it and I still dream of it.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Gin. That's really beautiful. It really reflected on what our copanelists have said today in a way that really tied it together, so I appreciate that. Heron, let's hear your 'What's lifting you up right now?'

**Heron Greenesmith:** I've been hearing so much that resonates with me, but it made me think about a conversation, an ongoing conversation that my partner and I are having about our daughter. And yesterday, it kind of came to the point where I said out loud, like, I wish that being audacious, like living audaciously—looking audacious, acting audacious—was not dangerous. I wish that I could give her the joy of embodying whatever audacity she wanted at the moment. And that I could tell her truthfully that she would be safe in that audacity. And then, what does make her safe and where there are moments of safety, is in community networks of care and in the family that we've built together and in the people who see us for who we are. And so that's where I see the hope and that's where I lean towards, is, whenever I'm feeling as if I am alone, as though I am alone doing this work, I have to really snap myself out of it and try to build the reflex of leaning towards community rather than away.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Heron. You know, bringing sort of the next generations, both those that we won't see and those that are with us now, is a really important point here, too. You know, the art, kindness, care, fullness, audacity, the solidarity, radical change, safety—you all have really laid out for us what we're fighting for. And I think that's a perfect place to ground us in today's conversation. And we're going to move into the hard stuff now so that we are prepared for the fight ahead. I'd like for us to spend a significant amount of time today on the trends, strategies and momentum you're seeing in anti-LGBTQ organizing and politicking. Reflecting on anti-LGBTQ activity throughout 2022, which was a really heavy year, can you also reflect on how trends, strategies, and momentum in 2022 appear to continue, evolve, or be supplanted in 2023? So this is a big question and we can take our time with it. But who would like to get us started?

**Heron Greenesmith:** I can eager beaver this one and lay out maybe a groundwork for us that we can fill in. So over the last—in 2022, we saw an increase in violence against the LGBT community, violence against the trans community. We saw an increase in state violence. We saw increase in interpersonal violence, and we saw increase in organized violence. This

violence was precipitated by a heightening in rhetoric from the Christian Right, from major organizations on the Christian Right, like the Alliance Defending Freedom, the Family Research Council, the Heritage Foundation, and the Family Policy Alliance, all of whom are producing lawsuits and model legislation and reams of quasi-scientific material that purports to show with evidence that trans people don't deserve to live publicly, and in some cases even privately, as ourselves. This disinformation, supported by some really crucial partners I want to lift here: the TERFs, and the gender critical folks have really provided some important support for the Christian Right in 2022, and also some important connections to organized violent groups like the Proud Boys. We've seen them working together in 2022 for the first time, openly together.

That disinformation was lifted up, twisted further, mangled by the right-wing media, who really had their heyday in 2022. We saw mainstream right-wing media folks like Tucker Carlson call for—openly for physicians' murder on cable news. This—a coauthor of mine and I, Amy Littlefield, just published an analysis in *The Nation* this morning looking at how these trends follow the playbook of the antiabortion advocacy of the past 50 years. Because it's the same folks playing the book. So we have Tucker Carlson, we also have this microcosm of truly craven right-wing media spokespeople like Matt Walsh, and Ben Shapiro, and Christopher Rufo, and Chaya Raichik of Libs of TikTok, who took it upon themselves to lift up specific instances of queer people gathering: whether it's gathering for health care, or gathering for celebration together, or gathering to read a book to a kid. These instances of queer gathering and celebration were lifted up by these right-wing media, and who listened? This year, well last year, the Patriot Front listened, the neo-Nazi group NSC 131 out here in Massachusetts listened. The Proud Boys listened. And you have a boiling point, that boiled over at the Club Q Massacre, which I'm assuming we're going to talk about as well. That's just the skeleton. So maybe we can hang some more information on it, especially its impacts on our community, because those impacts have not been felt equally across the community.

**Koki Mendis:** Oh, go ahead, Brandon.

**Brandon Wolf:** Yeah. No, thank you, Heron, for laying that out. And what I really love about what you said is there is, at least in my view, from my perspective, my job is interfacing with the media every day. And it does feel sometimes like I'm banging my head against the wall. Because while there is a very coordinated right-wing strategy, whether it's media or, you know, talking heads or these organizations that are well funding the entire effort, there is a missing component in the mainstream media and certainly from, you know,



allies in media organizations to tie all of these things together. There's, you know, part of the strategy on the Right Wing is to have us fighting all of these individual battles, or trying to put out individual fires without seeing them as the nationwide blaze that they are. And I do think that in ways, the mainstream media and allies in the press have completely failed in that regard to tie all of these things together and to call attention to the people who are behind them—the Heritage Foundations of the world. We've got Moms for Liberty that was birthed out in Brevard County here in Florida, that's now sweeping the nation. So I think that's that's number one, is that the Right wing is winning the battle to have us fighting these individual fires, while the people who are supposed to be tying it together nationally for us have not done a great job of that.

And then I also think there's a political component. And, you know, I spend so much of my time steeped in the politics of Ron DeSantis and the Florida political machine, which has in many ways, alongside Texas, set the tone for what's possible with right-wing extremist leadership in politics. And so I think it's important to name that while there's that piece going on with right-wing media—by the way, many of those spokespeople have relocated to the state of Florida, namely the Tampa Bay area. So if you're wondering where the Christopher Rufos and others are in the country, many of them are now living in Florida, unfortunately. And so while that's going on in the media, you also have this political machine that's operating at the same time. And so you've got people like, you know, Chaya Raichik of Libs of TikTok, first, elevating individual instances of LGBTQ people existing in the world, passing those things along to the political shops of Ron DeSantis, who are then turning it into policy to try to generate additional headlines. And so I wanted to name a couple of things that I've seen trend-wise that I think are worth watching.

Number one is, while the mainstream media and the press, who are, in my opinion, sometimes asleep at the wheel, have painted people like Ron DeSantis as the moderate response to Donald Trump, those very same politicians like Ron DeSantis are actually just an extension of the right-wing media. They don't care about the outcome. Ron DeSantis doesn't care about which books are ultimately banned in schools. He doesn't care about whether or not the laws are found to be constitutional or not. He cares about the headlines they generate. He doesn't care what happens to migrants, for instance, once they're dropped off at Martha's Vineyard. He cares that they got on a plane and it ended up on the front page of *The New York Times*. And so there is this never ending perpetual cycle of using the power of government to generate right-wing media content, to keep their names front and center.

And the second point that I wanted to make is an extension of that, which is to say that the right-wing politicians who are using that media ecosystem

to boost their own political profiles are not bound to one lane of government or one lever of power to punish people in order to gain those headlines. Ron DeSantis is not waiting for the legislature to file a bill. He is wielding the legislature when it's in session as a weapon to bolster his resume. And then as soon as the hankie drops and the legislative session is over, he's turning to what used to be apolitical state agencies like the Board of Medicine, the Board of Osteopathy, the Department of Business and Professional Regulation, to use them as a weapon against the very same targets he had during the legislative session. It's why you saw House Bill 1557, the Don't Say LGBTQ law, pass, be signed into law, and almost the next day we were talking about the Board of Medicine fighting against gender affirming care in the state of Florida.

And it doesn't stop there. When those headlines run dry, he then turns to removing locally elected officials and replacing them with his allies or his sycophants to do more work on a local level. The Broward School Board in Florida, for instance, a traditionally progressive community was at one point a majority DeSantis appointees because he had removed and replaced all of these locally, independently elected officials to go out and exact punishment on LGBTQ people, on people of color, in the Broward School system. So I wanted to name that in the politics of it all, while the right-wing media infrastructure is stirring up content, it then feeds the political machine that punishes marginalized communities, especially LGBTQ people, with policy, with state agencies, with political attacks on locally elected officials, to generate more headlines to keep churning the machine. And it has figured out, through the DeSantis mechanism, a way to keep that that process moving, even when the legislature is not in session, even when it's not an election cycle. They've weaponized the whole of government, every lever of power to keep those headlines being generated.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Brandon. Thank you, Heron. I think you both really outlined who the major power holders are, how they're interconnected, and the narrative strategy that they deploy in addition to organizing strategies, legislative strategies. Gin, Kwyn, there's a lot more to get into. Gin, go ahead.

**Gin Pham:** Yeah. Brandon, you said it so beautifully in terms of just like being able to leverage—and especially state leaders and our legislators, even in off years—have been able to leverage not only state departments, but state departments to criminalize queer and trans individuals, to criminalize even further people of color within the state. Right. And so, you know, you mentioned some really damning moments in which that happened. And, you know, in the same way in Texas, when they try to criminalize people



supporting and loving their trans youth in their family, where the department is Family Protective Services—even when we have one of the worst foster care systems in the country—to separate them from a supportive support network in which their family is actually already protecting them. And when we're looking at last March in which, you know, in Austin, there was a grassroots protest outside the governor's mansion against weaponizing the department to protect children already, it was also within the city of Austin, which is the home of Infowars. Where they came in an armored truck, same vibe, same energy to intimidate. And a lot of these tactics in a lot of these situations are intended to intimidate and also embolden their base already. And so, you know, looking even past towards the election cycle, we're looking at, you know, postcards, not just digital print, but like actual postcards being sent to homes in which, you know, it is spreading even further misinformation, and spreading misinformation specifically around trans women of color and how they are 'here to harm people.' But we know that is not truth. We're seeing this in—across the whole nation in terms of the way that we have to be able to actually call it out in terms of who is allowing this, and witnessing that it's not just our state leaders, but also the ones that they appoint as well. And so I just want to talk about that. Thank you.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you so much, Gin. I want to echo one of our chat participants. Elizabeth says, really appreciating the lens of criminalization. You know, you really connected sort of the fight for LGBTQ justice/thriving/safety and the need to abolish and defund police in such a really clear way. And I would love us to continue to keep that in focus in our conversation. Kwyn, I'm going to pass you.

**Kwyn Townsend Riley:** Yeah. Everything that—I definitely agree and want to repeat and underline and bold, everything that my panelists have offered. 2021 was recognized as the deadliest year for trans and queer folks by the Human Rights Campaign. And I think that should be something hard for us to feel and hard for us to digest. And I understand with our society there seems to be a lot of saturation of deaths, and names, and victims, but that is something that I don't want folks to just get familiar and complacent with. As much as we talk about, you know, people talk about how grief comes in waves. Violence is more like a volcano. And right now we've been erupting with not only just bills, but lots of policies.

I mentioned earlier how art is something I want to see, because with all these book bans particularly, there are stories that are no longer being told, and there are people that are being erased, and there are narratives that are not

being told. And therefore children and adults may not actually find themselves seen, may not find themselves reflected, and won't be able to have the safety of literature, of poems, of essays to wrap themselves around.

And I think it's also important to note the hospital bomb threats for hospitals that have been choosing to offer gender affirming care for trans youth. That's something that's really devastating to hear, of everything going on with the Vanderbilt Hospital. You also have within higher education, there are student organizations, pride student organizations, that are not being recognized at the university. So, for example, there was a case at Yeshiva University in New York, which I believe is the Orthodox Jew University that sued—that was in a lawsuit with a student organization that wants to be recognized, and by being recognized as an organization, will be able to receive funding from the university, be able to gain membership, and be able to allow their posters and stuff on campus. So that's important. And so the fact that they had to go to court, the Supreme Court, our nation's highest court, to actually receive this type of recognition is interesting to me. Because I'm learning now more so than ever—I think we're all doing that—there is no separation between church and state. There absolutely is no separation between church and state. Literally, the state is fueling off the church and the church is being fueled from the state. And literally everything that we think about, violence especially against queer folks like myself and trans and gender non-conforming folks, it's all rooted back to Christianity and religion, which is one of the most political—one of the most used tools, I think, when we think about attacks on marginalized identity all goes back to religion and that type of system. So I just want to bring up that. And yeah.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Kwyn. You know, I really particularly appreciate this, the point you make about erasure and culture, and also culture as a political landscape, right, to participate in. And I think it's something PRA doesn't do a ton of in our work, but it's certainly a major line of strategy for violent and genocidal movements. And you really name that well. I want to move—continue with the last point that you made, sort of the complicity between Christian Right organizing and the state. And I want to pass it back to you Heron, to talk a little bit about your work at PRA, really tracking the Christian Right; both, you know, specific named Christian Right strategies, but also the relationship that you touched on earlier with sort of purportedly centrist or almost like, so-called “Left” feminist movements that are not only anti-trans but incredibly complicit in Christian Right organizing.

**Heron Greenesmith:** Yeah, we saw some pretty strong spillover from the anti-trans feminists who work and live in the UK, and have been frighteningly

efficient and effective there in dismantling the centralized systems for folks to receive trans affirming care. Specifically youth receiving—the only clinic that had the referral service for youth receiving trans affirming care, the Tavistock Clinic, has now been dismantled. They are still providing care through the National Health Service in the UK, but the centralized location at which the providers were connected is now being dismantled. And I'm assuming everyone saw that for the first time in the entirety of Scotland existing, the Prime Minister of England stepped in and said that Scotland may not amend its Gender Recognition Act to allow people to self identify their gender. There's been plenty of news about this. I'm not going to, you know, give any more details other than the Gender Recognition Act is an interesting administrative quirk of the UK, where it's just a piece of paper that says your gender, and you don't need it for anything. It's just an affirmation. And that England, the English government, is so frightened of two things, I think. I think the Tories are frightened of, you know, bodily autonomy, just as conservative people are in the United States. And I do believe that this is tied closely with Scottish autonomy as well. And I think Scottish folks have said the same. And so here you have yet another example of how state violence and anti-trans violence are inseparable. The Tory Party is using anti-trans violence as a weapon, literally wielding trans people's bodies against apparently trans and Scott—and cis Scots people.

That effective, anti-trans feminist organizing has moved into the United States. And in 2022 we saw, pardon the expression, TERFs go 'mask off.' We saw anti-trans feminists much more openly cooperating with organizing, with being seen openly with, as I said, those anti-trans feminists from the UK who came and traveled and did a speaking circuit around the U.S. meeting with anti-trans feminists from the U.S. along the way. Proud Boys started showing up at her stops to provide security to the anti-trans feminists. And rather than saying, "Oh, no, thank you, we're feminists, our beliefs are completely opposite to yours," they said "Thank you" and stood there next to Proud Boys.

We saw some important bolstering of this idea that it is okay to say you are a woman and a feminist and that you have concerns about trans people. I still don't think in the United States—and I may be proven wrong here even in the next year—I still do not think that anti-trans feminism has the same erosion into mainstream feminism here in the U.S. as it does in the UK. Our mainstream feminist organizations are largely pro trans affirmation. They are pro trans justice. They make those statements. We have not seen the erosion of major feminist organizations as we have in the UK. So if that's a glimmer of hope for anyone, I would say that if you think about the anti-trans feminists who look like they're providing Christian Right organizations with a veneer of a much broader base of support, it is just a veneer. It is exactly that.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Heron. And thank you for sort of calibrating for ourselves and our audience exactly the threat that we're talking about here. I'm going to keep the question open. Is there anything else that folks want to take a moment with? We talked about, you know, threats of physical violence. Kwyn, you brought up complacency around violence. And so, I mean, we're moving into, I would say, what, year three of very large scale, anti-trans legislation organizing. You know, that's that's a long time to carry that ongoing trauma and to keep up the fight. We talked about right-wing capture of higher education, if anyone wants to pick that up. And then there's also space to talk about who's funding all of this. Right. Where is this—where's the money coming from? Yeah, Heron.

**Heron Greenesmith:** I just wanted to bring in that Utah today—the first ban on trans affirming care for youth went into effect today. There's three other states that have bans. They haven't come into effect yet. Two are pending lawsuits and one doesn't come in effect until March. So as of today, we have kids who can't access health care. We are going to have children who are detransitioned, children who are told that they cannot access the health care that they need to access. I also want to bring up, Kwyn mentioned the hospitals. Back to just like, kids. There's kids in those hospitals that have cancer and are dying of cancer. There are kids. There are babies in hospice. In those hospitals. Like I'm literally getting emotional about how violent it is to attack a provider of health care, the center of a community. We don't have a lot of third spaces in our communities, but hospitals are centers of communities for a lot of people, especially cities, especially for low income people who don't have access to health care, who don't have access to a doctor. People use hospitals as health care to attack—.

**Brandon Wolf:** I am so glad you brought that up, Heron. And I feel like for me, that's at the core of—that's at the core of my organizing. I think it's at the core of our message to people. I know there's better ways for us to explain, but bigotry consumes everyone. Anti-LGBTQ animus consumes everyone. There is no one who is safe from violently oppressive structures, right? Patriarchy, misogyny, anti-LGBTQ hatred, racism, White supremacy. Those things consume everyone. They benefit absolutely no one. And at some point everybody falls prey to the blaze that is lit, even if it's targeted at one particular group of people one day, eventually we all fall victim to it. And I feel like, at least for me, that's part of the messaging strategy that we've got to coalesce around, we've got to get stronger on as we push forward into 2023 as a movement, is figuring out how to articulate that in a way that it resonates with people that don't see the impacts of these things happening to them tomorrow, or even the next day. And I'm thinking about one thing in particular.

In 2021, so Equality Florida has been around for 26 years now. And up until 2021, we had successfully blocked every piece of explicitly anti-LGBTQ legislation that came through Tallahassee, which is, you know, a cornerstone of our work: being in Tallahassee all the time. I see members of our field and policy team and communications team are all tuned in today, really proud of the work that they do every single day to fight back against these things—in a state, by the way, that’s had a Republican trifecta for a very long time. And in 2021, we saw the first explicitly anti-LGBTQ bill get over the finish line, which was the ban on transgender kids participating in sports with their friends. And of course, it’s baked in all the same, you know, confirmation bias as everything else that’s, you know, steeped in misconceptions and misinformation about who trans people are. It’s fear mongering among, you know, parents of children telling them horrible things about trans people that aren’t true. And when you’re trying to mobilize the community around that, people weren’t showing up for trans people. Let’s just, you know, call it like it is. People were not showing up the same way they show up for pride festivals, the same way they showed up when the bill was called Don’t Say Gay. They did not show up for trans kids in in that moment.

But what happened? The bill made it through all of its committees, got over the finish line by being attached to a really horrific omnibus education bill after we’d killed it, seemingly. In the 11th hour it was resurrected, we call it a zombie bill, stuck on something else. It made it over the finish line. The governor signed it in really grotesque fashion with his very small child on his knee and big signs that say, ‘protect women’s sports.’ It was all really gross and sickening. Gets over the finish line. One of the very first things that happened after we screamed that bigotry consumes everyone and people turned a blind eye; ‘it’s just about keeping boys off of girls’ fields.’ One of the very first things that happened was a lacrosse tournament where there was a young Black girl playing on a lacrosse team, and parents on the opposing team—this child was cisgender—and parents on the opposing team began hurling anti-trans rhetoric for this student, challenging her gender identity, saying that she was a boy playing on the girls’ teams. And I underscore that because one of the very first people victimized after the passage of that piece of legislation was a cisgender girl. By the way, a Black, cisgender girl. Black women’s bodies have been policed by these same systems of oppression for all of time. And one of the things we warned about was that Black girls would be among the first people to feel the weight of a piece of anti-trans legislation that bore fruit almost immediately. So, again, I guess to underscore what you’re saying Heron, and these things impact all of us. You don’t have to be transgender. You don’t have to be LGBTQ at all to feel the weight of oppressive systems and structures, to feel the weight of bigotry because it ends up consuming everyone.



**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Brandon. I think you cannot say it better. I will not even try to summarize such a succinct, strong point that you made. Kwyn, Gin, would either of you like to chime in again here?

**Kwyn Townsend Riley:** I was just saying, period. To everything that's been shared. I don't think we—I—let me just check on myself. I do not think that we fight hard enough for trans folks, gender nonconforming folks, especially like within this queer civil rights movement currently. I don't think that even heterosexual, same sex loving folks, really challenge themselves on perpetuating the gender binary enough. And I think that's one that gets me frustrated with fighting for the struggle, is just recognizing the internal work. Because a lot of people always think like, yes, it's external, let's fight these policies. But have you checked yourself well enough on what you are perpetuating within your own home, within your own community, within your own love life? People are not really underscoring like how preference is seen as political, how it can be seen as polarizing, how it is something that can be dangerous. And when it even comes to preference to, you know, what you choose to consume. Let it be different podcasts, books, you know, shows, like whatever. But also just choosing to comment on people's bodies, like it's—the type of violence that I'm just seeing right now that's manifesting really does exist at words; and I don't think people really take the time to understand how much words really, really, really, really do matter, especially within our community.

And I don't mean just, you know, just the pronouns or just like somebody, you know, using their name or whatever. But more so, like when it comes to laws and policy work and allowing folks to be who they want to be. And I forgot to completely bring up sports. When everything was going on with the Olympics, that was a huge, huge, contentious debate. A lot of my family friends just asked, can you explain how a girl can play for men's sports and stuff? And we had to take it all the way back to like, okay, can you define what a girl is? Can we talk about like what it means when somebody transitions? And there's a lot of, I don't want to use the word ignorance, but a lot of people don't know a lot of stuff. And so one of the things I think that is required, unfortunately, of folks that are not only just a part of this movement, but folks who want to be allies, is taking the time to talk to somebody. And it's going to be exhausting. It really, really, really is. And I can't, you know, I wish I could change that and encourage folks like, Yeah, it's going to be a cute conversation, everybody's going to be safe. Like, no, but when you don't take the time to actually talk with some of these people and educate them on exactly what it is, what it means to transition, what it means to detransition, the importance of pronouns, the importance of this stuff, all of this violence, all of this ignorance is only going to



fester. It's going to become a bigger and bigger thing because people are going to think that they're right. And then nobody else has told them that they're wrong. And I think that's what's happening, is that nobody is telling somebody that they're wrong at this point.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you Kwyn. I mean, I can't underscore enough how important it is to talk—to name the labor of doing that internal work and the work within your immediate community, and the education that is required, as Heron says in the chat, it's exhausting. But by not doing that education, by not dismantling harmful language, we just create a platform on which to build physical violence. Gin, would you like to chime in here before we—Oh, and I also, I'm going to pass to you Gin, and I also want to invite anyone to talk about the parents' rights movement that we sort of named in early 2022 as a strategy. I'd love to hear, you know, how it evolved over the year and whether we see it moving forward. Gin, go ahead.

**Gin Pham:** Yeah, I just want to add even further on to just how much we can not—and specifically people of color, BIPOC folks—have not been able to lean or even depend on these institutions that have been created to protect us. We have seen the forms of community support have really even risen. And something that I really want to bring it back around to, now that we've named that this is a form of White supremacy, is that this is also—it played out even further throughout COVID, right, where it is a form of eugenics. Especially in terms of how we have not being able to provide even adequate health care for anyone in this country. Unless if you can pay the bill. And the way that has continuously been pushed even further is that, you know, when we talk about—and I think all of us have heard this word either on the debate floor—the word 'normal' over and over and over, is that the heavy political weight of that word is based around the idea of eugenics. And the further history of that, it includes, you know, even in 1940 when they created these two statues, Norma and Norman, where they measured up thousands of college university students, White college university students. They cannot even apply that standard of what is normal to themselves. Right. And so any form of gender incongruity or anything outside of that cis-het-normative or normativity also includes the ability to rationalize or justify the amount of violence that has been pushed upon our community. And so this harmful continuous trend is not new. It is a very long, deep history that includes both internal and external colonialism as well. And so I just wanted to make sure that has been said as we keep hearing this word: what is normal?

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Gin. That's so important. Y'all are doing an amazing job really identifying all of the different—what we think of sometimes as disparate right-wing movements, historical trajectories, and how they are coalescing in this moment. I mean, it's a bleak picture we paint, and I think it's an important one, right? I think that this is what the movement needs, is clarity, and what the challenge is ahead.

I'm going to pivot us. And before we move into plans for action, we've heard some today: we started talking about narrative action, community work. And I want to come back to that and really think about it as a group. But before we get there, I want to talk about what actions taken, coalitions developed, or cultural touchstones that occurred in 2022 that were and are worth celebrating and reflecting on. What gains were made by those of us fighting for gender and sexual justice that provided hope and a model for future action? What are you taking with you into 2023? Kwyn I saw a hand.

**Kwyn Townsend Riley:** Yeah. I wanted to start because I read earlier in the chat that some people are here from Chicago, where I'm originally from, and I always love my city, 773 to the death of me. And there are two bills that I am really, really proud that have been passed, in Chicago and Illinois by Governor Pritzker recently. One is House Bill 2542, and I think Heron brought this up earlier. When we talk about like abolition and defunding and you know, just removing the carceral system, how it does tie into trans liberation and LGBTQIA work. House Bill 2542 is the Illinois name change modernization bill. In this bill, repealed and amended restrictions and outdated provisions contained in the Illinois name change law, which is one of the most—This name change law was the most restrictive like, in the entire nation. But now millions of folks who were previously barred, can now pursue name changes. And this is a huge, huge win for LGBTQ folks in Illinois, and it also helps with decarceration efforts.

And then we also have House Bill 4664 that recently was signed into law, where it's state protection for gender affirming care and reproductive health care in Illinois. So it affects the abortion movement as well as LGBTQIA folks. And this act ensures that trans people in and outside of Illinois have legally protected access to medical care in the state. And this... Both of these are huge wins, of course, but we can have long, long ways to go. I do want to talk about, as I brought up in the first one, about arts and culture. I do think it's important for us to follow like the firsts and the wins, which have taken a long time. So let's shout out to MJ Rodriguez for winning her Golden Globe. I want to also talk about again, I can never say her name enough. Beyonce is very important to my soul. And I think it's very, very important that she did release an album that is drenched, heavily saturated with the ballroom scene. And just like, for

everything queer and everything sparkly and just everything amazing. And I think it just really makes...The view that I have, like on queer folks, is really one that is incandescent. And I'm just so grateful that we have artists that are now really embracing that, and they're just now making us shine louder, prouder than ever. So that's something that I'm just like always carry with me, always blasting Beyonce, always proud of all the things that are happening.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you so much, Kwyn. Brandon.

**Brandon Wolf:** Yeah, first of all, thank you, Kwyn. Every conversation needs some Beyonce in it, if we're being honest with one another. So thank you for invoking her. She deserves to be here, too. I wish I could talk about legislation that I'm proud of in Florida. There's not a lot of that. There are some really good things that have been filed, certainly, by our partners. But I think what I want to center is some of the coalition work that has happened. And, you know, I talked earlier about the sort of motivating factor in the LGBTQ civil rights movement, which is this idea that something greater is just over the horizon and that we may not be the ones to see it. We may not be the ones to fully realize it, but something better is there if we continue to expand hearts and minds. And another thing that's animated the LGBTQ civil rights movement is the way in which being pushed into a corner with our backs against the wall makes us stronger, that we find new allies, that we find, you know, new ways of reaching out to people, that we find new strength in our community in those moments. And so I'm really proud, at least in Florida, and I think really around the country, of the way in which I've seen new strategies coming forward at the intersections of different movements. I am not only a queer person in this country, I'm also a Black person in this country. And for most of my life, I've struggled, you know, being from a mixed race household, with not feeling Black enough for some spaces, not feeling White enough for other spaces, and certainly never feeling, you know, cisgender, heterosexual enough for any space. And it's given me a lot of hope in the last year to watch the movement for LGBTQ civil rights and racial justice intersect in Florida in the way that it has; to watch an organization like Equality Florida, whose mission is LGBTQ equality, take the lead on voicing concerns about the Stop Woke Act, for instance, that directly attacks an accurate telling of history in our state.

It's been incredibly powerful to see the voices of Black queer leaders in Florida, we're talking right now, as the governor took aim at AP African-American studies, banning it in the state of Florida. When he got pushback on that, he, of course, pivoted and said, Oh, I didn't mean all Black folks, I just meant the queer ones. And so that has, again, sort of birthed this moment at

the intersection of those two movements where we're talking with Black queer leaders around the country to bring Black queer history during Black History Month to the state of Florida. And what does that really look like? So that has really inspired me a lot, to watch the movements for racial justice and LGBTQ liberation intersect, and also the movements for reproductive freedom and LGBTQ civil rights intersecting as well. Because at the end of the day, autonomy is autonomy. And if we're talking about sexual autonomy for people who have the capacity to bear children, we're talking about sexual autonomy for transgender people, too. It's all about having autonomy over who we are, our sexuality, our gender expression, the ways in which we move throughout the world, and a freedom from government forced conformity into someone else's idea of who we're supposed to be. And so watching the reproductive justice movement work in tandem with the LGBTQ civil rights movement in the state of Florida, watching the way in which Planned Parenthood and Equality Florida move arm in arm to try to protect people, has given me a lot of hope, and also helps me keep my eyes locked on what I think the future of this country and the globe can look like. When we really see our collective liberation as as linked and intertwined.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Brandon. I think, you know, hearing from somebody organizing in one of the hardest places right now to do that work, hearing what's lifting you up and the wins you see in organizing with the wins in legislation and policy to come is really important; and I just commend you for being so clear-eyed and understanding the movement in Florida right now. And as a fellow Floridian, man, it hurts. So I feel you. Gin, can I call on you to go next?

**Gin Pham:** Yeah, for sure. You know, I really want to focus on what we were able to do. I think there is a form of fatigue following 2021 and that legislative session. And so, you know, focusing on that and moving towards February of 2022, the TENT, or Transgender Education Center of Texas, launched a campaign called Love Letters to Trans People. Right. And within that, we really wanted to, you know, be able to give these short love letters to folks that aren't necessarily feeling up to it. And tired, and rightfully so. And when we launched it, eight days before Valentine's Day on February 22nd of 2022, that is when Ken Paxton put out a letter to separate trans youth from their families. And what really—from that, it really did blossom into a brighter image of what we could see within human decency from even around the world. And what I mean by that is that we got love letters from all around the world. The whole world continues to look at us in terms of the ability... And it's the same feeling as I get when I look at queering the map. Of just the amount of love being poured

into our states and into, you know, the trans folks around our nation in terms of how they want to be supported.

And one thing that I really want to focus on, looking into this year, but especially last year, was trans joy and what that looked like. Right. And there are so many people invested in the joy of queer and trans people in our nation. There's so many people invested and appalled of what's happening to our communities. And there's so much of that solidarity that I mentioned it from the beginning of this panel to now. Of people who might not be able to be there right then and there, but they are still the ones showing up to volunteer events, to call their legislator. They're still the ones that are coming to their state's capitol. And they might be, you know, it might be the first time that they're hearing that you can do something about it. And it was through that love letter campaign that they finally found that self-determination to even share with someone across the world digitally or postcards that there are so many love letters of people coming out. There are so many love letters of, Wow, you're out. And I wish I could be, too, but I still love you. And that feeling continues to push me through, especially, you know, right after that campaign and the explosion of love letters from around the world. You know, Lizzo getting up on stage at South By, and saying trans kids deserve to be Texan, they deserve to be here and they deserve to be loved. I mean, that's a win that I continuously reflect on walking into 2023.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you so much, Gin. And please ignore the fire alarms if you can hear them. Something's going on in my house. And I just want to underline what you and TENT have done, which is prioritize the emotional capacity to keep doing this work. And the strategy in doing that is so important to the work that we're all doing. You can't—we can't continue down this path without stopping to prioritize the emotions of the work, the exhaustion, and to lift each other up, not only to build community, but to stay in the struggle. And Lizzo, Beyonce, I mean, come on. This is...2022 had some real ups, for sure. Heron, I'm going to pass to you.

**Heron Greenesmith:** Hey, I want to celebrate... I agree with everybody's—I want to celebrate the youth. Like the kids. The kids who had to, like, grow up really, really, really fast because their parents had to tell them things like, we're not going to be able to continue to go to the doctor. Or, we're going to need to drive 20 hours to go to the doctor. Or the kids who don't have parents who would have said yes anyway. The kids who are watching this debate around care, not to be maudlin, but from a street corner. They're the...Trans youth are vastly overrepresented in homeless youth, vastly overrepresented in foster

youth. We have some folks bringing up foster care in the chat as well. I always... Whenever people talk about... Whenever I read on the Right about this, like, you know, glut of care, this apparently overflow—so much care that we need to restrict it. I think of a number. And that number is, I think... I think it's 300. Imma check it later on, which is like .00001% of the population. That's how many people under 18 accessed top surgery last year. 300 total people. That's like, I think, fewer people than got struck by lightning. And fewer—I'm just going to start exaggerating. Fewer people that got bit by raccoons, and fewer people who stabbed themselves in the nose with their toothbrush because they sneezed at the same time. But we don't legislate against raccoons and we don't legislate, we don't regulate toothbrushes. In fact, we do regulate toothbrushes. We have an entire medical body that does regulate toothbrushes. The American Dental Association. And we trust them to make sure our toothbrushes are safe. We trust ourselves not to sneeze and shove a toothbrush into our brain. The fact that we are speaking over medical institutions, we're speaking over parents, we're speaking over kids, we're speaking over people who know what they're talking about, because either they lived it or this is their actual job. The disdain towards children is in such contrast to the messages that we were talking about, and in the chat. Protect the children. Save the kids. Oh, no. They're going to be groomed. Oh, no. They're going to be—to face sexual violence. While you have kids screaming on street corners for just somewhere to sleep that night. Not to mention the care. Trans affirming care. Celebrate kids. I'm being sad again. I always end up being sad.

**Koki Mendis:** I think that's an important note. I think we can also stick with this conversation. You know, who are we fighting for? And look ahead. We're one month into 2023. How can and should our queer-led and allied organizations and communities orient themselves to the struggle for basic rights, safety, authenticity, thriving this year? Heron, you named one of the most important orientations towards the well-being of children in this country. And what are some of the most compelling strategies that you're working on or already deploying to both block the continued erosion of LGBTQ rights and build that liberated future that we started today's conversation with?

**Brandon Wolf:** Well, I yeah, I first want to underscore Heron, thank you for bringing us back to young people. And thank you also, Stephanie, for calling out our trans elders, our LGBTQ elders. It is, you know, this is not to take away people's agency, but it is the people that are most vulnerable in our community who need our fight right now. People ask me all the time, is it time to leave Florida, are you going to move home? I'm from Portland, Oregon, is it time to pack



up and head back to the northwest? And my answer is no. It might be for other people. It might be for those with young children or those who are retiring, who it's no longer safe, but it's safe enough for me to fight. And I have an obligation to put my own comfort on the line in order to continue to fight for, you know, for a Florida that we all deserve. So I thank you for first underscoring the importance of fighting for those who need us most. And I also just want to underscore too, the power that young people have had to inspire me over the last year.

There was a moment in the fight against House Bill 1557, the 'Don't Say LGBTQ' law, where we were a month and a half in, and I just wasn't sure if it was worth it anymore. It was so demoralizing and so horrifying to watch every single day. You know, I was home in Orlando, but I was watching every single hearing and I was listening to these lawmakers, these people with incredible power in our state, say dehumanizing things about children in the same breath that they were talking about the parental rights in education law. And I remember getting up, it was a hearing day. And I just thought, I don't know if it's worth it anymore. I don't know if I can do this work anymore. I don't know if I can keep getting up every day and putting myself through this. I don't know if I have the emotional bandwidth to keep delivering in this way. And I kid you not, it was that very same day that we turned on the news and thousands of students had walked out of class across the state of Florida, and it was because they were unafraid to advocate for a world that they know they deserve. You know, my boss says all the time, you can't put the genie back in the bottle. TikTok is not going anywhere. Twitter is not going anywhere. Instagram isn't going anywhere. You can't pretend like LGBTQ people don't exist. Young people can imagine a world where LGBTQ people are treated with the same dignity and respect as everyone else. And that was exactly what they were advocating for that day. So again, thank you for underscoring young people and the power they bring to the conversation. And in terms of strategies that we're deploying to continue that fight for young people, for our elders, for our community, I think there are a couple of things that that we're trying. Number one, we launched our first ever cable ad campaign during last year's legislative session. You know, our opponents told us that it caught them by surprise. They were not expecting us to nickname the bill so effectively. They were also not expecting us to launch, you know, dystopian ads on cable networks across the state of Florida. And so that, I think has been interesting, is using new mediums.

This year, we're talking about language access. Our opponents have worked really hard to get their message out in Spanish language in a way that I think the infrastructure, especially the national democratic infrastructure, has not been willing to invest in. So our organization is talking about investing in language access to make sure that people are hearing us in the ways that that

make the most sense for them. And finally, my encouragement to others as we think about organizing, especially in places like Florida and Texas, is, the old ways of doing things aren't working. This idea that we're going to build a moderate coalition of Republican lawmakers in these state legislatures is not working. It's just not working. Those people are not there. They're under immense political pressure to move to the extreme right. And so we have to reconsider what power building looks like. It doesn't look any more like mobilizing to a hearing room and trying to move that one person on that particular subcommittee to do something different on a bill. It looks like going to their home district and knocking on the doors of their constituents and telling them about the authoritarian fascist legislation that they're supporting in the state House. It looks like going to our neighbors, to our friends, to our family members, and organizing them to get out on the street, to demand a world that's different, that's better to the people they love the most. So I think for me, what I want to see from Equality Florida, what I want to see from our movement down here, and from our allies, is we've got to talk to people. We've got to meet people where they are. We've got to organize and build power from the ground up. We've got to stop trying to negotiate with that one person on the Health and Human Services Committee that we know is not changing their minds, and start exacting political accountability on these people for the actions they're taking against our community. If you can't tell, I'm like almost through my coffee. So I'm lit people.

**Koki Mendis:** That's the energy we need, especially on a Tuesday evening. I think that's so important. I think it's the person to person conversations. It's that work that we talked about earlier and that Kwyn brought up. It's the talk—the taking the time to talk to the people around you that's hard, and tiring, and so important. It was the conclusion of a conversation we had last week on Culture War. Right? What can we do? Talk to people. It's not the fun, sexy, easy, quick answer, but it's the one that we have to take really seriously. As Liz says in the chat, old school organizing and canvassing. That's where it's at. Thank you Brandon. Kwyn, Gin, who would like to go next? Okay, perfect. Kwyn, go ahead.

**Kwyn Townsend Riley:** How did it happen? We both did it? I'm sorry Gin, did you want to go?

**Gin Pham:** Yeah, I just want to add it on Brandon, so. Yeah. Bruce. Liz. Brandon, you're completely right. It's about talking to people and meeting them where they're at. And, you know, one of the things that we were able to do last year in the fall of 2022 is that we took TENT on tour. We literally visited every

major metropolitan area around the state of Texas, and we invited families and community members and loved ones of those community members to have two days with us to to ask whatever they needed to ask, to talk about whatever strategies, whatever talking points that we need to talk over. We talked about where they can use this. And it's not just at our state Capitol, it's also at their school, independent school district board meetings. It is also at the kitchen table with their crappy uncle. It's also with their cruddy transphobic boss. Right. And the way that we are able to really further talk about this is also acknowledging that a lot of these processes may seem really daunting to these folks, especially going to the Capitol, as buildings as old or as big as that. I think that the huge part of it is that just having that one friendly face to say hi to when you walk through those big doors, is also like introducing yourself to those community members. Right.

And one huge strategy that really, really focused on was hosting those workshops when TENT went on tour at local community centers, local trans led orgs, so they also understand that there is folks doing the same type of work in their neighborhood, in their backyard. Right. And so being able to connect with those organizations and being able to see the faces that are providing those resources all the way from housing to food, all the way to educational workshops, to health care. Right. More often than not... Sometimes I hear, my kid's, the only trans person I know. And that is not how it's supposed to be, right? There's a wide community in which there has been, you know, established support networks in which, you know, what queer and trans led orgs can do is continuously connecting those bridges for these families and these folks that we're advocating for, especially when we're looking at that statewide level, we're looking at that national level. There are so many people doing the same thing. And more often than not, it sounds like, it feels like, that we're recreating the wheel, but we're doing it in different places and seeing that there's this huge front of queer and trans folks and supporters that understand, that know these are my priorities. Now I just I need to know who's next to me. And being able to see that, being able to sit down with other parents of trans youth, being able to sit down with other loved ones of trans folks, and those trans folks as well, it really brought the idea of this authentic form of community in which they can swap numbers and show up to the Capitol tomorrow. And it won't be too weird. There's not going to be any strangers.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Gin. I love the intentionality that you and TENT are bringing to building community and to having those conversations. That sort of careful thought going into how to make them sustainable conversations that outlives that initial point of contact, and how it turns into political power. I

think that's such a wise strategy to deploy. Kwyn.

**Kwyn Townsend Riley:** Yeah. I struggle with answering this question just because I'm a real... I'm a Scorpio y'all. So I'm usually always in my feelings, but I'm very, very protective over my people. And I want to be honest with you guys and say that BYP100 as an organization is in a place of grieving. We lost a member, Turner Cooper, who was the founding member of our Dallas chapter, and he's also a national member. And he was somebody who really just provided lots of breath for places that I personally could not feel as if I could breathe in. And I think it's important when we talk about organizing these mobilizers, folks that seem to be super heroes are really just humans. And we really have families and we really are somebody's child, we are somebody's partner, we are somebody's best friend. And so when we talk about things that we currently are working on intra-community wise, BYP is really just taking a moment to heal in safety because that's really important to this work, not only to keep us going, but just to keep us alive while there are so many things that are trying to destroy us, not just in our practice of our mental hygiene, but also in our physical hygiene as well. And so right now, seeing that it's Black History Month, we do have 28 days of Black love. If you follow us on social media, we do have healing and like Reiki sessions, sound baths that can happen virtually. And I would like to emphasize and remind folks that these spaces are just for Black, queer and trans and gender nonconforming folks. And so I like to—hopefully, you guys, you know, have some Black friends. Like please continue to share information about the BYP100 as well as like other organizations as well. But yeah, just keep us lifted. If you pray, think, if you have an altar during this time. Thanks.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you, Kwyn, and thank you for being with us today in grieving and sharing that with us. I think that's, you know, we do lose sight of that when we have incredible spokespeople like you all on panels and we have our movement leaders really holding a lot of space for the folks in our movements, and reminding ourselves and each other that people are also people at the end of the day. And I think that's that's both strategic, right? It's really strategic to make this a sustainable fight, and we've talked a lot about that today. And it's necessary. It's a part of why we do it. Heron, I'm going to send it to you.

**Heron Greenesmith:** So one thing that we've been doing is shoring up folk's confidence and in the face of disinformation, in the face of gaslighting, essentially, you know, we're facing a pretty enormous gaslighting campaign where we are told that medical science is incorrect, and that consensus of

medical associations who have done multiple studies and meta analyzes of those studies are wrong. But this other single study that got done that is not replicable but claims the opposite of the medical consensus. That's called gaslighting. And Kwyn, you were talking earlier about, you know, just being kind of frustrated with folks', I guess in one word, gullibility, right? Just like, our susceptibility as humans to believe things that don't make any sense at all. I'm sure there is some evolutionary benefit to not having any common sense because some of us do. But I have not determined what it is yet.

But I would like to say to all of us here, that feeling unsure in the face of gaslighting is a natural response. It is okay to not know what to say against an anti-trans talking point in the moment. It's actually even okay to never know what to say to it. People all the time ask me like, Why do people hate trans people? What do we say to someone who hates trans people? Those people are not the ones we're talking to. We don't need to understand why someone hates trans people. Perhaps some researchers are interested in doing some, you know, socio-psycho analysis of that. But that's not what we're doing here. We are saving lives and moving history and our future towards where our children can be safe and their children can be safe. And I want to reassure all of us that feeling unsure in the face of lies, not knowing what to say in the face of deceit, are natural things. And that's what PRA is doing. We provide context. We provide context to our partners. We provide context to folks who read our stuff. I pasted a couple of times a context providing a resource that we just released on Friday about how to combat anti-trans disinformation. That's something that we do. We also work with feminist organizations to help them build confidence. They can talk confidently to their board members and to their constituents about why it's important to support justice for trans lives, and why bodily autonomy is an important goal for all of us. I'll leave it there for now, because we need to have some closings.

**Koki Mendis:** Thank you so much, Heron. You know, this is...you've got 10 minutes left, 9 minutes left. So if everyone wants to drop in the chat the orgs that you want your fellow audience members to follow, like, support. This is your chance to do that. And PRA will continue to have these conversations, as I know, are plentiful in our movement space where we do create community and we come together to have these important conversations. Today's was superlative. The four of you were incredible. I can't thank you enough, Gin, Kwyn, Brandon, Heron, for taking the time to share your vision for what we're fighting for. For helping us understand the fight to contextualize who we are in opposition to, for strategizing with us, and for helping us learn from examples, recent examples from the past year as to what can work and where energy

should be directed. I think this was a really useful conversation.

You know, we were going for a briefing here so that folks can take parts of this conversation into their work, into their conversations at home, in the community, and feel some sense of surety that we're on the right path and that we know what needs to be done. And you all really provided that insight. And I just cannot thank you enough. To our audiences, thank you so much for attending today. This was both a heavy and in some ways really uplifting conversation. And again, I applaud the four of you for—and those of you in chat who are also bringing it home with your excellent comments. I applaud you for being able to do that. It's hard and it's necessary. Thank you. Again, please stay tuned. PRA is going to continue to have these kinds of conversations. In the meantime, check out [politicalresearch.org](http://politicalresearch.org). There are a ton of incredible resources for combating anti-LGBTQ movements, many of which have been drafted by our very own Heron. [Religiondispatches.org](http://Religiondispatches.org) is an excellent outlet to go if you're interested in the ways in which the Christian Right really intersects with the anti-trans movement, the anti-LGBTQ organizing that we're seeing. Chrissy Strop is an incredible writer on Religion Dispatches, and I would definitely direct you to her work as well. And to Gin, Kwyn, and Brandon, TENT, BYP100 and Equality Florida, who are doing incredible work and have more to share with you. So thank you. Thank you all.