

strategies of homophobia around the world, we will have to keep studying the Christian right.

Response to Cynthia Burack

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We thank Cynthia Burack for her thoughtful review of our volume. Her comments highlight, in large part, what we intend as most unsettling in the book, including the overlap or distinction between “political” and “state” homophobia and the relative utility of queer theory as an analytical tool. Burack is correct to home in on the difference between state and political homophobia. And yet, part of our objective is precisely to leave the field open in this initial foray. Doing so allows consideration of state and supportive non-state elites within the same frame, for instance, as well as of state actors mobilizing across state lines. The categories “state” and “political” overlap, in other words, but neither is a perfect subset of the other, and both merit attention.

Events have outpaced theorizing as well as empirical research, most recently with a wave of mirror-image legislation outlawing the promotion of homosexuality in Russia, Nigeria, Uganda and Gambia (themselves reflecting Thatcher’s Section 28 in Britain and US restrictions on HIV/AIDS education funding in the 1980s). Yet, while the political uses of homophobic policies and rhetoric are converging around a similar framework, advanced in a remarkably similar set of quasi-authoritarian regimes under crisis, much scholarship still remains more concerned with such manifestations as the use of “homophobia” as a tool of nationalist propaganda by LGBT activists and political leadership in the US and Europe. In other words, even as work on “homonationalism” bridges queer and postcolonial theorizing, significantly advancing a project of critique necessary to both engaged scholarship and intersectional activism, it still elides or evades much of the strategy and political purpose behind homophobic action. With remarkably few exceptions, the emerging literature has yet to theorize the policies and structures of regimes that, as we point out in *Global Homophobia*, more often than not condemn a local LGBT rights political project before one even exists. Indeed, we can consider Burack’s work as along the same lines as our intervention, as it

interrogates the homophobia of politicized US evangelicals in ways that queer and postcolonial theorists have yet to do so artfully in the case of articulated heterosexist regimes around the globe.

That said, a bit of explanation is in order. “Homophobia” is itself a complicated term, imbued with derogation, imprecise in its links to either symbolic systems or social structures, at some times either implying a kind of private, internal belief or posture, and at others, a contested public terrain. It is a decidedly “Western” concept, arriving after the full development of “the homosexual” as a social category and “LGBT rights” as a political claim. This derivation makes its applicability to other regions prone to neocolonial dominance as well as mischaracterization: where the homosexual does not exist as a social category, can hostility to same-gender sexual expression be considered homophobic? At the same time, when key political actors describe same-sex loving as an LGBT (or gay) agenda, clearly the development of a homophobic set of politics and rhetoric becomes part of the kinds of broader heterosexist social projects that we consider in our collection.

Finally, the difference between “state” and “political” is theoretically and empirically relevant. Our decision not to favor either reflects our own and our contributors’ differences, some of us working more closely in the literature on social movements and contentious politics, and others emphasizing the forceful role of the state in structuring civil society and the possibilities for as well as parameters of political contestation. Is either *political* or *state* constitutive of the other? In short, the answer is clearly, no. But neither is the homophobia we consider primarily a measure of private beliefs or postures more relevant to the term “homophobia” devoid of modifier. Indeed, to advance theoretical development and empirical research on the emerging wave of global homophobia of this kind — with attention to its structures, trajectories, and consequences — scholars need to consider political homophobia as an aspect of social action and contestation and state homophobia in the manifestation of official ostracism and repression. We hope our volume helps to advance this much-needed trajectory of inquiry, as well as a more critical activism.