

Response to Meredith Weiss and Michael Bosia

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Cynthia Burack

Meredith Weiss and Michael Bosia raise a number of questions in their thoughtful review, and their invocation of a “cross-cultural lens” is consistent with their own fruitful contributions in *Global Homophobia*. In a brief reply, I will take up two of these questions: the first essentially asks how modular the compassionate frame, with its related strategies, tactics, institutions, is; and the second asks about the salience of gender(s) in the compassion campaigns I analyze as well as the relevance of gender and sexuality in the work of those I use as primary theorists.

With regard to the portability of United States (US) Christian right-style compassion, of course this is an empirical question that would have to be evaluated for every case. However, I think it’s possible to make a few initial observations that might help us get started. We know from empirical research in religious studies that in recent decades the center of gravity of Christianity, as well as that of conservative evangelical Protestantism, has shifted from the US and Europe to Africa, Asia, and Central and South America, and that Christian conservatives for whom the US is no longer sufficiently morally hospitable have shifted much of their activism and resources to more productive venues. However, the ex-gay movement — in many respects in retreat in this country—has been exported throughout the world since its inception in the US in the 1970s. Today, after the domestic US implosion of Exodus International, Exodus Global Alliance continues to operate throughout Latin America, Asia, Australia, Canada, and parts of Africa with ministries modeled on those developed in the US.

Abortion opposition introduces more of a wild card into the analysis because of the unique history of the US with regard to criminalization, decriminalization, culture wars, and Christian conservative movement strategy. However, even on this topic, it’s possible to miss how the rhetorics and ideology travel to and put down roots in different parts of the world and inform not only reproductive rights struggles but conservative social movements more broadly. To take only a single example, the compassionate anti-abortion project 40 Days for Life, which was founded in Texas, networks and operates throughout Eastern and Western Europe and the United Kingdom, as well as in Russia and parts of Africa.

Dense networks of such organizations with an international reach can mobilize critics of reproductive rights even in places where the public policy issue of abortion seems settled. Such networks also provide training to clergy, activists, and opinion leaders and transmit ideologies in which opposition to sexual and reproductive freedoms is presented as an integral component of a Biblical worldview.

Second, I agree that inflexible binary conceptions of gender as a function of biology underwrite anti-LGBTQ thought and must be taken into account in research on sexuality. Some LGBTQ rights advocates have argued that to understand opposition to, for example, same-sex marriage, we should look to extremely polarized conceptions of gender on the right that require believers to support opposite-sex marriage and the suppression of LGBT rights. This is a fruitful perspective on right-wing hostility to LGBTQ rights and one that helps to explain contexts as diverse as gender-linked socialization in the ex-gay movement and the pervasive gendered associations that ground much of both the labor and the messaging of post-abortion ministries. Students of the Christian right also come to understand that, even today, Christian conservatives understand transgender identity and gender non-normativity as inextricably connected to same-sex sexuality and not as independent phenomena.

Let me indulge in a shortcut to explain something of how gender works in the theoretical analysis that identifies strong parallels between Rand's thought and the contemporary Christian right and then uses Klein's thought to tease out the social and political consequences of this convergence for the rest of us. Rand shows how traditional binary and complementary gender configurations can pair with winner-take-all market fundamentalism to produce bridges between social and economic conservatism that are commonplace on the Christian right. On the other hand, an attractive feature of relational psychoanalysis is that it subordinates binary conceptualizations of gender to other dimensions of individual and group psychology. This feature makes it possible for social theorists to use this tradition to analyze a wide range of social problems related, but not reducible, to gender and sexuality.

One way to connect these two books is to consider the broad category of "homophobia" — of which "political homophobia" is a subset — as internally complicated wherever it appears and as having psychological, as well as political, dimensions. Homophobias reflect social, cultural and geopolitical diversity. But as long as US Christian conservatism has a disproportionate role in disseminating the rhetorics, institutions, and

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

Response to Cynthia Burack

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Michael J. Bosia and Meredith L. Weiss

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