



Social Justice Program





arcus FOUNDATION Social Justice Program

The Arcus Foundation's social justice strategy aims **to enable individuals and families of every sexual orientation and gender identity, race, and ethnicity to live their lives with dignity and respect, and express their love and sense of self wherever they are in the world.**

The steps toward reaching this goal vary considerably, depending on the cultural and legal contexts within specific countries and communities, as well as within individual families. Yet, a unifying theme of the foundation's three principal Social Justice Program areas—International Human Rights, Global Religions, and U.S. Social Justice—is that cultural shifts and legal or policy changes are mutually enforcing and must be pursued together to advance LGBT freedoms and safety.

■ ■ ■ International Human Rights

More than 70 countries criminalize private consensual same-sex relations among adults, primarily through sodomy laws that date back to British colonialism in large parts of Africa and Asia. In seven countries, punishments can include the death penalty. In many other jurisdictions where such laws do not exist, homophobic violence is often carried out with impunity, or additional measures, such as curbs on public assembly, act discriminatorily against people perceived as gender non-conforming. This repression is compounded by widespread employment

and health care discrimination, and the inability for many LGBT people worldwide to enjoy relationships and families.

Working at national, regional, and international levels, Arcus contributes to the development of a global movement integrating sexual orientation and gender identity into shared conceptions of human rights.

Arcus invests in policy and cultural changes in targeted countries—primarily in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe—as well as in change-makers and their leadership at the United Nations and within human rights organizations with regional scope.

Among Arcus' priorities in this portfolio are supporting the human rights of transgender people, lifting LGBT and pro-LGBT faith voices particularly at the U.N., and increasing the funding available to the LGBT-related work of other foundations, governments, corporations, and individuals.

ARCUS SUPPORTS:

- Policy changes at the national level to counter discrimination and violence and to support rights such as privacy, free expression, health, and legal recognition of gender identity. Where policy changes are unrealistic, projects may seek cultural change with clear, measurable indicators and outcomes.



This support is provided through intermediary organizations that have the capacity to work at the country level with targeted populations.

- International and regional organizations' efforts to document human rights abuses related to sexual orientation and gender identity, and to advocate for improvements before the U.N. (for example, through the Universal Periodic Review process) and regional bodies. Particular attention is paid to ensuring national compliance with human rights obligations.
- Capacity development to better prepare public officials and activists to advocate for respect of human rights and nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Particular attention is paid to gaining support for LGBT rights from countries with regional influence; from mainstream human rights, democracy, women's, faith, and other movements; and from influential political and social groupings to mobilize others against homophobia and transphobia.

■ ■ ■ Global Religions

Discrimination and violence against LGBT individuals have long been justified by

vocal and restrictive religious interests, misusing interpretations of sacred texts, tradition, and doctrine. From Uganda to Malaysia, from U.S. state legislatures to the U.N., some religious leaders are among the most vocal supporters of laws and policies that criminalize same-sex activity, refuse to recognize LGBT relationships, and legalize discrimination and violence against LGBT people.

Arcus aims to build on and amplify religious traditions that historically have sought to embrace the full diversity of faith communities. In recent years, some religious leaders have used sacred texts to promote moral lessons that teach inclusion of persons of differing sexual orientations and gender identities. In addition to notable advances among mainline U.S. Protestant denominations and other Christian groups, there has also been increased dialog on these issues within the Islamic diaspora, and emerging yet cautious engagement by activists and allies in predominantly Muslim countries.

Grants in Arcus' Global Religions portfolio elevate the voices and increase the diversity of those primarily within the Abrahamic faith traditions who possess the political and/or moral authority to challenge policies that bar LGBT people from assuming their full and equal

human rights. In addition, the foundation supports groups that fight efforts within religious structures to deny protection and equality to LGBT people.

The foundation connects leaders within targeted communities—particularly in countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and among Muslim communities, U.S. communities of color, and transgender populations—with religious bodies, international human rights agencies, and grassroots organizations to increase inclusion of LGBT people within local, regional, national, and international forums.

ARCUS SUPPORTS:

- The growth of a diverse global network of pro-LGBT religious leaders to develop partnerships, share resources, and engage in public dialog on LGBT rights.
- Development of messages that draw from Abrahamic teachings that humanize LGBT persons and highlight their roles within families and communities.
- Efforts by faith leaders to integrate LGBT rights into their advocacy efforts and to decriminalize homosexuality and destigmatize transgender people across the globe.



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■ ■ ■ U.S. Social Justice

Victories for LGBT rights in the United States are on the rise, from the legalization of same-sex marriage in more than 15 states, Washington, D.C., and tribal jurisdictions to the opening of military service to LGBT citizens and the abolition of the Defense of Marriage Act. Advances in law and policy are momentous, but history has shown that if they are not accompanied by changes in cultural attitudes and behaviors—driven by a diverse and organized grassroots base—too often they fail to effect real social change.

By 2030, the majority of U.S. residents under 18 will be youth of color, and by 2042, people of color of all ages will be the majority of the U.S. population.

Research confirms that youth are already leading the charge on LGBT acceptance and that young people's views are changing faster than those of any other group.

Arcus works at the intersection of sexual/gender justice, racial justice, and economic justice, investing primarily in leadership “by and for” youth, people of color, and targeted faith communities, with special priority for youth of color, and transgender populations. To meet its goals, the foundation supports communications efforts aimed at influencing youth, people of color, and faith communities with messages of inclusivity in numerous contexts, from the arts and entertainment to religion.

Arcus supports projects that are transformative rather than remedial in nature and that catalyze support from other funders and sectors. Included are those efforts that increase the capacity of LGBT and allied organizations working on intersecting issues to build a movement with a strong organizing base, infrastructure, and sophisticated national advocacy strategy.

ARCUS SUPPORTS:

- Relevant and culturally competent, positive messaging efforts as well as both grassroots and high-profile

messengers with the capacity to influence youth, people of color, and faith communities to support LGBT inclusivity. These communications efforts may be delivered within numerous contexts, including the arts, entertainment, sports, and religion.

- Leadership “by and for” targeted populations and organizations such as those led by youth, people of color, and people of faith, as well as those groups with credibility within target populations.
- Advocacy efforts to increase social and economic protections affecting LGBT youth of color through the building of a network of local and national organizations advancing such protections and lessening the marginalization and rejection of these young people.
- Projects that address the intersection of sexual orientation and gender identity with issues of racial, gender, and economic justice. Examples of these intersections include efforts to address youth incarceration, employment discrimination, homelessness, and immigration justice.