

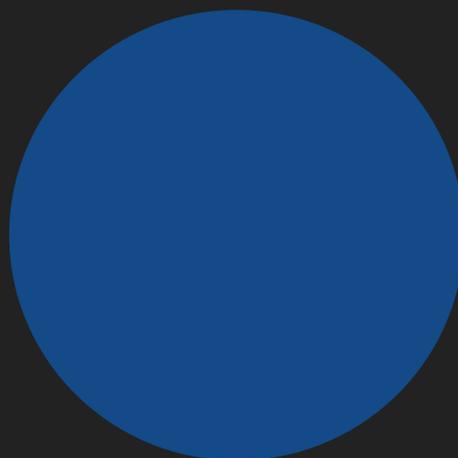
UNDERSTANDING THE STATE OF GLOBAL LGBTQI+ PERSECUTION

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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RAINBOW
RAILROAD



Rainbow Railroad helped me escape a homophobic, abusive environment, navigate an asylum system that failed me, and endure the hardships of living in a second country while my case was being processed... Without Rainbow Railroad's assistance, there was no conceivable way I could have achieved what I have today - whether through asylum, work, or education... I'm still in disbelief that all of this is possible, and I'm grateful that so many others are being helped too. I hope that one day this kind of assistance will no longer be necessary, but for now, it remains absolutely crucial.

Samir
Currently living in Canada
GAR Beneficiary

As thousands of LGBTQI+ individuals around the world await support, a few newcomers remind us of the hope and resilience of our global community:

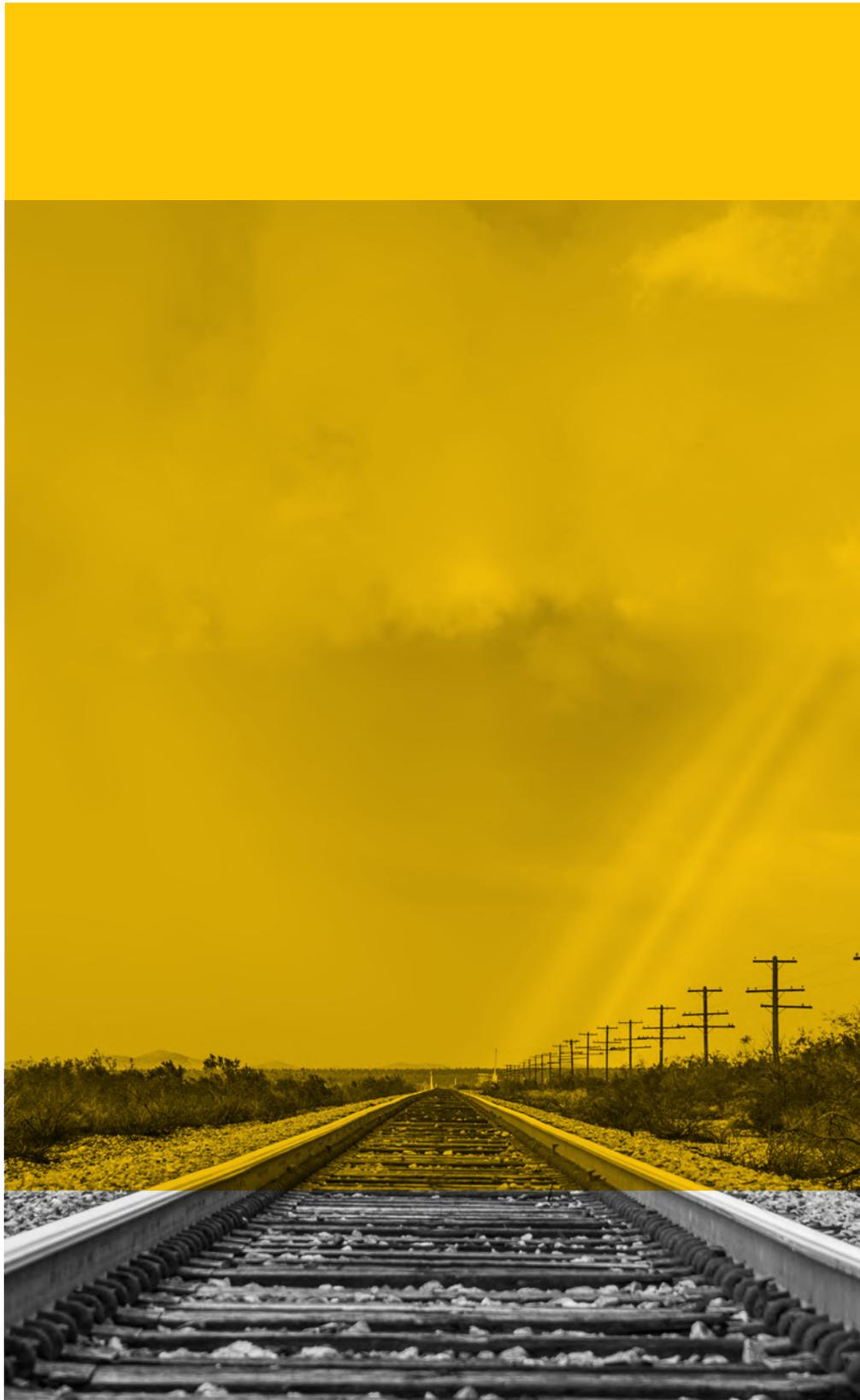
"You are not alone, and your identity is valid and beautiful. There are people and there's Rainbow Railroad out there who will fight for your safety and freedom. Keep believing in yourself, and never give up on the possibility of a better, safer future." Rahma Esslouani (they/she), Government Assisted Refugee Program (GAR) Beneficiary

"Being part of [Communities of Care] has profoundly impacted my sense of belonging and well-being. It has made me feel deeply appreciated and valued. The program has fostered a strong sense of community and connection, easing the challenges of adjusting to a new environment. This support system has significantly contributed to my overall happiness and sense of security." Zair, resettled to Washington through Rainbow Railroad's Welcome Corps partnership

"I feel I am a human, and I feel like me. I feel I can live normally, without hiding myself. I feel so good. I feel I have my right personality and that I'm in the right place. Where I came from, I had to pretend to not be me. Here I can be me in my whole body in front of everyone." Bronz, a trans woman resettled to Michigan through Rainbow Railroad's Welcome Corps partnership



Bronz (one from left), a newcomer, is welcomed at the airport by the volunteer private sponsor group that supported her resettlement.



CONTENTS

Glossary	06
Foreword	10
A Message from Rainbow Railroad's Outgoing and Incoming Board Chairs	12

CRIMINALIZED AND TARGETED: EXCLUSIVE DATA ON LGBTQI+ LIVES AT RISK	14
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Tracking Our Requests for Help	17
From Mission to Action: Our Programs and Impact	20
The State of Global LGBTQI+ Persecution	23
Behind Every Request: Demographics That Tell a Story	26
Drivers of Displacement	30
Services Requested	31
No Safe Travel Routes	32

OUR WORK IN ACTION	34
--------------------	----

1. Expelled and Unwelcome: LGBTQI+ Refugees Caught in a Global Attack on LGBTQI+ and Asylum Rights	36
2. No Other Options: Resettlement as a Critical Path to Safety for LGBTQI+ Individuals	41
3. While Laws Turn Against Us, People Show Up: The Growing Movement to Support LGBTQI+ Refugees in the U.S	42
4. One Year On: LGBTQI+ Resettlement in Canada Demonstrates the Success of State-Civil Society Partnership	44
5. Organizing Is Survival: Why LGBTQI+ Movements Deserve Crisis-Level Support	45
6. The Queer Forced Displacement Crisis at Scale: Convening a Global Network	47
7. Addressing the Anti-LGBTQI+ Backlash on the World Stage	48

HOW WE WORK IN COMMUNITY	50
--------------------------	----

Community Mobilization and Partnerships	52
Strengthening LGBTQI+ Refugee Voices and Leadership	52
Grassroots Mobilization	56
Queer Liberation is Grounded in Community	58
Our Team	60
Thank You	62
Donors	62
Volunteers	74
Financials	76

GLOSSARY

AGENDER	A term describing people who do not identify with any gender. This term may also encompass people who experience a lack of gender and people whose gender is neutral. Agender people have a range of sexual orientations, gender expressions and sex characteristics.
ALIAGENDER	A non-binary gender identity that doesn't fit into existing gender schemas or constructs. Persons are not a mixture of male and female, nor an absence of gender, but instead identify with a strong, specific gender identity that is not man or woman.
ASEXUAL	Often called "ace", asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, little or conditional sexual attraction.
ASYLUM SEEKER	An asylum seeker is a person who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but hasn't yet been legally recognized as a refugee and is waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim.
BISEXUAL	A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual.
CAR	Caribbean
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CIS-MAN	Cisgender Man. A person designated male at birth who identifies as a man.
CIS-WOMAN	Cisgender Woman. A person designated female at birth who identifies as a woman.
CISGENDER	A person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.
CITIZEN	A citizen is a person who, by place of birth, nationality of one or both parents, or naturalization is granted full rights and responsibilities as a member of a State.
COMC	Rainbow Railroad's Communities of Care (ComC) are U.S. citizen volunteer groups recruited under the Welcome Corps program that specifically provide resettlement support to LGBTQI+ refugees.
EE	Eastern Europe
ETS	Emergency Travel Support
FDP	Forcibly Displaced Person; an umbrella term to refer to any person experiencing forced displacement regardless of their particular legal status.
GAY	A person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. People of all genders may use this term to describe themselves.
GENDER IDENTITY	A person's internal, deeply felt sense of being female or male, both, or something other than female and male, such as third gender or non-binary.
GENDER NON-CONFORMING	A person who does not conform to stereotypical appearances, behaviors or traits associated with sex assigned at birth.

GENDERFLUID	A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.
HETEROSEXUAL	Also "Straight;" a person whose romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction is to people of a different gender.
HRD	Human Rights Defender
IDP	Internally Displaced Person; someone who has been forced to flee their home but remain within their country of origin.
INTERGENDER	A non-binary gender identity that describes the experience of having a gender that falls somewhere in between woman and man or is a mix of both man and woman.
INTERSEX	An umbrella term that refers to a range of variations in chromosomes, gonads, and/or genitals that vary from what is considered typical for female or male bodies.
LA	Latin America
LESBIAN	Women and non-binary people who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women and non-binary people.
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Plus
MATCHING	In the context of Welcome Corps "matching" refers to refugees who were already in the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and who were known to be part of the LGBTQI+ community, and were paired with Rainbow Railroad and our Communities of Care.
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NA	North America



GLOSSARY

NO LEGAL STATUS	Someone without any legal immigration status (either temporary or permanent) in their country of residence. This is sometimes also referred to as an undocumented migrant or a person without status.
NON-BINARY	An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.
OCEA	Oceania and Pacific Islands
PANSEXUAL	Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.
PERMANENT RESIDENT	A person who has been granted the right to reside permanently in a certain country, but is not a citizen. Permanent residents are often afforded basic rights similar to those of citizens, with some limitations and restrictions.
PSG	Private Sponsor Groups (PSGs) are U.S. citizen volunteer groups that help support incoming refugees in their resettlement through the Welcome Corps program.
QUEER	A term people often used to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as an umbrella term, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities.
SCA	South-Central Asia
SEX	The biological classification of bodies as male or female based on such factors as external sex organs, internal sexual and reproductive organs, hormones, and chromosomes.
SEX CHARACTERISTICS	Each person's physical features relating to sex, including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, genitals and secondary physical features emerging from puberty.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION	An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. An individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STATELESS PERSON	A person is "stateless" if no State considers them a citizen. States have specific obligations towards their citizens and grant citizens significantly more rights than non-citizens. Since no State recognizes them, stateless persons are deprived of many basic rights and have no State to protect them.

STRAIGHT	Also “Heterosexual”. A person whose romantic, emotional and/or physical attraction is to people of a different gender.
TEMPORARY RESIDENT	A foreign national who is legally authorized to enter and live in a certain country for temporary purposes (work, studies, etc.).
THIRD-PARTY NAMING (TPN)	In the context of Welcome Corps, “third-party naming,” (TPN) provided Private Sponsorship Organizations such as Rainbow Railroad the opportunity to refer individuals in our case management system, to be considered and processed by the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).
TRANSGENDER/ TRANS	The gender identity of people whose sex assigned at birth does not conform to their identified or lived gender. A transgender person usually adopts, or would prefer to adopt, a gender expression in consonance with their gender identity but may or may not desire to alter their physical characteristics to conform to their gender identity.
TRANSGENDER MAN	A man who was designated female at birth.
TRANSGENDER WOMAN	A woman who was designated male at birth.
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USRAP	United States Refugee Admissions Program
RFH	Request for Help. This is Rainbow Railroad’s terminology for tracking the number of individuals who reach out to us to request our help.
REFUGEE	Refugees are persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection. Some refugees are registered by UNHCR under their mandate.
WE	Western Europe
WHO	World Health Organization

FOREWORD

THE GLOBAL POLITICAL CONTEXT IS CHANGING.

We are witnessing a global anti-gender backlash that is eroding human rights frameworks, and forcibly displacing LGBTQI+ persons around the world at an alarming rate.

Today, over 60 countries still criminalize same-sex intimacy, with 12 countries including the death penalty as punishment. Fourteen countries explicitly criminalize transgender people. Global forced displacement has also increased every year for the last 10 years, and right now 1 in every 67 people globally is forcibly displaced.¹

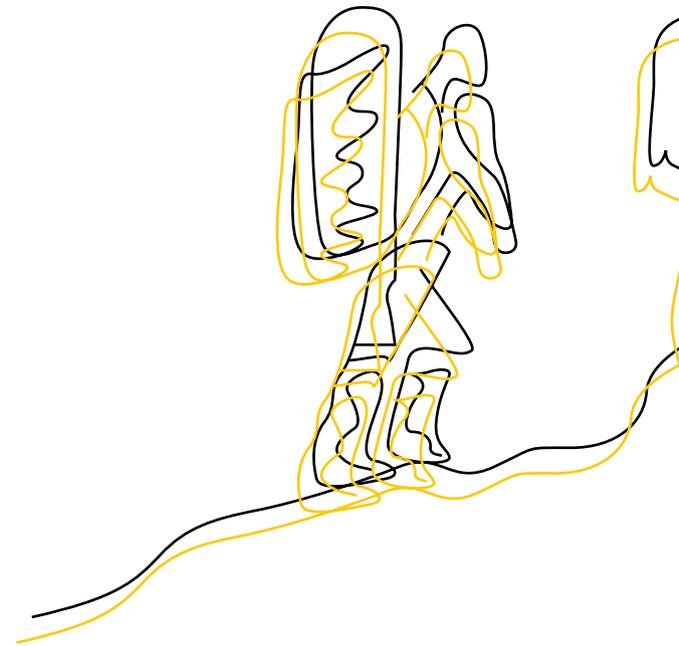
Amidst this evolving global context, we support at-risk LGBTQI+ persons to access pathways to safety. We provide emergency and livelihood assistance to individuals in-place when they need help, we connect them with local LGBTQI+ organizations providing protection on the ground and, for the most urgent cases, we support in finding bespoke pathways to international refuge. Each year we receive tens of thousands of requests for help from queer and trans individuals seeking urgent international protection. In 2024, 13,402 people asked for our help.

To meet this moment and the dual attacks on LGBTQI+ and asylum rights, we need to utilize short-term emergency interventions and proactive long-term strategies. This is why in 2024, Rainbow Railroad (RR) launched the Queer Forced Displacement Initiative (QFDI). The QFDI is a groundbreaking project to design and build an international multi-stakeholder network of refugees, civil society organizations, UN agencies, and allied governments dedicated to improving protection and developing durable solutions for LGBTQI+ refugees.

The QFDI is our flagship commitment to employing a refugee-led orientation to queer forced displacement work. As demonstrated through the new suite of Queer Refugee Leadership & Empowerment programs, those with lived expertise in forced displacement are on the forefront of driving change at Rainbow Railroad.

Since 2006, we have received over 59,000 requests for help (RfH) from individuals in over 190 countries facing persecution due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or sex characteristics (SOGIESC). In collaboration with a global network of grassroots organizations and human rights defenders, we have facilitated access to safer locations for over 2,300 people.

Thanks to the generosity of our community of committed donors, we supported 5,916 people across our programs last year. We did this by investing in key partnerships with 24 LGBTQI+ organizations in 18 countries, and expanding our crisis response programming. We welcomed 60 LGBTQI+ refugees into Canada and the U.S. through novel government resettlement pathways, and evacuated 242 people from 29 different countries through Emergency Travel Support (ETS).

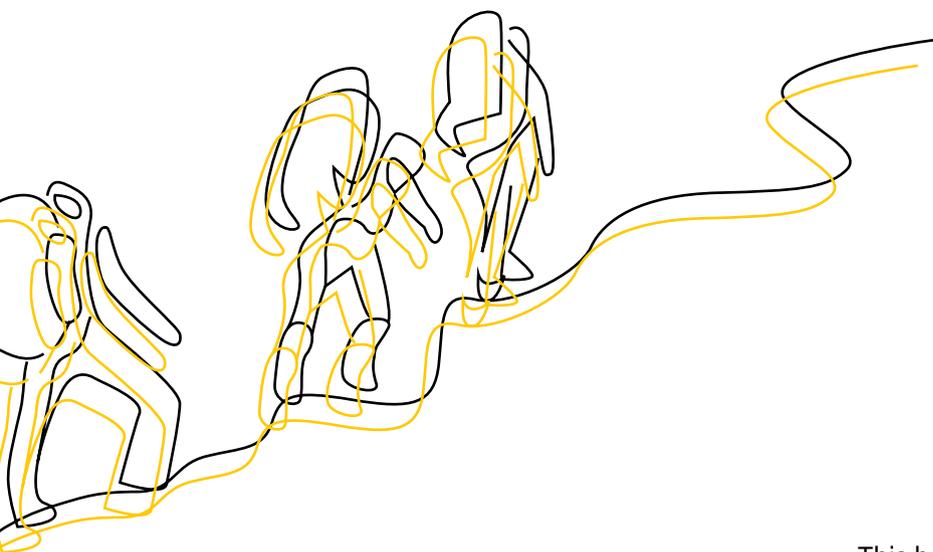


CHANGES IN THE U.S. ARE DRAMATICALLY IMPACTING LGBTQI+ ORGANIZING AROUND THE WORLD.

In 2024, we partnered with the U.S. government to identify and resettle at-risk LGBTQI+ refugees. We recruited and mobilized queer, trans, and allied community members to form Communities of Care (ComC) to welcome queer refugees, and we built relationships with local organizations across the country to provide broader access to community networks and support. As the only LGBTQI+-focused Private Sponsor Organization, we developed queer competency guidance across the entire Welcome Corps program.

However, the election of the new U.S. Administration has dramatically accelerated global regression on LGBTQI+ and asylum rights. Within 24 hours of taking office, the President suspended the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), and instructed federal agencies to recognize two sexes, fixed at conception. The State Department then slashed almost all foreign aid spending, halting critical services to refugees worldwide, and issued a stop work order to all U.S. refugee resettlement agencies. After breaking the top 10 countries of requests for help for the first time in 2022, the U.S. became our top country of request in 2024. We received over 2,800 U.S. requests for help last year, representing 21% of all requests for help received in 2024.

Notably, the vast majority of the RfH we received from individuals in the U.S. were based on a well-founded fear of persecution *in the future*. This fear is tied to the shifting rhetoric and policies around gender and immigration, which for many LGBTQI+ persons, are increasing the likelihood of



harm to come. Typically however, individuals request our help after having experienced persecution and violence from living in a country where same-sex relationships are criminalized. Asylum claims can be granted based on past persecution or the credible threat of persecution to come – where there are no available internal relocation alternatives. The range of LGBTQI+-friendliness varies widely across the entire United States, making it incredibly difficult for folks inside the U.S. to make a successful claim outside the country. This is why our main program of support to these individuals last year came in the form of information services and referrals.

And yet, the U.S. remains a key destination for individuals seeking asylum, including through Rainbow Railroad. ‘Safety’ is a relative and deeply subjective experience, and for many LGBTQI+ persons, the U.S. still represents an opportunity to be more free to live a life of their choosing. LGBTQI+ persons will continue to hope for a better life and seek asylum in the U.S. Amidst a landscape of rapidly deteriorating rights, we will not abandon the networks of support we have established for LGBTQI+ refugees and asylum seekers, which are needed now more than ever. We will continue advocating for LGBTQI+ and asylum rights in the U.S., and we will develop new strategies to support queer asylum seekers in accessing their right to refuge.

THE ANTI-GENDER MOVEMENT, DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING, AND INTERNATIONAL CRISIS RESPONSE.

The backlash in the U.S. is the latest in a series of legislative regressions which cannot be viewed in isolation. With demonstrable links to anti-democracy efforts, LGBTQI+ people remain among the first communities to be scapegoated by authoritarians seizing power. We have been tracking a series of anti-LGBTQI+ regressions and crisis situations around the world in: Chad, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Russia, Afghanistan, Georgia, Sudan, and Myanmar, among others, all in line with a global anti-gender movement that is gaining momentum.

This hate is well-organized and well-funded, and being heavily resourced by organizations based in the U.S. and beyond.² We have seen this movement exemplified in many different events worldwide including: the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda, the Russian Supreme Court labeling the LGBTQI+ Movement as “Extremist”, Ghana passing the Family Values Act, Iraq criminalizing same-sex relationships under the guise of morality, and the U.S. declaring recognition of only two sexes.

These events are changing how the international LGBTQI+ community must adapt and respond to threats to our rights. As a result, the queer and trans liberation movement, and Rainbow Railroad’s work within it, has come to be defined increasingly by international crisis response.

THE ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report serves as one of the only published data sources on LGBTQI+ forced displacement in the world. In 2021, we began publishing our proprietary data to map the state of global LGBTQI+ persecution according to our requests for help. This report has since become a critical document in the LGBTQI+ forced displacement sector, used by academics, civil society organizations, and government actors as a key tool in policy development and advocacy for LGBTQI+ refugees.

Long-term relationship-building with states, UN agencies, and international organizations has allowed us to disseminate our data and share our expertise on the world stage. Rainbow Railroad is well connected to a global network of LGBTQI+ organizations and rights defenders. This unique position allows us to elevate the voices of the individuals we serve and the partners we work alongside, to drive systemic change at a global level.



Becky McFarlane
Chief Operating Officer and Head of Operations
Rainbow Railroad

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Becky McFarlane'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



Rainbow Railroad Board Chair Bruce Koff speaks at the When I Am Free jazz benefit concert in Chicago in October 2024

A MESSAGE FROM RAINBOW RAILROAD'S OUTGOING AND INCOMING BOARD CHAIRS

In compiling this report, and looking back on the last year, it is clear that 2024 was a time of radical change that will continue to impact our work. LGBTQI+ people around the world are uniquely impacted by geopolitical shifts; our community is feeling significant impacts as a result of the current political climate. Changes in the United States are having a ripple effect, threatening hard-won rights and reshaping the landscape for queer organizing around the world. We see this reflected in the data shared in this report, in the major spike in requests for help from the United States, as well as the increasing number of crackdowns and crises we are responding to globally.

Over the past year, Rainbow Railroad has maintained our foundation as an organization in spite of a challenging landscape for sustaining the capacity of our work. Revenue was consistent from 2023-2024, and we have come out of this period with a renewed outlook on our future as an organization, thanks to the ongoing commitment of our dedicated community of supporters.

We are taking a bold, innovative approach to our work, launching a new multi-stakeholder framework to develop durable solutions for LGBTQI+ refugees worldwide, and building out our programming to expand our support for LGBTQI+ refugees, asylees, and asylum seekers post-relocation.

Our work is only possible because of the unwavering dedication of our donors and volunteers. Your compassion and tireless support fuel our mission, and we hope that this report gives you a window into the vital work you are a part of. We also cannot overlook the expertise and commitment of the incredible staff that make up Rainbow Railroad. This commu-

nity is necessary in the fight for LGBTQI+ liberation, and we are so grateful to have so many smart, thoughtful, and passionate individuals standing behind us.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to both urgent interventions and long-term structural change. With more than 13,000 people seeking our help in 2024 alone, the need has never been more pressing. We will continue to meet this moment with perseverance, boldness, and collective strength.

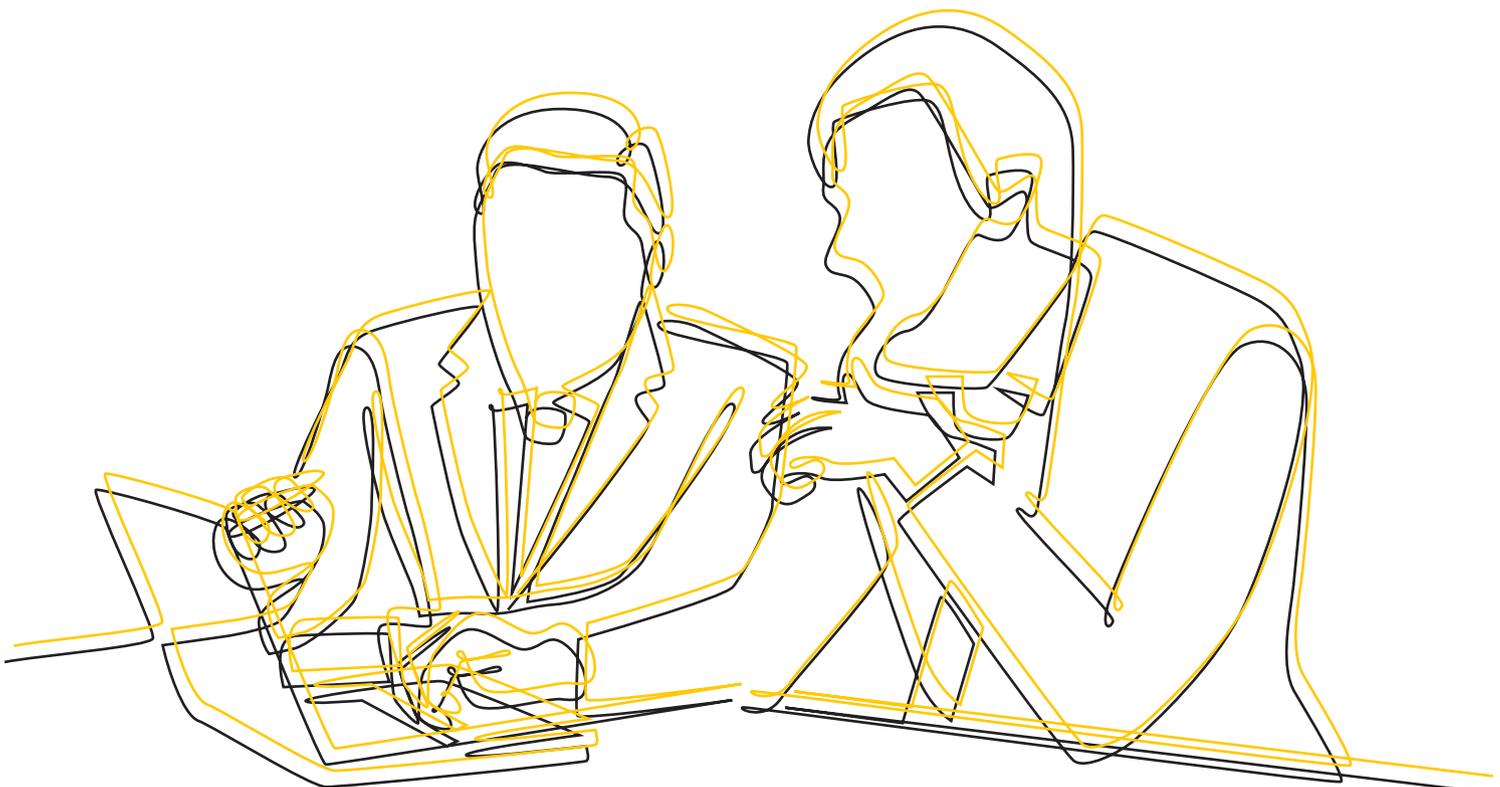
In Solidarity,



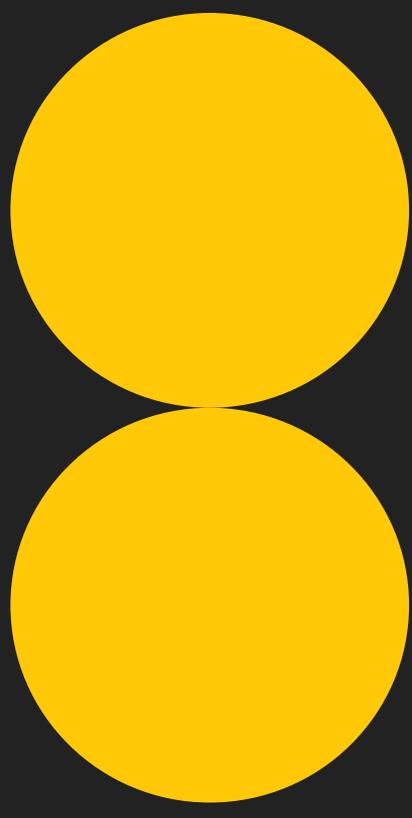
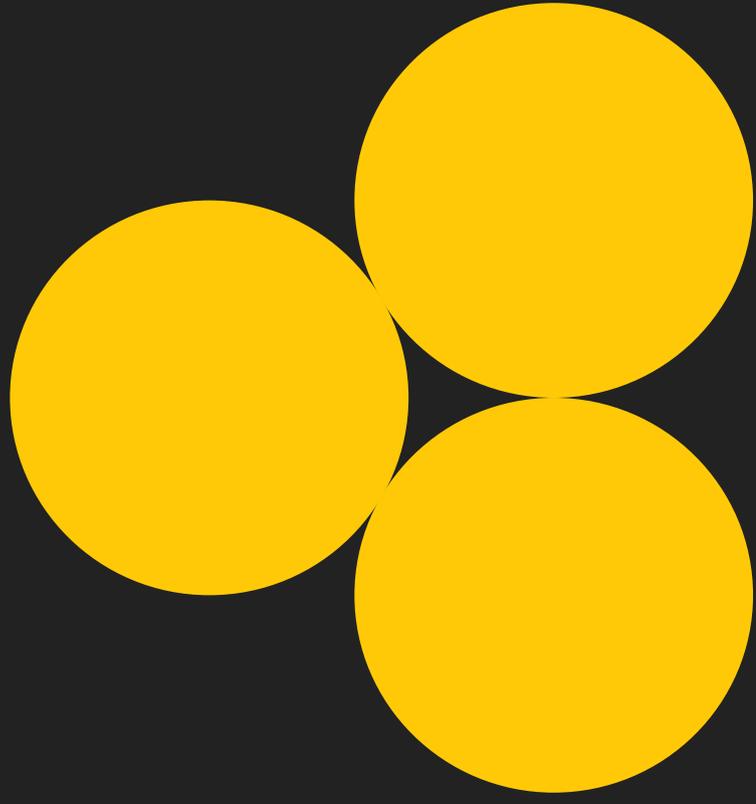
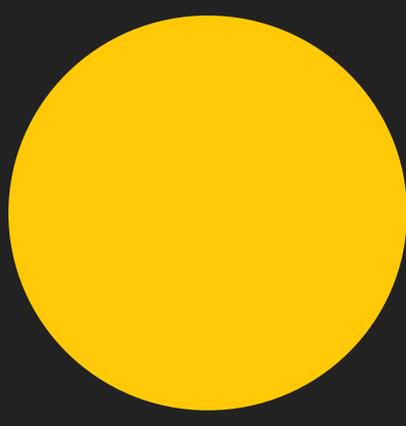
Caleb Goodman
Outgoing Chair
Rainbow Railroad Board of Directors



Bruce Koff
Incoming Chair
Rainbow Railroad Board of Directors



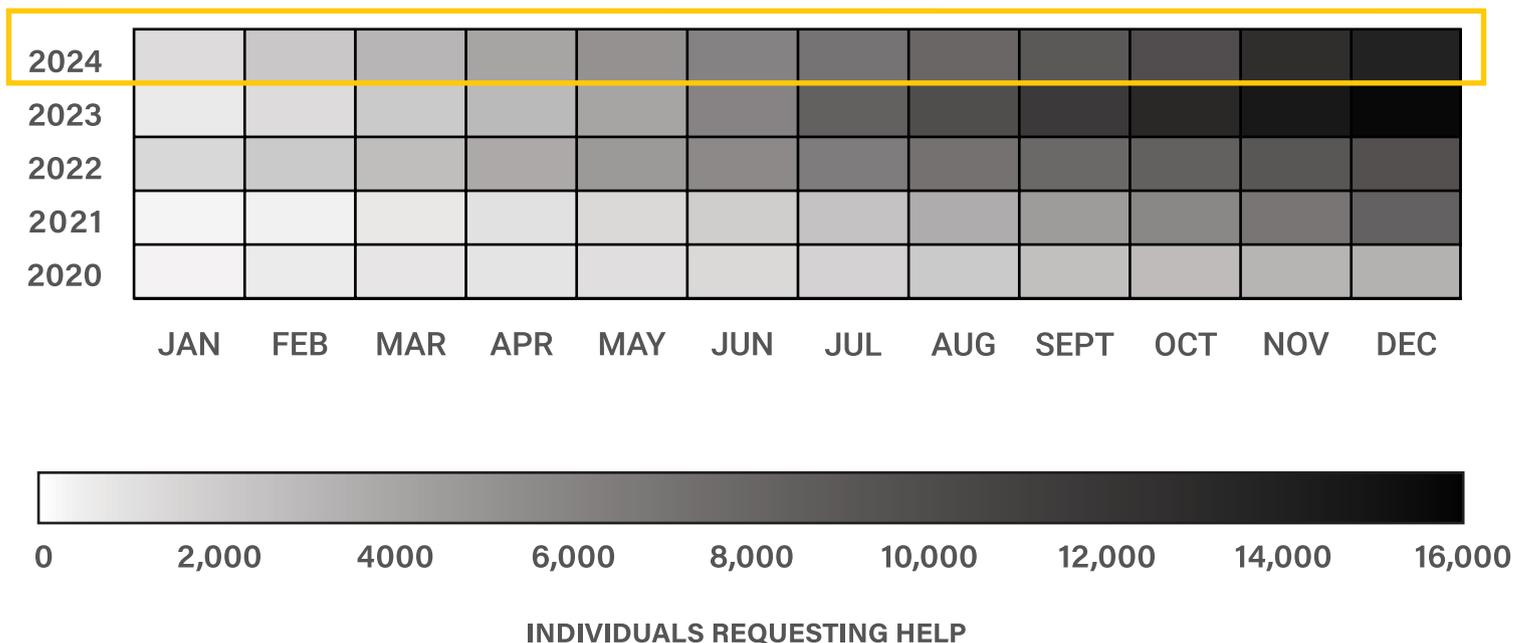
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The State of Global LGBTQI+ Persecution	26
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CUMULATIVE REQUESTS FOR HELP SINCE 2020



TRACKING OUR REQUESTS FOR HELP

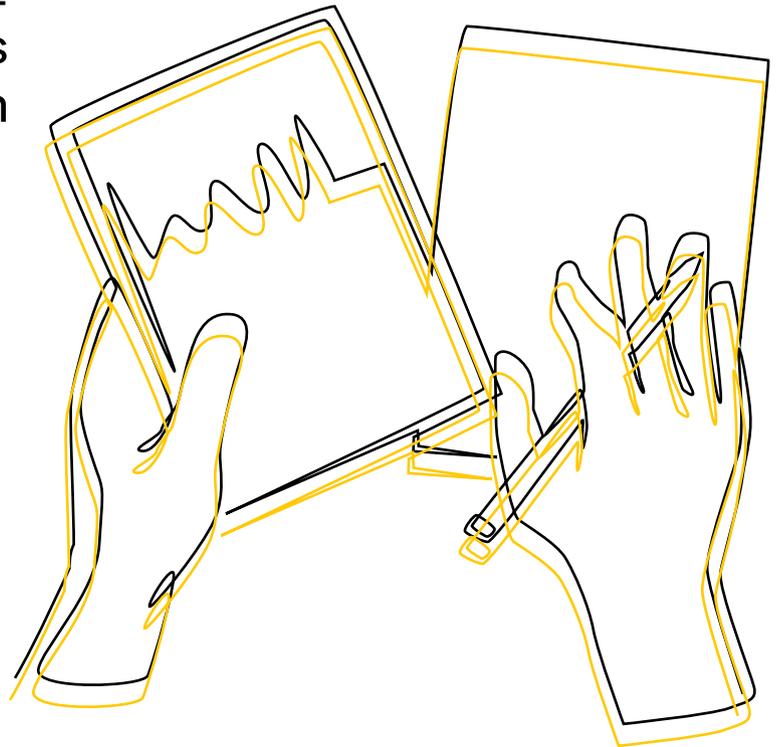
In 2024, we received 13,402 requests for help (RfH). Over the past decade, RfH increased exponentially year over year, peaking at 15,352 people in 2023. The majority of these requests in 2023 stemmed from our ongoing crisis response work in Afghanistan — as we were able to support more people, more individuals in need became aware of our services and requested help.³

LGBTQI+ people are often missing from global humanitarian and refugee reporting. That’s why we keep the experiences of at-risk LGBTQI+ people at the heart of our advocacy efforts, and raise visibility and awareness by sharing our analysis publicly. Collecting data on LGBTQI+ individuals is a complex and iterative process, and analyzing a larger dataset alongside personal stories enables us to see global trends from different perspectives. By sharing this information, we aim to provide a window into the state of LGBTQI+ persecution around the world.

Intake caseworkers are the first point of contact for individuals seeking our help. They must approach each case with care and sensitivity, knowing this may be the first time a person has ever disclosed their queer identity to someone else. The Intake team plays a key role in ensuring we maximize new refugee pathways by effectively triaging cases to the right program. Intake also collects data about the needs and experiences of LGBTQI+ people at risk, driving programming and advocacy decisions across the organization.

This data serves as the foundation for understanding the needs, challenges, and priorities of the communities Rainbow Railroad supports. In 2024, as we enhanced our Intake system and placed greater emphasis on collecting even more detailed data, we identified both current and emerging trends that demand immediate attention and long-term advocacy and intervention strategies. Our data is a powerful tool for change, allowing us to pivot our partnerships, advocate for systemic changes, and allocate resources more effectively to address the urgent needs of LGBTQI+ individuals fleeing persecution worldwide. It is during Intake that individuals share their stories, challenges, and aspirations, providing invaluable context that enriches our data. By transforming individual stories into quantifiable and qualitative evidence, we can effectively communicate the scale and urgency of the state of global LGBTQI+ persecution to policymakers, funders, partner organizations, and the public.

Our data is a **powerful tool for change**, allowing us to pivot our partnerships, advocate for systemic changes, and allocate resources more effectively to address the urgent needs of LGBTQI+ individuals fleeing persecution worldwide.



THERE ARE 5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR HOW WE COLLECT AND SHARE OUR DATA

- **Evidence-Based and Human-Centered**
 - We prioritize methods that respect individuals' experiences while ensuring non-extractive data collection.
- **Queer-Sensitive and Inclusive**
 - Our frameworks address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQI+ individuals.
- **Decolonizing Data**
 - We focus on identifying and amplifying underrepresented voices in forced displacement data.
- **Politically Informed and Context-Aware**
 - We adapt our work to the unique sociopolitical contexts impacting the people we serve.
- **Adaptable and Innovative**
 - We use flexible methods and new technologies to meet evolving needs and emerging challenges.

LIMITATIONS AND NON-GENERALIZABILITY OF OUR DATA

It is important to note that our data is not generalizable or representative of all LGBTQI+ displaced and at-risk persons. The global forced displacement crisis is resulting in tens of thousands of new requests for help each year, causing a backlog in case verifications. Our total requests for help include both verified cases and requests which we have not yet independently corroborated. However, trends between verified cases and unverified cases are broadly consistent.

Given the limited data available on LGBTQI+ forced displacement, this report sheds light on patterns in human rights violations and protection concerns which can inform policy responses and offer key insights into the unique experiences of this particularly vulnerable population. We intend for our data to play a role in addressing the broader gap in international forced displacement and LGBTQI+ rights research.

If you are interested in accessing the anonymized data used to produce this report, you can submit a request and justification to info@rainbowrailroad.org.

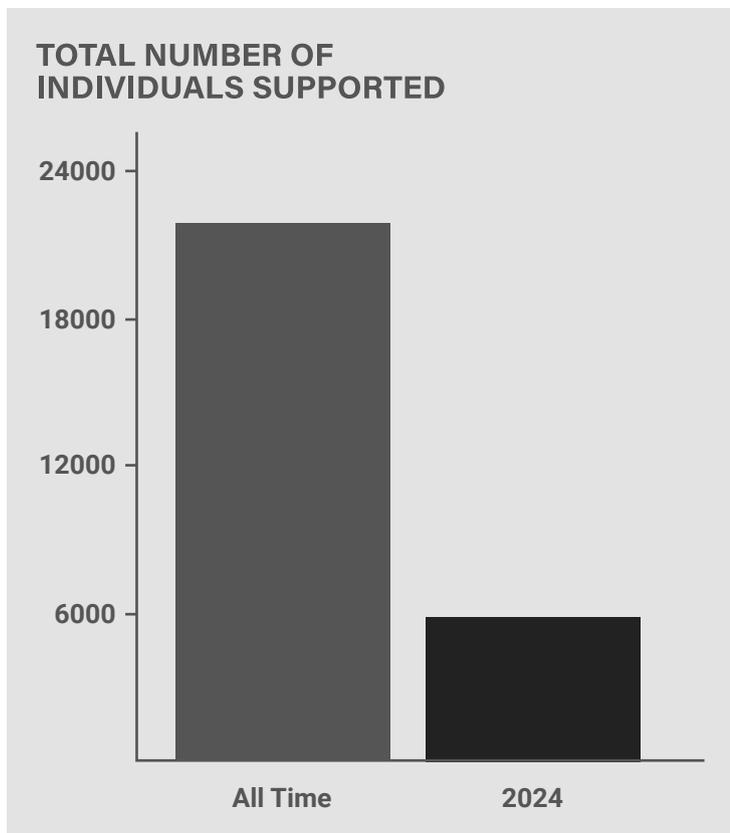


Photo credit: Andrew Kelly. A participant at the Rainbow Railroad panel side event hosted during the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024.

FROM MISSION TO IMPACT: OUR PROGRAMS AND IMPACT

Our programs are meant to complement each other by offering individuals a range of support depending on their unique needs, and our capacity to respond. In 2024, Rainbow Railroad supported 5,916 individuals.

CRIMINALIZED AND TARGETED: EXCLUSIVE DATA ON LGBTQI+ LIVES AT RISK

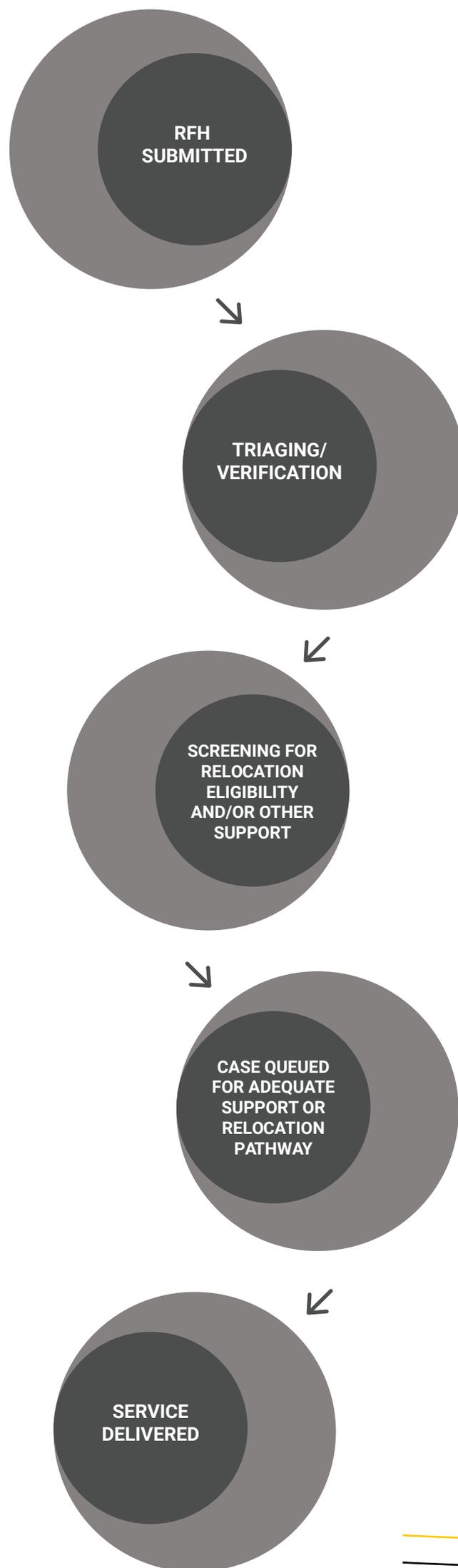


OUR PROGRAMS

Every individual who submits a request for help is evaluated for support through our suite of programs. Because each case is unique, individuals may be supported through multiple programs – some individuals received support through up to four different programs last year.

Last year we supported 5,916⁴ people, including 302 individuals we helped relocate to safer countries. Our direct services include:

- Emergency Travel Support (ETS): Relocation support to get at-risk LGBTQI+ individuals to a place of greater safety
- Cash Assistance to Individuals in Imminent Danger
- Grassroots Partnership Fund to Support Partner Organizations on the Ground
- Crisis Response to Crackdowns on LGBTQI+ Populations
- Information Services and Referrals for People at Imminent Risk
- Government Resettlement Pathways



ETS: EMERGENCY TRAVEL SUPPORT

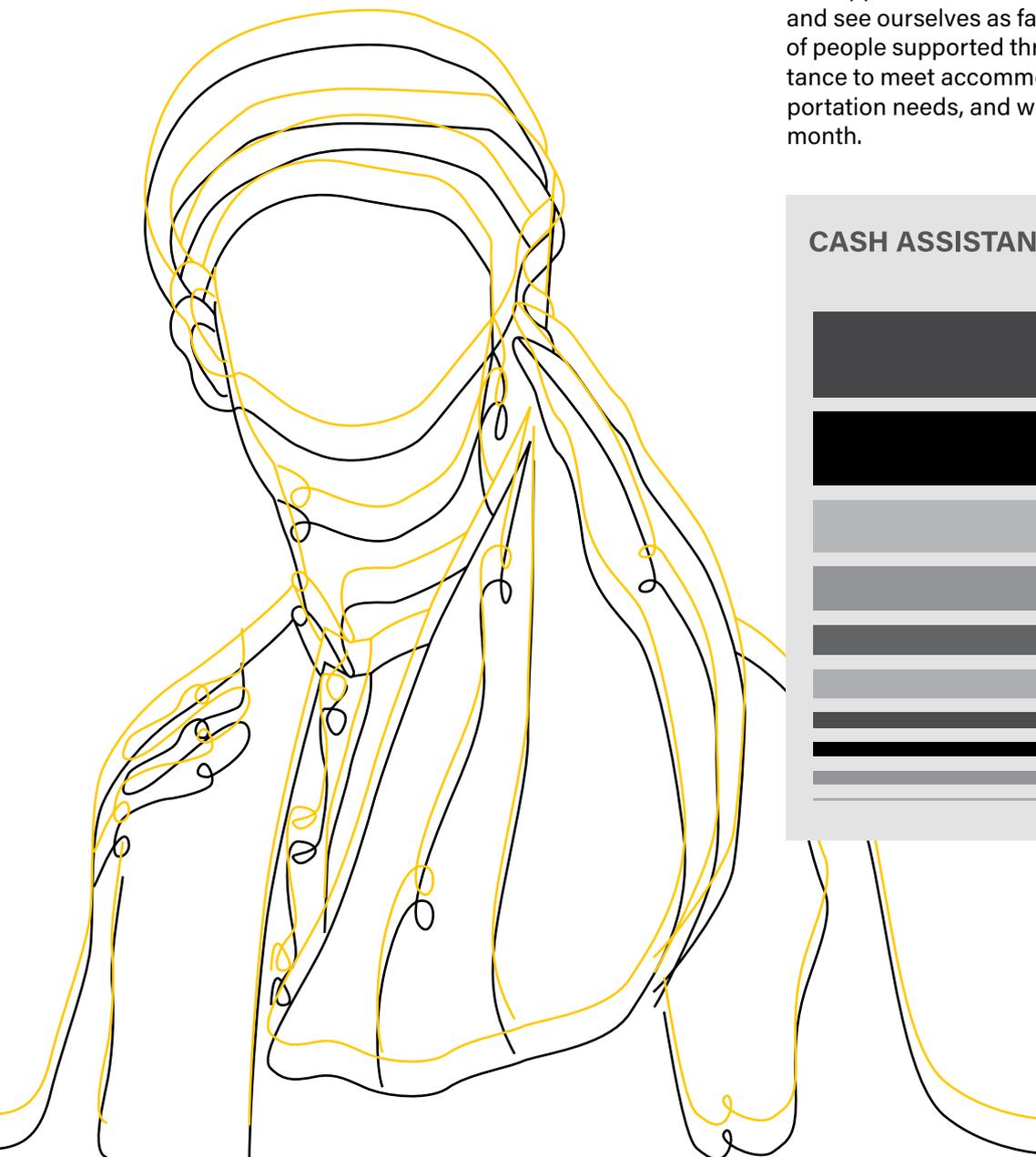
242 people were evacuated through ETS last year.

Emergency Travel Support helps individuals in imminent danger exercise their right to seek asylum. Nearly 75% of requests from individuals supported through ETS came from individuals in their home countries. Most of these individuals do not have access to safe resettlement pathways, as these are typically reserved for refugees, who by nature, have crossed an international border. Through ETS we supported citizens of 29 different countries, with most coming from Afghanistan, Russia, Jamaica, Jordan, and Egypt. Since our founding in 2006, Emergency Travel Support has helped over 2,100 people from 79 different countries on their journeys to find safety.

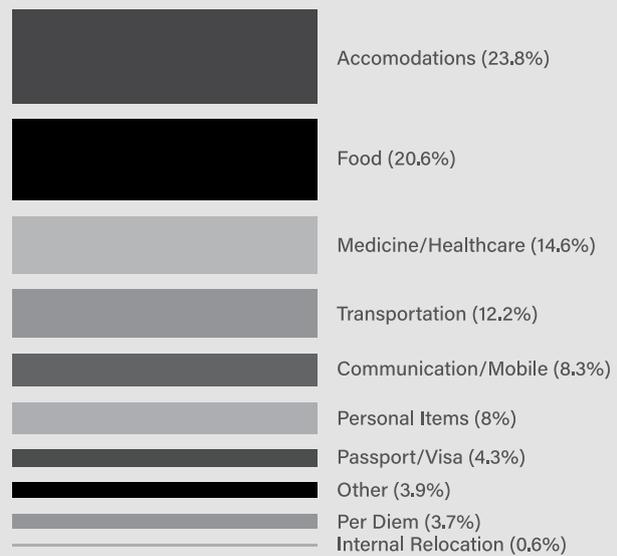
CASH ASSISTANCE

228 people received direct cash assistance to support them in meeting their basic needs.

Our cash assistance program sends urgent funds directly to individuals when they need it most. One of the principles embedded through all of our programming, including cash assistance, is the belief that LGBTQI+ individuals know what safety means to them. We trust the individuals we support to define and pursue safety on their own terms, and see ourselves as facilitators in this process. The majority of people supported through this program used cash assistance to meet accommodation, food, healthcare, and transportation needs, and we typically provided support for one month.



CASH ASSISTANCE SUPPORT



A Rainbow Railroad staff member holds up a sign at the 519 Rally for Refugee Rights, hosted in Toronto, Canada in May 2024.



CRIMINALIZED AND TARGETED: EXCLUSIVE DATA ON LGBTQI+ LIVES AT RISK

GRASSROOTS PARTNERSHIP FUND

4,986 people received direct assistance through local LGBTQI+ partner organizations.

Rainbow Railroad is part of a global network of LGBTQI+ organizations and rights defenders holding the line on anti-gender regression and fighting to advance protection for queer and trans people around the world.

CRISIS RESPONSE

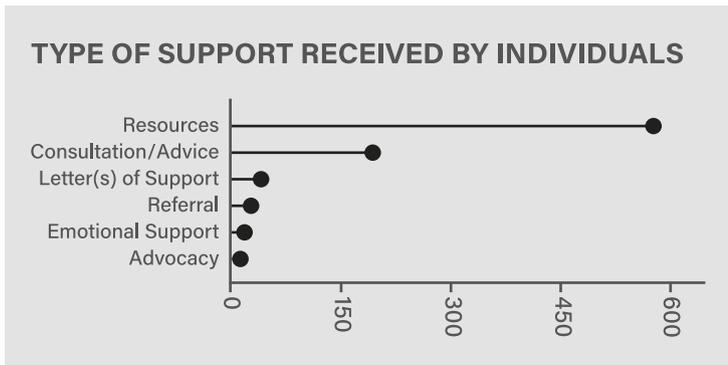
244 people received crisis assistance in Afghanistan, Uganda, Lebanon, and Egypt.

During anti-LGBTQI+ crackdowns, LGBTQI+ organizations are the first line of defense providing emergency care to queer and trans people on the ground. Crisis response funding for groups, activists, and human rights defenders helps mobilize and deploy resources quickly, and reaches at-risk LGBTQI+ persons, including trans or gender diverse persons who are often targeted first during crises.

INFORMATION SERVICES AND REFERRALS

615 people received support from a range of supplementary information resources.

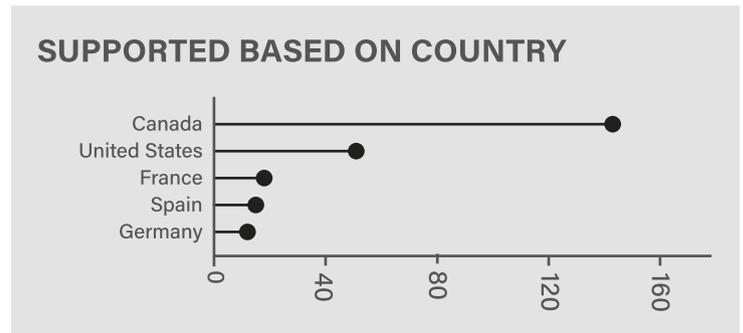
This program allows us to provide practical non-monetary assistance in the form of letters of support, travel preparation information, and vital mental health assistance as individuals navigate a cumbersome international asylum system. We also use this program to refer individuals to local service delivery organizations, often in cases which fall outside our organizational mandate. In 2024, we increased support through this program by 227% from the prior year, largely through information resources provided to individuals requesting help from the U.S. following the general election.



GOVERNMENT RESETTLEMENT PATHWAYS

226 individuals were referred or resettled through government partnership programs in the U.S. and Canada.*

- Pathways in 2024
 - 100 applications for the Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) program in Canada
 - 75 applications and referrals to the US Refugee Admissions Program
- 60 Refugees Welcomed into Canada and the United States
 - Our Communities of Care program resettled 31 refugees to the United States
 - Our Priority-1 program resettled 5 refugees to the United States
 - Our GAR team welcomed 12 individuals to Canada
 - Our PSR team welcomed 10 individuals to Canada
 - We welcomed 2 Human Rights Defenders to Canada



Some of the individuals whose applications were submitted last year are now in the refugee processing pipeline and we are waiting on state officials to move their cases forward so they can relocate and resettle as quickly as possible. For others impacted by the shutdown of the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), we are presently mobilizing nimble responses to find alternate pathways to safety as they were left stranded by the U.S. government. While we continue to advocate for the creation of government resettlement pathways, the political change in the U.S. highlights just how vulnerable these programs can be to sudden shifts in anti-LGBTQI+ and anti-migrant sentiment and the need for providing support across a diverse array of programming.

* Given that individuals may arrive in the same year that their referral or application is submitted, the numbers below will not add up. Thus, in 2024, across all government partnership programs, 226 unique individuals were supported.

THE STATE OF GLOBAL LGBTQI+ PERSECUTION

CRISIS RESPONSE IS REDEFINING INTERNATIONAL LGBTQI+ RIGHTS WORK

Throughout our history as an organization, we have seen international crises reflected in a clear spike in our urgent request for help case data as well as communications from partner organizations around the world.

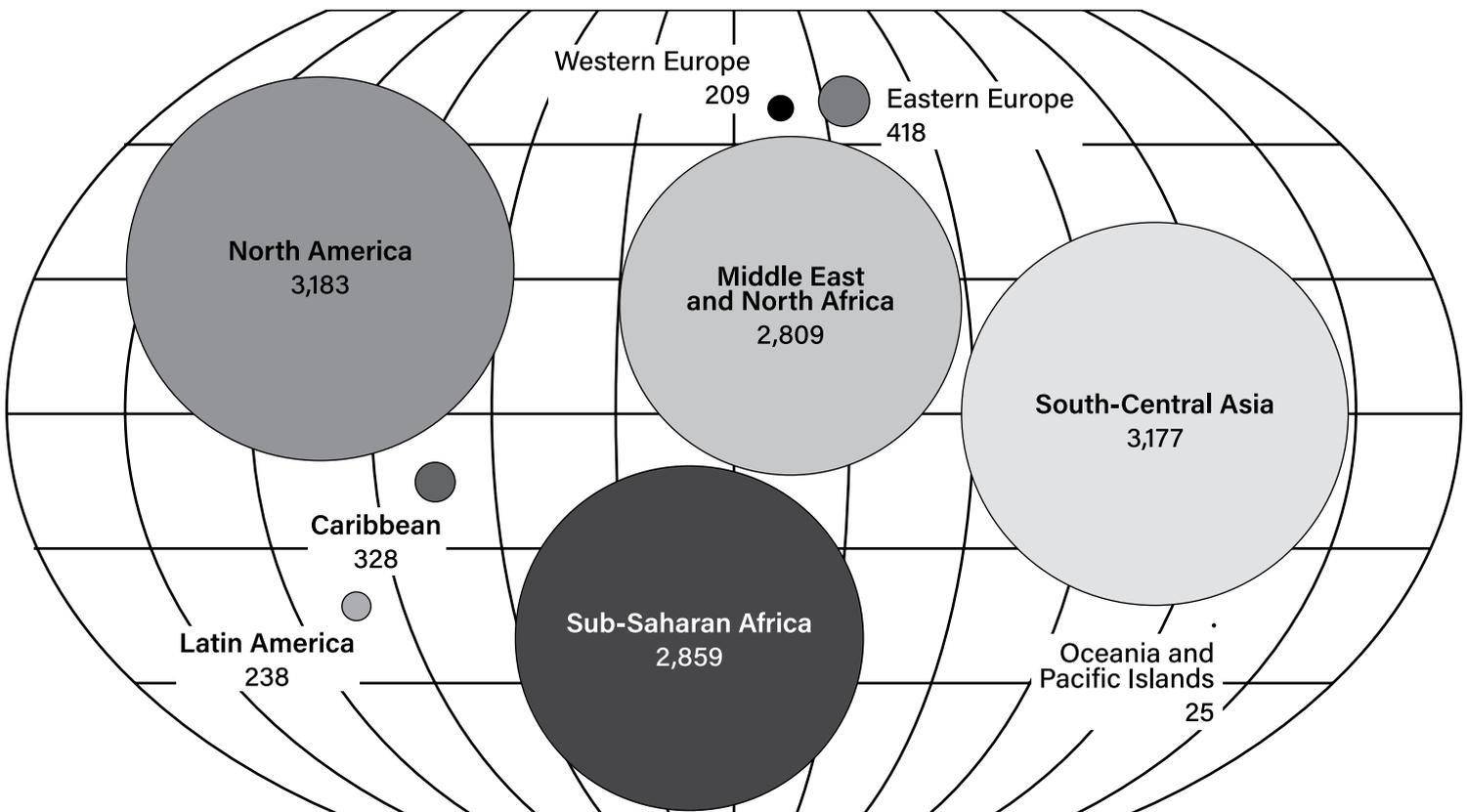
Our intervention in Afghanistan fundamentally changed the way we are involved in and leading international crisis response efforts and, in conjunction with the rising tide of anti-LGBTQI+ state crackdowns, crisis response will define our work for the foreseeable future.

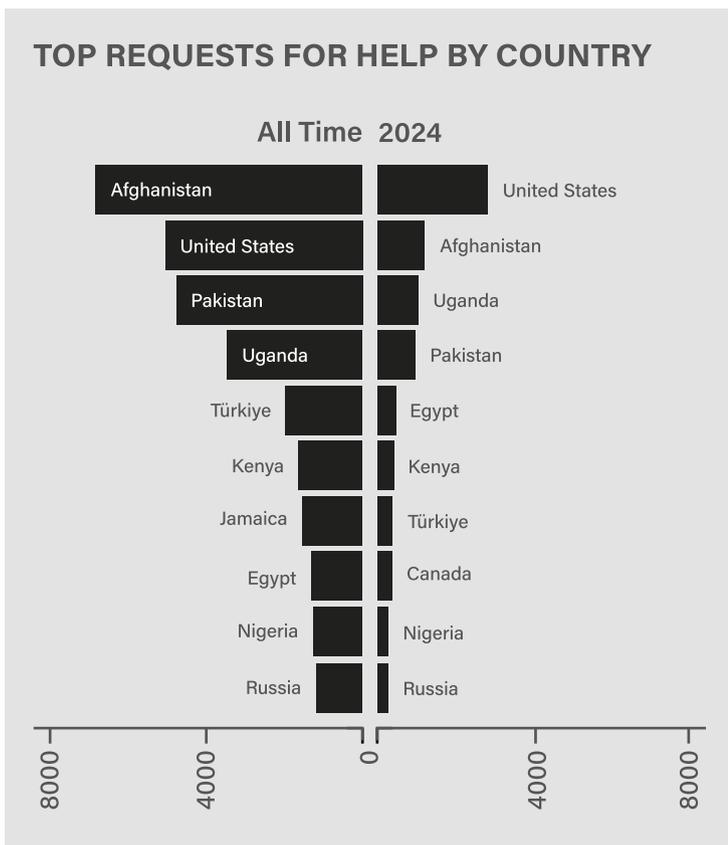
Rainbow Railroad receives tens of thousands of requests for help from people around the world every year, and publishing this unique data provides a window into the state of global LGBTQI+ persecution. We disaggregate by geographic location, SOGIESC, and age.

REGIONAL BREAKDOWN

In 2024, the top region of request was North America.

Over 3,183 requests came from North Americans last year. Almost 90% of those requests came from individuals in the United States making it the top country of request in 2024. After North America, 3,177 RfH came from South Central Asia, with Afghanistan accounting for the highest number of requests, and 2,859 RfH came from Sub-Saharan Africa, with most requests in that region coming from Uganda.

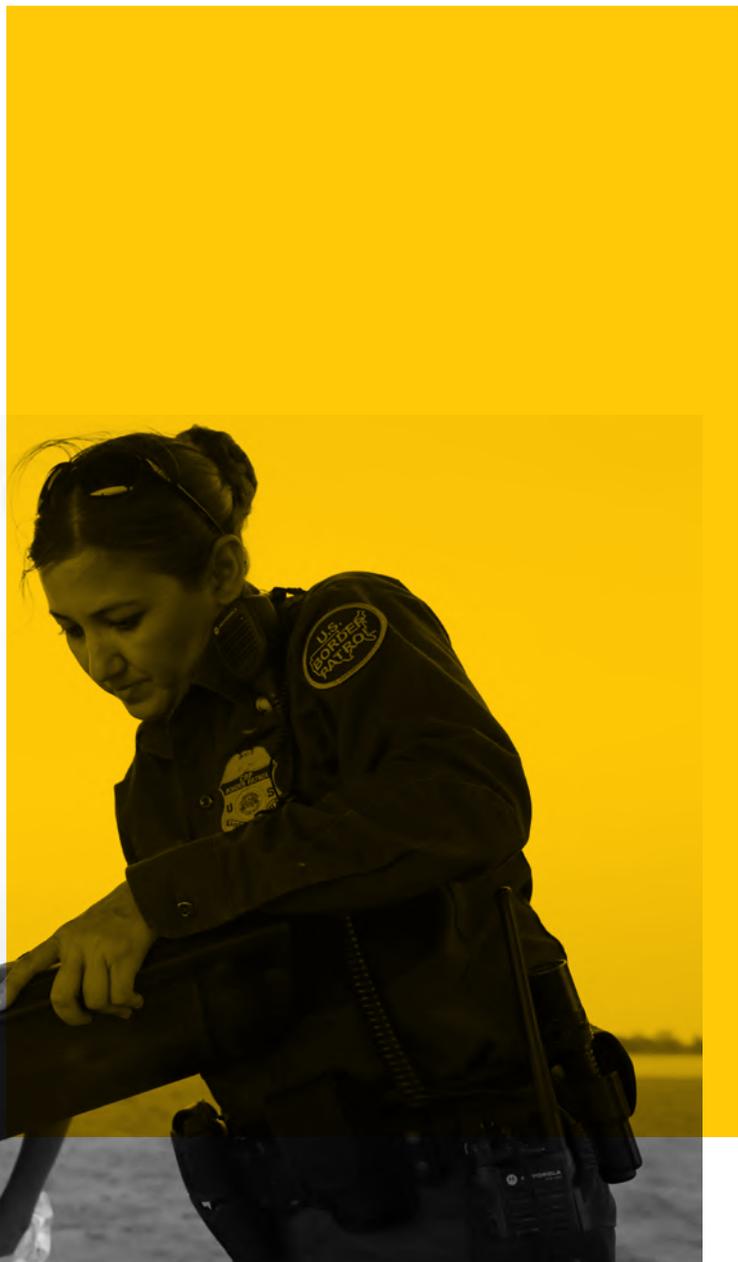




A SHOCKING SHIFT: THE U.S. LEADS THE WORLD IN REQUESTS FOR HELP

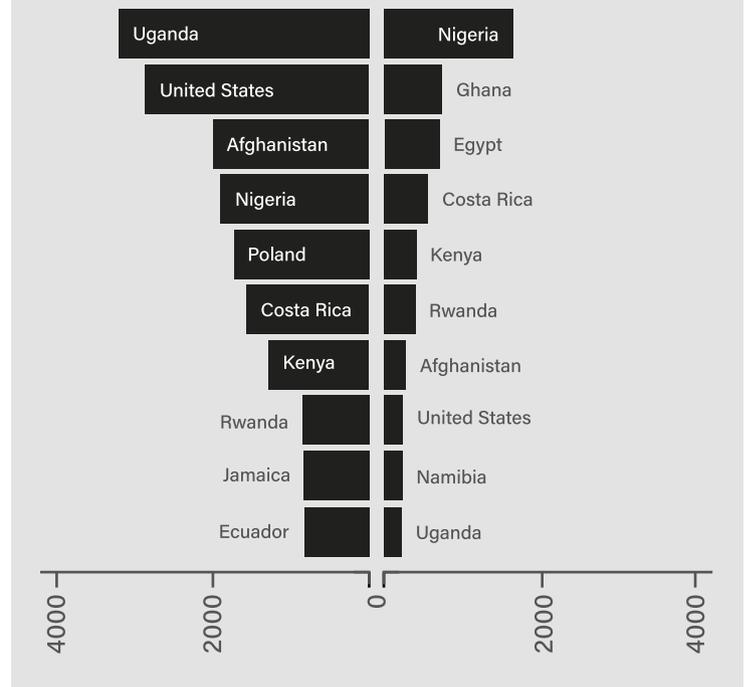
In 2024, 1 in 5 of the RfH we received originated from the United States. We attribute this sharp increase in part to a stream of anti-LGBTQI+ legislation introduced or passed in 2024, as well as the results of the election: over 75% of U.S. RfH were submitted after the election on November 5, 2024.

While the U.S. became the top country of request in 2024, when compared against our all time data, Afghanistan has produced the most RfH historically, at 12% of all requests. After the U.S., most RfH last year came from Afghanistan,



TOP COUNTRIES SUPPORTED

All Time 2024



Uganda, and Pakistan, which can be broadly attributed to two major and enduring international crises: the continued impact of the Taliban’s takeover of Afghanistan in 2021, and the introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda in May 2023. These crises have had an immediate, dire impact on LGBTQI+ individuals, and they have also decimated, almost overnight, the local networks of LGBTQI+ civil society organizing and support developed over years.

In 2024, the ongoing impact of major international geopolitical crises, and novel legislative attacks on the LGBTQI+ community, spurred significant spikes in requests for help. This data aligns with our understanding that acute and protracted anti-LGBTQI+ crisis situations are creating the highest needs for LGBTQI+ persons requesting our help, and crisis response will continue to dominate our work in a growing global context of anti-gender backlash.

SOLIDARITY WHERE IT’S NEEDED MOST: TOP COUNTRIES OF SUPPORT

Historically, we have supported more individuals from Uganda than anywhere else through our suite of programs.

Since March 2023, we have been deeply involved in the response to the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) in Uganda. This legislative attack on queer and trans people resulted in a major spike in requests for help from LGBTQI+ Ugandans. Queer and trans people from the surrounding region were similarly impacted by copycat legislation. Amidst the continued implementation of the Act, Rainbow Railroad maintained a crisis oriented focus in Uganda in 2024, pursuing novel opportunities for the most at-risk to find increased access to safety.

In 2024, we supported the highest number of people in Nigeria, at 1,647 people, followed by Ghana at 741 people, largely through targeted investments from our grassroots partnerships fund. These investments were informed by work we did in 2023 to identify gap, and critical gap countries: places which formed the top requests for help, but did not receive commensurate programmatic support. In 2023, Nigeria was a top 10 critical gap country, while Ghana was a top 20 gap country; in 2024 we forged new strategic partnerships to better reach people in need. Partnering with LGBTQI+ organizations is one of the most effective ways for Rainbow Railroad to meet global need and serve people who may not be eligible for existing relocation programs. Partnership investments also represented the majority of services received by individuals from Egypt, Costa Rica, and Kenya last year.

Across our programs, direct support to partner organizations helps us to reach the highest number of people, and last year we supported nearly 5,000 individuals through 24 organizations across 18 countries and five regions.

Investment in the global queer community at this current moment is vital to keeping the movement alive, and reaching LGBTQI+ folks around the world who may have no other options. Activists, human rights defenders, and organizers understand the nuances of working in and around criminalized and de facto criminalized countries and contexts. They are doing vital work on the ground holding the line on the global anti-gender movement and the LGBTQI+ rights pushback that is currently unfolding.

Since 2006, we’ve partnered with over 75 organizations across 36 countries and six regions.

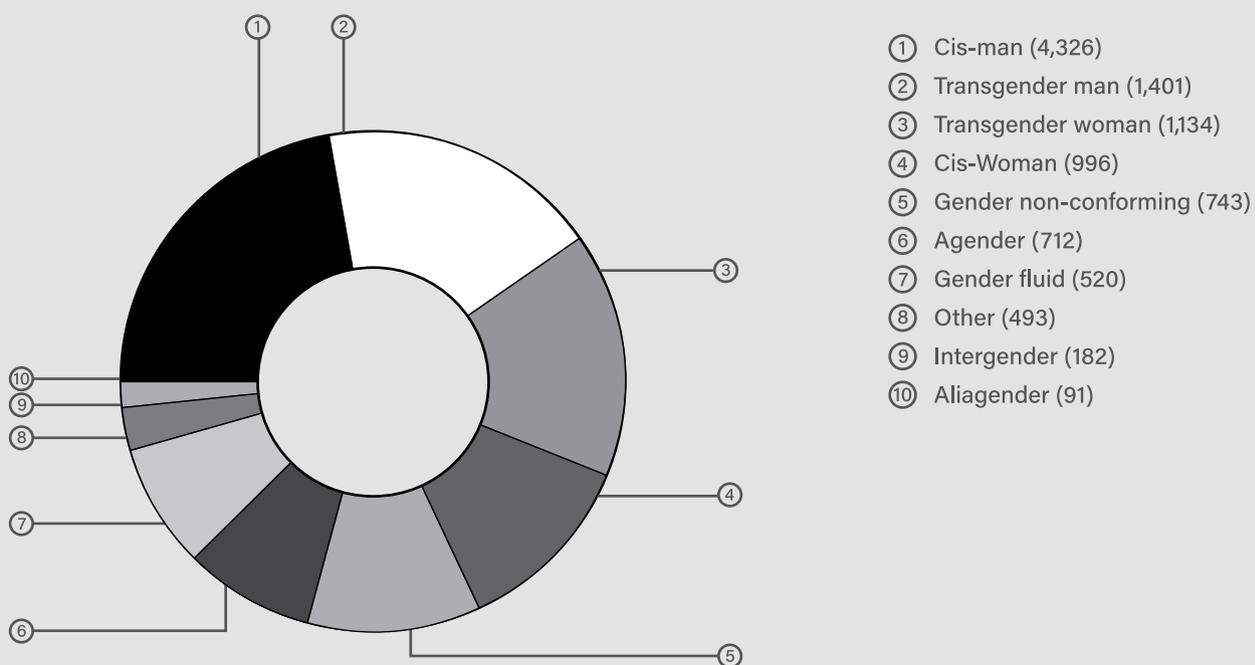


BEHIND EVERY REQUEST

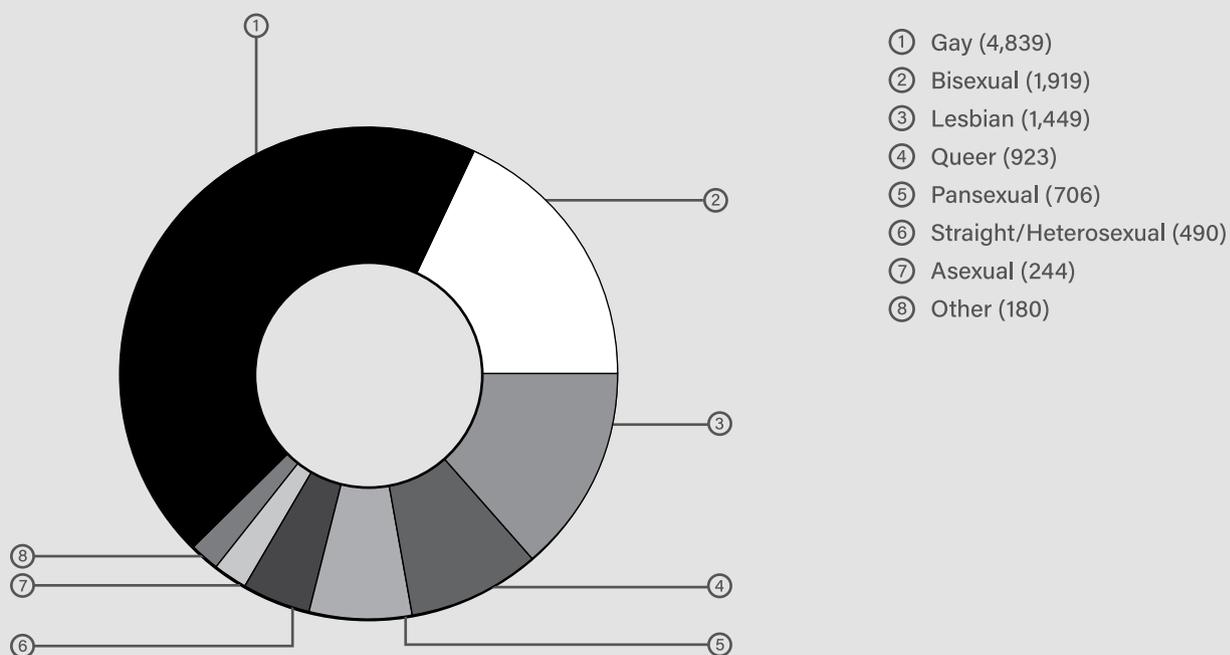
DEMOGRAPHICS THAT TELL A STORY

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression,
and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC)

RFH BY GENDER IDENTITY



RFH BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION



Rainbow Railroad collects demographic data from the primary applicant in a request for help and only from individuals who choose to disclose this information. This means that there is a portion of the individuals requesting help from us for whom we have no data. Therefore, demographic totals may not sum to 13,402 because some individuals did not report all demographic information.

Young people dominated our requests for help, and **over 80%** came from 18-35 year olds.

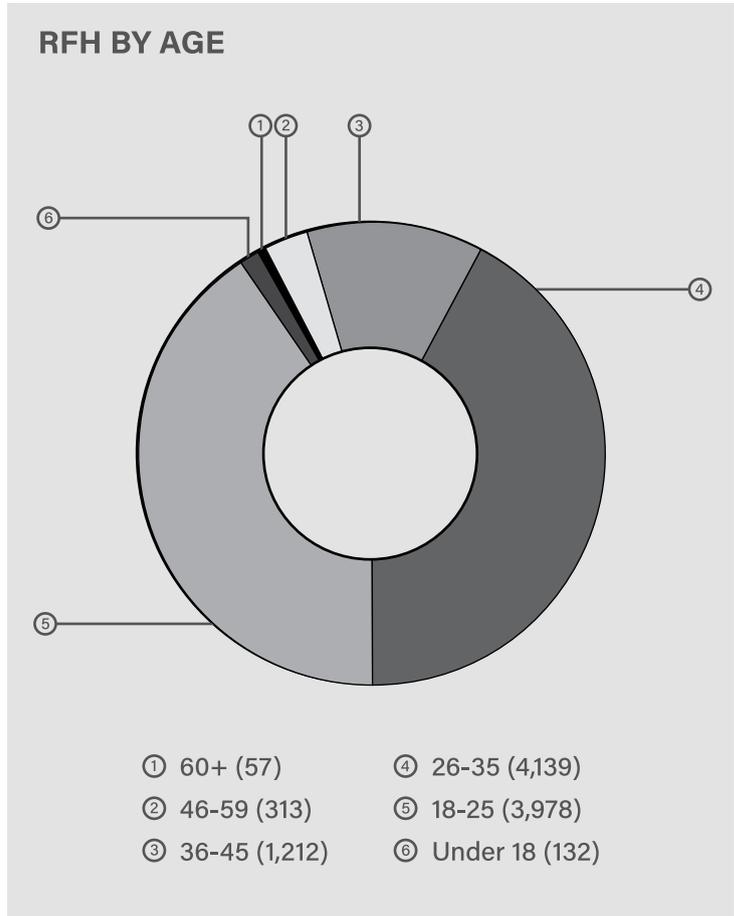
Cisgender men requested our help the most.

In 2024, cisgender men, transgender men, and transgender women formed the top three requests for help by SOGIESC. Disaggregating our data by SOGIESC allows us to prioritize our programmatic responses for populations within the LGBTQI+ community with lower access to services. In 2020, we committed to increasing the representation of non-cisgender men in our programming. In 2024, 36% of the individuals we supported were cisgender men, reflecting significant progress from 59% in 2023.

Recognizing the acute visibility and danger faced by trans people right now, we ensured that over half of the individuals we supported identified as transgender or gender diverse last year, while 1 in 4 individuals served were trans women.

Notably, there was a clear decrease in the proportion of cisgender women requesting our help last year. Intersecting forces of oppression may restrict cisgender women's ability to request help from RR – including restricted access to education impacting literacy, poor internet access, and reduced or non-existent legal or practical ability to travel independently. UN Women reported that one quarter of countries around the world reported significant backlash on women's rights last year.⁵

It is also important to note that we received 283 RfH from intersex individuals last year, representing 2% of our total RfH. As countries like the U.S. attempt to forward anti-science views recognizing two sexes,⁶ highlighting requests from intersex persons is vital. Policies targeting trans people are the same ones attempting to erase intersex persons' lived realities. International recognition of intersex people and their rights is still in its infancy, and the UN Human Rights Council adopted its first-ever resolution addressing discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against intersex persons in 2024.⁷



Rainbow Railroad collects age data from the primary contact in a case and only from individuals who choose to disclose this information. This means that there is a portion of the 13,402 individuals requesting help from us for whom we have no data on their age.⁸

Individuals identifying as gay, bisexual, and lesbian remained the top three requests by sexual orientation.

Over 80% came from 18-35 year olds.

People aged 26-35 formed the highest number of requests at 42%, and 18-25 year olds followed closely behind at 40% of all requests.

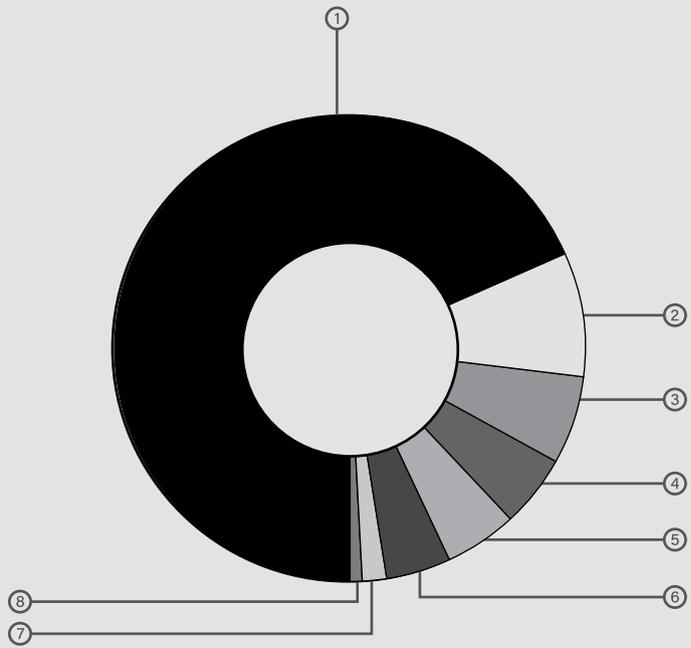
INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES REQUESTING OUR HELP

85% of requests for help came from individuals seeking safety on their own behalf.

10% of our requests come from individuals seeking help for themselves and one partner or one dependent. Just 5% of requests came from families with 3-10 family members. Based on our experience reviewing cases and speaking with individuals directly, larger family sizes may be indicative of the mass movements of people due to political instability or armed conflict, or in regions where forced marriage of LGBTQI+ people is more common.



RFH BY STATUS IN COUNTRY OF REQUEST



- ① Citizen (3,230)
- ② Temporary resident (409)
- ③ Asylum seeker (295)
- ④ No legal status (234)
- ⑤ Registered refugee (233)
- ⑥ Permanent resident (211)
- ⑦ Other (75)
- ⑧ Stateless person (35)

Given that individuals may arrive in the same year that their referral or application is submitted, the numbers above will not add up to 13,402.

Over two thirds of requests came from citizens requesting help from within their own country.

For the individuals requesting help outside of their country of citizenship, 33% were temporary residents, 21% were asylum seekers, and 18% were registered refugees. In 2024, less than 5% of individuals seeking our assistance had UN-HCR-registered refugee status. Of those who requested help from outside their country of citizenship, 17% had no legal status, meaning they had no temporary or permanent immigration status in their current location. Part of our advocacy work includes shining a light on these realities and calling on States to address the systemic challenges that LGBTQI+ asylum seekers face in obtaining legal documentation.



DRIVERS OF DISPLACEMENT

HEALTH AND WELFARE, AND SAFETY CONCERNS

When individuals reach out to Rainbow Railroad for support, we track the specific Health and Welfare and Safety Concerns they face throughout their journey.⁹ Health and Welfare Concerns refer to factors relating to physical and mental wellbeing that also put people at risk. In 2024, we tracked 16 Health and Welfare Concerns impacting the lives of the individuals we serve. These include individuals who face a lack of access to basic needs, mental health challenges, homelessness, employment discrimination, suicidal ideation, poor physical health, and income loss due to discrimination.

Safety Concerns are direct threats the individual faces stemming from their family, community or the State. In 2024, we tracked 39 Safety Concerns. Among the most frequently reported safety concerns were community rejection, family-based rejection, life-threatening violence, community violence, and verbal threats and abuse. Many individuals also report experiencing family-based violence and sexual violence/crime.

TOP HEALTH AND WELFARE CONCERNS

- **Lack of Basic Needs**
 - 75% of cases disclosing concerns
- **Mental Health Concerns**
 - 46% of cases disclosing concerns
- **Homeless**
 - 38% of cases disclosing concerns
- **Employment discrimination**
 - 32% of cases disclosing concerns
- **Risk of Suicide¹⁰**
 - 30% of cases disclosing concerns

Lack of basic needs, mental health concerns, and homelessness were the top three Health and Welfare Concerns facing individuals supported last year.

By streamlining this information during the intake and verification process, we are able to tailor program offerings to meet the specific needs of individuals requesting assistance.

TOP SAFETY CONCERNS

- **Community rejection**
 - 76% of cases disclosing concerns
- **Family-based rejection (non-violent)**
 - 70% of cases disclosing concerns
- **Life Threatening Violence**
 - 60% of cases disclosing concerns
- **Verbal threats/abuse**
 - 51% of cases disclosing concerns
- **Community violence¹¹**
 - 51% of cases disclosing concerns

Community Rejection was the top Safety Concern last year.

Community rejection persisted as the top safety concern among individuals we supported. In 2024, 76% of individuals we supported reported experiencing community rejection. Family-based rejection also persists, affecting 70% of individuals supported.

Last year, over half of the individuals we supported faced verbal abuse, community violence, or life threatening violence. Rejection and violence at the family and community levels are often enabled or further enforced by the State, driving the conditions that force LGBTQI+ people to seek refuge in other countries.

Lack of **basic needs**, **mental health** concerns, and **homelessness** were the top three health and welfare concerns facing individuals supported last year.

SERVICES REQUESTED

78% OF PEOPLE FROM 142 COUNTRIES REQUESTED INTERNATIONAL RELOCATION LAST YEAR.¹²

Starting in July 2024, we updated our system to capture the services requested by individuals seeking assistance.

We track the following service requests:

- International Relocation
- Relocation within the country of origin
- Shelter / Housing Assistance
- Mental Health Services
- Medical / Medication Resources
- Letters of Support for claiming international asylum

Between July and December 2024, 4,622 individuals requested specific services from Rainbow Railroad. Seventy-eight percent requested International Relocation and, of those requests, 36% were from individuals living in the United States, followed by 6% in Afghanistan, and 5% in Uganda. The next two most requested services were Shelter / Housing Assistance (35%) and Mental Health Services (22%). This data helped inform our programmatic responses, leading us to prioritize partnerships with organizations specializing in trauma-informed care.

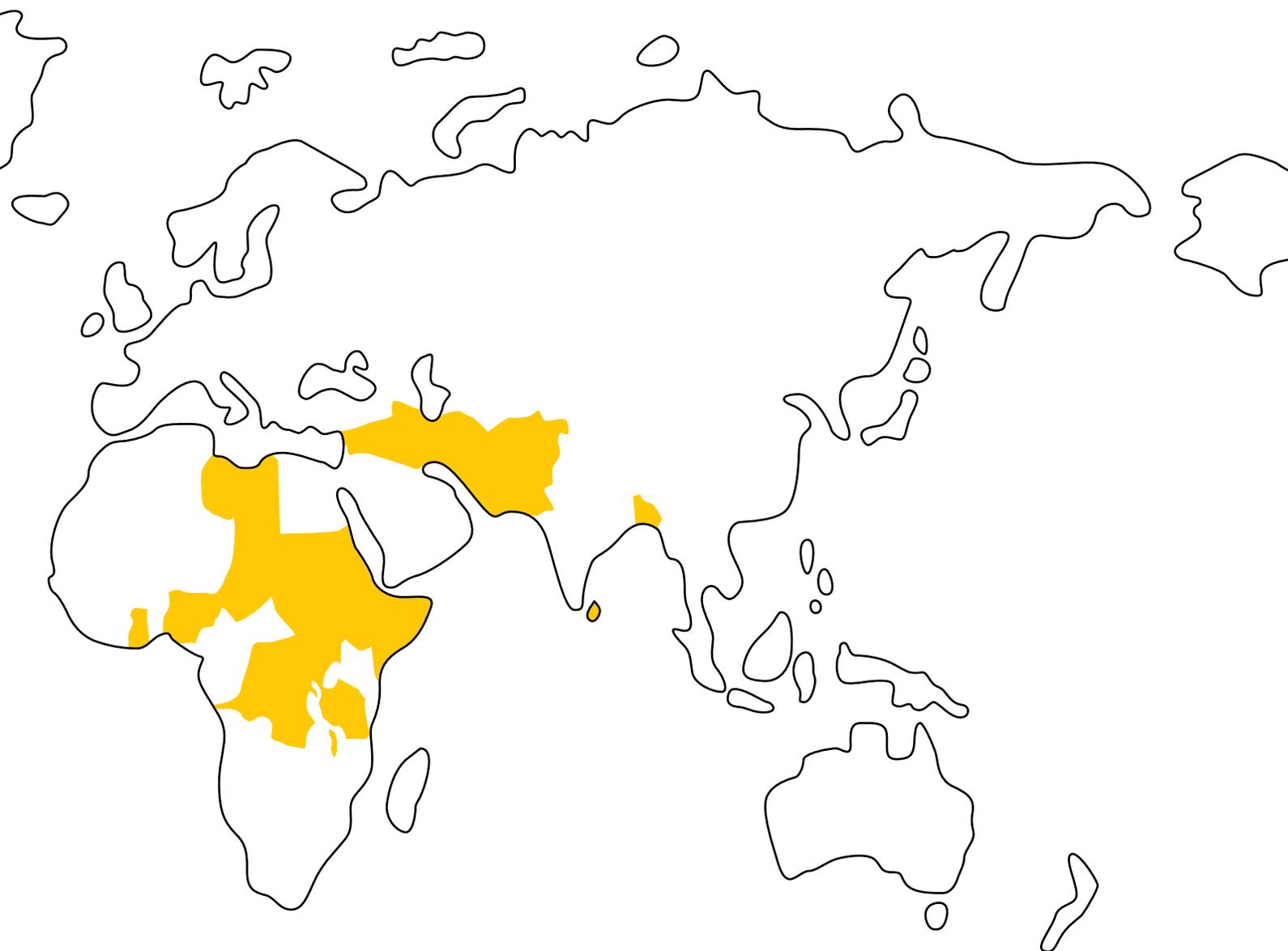
Tracking program service requests also allowed us to start identifying new regional and country-specific trends. For example, we found that LGBTQI+ refugees in Türkiye reported not only enduring systemic discrimination, but also the loss of access to healthcare and essential services as a result of stricter asylum policies. These insights informed our targeted interventions through the Crisis Response Fund and our grassroots partnership fund.

NO SAFE TRAVEL ROUTES

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
The Democratic Republic of Congo
Eritrea
Ghana
Iran
Iraq
Nigeria
Pakistan
Somalia
Sri Lanka
Uganda
Yemen
Syria
Malawi
Tanzania
Chad
South Sudan
Sudan
Libya
Ethiopia
Haiti

CRIMINALIZED AND TARGETED: EXCLUSIVE DATA ON LGBTQI+ LIVES AT RISK

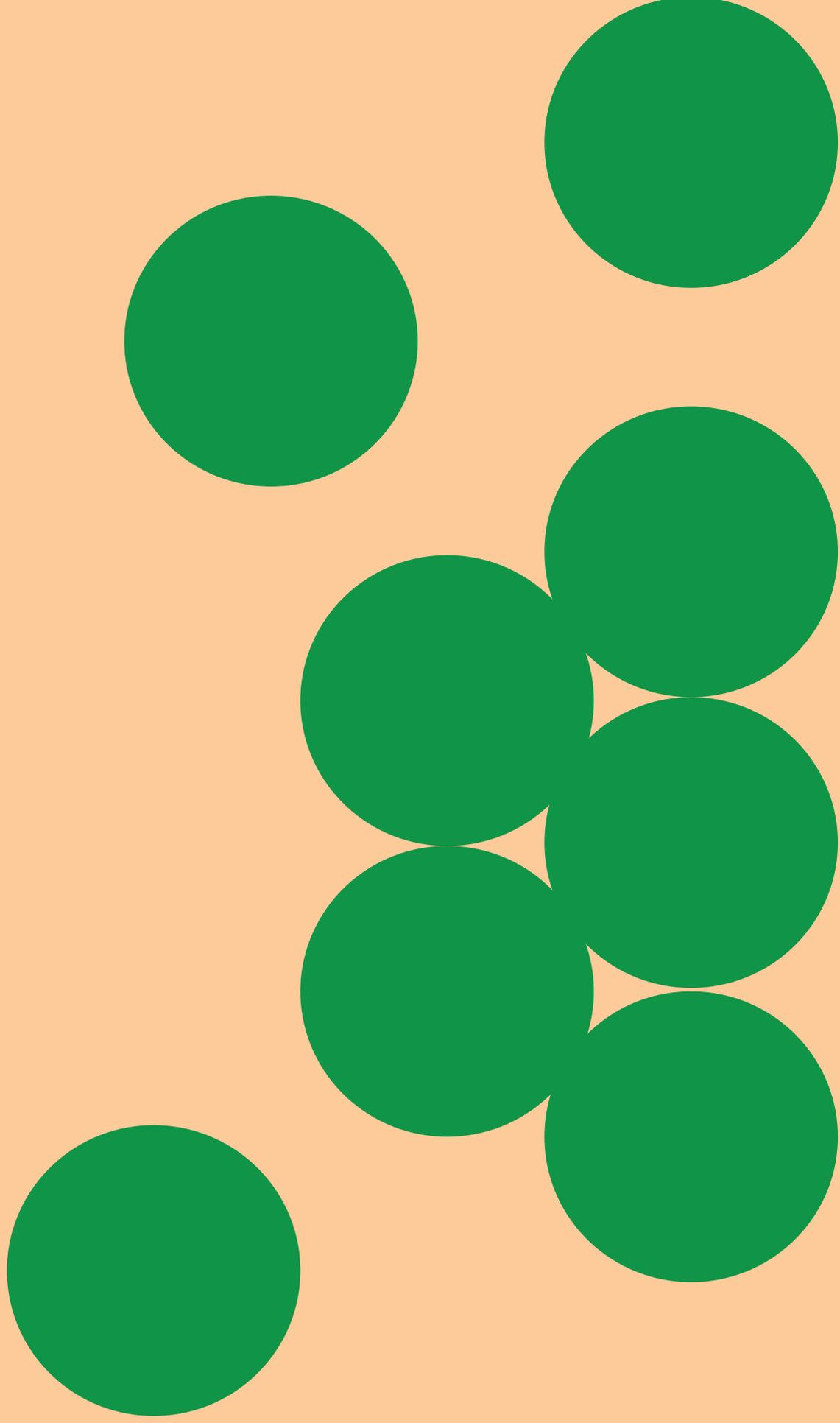




Shifting international movement restrictions, visa regulations, and highly controlled zones with no movement in or out, can mean that for some individuals we are unable to offer any relocation support. For many of these individuals, their passports cannot take them anywhere to claim asylum. This is why in the last year we have made a concerted effort to increase mapping of any local resources that can support our community. As we witness shrinking asylum opportunities for the people we serve, it becomes crucial to help connect them with local support networks.

Last year, we identified 22 countries where we were unable to provide travel support to people requesting help from within their own countries of origin, a 10% increase from the 20 identified in 2023. These individuals may still receive support through other programming apart from relocation. When nearly 3 in 4 people requested help from their country of origin last year, tracking the gaps in safe travel routes is key to understanding shrinking asylum opportunities for LGBTQI+ persons, and helps improve our programming, individual case work, and broader systemic advocacy.

OUR WORK IN ACTION



INSIGHTS

1. Expelled and Unwelcome: LGBTQI+ Refugees Caught in a Global Attack on LGBTQI+ and Asylum Rights 36
2. No Other Options: Resettlement as a Critical Path to Safety for LGBTQI+ Individuals 41
3. While Laws Turn Against Us, People Show Up: The Growing Movement to Support LGBTQI+ Refugees in the U.S. 42
4. One Year On: LGBTQI+ Resettlement in Canada Demonstrates the Success of State-Civil Society Partnership 44
5. Organizing Is Survival: Why LGBTQI+ Movements Deserve Crisis-Level Support 45
6. The Queer Forced Displacement Crisis at Scale: Convening a Global Network 47
7. Addressing the Anti-LGBTQI+ Backlash on the World Stage 48

OUR WORK IN ACTION

While the need for our work is growing, Rainbow Railroad's ability to respond is changing. Global forced displacement has risen to impact 1 in every 67 people,¹³ and our own requests for help are in the tens of thousands every year. States are making it harder to claim asylum through visa restrictions, denial of exit permits, boarding denials on flights, and partial or complete border shut downs.

We are in a crisis of scale. While we remain committed to our direct services providing travel support to hundreds of the most at-risk LGBTQI+ people every year, we have continually expanded our programming to improve the conditions of safety for LGBTQI+ persons where they are when they need help. In this way, safety is not a place, it is a state of existence.

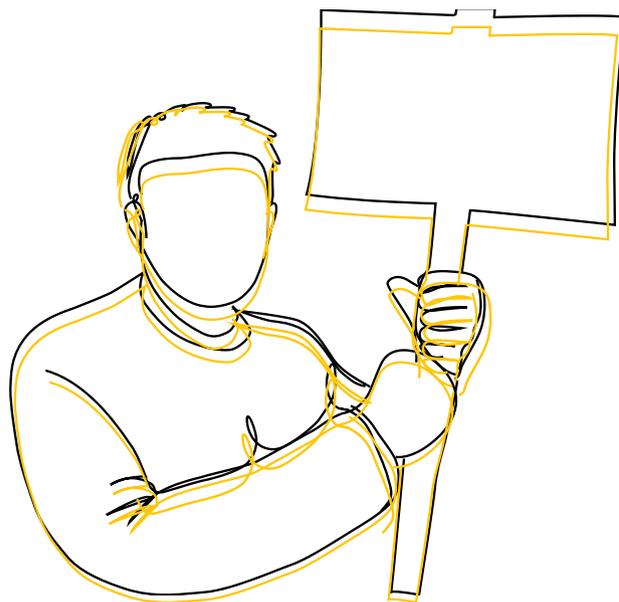
1. EXPELLED AND UNWELCOME: LGBTQI+ REFUGEES CAUGHT IN A GLOBAL ATTACK ON LGBTQI+ AND ASYLUM RIGHTS

In recent years, we have witnessed a steady rise in laws and policies that specifically target LGBTQI+ individuals, even as many countries have taken meaningful steps forward in their legal and policy frameworks. In 2022, Russia expanded its 2013 "gay propaganda" law to ban any public expression of LGBTQI+ identities. In 2023, Uganda passed the Anti-Homosexuality Act introducing some of the harshest criminalizations on LGBTQI+ identity, expression, and organizing in the world. In 2024, Ghana passed the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill, criminalizing LGBTQI+ advocacy, and Georgia followed suit, passing its own Family Values Bill banning LGBTQI+ "propaganda". And, at the time of writing this report in 2025, the Trinidad and Tobago Court of Appeal reversed the 2018 decriminalization ruling in the lower court, and reinstated pre-independence sodomy laws in the country.

These laws reflect a broader wave of state-sponsored repression driven by the global anti-gender movement. The influence of anti-gender rhetoric, funding, and policy has produced a rising tide of legislative changes that undermine a broad spectrum of rights, contribute to democratic backsliding, and lead to increased instances of forced displacement. Around the world, attacking LGBTQI+ persons and dismantling their fundamental rights has become a part of the authoritarian playbook.¹⁴

At the same time, anti-asylum sentiment is growing, with notable backtracking by countries of asylum on refugee protection and resettlement. In 2024, the EU signed their Pact on Migration and Asylum which allows for faster application processing and deportations.¹⁵ This could force LGBTQI+ asylum seekers to go through faster border procedures without in-depth analyses into their protection needs, putting them at greater risk for deportation. EU countries have also been pushing to externalize the asylum process. Italy finalized an externalization deal with Albania, which led to a joint call by 15 EU-member States for the outsourcing of asylum procedures.¹⁶

Externalizing asylum processes is an evasion of international



responsibilities, and undermines the international protection system — putting LGBTQI+ asylum seekers at risk.¹⁸ Although the EU's Pact on Migration and Asylum has not yet come into effect, we are already witnessing the impact. For those who were able to successfully reach their destination, we witnessed an increase in refusals and attempted deportations, and longer detention periods. With our advocacy and intervention and support of local partners, we were able to stop deportations and win cases on an appeals level. We anticipate a continued increase in these challenges as these new policies are implemented.

Externalizing asylum also comes in the form of carrier sanctions — financial and legal penalties by States against airlines who transport asylum seekers. Last year, Rainbow Railroad published findings that airline officials routinely arbitrarily deny boarding to LGBTQI+ persons suspected of having an intent to seek asylum, even when they meet all travel requirements.

"Our analysis of failed travel attempts via ETS revealed that some of Europe's largest airlines, including KLM, Lufthansa, and Air France, have developed screening practices to deny boarding to passengers deemed potentially 'inadmissible' by destination countries. These practices frequently encode homophobic, transphobic, and racist heuristics to select those for boarding denial."¹⁸

Carrier sanctions result in arbitrary boarding denial by private actors, severely impeding access to asylum and posing a foreseeable risk of refoulement.¹⁹

LGBTQI+ refugees are also being targeted within the United States, through attacks on both queer and trans populations and refugees and asylum seekers. In 2024, 30 states attempted to restrict access to critical healthcare for LGBTQI+ people.²⁰ More recently, the new Administration proclaimed that binary sex is assessed at birth and immutable.²¹ The U.S. government also removed mention of transgender people from federal websites and documents,²² and banned them from serving in the military.²³

The Administration has also declared that the country is suffering an invasion of immigrants.²⁴ Within 24 hours of taking

office, the President signed an executive order suspending the US Refugee Admissions Program, halting the processing of refugees already vetted and approved for resettlement, and leaving displaced LGBTQI+ refugees stranded in precarity.²⁵ Significant foreign aid spending has also been paused, halting critical services to refugees worldwide, including those already resettled in the U.S. An individual impacted by the changes shared her experience with us:

“My CBP appointment got cancelled because Trump took office. I just had six days until I could contact U.S. customs and be in a system for asylum. This is beyond words unfair, all my hopes are just crushed because of six days. Right now I’m in Mexicali, near the border, I see the wall, but nothing I can do... I don’t know what to do. My dismay could not be comprehended.”

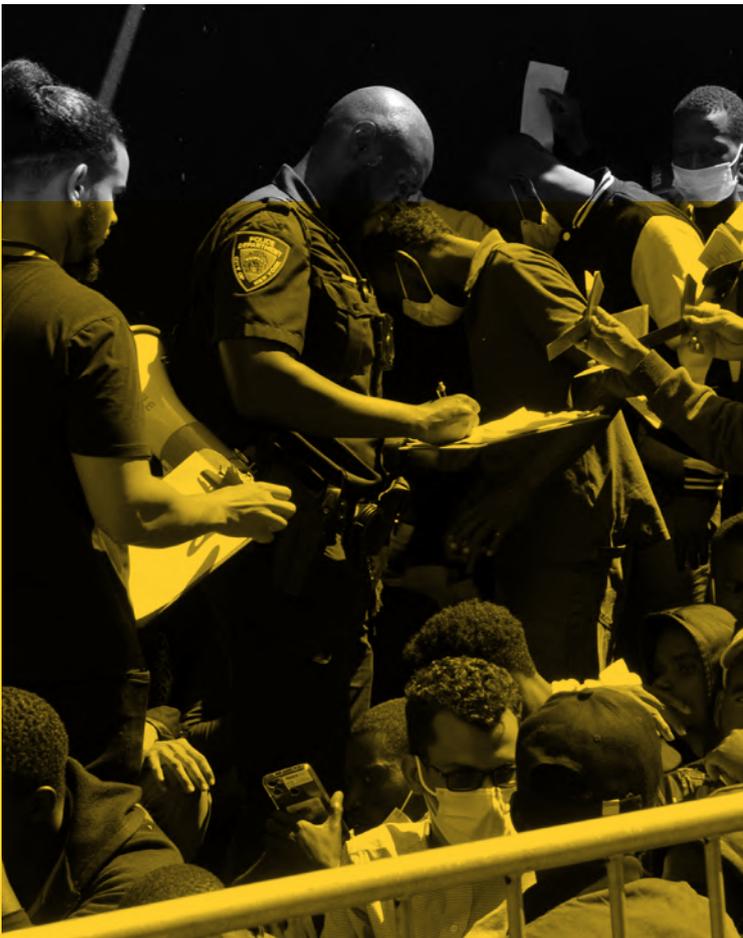
LGBTQI+ people in criminalized transit and displacement contexts, rely on asylum and third-country resettlement as life-saving protection. Safeguarding access to asylum is vital for LGBTQI+ asylum seekers for whom local integration or voluntary repatriation may not be possible. Despite this, last year, less than 5% of refugees in need of resettlement worldwide, actually received it.²⁶ The combined pressures of rising anti-LGBTQI+ legislation and dwindling commitments on asylum leave LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons (FDPs) with few viable options. Addressing these challenges requires tailored solutions including dedicated resettlement pathways, and stronger multi-stakeholder coordination to

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are Stuck with Nowhere to Go

As some refugee resettlement pathways expand, there is still a significant lack of robust protection measures for internally displaced persons (IDPs) who remain in their country of origin. In 2024, almost 3/4 of requests we received came from individuals in their home countries, underscoring the urgent need for long-term pathways to safety for IDPs. Many of the highest-need countries are also where Rainbow Railroad faces the greatest challenges in providing relocation support, and in some cases, we are unable to intervene at all. The shrinking global asylum space meant that in 2024, we identified 22 countries as having no viable routes to safety for at-risk LGBTQI+ IDPs – an increase from 2023.

Some states do discreetly facilitate humanitarian pathways for LGBTQI+ IDPs facing targeted persecution during anti-LGBTQI+ crackdowns. Humanitarian visas for Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) also provide a critical lifeline for LGBTQI+ activists trapped in high-risk environments. However, these pathways often fall short – offering temporary protection without a route to permanent resettlement or requiring permanent relocation without an option for short-term refuge, for those who wish to return to their human rights work once conditions improve. To be truly effective, these mechanisms must be flexible and responsive to real-world conditions.

LGBTQI+ refugee pathways such as GAR, Welcome Corps, and Priority-1 exclude IDPs. While resettlement policies for IDPs remain rare, there is precedent. Canada’s now-repealed Source Country Class program once provided resettlement options for individuals in refugee-like situations displaced within their own countries, signaling a principled “shift toward protection.”²⁷ Its elimination in 2011 left a critical gap in legal protection for LGBTQI+ IDPs. Over 83 million people were internally displaced in 2024.²⁸



address their unique protection needs.

The global attack on asylum has a direct impact on Rainbow Railroad's Emergency Travel Support (ETS) program. Last year, we saw trusted travel routes disappear due to changes in visa restrictions. **In 2024, we experienced one of the highest number of annual travel failures on record. During the five year period between 2018-2022, we experienced 53 travel failures. In 2023 alone, we experienced 20 travel failures and another 20 in 2024. In over half of all travel failure cases last year, the individual was trans or intersex. In 95% of cases the individual was racialized – demonstrating the increased challenges for folks with intersecting vulnerabilities. We continue to support cases wherever possible after failed travel, and many are successful on subsequent attempts.** Caseworkers are consistently researching and attempting new routes.

"The Emergency Travel Support team is committed to continuing to support folks in exercising their right to asylum, and we believe that this is needed now more than ever while queer rights are under attack globally. As we navigate these challenges, we are constantly adapting to new laws and changes in visa restrictions, researching new possible travel routes, and working collaboratively with individuals to prepare them for the barriers they will encounter on their journey to safety." - Brandon Pearl, Director, Intake, Emergency Travel Support and Cash Assistance

Despite these conditions, in 2024, the ETS team evacuated 242 individuals of 29 different nationalities. The majority were nationals of Afghanistan, Russia, Jamaica, Jordan, and Egypt. Since our founding in 2006, ETS has supported over 2,100 people from 79 different countries on their journeys to find safety. ETS allows people who are in imminent danger, typically still in their country of origin and who would otherwise not have access to typical refugee resettlement pathways, to exercise their right to claim asylum. Rainbow Railroad will always advocate for the right to claim asylum and our ETS program will continue to provide access for at-risk LGBTQI+ individuals in imminent danger.

My CBP appointment got cancelled because Trump took office. I just had six days until I could contact U.S. Customs and be in a system for asylum. This is beyond words unfair, all my hopes are just crushed because of six days. Right now I'm in Mexicali, near the border, I see the wall, but nothing I can do... I don't know what to do. My dismay could not be comprehended.

An individual impacted by the suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admissions program





LGBTQI+ Refugees in Kenya: A Worsening Situation

The protracted displacement context in Kenya is a striking example of the difficulties of local integration for many LGBTQI+ refugees in contexts of criminalization and severe stigmatization. Interviews with LGBTQI+ asylum seekers in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement in Kenya found that 83% of respondents had experienced physical violence, with nearly 9 in 10 assaults attributed to fellow refugees.²⁹ Despite this, the Kenyan government has stopped processing asylum claims and exit permits for LGBTQI+ refugees, preventing individuals from travelling in pursuit of asylum – even for those with identified pathways to resettlement.³⁰

Anti-LGBTQI+ and anti-asylum policies in Kenya are pushing some LGBTQI+ refugees to seek asylum by moving to dangerous refugee camps in South Sudan. A mass exodus from Kakuma to Gorom Camp was visible in our 2024 Intake data, and showed that many community members in Gorom Camp are still awaiting refugee registration, and that even those who have been registered report insufficient stipends for food and a lack of adequate shelter. Homosexuality is criminalized in both Kenya and South Sudan. Returning LGBTQI+ refugees to, or attempting to force local integration into, hostile communities is not tenable, and third country solutions are needed.

2. NO OTHER OPTIONS: RESETTLEMENT AS A CRITICAL PATH TO SAFETY FOR LGBTQI+ INDIVIDUALS

Our work is rooted in the freedom of movement: supporting LGBTQI+ people to access safety at home, and to exercise their right to asylum when needed. Between July and December 2024, 4,622 individuals requested specific program services from Rainbow Railroad. 78% of people from 142 different countries requested International Relocation. Despite the challenges that many face before and during relocation, LGBTQI+ refugees overwhelmingly report feeling more hopeful after resettlement or relocation. In interviews conducted by Rainbow Railroad, **91% of individuals who had relocated to a third country reported improved personal safety.**³¹

For LGBTQI+ refugees, resettlement in a third country may be their only option. Local integration or voluntary repatriation to their original countries may not be possible in climates of extreme homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. Community rejection continues to persist as the primary safety concern for individuals supported by Rainbow Railroad.³² Nearly 50% of people also reported community violence, up significantly from 2023.³³ Last year, over half of the individuals we supported faced verbal abuse, community violence, or life threatening violence. As anti-LGBTQI+ hate and legal backlash continue to increase, we anticipate a continued rise in rates of violence reported by the people we serve.

In response, Rainbow Railroad has advocated for governments to create designated pathways to safety for at-risk LGBTQI+ people. In 2023, Rainbow Railroad secured direct partnerships with the Canadian and U.S. governments and, in 2024, we operationalized them through the Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) partnership in Canada, and the Welcome Corps program and Priority-1 referral pathway in the U.S.

Rahma Esslouani is a non-binary lesbian from Morocco who resettled to Toronto through GAR in 2024. Rahma shared that in both Morocco and Turkey – where they were living as a refugee – they “faced constant fear, violence, and a lack of basic rights, which made it impossible to live openly and safely. Coming to Canada has allowed me to find the freedom and security I had long been denied... I felt a sense of relief and safety, knowing I was free from the fear and persecution I had faced. However, adjusting to a new culture and environment came with challenges.”

Reflecting on the role LGBTQI+ community networks can play in welcoming newcomers into a new community and country, they noted, “**The support from organizations like Rainbow Railroad and other newcomer organizations made a huge difference, helping me feel welcomed and supported as I began to build my new Fresh & Free life.**” Rahma shared that they want the queer community to stay “visible, vocal and united. We must challenge discrimination, support each other, and create safe spaces for all. Resistance also means working together for equality and acceptance, ensuring every voice is heard. I’m hopeful for the future because I believe in my ability to grow, find meaningful connections, and live authentically.”



[I] faced constant fear, violence, and a lack of basic rights, which made it impossible to live openly and safely. Coming to Canada has allowed me to find the freedom and security I had long been denied... **I felt a sense of relief and safety,** knowing I was free from the fear and persecution I had faced. However, adjusting to a new culture and environment came with challenges.

Rahma Esslouani

A non-binary lesbian from Morocco, who resettled to Toronto through GAR

Welcome Corps: Navigating the Promise and Pitfalls of Government Pathway Advocacy

While Rainbow Railroad's involvement with Welcome Corps has been a significant opportunity to support LGBTQI+ people at risk, the experience also brought to light critical systemic issues, including the impact of bureaucratic delays and the fragility of resettlement pathways.

From the outset, Rainbow Railroad was instrumental in shaping the Third-Party Naming (TPN) phase of Welcome Corps. We contributed significantly to the creation and rollout of the program, and many of our proposals and best practices were adopted directly into its framework.

In 2024, Rainbow Railroad, with the participation of over 55 volunteers, submitted 11 TPN Welcome Corps applications on behalf of 17 individuals. The application process was intensive, requiring individual interviews, the drafting of detailed case summaries, and ongoing support for volunteers throughout the various phases of interest, group formation and submission.

A recurring issue in LGBTQI+ refugee advocacy is the way in which government pathways result in delays, which leave individuals in life-threatening limbo while awaiting case processing. TPN was no exception, with team members and government partners anticipating that processing could take anywhere from one to three years. The timeline became critical following the results of the 2024 U.S. general elections, with advocates anticipating a severe slow down or halt of refugee processing. This was even more concerning because, once an individual has been processed by USRAP, they become ineligible for resettlement in another country unless USRAP proactively releases their case. Essentially, refugees who were referred into the program would likely have to wait 4+ years for their case processing to actively resume, and then be placed back into the resettlement queue.

The vulnerability of resettlement programs to political shifts, as demonstrated in the United States, reiterates the importance of Rainbow Railroad's multifaceted approach. While collaboration and partnerships with governments can be essential for opening new pathways, specifically for LGBTQI+ individuals who may not be able to access informal pathways, it cannot be the sole strategy.

It bears noting that while government resettlement pathways expand access for LGBTQI+ FDPs, they remain inadequate in addressing a global displacement crisis where over 120 million people are forcibly displaced.³⁴ Current policies resettle only a fraction of those in need. These pathways serve as stopgap measures, but States and the UN humanitarian system must work toward broader reforms to ensure LGBTQI+ persons in need of asylum are not left behind.

3. WHILE LAWS TURN AGAINST US, PEOPLE SHOW UP: THE GROWING MOVEMENT TO SUPPORT LGBTQI+ REFUGEES IN THE U.S.

Traditional U.S. refugee resettlement is a public-private partnership, wherein the U.S. government contracts with 10 national resettlement agencies to oversee reception and service provision for refugees. Welcome Corps — a new resettlement program — empowered everyday Americans to become directly involved in this process by serving as Private Sponsor Groups (PSG) for incoming refugees. Rainbow Railroad was the first and only LGBTQI+ organization to partner with Welcome Corps. Refugee resettlement was not designed with the needs of LGBTQI+ people in mind, so Rainbow Railroad dedicated itself to mobilizing queer, trans, and allied volunteers for this partnership. This was a first-of-its-kind model in the U.S., and lays the foundation for the organization's expanded post-relocation support frameworks. **Across the board, LGBTQI+ persons who benefited from this program, shared their feelings of awe at the empathetic care provided by volunteers, and hope for their own futures in being able to express and embody their identities in new ways.**

Creating teams dedicated to providing queer welcoming and community integration is a critical aspect in supporting an LGBTQI+ refugee's journey towards increased safety. Through Welcome Corps, volunteers serve in teams of five or more to support each LGBTQI+ newcomer for the first 90 days of arrival, helping them to connect with services such as housing, cultural orientation, English language learning, and job searches. Twenty-three groups completed their sponsor periods in 2024,³⁵ representing over 6,500 hours donated. **In surveys, volunteers reflecting on their experience overwhelmingly expressed feeling like they had made new family or friends, and a desire to continue direct service, and mobilize for direct advocacy efforts.**

After supporting the relocation of 31 refugees from 11 different countries through phase one of the program, Rainbow Railroad was also part of a smaller group of partners who were able to pilot "third-party naming" (TPN). This was a monumental opportunity to refer individuals who had submitted RfH to Rainbow Railroad directly, to be considered and processed by USRAP. Rainbow Railroad was invited to co-create the development of TPN because of our expertise on queer-sensitive refugee management systems. For queer displaced people who are severely underdocumented by resettlement administrators, this was a groundbreaking opportunity to gain access to resettlement in the United States because they had been able to request help through Rainbow Railroad.

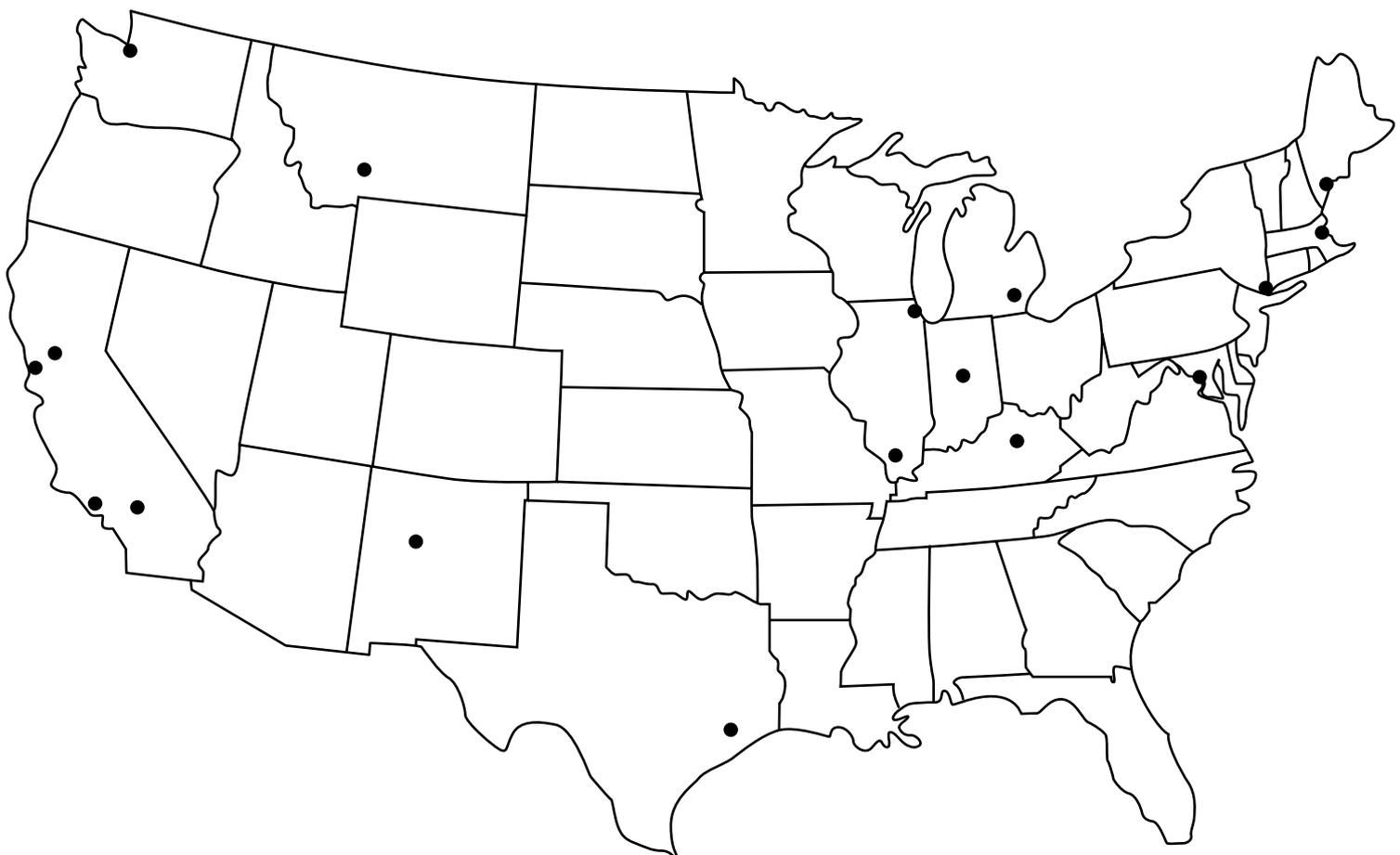
Rainbow Railroad's ability to operate this program is rooted in our partnerships and mobilization efforts, with Rainbow Railroad-trained and supported volunteers executing on the

ground support. Engagement Officers mobilized over 250 volunteers across the U.S., in 19 cities in 15 states. Our three largest hub regions were Chicagoland, the DC metro area, and Houston metro area, with each city's mobilization and support rooted in strategic partnerships.

In the wake of USRAP's suspension, dozens of these volunteers reached out with hopes of being re-mobilized for new kinds of services and direct advocacy in support of LGBTQI+ newcomers. Our new Community Support Teams extends the support model from LGBTQI+ refugees to LGBTQI+ asylum seekers. With Rainbow Railroad's training and guidance, these volunteer teams offer financial, logistical, and emotional support to new neighbors in need throughout the country. Despite the Administration's attack on immigrants and LGBTQI+ people, we know that queer people will continue to seek asylum in the United States. Rainbow Railroad and the networks of support we have built across the U.S. will continue to show up for them.

As we queered the Welcome Corps program, Rainbow Railroad also engaged in Priority 1 (P-1) referrals of at-risk LGBTQI+ refugees to the United States. P-1 allows designated non-governmental organizations to refer refugees of any nationality, typically with severe protection needs, for resettlement in the U.S. In coalition with other refugee rights and LGBTQI+ rights organizations in the U.S., we successfully referred 21 Priority-1 LGBTQI+ refugees for resettlement in the U.S. In 2024, five people arrived through this pathway. This pathway has also been impacted by the suspension of USRAP.

PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP GROUPS (PSGS) MOBILIZED AND APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED



Washington DC
Chicago, IL
Los Angeles, CA
San Francisco, CA
Sacramento, CA
Palm Springs, CA
Indianapolis, ID
Carbondale, IL
Lexington, KY
Boston, MA

Portland, ME
Ann Arbor, MI
Bozeman, MT
[Redacted for privacy], NJ
Albuquerque, NM
New York, NY
Houston, TX
[Redacted for privacy], VT
Seattle, WA

The U.S. as a Country of Asylum — Even Under the New Administration

In the first 24 hours following the U.S. election, Rainbow Railroad received over 1,200 requests for help from American citizens and residents. For many LGBTQI+ Americans, the election presented the possibility of a rollback of rights and an increase in violence. However, many states within the U.S. have legal protections and are generally presumed safe for LGBTQI+ individuals, making it incredibly challenging for Americans to claim asylum in other countries.

Safety is also relative and dynamic, and despite increasing anti-LGBTQI+ and anti-refugee directives from the new Administration, queer and trans refugees will continue to seek asylum in the U.S., and there will be communities to welcome them. The shrinking of resources and the increased trauma of seeking asylum make Rainbow Railroad's Communities of Care even more vital. **Where government infrastructure fails, our network of partner organizations and volunteers will both fill critical gaps and redefine what welcome and integration can mean for LGBTQI+ newcomers.**



Photo credit: Justin Tang. Pax Santos, Rainbow Railroad's Director of Advocacy, meets with The Honourable Marc Miller, Canada's former Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (not pictured), and members of his staff in May 2024.

4. ONE YEAR ON: LGBTQI+ RESETTLEMENT IN CANADA DEMONSTRATES THE SUCCESS OF STATE-CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP

The Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) program is a Canadian resettlement pathway that offers refugees a lifeline to resettle in Canada. Historically, access to this program was facilitated through referrals from UNHCR. However, LGBTQI+ individuals in the global refugee system often face multiple layers of exclusion, limiting their access to refugee status determination (RSD), and exposing them to biased decision-making that lacks a SOGIESC-sensitive lens, leading to unjust denials. In 2024, less than 5% of individuals seeking our assistance had UNHCR-registered refugee status. The GAR partnership is unique in that it enables Rainbow Railroad to directly refer LGBTQI+ asylum seekers from its internal case system, without requiring individuals to have their refugee status recognized by UNHCR. In 2023 the government responded to years of Canadian coalition advocacy and created a new pathway specifically for LGBTQI+ refugees.

This landmark agreement enables Rainbow Railroad to refer up to 250 at-risk LGBTQI+ refugees for resettlement each year. This responsibility required us to design a program that ensures accountability, transparency, and equity.

In 2024, we built the internal infrastructure to implement this historic program, including a complete overhaul of our case intake, processing, and evaluation systems. We developed robust frameworks and assessment tools to account for the specific needs of each individual who could qualify for this program, and prioritize access for the most at-risk. **The creation of comprehensive, queer-specific assessment tools marks a significant contribution to the humanitarian protection field, allowing us to engage in deeper, intentional thinking about the values that guide our work.**

The GAR pathway allows us to move at-risk LGBTQI+ refugees to safety quickly, and has had a transformative impact for the individuals we serve. After fleeing Algeria and having his original attempts at accessing asylum refused, Rainbow Railroad provided support to Ahmed while he was living in Dubai waiting for his GAR application to be submitted and processed. When asked to reflect on what this process meant to him, he shared:

“Rainbow Railroad’s support helped me escape a homophobic, abusive environment, navigate an asylum system that failed me, and endure the hardships of living in a second country while my case was being processed. Without Rainbow Railroad’s assistance, there was no conceivable way I could have achieved what I have today – whether through asylum, work, or education. I’m still in disbelief that all of this is possible, and I’m grateful that so many others are being helped too. I hope that one day this kind of assistance will no longer be necessary, but for now, it remains absolutely crucial.”

In its first year of operation in 2024, the GAR team successfully referred 144 individuals for resettlement in Canada, conducted 125 vulnerability assessments, and provided financial support to 60 individuals. There is an immense amount of work that goes into preparing each case, and a single referral requires approximately 40 hours to complete. To expand protection opportunities, Rainbow Railroad also introduced the external referral program, harnessing the expertise of other Canadian LGBTQI+ organizations to nominate LGBTQI+ refugees for resettlement consideration. In 2024, external referral organizations referred 24 LGBTQI+ individuals to the GAR pathway. This year we will be able to successfully refer more people through GAR; between January and April of 2025, 62 GAR applications were completed, in support of 85 individuals.

5. ORGANIZING IS SURVIVAL: WHY LGBTQI+ MOVEMENTS DESERVE CRISIS-LEVEL SUPPORT

As the nature of global crises continues to shift, so too must our strategies for response. In the past year, we have deepened our commitment to organizing for crisis response by listening closely to affected communities and investing in local organizations equipped to lead rapid interventions. Our data reflects accelerating LGBTQI+ forced displacement crises. In 2024, we monitored and responded to crisis situations in Afghanistan, Uganda, Lebanon, and Egypt, and expanded crisis-specific partner investments to support 244 people directly.

Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia seek to expel or eliminate LGBTQI+ persons from the family, community, and country. Crackdowns, often brought-on by the introduction of new criminalization legislation, ignite hate at the family and community levels, creating forced displacement crises specifically for LGBTQI+ communities.

Nour, a nonbinary/gender expansive individual, from Yemen, currently living in Canada, supported through GAR

“I grew up in Yemen, in a strict society that enforces toxic masculinity from a young age and rejects anything outside of it. Love, in any form, was not accepted, making our lives incredibly difficult. I faced threats, physical and mental torture, abuse, assault, and harassment. My partner and I feared for our lives, facing multiple attacks and relentless persecution, until we found asylum with Rainbow Railroad.”

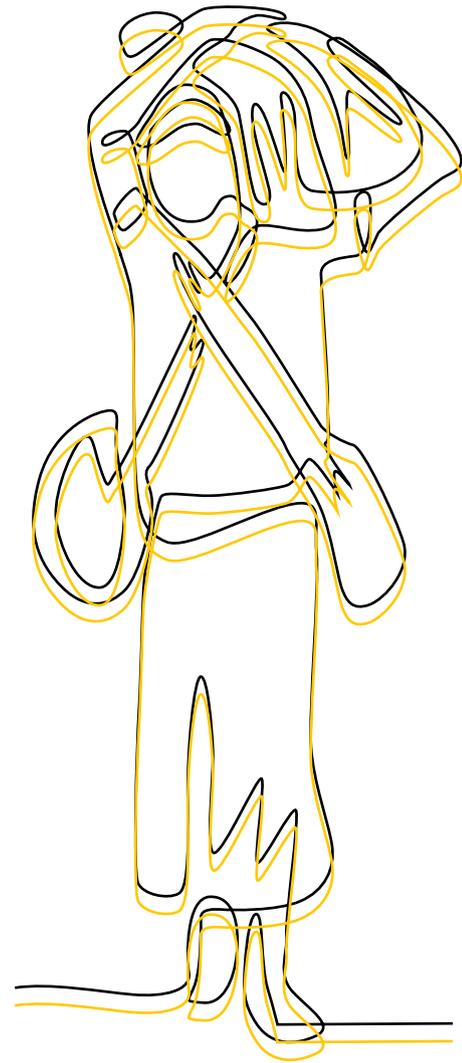
“Many people don’t realize that being a refugee is not just about leaving a country – it’s about leaving behind everything you’ve ever known, often with no choice. It’s not just a journey across borders; it’s a journey of survival, grief, and rebuilding. **Newcomers arrive with deep wounds, carrying the trauma of violence, persecution, and displacement. But at the same time, we carry dreams, resilience, and a strong desire to belong.** ... Being a refugee is not our entire identity – it’s just part of our story. What we truly seek is a future where we are seen, accepted, and given the chance to thrive like anyone else.”

Hope is what kept Nour going. “Despite living in a strict and hateful society, we still managed to create some beautiful memories across the country. We did our best to find light in the darkness, holding onto moments of joy wherever we could. ... Having my partner by my side, looking into their eyes, and feeling like everything is going to be okay – that we will be fine. We have each other. We’ve been through so much together, and I know we can overcome anything.”

Specific requests for services also informed our targeted investments in partner organizations last year. After international relocation, the next two most requested services were shelter and housing assistance, and mental health support. The high number of requests for mental health support, combined with similar requests from partner organizations, led us to strategically prioritize partnerships with organizations that specialize in trauma-informed care. These requests underscored the growing humanitarian crises affecting LGBTQI+ individuals in regions where systemic discrimination and violence persist. In South Sudan and Uganda, this data highlighted the imminent need for shelter and health assistance, with many community members reporting dire living conditions and urgent needs for essential services.

We have also made progress in adapting our services to better meet demand, and proactively responsive to emergent crisis situations around the world. Beyond requests for help, we also use our communications with local partners to map global needs and prioritize services.

In this landscape, innovative, flexible crisis response funding is vital in global LGBTQI+ rights protection work at scale. Rapid response funding is for groups, activists and human rights defenders who are the first line of defense to provide emergency care to locally affected populations, and also to mobilize in defending democracy. They launch injunctions to prevent new homophobic legislation from being implemented, and provide emergency shelter to individuals who are first affected by waves of queerphobia. As human rights work continues to be defined by international crisis response for the foreseeable future, building allyship and investing in local organizations will be vital to sustaining the queer liberation movement.



Crisis Response Fund: A New Way to Reach Underground LGBTQI+ Organizing

The state of LGBTQI+ persecution around the world has made crisis response a critical element of the global queer liberation movement. In response to this, in 2024 we launched the Crisis Response Fund as part of the Queer Forced Displacement Initiative. This fund provides accessible, flexible micro-funding to grassroots organizations to respond to crisis emergencies, ensuring LGBTQI+ people facing displacement have access to vital protection and services.

Critically, organizations do not need to be registered to access this funding. In many global contexts, LGBTQI+ organizing is explicitly criminalized. Additionally, the U.S. government's cancellation of international funding is targeting and restricting LGBTQI+ global funding. Despite this reality, LGBTQI+ organizers are first responders to crises. In state-sponsored crackdowns against the LGBTQI+ community, they are often on their own.

The Fund will invest in initiatives aimed at supporting people at high risk of displacement, and those who are already displaced through three core streams:

- Crisis & Emergency Response Services Grant
- Crisis Capacity Building Grant
- Crisis Advocacy Grant

We fund small and medium-sized grassroots organizations for one-time micro-funding up to CAD \$25,000.

6. THE QUEER FORCED DISPLACEMENT CRISIS AT SCALE: CONVENING A GLOBAL NETWORK

Across nearly every region of the world, movements for queer liberation are undergoing a moment of intense pressure and existential threat. For individuals caught at the intersections of LGBTQI+ identity and refugee status, these conditions are made more severe. With exponential growth in the urgency of, and need to, support queer forcibly displaced people, tackling these challenges requires both short-term, emergency interventions and a proactive strategy, aimed at sustaining existing movements through the turbulent storms ahead.

In 2024, Rainbow Railroad launched the Queer Forced Displacement Initiative (QFDI), a two-year project to establish an international multi-stakeholder network to improve access to protection and durable solutions for LGBTQI+ FDPs. The QFDI emerges from the reality that LGBTQI+ refugees are uniquely vulnerable to violence, marginalization, and discrimination on their journeys to find safety.

LGBTQI+ people experience direct persecution in countries of origin, in transit and host communities. They face systemic barriers in accessing humanitarian assistance or safe pathways, and experience exclusion and discrimination within existing protection systems. In the face of these complex conditions, LGBTQI+ people with lived experience, civil society organizations, international organizations and government actors from across the globe are generating creative strategies and solutions. And yet, to date, there exists no sustained global institutional space to capture and share this critical collective expertise to strengthen local, regional and international responses. The QFDI bridges this critical gap and serves as a long-term institutional platform for generating protection solutions for LGBTQI+ communities in forced displacement. It will also be a platform for mobilizing urgent response efforts for crises affecting LGBTQI+ communities.³⁶

Last year, we held the first global roundtable consultations in Mexico and South Africa, with additional consultations planned throughout 2025 in key transit countries in the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific. Preliminary findings indicate that LGBTQI+ FDPs are increasingly vulnerable to the rise of anti-LGBTQI+ and anti-refugee policies in multiple regions. Early recommendations point to the need to center the voices of individuals with lived expertise in policy-making, and for international bodies to partner with LGBTQI+ civil society organizations on solutions. As one activist at the Mexico roundtable shared, centering the voices of LGBTQI+ persons with lived or active experiences of forced displacement must be a core tenet of the QFDI:

“There are a lot of support networks, but refugee voices are not heard or listened to. The help is not actually being seen or experienced. People are facing discrimination in official government offices. It’s like a vicious cycle, we talk and talk about the issue, but people are not really getting support.”

After completing the initial roundtables, the global political landscape shifted dramatically. Long-standing networks of LGBTQI+ civil society organizations and human rights defenders were devastated by massive U.S. foreign aid funding cuts, with many forced to cut staff or close — including

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An activist at the Mexico roundtable



Photo credit: Justin Tang. Swathi Sekhar, Rainbow Railroad’s Director of Protection Initiatives, speaks at the closing reception event for Dignity Network Canada’s roundtables in May 2024.

key QFDI partners. In this context, it is imperative to leverage the QFDI as a strategic tool to hold the global refugee protection system accountable and ensure it meaningfully includes LGBTQI+ people who have been systematically excluded.

7. ADDRESSING THE ANTI-LGBTQI+ BACKLASH ON THE WORLD STAGE

Where direct service programming cannot meet the need, we advocate globally for systemic change to address the root causes endangering and displacing LGBTQI+ persons around the world. As one of the only global LGBTQI+ refugee support organizations providing direct services, this vantage point gives us unique insights into the state of LGBTQI+ rights across a diverse set of country contexts. With tens of thousands of requests for help from individuals each year, we have access to direct insights into the needs and experiences of LGBTQI+ refugees.

In 2024, Rainbow Railroad secured Consultative status through the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). ECOSOC status allows us to advocate for solutions to LGBTQI+ forced displacement, and elevate the work of partner LGBTQI+ organizations and activists at the UN, at a time when LGBTQI+ rights have become a flashpoint at the highest diplomatic levels. Rainbow Railroad also participated in the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In 2024, one in four countries around the world reported significant backlash on women's rights,³⁷ and in our work we see LGBTQI+ persecution as an acute expression of this wider global trend. At the same time, we continue to queer the broader refugee and asylum system, and share our expertise in LGBTQI+ refugee resettlement at the UNHCR Global Consultations with NGOs, and the Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways (CRCP).

At the UN Summit of the Future, Rainbow Railroad convened a side event on "International Peace and Security and LGBTQI+ Crisis Response."³⁸ Experts discussed how the rising tide of legislation targeting LGBTQI+ communities not only jeopardizes the safety of individuals and communities, but also has broader implications for global peace and security. Activist partner, Richard Wilson, Executive Director of Lighthouse Equality Advocacy Project described their experience paneling:

"This event opened my eyes to the global nature of the LGBTQI+ crisis response. It showed me that while the struggles of LGBTQI+ immigrants and asylum seekers are unique, they are not isolated. The panel gave me a deeper understanding of the complex intersection between displacement, identity, and security. It also highlighted the importance of international cooperation in addressing these crises and reassured me that there are ongoing efforts to improve the systems in place to protect and support people like me."

At international forums we ensured LGBTQI+ forced displacement was on the global agenda. Through The Commonwealth Equality Network (TCEN), for the first time Rainbow Railroad engaged in the Commonwealth Heads

of Government Meeting (CHOGM) — a meeting of all 56 commonwealth nations, about half of whom criminalize LGBTQI+ people. Despite civil society's urgent calls to hold commonwealth states accountable for global human rights violations, in a highly disappointing result, commonwealth state leaders selected Ghanaian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, as the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. World leaders effectively rewarded Ghana for introducing a new wave of anti-LGBTQI+ legislation in 2024 with the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill, which criminalizes LGBTQI+ advocacy.

This outcome is emblematic of the gap in global diplomacy and addressing the anti-LGBTQI+ backlash on the world stage. In our experience navigating the UN and other high-level State spaces, acknowledging LGBTQI+ people are protected under international human rights apparatus has become untenable in international diplomatic spaces. Words such as 'sexual orientation' 'diversity' and even definitions of the 'family' have become highly contested and their inclusion in shared global agreements is moving backwards.³⁹ As global actors continue to remove LGBTQI+ rights language and protection frameworks at the highest levels, Rainbow Railroad's advocacy on the human rights of LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons remains an urgent priority.

Ambassador Vanessa Frazier, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations and André Du Plessis, United Nations Program Director at Outright International at the Rainbow Railroad panel side event hosted during the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024.



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Richard Wilson

Executive Director of Lighthouse Equality Advocacy Project



**POWERLESS
WITHOUT
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COMMUNITY
MAKING OUR
WORK POSSIBLE**



Community Mobilization and Partnerships	52
Strengthening LGBTQI+ Refugee Voices and Lead- ership	52
Grassroots Mobilization	56
Queer Liberation is Grounded in Community	58
Our Team	60
Thank You	62
Donors	62
Volunteers	74
Financials	76

Rainbow Railroad does our work in collaboration and community with LGBTQI+ refugees themselves, local LGBTQI+ organizations, coalitions, donors, partners, and a broad network of volunteers all committed to enhancing safety for LGBTQI+ persons around the world.

Community Mobilization and Partnerships

In this critical moment, fighting for and building safer communities is more urgent than ever. In 2024, Rainbow Railroad invested in community mobilization, advocacy, and building post-relocation support systems — because safety doesn't begin when you cross a border, it begins when you find belonging.

STRENGTHENING LGBTQI+ REFUGEE VOICES AND LEADERSHIP

Last year, Rainbow Railroad launched a series of Queer Refugee Leadership & Empowerment programs to support LGBTQI+ refugees in North America and Europe. Queer FDPs are the center of Rainbow Railroad's mission; their dedication, skills, and advocacy amplify our ability to respond to crises, support other forcibly displaced LGBTQI+ individuals, and shape global conversations on queer rights and asylum.

The power of storytelling as activism was exemplified with our inaugural Persecution to Pride exhibition at the 2024 Freedom Party. This was a milestone photography and storytelling campaign that highlighted the journeys of LGBTQI+ refugees, showcasing their resilience and the importance of both safe relocation and long-term support.

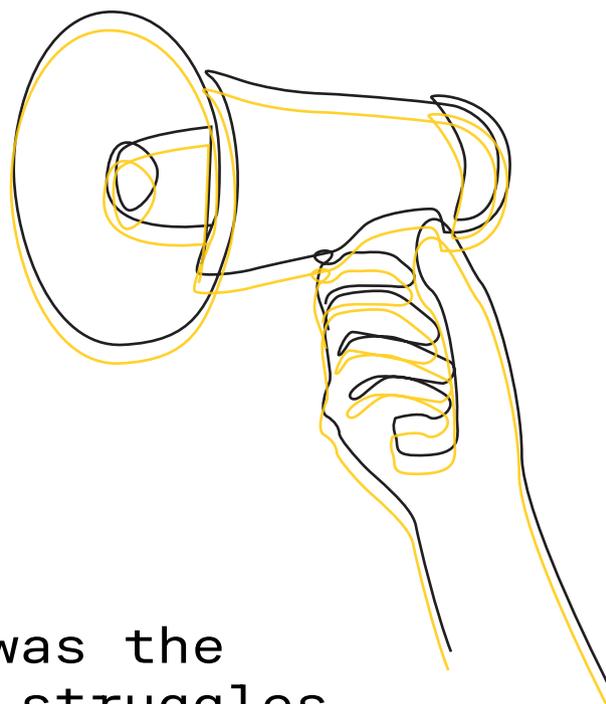
Ahead of the 2025 launch of our Queer Refugee Ambassador program, we supported several LGBTQI+ migrants in national and international advocacy spaces. The Queer Refugee Ambassador program will offer structured training and advocacy opportunities for LGBTQI+ people we've previously helped relocate to the U.S. and Canada. Last year, we recruited our first cohort of Refugee Ambassadors, and they brought their international expertise to a number of advocacy opportunities in the US and Canada.

Rainbow Railroad brought six community advocates from Jamaica, Kenya, Indonesia and Uganda, now all living in the U.S., to Washington, D.C. to participate in Refugee Council USA's National Advocacy Days. Over 300 participants, including 174 people with lived experience of forced displacement, gathered to meet with members of Congress in support of welcoming policies. Participation in these coalition spaces allows for Rainbow Railroad clients to directly advocate in their new communities, and pushes the migrant rights field to be more inclusive of LGBTQI+ needs and issues. One participant, Karabo Kitwana Kardashian, remarked:

"What struck me most was the realization that our struggles and triumphs are not just personal narratives but crucial elements in advocating for legislative change. We discussed passionately about bills and laws that directly impact LGBTQI+ individuals, emphasizing that these issues are as vital and deserving of attention as any other legislative agenda. Our collective voices became a powerful force advocating for inclusivity, equality, and justice. Sharing those moments reminded me that behind every policy debate and legislative decision, there are real lives, real challenges, and real hopes."



Kitwana Kardashian, Rainbow Railroad refugee ambassador, at Refugee Council USA's Advocacy Days in Washington D.C.



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Kitwana Kardashian
Rainbow Railroad refugee ambassador

In Her Own Words: Jannat Ali

Jannat Ali, was an activist (artist/activist) in Pakistan and has continued to rebuild her activism in Canada after she was provided with relocation support in 2023. In 2024, Rainbow Railroad nominated her for the Amina Malko Fund, so she could represent LGBTQI+ refugee interests at the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR). The Consultation brought together 430 people, including refugees, immigrants, NGO representatives, human right defenders, government representatives, and academics from across the country and abroad. The event was an opportunity for direct advocacy with the Canadian government to protect political support for refugees and migrants, and push them to counteract harmful stereotypes through public education and structural reform. Jannat shared her experience doing direct advocacy work through this opportunity: "Advocacy is at the core of my existence as a trans woman activist and artist. Having faced persecution and systemic oppression in Pakistan, I know first-hand how critical it is to use my voice to uplift marginalized communities. Advocacy is not just about policies and protests – it's about survival, dignity, and creating spaces where transgender and queer individuals can live without fear. Every time I speak up, I carry the voices of those who are silenced.

One of the most impactful moments of this trip was meeting other resilient leaders who are working tirelessly to support refugees and asylum seekers. Being recognized through the Amina Malko Fund by CCR was deeply meaningful, as it symbolizes the recognition of LGBTQI+ struggles in migration. As a Rainbow Railroad Ambassador, I had the opportunity to share the stories of those who have escaped persecution and to emphasize the urgent need for safe pathways for displaced LGBTQI+ individuals. I attended different sessions, working group meetings, caucuses and plenaries to learn more about refugee rights, current immigration and resettlement policies, and how to be part of different committees and groups and reclaiming our spaces in policy making and developing a National Plan for Asylum.

The most crucial message was that LGBTQI+ individuals facing persecution do not just need asylum; they need holistic support – mental health care, safe housing, community integration, and opportunities to rebuild

their lives. **It is not enough to relocate people from danger; we must ensure they are not forced into isolation and struggle in a new country.** Solidarity means action, and action means ensuring that policies are inclusive and protective of LGBTQI+ migrants.

This event reinforced my belief that crisis response must be proactive, not just reactive. Many LGBTQI+ individuals flee life-threatening situations, but the systems in place often fail to recognize the specific vulnerabilities they face. Hearing from experts and those with lived experiences highlighted the need for intersectional policies that address both immediate safety and long-term well-being. It also reminded me that while organizations like Rainbow Railroad are doing incredible work, we need more systemic change at governmental levels to ensure that no LGBTQI+ person has to fight for their right to exist.

Our community can support LGBTQI+ crisis response by advocating for inclusive asylum policies, providing direct support to resettled individuals, and amplifying the voices of those facing persecution."

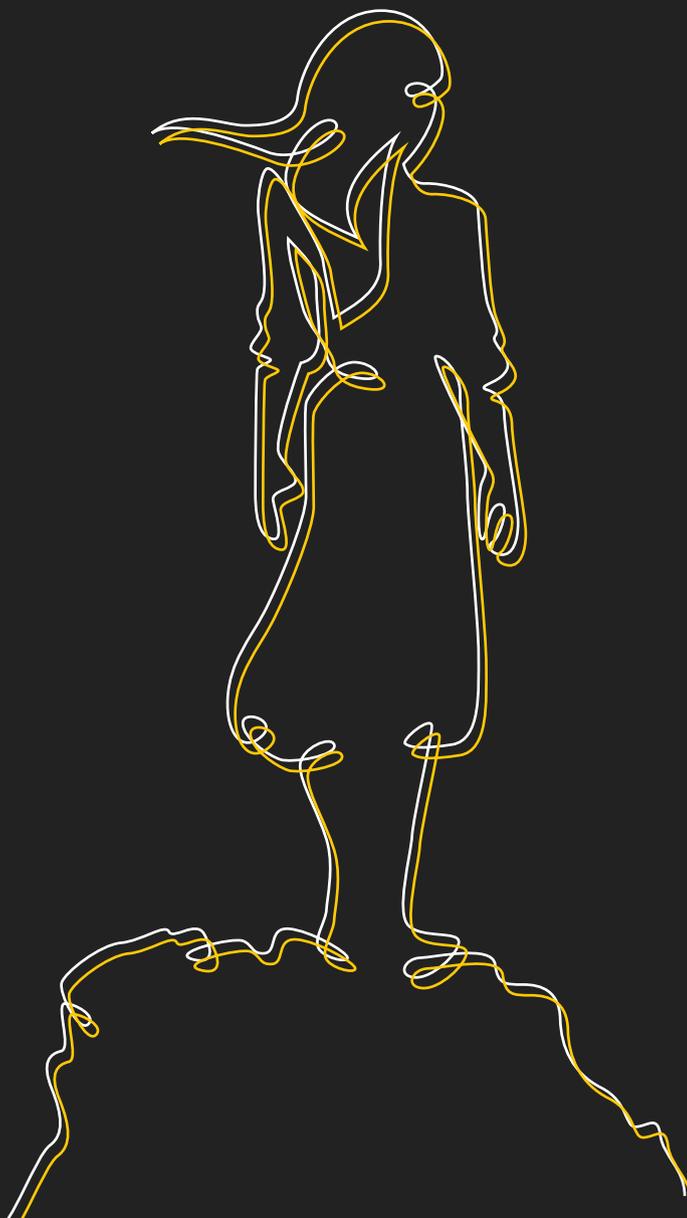
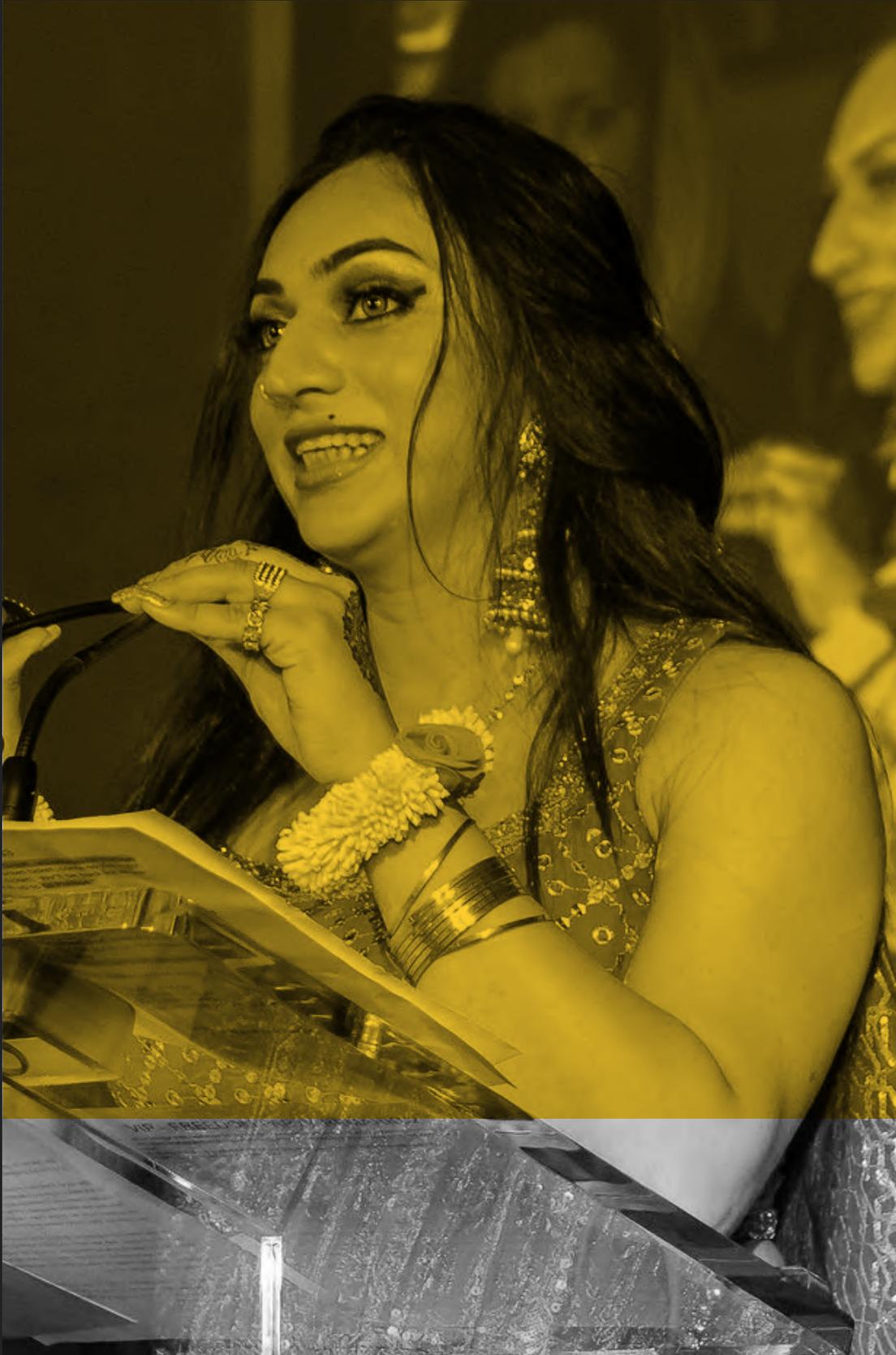


Photo credit: Devenae Bryce. Jannat Ali, a newcomer, speaking at Rainbow Railroad's annual Freedom Party in June, 2024.



GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION

We are at a cultural crossroads in the global movement for LGBTQI+ rights and refugee protections. The fight for rights and dignified refuge for forcibly displaced queer and trans individuals is being shaped by shifting policies, rising populist narratives, and increasing displacement due to state, community, and family-sponsored violence.

In 2024, Rainbow Railroad mobilized hundreds of volunteers who gave their time across our programming areas including events, advocacy, as well as relocation, and post-relocation support.

In 2024, a total of 509 volunteers contributed 38,820 hours to Rainbow Railroad. **This is the equivalent of 18 full time employees.** Their dedicated efforts played a key role in advancing all of our programs and initiatives. Thanks to their commitment, we were able to expand our impact, improve the quality of our services, and create lasting change for LGBTQI+ people seeking safety and support.

Queer and trans refugees face profound challenges rebuilding their lives in unfamiliar, often hostile environments. The transition from persecution to safety is non-linear and riddled with new struggles, including systemic barriers to housing, employment, and social integration. Adrian, a trans man from Uganda, shared his experience gaining access to LGBTQI+ community support networks during resettlement, and how this contributed to his continuing journey of self-acceptance.

“Due to the persecution I faced as an LGBTQ+ individual, I was forced to flee my home country in search of safety. In 2016, I sought asylum in Kenya, where I lived for several years as a refugee. However, even there, life remained uncertain and challenging. Through the support of Rainbow Railroad, I was connected with organizations [and] hospitals that assist LGBTQ+ refugees. In 2024, I was granted the opportunity to resettle in Canada as a permanent resident. Now, I’m rebuilding my life in a safe and accepting environment,

embracing my identity as a trans man, and continuing my transition journey. I remain actively engaged in the LGBTQ+ community, working toward a future where no one has to live in fear because of who they are.”

Rainbow Railroad’s role is evolving beyond movement with increased post-relocation support. Years of experience have taught us that safety is not just about reaching a destination — it’s about building the conditions in which LGBTQI+ persons can thrive. The most significant portion of volunteer hours were contributed by volunteers in our PSR and WC programs. While both programs require a significant time commitment, our volunteers have reported their own life-changing experiences through their participation.

POWERLESS WITHOUT PEOPLE: THE COMMUNITY MAKING OUR WORK POSSIBLE

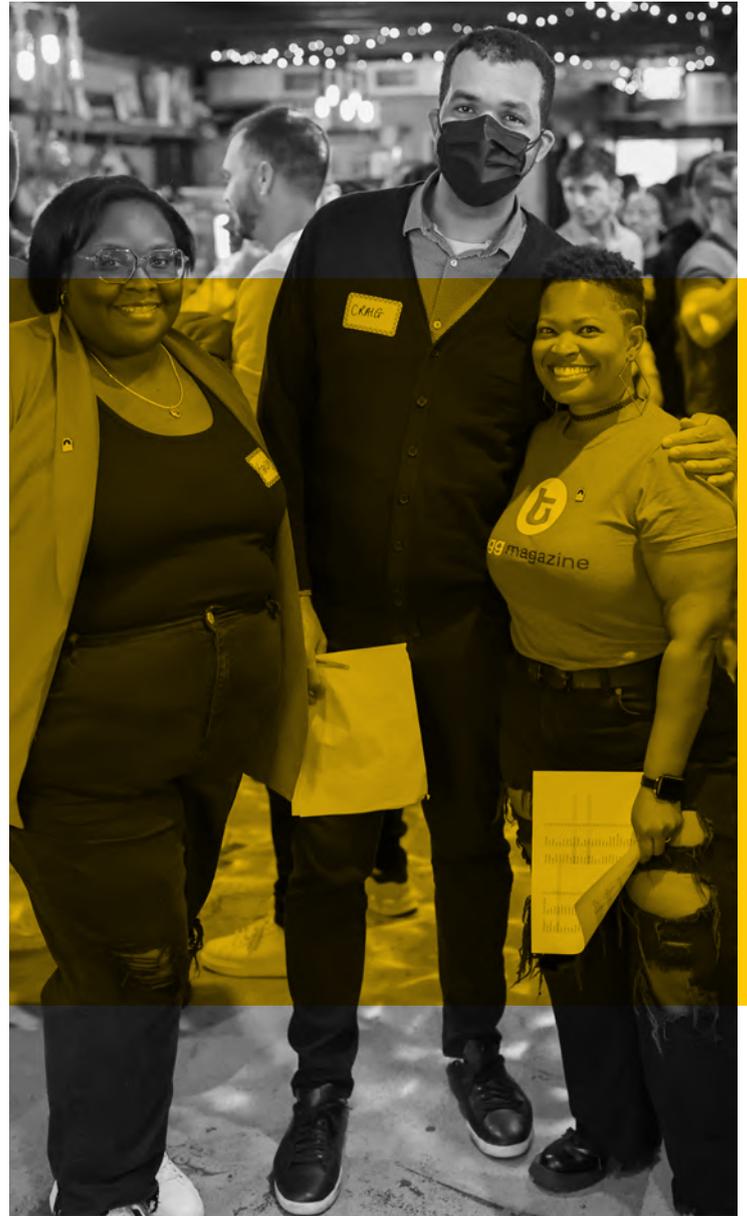


Photo credit: Brixton and Brenna Coppola-Millner. Rainbow Railroad’s Senior Engagement Officers, Kendra Frith and Craig Palmer (left and center), at a Communities of Care happy hour event hosted by Rainbow Railroad in Washington, D.C.

Faith and Community in Washington, DC Prepared by the Rev. Lisa Saunders Ahuja, Rector

In the past year, St. Thomas' Parish has been energized by a transformative partnership with Rainbow Railroad. This partnership provided a meaningful opportunity for our members to live out their faith in sharing radical welcome and a ministry of solidarity. We have also had the opportunity to connect with other churches and houses of worship to share this opportunity in Washington, DC.

Our parish had already been actively involved in refugee resettlement, but when we learned of the urgency involved in resettling LGBTQIA+ refugees, our predominantly LGBTQIA+ parish was eager to partner with Rainbow Railroad. For those fleeing violence, persecution, and discrimination in their home countries, finding a safe place to live as their authentic selves is not only a matter of survival but also a profound act of reclaiming the right to live fully as they were created to be. Through this partnership, we have been able to witness firsthand the transformative power of providing such a space.

At St. Thomas', we have long prided ourselves on being a church that is open and welcoming to all, especially to the LGBTQIA+ community. This partnership has been a living testament to the impact of that welcome. As a parish, we have embraced the opportunity to provide practical support, resources, and, most importantly, a loving and inclusive environment for those who have been displaced and marginalized. Our role as hosts and advocates has been not only an act of compassion but also a powerful ministry of solidarity.

More than half of our congregation is involved in a Private Sponsor Group (PSG). In these PSGs, church members are building relationships with one another while preparing to provide welcome and friendship. Together they wait, troubleshoot, hope, and celebrate. We find members of PSGs end up involving other church members, colleagues, and friends creating a network of care. Valuable friendships are formed with those we welcome that extend beyond the three-month commitment.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to continuing this vital work. Through this partnership, we are transforming lives—and in doing so, we are transformed as well.

Due to the persecution I faced as an LGBTQI+ individual, I was forced to flee my home country in search of safety. In 2016, I sought asylum in Kenya, where I lived for several years as a refugee. However, even there, life remained uncertain and challenging. Through the support of Rainbow Railroad, I was connected with organizations [and] hospitals that assist LGBTQI+ refugees. In 2024, I was granted the opportunity to resettle in Canada as a permanent resident. Now, I'm rebuilding my life in a safe and accepting environment, embracing my identity as a trans man, and continuing my transition journey. I remain actively engaged in the LGBTQI+ community, working toward a future where no one has to live in fear because of who they are.

Adrian

A trans man from Uganda

Communities of Care are by us and for us – Charles Kyazze

Communities of Care are rooted in the idea that queer and trans people should have a central role in welcoming LGBTQI+ refugees. And no one embodies that philosophy more than Charles Kyazze. Charles is a group member of Bluegrass Rainbow Allies, a Community of Care in Lexington, Kentucky, and himself an LGBTQI+ refugee from Uganda. Charles was resettled to the U.S. in 2018, and became a new citizen in 2023. Charles was inspired to become a volunteer because of his own personal experience and familiarity with Rainbow Railroad's work.

In April 2024, Bluegrass Rainbow Allies welcomed a newcomer from Venezuela, and Charles said he “was both excited and afraid. I was excited because I had experienced the same thing and knew exactly what had to be done to thoroughly resettle someone and help them become independent, self-sufficient, and self-reliant. But I was afraid of accepting someone who didn't speak the same language I did since I wasn't sure how we would communicate with them, whether they would succeed, and if we could assist them. Can we communicate with each other?”

Charles shared that being part of this program provided new learning opportunities for himself: “I know where to access both federal and state services, how to organize fundraising, help in planning and setting up affordable housing for a newcomer, shop with them to assemble basic things, and making budgets and reports...all of which I would not have acquired without taking an interest within the sponsorship program.”

In a message to future volunteers Charles said “it is important for prospective new sponsors to understand how satisfying and fulfilling this program is. It is rewarding and satisfying to assist someone who has gone through a lot and to see them doing their best to overcome hardships, start over and strive to achieve the American dream. **We cannot change the entire world, but we can still make a small difference by being kind to others and doing our part in any way possible.**”

The Queer Refugee Community Support Network (QRCSN) was a new project launched in 2024 designed to connect LGBTQI+ migrants previously relocated and supported by Rainbow Railroad with newcomers arriving in the same country or city. Our QRCSN volunteers use their lived experience navigating asylum, immigration, and social service programs to update tailored resource guides, in addition to offering their emotional support.

For Esan Abrahams, helping other LGBTQI+ refugees navigate asylum and resettlement in a new country is informed by meaningful personal experience. Esan relocated to France from Guyana, where they had been targeted, framed, and threatened directly by government officials. Esan and their partner arrived in France in December 2020, but it was not an end to their hardships. When making their asylum claim at the airport, Esan and their partner were detained, searched, and held for days. Eventually they were both granted temporary visas, allowing them to make their asylum claims. Exacerbated by COVID-19, Esan and their partner floated between case managers and shelters while awaiting a decision.. When asked about their interest in volunteering with the QRCSN, Esan said **“this follow up program is very necessary because our situation was difficult in France because we had no help, no guidance. We had to figure it out.”** In the future, Esan hopes to become a French citizen and business owner, and they are grateful to be part of this new program in order to ease the transitions of other LGBTQI+ newcomers seeking safety.

QUEER LIBERATION IS GROUNDED IN COMMUNITY

As Rainbow Railroad's work continues to evolve, centering the experience of the LGBTQI+ people we serve remains paramount. It is driving changes in how we approach this work, striving to support each individual's needs in a holistic way through community.

That means supporting local activists working in underground networks. It means sending direct cash assistance to individuals while they await relocation. It means stepping in when someone is denied boarding and helping them try again as they pursue their innate right to find refuge.

It also means building networks of international support: connecting queer asylum seekers with queer refugees who know the road is hard and will be by their side as they walk it. It means creating national systems of community support to welcome LGBTQI+ newcomers as they begin their journeys in unfamiliar places. And it means assembling an international, multi-lateral network to tackle the global crisis of queer forced displacement at scale.

In the coming years, as attacks on our community continue to intensify, our work will continue to be guided by the fact that we are not doing it alone.

Private sponsorship group volunteers Doug and Daniel (left and right) with newcomer Luis (center).

Meeting the Moment in an Iconic Queer City – Doug, Daniel, and Luis in San Francisco

Communities of Care connect queer refugees with queer networks of community support. Doug’s goal in forming a Community of Care was all “about providing hope, opportunity, and a sense of belonging.” His group welcomed a couple, Daniel and Luis, just a few weeks before the presidential inauguration and the halting of refugee resettlement. To help share that sense of belonging, Doug and his group members planned a trip to San Francisco. San Francisco holds a special place for many LGBTQI+ people, and for Doug in particular.

On their trip, the group found themselves in the Castro District. Doug shares: “The Castro has always been an important symbol and ideal for me personally. I remember going there for the very first time and for the very first time feeling an overwhelming sense of belonging. To share that feeling, that importance, that symbol, that history with others that might not ever have had was an important moment of sharing. It was a communion. Luis and Daniel were aware of the Castro but not about the history or its importance to queer activism. “We talked about Harvey Milk and Dan



White, we talked about the police riot of 1989, about ACT UP, about the importance of the women of Castro that were the caregivers during the height of the AIDS crisis, and how many of those things affected me personally.”

“It may be totally overwhelming to walk into a gay neighborhood and see dozens of Pride flags, same-sex couples holding hands or showing affection in public. Especially coming from a country or region where this would never occur.” Daniel and Luis experienced “astonishment that such a place exists. The sight of the large Pride flag flying over Market and Castro Streets is the most welcoming sight in the world to anyone who has felt repressed.”

The timing of Daniel and Luis’ arrival was bitter-

sweet, finally finding safety just as the current Administration aims to shut its doors. When asked about our responsibility to one another in this moment Doug shared: “It is important now more than ever for us to strengthen our bonds, to resist and continue the fight for acceptance, for freedom, for affirmation of each individual’s sense of being. We will get past this horrible period in our history, there is no doubt. There are already casualties in this new oppression, and we cannot accept more. Solidarity to resist and to create paths for individuals to discover their true selves is more important **than ever. Individuals can lead but together we can accomplish a lot.**”

OUR TEAM

* This is the Rainbow Railroad staff list at the time of the Annual Report's production; it is accurate as of May 15, 2025.

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Emily Loebach
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Michelle Jung
Julien Michel
Zoe Robinson
Shaili Shah

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Finance Administration Officer
Senior Finance Officer
Senior Finance Officer
Director, Human Resources & Administration
Senior Administrator, Executive and Strategic Planning
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Jasmine Ford
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Kathryn Busch
Brittany Skerritt

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Donor Relations Officer
Development Officer, Community Fundraising
Development Officer, Corporate Partnerships
Senior Development Officer, Major Gifts USA
Senior Development Officer, Philanthropy
Senior Development Officer, Major Gifts Canada
Director of Individual Giving
Director of Donor Relations
Director, Community Giving

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Deputy Head of Programs

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Program Officer, Case Work
Program Officer, ETS & Cash Assistance
Program Officer, Programs Volunteer Coordinator
Program Officer, Resettlement
Program Officer, Resettlement
MEL Officer, Evaluation
Program Officer, Intake
Programs Officer, Intake
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Programs Officer, Intake
Programs Officer, Resettlement
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Senior Program Officer, Grassroots Mobilization
Senior Program Officer, GAR Coordinator
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Director of Intake, Emergency Travel Support and Cash Assistance
Director, Protection Initiatives
Director of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
Director of Crisis Response

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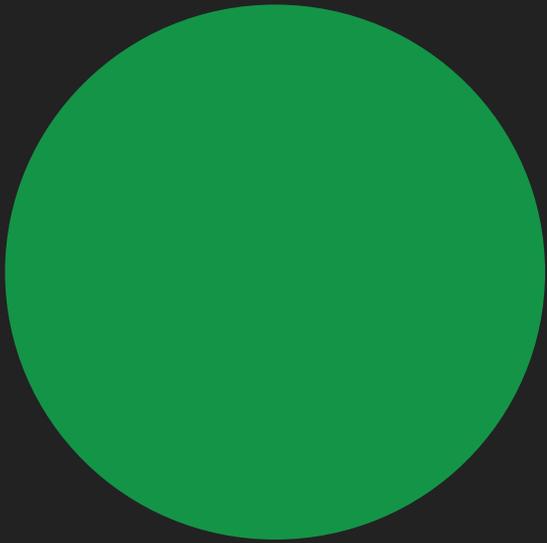
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THANK YOU

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Thank you for your unwavering support of Rainbow Railroad in 2024. Your generosity empowered us to respond to urgent requests for help, expand our global reach, advance critical global advocacy, and provide vital assistance to LGBTQI+ individuals facing persecution. Each life changed, each path to freedom forged, and each moment of dignity restored was made possible by your compassion and commitment. Thank you for standing with us and for affirming, through your generosity, that every LGBTQI+ person deserves to live freely and authentically, no matter where they are.

- includes fundraised amounts
- † includes in-kind support

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I know other trans women from all around the world, and I'm acutely aware that the freedom I enjoy in Canada is an exception. From harassment to outright threats to our lives, **most of the world remains hostile to us.** I support Rainbow Railroad because I want all LGBTQIA+ people to be able to live somewhere we don't have to fear for our lives every day.

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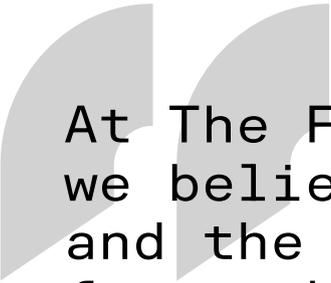
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Sunnyside Provisions
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Emily Taylor
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& Sexuality Alliance)
Jim and Judy Thiessen
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John Thorp
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Tonic Blooms †
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Arlett Trittel-Oleo
Tucows Inc.
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Wood Hart Fund at Toronto Foundation
Jinelle and Baylee Woodley
York United FC †
Nora Young
Anonymous (23)



My coming out experience was met with support, but I know that same act could get someone killed in another country. That's what motivates me – the injustice of it, and the deep belief that we can do something about it. By including a gift to Rainbow Railroad in my estate plans, I really want to **leave a legacy that helps people live freely** – the freedom to be themselves, to live as authentic human beings without having to hide or face violence.

Mark Colclasure
Legacy Donor



At The Fresh Perspective Group, we believe in dignity, freedom, and the power of showing up for each other – and Rainbow Railroad does just that. We're proud to support work that opens doors, builds bridges, and helps people live safely and authentically, no matter where they are. It was a joy to partner with their team to deliver systems that work faster, feel better to use, and create real impact for both staff and donors. Supporting this mission isn't just meaningful – it's a privilege.

Pamela Fitch

Director, Philanthropy and Social Impact,
In-Kind Donor

USA

\$250,000+

Estate of Martin W. Madden

\$100,000 - \$249,999

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Warburg Pincus LLC
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 Team Pride Flame •
 Team Raeff Ostlund San Francisco #2 •
 Team St. Margaret's •
 Team Team K Street •
 Team The Painted Turtles •
 Team Tree Town Welcomes You #2 •
 Team Uhuru •
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 Anonymous (25)
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 The Lawrence Schafer Foundation
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 Walmart Canada
 Anonymous (2)



LEGACY DONORS

With gratitude, we are recognizing those who have generously confirmed a gift to Rainbow Railroad in their estate plans. These are just some of the thoughtful individuals who are dedicated to providing more at-risk LGBTQI+ people with pathways to safety.

Robert Adams Chvostal
 Bernie Altman
 Michael Anderson
 Scott Baker and Blair Mascall
 Eryn Batchelor
 Lawrence Bennett
 Stephanie Berliant
 Chris Black
 Mark Black and Glen Leiner
 Roger L. Bell
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 David Sector
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 Jesse St Croix
 Grant Statchuk
 R. Christopher Strietman and Blane E. Halliday
 Ramesh Sukhnandan and Rahim Chunara
 Guillermo Javier Adrian Talavera
 Mark Tan
 Ray Wallach
 Andrea Williams
 George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg
 Anonymous (7)



I saw several reports in the media about Rainbow Railroad and the work they were doing to secure safe passage for LGBTQI+ individuals from areas of the world where they were being arrested, beaten, tortured, and killed for simply loving someone. Their struggle resonated with me, and I could not stop thinking about how I could help and make a difference. Rainbow Railroad's mission to help individuals who are forced to flee their homes really resonates with IKEA and the work that we do to support refugees and newcomers to Canada. We were very proud to partner with such a positive and impactful organization that aligns with our purpose to create a better everyday life. And what better way to celebrate progress and to continue rallying for change than with a slice of colourful, delectable cake?

Ron Conacher (he/him)
Food Commercial Manager
IKEA Canada, Corporate Donor

VOLUNTEERS

At the heart of our organization's success lies the invaluable dedication of our volunteers. From forming private sponsorship groups to resettle queer and trans newcomers to fundraising, advocacy and direct support services, volunteers make a tangible difference in helping us get more at-risk LGBTQI+ individuals to safety. We're grateful for the volunteers who generously contributed their time, passion, and skills to support our mission.

We are recognizing those individuals who have generously given 75 hours or more of their time to Rainbow Railroad in the year.

PRIVATE SPONSORSHIP GROUPS

2U Welcome Crew

Kristin Clowes
Surina Jindel
Maddie Mills-Craig
Alicia Obando
Curtis Smith
Arlene Tran

Arcoris - Washington DC

Carriellen Beaudreau
Benjamin Bynum
Carol Coonrod
David Jolliffe
David Andrew Swanson
Donnica Wingett

Bennington County Open Arms (BCOA)

Anandaroopaa
Bryan Dalton
Cheryl Gasperetti
Leslie Kielson
Grace Winslow

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Anna Campbell
Erin Campeau
Jasmine Ford
Carl Anthony John
Mansi Setia
Nirmalan Vijeyakumar

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Brad Fresia and Allister D'Souza
The Rev. Linda M Kaufman
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Amelia Katan
Emily Perrow
Siena Ruggeri
Saul Ulloa

St Margarets PSG

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Blaine Branchik
Daniel Sherman
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Elizabeth Terry
Ryan Winfield

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Morad Hallami
Zoya Hussain
Kaanu Joshi
Leticia Pinheiro Guimaraes
Betina Sehnke
Noor ul Ain
Anonymous (1)

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Nigel Chikukwa
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Vini Mollo
Sonya Mwambu
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Craig MacDougall
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Alireza Sayahi Zenouz
Alireza Sheshlou

Team Dario

Antony Bright
Dario Kosarac
Jayme Nadolny
Moein Sabouhiyan
Preetika Sharma and Akashdeep Singh Rana
Anonymous (1)

Team David Balaga

Ross Dickson
Mohammad Faris Mohammad Rasiff
Brett Kane
Wilson Lixon
Bernard Price
Anonymous (1)

Team Elton

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Tony La Duca
Elton Oliveira Silva
Davi Rocha
Jason Timermanis

Team Fab Chicago

Ryan Hougardy
Tim Knipper
Mr. Thomas Lodge
Mark Shields
William Southerland

Team Gerard

Stephen H. Brown
Alex Chaharnyi
Chishimba Chibwe
Albert Lam
Jaden Peng
Gerard Wisser
Alex Zandi
Anonymous (1)

Team Gionni

Jerry Ajang Daniel
Ernest Akobundu
Sarah Leaper
Anonymous (1)

Team Greg

Jackie Cisneros
Xander Feng
Sadie Lewis
Paula Potts
Aidan Tammaro
Greg Wilson

Team Henrik

Abubaker Bukulu
Andrew Mazzanti
Lucas Nogueira
Erica Wennberg

Team Jessica

Hannah Blum
Narges Fattahnia
Elke Grenzer
Jessica Shea
Madeline Smith
Amanda Spakowski

Team K Street

Ethan Bishop-Henchman
Nathan Brown
Dominic Nozzarella
Scott Spaulding
Karen Wires

Team Lavender

Austin Baidas
Justin Connolly
Mr. Terry Cosgrove
Taralee Morgan
Robert Ruggero

Team Michael

Sara Ashtiani
Cemile Marsan
Vera Santillana
Michael Sawdon
Lesley Vaage
Liam Waugh

Team Nawara

Nawara Alfaisal
Andrea Davis
Ahmed Hani
Khalil Issa
Mohammed Issa
Stephen Watt
Anonymous (1)

Team Ryleigh

Ryleigh Carson
Christen Carson-Traviss
Alanna Going
Nina Harris
Adi Shram

Team Sasha

Edwar Dawlatly
Ayesha Maria Khan
Sasha Girling
Philip Roy
Sarah Shusterman

Team Thomas

Zahra Ashari
Jeremy Fleming

Over the past year, Rainbow Railroad has maintained our foundation as an organization in spite of a challenging landscape for sustaining the capacity of our work. Revenue was consistent from 2023-2024, and we have come out of this period with a renewed outlook on our future as an organization, thanks to the ongoing commitment of our dedicated community of supporters.

In 2024, we experienced challenges in our fundraising and programmatic work. Overall giving in the United States was lower, although Canadian-based corporations increased their level of giving when compared with the prior year. While the total number of individual donations declined in 2024, we're deeply grateful that the average gift size grew, demonstrating our donors' remarkable generosity and commitment to our mission.

Rainbow Railroad strategically utilized funds from its reserves in 2024 to manage temporary cash flow fluctuations. The organization remains fully committed to restoring its reserves in 2025. With current revenue already trending higher, we are well-positioned to meet this goal.

The primary source of our revenue is generated by individual donors (42%) and corporations and foundations (33%). We anticipate these two areas of revenue generation will continue to drive Rainbow Railroad's revenue in 2025. We also continue to diversify our funding sources. In 2024, Rainbow Railroad saw a significant increase in financial support from government grants and contributions. This area of financial support represents approximately 14% of total revenue, a 3-fold increase over the previous year.

Shifts in the global geopolitical landscape have also impacted our programming. Under the new administration in the United States, we are facing new obstacles in our work, including the suspension of the U.S. Refugee Admission Program that allowed us to assist LGBTQI+ refugees to relocate to the U.S.

Amidst these challenges, our work is becoming increasingly costly as a result of the erosion of the global right to seek asylum, and major rollbacks to LGBTQI+ rights internationally. Rainbow Railroad's budget in 2025 is growing to meet the evolving needs of those facing persecution around the world. We are grateful for our dedicated community of donors and the fuel they provide for our mission as we navigate the challenges that lie ahead.

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND NET ASSETS

CANADA

Donations	\$7,021,027
Grants	\$1,452,874
Other	\$315,197

Total Revenue **\$8,789,098**

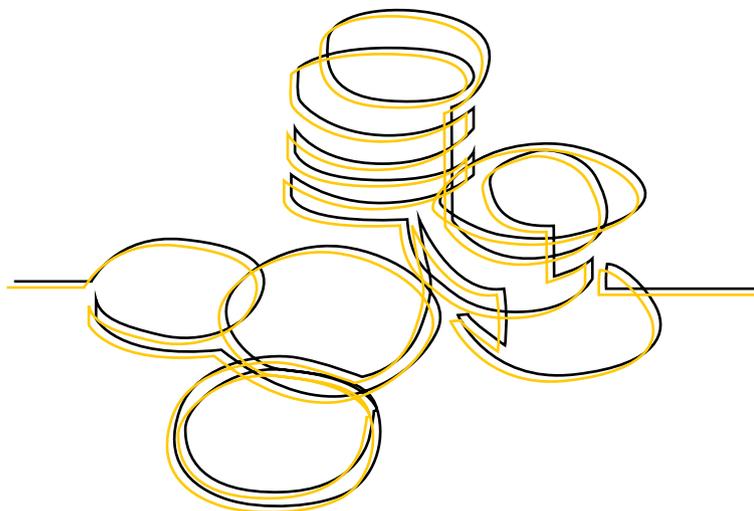
Programs	\$6,038,945
Fundraising	\$1,553,139
Administration	\$1,095,728

Total Expenses **\$8,687,812**

Excess of Revenue Over Expenditures **\$101,286**

Net Assets

Beginning of year	\$1,418,389
End of year	\$1,519,675



USA

Donations	\$2,706,680
Other	\$216,357

Total Revenue **\$2,923,037**

Programs	\$2,875,057
Fundraising	\$738,814
Administration	\$162,752

Total Expenses **\$3,776,623**

Surplus (Deficit) **(\$853,586)**

Net Assets

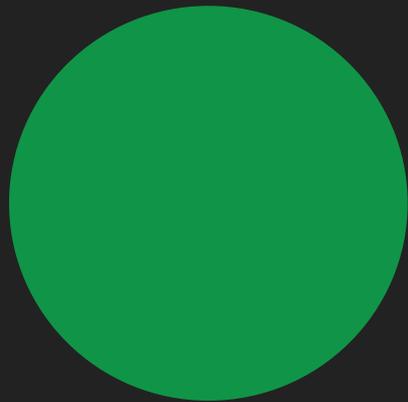
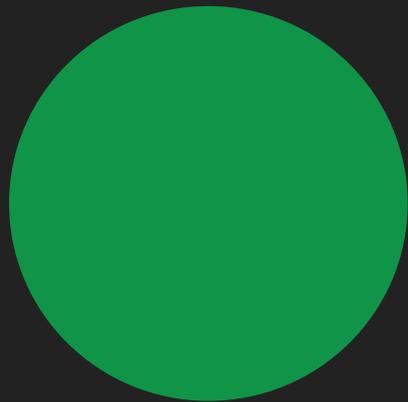
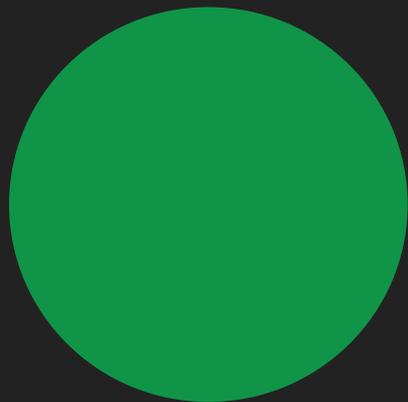
Beginning of year	\$841,857
Surplus (Deficit)	(\$853,586)
Other changes	♦\$1,125,644
End of year	\$1,113,915

- ♦ In 2022, Rainbow Railroad USA received a transformative unrestricted gift of USD \$5 million, allowing us to establish an operating cash reserve to support strategic initiatives. This year, the Board of Directors approved the release of USD \$1 million from this reserve to fund critical initiatives and operations, resulting in a planned deficit of USD \$853,586. This approach ensures the continuation of our vital work and strengthens our long-term impact.

ENDNOTES

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2. Global Philanthropy Project. 2021–2022 Global Resources Report: *Government & Philanthropic Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Communities*. June 21, 2024. <https://globalresourcesreport.org>.
3. Total requests from 2023 to 2024 decreased by 13%. This can also be partially attributed to a change we made in how we count requests for help. In previous years, both web and email requests for help were counted in total requests for help. We now only count those submitted on the web form, as they contain the minimum information required for the Intake team to proceed with screening.
4. The following individual program numbers total more than 5,886 because some individuals receive support through multiple programs.
5. UN Women. *One in four countries report backlash on women's rights in 2024*. Press Release. March 6, 2025. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2025/03/one-in-four-countries-report-backlash-on-womens-rights-in-2024>.
6. Executive Order of January 20, 2025. *Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government*. United States Code, title 5. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government>.
7. OHCHR. *A "big victory" for intersex people and their rights*. April 5, 2024. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/04/big-victory-intersex-people-and-their-rights#:~:text=In%20a%20landmark%20vote%2C%20the,kind%20for%20the%20United%20Nations>.
8. Individuals who have been verified for support are required to disclose their age as we do not offer direct program services to those under 18. We do support individuals and families with dependents under the age of 18.
9. We continuously update our tracking systems based on what we learn from individuals about the nuances of their experiences. Notably, Health and Welfare and Safety Concerns data focuses on the primary LGBTQI+ applicant requesting help from Rainbow Railroad, even if their partners or other LGBTQI+ members of their families have also faced persecution and subsequently received our support. Our most detailed data surrounds the primary applicant and we provide limited information on dependents, representing a source of underreporting.
10. These percentages all refer to the percentage of those supported in 2024 who disclosed 1 or more Health and Welfare Concern, not to every individual who requested help.
11. These percentages all refer to the percentage of those supported in 2024 who disclosed 1 or more Health and Welfare Concern, not to every individual who requested help, not to every individual who requested help.
12. From July 2024 onwards, when we began tracking requests for specific programs services.
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14. UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI). *Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to the human rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association*. A/HRC/56/49. April 18, 2024.
15. International Rescue Committee. *What is the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum?* July 23, 2024. <https://www.rescue.org/eu/article/what-eu-pact-migration-and-asylum>.
16. Liboreiro, Jorge. *15 EU countries call for the outsourcing of migration and asylum policy*. *euro news*. May 16, 2024. <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/05/16/15-eu-countries-call-for-the-outsourcing-of-migration-and-asylum-policy>.
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IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONNECT WITH US ABOUT THE
WORK WE'RE DOING, PLEASE REACH OUT.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU.

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