

A group of people are seated around a conference table in a meeting room. A woman in the background is on a phone call while holding papers. A woman in the foreground is working on a laptop. A small rainbow flag is on the table. The background shows a whiteboard with some notes.

# **DISPLACEMENT AND DIFFERENCE: HARNESSING RESEARCH TO ADDRESS LGBTQI+ FORCED MIGRATION**

## **POST-SYMPOSIUM REPORT**

**Event: International Symposium “Displacement and Difference: Harnessing Research to Address LGBTQI+ Forced Migration”**

**Date: August 21-22, 2025**

**Location: Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexico City**

**Organizers: Rainbow Railroad, The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), and Casa Frida**

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**COVER:**  
Participants  
during a  
workshop at  
the Academic  
Symposium in  
Mexico City,  
August 2025.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Symposium on Displacement and Difference in August 2025 was convened as part of the Queer Forced Displacement Initiative (QFDI), is a coordinated international effort to build a global, multi-stakeholder network focused on the protection needs of LGBTQI+ forcibly displaced persons. The symposium served as a core component of the initiative's research pillar, with the primary purpose of beginning to map a global research agenda for the field. The two-day event brought together 142 academics, activists, policymakers, and individuals with lived experiences from 22 countries, and served as a critical nexus for integrating evidence-based research with policy and practice, transcending traditional asylum narratives to address a wide spectrum of related issues. Diverse and dynamic discussions encompassed the necropolitics of migration routes in Central America, systemic abuses in U.S. detention centers, the phenomenon of "stuckness" experienced by Iranian refugees in Turkey, and the effects of anti-rights movements in the South Caucasus and North Africa. The symposium emphasized various forms of resilience, including community-led health initiatives in Cameroon and Honduras, and the efficacy of storytelling in Canadian asylum claims.

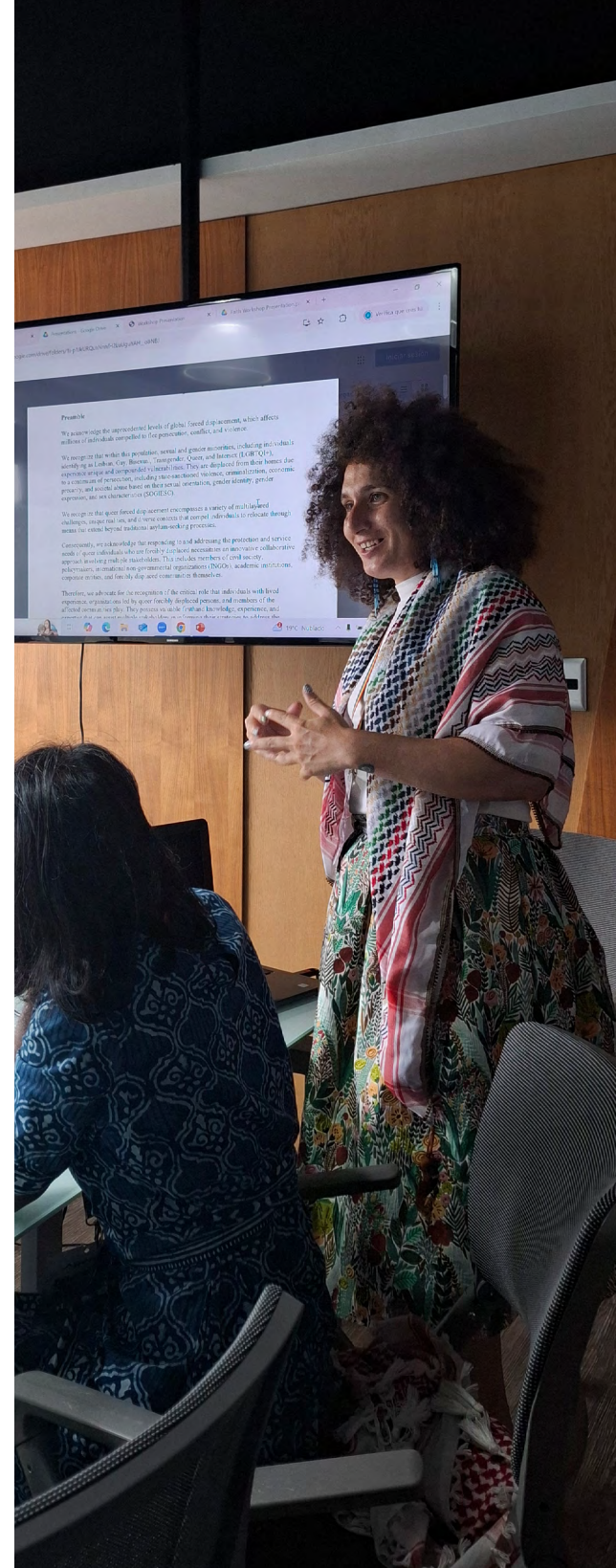
Key debates emerged throughout the sessions, exploring the tensions between the necessity for visibility and the strategic employment of invisibility for survival, the effectiveness of formal international legal frameworks compared to the adaptability of informal grassroots support, and the ethical dilemmas associated with conducting research in precarious contexts. The symposium yielded several significant outcomes: it commenced with a landmark meta-analysis that identified critical data gaps, thereby establishing a data-driven agenda for the field; it facilitated the enhancement of a global collaborative network; and it provided a platform for the dissemination of innovative models of community care, legal advocacy, and participatory research. A central collaborative output was the drafting of a Multi-Stakeholder Declaration for the Advancement of Rights for Queer Forcibly Displaced Individuals, a living document developed through a two-year global consultation process, which serves as a foundational tool for future advocacy efforts.

The diverse discussions culminated in a series of targeted recommendations. These included calls for states to reform asylum systems and discontinue the detention of LGBTQI+ individuals; for humanitarian funders to prioritize direct, flexible support for local, queer-led organizations; for researchers to adopt participatory methods to address critical knowledge gaps; and for community organizations to exchange best practices in trauma-informed, culturally competent care. The symposium concluded by establishing a clear framework for ongoing international collaboration, including a final conference in May 2026, when the global network will be officially launched, thereby solidifying its role as a catalyst for sustained collective action.

# SYMPOSIUM RATIONALE AND ORGANIZERS

The International Symposium on Displacement and Difference was conceived and organized through a strategic partnership among leading institutions in human rights, academia, and frontline community support. This collaboration united **Rainbow Railroad**, an international organization dedicated to assisting LGBTQI+ individuals in fleeing persecution and violence; **The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law**, a premier research center focusing on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy; the **National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)**, a prominent academic institution in Latin America, through its Institute of Legal Research and the University Seminar on Studies on Internal Displacement, Migration, Exile and Repatriation (SUDIMER); and **Casa Frida**, a civil society organization based in Mexico City that provides shelter and comprehensive support to LGBTQI+ individuals fleeing extreme violence.

The rationale for the symposium arose from a collective recognition that, while forced displacement has escalated into a global crisis, the particular experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals remain critically under-researched, under-funded, and under-represented in policy-making arenas. The organizers identified a significant disparity between the existing evidence base and the legal and policy frameworks that affect the daily lives of forcibly displaced queer individuals. Consequently, the symposium was conceived as an essential platform to address this gap, with the aim of fostering a reflective and action-oriented environment where academia, activism, and public policy could converge. Its primary objective was to illuminate the multifaceted realities of "queer displacement," transcending traditional asylum narratives to explore themes such as South-South migration, internal displacement, and the complex causal factors driving these movements. By establishing a safe, multidisciplinary forum, the organizers sought to catalyze international collaboration, enhance advocacy efforts through evidence-based research, and ultimately generate strategic recommendations to develop more inclusive and effective protection systems for displaced LGBTQI+ populations globally.



Nora Noralla,  
Rainbow Railroad Research Fellow for the QFDI

# INTRODUCTION AND SYMPOSIUM OBJECTIVES

Forced displacement has doubled in the past decade, with LGBTQI+ individuals disproportionately affected by the violence, persecution, and systemic exclusion that drive migration. However, their specific needs and experiences often remain obscured within global refugee and humanitarian frameworks. Acknowledging this critical gap, the symposium was convened with the primary objective of harnessing interdisciplinary research to inform and fortify legal, policy, and community-led responses to LGBTQI+ forced migration.

The symposium aimed to create a collaborative and action-oriented environment to:

- **Analyze Key Issues:** Investigate the root causes of displacement, the legal and institutional barriers to protection, and the lived realities of integration and resettlement.
- **Share Research and Findings:** Provide a platform for emerging academic work and on-the-ground data to identify critical trends and knowledge gaps.
- **Foster Dialogue:** Assemble diverse stakeholders—from UN officials to grassroots activists—to discuss challenges and collaboratively devise solutions.
- **Develop Actionable Outcomes:** Formulate concrete recommendations and collaborative tools to advance the rights and protection of displaced LGBTQI+ persons on a global scale.



Panelist and moderator presenting during panel, Resettlement and Relocation Dynamics

# SYMPOSIUM METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANT PROFILE

The symposium employed a hybrid methodology, enabling 142 participants (75 in-person, 67 online) to engage from various locations worldwide. The event was intentionally structured to dismantle hierarchies between "experts" and "subjects" by centering the lived expertise of forcibly displaced individuals in plenary sessions and panels. The agenda prioritized interdisciplinary dialogue, positioning academic research in direct conversation with the frontline experiences of activists and the strategic perspectives of policymakers.

Based on pre-event surveys completed by 52 attendees, the participant profile was notably diverse. Attendees represented citizenship from 22 different countries, with the largest contingents originating from Mexico, the United States, and Canada. The group encompassed a wide spectrum of gender identities, including cisgender, transgender, non-binary, and genderfluid individuals, as well as various sexual orientations. Professionally, the majority identified as activists or human rights defenders (27), representatives of Civil Society Organizations (23), along with academics (13) and government officials (4). Importantly, 11 respondents indicated personal lived experience of forced displacement, primarily as asylum seekers or recognized refugees, thereby ensuring that their perspectives were integral to the discussions.



Panelists during plenary session, Plenary session: Mexico City: A City of Reception and Sustainable Local Integration for LGBTIQ+ Persons in Situations of Forced Displacement

# SUMMARIES OF PLENARY AND THEMATIC SESSIONS

The content of the symposium was delivered through a series of plenary sessions, panels, and interactive workshops over the course of two days.

## OPENING PLENARY: SETTING THE AGENDA

The symposium commenced with an overview of the current state of research on LGBTQI+ forced displacement, framed by welcoming remarks from the organizers who emphasized UNAM's commitment to historically marginalized voices. The session featured a landmark meta-analysis of 275 academic documents published between 2019 and 2024. The findings, presented by independent researcher Nora Noralla and moderated by Ari Shaw from the Williams Institute, revealed critical gaps in existing literature, particularly the lack of intersectional data concerning intersex individuals, youth, and elders. The analysis also underscored a geographic bias towards research concentrated in the Global North, with a significant underrepresentation of South-South displacement narratives. During the question-and-answer segment, audience members raised concerns regarding the five-year scope of the analysis, noting that it might not capture the full impact of recent crises—a point acknowledged by Noralla, who defended the necessity for contemporary data. This data-driven presentation established a clear mandate for the symposium: to transcend existing frameworks and address these under-researched dimensions of queer migration. Opening remarks from Hazem Ghaith of Rainbow Railroad, who poignantly reflected on displacement as "playing a game without having the rules," along with virtual remarks from former UN Independent Expert Victor Madrigal-Borloz, positioned the event as a vital space for fostering the networks essential to address these gaps.

## DAY 1: THE ARCHITECTURE OF DISPLACEMENT AND RESILIENCE

The sessions on the first day concentrated on the legal, political, and social structures that drive displacement, alongside the community-led strategies developed for

survival and resistance.

### Panel Discussions

- **Panel 1: Legal Realities of Queer Forced Displacement:** This panel presented a critical examination of how legal frameworks perpetuate harm. Sarah Decker of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights organization outlined systemic human rights violations within U.S. immigration detention, revealing the government's employment of torturous solitary confinement and the denial of medical care, which have resulted in preventable fatalities, including those of Roxana Hernández and Johana Medina León. Danilo Manzano from Fundación Diálogo Diverso, presenting virtually, underscored the catastrophic consequences of international funding reductions, noting that the cessation of U.S. resources in January 2025 adversely affected over 21,000 individuals across eight Latin American nations.
- **Panel 2: Organizing and Activism for Queer Forced Displacement Rights:** This session emphasized innovative grassroots strategies. Independent researcher Yana Kirey-Sitnikova provided a nuanced analysis of Russian transgender activism, examining the challenging decision between operating clandestinely within Russia or continuing openly from self-imposed exile, and highlighting the pervasive influence of military culture on trans men facing conscription. Uluk Batyrgaliev of ECOM introduced a model of community-led emergency support in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) region, detailing how a rapid-response fund empowered 55 grassroots organizations to deliver essential services to queer individuals displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.
- **Panel 3: The Art of Storytelling in LGBTQ+ Refugee Claims:** Facilitated by Maria Diaz and Viviana Santibanez Jaimes of Vivi'r LGBTQ+, this panel compellingly asserted that behind every legal document lies a personal narrative. Diaz recounted her own distressing journey of arriving in Canada with an infant, missing critical appointments due to logistical challenges, and remaining without legal status for five years—illustrating how a deficiency in culturally competent support can disrupt a legal case. The presenters offered strategies for assisting Spanish-speaking refugees, which included practice sessions

for testimonies and the utilization of interactive tools such as Menti.com to foster trust. A significant takeaway, as noted by one rapporteur, was the efficacy of their model, which, without governmental funding, has successfully resolved over 300 cases by prioritizing human connection over bureaucratic processes.

- **Panel 4: Queer Migration in Anti-Rights Environments:** This panel investigated the ramifications of burgeoning anti-gender and anti-immigrant movements. Vahid Aliyev (Minority Azerbaijan) explored the influence of Russia's political homophobia on the intensification of legislative discrimination throughout the South Caucasus. René A. Tec-López (UNAM) examined the convergence of anti-woke rhetoric in the United States and religious conservatism in Mexico, which together cultivate hostile environments for transgender migrants. Syrine Boukadida (Mawjoudin for Equality) provided a sobering account from Tunisia, where a state-sponsored anti-migrant campaign and the criminalization of homosexuality engender a state of dual vulnerability, compelling queer migrants to apprehend the process of seeking asylum.
- **Panel 5: Building Resilience Through Innovative Health Services and Policies:** This session focused on health and well-being. Armando Velasquez presented the "Voluntariado Diverso" program in Honduras, which enhances the advocacy skills of displaced LGBTQI+ youth through its "Rainbow of Participation" model. Enama Jean Paul, a public health expert, elucidated the compounded health and human rights challenges faced by Central African LGBTI refugees in Cameroon, where they endure dual discrimination due to their refugee status and sexual orientation in a jurisdiction where same-sex relations are criminalized.
- **Panel 6: Exploring Queer Migration Beyond Asylum Seeking:** This panel expanded the discourse surrounding displacement narratives. Anne Campbell discussed how queer youth utilize higher education visas as a mechanism for migration, framing the stress associated with the J-1 visa's two-year home residency requirement as a form of involuntary migration. Akira Sawata employed autoethnography to recount their personal journey from a depressive upbringing in conservative Japan to the discovery of their queer identity in Tokyo, characterizing this process as

"moving for hope." Nine, co-founder of Garabtaag, detailed the efforts of their volunteer collective in supporting LGBTQ+ refugees in Malaysia, a "gray area" nation lacking legal protections, where the community faces extreme precarity and relies on mutual aid.

## Workshops

- **Workshop 1: A Case Study in Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration:** Facilitated by Dr. Douglas Janoff and Dr. Ester Serra Mingot, this workshop scrutinized the hybrid funding model of Casa Frida, inciting discussion on diversifying funding sources and engaging the private sector without undermining NGO independence.
- **Workshop 2: Healing Across Borders:** Conducted virtually by Faith Birungi of Underestimated UG, this session centered on trauma-informed mental health support and solutions that prioritize peer-led care.
- **Workshop 3: Queer Individuals in Transit:** Carou Labonne of Out Moris presented a mini-series of videos documenting the narratives of queer Mauricians, including the compelling case of Aria, a transgender artist imprisoned under the anti-sodomy law (Section 250).
- **Workshop 5: Helping LGBTQ+ Newcomers Thrive:** Christian Giraldo discussed his work with Vivi'r LGBTQ+ in Toronto, offering a personal reflection on the significance of peer-led organizations in fostering the integration of Spanish-speaking newcomers.
- **Workshop 6: Navigating Intersectional Displacement:** Rodrigo Tadeu Guimaraes Jales of ReportOUT drew upon his lived experience as a gay Afro-Brazilian to examine the phenomenon of "double marginalization" encountered by Afro-descendant LGBTQI+ individuals in situations of forced migration.

## DAY 2: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF INTEGRATION, FAMILY, AND YOUTH

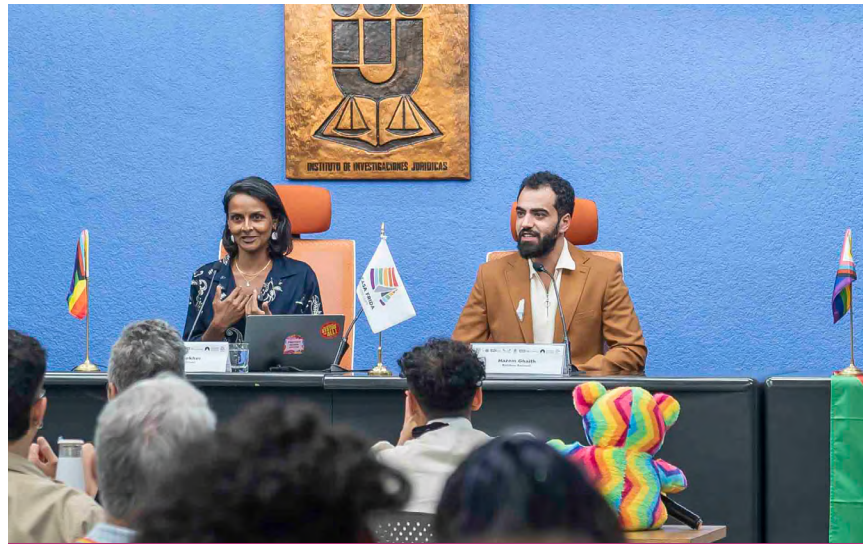
### Plenary and Panel Discussions

atic abuses including sexual violence and torture of LGBTQI+ detainees, and suspend funding to facilities where violations persist.

- **Plenary: Mexico City as a City of Reception:** Organized by Casa Frida, this plenary session convened representatives from UNHCR, COMAR, and the Mexico City government to discuss a new legislative initiative aimed at guaranteeing rights for all individuals in transit, including a proposed "guest credential."
- **Panel 1: Resettlement, Relocation, and "Stuckness":** This panel examined the dynamics of displacement. Kristen Miccile utilized data from over 2,000 LGBTQI+ refugee cases in Sub-Saharan Africa to share the fragmented journey of "Lucy," a Ugandan activist who was denied asylum in Zambia due to her identity as a lesbian and Christian before ultimately finding safety. Elif Sari introduced the significant concept of "stuckness," describing the experience of Iranian LGBTQ+ refugees in Turkey who are confined for years in small urban areas, enduring a prolonged state of limbo she characterized as an "open-air prison."
- **Panel 2: Support Networks and Queer Families:** This session illuminated often-overlooked family structures. Donwell Mpofo addressed the challenges of transgender parenthood in displacement within South Africa. Shooky Shi's research investigated the contradictory nature of sport as a space for displaced Chinese queer individuals—sometimes inclusive, yet at other times exclusionary. Ph.D. candidate Maria Cristina Yopez Arroyo shared an impactful narrative of "Jota" and "Katya," migrant lesbian mothers in Ecuador, as they navigated institutional discrimination to establish "roots in the sea."
- **Panel 3: Militarism, Conflict, and Queer Forced Displacement:** This session examined the phenomenon of displacement in conflict zones. Dr. Jasmin Lilian Diab presented findings from interviews conducted with internally displaced queer individuals from South Lebanon in her work titled "Missiles and Misfits." Ribal Maatouk and Mario Touma provided insights from Lebanon's LGBTQI+ Task Force, highlighting the systemic exclusion of queer individuals from humanitarian aid during the 2024 war, which resulted in nearly 900,000 people being displaced. Kyi Nyein from Queers of Burma Alternative analyzed the implications of Myanmar's 2024 Conscription Law as a mechanism of state terror contributing to the forced displacement of LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- **Panel 4: Innovative Research for the Advancement of Rights:** This panel highlighted novel methodologies in research. Joseph Salazar posited, through the ethnographic case study of "Carolina" in Ecuador, that gender identity is often shaped through experiences of violent displacement rather than being a fixed precursor to it, recounting her mentorship under a "trans mother" named Maritza. Edward J. Alessi presented findings from a study focused on HIV prevention among Latino migrant men in the United States, detailing the challenges encountered in conducting online research amid xenophobia, which included navigating interactions with bots and fostering community trust.
- **Panel 5: Latin America in Focus:** This panel provided an in-depth analysis of regional challenges, emphasizing the paradox between progressive legislation and ongoing protection gaps. Joseph Wiltberger and Laura Gomez Mera presented comparative research from Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia. Flavio Carrera Verdesoto shared findings regarding integration barriers based on a study conducted across eight countries. Frank Evelio Arteaga Flores discussed the initiatives of Manodiversa in Bolivia, which provides essential sexual and reproductive health services, including access to abortion, for internally displaced LGBTI individuals.
- **Panel 6: Stories of Welcome:** Chaired by Casa Frida, this impactful panel featured firsthand testimonies from LGBTQI+ refugees and internally displaced persons—Avril Xux Ek Medina Navarro, Yarelmis Cecilia Pérez Rivero, Nancy Landa Hernandez, Erick Ivan Ortiz, and Elis María Valero Sosa—who have successfully rebuilt their lives in Mexico City, thereby grounding the symposium's policy discussions in the lived realities of these individuals.
- **Panel 7: The Politics of Queer Forced Displacements:** This session explored the political dimensions associated with forced displacement. Daniel Barría-Yorins introduced a "queer approach to democratic participation" by analyzing how Nicaraguan LGBTQI+ activists navigate their identities in exile in Costa Rica. Víctor Hugo Gutiérrez Albertos examined the necropolitics of migration routes in Central America, framing the risks faced by queer migrants as a form of state-sanctioned peril, although technical difficulties

precluded the presentation of his accompanying videos.

- **Panel 8: Young Individuals and Forced Displacement:** This panel concentrated on the experiences of youth. Activist Jones O. Okolie identified familial rejection as the principal driver of homelessness among queer youth in Nigeria. Fernando Salinas-Quiroz and Anaamika Nair elucidated the significant mental health repercussions associated with prolonged asylum processes for young queer migrants in Massachusetts. Androgenius Alpha presented initiatives in East Africa wherein vocational education is utilized as a potent instrument for economic empowerment.



Rainbow Railroad staff during opening plenary session of the conference.

## Workshops

- **Workshop 1: City of Belonging:** Facilitated by Muhammad Burhan, this session employed strategic exercises to collaboratively develop solutions for an intersectional "Queer-Immigrant Conscious Ecosystem."
- **Workshop 2: Latino-PositHIVE Resistance:** Axel Bautista led this workshop, examining the adaptation of a community-building project for queer Latinos living with HIV to address the specific needs of displaced individuals.
- **Workshop 3: Building Bridges:** Conducted by psychotherapist Patricia Luna Gonzalez, this workshop utilized the participatory "Milpa" model—a pre-Hispanic agricultural system—to investigate how the diverse skills of community members can be mobilized to enhance collective mental health.
- **Workshop 4: Precarity in Transit:** This session, led by Ryan J. Figueiredo, employed Thailand as a case study to re-evaluate protection frameworks for LGBTQI+ displaced persons in nations that have not ratified the Refugee Convention.

## DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES AND KEY DEBATES

The symposium facilitated vigorous discourse, revealing several salient tensions and divergent perspectives within the field.

- **Visibility vs. Safety:** The strategy of "strategic invisibility" employed by queer activists incited debate regarding the ethics of visibility. While public advocacy is essential for rights-based movements, in highly repressive environments, evading detection emerges as a vital survival strategy.
- **Formal vs. Informal Support:** A significant tension surfaced between dependence on formal, often underfunded and bureaucratic institutional systems (such as UNHCR and state asylum bodies) and the nimbleness of informal, community-led support networks. The efficacy of organizations like Vivi'r, which operate without state funding, highlighted this discourse.
- **Legal Frameworks vs. Lived Realities:** Numerous panels emphasized the disjunction between progressive international human rights standards and the quotidian experiences of discrimination. This prompted discussions regarding whether advocacy efforts should prioritize legal reform or bolster community-based survival mechanisms.
- **Technology and Authenticity:** A question from the audience during Panel 3 concerning the utilization of Artificial Intelligence in the preparation of asylum claims ignited a debate on the merits of efficiency versus authenticity, with speakers strongly advocating for the indispensable role of human connection in constructing a credible narrative.

## SPECIAL FOCUS: THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DECLARATION WORKSHOPS

A central and highly anticipated component of the symposium was the two-part workshop series dedicated to the collaborative drafting of a **Multi-Stakeholder Declaration for the Advancement of Rights for Queer Forcibly Displaced Individuals**. Facilitated by Rainbow Railroad, these sessions were structured as a consultative process aimed at constructing a global framework of principles and commitments designed to guide the actions of governments, humanitarian organizations, the private sector, and academia.

The facilitators presented the draft document not as a final product, but as a "living guide" developed over a two-year research period, which is now being opened for international feedback. The declaration's ambitious objective is to establish a common reference point that enhances the relationship between institutions and displaced LGBTQ+ individuals, thereby ensuring their protection and dignity. The draft was organized around ten principles that address economic, social, political, and medical rights, with specific sections delineating commitments for each stakeholder group.

The workshops generated intense and productive debate, reflecting the complexities involved in creating a universally applicable human rights instrument. Key discussion points included:

- **Feasibility and Governmental Buy-In:** Several participants immediately questioned the practicality of the declaration, inquiring whether governments would authentically endorse its principles. The perception was that while developed, "pro-LGBTIQ+" countries might exhibit flexibility in signing, the true challenge would reside in implementation. The group deliberated on the difficulties of securing commitment from developing nations or those with less progressive legal frameworks, with a consensus emerging that a pragmatic approach focusing on existing human rights jurisprudence in regions such as Latin America and Africa might serve as a more effective starting point.
- **Scope and Complexity:** A significant point of contention was the document's length and detail. Some participants contended that the exhaustive, point-by-point approach could lead to a dilution of the declaration's central objective, rendering it unwieldy. A counter-proposal emerged advocating for the creation of a broader, more "philosophical" declaration centered on common principles, accompanied by a separate executive summary and glossary to ensure accessibility for a wider audience.
- **Beyond Asylum:** Participants articulated a crucial concern regarding the tendency of judicial authorities and legal systems to focus almost exclusively on the status of "asylum applicant," a narrow perspective that fails to encompass the full complexity of displaced queer individuals' needs and aspirations for a dignified life beyond legal status. The workshop participants emphasized that the declaration must address the entire lifecycle of displacement, encompassing aspects such as integration, economic empowerment, mental health, and community belonging.



Presenters and conference organizers during opening plenary session of the conference.

- **Role of the Private Sector and Accountability:** which emphasizes the inclusion of corporations, has catalyzed a significant discourse surrounding accountability. While acknowledging the private sector's capacity to create economic opportunities, participants cautioned against the phenomenon of "rainbow washing." The group underscored that corporate participation must be accompanied by transparent, measurable commitments and should not relieve governments of their fundamental responsibilities. The notion of endorsing small, LGBTQ+-owned enterprises as pivotal partners in delivering employment and services was also accentuated as a more grassroots-oriented strategy.
- **Strengthening Existing Mechanisms:** which addresses the prohibition of arbitrary detention and non-refoulement, received positive reception. Participants concurred with the approach of enhancing and adapting existing international legal frameworks, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, rather than establishing entirely new structures. The significance of prioritizing the direct experiences and testimonies of victims in informing these legal and policy modifications was strongly affirmed.

The workshops concluded with a commitment from the facilitators to regard the declaration as an adaptable and evolving instrument. The feedback collected was considered vital for refining the text to balance ambitious objectives with practical applicability. The facilitators reiterated that the document is intended to serve as a versatile tool for non-governmental organizations, governments, and private entities, and that initiating these complex conversations represents a crucial first step toward fostering change.

# SYMPOSIUM OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Key Recommendations

Synthetically derived from the panels and workshops, the following recommendations emerged:

- For States and Policymakers: Move beyond symbolic gestures and establish tangible pathways for protection. This necessitates reforming asylum systems to be responsive to SOGIESC-based claims, providing alternatives to detention, and facilitating local integration through clear legal pathways to employment, healthcare, and legal identity.
- For Humanitarian and Funding Organizations: The current funding model is inadequate for frontline communities. Donors must prioritize direct, flexible, and sustained funding for LGBTQI+-led grassroots organizations and advocate for the mainstreaming of LGBTQI+ inclusion across all humanitarian responses.
- For Researchers and Academia: The academic community bears the responsibility to generate knowledge that is both rigorous and relevant. This entails prioritizing the filling of critical data gaps, adopting participatory methodologies, and actively bridging the research-policy divide by translating findings into accessible formats.

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK AND SYMPOSIUM EVALUATION

Post-event surveys completed by 37 attendees indicated that the event was highly successful and impactful. A comparison with pre-event data revealed a significant increase in self-reported knowledge across all 15 thematic areas. Qualitatively, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The majority of respondents indicated that their expectations were "mostly" or "completely" met, and 92% rated the event's organization as "excellent" or "good." Importantly, most participants felt that their voices were "completely" or "mostly" heard. Constructive feedback included requests for additional dedicated networking time and more content addressing the experiences of LGBTQ+ elders and intersex individuals. Nonetheless, rapporteur

notes also highlighted a critique regarding the limited direct representation of displaced persons in some panels, as well as a perception that some institutional discussions lacked a "human sense."

The International Symposium on Displacement and Difference effectively accomplished its objective of establishing a dynamic and essential platform for dialogue, knowledge exchange, and strategic planning. By deliberately integrating academic research, grassroots activism, policy analysis, and the invaluable testimony of lived experiences, the event transcended the conventional conference format, emerging as a significant act of network-building and collective agenda-setting. It exposed the profound disparity between the aspirational ideals of international human rights and the precarious realities faced by numerous displaced LGBTQI+ individuals, while concurrently highlighting the remarkable resilience, creativity, and solidarity that characterize their communities. As one rapporteur articulated, the symposium left participants feeling "grateful, tired, and deeply energized," which serves as a testament to the urgency of the issues discussed and the shared commitment to addressing them.

The symposium was intentionally designed not as a concluding event, but as a catalyst for sustained, long-term collaboration. The knowledge exchanged and the networks established will continue to inform more humane and effective responses to one of the most pressing human rights challenges of our time. To maintain this momentum, the organizers have committed to a clear and actionable pathway:

1. **Advance the Multi-Stakeholder Declaration:** The draft declaration, which served as a focal point for collaborative efforts, will be refined based on the extensive feedback received during the workshops. This "living document" will subsequently be circulated among all participants and a broader network for further input and endorsement, thereby transforming it from a conference outcome into a global advocacy instrument.
2. **Disseminate Knowledge and Continue the Dialogue:** This comprehensive report, along with other essential materials and session recordings from the symposium, will be made publicly accessible. This ensures that the

critical conversations initiated in Mexico City can reach a wider international audience, thereby expanding the circle of informed advocates and contributing to a more robust evidence base for the field.

3. Strengthen the Global Network through Future Convening: The connections established at the symposium represent its most valuable and enduring outcome. To consolidate this network and ensure continued progress, the organizers announced a three-day follow-up conference scheduled for April 2026. This forthcoming gathering will provide a crucial opportunity to assess progress relative to the principles of the declaration, share new research and best practices, and collectively establish the strategic agenda for the forthcoming years.

## CONCLUSION

The struggles for the human rights and freedoms of displaced LGBTQI+ individuals persist. The network established here is merely the inception of a broader, deeper, and more transformative collaboration. The symposium concluded not with an ending, but with a collective promise to continue dreaming, resisting, and formulating strategies that uphold the rights of all displaced queer individuals to a safe and dignified future.



Presenters and participants during plenary session of the conference.