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What is the relationship between scholarship in religion and activism on behalf of social justice? For scholars committed to social transformation that is feminist, antiracist, and pro-LGBTIQ rights, what does activism look like? And how should the work of activists and activism inform such scholarship? What are the unique issues that emerge for those of us working with and on behalf of LGBTIQ communities?

Participation in social change is part of the vocational identity of many queer-identified scholars. To borrow terminology from one of the panelists below, such scholars hope to do more than merely understand the world — we are interested in transforming it. At times, however, significant tensions exist for those seeking to be scholar-activists. Sometimes chasms seem to separate the worlds of scholarship and activism.

The challenges that confront work attempting to bridge scholarship and activism come from institutional barriers present within the academy, as well as from the difficulties of forging paths outside of the academy. To name a few such challenges:

- The ways in which heterosexism affects access to jobs and job security in academic positions

- The lack of rewards for collaborative work and the challenges heavy workloads pose for such efforts
- The seductions of engaging in discourses that are inaccessible to the very communities to whom queer scholars most need to be accountable
- The ways in which racism, sexism, and economic privilege fracture the cohesion of LGBTIQ communities and negatively impact scholarship and activism
- The scarcity of resources to support the work of social change and the narrow set of skills in which graduate school trains those of us engaged in scholarship

Thinking in concrete and practical ways about how to face and respond to these challenges is critical if we are to truly leverage scholarship in religion for the work of justice. The particular — and sometimes particularly fraught — relationship between religion, and political and civic rights, for LGBTIQ persons makes the question of the relationship between scholarship and activism acute. Yet there are relatively few times and places specifically marked for productive reflection on these issues.

In November 2010, the AAR Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession Task Force brought together a group of scholar-activists to reflect explicitly on such topics. The exchange was fruitful and identified some of the most difficult issues that scholar-activists face. It also elicited insights about directions that those of us committed to the well-being of LGBTIQ communities, who are engaged in a variety of types of intellectual labor, might take.