

TRANSCRIPT

"IS THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN CRISIS?"

Open Society Institute

A conversation with Aryeh Neier and Samuel Moyn

Moderator: Laura Silber

Recorded July 11, 2018

ANNOUNCER:

You are listening to a recording of the Open Society Foundations, working to build vibrant and tolerant democracies worldwide. Visit us at OpenSocietyFoundations.org.

LEONARD BENARDO:

Ladies and gentlemen. My name is Leonard Benardo. I'm a vice president here with the Open Society Foundations. It's a great honor to be here with all of you. And with of course Aryeh Neier, Samuel Moyn, and my close friend and comrade, Laura Silber. Aryeh, as many of you know-- or if you don't you should, was the first president of the Open Society Foundations from 1993 to 2012. Prior to that, he was founder of Human Rights Watch, prior to that national director of the American Civil Liberties Union, prior to that-- the progenitor of and then critic towards Students for Democratic Society. Studied with Nabokov at Cornell. No? (LAUGHTER) A storied life, mentor to me, Rob Kushner, and others here.

And-- author of seven books, the last of which, *The International Human Rights Movement* that came out in 2012 I'm sure will at least be-- a subject of some of Aryeh's-- musings. He's also been published in Sam's journal. Sam, you're-- are you still with *Humanity* or you left? You resigned, but Sam founded the *Journal of Humanity*-- in which Aryeh published-- a couple of years ago.

Sam himself, Sam Moyn, who's a professor of history and law in New Haven, 35 years Aryeh's junior-- has sort of made the Northeast corridor trifecta, having been in Morningside

Heights, then up at Cambridge, now settling in the leafy metropolis of New Haven. Sam also is the author of seven books-- one of which is-- an edited volume on-- on Rosanvallon. But Sam started as a French historian. He wrote his first book on Levinas, but as many of you know, if not everybody has drifted into the world of human rights, politics and sociology and history over the last-- number of years.

Laura Silber, as I said my close friend and comrade, sitting in the middle here. Her daughter's in the audience. Eva raise your hand. There, thank you Eva. (LAUGHTER) Laura is-- an award-winning author as you know of the great *Death of Yugoslavia*, which is the-- most important work on the collapse of the former Yugoslavia. Has-- an accompanying series on BBC, should you choose to take a look at that on YouTube.

Is the chief communications officer here at the Open Society Foundations and has been for many years. An ace journalist for the *Financial Times* and-- and other publications. So this is gonna be a great 90 minutes. There may be some blood on the tracks, as Dillon would say, but-- we'll see how it goes. So over to-- over to Laura.

LAURA SILBER:

(IN PROGRESS) --be here. And I'm gonna tell you a few rules. First of all, this event is being recorded. It's being livestreamed. So I want to welcome everyone who's watching online. You can watch it both at [OpenSocietyFoundations.org](https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org) and on Facebook Live with our partners at Human Rights Watch. So thank you for joining us.

We'll be taking questions from the audience, but also we'll be taking them online. So if you see me looking at my phone, it's not that I'm not interested. It's because I'll be receiving some questions via telephone. And also, we'll be taking comments. And we want this to be a conversation. There was so much sort of excitement about this that I was really nervous.

Because people were like, "Are they gonna fight? What's gonna happen?" (LAUGHTER) And I'm sure that there's no other event where people feel so strongly-- feel so strongly, they strongly agree with Aryeh, they strongly agree with Sam Moyn. At the same time, they also strongly disagree with both.

So I'm sure that you can all situate yourselves somewhere on that long spectrum, and I'm really excited to be here. We will start out with-- Sam will speak for ten minutes. Aryeh will then speak for ten minutes. We'll then speak a little bit amongst ourselves. I'll ask some questions, and then we'll throw it to the audience, because there are many of you who I know want to contribute. I'm already receiving some prompting emails during the week just, "I want to talk about this and I want to talk about this."

So this, there's-- there's really no other question that I think for most of us in this room that's more vexing and more important of, is hu-- is the human rights movement in crisis? And really what we want to talk about also is, "And what are we going to do about it?" And that's what's important I think to-- to me and to many of you. So I'm really excited, and I want to

thank Sam especially for coming. It's really, we're really grateful that you made the trip. And-- why don't we begin?

SAMUEL MOYN:

All right. Well, this is-- an incredible privilege for me, not just because you're all here, but because I-- I get to serve on a panel with Aryeh. You know, Lenny mischievously tweeted that this would be a "clash of the titans," but that can't be, not just because Aryeh's had a storied career and I've written a few books.

But mainly because I think-- I agree with Aryeh much more than-- some might think. I think I'll reach some of his-- classic positions from a somewhat different route, and so it might be that the event, if there's fighting, devolves into-- tension between the-- the speakers and the audience.

So let me just get outta the way at first-- an area of I think maximum disagreement between Aryeh and myself-- which I think we should note and set aside. Because I don't think it ought to be the-- the main topic. And that of ser-- course concerns the reality of economic and social rights-- as rights, and whether-- groups such as Human Rights Watch-- or others ought to pursue them. I think we should note it and set it aside, because-- it's been resolved-- that these are rights that we think of as rights. And that at least-- fair number of-- cause groups will pursue them.

Now Aryeh has some very eloquent arguments to the contrary, and of course they were influential because of his position. They sometimes were highfalutin, if you like, when he would cite Isaiah Berlin to his cause. Other times I think they took what you might call a Cold War form. And I don't regard that as a criticism, because of course human rights activism-- was born in the Cold War, and it evolves beyond it. We don't know its future, but we-- we note its origin, which gave it virtues and vices.

So when-- when we look back and read in Aryeh's autobiography-- and we see that he writes that, "The concept of economic and social rights is profoundly undemocratic, and that authoritarian power is probably a prerequisite for giving meaning to them," I think we can say that he came by those views honestly and that the vast bulk of the movement has-- has changed its mind on that topic.

Now I have-- in my work-- a different, say, bone of contention I want to throw out-- which really doesn't have to do with whether we should think of economic and social rights as important, whether groups like the ones that-- O.S.F. Fund should pursue them. 'Cause I think they are and-- and they should. But-- I-- I have-- a worry about a related but distinct topic, which is that human rights activism including activism around sufficient provision when it comes to the basic decencies of life, which we call economic and social rights, has the same lifespan as the explosion of inequality in most nations.

And I just want to name and shame that fact-- and get us to think about it. Whether we consider ourselves within something called the human rights movement, however we define it or position ourselves outside it as observers or as people who want to have a different kind of movement.

Now why should this relationship matter? Well, because inequality has exploded. And as human rights activism has become prestigious, it has accompanied this explosion. Without the norms on its pieces of paper like legal treaties to address growing inequality and maybe not the kinds of mobilizational strategies to face it down and alter the trajectory of so many societies. So my main goal in what I've written is to just try to think about why that is-- and - leave it to you all-- what if anything you should do about it.

Other ideologies fell-- between the Cold War and the present-- as human rights survived, notably socialism. Other kinds of movements, notably trade unions began to implode-- as human rights activism became exciting-- especially amongst youth.

Now where I agree with Aryeh I think most of all-- is that I'm not totally convinced that the answer is that human rights movements should just take equality-- as a new goal along with all the others. They're doing-- something, although honestly not all that much-- in-- in let's say outcomes terms to advance. Now I think this is something I would really like to have us talk about in-- in our time, both between the two of us and-- and more generally. I do think that it's important for human rights movements to care about the fact that they've succeeded-- along with-- the crisis of inequality. They shouldn't want to get scapegoated above all-- in an atmosphere in which some people might try to face down the rich finally.

And I think human rights organizations, even if they change nothing about themselves, should want to avoid getting caught up in a justifiable revolt against the rich. And whatever attempts do emerge to-- constrain inequality. I also think that there oughta be room for human rights movements to consider-- how and whether they can take on material equality as a concern, even if it's not a major one.

And even if it's gingerly, as you know, I think is almost inevitable to the extent it happens at all. But I know that there are people in at least some organizations who want to expand the remit. I don't see any trouble with trying. The objection I think we'll here is that that will make human rights movements political. But guess what? They already are. And their enemies regard them as deeply political already. What's the risk?

And so I think there's-- there's some reason for Human Rights wa-- ra-- Watch and other such organizations to flirt with-- some kinda challenge to inequality. The broader ecology is one in which funders-- like O.S.F. can fund other kinds of movements.

Because after all, it doesn't seem likely that the-- the strategies that human rights movements have are up to the challenge of inequality. Let's see what happens if they should want to try. But it doesn't seem that they're likely to succeed. They don't have the norms on paper, and if we compare them to trade unions and socialist parties, which were the N.G.O.s that had egalitarian purposes, they seem very different-- in their professionalism, in their let's say

bias for informational politics, which isn't to say that's the only kind of thing that human rights organizations do. In the kinds of people, largely elites-- who-- who man the precipice of the world of human rights.

Okay, so that's mainly what I want to say. I'll just turn in one last minute to-- another way of-- of putting my perspective. You may not personally or organizationally think equality is of moral importance or you may say it's not of comparable importance to rights, including economic and social rights.

I think what we're learning, not in every country but in some countries-- that human rights advocacy depends on conditions it can't guarantee. And I think that's something we have to think about, because equality might be part of the picture-- in places where we s-- you know, save regimes from-- form populist capture or even collapse. Now not everywhere.

You always knew if you were working on a despotism that you couldn't guarantee the success of your own movement. Often you-- you-- you were doing something noble but relatively hopeless. But then there are places where you had more room for maneuver-- and yet you're losing them-- due to populism.

I'm not suggesting by any means that inequality is the only driver of populism, but it's one important one. And so I just conclude by saying that-- we're learning more and more every day that you can't have an open society that's not an equal society. You can sign up for Karl Popper and George Soros and pursue freedom, but sooner or later, a majority has to support your cause. And-- human rights have therefore to be part of a majority politics sooner or later. A group like-- like-- the one some of you work for can't do it on its own-- nor can judges. In the end, you have to have a majority-- with you, and the suggestion is, equality is going to be part of the way we create an ecology in which human rights survive and thrive-- in open but also equal societies. Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

LAURA SILBER:

Thank you. We'll go right to Aryeh, and then we'll open up for a few questions.

ARYEH NEIER:

Well, first-- in most of-- his remarks-- Sam Moyn referred to equality and inequality. He didn't use the phrase-- "economic-- equality" or "economic-- inequality." If it's-- equality-- this is-- major focus of the human rights movement generally and-- of an organization like Human Rights Watch.

That is-- racial equality, gender equality, equality for indigenous people, equality for-- disabled people. A very large part-- of the-- the work-- of human rights organizations focuses on those issues. And-- I think it should probably also be pointed out-- that a substantial degree of economic-- inequality-- involves-- inequality on the basis of status.

That is-- the-- racial groups-- that are treated unequally tend to be-- the most deprived in-- any country, whether it is-- African Americans in the United States or the Roma-- in Eastern Europe or the Rohingya-- in Burma. Those are the people who suffer most-- from economic-- inequality. So the human rights movement, by addressing-- equality-- on the basis of status-- is very much-- engaged in efforts to deal with economic-- inequality, even if it hasn't adopted the idea that economic inequality per se-- ought to be-- its concern.

I-- also note that-- Sam Moyn-- says that-- economic-- on "inequality has exploded." And that-- this has accompanied the rise of the human rights movement. Yes, but a lot of other things have accompanied the rise of the-- the human rights movement. That is, environmental damage and-- climate change have-- encar-- accompanied the-- the rise of the human rights movement.

Should the human rights movement also take-- on-- the environmental concerns or the concern with-- climate change? And if the human rights movement takes on climate change and economic equality and inequality, and everything becomes-- question of human rights, I would suggest that then there is nothing left to human rights. It's just-- an organization concerned with-- every ill-- of the world, and it's unlikely to-- to have-- much impact.

Now-- when it comes to economic-- inequality-- per se-- I have-- three-- main reasons-- for-- opposing an engagement-- with the-- the issue of economic-- inequality. The first is very simply that the human rights movement would be-- wholly ineffective. That is-- an important issue so far as-- economic equality is concerned is tax policy. Now suppose that Human Rights Watch-- took a stand-- on tax policy.

It lacks expertise-- in the-- the area. It would not speak for a constituency that looks to it-- to voice its concerns-- on those issues, and such constituency as it has is probably quite divided-- with respect to-- to tax policy. And the methods that are available to the human rights movement-- the-- the naming and shaming and litigation which have pr-- been principal methods-- of the-- the human rights movement would be inapplicable-- in dealing with a question like-- tax policy.

So the first-- objection to engagement-- with the issue of economic inequality is that the human rights movement would be-- very ineffective. My second-- objection-- is that-- it g-- it goes to my-- definition of rights. That is, I think the concept of rights has to have integrity. And that those who struggle for rights have to be able to-- project that int-- integrity. And from my standpoint, a right is something that always takes precedence over other-- considerations. Before the-- the advent of the-- the current-- precedent, the-- the legal philosopher-- the late Ronald Dworkin was-- known for saying that "Rights trump every other-- consideration."

That is-- if you-- say, "You have a right not to be tortured," there's no other consideration-- that can prevail against-- that right. If you ha-- say, "There's a right not to be enslaved," there's no other consideration that can prevail against that right. If you have a right to due process of law, there's no other consideration that can prevail against that right.

Now when you deal with-- with economic issues-- and by-- by the way, that-- that concept is very well expressed in the-- the first five words of the Bill of Rights of the United States. That is, the first five words-- "Congress shall make no law," that is, where rights are concerned even when there is a democratic process, the congress can't do anything to-- take precedence over rights.

Rights trump every other consideration. You can't deal with that so far as economic issues are concerned, and I will use-- one example, and that is the example of China. China has-- been more successful than any other country in the world at raising large numbers of people from-- poverty to-- approximately-- middle class status. That is, hundreds of millions of people have been raised to middle class status.

In Northern China, Beijing-- for example-- this has required the very extensive use of-- fossil fuels, principal-- principally coal. And unless-- that were done, China could not have-- raised those people to-- to that level. A problem of course is that it also done great damage to health. That is, there are pulmonary diseases, heart disease, cancer-- that have affected millions of people in Northern China. So the success in raising people's level of income has done great damage to the health of-- a portion of that-- population.

If you go further South in China-- China has more access to hydroelectric power. There are rivers that come from the Himalayas and the other mountain chains of-- of China. China's greatest river is the Yangtze. And-- in order to harness the energy from the Yangtze-- China built the-- the Three Gorges dams-- and did a great deal of environmental damage in the process, but also forcibly displaced-- at least 2 million people. That is-- they lost their homes, they lost their livelihoods-- they lost their communities.

So-- there are countervailing-- considerations. Now how do you deal with those countervailing considerations? You don't say, "There's a right to health, and therefore you can't-- engage in the-- activities which lifted people's incomes (SNEEZE) in Northern China." You don't say there's "a right never to be displaced." On the other hand, you don't say-- "Raising the income is so important that you can completely overlook the health consequences and-- the displacement."

You need to develop good public policies that try to-- get-- as much on either side of that equation as possible. You need to be concerned with the right to health and with raising the income. That's the nature of economic issues. Most economic issues, not every-- economic issue. But most economic issues have to be subject to countervailing considerations. Dealing with them from the standpoint of rights gets you nowhere. What you need are intelligent public policies that are concerned with-- with both sides-- of that equation.

Now-- my third reason for-- opposing-- concern with-- economic-- inequality is something than I would-- address by, you know, going back to my own history at Human Rights Watch. When I took over the-- the direction of-- of Human Rights Watch-- shortly after-- it started-- I plunged the-- the organization-- into the-- wars that were then underway in El Salvador-- and Guatemala.

And-- Human Rights Watch was very innovative. That is-- it-- introduced the-- the idea of international humanitarian law, which had not been a concern of the human rights movement previously to measure the-- the kinds of abuses that were taking place in El Salvador and Guatemala.

And although there was great carnage-- in El Salvador and Guatemala, we nevertheless had a s-- significant impact. We saved many-- many thousands of lives. During the effort to-- to do that, the Guatemalan government and the-- the Salvadoran government and much more-- significantly, the Reagan administration, made every effort to discredit us.

They labeled us in every conceivable way. They labeled us as-- Communists-- who were supporting-- these guerilla movements. If we had embraced the ideology of those guerilla movements-- and those guerilla movements said they were fighting for-- economic equality, the Reagan administration would have succeeded. They would have snuffed out Human Rights Watch. The organization would not have survived. It would not have achieved-- everything or anything that it-- it has achieved.

We could resist-- the Reagan administration, and we survived to take on those kinds of struggles in a great many other armed conflicts because we did not adopt political positions-- such as the political positions which a socialist movement would adopt. For example, to promote-- economic equality. If we had indicated ideological sympathy for the causes of the guerillas, we could not have survived.

So that-- that is-- simply-- a necessary way of proceeding. If you're going to be successful-- in the international human rights field, you have to circumscribe the causes-- with which you are concerned. And if you do not circumscribe the causes with which you are concerned, you cannot become what Human Rights Watch-- has become-- today. Thank you.
(APPLAUSE)

LAURA SILBER:

Thanks very much. Sam, I'm gonna give you an opportunity to respond directly, and I would like to ask you, what is it that you disagree with most about what Aryeh (LAUGHTER) just pointed out?

SAMUEL MOYN:

So I think I disagree most with his-- his three big reasons. (LAUGHTER) But there's, there, the-- again, I want to emphasize some common ground. So I totally agree first that status equality, as you called it is-- is important. It's essential. The trouble is, its relation to economic equality is not simple. Sometimes it's true that by focusing on equal status, we improve economic equality. But often things go the other way.

And we do have lots of movements that are status based-- that have also prospered as certain forms of feminism have-- alongside-- the increase in class inequality. Another great example

of a class-insensitive status based campaign would be Affirmative Action, which has done a huge amount for black inclusion in this country, but helps reproduce divisions that are class based within the black community.

Indeed-- Affirmative Action has helped create some of those divisions. So the idea would be, of course, these are different and they may need different approaches. We've done very well, both in general and within human rights with status equality, even as inequality-- of-- on-- of an economic sort has soared. Okay, so let me turn to his three reasons.

So I don't think it's gonna be very plausible to worry that-- human rights movements will be ineffective when it comes to economic concerns in general, because it's not clear how effective they are in general to begin with. There's a big debate about that. But more generally, they've taken on so many burdens already that it's hard for me to see a huge risk of overburden-- overburdening themselves by adding something else to the list.

Still, generally I totally agree with Aryeh that, while human rights groups should think about this topic and above all save themselves from, you know, the-- the neoliberal-- companionship they've had, I don't think they're gonna make a big difference in the long run, unless they're allied with-- other kinds of movements-- and other kinds of ideologies. I think that, in the end though, Aryeh gave his three arguments really against-- the proposal, which is now I think, you know, overtaken by events within the movement that-- that human rights bear on economics at all.

And already, the focus on economic and social rights has-- has overcome some of these objections. So of course human rights is relevant to tax policy. (COUGHS) If there's not expertise in your group, find it, because to the extent economic and social rights are being violated-- it requires-- an argument for different levels of taxation.

The bigger issue I think is that, we've also given up by and large the old idea of rights as trumps. Some are, but they're very few. Most rights are matters of setting priorities. And they take into account that there are other countervailing social ends. If you look at the utopia of human rights in the European convention system, it's all about balancing and in particular proportionality balancing. Because almost no right-- exists without limitation.

So if we think of rights in that spirit, we realize that we're setting things as high priority. And there's gonna be political debate about how to set the priorities and how the priorities coexist with one another. No reason equality shouldn't be in the mix.

Lastly, I fully grasp Aryeh's concern borne of the Cold War-- that the enemies of equality are so powerful that to the extent you broach it, they will destroy you. And so he made a strategic decision-- to-- to remain out of the fray. And yet, this is the period when the left was being destroyed. So it's true that Human Rights Watch survived to fight another day by failing to talk about distribution, but it stood by as the left was destroyed, which had massive ramifications after 1989. There was no reason after 1989 the human rights movements couldn't h-- have engaged distribution with alacrity, and there's no reason it shouldn't now.

In-- indeed, it already does through economic and social rights without massive risk to its legitimacy.

So it's a matter of more or less-- not radical change. And I-- I think-- Aryeh's been very eloquent. But just as we've overcome a skepticism with respect to rights of sufficient provision, we should also say, "Equality can be part of-- politics in which rights also figure."

LAURA SILBER:

Aryeh, I'm sure you disagree with many things that Sam has said. And I want to ask you also, is it, while you oppose using the argument of economic rights, and you're not solidly behind that, what do you think of perhaps attempts in the direction of Human Rights Watch in using that as a way of maybe checking some of the authoritarian governments that don't spend the, whether it's natural resources or other monies to the benefits of their people, but use it for, to line their pockets or for other forms--

ARYEH NEIER:

Now look. Human Rights Watch has gone beyond-- where I was-- in-- my direction of the-- the organization. It's been 25 years-- since I left Human Rights Watch. It would be-- strange if the organization were entirely static-- during that-- 25-- year period. My-- successor, Ken Roth, has-- ventured into the-- the economic and social rights-- area-- where-- he sees-- particular violation-- particular violator.

And where it is-- the consequence of some, you know, arbitrary-- or corrupt or-- discriminatory-- practice-- or policy. I-- I-- think that has been done very well. I'm not-- unhappy with the-- the way in which-- Human Rights Watch-- has evolved. I think to a very large extent-- the issues-- involve-- discrimination. I-- I'll-- I'll go back to being-- autobiographical. And that is, when I was at the A.C.L.U. before I was at-- Human Rights Watch, I'd launched-- a lot of projects.

My-- my favorite project in my days at the A.C.L.U. was something called the South Texas Project. Or that's what I called it. And-- it was based in a town that has been in the news a lot recently because of the-- the migration issue, and that is McAllen-- Texas. And the issue was the following.

There was a large Chicano population-- there. They were-- people who lived in what were called colonias. Colonias were farmland divided into small pieces of property. They had built-- their own houses in these-- colonias. They were there during the-- the winter. And then in other parts of the year, they went up through the central part of the United States-- doing farmwork. In those days, the-- the Texas Water District boards-- drew their own lines.

And they excluded the colonias-- from-- the provision of clean water. And if you sank a well in that area, you would get-- brackish water. So the only-- place where the people who lived in the colonias-- could get water-- was-- by-- tapping irrigation standpipes-- in the fields.

And the consequence was that that area of Texas-- had by far the highest-- disease rate-- in the United States. So-- I established a project specifically to challenge-- the exclusion of the colonias from the territory of the-- Texas-- Water District boards. And we, you know, filed a series of lawsuits, and over time-- we won.

And-- the Tex-- the-- the-- the clean water had to be supplied-- to the colonias. Now you can call that a, you know, water-- supply an economic and-- and social right-- kind of issue. But it was also discriminatory-- so far as the-- the Mexican-American population living in that area-- was concerned. That's the kind of thing-- that-- Human Rights Watch-- does today. So-- in-- preparation-- for this meeting, I got a few of the-- the Human Rights Watch-- reports, and I was interested to see that-- one of them is entitled, *Canada, Water Crisis Puts First Nations Families at Risk*.

So here is Human Rights Watch dealing with-- an exactly analogous-- sort of thing to what I was dealing with-- at the-- the A.C.L.U. more than 40-- years ago. (COUGH) I'm very much in favor of-- civil liberties and rights organizations dealing with things like that. They can have an impact-- on-- questions of that sort.

And Human Rights Watch-- has had a significant-- impact. By the way, coming back to this whole notion of the human rights-- movement being in crisis. I don't think the human rights movement is in crisis. I think the world is in crisis. (LAUGHTER) And I think we have-- lot of ethno-nationalist-- governments today and populist governments. And Sam Moyn's notion that we would in some way-- sort of address this problem so far as populism is concerned if-- the human rights movement would get involved in-- in economic-- equality issues strikes me as-- not-- not well thought through.

The populist movements-- around are precisely the movements that are most opposed to economic equality. They think economic equality would be at their expense. It would be in behalf of the people who are lower down than them. The people who support Orban-- in Hungary-- are not supporters of economic-- equality, because they fear that would-- benefit the Roma.

The populists in the United States are not in favor of-- economic equality, because they think-- that would-- benefit the minority groups within the United States. So the-- the notion that somehow one is going to be able to head off populism if one embraces-- economic equality seems to me completely misinformed. It-- it's just-- exactly opposite-- to-- to what would take place.

The human rights movement is good at certain things, and Human Rights Watch has proved that it is good at things that go beyond what it did when I was the-- the director of Human Rights Watch. And I'm-- very happy to-- to endorse-- the activities of Human Rights Watch. One of the things, you know, one should always wish for-- is that your successor should be very good. (LAUGH) Because if you're successor is very good, it makes you look good. (LAUGHTER)

LAURA SILBER:

Well-- well done. Sam are you being unfair to the human rights movement, not, first of all for thinking that it only exists, it's only Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, the human rights movement is much bigger, it's much broader. It encompasses and Aryeh might not agree, but it encompasses whether it's disabilities rights activists, whether it's-- well, I know you agree with that one, but you're not gonna agree with this one. (LAUGHTER)

Which is people for economic justice, people for environmental justice. That's what I see as the human rights movement. So is it fair to place on the human rights movement just categorizing them as Human Rights Watch? That's one question.

And the second one is when, I've read all the reviews of your recent book, and everyone keeps saying, "Is he saying that China is supporting human rights? Does he believe that that's the only way to go?" Because you have lifted the people, they have lifted the people from poverty in China, does it make it that, you would say, "Well, China's doing a good job with human rights? Does it matter?"

SAMUEL MOYN:

Great. So those are all great questions. And Aryeh is eloquent as always, so let me incorporate-- bit of response to what he said. So first, of course it's true that the world of-- of rights advocacy is huge and, you know, chaotic and diverse. And there's no doubt about that. But it can be doubted how-- much if at all, the agenda of-- of socioeconomic equality figures within it.

It, I think Aryeh's right that it has been about other things, even to the extent it's evolved. And-- so the question is-- is that a bad thing? Well, I think it's a bad thing if no one else is out there standing up for that value. Especially if we look out-- and we see-- that we're pouring millions-- and lots of our time and energy into human rights, only to see the circumstances become totally unpropitious for our activity.

So Aryeh's putting words in our mouth, in my mouth in-- in attributing me to a position I already rejected earlier. I-- I'm not at all sure that human rights groups are the right ones to do this work. I do think it's legitimate for those who are in it and want to discuss that possibility to-- to-- to have a say-- and debate with their colleagues about how to define their agenda. And I haven't heard an argument that somehow-- you know, a conversation stopper in that regard.

But the bigger issue is, goes beyond, you know, what human rights movements should do. It's really about where as-- as-- as, you know, a community of reformers as well as funders we should put our energy, time and money. And the suggestion is that it's very short-sighted if we focus solely on the issues that Aryeh's willing other define as human rights issues, if it turns out that-- the majority's not with you.

So this is I think the most contentious-- part of his remarks-- when he interprets populism. So surely it's true that when middle classes in revolt look at those they consider outsiders or those who are weak and whom they scapegoat, that they don't want to help those people. But it's not because they're against-- some remedy for their own stagnation. And so I think equality is actually a huge part of the remedy for populism.

And if we care about those who-- p-- populists are scapegoating, we have to find a way to attract their voters to a different majority politics than they're choosing, one that's not about denying rights, that's not about hurting the weak including in some of the stories about socioeconomic deprivation that-- that Aryeh rightly mentioned.

So last point, I must have read different reviews, because-- all that's to be said about China, Aryeh has said that through their own policies, marketizing policies that have the, also the same lifespan as the human rights movement, they've brought far more people I would say out of extreme poverty, World Bank defined a dollar and change a day, than any state, any agent in history. And that's a miraculous achievement, especially compared to the groups, you know, much less well-funded than Human Rights Watch that have embraced the intentional pursuit of economic and social rights across the world wi-- who have a paltry showing to date.

Now that doesn't mean that China's a good society or anything of that sort. I'm-- I'm with all the denunciation that-- the-- the civil libertarian wants to muster. And of course, they've done this work in the midst of their own inequality crisis. No society has saved as many from extreme poverty. No society has accelerated inequality over such a short time as China has in the past 35 years.

ARYEH NEIER:

It-- this raises a question as to why the-- the human rights movement should be the instrument-- that is blamed-- for allowing-- economic inequality to-- to-- develop-- during the period in which it has been-- operating. Sam Moyn-- is a professor at Yale University. Yale University probably has about ten times as many employees as Human Rights Watch. It has an endowment about 100 times-- that of-- of Human Rights Watch. If Sam Moyn wants to organize his colleagues at Yale University-- to take on the issue of (COUGH) economic inequality--

SAMUEL MOYN:

I'm trying.

ARYEH NEIER:

Yale has far more resources (LAUGHTER) than Human Rights Watch. I'm all for it. I wish you well. I might even help you a little bit. (LAUGHTER) But why should the human rights

movement, which has an immense agenda as it is-- be the instrument that has to also-- take on this issue, which is not directly relevant-- to the activities in which-- it engages?

If Human Rights Watch is trying to deal-- with the Rohingyas-- in Burma-- with the Gazans-- who are protesting, with the millions of people who are-- victims of-- Assad-- in Syria-- if all those people who are the-- the victims of the conflicts in-- the Central African Republic-- and South Sudan, and I could go on and on and on and on, and it's making a difference so far as-- the people there are concerned, why should it also take on this issue?

Why shouldn't a much wealthier-- much larger institution than Human Rights Watch-- take this on? I took-- some trouble to-- to help organize Human Rights Watch. I also had a hand-- in organizing several other human rights organizations. Those organizations have difficult agendas-- to deal with.

There are organizations like Yale University-- which don't have such difficult agendas.

They're educating the privileged elite, pres-- precisely the people-- who are-- the beneficiaries of the-- neoliberalism that Sam Moyn is talking about. Why not organize them to try to deal with the-- the issue of economic-- inequality?

SAMUEL MOYN:

Do-- do you want me to? So--

LAURA SILBER:

Go right ahead. (LAUGHTER)

SAMUEL MOYN:

Well, no, I, look, I I-- I-- I-- I'm in agreement. You know, economic inequality like many other policies outcomes are the work of lots of hands. And there's no doubt that if we want to talk about national inequality in this country and global inequality too that we'd have to put elite formation in the mix, because of course, that's who run things. And how people get their ideas and how they rule is-- is of the utmost significance.

And universities are a big part of that. Especially if you take into account that-- in many of these countries, notably the United States, elitism is increasingly driven by meritocracy. Meritocracy doesn't disrupt it, but creates a new, self-sustaining elite. So I'm-- I'm with Aryeh on that point. However, universities are not-- cause organizations. They haven't defined-- an idealism for young people coming to universities who-- enter with the notion that if they want to save the world, they need to work on human rights-- only to find that-- until very recently, a lot's left out.

Because of Aryeh's otherwise extremely fine work in setting up-- really unprecedented kinda moral contribution that the human rights movement has been. But it's not inflexible. It's already changed so much as he's proven in his remarks. He could go on and on down the list, because other people added some things to it to remit, and there's no reason not to add more.

I think it will require-- flexibility in the future, because that's the way history works. And-- and so the real question is, why draw the line on this point? You know, our benefactor here, George Soros, at, to the best of my understanding has not done so. He understands that after 1989, he was in error in thinking that you could set up an open society without regard to distribution in general and equality in particular.

And he knows as much better than-- than any of-- of us on the panel that we've lost Eastern Europe for who knows how many more generations again. Because it's not as if this is the first time we've tried to export human rights there. And so I think there are lessons to be gained, and they're-- they're really about w-- what-- where we set our priorities as activists. Whether we're a part of human rights groups or outside them as I think more and more people ought to position themselves.

ARYEH NEIER:

You know-- (LAUGHTER) when I thought, when-- when I-- when I took--

LAURA SILBER:

Thirty seconds.

ARYEH NEIER:

When I took over Human Rights Watch-- I added to the agenda of the-- the human rights movement. I made two major additions-- to the j-- the agenda. One was to get the human rights movement involved in international humanitarian law. And the other was that up to that point, the human rights movement had only been concerned with-- political oppression.

And I added-- civil liberties agenda which was much broader-- and which dealt with such things as-- police abuses and ordinary criminal cases, prison conditions for ordinary prisoners, women's rights, and-- so forth. And gradually the-- the human rights movement as a whole followed the lead of Human Rights Watch. Amnesty International debated for more than ten years whether they would get into the-- international humanitarian law field, but eventually-- they did. And Amnesty's agenda today is roughly comparable to the-- agenda of Human Rights Watch. But in making those additions-- it was crucial to me that there should be-- integrity. That there should be-- the same-- approach to the-- the idea of rights-- throughout the-- the work that we did.

And that we could not take on-- issues which could only be addressed through the political process-- such as-- economic-- issues. And so I refrained from getting involved in-- the-- the economic issues. I wanted only to deal with issues where rights as such-- could be the-- the-- the crucial issue.

And I think maintaining that integrity remains crucial from the standpoint of the human rights movement. It can add to the agenda that-- I had. And under-- Ken Roth's leadership, it has added to that agenda. And, you know, that's-- all to the good, and I applaud that. But it can only be done where that integrity is maintained, and I think that when-- Sam Moyn-- wants to plunge the human rights movement into economic-- issues broadly by taking on-- this huge subject of economic equality, he is proposing a distortion of the human rights movement-- which would greatly undercut the human rights movement.

LAURA SILBER:

That was a long 30 seconds. I'm-- (LAUGHTER) I'm gonna turn to Sam for one more question, couple more questions, and then we have, it's really burning up the internet with questions, so I'm gonna have to turn to that and then we'll come to this room.

Sam, two questions for you. What's right with the humans right-- human rights movement? Number one, just, and I was reading that you started out a very different person. You were working in the Clinton White House, and you believed in intervention in Bosnia. And I read that you wrote an op-ed for President Clinton I believe, and you really believed in the power of intervention. When Aryeh mentioned humanitarian intervention, you have subsequently come to believe that humanitarian intervention is often a veil for maybe American imperialism or other goals is seldom successful.

But today, I was watching the World Cup. I have to admit that. And I saw Croatia, sorry Jonathan-- come into the finals. Would Croatia be where it was had it not been for humanitarian intervention? Would Bosnia be where it was, where it is today with the absence of killing? Would Kosovo be? So I'd just like you briefly to (NOISE) think about that. And we'll go to the internet after that.

SAMUEL MOYN:

Well, ye-- ye-- you know, you're-- you're opening up a huge can of worms-- (LAUGHTER) in a conversation, you know, about-- about something else in a sense. But it's an important one. You know, I-- I-- I guess I-- I would say that-- I-- I think that w-- we-- we can in theory and maybe-- once in a while in practice find a humanitarian intervention that's worked. So no reason to rule them out absolutely anymore that-- than we should think that, you know, war is always a mistake.

It seems as if the record is very clear that it's almost always a mistake, and humanitarian intervention almost always makes things worse. So I, you know, I don't, many people would

at this point cite the example of-- of Libya-- where I think it's-- it's hard at this point to sustain optimism in the propriety of humanitarian intervention.

You know, this work and this discussion is much less about human rights serving great powers, although they have done so-- and more about human rights accommodating to a world-- of-- of economic libertarianism. And so the question is, you know, whether we ought to rest content with that result, especially since we're now reaping-- its fruits.

LAURA SILBER:

Thank you. So I'm gonna take a question from Human Rights Connected. And they ask, "What advice would you give to activists, organizers who mobilize for human rights where inequality is a huge backdrop to the work they do? How should they educate those within their movements to modify their approach based on your varying perspectives?"

SAMUEL MOYN:

Does Aryeh want to-- Aryeh can't. It's against interest for him (LAUGH) to offer any advice.

LAURA SILBER:

You can try. It is to you too.

SAMUEL MOYN:

I-- I would rather, he, you know, I'm not an activist. In fact, I'm just trying to kind of understand from-- from a distance-- how this new form of human rights activism fits into our moral world. To come back to your earlier question, I think its principal contribution is that it's allowed us to place stigma on evil around the world. And that's no small contribution, even if we-- we can testify to very little success in-- in lifting the reason to-- to allocate the stigma. But I-- I'm not sure.

I mean, I think there's a substantial generational rift within human rights organizations right now, from what I've seen. And it's not always that the older ones amongst us are wrong and the younger are correct, because often it's the other way around.

But as in every cycle of generations, you have to decide-- you know, how to angle for power within a political world and in this case in a movement you didn't build. And that's an immense strategic challenge. So best of luck. But I think that it's increasingly obvious to people of any age-- and with any amount of involvement in human rights organizations and-- and any, you know, reformist cause in general that, to the extent we neglect equality, we'll fail on all of our other ends. And that's just a very basic reason to convince anyone that they oughta change their priorities.

ARYEH NEIER:

Did you say that came from Connectas?

LAURA SILBER:

No, I said it came from hold on-- connected, Human Rights Connected.

ARYEH NEIER:

Oh, okay, I don't know that. I-- I was thinking of Connectas, which is-- very valuable Brazilian-- human rights-- organization. And I'll still answer it as if it had come from-- (LAUGHTER) Connectas-- in this respect-- that, if I think of Brazil and I think of the human rights abuses-- that I know about in Brazil, such as the-- extensive police abuses and-- police killings-- in Brazil-- those particularly focus-- on-- impoverished people in-- cities like-- Rio and-- Sao Paolo.

And so if I wanted to-- to address issues of-- economic inequality-- in Brazil, I would focus on-- real-- and very significant human rights abuses that disproportionately-- affect the-- the poor-- in Brazil. And I think a human rights organization would have more impact-- in-- focusing-- on those kinds of issues than if it tried to broadly advocate-- for overcoming economic inequality, which is very great in braz-- Brazil.

And I do think that the human rights abuses with which-- most of the human rights movement is concer-- are concerned-- are-- overwhelmingly-- human rights abuses that-- afflict the-- the poor. And therefore-- it seems to me, that's the-- the area-- in which the human rights movement ought to address the subject of-- of economic inequality.

LAURA SILBER:

Sam, did you want to chime in? Okay. I'm gonna go to Iain Levine in the fourth row back there. And if you could, well, I've introduced you.

IAIN LEVINE:

Hi, thank you. Iain Levine from Human Rights Watch. Thank you both. It's been very-- very entertaining, even if I disagree with both of you on-- on a lot. You both talked about the Cold War. I want to start with Helsinki, because so much began at Helsinki, including Helsinki Watch.

And 43 years ago-- we had the Helsinki Accords. The two most powerful political-- blocks in the world met and reached agreement-- and spawned-- Helsinki Watch and became Human Rights Watch and much else about the human rights movement. Next week in

Helsinki, we will see the leaders of the U.S. and the, and Russia meet again. And this time, they don't meet of course as adversaries.

They meet in many ways united-- united in their contempt for human rights and their rejection of human rights and their rejection of international cooperation and a rules-based global order, and very much pursuing a nationalist, populist, anti-rights movement, and mobilizing allies around the world on that.

It's a very dangerous time as-- as Aryeh ne-- noted, not just for rights but for the very values that make human rights possible. Values of decency, humanity, compassion, and perhaps even more significantly, the very idea that every human life is of equal worth, which lies at the heart of this conversation today about poverty, inequality-- and the human rights movement. So we can't be complacent about the state of human rights in the world. I do agree with Aryeh that that doesn't mean that the human rights movement is in crisis.

We have seen way too many premature obituaries written about the human rights movement. It is strong. It is diverse. It is sophisticated. It is-- using more techniques to work on more issues than it ever has in its history. And please, it is way bigger than Human Rights Watch. I mean, it's very flattering that you want to talk about Human Rights Watch, but-- this debate is way-- way bigger than Human Rights Watch.

And there are people in this room. I see Ignacio from Center of Economic and Social Rights and others who are way more expert than I am or my colleagues at Human Rights Watch are on issues of poverty, inequality, economic rights and so on. So that's the first thing I want to say. I want to come now to the poverty and inequality. A couple of years ago, we did a report on arsenic poisoning in Bangladesh. Some 20 million people a day drink arsenic-contaminated water in Bangladesh, and about 45,000 people a year die because they drink arsenic-contaminated water.

As you can imagine, these are people who are poor, who don't have access to power, who don't have access to resources that allow them to influence political decision making, and as a result they die. And that was an issue that we could take on because, and here I disagree with-- with Sam. It's-- issue of profound moral import. It's a profoundly significant human rights issue, because it is driven by human rights causes. And it's, and-- and it-- and it creates human rights consequences.

And we can't make a difference. It is an issue in fact where our work, our methodologies, naming and shaming and stigmatizing evil and drawing attention and mobilizing partners and reaching the press and working with social media can and do make a difference.

And those-- those tactics, those strategies and that commitment to recognizing that we can chew gum and walk at the same time, we can work on Syria and on supply chains. We can work on-- on forced labor. We can and must and do work on the human rights impact of climate change and environmental toxicity, including in Brazil where we also work on-- on police brutality. And it's fundamental to the future of the human rights movement if it is to

be relevant, it, if it is to make a difference in people's lives, and if it is to address the wave of anti-rights populism.

We have to be relevant, we have to take these issues on, and we have to have the humility to recognize as I hope we do at Human Rights Watch where we don't have the expertise, and we have to learn it. We have to find it, we have to hire it, we have to work with it. The fact that we don't at this moment have the expertise that we should have on tax policy or how to do a rights based approach to budgeting policy doesn't mean that we shouldn't find-- and-- and hopefully won't find that-- expertise as we go forward.

The U.N. system, and I rarely quote the U.N. system as a source of kinda progressive thinking, but the U.N. sys-- I worked there for ten years, so believe me I know. The U.N. system in-- in-- in 2015 when it adopted the sustainable development goals included three of the 17 goals are essentially human rights goals. There's goals on gender equality, on broadly inequality, and a broader-- goal that makes reference to freedom of speech, freedom of the press-- the-- the right to expect transparency and accountability from governments-- and access to an independent judiciary.

Governments of the world recognize that economic development, just and sustainable economic development requires respect for human rights. And it's clear that human rights groups of different kinds can make a huge difference in advocating for an economic development system that is not abusive but is generally rights respecting. (NOISE)

Perhaps the most important and influential human rights movement at the moment in this country is the Poor People's Campaign led by Reverend Dr. William Barber. And I think it's a very good example of where and how the human rights movement is evolving. New partnerships, new approaches, new languages, and new ways of working with people. Thank you.

LAURA SILBER:

Thank you. Sam?

SAMUEL MOYN:

No, Iain, that was terrific, and I generally agree with it. So just three quick comments. First the Helsinki moment that you're memorializing reminds how im-- improvals-- provisional and shocking the birth of human rights activism was. And again, there's no reason not to expect it's not a plastic-- movement that can evolve-- you know, shift in different ways.

And so the-- the real question I think that's emerged here is how and on what grounds one can draw a line beyond which it cannot evolve. As you said, the-- the evidence is already plain-- that-- it can, and why not this-- this new challenge? Especially when all human rights may depend in-- in the end on whether we do s-- s-- something, strike some kinda blow for equality. Poverty and eq-- inequality are not the same moral problem. They're related. But

there are lots of people in the United States and elsewhere who are upset about inequality without being poor.

And of course, they're the people who-- who are, we need to convince to join a different majority. Finally, let's not get too upset about challenges to the rules based international order. Let's propose to change the rules, because if we're brutally honest but fair, these rules based international order has served the North better than the South.

It hasn't been very substantially about the protection of human rights in real terms. And of course, above all, it served the rich-- through-- trade rules and investment rules. And-- this is part of the problem-- not the solution as if we just adhere to rules. So we have to change the rules.

LAURA SILBER:

So the web is really burning up. Okay, so I have a couple of comments. Tom Picone (PH) asked, "Please as the speakers to distinguish between equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes."

SAMUEL MOYN:

Aryeh, that's you Aryeh.

LAURA SILBER:

You're not gonna take that one.

ARYEH NEIER:

Now look. Economic-- equality is about-- equality of outcome. It's not about-- equality of opportunity. The-- the right to be treated equally-- is-- about-- equality of opportunity. The right to obtain the equal protection of the laws is about-- equal opportunity. But when one talks about-- economic equality, one-- one is talking about the outcome. (COUGH)

SAMUEL MOYN:

It's a nice distinction. I-- I think it-- it-- it-- it doesn't stand up in theory, let alone in practice. I mean, any child who gets-- different amount of benefit from his or her parent in an unequal society-- has a different amount of opportunity in life. So if we-- if we take equal opportunity seriously, we-- we become radical very quickly.

Now I myself am not arguing for anything like absolute equality, although equality of opportunity in a sense demands it. What I am suggesting is that we once did better

moderating inequality so that we didn't have parallel societies of the rich and the rest. And it's a burning moral issue, just as human rights are.

LAURA SILBER:

I want to go to Michael Vachon in the front.

MICHAEL VACHON:

So I-- I have a question which is this. We-- we all know what inequality is, but what's-- what is equality? What's the, what are we-- what are we striving for? 'Cause we know where that has taken us in other cases. Very bad places. So what do we mean by equality?

SAMUEL MOYN:

So this-- this is-- this is a great and-- and very pressing question, but let me dodge it. (LAUGHTER) You know, we know for sure that we don't want to take big ideas like equality or socialism as alibis for the destruction of human rights-- let al-- or even their negligence.

However, there's lots of versions of equality. You know, John Rawls who was a relatively, you know, s-- middle of the road-- social democrat-- stood up for equality of outcomes-- ins-- you know, to some extent. So I would say at this stage when all of the societers (?) are going the other way, we don't need to define very precisely what we mean. We have to say, if you believe that it matters morally not just that people get a basic minimum of sufficient provision but that we should live in relatively more equal circumstances than we have-- in the era of Human Rights Watch, then you're an egalitarian. It's-- and it's a big tent and we'd have to fight within it if we ever gained enough power by restoring this item to the agenda to decide, well, what-- what's just? But that's true in general.

So I would say it-- it's-- it's not up to, you know, it's not-- important yet to answer your question, because obviously the maj-- the-- the-- the majority of the forces in the world right now are-- are-- are creating more inequality, not approaching the-- the-- the solu-- the-- the-- the answer that you are legitimately asking for.

ARYEH NEIER:

(UNINTEL PHRASE). I-- I-- I don't think we have a disagreement. But-- it would be much better-- if the-- the level of economic equality were to decline-- rather than to increase in the way in which it has been-- increasing-- in recent years. The-- the dispute is-- whether-- the-- the human rights movement could make a difference-- if it-- took on the subject of economic-- inequality to-- per se, and whether-- it would do damage to the-- the human rights movement-- if it tried to-- to take on that subject. And-- I'm-- for expanding the--

remit of the human rights movement to the degree-- that one can-- show-- a rights approach-- to-- issues.

And where one cannot show a rights approach, where one can simply-- adopt a political platform-- which is what would be involved if one-- took on the issue of economic-- inequality per se, I am against-- the human rights movement-- getting involved. If the human rights movement-- takes on issues-- which lack-- the relationship of int-- integrity-- to the mission that it has-- staked out-- the human rights movement will do-- damage to itself.

And the human rights movement can't afford-- to do that kind of damage. It has too many pressing issues to deal with-- right now-- to get involved in-- matters where-- it would be ineffectual and where it would also undercut its own-- other activities.

SAMUEL MOYN:

I-- I-- I just want to make sure that that's-- that's clear that that's Aryeh's fame-- framing, and it's fair for that to be his framing, but it's not mine. I think the framing ought to be what kinds of movements should be found and join and fund? If we just debate--

ARYEH NEIER:

I have no difficulty with your founding your own movement.

SAMUEL MOYN:

Sure, good. Well, I-- (LAUGHTER) I-- I-- you've done it, so I-- I guess the burden's on me. But it's still a legitimate question, even if you think others should found their own movements. You know, how flexible and plastic the human rights movement is.

And, you know, the idea that rights are these sacred things that-- that define like an outer perimeter of our concern is false. We've shown it to be false by expanding the perimeter. I mean, if-- if it's the-- the word that concerns you, we can just proclaim a right to equality, and suddenly it has all the characteristics of the-- moral demands that-- that-- that would satisfy you. But again, I agree with Aryeh that-- that this-- this whole issue of what human rights movements should do is in a sense secondary. There's a much bigger question, which is what should we do?

LAURA SILBER:

Because time is really running short-- we're gonna take one more question, and the I'm gonna give you each two minutes. We're gonna run a few minutes over. I apologize in advance for that. We'll give you each two minutes to respond, and if-- summer, it's gonna be your choice. If you can just maybe go back maybe in the middle there. But yeah, that looks. And if you could introduce yourself that would be great.

NEHA SOOD:

Thank you, I feel honored. I'm Neha Sood. I have a consulting practice of my own called Fem Just. (UNINTEL PHRASE) Sure. My name is Neha Sood. I have a consulting practice called FemJust, and we work with-- various movements. And I have so many thoughts, but I'm just gonna focus on a couple.

One, that we've seen the human rights framework evolve over time to address a lot of these-- issues that-- perhaps weren't seen as falling squarely within the-- the remit of human rights. For instance, the work at the U.N. on business and human rights and the, you know, the functioning of transnational corporations and human rights.

And we're seeing these efforts really addressing a non-- like non-state actors, corporations that we know have, you know, the-- like the largest impact on-- on widening-- eq-- inequalities, including economic inequalities. So I just wanted to name that. And then in terms of like this-- tussle between like, what should human rights movements be doing? I really, I-- I don't see Human ri-- Rights Watch and Amnesty being the human rights movement. It's so much broader.

And-- and I understand that like you have to-- function within your organizational capacity, your mandate, but I think movements need to be talking to each other. And I think N.G.O.s are usually not part of movements. They need to be talking to and supporting movements.

So we talk about the Poor People's Campaign or the movement for black lives, and like multiple movements around the world. N.G.O.s that have resources that engage with certain mechanisms, that use certain tools like, you know, the human rights system need to be supporting those movements. So for instance, a feminist economist group that-- analyzes the T.T.P., the Transpacific Partnership and points out why that's bad for women and poor women specifically. Human rights organizations can be supporting them with a human rights analysis of that, and that merger, that coming together, that collaboration just makes it so much richer and makes the work of both movements more effective.

ARYEH NEIER:

(UNINTEL PHRASE). I-- I didn't hear everything you said, but-- you didn't, you mentioned, you know, the role-- you mentioned the role of corporations and all that. At the Open Society Foundations-- I-- maintained a certain amount of control over the-- the human rights portfolio during the period that I was president of the foundation.

And-- I helped-- a startup organization called the Business and Human Rights Resource Center. And I have stayed in close contact-- with the organization. And I do so because it seems to me to play a valuable role-- in-- crossing the-- the boundaries between human rights abuses-- committed by governments and human rights abuses in which corporations-- are complicit. And-- it deals directly with corporations to try to-- get them to-- to end those

kinds of-- abuses and that collaboration with governments in abuses. So I'm all in favor-- of an approach of that sort, and that's an organization whose work I-- I particularly value.

LAURA SILBER:

So Aryeh, if you want to take a minute to conclude, and then I'm gonna turn to Sam.

ARYEH NEIER:

You know, I-- I-- I think I would basically-- repeat myself. But-- I-- I-- I will do so.
(LAUGHTER)

LAURA SILBER:

In one minute-- one minute.

ARYEH NEIER:

I-- I-- I don't, I-- I really don't need the minute. Go ahead.

LAURA SILBER:

Oh. Samuel Moyn, you need the minute.

SAMUEL MOYN:

No-- no, I so I agree totally with what-- what-- the-- the last question, you know, concerned. And-- and-- I-- I don't want to respond to it for that reason. I think, you know, the-- the spirit of your question is really we should be very ecumenical about what counts as a human rights movement, even whether we need to call all movements human rights movement just to get them on the map.

But there's, you know, as a historian-- I'll-- I'll just close by saying-- actually there, it's not as if we just discovered that distribution matters-- or that we just realized it. You know, there's been a long history of different campaigns which have set their priorities in different ways than the, let's say the mainstream really-- leading human rights groups have.

They still matter, because funding matters. You can say you have an immensely pluralistic-- universe of groups, but if it turns out that the ones that have been mentioned get the lion's share of the funding and don't have to worry day to day about their very existence and survival, then-- then it-- it does need to be mentioned.

And yet, even in the '70s when Aryeh, you know, admirably and honorably was-- was-- was doing something, founding a movement, there were other visions for human rights. That was when there was the bigger debate actually than we've had yet about multinationals and their role not just in atrocities-- but in the political economy of the world.

And so it goes back to, you know, where human rights and mobilization generally should fit in the search for global justice, which-- is somewhere there. But I think they've-- they've gotten t-- maybe too selective to date in the mainstream about the norms that matter. And that can change.

LAURA SILBER:

Thanks very much. I want to thank everyone for coming, particularly to those of you who watched on the web. There was a very lively discussion. We didn't get to nearly all the questions, and as we continue on, my colleague and friend Lenny Benardo suggested that we would announce that this would be a series, so quarterly we'll be doing this.

Next time we'll reveal how to find global justice, not just how to talk about it. So thanks everyone. We have-- for those of you in the room, we have food outside, and looking forward to the next time. Thanks to Samuel Moyn for coming here. (APPLAUSE)

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *