Opinions: Breaking gay rights political boundaries

By Frank Bruni, New York Times

Elliott Management's lofty offices in Midtown Manhattan look north, south, east and west across the borough's thicket of skyscrapers. But the most intriguing view I got during a visit there last week was of something else: the changed gay-rights landscape and its implications for the Republican Party.

I sat in a 30th-floor library with the hedge fund's founder and chief executive, Paul Singer, a billionaire who was one of the most important donors to Mitt Romney in 2012, gives generously to a range of Republican causes and prefers to do this with a minimum of media notice. He's wary of speaking with journalists, so much so that I've seen the adjective "reclusive" attached to his name.

But here he was giving an interview, my second with him in 16 months, because the focus both times was gay equality. It's a subject important to him. In this case, he was announcing a new project to be funded, at least at the outset, by him and other conservative donors but to be run by the Human Rights Campaign, an L.G.B.T. advocacy group in Washington, which is much more closely affiliated with Democrats. The initiative will be dedicated to fighting the victimization of gays and lesbians internationally. But it will also show that there are Republicans — not a majority, but an increasingly impassioned minority — who are intent on progress and justice for L.G.B.T. people. They won't surrender that cause to Democrats, and they believe that Republicans who do so are resisting a future that's both just and inevitable.

"Unless America engages in a terrible, terrible retreat from freedom, towards fascism, communism, whatever — some

totalitarian harsh state – this seems inexorable," Singer told me, meaning equal rights, including the spread of gay marriage, for which he has campaigned with particular energy.

"Social conservatives have and should have a place in the inner circle of what it means to be a Republican," he said. But, he added, "There needs to be room for conservatives who have different views on some of the social issues."

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