Reviving the Queer Political Imagination:

Affect, Archives, and Anti-Normativity

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Abstract

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Through investigating three cultural archives spanning the last three decades, this dissertation elucidates the causes and dynamics of the sharp conservative turn in gay and lesbian politics in the United States beginning in the 1990s, as well as the significance of this conservative turn for present-day queer political projects. While many argue that growing supremacy of the ideology of neoliberalism is a root cause of such political reorientations, this hypothesis remains woefully inadequate. By examining queer activist AIDS art and its changing metaphors from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, and examining how battles over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law were felt and understood by citizen journalists working in the gay and lesbian press from the early 1990s to the early 2000s, this dissertation accounts for the nonconscious emergence of collective moods and shared minoritarian affects that have narrowed the queer political imagination. This research is informed by theoretical frameworks provided by Raymond Williams (structures of feeling), Deborah Gould (emotional habitus), Jonathan Flatley (affective mapping), and José Muñoz (utopian longing), all of which foreground an analysis of affect as integral to an understanding of history, subjectivity, and the political. Lastly, this dissertation examines the work of Against Equality, a group I co-founded, as a site of resistance that reinvigorates and expands the queer political imagination in the present political moment.

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Thank you.

Contribution of Authors

The bulk of this thesis is written solely by the author. There are sections of Chapter Four, *Imagine Resistance*, based on co-authored works created by the Against Equality collective. These co-authored texts have been updated and revised by the author of this dissertation project, but were originally formed through a collective writing and editing process. These section are marked clearly within the thesis itself. For further clarification, the sections based on collective works are listed below.

Chapter Four, *Imagine Resistance*

Against Equality: An Overview of the Arguments, pages 4-29.

Self-Publication: Seizing the Means of Production of Knowledge, pages 50-57

The members of the Against Equality collective who contributed to the creation of the original texts upon which these sections are based are: Karma Chávez, Ryan Conrad, Deena Loeffler, and Yasmin Nair.

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Introduction

Project Overview

Reviving the Queer Political Imagination: Affect, Archives, and Anti-Normativity examines the current state of what I call the queer political imagination and by doing so attempts to determine how we have arrived at this particular point in gay and lesbian history and politics.[1] The queer political imagination, as I define it, is the way in which people from marginal sexual subjectivities can collectively envision other political worlds that are more equitable, livable, and desirable. In short, the queer political imagination is the prefigurative condition through which worldmaking, a theme popularized within queer studies thanks to the groundbreaking work of Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner in the 1990s, is made possible.[2] In their examination of New Left scholarship and present-day social movements, Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish make similar claims about what they call the radical imagination. They suggest,

> …the radical imagination is the ability to imagine the world, life, and social institutions not as they are, but as they might otherwise be. It is the courage and the intelligence to recognize that the world can and should be changed. But the radical imagination is not just about dreaming of different futures. It's about bringing those possible futures 'back' to *work* on the present, to inspire action and new forms of solidarity today. Likewise, the radical imagination is about drawing on the past, telling different stories about how the world came to be the way it is, and remember the power and importance of past struggles and the way their spirits live on in the present. The radical imagination is also about imagining the present differently too. It represents our capacity to imagine and make common cause with the experiences of other people; it undergirds our capacity to build solidarity across boundaries and borders, real or imagined.[3]

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[1] I intentionally use gay and lesbian here, and in many places throughout this dissertation, as opposed to LGBT, queer, or queer and trans to specifically reference identity-based, non-intersectional, non-coalitional political organizing of the mainstream gay rights movement both historically and today.

[2] Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 2 (1998).

[3] Max Haiven and Alex Khasnabish, *The Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research in the Age of Austerity* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2014), 3.

Although Haiven and Khasnabish's work is not particularly queer, their theorizing on the radical imagination is particularly resonant with the ways I formulate my own queer concept of the queer political imagination.

Gay and lesbian political demands and organizing have become more conservative as activism became more professionalized during the AIDS crisis and forms of state governance increasingly privatized, corporatized, and finanicalized all aspects of life since the 1980s. This is what many on the political left now call neoliberalism.[4] Feminist and queer scholars like Lisa Duggan, Yasmin Nair, Silvia Federici, Samuel Delany, Dean Spade and others offer materialist, anti-capitalist, and/or Marxist critiques of neoliberalism where it intersects with queer and gendered life. In contrast, the role played by affect, emotions, and moods in the neoliberal present has gained scholarly interest only over the last decade.

This dissertation builds on the recent scholarly literature on affect to theorize the ways in which affect, emotions, and moods shape the queer political imagination and thus limit or expand the possible worldmaking projects taken up by queer people. Specifically, this dissertation looks at the traumatic impacts of loss on a mass scale during the deadliest years of the AIDS crisis and the parallel history of devastating legal setbacks over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws as they applied to employment, housing, and public accommodation in the United States. This study examines this doubled history of trauma and loss, both physical loss of life and repeated legislative and electoral losses of basic civil rights protections, and how these losses impacted the queer political imagination in the decades to follow.

[4] For an expanded look at neoliberalism that informs my own thinking, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

This dissertation project also includes a reflection on Against Equality, the online archive, publishing, and arts collective focused on critiquing mainstream gay and lesbian politics that I co-founded in 2009. While this dissertation project primarily focuses on theorizing the ways in which affect, emotions, and moods have shaped a rather narrow queer political imagination in this present moment, it is also critical to acknowledge and examine sites of resistance to this narrowing of vision. Against Equality, like any other site of queer resistance worth examining, reinvigorates and broadens the queer political imagination without which new ways of being and new worldmaking projects would be inconceivable or impossible.

Research Questions

This study asks: *Beyond the growing shift towards neoliberal forms of governance after the emergence of gay and lesbian social movements in the late 1960s, what fueled the strong conservative turn in gay and lesbian politics during the 1990s in the United States?*

To answer this question, additional questions must be asked:

- What were the structural conditions (social, political, affective, economic) during the 1990s that shaped the political vision and demands of the period?
- How did these conditions shape the individual emotional dispositions and collective moods of sexual minorities?
- How did the collective emotional disposition of sexual minorities impact this group's ability to imagine other worlds and enact queer worldmaking projects?

Lastly, in association with this second set of questions, this project investigates the following questions:

- What are the sites of resistance to the narrowing of the queer political imagination in the present?
- How did these projects come into being, how are they sustained, and what do they offer?

I have attempted to answer some of these questions through my own activist and cultural work over the last decade. Since 2011, I have been an organizing member of Pervers/cité, the annual queer anti-capitalist pride festival in Montreal. For a number of years, I was also a collective member of Queer Between the Covers, Montreal's annual queer and trans book and 'zine fair, as well as a board member of the Concordia Solidarity Co-op Bookstore, Montreal's de facto queer and trans bookstore. Before moving to Montreal, I was a long-time volunteer for Outright/LA, a queer and trans youth drop-in program in my hometown, as well as a board member of the now-disbanded Community Planning Group on HIV Prevention run by the Maine State Center for Disease Control and Prevention. I sat on the Maine Equity Fund's board of directors, which helped redirect grant money to the most marginalized members of the queer and trans community. I also moved in more radical circles, helping found the now–defunct queer feminist activist group The Naughty North, and began the now internationally-known queer archival project Against Equality in my bedroom in a queer housing collective that I also founded with friends in Lewiston, Maine.

My cultural endeavors, like my activist credentials, have always been explicitly queer and political. This includes the formation of the queer anarchist feminist punk band *to the barricades…*, with performance art antics that included me thrashing about in a wedding dress with a bouquet of flowers and microphone in one hand and a sarcastic "Gay Marriage Will Cure AIDS" sign in the other, and large-scale public art projects like the posters I designed for AIDS Action Now!'s Poster/virus series in 2012, and the posters I designed for *Does This Bother You?*

Well it Bothers Us!, critiquing normative claims of respectability in the Quebec provincial government's anti-homophobia campaign in 2013. I have always put my creative talents to work in service of disrupting the here and now in hopes of expanding the queer political imagination.

While I have not taken a complete break from urgent activist work or pressing creative projects to make the time and mental space to answer the research questions presented herein, this dissertation does differ from these previous engagements in its focus, depth, rigor, and scope. What this dissertation uniquely offers is an investigation of these stated research questions through a thorough and sustained engagement with three queer cultural archives from the recent past. Through this investigation, I offer provisional answers to my more pointed research questions. By focusing on questions of affect, emotion, mood, and the imagination in regards to the contemporary conservative queer political moment, I offer scholarship complementary to the compelling contributions of established materialist/Marxist queer and feminist scholars to understanding the present gay and lesbian historical moment.

While many of us activists and scholars working from an anti-capitalist perspective jokingly invoke the 1990s American adage, "it's the economy, stupid!," I have come to realize it is, indeed, not just the economy. While economic and material conditions are all too often left unaddressed by identity-based social justice movements, so, too, has the affective gone unaddressed. By foregrounding affect, emotions, and moods in my analysis of the conservative turn in gay and lesbian politics in the 1990s, I add a generative dynamic to understanding the links between the economic conditions of everyday life with the psychic life of queer people under perpetual attack.

In the Turn

It is worth noting that this dissertation research conveniently coincides with a number of emergent and ongoing trends within the humanities. The affective turn, the archival turn, and the rural turn, as they have come to be called, are evident in my scholarship. Whether these trends endure or their usefulness as conceptual frameworks for understanding work similar to my own is proven, will only be borne out in time. Much as Ann Cvetkovich writes in her forward to *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives* (2016), at the start, I was generally unaware of the emerging trends coalescing around these themes of scholarly investigation. When I began this project six years ago, I came out of an explicitly queer activist milieu in small-town Maine where questions of emotional and mental well-being, self-representation, self-documentation, self-historicization, and pushing back against metronormative assumptions about queer and trans life were second nature. My friends, lovers, allies, and colleagues were not part of academic cultures or institutions, but we were, in essence, doing the things that scholars had begun or were just beginning to theorize about in earnest. While I in no way intend to draw a sharp line between activist, cultural worker, or scholar, I note my origins in order to account for how I arrived in these so-called turns, as it were. My deep investment in affects, archives, and all things non-urban stems from a sense of place and practice, not academic trends or the allure of new ideas with attendant cultural capital in the academic marketplace.

In short, it all makes serendipitous sense. One could argue that my scholarly interests are shaped by historical forces, just like my contemporaries whose work is coalescing into a pattern or "turn" that breaks from historical precedent. Regardless of fate or chance, I have arrived where I need to be at a moment where my intellectual endeavors are legible and legitimized by a

chorus of scholars pursuing similar lines of research and thinking. For this, I am grateful and humbled.

Lastly, I must account for the archives to which I have turned. This dissertation project would not have been possible without access to the following institutional and personal queer archives: The Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine's LGBT Special Collections at the University of Southern Maine in Portland, the AIDS Activist History Project at Carleton University, Visual AIDS in New York City, the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Melbourne, The Moving Image Resource Centre at Concordia University, and Professor Thomas Waugh's personal HIV/AIDS video collection.

Chapter By Chapter

Chapter One, *Theory and Methodology*, sets the theoretical and methodological parameters of the case studies in the next three chapters. This chapter begins with a description of the field of affect studies and builds a common language for discussing the major theoretical and methodological threads within the field through a brief literature review. Three conceptual models used throughout the dissertation project are detailed at some length: Raymond Williams's "structures of feeling", Deborah Gould's "emotional habitus", and Jonathan Flatley's "affective mapping." These three conceptual models are then put in dialogue with José Muñoz's work on utopian longing and queer futurity to theorize the dynamic relationship between affect and the queer political imagination. This chapter ends with a discussion of my own methodology and the field of cultural studies in which I situate this dissertation project.

Chapter Two, *AIDS and Its Metaphors*, analyzes cultural production by queer American artists in the 1980s and 1990s that frames the AIDS epidemic as a form of genocide, using James

Wentzy's 1994 experimental film *By Any Means Necessary* as its anchor. Reviving these neglected works demonstrates how common the analogies between warfare, genocide, the Holocaust, and the AIDS epidemic were amongst queer cultural producers in the United States at the time. Through re-readings of Paula Treichler, Susan Sontag, Judith Butler, and Deborah Gould, this chapter examens how these meaning-making metaphors came to be accepted within the shifting emotional habitus of queer people at the height of the crisis. This chapter continues by examining how the AIDS epidemic is historicized at the present moment, in terms of both its political and affective legacy through recent film and visual culture. How are these metaphors of mass death and total destruction of queer lives rearticulated or forgotten and to what ends? Lastly, this chapter offers provisional reflections on how the historical framing of the AIDS epidemic as genocide does or does not serve the current gay and lesbian political turn towards assimilation, inclusion, and respectability. More specifically, what does it mean to not remember the AIDS crisis on the terms by which it was described by those queer artists and activists who experienced the carnage and unimaginable loss of life firsthand, but are no longer here to remind us? What do we make of contemporary work produced by those who did survive, but who have turned away from these once commonplace metaphors?

This chapter is also informed by the opportunity I had to design and teach a course titled "AIDS Film and Video" at Concordia University during the 2016 winter semester. The learning process I shared with my students and their keen insights into the corpus of HIV/AIDS films and videos we analyzed together was an invaluable gift. My reflections on teaching young people about the history and politics of the AIDS crisis through moving images are integral to the conclusions I draw at the close of this first case study.

Chapter Three, *Another Decade of Loss in Our Own Words*, analyzes community-based gay and lesbian newspapers in circulation in Maine from the early 1990s through the late 1990s. Complete runs of *10%*, *Apex*, *Community Pride Reporter*, *Our Paper*, and *The Gay & Lesbian Times of Maine* are all held at the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine's LGBT Special Collections at the University of Southern Maine. These serials provide a non-urban look at the parallel histories of the AIDS crisis and the battle over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws in the United States. My interest in focusing on the battle over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws stems from Deborah Gould's observation as to how the *Bowers v. Hardwick* United States Supreme Court ruling impacted the emotional habitus of queer AIDS activists in the late 1980s, rendering the genocide framing of the AIDS crisis as more palatable.[5] In looking back on the 1990s through archived serials created by gay and lesbian citizen journalists, I theorize how the repeated electoral and legislative losses relating to sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law continued to shape the political imagination of gay and lesbian people, and this particular case study, in my home state of Maine.

The AIDS crisis peaked in the early to mid-1990s in Maine due to its geographic isolation from the rest of the United States and its largely dispersed and less mobile rural population. Maine's gay male population, the demographic hardest hit by the epidemic, is also relatively small. This is due to the lack of economic opportunities in Maine after post-World War II deindustrialization that generally led young people to leave the state in search of gainful employment. The small size of the gay male population is also influenced by a general sense that to be gay, one has to leave for the big city, of which there are none in Maine. With only 136

[5] Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 165-172.

cases of HIV infection recorded in 1988,[6] Maine's worst year in terms of recorded infections seems meager compared to the alarming statistics in other states with larger urban centers. So while AIDS seems statistically less significant in Maine, it was nonetheless at the forefront of local gay and lesbian politics. This was in part because the national spotlight on the AIDS crisis shone in Maine on numerous occasions, including when AIDS activists from across the country converged on then-President George H.W. Bush's sprawling family estate on Walker's Point in Kennebunkport, Maine to protest his lack of action on HIV/AIDS while president.

Upon this backdrop, the battles over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws in Maine began in earnest in the early 1990s. These did not conclude until the passage of a statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law by referendum in November 2005. There is an interesting and devastating overlap between the loss of life during the AIDS crisis and the massively public homophobia resulting in resounding legislative defeats over the most basic rights to housing and employment.

Maine is unique as a state in that it is relatively easy to overturn laws passed by the state legislature by gathering signatures and putting a law to referendum. This is colloquially known known as a "People's Veto" in Maine and has primarily been used by social conservatives to overturn laws they perceive as morally disagreeable. This happened with many sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws in Maine that this chapter investigates, and also more recently with gay marriage in both 2009 and 2012.

This chapter provides a discourse analysis of the ways in which gay and lesbian citizen journalists described the decade's political mood where loss of life from the AIDS crisis and

[6] Robert Funa, *State of Maine 2009 HIV/AIDS Epidemiologic Profile,* report, Newly Diagnosed HIV Infections, accessed September 17, 2016, http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/hiv-std/data/documents/2009/maine-epidemiologic-profile-2009.pdf.

repeated legislative losses regarding sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws every few years weighed heavily on gay and lesbian people. I theorize how this double history of loss and the lingering mood of the decade shaped the politics of the next decades to come. I focus on Maine not only because I have an attachment to my home state (although that is certainly part of my interest), but also because of the unusually numerous sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law initiatives and referenda that took place there and the unusually numerous community-based newspapers that recorded this history. Lastly, focusing on a poor rural state like Maine challenges the trope of metronormativity, which is the accepted history of queer and trans people that overemphasizes urban life. This particular form of urban-centrism needs to be decentered if there is to be a fuller and more nuanced historical understanding of LGBT life over the last nearly half-century since the Stonewall rebellion.

Since this chapter takes gay and lesbian newspapers as a central object of investigation, my bibliography breaks with the more prevalent practice of excising newspaper articles from the bibliography while using the Chicago Manual of Style notes and bibliography citation style. While the online 16th Edition of the Chicago Manual of Style notes that citations to newspaper and magazine articles typically only appear in footnotes, it does suggest that if an article is critical to the text, then they may be included in the final bibliography. Being that newspaper articles make up the primary object of inquiry in this chapter, I have opted to include full bibliographic citations for these sources as an integral component of my methodology.

Chapter Four, *Imagine Resistance*, provides critical reflections on the work of Against Equality, the previously mentioned online archive, publishing, and arts collective that I co-founded in 2009 with Yasmin Nair. An autoethnography of sorts, this chapter will describe the cultural, social, and political context in which this project came into being, the work of the

collective to date, the critical reception of its work, what the collective has and has failed to accomplish, and how this project fits into a larger queer resistance movement that seeks to reinvigorate the queer political imagination in order to work towards the creation of a more just and equitable world. Against Equality's work includes a web-based digital archive, four published anthologies, two public art projects, a handful of cultural objects (stickers, buttons, magnets, postcards, etc.), three videos, over sixty public speaking engagements, and a number of magazine and journal articles as well as a few book chapters.


Figure 0.1 and 0.2 Ryan Conrad and Braden Scott, *Does This Bother You? Well It Bothers Us!*, October 2013. Exhibition photo documentation.

While many Fine Arts Interdisciplinary Humanities PhD students choose to prioritize new research-creation components in their dissertation, I have chosen to write a full thesis. Research-creation is the recently popularized term used by university administrations and funding bureaucracies to describe hybrid forms of research that include creative processes in some capacity.[7] I have made this decision to write a full thesis despite organizing my studio comprehensive exam with Evergon around an October 2013 exhibition of my then-current research-creation work *Does This Bother You? Well It Bothers Us!*. Instead of embarking on new research-creation work for the sake of this dissertation, I utilize this rare opportunity to reflect

[7] Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuck, "Research-Creation: Intervention, Analysis and 'Family Resemblances,'" *Canadian Journal of Communication* 37, no. 1 (April 2012).

and write critically on an activist and intellectual project I was an integral part of and that could be described as research-creation. In doing so, I subject an activist-initiated, collaborative, creative research project to a scholarly evaluation and, in part, legitimize the project as an object of study for scholars. Prioritizing this object of study draws a direct line between an outwardly political project and a scholarly investigation, situating myself firmly in the British cultural studies tradition that I discuss in more detail in Chapter One.

Chapter Five, *Reviving the Queer Political Imagination*, summarizes the case studies in the prior three chapters and provides closing thoughts on reviving the queer political imagination in the present historical moment.

Chapter 1

Theory & Methodology

Introduction

This chapter first reviews the theoretical work of cultural studies scholars who have contributed to what is called affect theory in the academy today. While these scholars work in a variety of intellectual traditions and formal disciplines, they grapple with the long philosophical engagement of questions about affects, emotions, and consciousness. By beginning with an investigation into the common threads and points of divergence between scholars of affect, I situate my dissertation research within this so-called turn to affect in cultural studies.

Following this investigation into the field of affect studies, I theorize how this turn to affect is helpful in thinking about how the political imagination of minoritarian subjects expands and contracts in relation to shifts in collective mood and shared affective states. More specifically, I am interested in how the queer political imagination in the United States has been shaped since the onset of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s beyond the oversimplified economic explanation of increasingly entrenched neoliberalism, an oft-repeated refrain by critics within the academy today. By thinking through the relationship between affect and the political imagination and applying this theorization to concrete case studies in the following chapters, I contribute to better understanding the dynamics of what I call the conservative turn in gay and lesbian politics in the 1990s.

Lastly, a brief discussion situating this dissertation between Canadian, American, and British traditions in cultural studies concludes this chapter. After locating this dissertation

research among these three geopolitical scholarly contexts, I discuss my methodological choices and the political underpinnings influencing those decisions.

Introducing Affect Theory

Affect theory is a growing interdisciplinary field of inquiry that has emerged in the aftermath of post-structuralism's, or post-modernism's, preeminence in contemporary philosophy. This renewed focus on affect is often referred to as the affective turn. Although affect theory currently enjoys a significant degree of interest within the academy, philosophical preoccupations with affect and emotions are many and can be traced as far back as Aristotle and the Stoics.[1] This lineage can be traced from these ancient Greek scholars through the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment, and Modernism, to today's contemporary scholars and philosophers. Despite this rich and diverse history of philosophic attention to affect and emotions, this chapter limits its scope to scholarly work from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Although the works of early scholars are not directly discussed at length, they are referenced throughout this chapter, as many of today's scholars of affect are deeply engaged with the work of these predecessors.

This following section of this chapter teases out the nuances, common threads, and noteworthy points of departure in approaches within the field of affect studies to date. As a subject of interest within a field of inquiry with a genealogy over two thousand years old, there

[1] To see these lineages mapped out briefly, see Ann Cvetkovich, "Everyday Feeling and Its Genres," introduction to *Political Emotions: New Agendas in Communication*, ed. Janet Staiger, Ann Cvetkovich, and Ann Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2010), 4-12; Patricia Ticineto Clough, "Introduction," introduction to *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, ed. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean O'Malley Halley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007). For an extensive lineage laid out more systematically, see Robert Solomon, *What Is an Emotion?: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

are significant shifts in how affects are apprehended, defined, and used by different scholars. By reviewing these differences in definitions and approaches between intellectual traditions, I demonstrate how often scholars are talking past one another, using the same language to elucidate vastly different concepts and ideas. To demonstrate this and to avoid similar problems within this chapter, I take a cue from Jonathan Flatley's *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (2008) and Deborah Gould's *Moving Politics*: *Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS* (2009) and open the following section of this chapter with definitions and key concepts.

Following the discussion of definitions and key concepts, I describe ongoing tensions between ontological and epistemological approaches within affect theory. Numerous scholars describe this tension as an impasse in cultural studies, where the paranoid readings of social constructionist scholars leave us stuck in a limited and particular mode of critique centered on the subject.[2] The limitation of the paranoid position was most famously articulated by Eve Sedgwick in her essay "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You" in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003). In trying to move away from an epistemology of the paranoid position that has come to dominate cultural studies, where ways of thinking and modes of critique have foreclosed around knowing in advance what one expects to find, Sedgwick asks scholars to move in a different direction through what she calls a reparative reading. By reparative reading Sedgwick means an openness to alternative ways of knowing and allowing oneself to be

[2] This tension was played out in rigorous detail between Ruth Leys, William Connolly, and Adam Frank, amongst a few others, in the pages of the journal *Critical Inquiry* between 2011 and 2012. The Journal has compiled this volley of exchanges online: http://criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu/affect_an_exchange

surprised through one's own investigation of a text. Others have moved from this epistemological impasse towards a renewed investment in ontology or some combination of both. After detailing the stakes of tensions between the ontological and epistemological approaches to affect in further detail, this section describes the ontological, psychoanalytical, phenomenological, and queer critique threads within affect theory, where these tensions are borne out in the broader field of cultural studies.

After I effectively map out these different theoretical approaches within the different threads of affect theory, I describe my own interest in affects and emotions as they relate to my dissertation research. I note which scholarly works within the field I align myself with and how I integrate some components of this much larger growing field into my theoretical approach for analyzing different queer cultural archives in the following chapters. Most emphatically, I focus on how affect studies undermines rational actor models inherited from eighteenth-century Enlightenment, how affects shape the formation of minority subjects and collectivities, and how negative affects may be a productive starting point for collective identification, political organizing, and action, as well as a useful framework for considering questions of how the political imagination of both individuals and collectivities expands and contracts.

Lastly, to conclude this section of the chapter, I draw attention to some of the perceived shortcomings of affect theory that rise to the surface after reviewing key scholarly works within the field. In particular, I take stock of who and what counts as part of the congealing canon of affect theory, demonstrating how race, gender, and sexuality are often still unaccounted for, and how both women of color and queer of color scholarship is, for the most part, maintained outside or on the periphery of what is most commonly referred to as affect theory within the academy.

What is an Emotion?

As noted previously, it is imperative to work from shared definitions and common languages to avoid confusion and attend to nuanced differences amongst scholars of affect. I begin by defining terms and key concepts that together make up a concise overview necessary to facilitate clearer discussion of the different genealogies of affect: Affect, Drives, Sensations, Emotions, Feelings, Structures of Feeling, Emotional Habitus, Affective Mapping, and Atmosphere/Mood.

Affect and Drives

Many scholars associated with the affective turn point out that affect is most often used loosely as a synonym for emotion. Despite this elision, affect scholars have parsed out the differences between affect and emotion, largely drawing a line between what some call pre-cognitive, pre-social, autonomic, and/or nonconscious attributes of affect and cognitive, social, conditioned, and/or intentional attributes of emotion.[3]

For theorists Brian Massumi and Deborah Gould, however, affect is decidedly neither pre-social nor social, but something else. Massumi argues for a conceptualization of affect as "asocial," claiming that affects are always in relation to the social, but not predetermined by the social, leaving room for the undetermined potentiality of affects.[4] Gould similarly argues that

[3] See Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); William Connolly, *A World of Becoming* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Gould, *Moving Politics*; Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); John Protevi, *Political Affect: Connecting the Social and the Somatic* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012).
[4] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 30.

affect is indeed "autonomic, involuntary, and physiological, but is also inseparably intertwined with the social."[5] Gould develops her conceptual framework of emotional habitus that I discuss in more detail later, to bring together the focus on autonomous bodily intensities associated with affect and how they are shaped, but not determined by, the social. For Massumi, Gould, and others, affect is explicitly relational and not caught up in the interiority of the subject the way emotion is often conceptualized.

Although drawing out a strong conceptual difference between affect and emotion is not integral to my research project, this scholarly material is rich with theoretical frameworks that help define the stakes of this emergent field that I elaborate upon in the next section. What I take away as most useful from this debate of what affects are, however, is that affects have no predetermined analogous emotion or action attached to them. It is in this freedom to associate that a potentiality exists. It is in the way affects interface with the social that emotions and actions become legible as possible, desirable, or necessary.

Additionally, in helping understand how affects are defined, Flatley marks out an important distinction within psychoanalysis between affects and drives. This is critical because psychoanalysis has been, and continues to be, one of the primary approaches used to account for affects. In summarizing the work of pioneering psychoanalyst Silvan Tomkins, Flatley restates that affects have a degree of freedom in object choice and duration, unlike drives, and that affects can modify how we experience a drive. "For example, one can be terrified of anything, for any amount of time, but can only breathe air, and cannot do without it very long."[6] The experience of panic felt as air supply dwindles augments the way we experience the anoxic drive signal, but the

[5] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 31-32.
[6] Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, 13.

panic is a result of affects like fear and not directly as a result of the anoxic drive. This example demonstrates how affects differ from and can possibly modify our experiences of drives. One could also see how hunger can be experienced differently, pending the affects in play. The experience of hunger can be modified by any number of affective states like boredom, anger, fear, or spiritual calm, all with different degrees of diminishing or intensifying one's experience of hunger. Similarly, Flatley notes that the sexual drive can be diminished by feelings of shame or anxiety, or increased by feelings of excitement. Although Freud allowed for a certain amount of freedom in object choice when theorizing the sex drive, it is clear to see from Tomkins' work and Flatley's reiteration of his work that affects and drives generally differ along the lines they propose. This difference is crucial in the next section as I outline psychoanalytic approaches to affect.

Sensations, Emotions, Feelings

Emotions are the cognitively and historically derived expressions of affects, or as Massumi clarifies, "…emotion [is] the expression of affect in gesture and language, its conventional or coded expression."[7] Gould, following Massumi, also states, "I use the idea of an emotion or emotions to describe what from the potential of bodily intensities gets actualized or concretized in the flow of living."[8] What Massumi and Gould share, along with a number of other scholars, is an assertion that emotions are produced by affects through a distillation process within the subject that relies on prior social processes through which emotional intelligence is learned. While emotional intelligence as a concept has been hotly contested by scholars after its

[7] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual,* 232.
[8] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 20.

popularization by Daniel Goleman in the mid-1990s, I use it here to refer to the ability to perceive and understand one's own emotions in relations to others, an intelligence that is both culturally specific and socially situated.[9] Teresa Brennan summarizes this process of affects becoming emotions more simply, noting, "…feelings [emotions] are sensations [affects] that have found the right match in words."[10]

To highlight the confusion between affect, emotion, and energy/intensity, and how scholars of affect use similar language to describe different phenomena, much to the confusion of the uninitiated, I provide an example from Eva Illouz's *Cold Intimacies*. She claims, "Emotion is not action per se, but it is the inner energy that propels us toward an act…".[11] Here, Illouz uses emotion the way Massumi, Gould, Connolly, Brennan and others would more likely use affect, although these same scholars would also argue that affects which impinge upon the body and propel us to act are not always, if ever, internal; rather, they are relational. I share this brief example from Illouz not to show how one account of affects and emotions is correct and the other wrong, but to demonstrate how the language used to describe phenomena relating to affects and emotions is contested, uneven, and not universally employed across varying approaches to affect.

Jonathan Flatley notes that defining the difference between emotion and affect has come to dominate theoretical questions in the field of affect studies. In describing his own project on affect and modernism, Flatley deliniates the confusion between terms:

> In everyday usage, while the words [affect and emotion] are often interchangeable, there are significant connotative differences. Where *emotion* suggests something

[9] For further discussion of Goleman's concept of "emotional intelligence" and its impact on social science and popular culture, see Eva Illouz, *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 62-67.
[10] Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 5.
[11] Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*, 2.

> that happens inside and tends toward outward expression, *affect* indicates something relational and transformative. One *has* emotions; one is affected *by* people or things[...] I exercise a preference for *affect* as the more useful term and precise concept in part because it is the relational more than the expressive I am interested in. For the most part, however, it seems least confusing to follow everyday usage of the two terms (that is, more or less synonymous but with the aforementioned connotative differences) and to be explicit about it when I think a difference between them needs to be emphasized.[12]

Flatley's pragmatic approach in attending to the conceptual difference between affect and emotion without losing sight of how language is used in everyday life resonates with this dissertation project. It is my intention to connect this theoretical work on affect to activist projects and therefore a clear, pragmatic approach to the uses of language in everyday life is most productive. That is not to suggest activist or everyday people need dumbed-down conceptual frameworks to engage in critical thinking, but to insist on intellectual work that deals with the ways language is already in circulation. If scholars trained in ways of critical thinking with sharpened cognitions struggle to find a common language between affect and emotion, it is with the utmost care that we must engage laypeople and everyday uses of language.

Structures of feeling

Structures of feeling is a term and concept developed by Raymond Williams throughout his intellectual life. He first coined the term in his 1954 book *Preface to Film* and continued later to elucidate the concept in his books *The Long Revolution* in 1961 and *Marxism and Literature* in 1977. This term was developed to reference the forming, but not yet formed, inarticulable ways of sensing and thinking that emerge, vying for space to come into being at a particular moment in history. What is unique in this concept is that Williams tries to open conceptual space

[12] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, 12.

for inchoate and emergent ways of thinking and sensing that have not yet come into being in resistance to hegemonic belief systems or ways of knowing. This yet-to-fully-arrive shift, he argues, still exerts a force before being clearly defined in language or taken up in ideology or by institutions. He argues that the emergence of new ways of sensing

> …is a general change, rather than a set of deliberate choices, yet choices can be deduced from it, as well as effects… For what we are defining is a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period.[13]

Williams goes on to say that structures of feeling are almost always unperceivable as they come into being and are often apprehended historically, when a structure of feeling becomes intelligible through stylistic traces left in art, literature, and culture, or concretized in ideology. Illouz goes on to elaborate Williams's concept, stating:

> The notion of "structures of feeling" designates two opposite phenomena: "feeling" points to a kind of experience that is inchoate, that is, that defines who we are without us being able to articulate this "who we are." Yet the notion of "structure" also suggests that this level of experience has an underlying structure, that is, is systematic rather than haphazard.[14]

Here Illouz rearticulates the difficulty of being able to put a finger on emergent changes in largely inchoate generation-defining feelings, experiences, or moods. She clarifies that this is not a personal or isolated phenomenon, but systematic and structural. What Williams articulates through the concept of structures of feeling is an argument for an attunement to barely conscious, emergent patterns of moods or affective states that are formed through a multiplicity of interacting structural forces that come to define a generational or epochal shift. We can look to examples such as how a general mood of anxiety and/or desperation may have come to define the years of President Reagan's administration for working-class people in the United States, or

[13] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 131.
[14] Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*, 50

how terror and anger came to define the overarching mood of the generation of gay and lesbian people in the United States during the pre-protease inhibitor days of the AIDS crisis. In each case, a number of changing structural forces, be they political, social, economic, biological, or otherwise, clash together to define the mood and ways of thinking of a particular group of people over a given period.

Emotional Habitus

Emotional habitus is a concept coined by Gould as an extension of radical sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus to the realm of affects and emotions. Habitus, for Bourdieu, was "...a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions, and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously coordinated or governed by any 'rule'."[15] Gould, in combining a focus on the affective with Bourdieu's habitus, explains her coupling of emotional habitus: "With the term *emotional habitus*, I mean to reference a social grouping's collective and only partly conscious emotional dispositions, that is, members' embodied, axiomatic inclinations toward certain feelings and ways of emoting."[16] While this sounds quite similar to Williams's concept of structures of feelings, there is a clear but complementary difference: Williams tries to account for emergent, nonconscious, affective states that mark a given moment in history, while Gould tries to account for the processes, both nonconscious and barely conscious, in which collectivities are enculturated through repetition towards shared norms and ways of thinking, feeling, and imagining.

[15] John B. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction," introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power*, by Pierre Bourdieu (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 12.
[16] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 32.

Illouz also mentions emotional habitus in her discussion of what she calls "emotional fields," echoing Gould and, of course, Bourdieu. However, Illouz's definition fails to account for the nonconscious by claiming, "[Emotional fields are] a sphere of social life in which the state, academia, different segments of cultural industries, groups of professionals accredited by the state and university and the larger market of medications and popular culture intersect to create a domain of action and discourse with its own rules, objects, and boundaries."[17] Illouz's inability to account for the nonconscious in this formulation stems from her failure to clearly tease out the conceptual differences between emotion and affect earlier in her text. Her definition accounts for the structures and institutions that make up hegemonic systems, but leaves little room for emergence of new ways of being, sensing, thinking and contesting hegemonic ideology. What Illouz's and Gould's texts have in common is that an emotional habitus is made up of intersecting sites of power that structure individual and collective emotional attunement, limit imagination, and define the ability to explain the range of affective responses to stimuli of a group of people with a shared emotional habitus.

Affective Mapping

Jonathan Flatley uses the term affective mapping "to name a particular set of aesthetic strategies that allow one to perceive the historicity of one's affective experience, especially experiences of difficult, potentially depressing loss."[18] Flatley clarifies that a subject's emotional life is formed through social processes and institutions, and thus a subject's emotional life is shared by other subjects who are impacted by the same forces. What Flatley describes here is an

[17] Illouz, *Cold Intimacies*, 62.
[18] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, 105

attunement to the past, to historical losers and losses that correspond to one's own in the present, in order to understand the historical origins of one's individual and collective suffering. It is through this directive to cling to the losers and losses of the past that Flatley suggests it is possible to see one's own struggle in relation to past struggles and to others in the present with whom one shares a struggle. For Flatley, a melancholic attachment to the past allows for politicized action in the present.

José Muñoz's work on an attunement to the "no-longer-present" and utopian longing in *Cruising Utopia* (2009) strikes a similar chord. Both Flatley and Muñoz were graduate students working under Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick at Duke University in the early 1990s and the complementarity of their work stems from coming out of similar intellectual traditions. Muñoz's work on queer futurity and the political imagination is revisited more thoroughly later in this chapter.

While noting the shared intellectual origins and education of Flatley and Muñoz, it is also worth mentioning Flatley's former graduate advisee and now full-time professor Heather Love's work. In her 2007 book, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*, she makes similar arguments to Flatley. She insists on remembering and representing the negative affects associated with queer life in the past (shame, grief, sorrow, loss, embarrassment, etc.) in order to conceptualize how a historical queer structure of feeling continues to bear upon queer subjects in the present, despite their growing assimilation into mainstream culture. Like Flatley, she links an attunement to negative affects in the past, what she calls "feeling backward," to the generative possibility of forming collectivities and political action in the present.

Atmosphere and Mood

Flatley's reading of Heidegger's articulation of *stimmung* or mood overlaps with both Gould's emotional habitus and Williams's structures of feeling. Flatley notes, "I take 'mood' to refer to a kind of affective atmosphere… in which intentions are formed, projects pursued, and particular affects can attach to particular objects."[19] He follows with an example showing that if someone is already in an anxious mood, consciously, semi-consciously, or nonconsciously, certain objects in the world may appear as more fear-inducing than they would otherwise. Individual and collective moods then determine how one apprehends new objects, what sort of relationships one has with these objects, and what kinds of affects they do or do not incite in relation to the subject or a collectivity.

Flatley argues that while Williams's structures of feeling and Heidegger's work on mood emerge from two different intellectual traditions, they are not incompatible. He further insists that the major difference between the two is emphasis. "Where *stimmung* [mood] as a concept focuses attention on what kinds of affects and actions are possible within an overall environment, structures of feeling are more discrete, less total, and they orient one towards a specific social class or context."[20] He continues by offering the example of depression as a general mood, but the specific depression of residents in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 as a structure of feeling.

Teresa Brennan, who is equally invested in biological as well as social transmission of affect, notes that "an atmosphere is a physiological and social field where one can come to feel others' affects."[21] Importantly, Brennan is attentive to the ways in which numerous autonomic

[19] Ibid, 19.
[20] Ibid, 26-27.
[21] Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 1.

nonconscious biological functions, like breathing in pheromones or sweat particles of another subject that may signal a subject's specific affective state(s), are also at play in the making of moods and atmospheres. She refers to this biological transmission of affect as "chemical entrainment." In short, Brennan would argue that moods and atmospheres are not only social processes, but physiological ones as well. In these processes, subjects and affects do not exist as discretely bounded, but intermingle physically and psychically.

Margaret Wetherell's overview of various theoretical threads in the turn to affect challenges Brennan's concept of chemical entrainment and its use for understanding affective cognition. She notes that, as subjects, we often misread others' feelings and are largely incapable of reading the atmosphere. Therefore, she argues, any linkages between physical transmission of affect through pheromones or sweat have limited use when affective cognition and these physical transmitters of affect do not line up with the perceived corresponding emotional states.[22]

This brief overview of the sometimes conflicting, sometimes complementary definitions and key concepts within the work of different affect theorists demonstrates the contested terrain of affect theory with which my own dissertation research is in conversation. In addition to basic definitions, I have briefly mapped out key conceptual contributions from Williams, Gould, and Flatley that I use throughout the investigations of three queer cultural archives in the following chapters. By providing this preliminary discussion of definitions and conceptual tools, I have provided some common language from which to proceed with as much clarity as possible in a contested field of inquiry that is in flux.

[22] Margaret Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012), 146.

How to Attend to Affect?

Since affect theory has been taken up across different intellectual traditions with varying ontological and epistemological assumptions, I now move on to different approaches to affect that generally fit under the banner of cultural studies. Before outlining these key approaches to affect, which include Deleuzian-influenced ontology, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and queer critique, I want to tease out some of the critiques of the turn to affect. Rather than develop my own critique of the turn to affect, I am more interested in thinking through what has caused contemporary scholars to turn to affect and what previous modes of inquiry did not achieve for scholars. More simply, where and in what directions did previous modes of inquiry fail to take scholars that they wanted to go?

As previously alluded to through Sedgwick's critique of paranoid readings, the impasse in cultural studies refers to the limitations of modes of post-structuralist critique that confine our scope of inquiry to the socially constructed world where meanings have become sedimented and to some degree, determinant. Within this framework, scholars have worked to uncover and expose injustices in how our world is socially structured and organized. This is now the standard operating mode of critical inquiry. As Sedgwick suggests, this form of inquiry has become tautological, where every scholar now must work from the paranoid position of always expecting to uncover a terrible wrongdoing in our social world and, in the process, forecloses alternative or parallel readings. In fact, most rigorous theories and methodologies in cultural studies are designed to uncover what we already know is there, foreclosing an openness to new or emerging ways of sensing and knowing, as well as foreclosing experimental epistemologies where failure and surprise are possible.

Moreover, the turn to affect is an attempt to move away from the rational thinking political subject to account for the role of bodily intensities, the nonhuman, and the nonconscious. Ruth Leys points out unsympathetically that,

> These theorists [of affect] are gripped by the notion that most philosophers and critics in the past have overvalued the role of reason and rationality in politics, ethics, and aesthetics with the result that they have given too flat or "unlayered" or disembodied an account of the ways in which people actually form their political opinions and judgments.[23]

In this statement, Leys derides the turn to affect and exemplifies the primacy of reason and rationality as self-evident. This is the same sort of thinking that affect theorists bring into question. By working with affect theory, I, too, seek to move away from overvaluing rationality, giving in to the observation that the social worlds in which people form political opinions, attachments, and actions are more dynamic and messy than rationality allows.

Leys, in her scathing and lengthy critique of the turn to affect, goes on to question the use of the hard sciences by scholars of affect in the humanities to shore up the truthfulness of their claims, the separation of intention from emotions, and the dualism and privileging of the body over the mind. Most pointedly, she questions the possibility of even separating affects from cognition. Leys' trenchant questioning caused a volley of back-and-forth responses in the pages of *Critical Inquiry*. These remain a point of tension between newer affect theorists whose approach to affect is decidedly both Deleuzian and ontological, in contrast to scholars like Leys coming out of the psychoanalytic tradition. With these particular tensions in mind, I briefly discuss popular approaches to affect that are utilized within the broader field of cultural studies.

The typology I develop hereafter is inherently flawed. My intentions are not to map out discretely bounded approaches with which one can attend to affect, but to acknowledge the

[23] Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 3 (2011): 434-472.

different intellectual traditions that coalesce around the turn to affect in contemporary scholarship. Ontology, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and queer critique are among the most prevalent threads within cultural studies work that attends to affect. In this section, I outline concepts from key texts in each of these four intellectual traditions. These traditions are not mutually exclusive; scholarship on affect tends to be either explicitly or implicitly interdisciplinary, borrowing concepts across intellectual traditions.

Ontology

In the introductory chapter of *Parables for the Virtual* (2002), Massumi equates intensity with affect. He goes on to state,

> Affects are *virtual synesthetic perspectives* anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them. The autonomy of affect is its participation in the virtual. *Its autonomy is its openness.* Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is. Formed, qualified, situated, perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect. Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) expression of that *capture*—and of the fact that something has always and again escaped.[24]

Here Massumi argues that affect is a pre-cognitive, autonomic, intensity felt in the body, which can be partially captured through a process of cognition and expressed as an emotion(s).

Gould, building on the work of Massumi, says far more clearly and directly that,[25] "I use the term affect to indicate nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences

[24] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 35.

[25] As noted by Philip Cherny, this not exhaustive list of often unexplained or unqualified jargon in Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual* makes following his arguments quite challenging: countergravitational, hyperconnectability, copresence, indeterminate givenness, overpresence, periodicity, multiplex, hypermutable, factoidal, event-space, mesoperception, trans-situational, quasi-causality, quasi-corporeality, event-transitivity, transversality, ur-idea, infolding, asymmetrical symbiosis, possibilization, transindividual, redivergence, combinatoric, humanity-particle, involutionary, precession, autotransformative, fabulation, extensile mutuality,

of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body."[26] William Connolly, also following the logic of Massumi, notes that, "affect, in its most elementary human mode, is an electrical-chemical charge that jolts or nudges you towards a positive or negative action before it reaches the threshold of feeling or awareness."[27]

These definitional differences between affect and emotion are integral to the ontological theories of these philosophers of affect because the stakes of the investment in this difference cannot be overstated. These theorists are particularly interested in the process of how stimuli impinge upon the body, inciting different affective states which are partially captured through a cognitive process where an affect is expressed as emotion and/or action. The importance of an affective ontology here is that it opens up conceptual space for an undetermined, unbounded, unfixed potentiality (affect) to move and move us in non-predetermined directions. The cognitive process, the partial capturing of this unbounded potentiality within the social, creates an opportunity for emotions to be mobilized in an infinite number of ways that, in turn, explain how and why rational actor theories fail to fully account for human decision-making processes.

This vast openness, or freedom of affect, can be conceptually seductive. Who would deny the inherent freedom of the conceptual framework by philosophers of ontological affect? What is the other choice for cultural theorists who reject Massumi's proposed ontology of affect: socially

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peripheralization, integrative subsumption, indistinction, insensate, deactualization, incipiency, monosensual, endoreduction, superempirical, intermodal, superposition, infraempirical, protostandard, exoreferential, overcoding anexact, transpositionality, hyperspace, biogram, peri-personal, hypersurface, supermodulatory, onto-topological, translogical, endo-reduction, genitivity. This is not to suggest that complex language is not appropriate to the discussion of complex ideas or phenomena, in fact, quite the opposite; but reading Massumi's text left much to be desired in terms of explanation and clarity. Also, the use of this kind of scientific language also exemplifies Leys's criticism about using the language of the hard sciences to shore up the truthfulness and apparent rigor of affect theorists' claims.

[26] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 19.

[27] Connolly, *World of Becoming,* 150.

deterministic un-freedom? While cultural theorists have undermined determinism and found freedom in a number of other conceptual devices, this setup seems like no choice at all.[28] Wetherell argues that Massumi's move to an ontology of affect, where affect is an immaterial intensity detached from the body, is an attempt to get away from the discursive focus that has prevailed in cultural studies for decades, and which Massumi finds overly deterministic.[29]

More importantly, Massumi's excitement as he posits his ontology of affect as a liberating way out of the current impasse in cultural studies falls short of recognizing the ways in which affective states, because of their potential to move us in non-predetermined directions, still can and do attach themselves to pre-existing social conditions, ideologies, hierarchies, and bad objects that, in fact, might do great harm to us or cause inaction. For example, affective states that incite a desire to feel loved, or to belong, can and do cause subjects to invest themselves in objects or ideologies that cause self-harm.[30] This ability of affect to attach itself to bad objects or troubling ideology necessitates caution toward the excitement that this theory of asocial precognitive affect is a way out of the socially deterministic paranoid position. The key is to pay close attention to both the ontological and the epistemological aspects of affect, leaving space for the pre-cognitive, autonomic, and unbounded capacities of affect without abandoning the socially constructed realities of everyday life and politics. Massumi's reference to feedback loops and back formations attempts to do this, but these concerns are overshadowed by the romanticism and presumed positive valence of the potentiality described in his ontology of

[28] Clare Hemmings's reflections on the turn to ontology within affect theory was particularly helpful in raising this line of questioning. See Clare Hemmings, "Invoking Affect," *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 5 (2005): 548-567.
[29] Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion*, 75.
[30] For a longer discussion of this phenomenon, see Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

affect. Williams's structures of feeling, Flatley's affective mapping, and Gould's emotional habitus create this kind of intellectual opening with a both/and approach to ontology and epistemology without the romanticism of unbounded potentiality and ultimate freedoms overstated in Massumi's work.

Psychoanalysis

Attending to affects and emotions is a primary concern in the psychoanalytic tradition as can be seen in the work of Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Joan Riviere, and Silvan Tomkins. While entire volumes are dedicated to the ways in which psychoanalysis attempts to understand and theorize emotion, I focus specifically on the work of Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere's *Love, Hate, Reparation* (1964) and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theoretical work on reparative readings. These works are specifically useful both to my own research project and thinking about how my scholarship fits within theories of affect and the field of cultural studies more broadly.

Klein and Riviere's *Love, Hate, Reparation* demonstrates some key assumptions within psychoanalytic theory regarding affects and emotions. First, they see the basic emotional disposition of a person as being formed in early childhood through a number of unconscious experiences related to drives. These experiences require a subject/object relationship; in the case of Klein and Riviere, this is child/mother or more specifically child/mother's breast. These experiences between subject/object cause unconscious disturbances that are then repressed (unhealthy), but may be brought into consciousness through a variety of techniques and strategies (healthy). Repression then plays out through a series of possible psychological trajectories, most notably: emotional disorders, schizophrenia, neurosis, the Oedipus complex, castration anxiety, an inability to properly mourn (melancholia), and others.

In grossly reductionist and oversimplified terms, Klein's concept of reparation can be described in the earliest experiences of the child in relationship to their mother. First, the child loves the mother and sees the mother as part of their own self. When the mother asserts herself as her own self and not within the control of the child, perhaps denying the breast when the child is hungry, the child then feels frustrated, resentful, and hatred for the mother—even fantasizing about killing her. The child then unconsciously feels guilty for injuring in fantasy their mother whom they actually love, and only then can they begin making reparations. Klein sees this reparation as part of all human relationships and fundamental for love.[31]

This early thesis from Klein was later developed into the theory of the paranoid/schizoid position versus the depressive/reparative position, published in *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (1997). This is the theoretical work, along with the work of Silvan Tomkins, that Sedgwick takes up to develop her theory of paranoid versus reparative readings. In doing so, she gestures towards the possibility of overcoming the impasse in cultural studies. She states,

> …the depressive position is an anxiety-mitigating achievement that the infant or adult only sometimes, and often only briefly succeeds in inhabiting: this is the position from which it is possible in turn to use one's own resources to assemble or "repair" the murderous part-objects into something like a whole—though I would emphasize, *not necessarily like any preexisting whole*.[32]

Lisa Duggan, picking up on the work of Sedgwick, goes on to describe more specifically how the depressive position functions, with examples to clarify. She says,

> From the depressive position we accept the uncontrollable nature of political reality, we critique the social world but still engage it, we take the risk of hope with full knowledge of the possibility, even the certainty, of failure. We repair our relation to the social and political world that we have also wished to mutilate,

[31] Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere, *Love, Hate Reparation* (New York: W.W. Norton, [1936] 1964), 66-69.
[32] Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 128.

> explode, destroy. We campaign for Obama, then organize to pressure and transform the political institutions that disappoint or harm us.[33]

The depressive position, as described by Sedgwick and rearticulated by Duggan, offers an alternative strategy of investigating the social and how we are called to it. Although psychoanalytic theories for apprehending affect span a far greater number of strategies than I cover here, I again focus on Sedgwick's work as it has a strong correlation with queer and queer of color critiques within cultural studies that I discuss at greater length below.

Phenomenology

I only briefly outline Sara Ahmed's theoretical work on affect and phenomenology because she stands out as one of very few contemporary scholars who have taken up this line of inquiry into affect. Phenomenology, although contested, is generally understood as the study of the way one experiences objects, how objects appear, and how one makes sense of objects from a first-person, experiential point of view. Ahmed's phenomenology of affect is interested primarily in how emotions circulate between bodies, or the transmission of affect between bodies and objects. She is interested in how orientations and relations between subjects and objects create the possibilities for a bounded subject. She states, "it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made[...] In other words, emotions are not 'in' either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects."[34]

This theoretical approach implies that emotions are not intrinsic to any subject or object, but are created through a relationship between them. This formulation allows one to move away

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[33] Lisa Duggan and José Esteban Muñoz, "Hope and Hopelessness: A Dialogue," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 19, no. 2 (2009): 280.
[34] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 10

from an essentialist idea of a clear and bounded subject with discrete emotions either pushing out from the inside or impinging upon the body from without. Indeed, here we have a theoretical model that stresses the circulation of emotions as what produces subjects and objects and not its inverse. This phenomenological approach allows one to engage with a conceptual model that moves away from the givenness of the subject as a starting point to apprehend affects, unlike psychoanalysis where the subject and its interiority are tantamount.

What interests Ahmed most is how certain emotions stick to the surface of some objects more than others. She uses the figure of the asylum-seeker in the United Kingdom as an example of an object to which certain emotions seem to stick more than others, such as fear, indignation, and feelings of threat. In trying to conceptualize the transmission of affect, the surfacing of objects, and how some objects become stickier for certain circulating emotions, she tries to capture the ways in which the transmission and circulation of affect is always a socially situated phenomenon.

Wetherell's critique of Ahmed's work returns us to an early point I made in the review of terms that preceded this section. Wetherell argues that Ahmed offers unclear definitions of affect and emotion, making the entire premise of her argument "hard to decipher."[35] While I am mildly sympathetic to this reading of Ahmed's work, as we all struggle for clarity in our process of articulating new ideas, the real reason for Wetherell's objection to Ahmed's work is that it disembodies affect. By arguing for a conceptualization of affect as an intensity that surfaces and moves us, as Ahmed does, she aligns more closely with the scholarship of affect theorists working with Deleuzian ontological conceptualizations of affect. Wetherell, a professor of

[35] Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion*, 158.

psychology, derides this disembodying of affect throughout her entire overview on affect theory.

Queer Critique

The focus on affects and emotions within critical queer scholarship is varied and broad. While it is difficult to suggest certain concerns are more influential or central than others, there are notable patterns worth investigating, such as the role of emotions in the formation of minoritarian subjects and collectivities;[36] the role emotions have in shaping the notion of, and functioning of, the nation-state;[37] a particular attention to negative emotions;[38] the role played by both directly and indirectly experienced trauma;[39] and a minoritarian attunement with utopian longing.[40]

In particular, I am interested in the numerous recent queer studies texts that articulate how affect and emotions, to some degree, shape the formation of minority subjects and collectivities.[41] In most cases, this phenomenon of identification and collectivity organized

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[36] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*; Gould, *Moving Politics*; Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).
[37] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
[38] Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Douglas Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism: Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004); David L. Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*.
[39] Grace M. Cho, "Voices from the Teum: Synesthetic Trauma and the Ghosts of the Korean Diaspora," in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, ed. Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean O'Malley Halley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).
[40] Duggan and Muñoz, "Hope and Hopelessness"; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.
[41] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*; Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Cheng, *Melancholy of Race*; Cvetkovich, *Archive of Feeling*; Duggan and Muñoz, "Hope and Hopelessness"; Eng, *Feeling of Kinship;* David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley:

around negative affects like melancholy, shame, grief, fear, anger, disgust, depression, loss, and hopelessness is not always central to the scholarly project at hand. Nonetheless, this pattern is intriguing because of the potentiality that exists in such processes of affective identification. To clarify and demonstrate this potentiality that I allude to here, I quote José Muñoz in dialogue with Lisa Duggan at some length:

> W.R. Bion's notion of valence might also be useful to understand how a belonging in and through affective negativity works for an anti-normative politics. Valency, borrowed from chemistry, is the concept that describes the capacity for spontaneous and instinctive emotional combination, between two individuals or a group. Bion's concept provides a provisional and partial account of how emotions cement social groups as guiding basic assumptions (what he calls bas). Thus as a group or a pair we share happiness and grief, ecstasy and sorrow, and so forth. This affective commonality is a site for commonality and even sociality.[42]

In this formulation, Muñoz suggests that it is in and through an affective negativity that commonality and collectivity might coalesce. This is echoed by Flatley's reflections on melancholy and affective mapping. Mobilizing this concept, Flatley argues for a sense of collective identification with others against the social structures and historical developments through which negative affect originates. Through an analysis of one's own emotional life and seeing its connections to others, some agency can be derived. "For only then," Flatley argues, "can one see with whom one's situation is shared, who one's enemies are, what situations must be avoided, skills developed and tactics pursued—in short all the ways one might stave off despair and have some agency in relation to one's own emotional life."[43]

This potential for identification and collectivity based on shared affective states, particularly those marked by negative emotions, may open up space for political organizing and

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University of California Press, 2003); Flatley, *Affective Mapping*; Gould, *Moving Politics*; Love, *Feeling Backward*; Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*; Povinelli, *Empire of Love*.

[42] Duggan and Muñoz, "Hope and Hopelessness," 281.

[43] Flatley, *Affective Mapping*,122.

action that transcends or connects subjects across traditional modes of identification (i.e. race, class, gender, sexuality) that political organizing relies upon all too often. As Lisa Duggan puts it quite humorously, "Bad sentiments can lead us (instead) *out* of dominant, alienating social forms… and into a collectivity of the cynical, bitter, hostile, despairing, and hopeless. This is how I find my people!"[44]

Queer critique's engagement with trauma studies has also provided a particularly fertile ground for thinking about affect in relation to history, memory, and processes of identification. In particular, I am interested in generational and vicarious trauma caused by the AIDS crisis and the afterlife of negative emotions as they are, or are not, passed down through generations of queer and trans people, which I take up at length in the following chapter. Beyond the field-defining work of Ruth Leys, Karyn Ball, and Cathy Caruth in trauma studies that is decidedly not queer,[45] theoretical concepts relating to mourning, haunting, and testimony of queer trauma survivors in the aftermath of the AIDS crisis in the United States have emerged in the work of Douglas Crimp, Ann Cvetkovich, Roger Hallas, Marita Sturken, Christopher Reed, and Christopher Castiglia, among others.[46]

Returning to Muñoz, the opening chapter of his 2009 book *Cruising Utopia* titled "Feeling Utopia" offers us a way of imagining a yet-to-come future by using utopia as a

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[44] Duggan and Muñoz, "Hope and Hopelessness," 279.
[45] Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (University of Chicago Press, 2000); Karyn Ball, ed., *Traumatizing Theory: The Cultural Politics of Affect in and beyond Psychoanalysis* (New York: Other Press, 2007); Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
[46] Crimp, *Melancholia and Moralism*; Cvetkovich, *Archive of Feeling*; Roger Hallas, *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

conceptual tool that allows us to critically engage with the social world, and not necessarily as a place to arrive. He eloquently states,

> We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see the future beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of the moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds.[47]

What is most interesting in this passage is Muñoz's attunement to the potentiality of new worlds coming into being that are not yet here, but always somehow imagined on the horizon. In *Cruising Utopia*, he goes on to point out that there is a feeling, perhaps even a longing, for new ways of being in the world that rely on this kind of queer utopian attunement. Muñoz's conceptual tool builds to a degree upon Williams's structures of feeling. In an important way, Muñoz surpasses this concept by explicitly situating utopic desiring as a departure point from the negative affects of queer and queer of color minoritarian collectivity that is only made possible through this attunement to the not-yet-here, or what he calls the "then and there" of futurity. He also gestures towards this attunement in dialogue with Lisa Duggan: "Feeling Revolutionary is a feeling that our current situation is not enough, that something is indeed missing and we cannot live without it. Feeling Revolutionary opens up the space to imagine a collective escape, an exodus, a 'going-off script' together."[48] This utopian attunement and incitement to imagine that Muñoz puts his finger on is central to my own dissertation research through pairing scholarship from affect theory with Muñoz's work on the imagination.

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[47] Munoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.
[48] Duggan and Muñoz, "Hope and Hopelessness," 279.

Why Affect Theory?

My interest in affect theory lies primarily in three areas that intersect with my long investments in queer studies and radical political activism. First, I am interested in how affect theory undermines Enlightenment-era assumptions that people can and do make rational decisions based on factual or proven information. In particular, I am interested in why gay and lesbian subjects invest themselves in so-called pragmatic political projects that, in the end, work against their own best interest as queer people. Secondly, I am interested in how affects, particularly negative affects like shame, grief, loss, trauma, and melancholy, shape minority subjects and collectivities. Lastly, I am also interested in how these negative affects might be leveraged as productive starting points for collective identification as well as transformative political imagining, organizing, and action.

Using affect theory in the following chapters as the theoretical framework for my investigations into the conservative turn in gay and lesbian politics in the 1990s allows me to move away from the impasse I have reached in my previous research project. For the last seven years, my primary intellectual work has been the assembling and maintenance of a user-generated online collective archive comprised of radical queer and trans critiques of the political demand to be included in the institutions of marriage, the military, and hate crime laws in the United States. The explicit purpose of the archival project is to "reinvigorate the queer political imagination."[49] We accomplish this through offering a thorough critique of contemporary gay and lesbian politics, or what Muñoz has referred to as "gay pragmatism" in *Cruising Utopia*, to create a rupture in the taken-for-granted notion that progress is achieved through inclusion.[50]

[49] As noted in the sidebar on Against Equality's website (againstequality.org), we've been "reinvigorating the queer political imagination since 2009."
[50] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 21.

This archival project that began in October of 2009 is called Against Equality and is the case study of interest in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

The collective I co-founded that maintains the digital archive is resolutely materialist in its critique. The majority of written and visual materials that comprise the archive are focused on economic critiques of the previously mentioned institutions. For a collective that is activist but not necessarily academic, the concreteness of the critiques within the archive make practical sense. There is something missing in this strategy, however. For example, we can hammer queer and trans people over the head through materialist critiques with clear data and evidence to prove our points again and again, yet many queer and trans people continue to invest themselves in the institutions we are clearly trying to divest ourselves from. This is not to suggest that gays and lesbians who seek recognition and inclusion suffer from some sort of false consciousness, but that messy, complex, and contradictory affects, emotional investments, desires, and attachments are not accounted for in our materialist approach and this is part of how our project fails to reinvigorate the queer political imagination. In fact, in our materialist critiques, we often pose as hyper-rational, coolly methodical, and extremely calculated despite our anger!

Affect and the Political Imagination

In discussing why I turn to affect, I imply a relationship between affect and the imagination. Exploring and theorizing this relationship between affect and the imagination is my small contribution to the field of affect studies and what weaves together the chapters of this dissertation project. Like affect and emotion, philosophical debates on the meaning and use of

the imagination can be traced back to debates between Aristotle and Plato.[51] For the sake of brevity and to illuminate contemporary understandings of the imagination that are at play today, I focus on the imagination as it came to be defined in the twentieth century. Particularly, I will focus on the work of the Frankfurt School philosophers taken up in the work of José Muñoz, who understood the imagination to be a radical tool for remaking the world.

Sociologist Max Haiven notes that calls for individual activists and collective social movements in North America to engage their radical imaginations are ubiquitous today.[52] Indeed, anarchist sociologist Chris Dixon's thorough account of contemporary radical social movements in the United States and Canada titled *Another Politics: Talking Across Today's Transformative Movements* (2014) concludes with a chapter titled "Imagining Ourselves Outside What We Know." In this closing chapter, Dixon concludes that we do not yet know how to make a revolutionary social movement in the twenty-first century, and that openness to dialogue, experimentation, and fresh ideas, as well as attunement to new possibilities, are required for another politics to come into being. Dixon's observations are largely echoed by activist and public intellectual Micah White's reflections on the Occupy Wall Street protests he helped foment and the future of revolutionary social movements. For White, the battle for the mental environment against commercial advertising is tantamount in unleashing the capacity for the collective political imagination to dream up new ways of being and creating social change.[53]

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[51] For a detailed extrapolation on the debates between Aristotle and Plato on the imagination, see Max Haiven, *Crises of Imagination, Crises of Power: Capitalism, Creativity and the Commons* (London: Zed Books, 2014), 219-220.
[52] Haiven, *Crises of Imagination*, 217.
[53] Micah White, *The End of Protest: A New Playbook for Revolution* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2016), 172-173.

In short, the political imagination has widely come to mean the psychic space in which we reflect on the social worlds we inhabit and consider the ways in which these social worlds might be otherwise. Interestingly enough, neither Haiven, Dixon, nor White engage with Muñoz's work on the imagination in his theorizing on queer futurity and utopian attunement, despite Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* preceding their publications by at least five years. While it is impossible to read and be aware of every intellectual project, this elision is sadly both frustrating and predictable. It speaks to the reality that straight scholars often lack exposure to work produced under the banner of queer theory and critique, and that theoretical work produced in fine arts and the humanities often does not cross over with the supposedly more rigorous empirically-based disciplines of the social sciences, including history. I want to be generous here as I find all their work stimulating and necessary, but regardless of why these radical sociologists and social movement theorists have overlooked Muñoz's scholarship, they could all benefit from Muñoz's sustained engagement with the political imagination. His work more thoroughly theorizes how the political imagination works, how an attunement to future possibilities might be honed, and what the political imagination's relevance might be for radical worldmaking projects.

Muñoz's utopian attunement, a longing for the no-longer-here and the yet-to-come, places the political imagination in dialogue with the past, present, and the future. Like Flatley's affective mapping that argues for melancholic attachment to the losses and losers of the past in order to historically situate one's individual and collective struggles in the present and thus gain some agency over one's future, Muñoz argues for a similar temporal arrangement. Evoking Heidegger's articulation of historicity in *Being and Time,* Muñoz notes that it is through a subject's historical existence that one can act with a mind towards future possibilities. While rejecting what was to become of Heidegger's philosophical work as reprehensible, Muñoz still

sees a use for thinking about queerness on these terms: "…I think of queerness as a temporal arrangement in which the past is a field of possibility in which subjects can act in the present in the service of a new futurity."[54]

Muñoz's emphasis on the imagination and futurity is a direct rebuke to the so-called anti-social or anti-relational turn in queer theory that rejects the future in favor of an emphasis on the present. The anti-social thesis has been articulated most loudly through the work of Lee Edelman.[55] While pushing back against the popularization of this trend in queer theory, Muñoz opens up space for queer pleasure, desire, and hope by demanding we know the present "in relation to the alternative temporal and spatial maps provided by a perception of past and future affective worlds."[56]

To do this, Muñoz utilizes Frankfurt School scholar Ernst Bloch's conceptual work on utopia that directs us to attune ourselves with the no-longer-conscious and not-yet-conscious. The no-longer-conscious, meaning those things from the past that we miss because they are no longer part of our present reality, and the not-yet-conscious, meaning those things that have yet to arrive, or as Muñoz would say, are on the horizon of becoming. In this formulation, the no-longer-conscious refers to one's relationship to past forms of knowing and feeling that are longed for in the present because they are missed, and the not-yet-conscious to the possible unfolding of social worlds and ways of knowing and feeling that might come into being through a utopian attunement. As noted by Muñoz, utopia for Bloch was never about arriving at a physical place or a perfected social world, but as a way to critique the present.

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[54] Munoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 16.
[55] See, Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
[56] Munoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 27.

In pairing the political imagination with utopian longing, Muñoz insists on attunement to radical future possibilities by an awareness of that which is missing from the past in the present moment. As described by both Flatley and Muñoz, this utopian attunement can be activated by a perception of one's historicity and, indeed, negative affects. What ontologically-focused affect theorists and Muñoz's work on the imagination have in common is an attempt to conceptualize how one can perceive the emergence of new ways of sensing, thinking, and being in a present that is always in flux, always unfolding. While ontologically-focused affect theorists are primarily invested in developing a conceptual model that allows for greater potentiality and possibility for being moved, Muñoz offers a complementary theorization as to how individual subjects and collectivities might attune to the possibilities and potentialities produced through shared negative affective states, and why and how such attunement is necessary for minoritarian subjects.

In other words, theorists like Massumi, Connolly, and others working on the ontology of affect provide a rigorous and scholarly conceptual model that proves the childhood axiom that anything is indeed possible. Theorists like Williams and Gould provide tools to perceive how what is possible becomes distilled into patterns of thinking, sensing, knowing, and ways of being among specific groups of people at certain points in history. Lastly, theorists like Muñoz, Flatley, and others working on shared negative affect amongst minoritarian collectivities offer strategies for imagining and agitating for a future beyond the here and now's confining ways of thinking, sensing, knowing, and ways of being.

The Queer Political Imagination

In Munoz's first chapter of *Cruising Utopia*, he uses the phrase "the gay and lesbian political imagination" to reference the narrowing political vision and activism of contemporary gay rights activists.[57] He sets up the gay and lesbian political imagination in contrast to what he calls "gay pragmatic thought" in an attempt to demonstrate the homonormative drive of contemporary gay politics that confines its vision for possible futures to the institutions and social structures of the present. Muñoz never uses the phrase again, nor does he go on to explicitly define or further expand upon the gay and lesbian political imagination conceptually, but *Cruising Utopia*, perhaps in its totality, can be seen as a treatise on what I refer to as the queer political imagination.

Utilizing Gould's concept of emotional habitus, Williams's concept of structures of feeling, Flatley's concept of affective mapping, and Muñoz's concept of utopian attunement to think through today's seemingly foreclosing and foreclosed queer political imagination is at the heart of this dissertation research. How have queer and trans subjects come to desire inclusion in systems, structures, and institutions that are failing and harming them, when just a generation or two ago, these same institutions were rejected in favor of experimenting with new egalitarian modes of being in the world? How has this mood of assimilationist desiring come into being? How does it maintain itself as the only way to imagine a possible future?

My hypothesizing around these questions informs the following three chapters that offer case studies of queer cultural archives from the recent past and present. While other scholars have noted the conservative turn in gay and lesbian politics beginning in the late 1970s, my case studies begin in the late 1980s and early 1990s when this conservative turn in gay and lesbian

[57] Ibid, 21.

politics intensifies to a fever pitch.[58] The first case study investigates the lingering affective legacies of mass death and trauma on gay and lesbian subjects left in the wake of deadliest years of the AIDS crisis. The second case study attends to the historical trauma stemming from the legal and civic exclusions manifested by the anti-gay backlash that was orchestrated by religious conservatives in the 1990s. This backlash was in direct response to increasing gay and lesbian visibility *vis-à-vis* the AIDS crisis and sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections. The third and final case study unpacks the impact of these two difficult decades on the queer political imagination through an investigation of the cultural archive assembled by the Against Equality collective. This final case study is included in order to see how one might be able to reinvigorate the queer political imagination with radical possibility at this present moment in history.

Investigations into these cultural archives also requires a mode of inquiry that pays close attention to the inter-subjectivity of queer and trans people, noting the ways overlapping identities and shared affect are in play that relate not just to a subject's sexuality, but also to gender, race, ethnicity, ability, citizenship, and other social collectivities around which minority identities and practices form. That is to say, the social in which affect distills into emotions or actions is racialized as much as it is sexualized or gendered, and particular attention must be paid to the specific interactions of these social identities as they relate to shared affect in order to avoid essentializing or universalizing their relationship. In not doing so, one also runs the risk of creating false causal links when there are too many variables at play. Robin Kelley and Matt

[58] Greg Youmans, "'Thank You Anita": Gay and Lesbian Activist and Experimental Filmmaking of the Late 1970s" (PhD dissertation, University of California Santa Cruz, 2009), Chapter 3.

Brim's work on the black radical imagination, like Muñoz's work at the intersections of race and queerness, leads by example.[59]

This attention to race, gender, sexuality, and class also calls into question who does or does not count as part of the affective turn in contemporary scholarship. The Deleuzian ontological thread within affect theory, the thread within the field that is gaining prominence as the canonical form that affect theory is to take, is a field that appears to be dominated primarily by white, Euro-American, heterosexual, men working in the traditions of continental philosophy. There is nothing wrong with this observation, but it causes me to be skeptical of the growing prominence of Deleuzian-influenced work on affect within the broader field of affect theory and to ask who and what is being left out of the conversations about affect in the academy. Particularly, I wonder what from postcolonial, critical race, feminist, queer, disability, animal studies, and other disciplines that attend to affect in some capacity are not being given as much attention as they should. The prominence of the Deleuzian ontology of affect, particularly in the Montréal context where Brian Massumi works as a communications professor at Université de Montréal, and the amount of air time it takes up in debates over affect, obscures these other necessary forays attending to the affective. Unpacking the stakes in these alternative approaches in cultural studies and providing adequate time and space for them to unfold within a critical academic sphere is imperative for any intellectual project committed to progressive politics.

[59] Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Matt Brim, *James Baldwin and the Queer Imagination* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

Notes on Methodology

Cultural studies is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry where a multitude of ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions and strategies exist. The case studies of queer cultural archives in the following three chapters follow in the spirit of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies under Stuart Hall's directorship. Hall provides a description of his understanding of cultural studies in an early lecture:

> Cultural Studies is neither an objective description of how a group lives, nor an analysis or inventory of the ideas that group has. Since culture is the interaction between the two, Cultural Studies seeks the life one is obliged to live because of the conditions into which one has been born, the circumstances which have been meaningful and hence experienceable because certain frameworks of understanding have been brought to bear upon those conditions. Practices are not simply the result of an individual having been placed in a physical, economic, or material space, but of the attempt to live socially in ways which reflect how we understand and experience our circumstances. Those forms of experiencing have been built into the ways human beings live, into their practices. A practice is always cultured. It has been cultivated. It is impregnated with forms of interpretation. This is what culture is: experience lived, experience interpreted, experience defined.[60]

A key concern for Hall and cultural studies scholars coming out of this British Marxist-inflected school of thought was the examination of the forces within and through which people conduct and participate in the construction of the social worlds of their everyday lives.

In his 1999 book, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, British cultural studies scholar Ziauddin Sardar produced a short list detailing the characteristics that came to define cultural studies in the decades after the founding of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies in 1964. He notes that while cultural studies itself remains difficult to define, these characteristics have come to be associated with the field:

- Cultural studies aims to examine its subject matter in terms of *cultural practices* and their *relation to power*. Its constant goal is to expose power

[60] Stuart Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983: A Theoretical History*, ed. Jennifer Slack and Lawrence Grossberg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 33.

relationships and examine how these relationships influence and shape cultural practices.

- Cultural studies is not simply the study of culture as though it was a discrete entity divorced from its social and political context. Its objective is to understand culture in all its complex forms and analyze the *social and political context* within which it manifests itself.
- Culture in cultural studies always performs two functions: it is both the *object* of study and the *location* of political criticism and action. Cultural studies aims to be both an intellectual and pragmatic enterprise.
- Cultural studies attempts to expose and *reconcile the divisions of knowledge*, to overcome the split between tacit (that is, intuitive knowledge based on local cultures) and objective (so-called universal) forms of knowledge. It assumes a common identity and common interest between the knower and the known, between the observer and what is being observed.
- Cultural studies is commitment to moral *evaluation* of modern society and to a *radical* line of political action. The tradition of cultural studies is not one of value-free scholarship, but one committed to social reconstruction by critical involvement. Thus cultural studies aims to *understand and change* the structures of dominance everywhere, but in industrial capitalist societies in particular. *(emphasis his)*[61]

This dissertation research follows both Hall's and Sardar's articulations on Cultural Studies in that it aims to investigate the forces that come to shape queer life by closely examining cultural archives of the recent past.

It is important to note the shifts in Cultural Studies across the geopolitical contexts I straddle. I am an American living in Canada studying at a Canadian institution, utilizing an explicitly British Cultural Studies framework on cultural archives that are largely American. As noted by Sardar, American Cultural Studies has become professionalized, institutionalized, and largely depoliticized since its emergence in the 1980s. In Canada, Cultural Studies emerged around the same time as its American counterpart and often came to revolve around questions of Canadian identity and nationhood. This focus was an attempt to define itself against its American neighbor as well as deal with its diverse cultural and linguistic populations (English, French, and

[61] Ziauddin Sardar, *Introducing Cultural Studies* (Cambridge, UK: Icon, 1999), 9.

various Indigenous languages) that have questioned the necessity and usefulness of the Canadian federation of provinces and territories that make up the nation today. While I occupy an unusual place between these three physical locations and intellectual traditions, I want to reiterate that this dissertation project maintains the Leftist political and intellectual tradition so influential to the founding of British Cultural Studies.[62]

Investigating the queer cultural archives I have pulled together in this dissertation, as opposed to doing interviews with people today who were there at the time these cultural archives were coming into being in the 1980s and 1990s, prioritizes an investigation into the way queer individuals and collectivities represented themselves and their struggle to one another at the time. I am more interested in how these queer individuals and collectivities represented themselves in the moment rather than how these individuals might remember themselves in the past from today's vantage point. Again, following the work of Raymond Williams, I am looking for the traces left behind in art and culture from which inferences regarding the emerging structures of feeling can be made. Furthermore, in the queer cultural archives of visual and textual works that I investigate, the work that was produced was primarily by and for a gay and lesbian audience. Therefore, these cultural archives are rich with work that sought self-representation and in-group dialogue created by queer subjects working at the particular moment in history that interests me.

Chapter Two pulls from the discipline of art history, providing close textual readings of visual and performance work from the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter Three pulls from the discipline of communication studies, providing a discourse analysis of how gay and lesbian journalists described the conditions of gay and lesbian life in the 1990s and early 2000s. Chapter Four pulls from John Dewey's philosophy on reflective thinking, utilizing first person critical reflection on

[62] Ibid, 56-62.

the successes and shortcomings of a multi-year collaborative research project from the late 2000s.[63]

While cultural studies is always interdisciplinary in its approach, and interdisciplinarity has become a buzzword of university bureaucrats that retains a positive valence towards the new, the hybrid, and the collaborative, interdisciplinarity is not without its critics. While I do not seek to legitimize the critiques of interdisciplinarity that favor rigid disciplines and the intense specialization of knowledge, I do acknowledge that others have posed helpful questions regarding the limits or usefulness of interdisciplinary modes of inquiry.[64] In the following chapters, I engage in rigorous theoretical conceptualization and close textual readings in order to stave off feelings of being an impostor that often come with sprawling interdisciplinary projects like my own. The rigor of my investigations aims to quell the colloquial admonishment that interdisciplinary work suffers from being a jack of all trades, yet a master of none.

[63] John Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).
[64] For an example of productive lines of questioning regarding the limits of interdisciplinarity, see Kyle Whitfield and Colleen Reid, "Assumptions, Ambiguities, and Possibilities in Interdisciplinary Population Health Research," 2004.

Chapter 2

Revisiting AIDS and Its Metaphors

> …history is a process of generalization, an elevator pitch, and we privilege the stories that are easier to tell. In the public sphere, complexities are frequently slipped under the shadows of our zeitgeists, and well-worn media tropes supplant more disorderly truths.
>
> - Avram Finkelstein, *AIDS 2.0*[1]

Introduction

This chapter analyzes cultural production by queer American artists in the 1980s and '90s that framed the AIDS epidemic as a form of genocide, using James Wentzy's 1994 experimental film *By Any Means Necessary* as its anchor. Reviving these neglected works demonstrates how common the metaphors of the AIDS epidemic as warfare upon civilians, genocide, and the Holocaust were amongst queer cultural producers at the time. Through re-readings of Paula Treichler, Susan Sontag, Judith Butler, and Deborah Gould, this chapter examines how these meaning-making metaphors came to be accepted within the shifting emotional habitus of queer people at the height of the crisis. This chapter continues by examining how the AIDS epidemic is being historicized at the present moment, in terms of its political and affective legacy, through recent film and visual culture. How have these metaphors of mass death and total destruction of queer lives been rearticulated or forgotten, and to what ends? Lastly, this chapter offers provisional reflections as to how the historical framing of the AIDS epidemic as genocide does or does not serve the current gay and lesbian political turn towards assimilation, inclusion, and respectability. Specifically, what does it mean to not remember the AIDS crisis on the terms by which it was described by those queer artists and activists who experienced the carnage and

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[1] Avram Finkelstein, "AIDS 2.0," Artwrit, December 2012, http://www.artwrit.com/article/aids-2-0/.

unimaginable loss of life firsthand who are no longer here to remind us? What do we make of contemporary work produced by those who did survive but who have turned away from these once commonplace metaphors?

Although the AIDS epidemic also disproportionately impacted other marginal groups at its onset—people with disabilities (specifically those with blood disorders such as hemophiliacs), racialized populations (particularly Haitians), and people who use injection drugs—this chapter focuses specifically on queer cultural responses to the crisis because my larger project investigates how the legacy of the AIDS crisis had and continues to have an impact on the trajectory of contemporary gay and lesbian politics. While none of these affected groups are mutually exclusive and racialized groups of people remain grossly overrepresented in both incidence and prevalence of HIV infection, the political fortunes of gays and lesbians have rapidly expanded since the invention of Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment (HAART). Beginning in the mid-1990s, the crisis shifted from the stark reality that AIDS was a disease marked by assured death to a chronic, long-term manageable illness for those who could access treatment. However, racialized people, people who use drugs, and people with disabilities remain deeply marginalized in American society. This chapter explores this specific impact of AIDS on gays and lesbian politics in part to understand why their political fortunes have grown by leaps and bounds while other disproportionately affected communities remain disenfranchised and in crisis.

Partial Histories and Metaphors in the Making

Doing the history of AIDS in any capacity, including small, specific, and somewhat superficial historiographies like the one offered here, always seems condemned to high-stakes

inaccuracies, partial truths, and flattened complexities, no matter how hard one tries otherwise. This chapter hopes to avoid such missteps to the extent possible when dealing with such fraught and contested past events and to contribute to the messy and disorderly truths, even the uncomfortable and conflicting ones, as Finkelstein demands of us when doing the history of AIDS.

An original member of the Silence = Death project and Gran Fury, Finkelstein observed in early 2013 that "it's likely we're now witnessing the solidification of the history of AIDS" in reference to the recent canonization of specific AIDS histories.[2] This observation has become commonplace as scholars attempt to make sense of the outpouring of work looking back at the history of the AIDS crisis.[3] These scholars are reflecting on art retrospectives like the traveling "Art.AIDS.America" exhibition on view form the fall of 2015 to the spring of 2016, the New York Public Library's exhibition "Why We Fight: Remembering AIDS Activism" from fall 2013 to spring 2014, the "Gran Fury: Read My Lips" exhibition at New York University in 2012, and Harvard's "*ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987–1993"* exhibition in 2009.[4]

Additionally, these scholars are referencing the solidifying of certain AIDS histories through recently released documentary films like *Sex in an Epidemic* (2010), *We Were Here* (2011), *Vito* (2011), *How to Survive a Plague* (2012), *United in Anger: A History of ACT UP*

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[2] Finkelstein, "AIDS 2.0."
[3] For examples of observations similar to Finkelstein's, see E.C. Feiss, "Get to Work: ACT UP For Everyone," *Little Joe*, November 2015.; Alexandra Juhasz, "Acts of Signification-Survival," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, no. 55 (Fall 2012); Theodore Kerr, "Time Is Not A Line: Conversations, Essays, and Images About HIV/AIDS Now," *We Who Feel Differently*, no. 3 (Fall 2014); Shahani Nishant, "How to Survive the Whitewashing of AIDS: Global Pasts, Transnational Futures," *QED: A Journal of GLBTQ Worldmaking* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2016).
[4] Finkelstein, "AIDS 2.0."

(2012), *Memories of a Penitent Heart* (2016), and *Uncle Howard* (2016) as well as recently released historical dramas like *Test* (2013), *Dallas Buyers Club* (2013), and the HBO made-for-TV movie reboot of Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* (2014). None of these contemporary works, save the reboot of *The Normal Heart* originally written in 1985, uses the genocide metaphor that I excavate in my analysis of AIDS activist cultural production from the mid-1980s through 1996. While these new works are vital to our historical and present-day understanding of the ongoing AIDS epidemic, this chapter focuses more sharply on lesser-discussed works produced during the emergence of the crisis, and the deadliest years that weren't conceived under a logic of historical storytelling and anniversary—like the so-called 30th anniversary of AIDS in 2011 which produced an outpouring of nostalgic and commercial interest in HIV/AIDS that just as quickly waned after the few bucks to be made had been extracted.

Cultural production and artistic works, like those created during the pre-protease-inhibitor days of the AIDS epidemic in the United States, generously lend themselves to metaphor. Susan Sontag's seminal 1978 pre-AIDS text, *Illness and Metaphor*, provides guidance in understanding how such metaphors might impact the health and well-being of people living with AIDS. She argues against using metaphor to describe illness, suggesting that metaphors, particularly military ones, cause psychological and social harm to those afflicted and detrimentally shift our collective focus away from the rational biomedical discourse and hard science from which treatment and cures are derived.

Sontag went on to write a follow-up text, *AIDS and Its Metaphors* (1989), where she shifted her primary focus from cancer to AIDS while making many of the same arguments against illness metaphors. Between the publication of Sontag's two texts, feminist communication studies scholar Paula Treichler convincingly interjected in the now-highly cited

winter 1987 issue of *October* magazine centered on AIDS cultural analysis and activism edited by Douglas Crimp that "No matter how much we may desire, with Susan Sontag, to resist treating illness as metaphor, illness is a metaphor."[5] She continues: "…the AIDS epidemic—with its genuine potential for global devastation—is simultaneously an epidemic of a transmissible lethal disease and an epidemic of meanings or signification."[6] Treichler goes on at length, citing other scholars who have challenged Sontag's model of clearing the way of harmful metaphor so that more objective science can lead us. Nonetheless, Sontag's writing has had a lasting impact on scholarship about AIDS. The work of Eric Rofes (*Dry Bones Breathe: Gay Men Creating Post-AIDS Identities and Cultures* [1998]) and Jan Zita Grover (*North Enough: AIDS and Other Clear-Cuts* [1997]) come to mind as they fastidiously avoid war and military metaphors about AIDS while alternatively employing environmental ones.

What's of interest here, though, is thinking through not just how the media, politicians, moralists, popular culture, and even biomedical science have socially constructed meaning about illnesses such as AIDS historically, but how people living with AIDS in the 1980s and '90s might have utilized metaphor to make sense of their own illness and lives. Specifically, how might have people living with AIDS in the United States before any form of effective treatments existed, utilized metaphor productively to organize their emotions and fight back in the face of devastating political despair, fatal medical negligence, governmental indifference, and a growing pile of dead bodies comprised of friends and lovers?

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[5] Paula A. Treichler, "AIDS, Homophobia, and Biomedical Discourse: An Epidemic of Signification," in *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism* (Boston: MIT Press, 1988), 34.
[6] Ibid, 32.

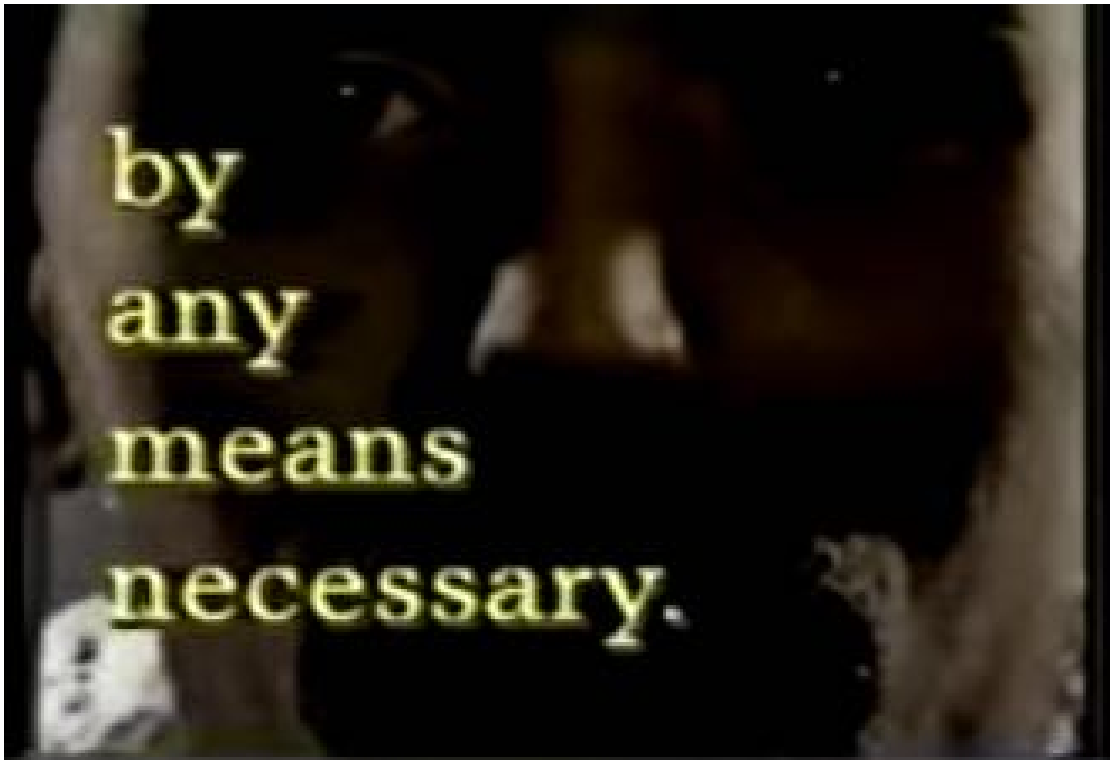

Figure 2.1 James Wentzy, *By Any Means Necessary*, 1994. Video Still.

Genocide?

James Wentzy's short experimental film *By Any Means Necessary* was made in 1994 and first exhibited as part of the MIX New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival, now referred to simply as MIX NYC, in that same year.[7] Wentzy's short experimental film is a strong departure in content, form, and tone from the gay male AIDS melodramas of the 1980s and early 1990s that film scholar Thomas Waugh has documented at length.[8] According to a 1996 article from *POZ Magazine* written by now-deceased AIDS activist Kiki Mason, the film was made after Wentzy approached him and requested to use a manifesto he had written for a short film.[9]

[7] James Wentzy, "By Any Means Necessary," ACT UP New York, accessed September 10, 2016, http://www.actupny.org/diva/CBnecessary.html.
[8] Thomas Waugh, "Erotic Self-Image in the Gay Male AIDS Melodrama," in *The Fruit Machine: Twenty Years of Writings on Queer Cinema* (Durham (N.C.): Duke University Press, [1989] 2000), 218-34.
[9] Kiki Mason, "Manifesto Destiny," *POZ Magazine*, June/July 1996.

Mason goes on to describe the manifesto as the text he contributed to an ACT UP action, in which a smaller affinity group within ACT UP called The Marys distributed authentic-looking Gay Games brochures with the incendiary text. The 1994 Gay Games in New York City coincided with the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, an event ACT UP wanted to commemorate in juxtaposition to the consumer-driven Gay Games, Mason notes. Although Mason expresses ambivalence as to the effectiveness of fifty thousand brochures printed with his words, which at the time were collectively attributed to ACT UP, the words were taken up by another artist (Wentzy), giving them another life and leaving a rich audiovisual archive of political feelings from which we can continue to make meaning from the past in this present moment. After searching without luck the finding aids for numerous AIDS-related collections to locate an original copy of the spoof Gay Games brochure at the New York Public Library's archives, it appears that Wentzy's film is primarily what remains of Mason's words.

Figure 2.2 James Wentzy, *By Any Means Necessary*, 1994. Video Still.

Preceding Wentzy's *By Any Means Necessary* is a simulated academy leader where white words on a black background proclaim "ONE AIDS DEATH EVERY 8 MINUTES" as the number of minutes count down by the second. This unique simulated academy leader appears on many direct action documentary videos Wentzy produced, including those featured on his Manhattan-based weekly public access television show, AIDS Community Television.[10] In conversation, Wentzy relays that he created this academy leader shortly after the ACT UP action that shut down Grand Central Station in 1991, where activists held a "One AIDS Death Every 8 Minutes" banner over the arrivals/departures time tables.[11] By employing it in his experimental short video, he directly links his creative work aesthetically to the now-canonized genre of shoot-and-run-style documentary AIDS-activist video that emerged along with increased access to consumer-grade video technology in the 1980s and 1990s.[12]

[10] Alexandra Juhasz, *AIDS TV: Identity, Community, and Alternative Video* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 70-73.
[11] James Wentzy, "Interview with James Wentzy," interview by Ryan Conrad, spring 2011.
[12] For brief description of the links between AIDS activist video and changing video technologies, see Lucas Hilderbrand, "Retroactivism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12, no. 2 (2006).


Figure 2.3 James Wentzy, *By Any Means Necessary*, 1994. Video Still.

Following the simulated academy leader, the screen goes dark before transitioning to a tight close-up on the face of a dimly lit mustachioed man standing in the foreground before yet another layer of video that will soon be revealed. The combination of close-up shot and dim lighting allows the viewer to see the glossy reflection of the man's eyes and the shadowy outline of his face, but not clearly enough to actually identify him. He remains semi-anonymous as anyone would in the dimly lit back rooms of the then-shuttered gay sex clubs and bathhouses in New York City.[13] The man delivers the then-anonymous manifesto penned by Kiki Mason in a calm, sure voice as the camera slowly zooms out, revealing black-and-white film footage of World War II concentration camps littered with lifeless bodies in the background.

[13] For a history of the closures of commercial gay sex venues in New York City, see Ephen Glenn Colter, ed., *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS Activism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1996); Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999).


Figure 2.4 James Wentzy, *By Any Means Necessary*, 1994. Video Still.

> The manifesto begins:
>
> I am someone with AIDS and I want to live by any means necessary. I am not dying. I am being murdered just as surely as if my body was being tossed into a gas chamber.[14]

The metaphor of AIDS as genocide, and the Holocaust more specifically in this example, begins at the outset of this spoken manifesto and visually through the pairing of Holocaust imagery with that of a person living with AIDS. This framing of AIDS as genocide and metaphors linking AIDS to the Holocaust continue throughout the emotionally dense five minute and forty-nine second video, demonstrated in two brief excerpts:

> Activists now negotiate with drug companies just as the Jewish councils in the Warsaw ghettos of World War II negotiated with the Nazis. 'Give us a few lives today,' they insist, 'and we'll trade you even more tomorrow.' AIDS careerists—both HIV-positive and HIV-negative—have exchanged their anger for an invitation to the White House…

[14] *By Any Means Necessary*. Directed by James Wentzy. New York City, 1994. https://youtu.be/oY6tujeZumA.

> Jewish leaders established organizations to run their ghettos and we do the same in a desperate attempt to gain some sense of control over this living nightmare. Everyone is selling you out. We refuse to plead with the U.S. government or negotiate with the entire medical-industrial complex for our lives. We have to get what we need by any means necessary…[15]

The framing of AIDS as war or genocide, and specific references to the Holocaust, are not limited to Wentzy's short video. In fact, the metaphorical reference is quite common throughout AIDS-related cultural production in the United States created before the invention and large-scale usage of life-saving medication like protease inhibitors as the following examples demonstrate.

The Silence = Death project, a small consciousness-raising group that predates the better known propaganda arm of ACT UP called Gran Fury with whom they are often conflated, designed numerous posters framing AIDS as genocide.[16] They are credited with the creation of the 1986 iconic black poster with a centrally placed inverted pink triangle, a direct reference to the pink triangle worn by homosexual men in Nazi concentration camps, and the white text "SILENCE = DEATH" running along the bottom. They also produced the group's equally recognizable 1987 neon yellow and pink "AIDSGATE" poster of Ronald Reagan with fiendishly neon pink eyes and includes the caption "…What is Reagan's real policy on AIDS? Genocide of all non-whites, non-males, non-heterosexuals?...".[17]

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDS Demo Graphics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990); Finkelstein, "AIDS 2.0."
[17] Crimp and Rolston. *AIDS Demo Graphics*.

Figure 2.5 LEFT: Silence = Death Project, *Silence = Death,* 1986. Poster; RIGHT: Silence = Death Project, *AIDSGATE,* 1987. Poster.

Members of the Silence = Death project also contributed to an installation in 1987 titled "Let the Record Show," in which "AIDS criminals"—doctors, politicians, journalists—are shown before a backdrop of the Nazi Nuremberg trials, again making the connection between AIDS and WWII and the Holocaust.


Figure 2.6 Gran Fury, *Let the Record Show,* 1987. Installation.

AA Bronson of the renowned queer Canadian artist collective General Idea describes the process of making a portrait of one of his dying collaborators, titled *Jorge, February 3, 1994* in the 2008 documentary *General Idea: Art, AIDS, and the Fin de Siècle.* In it, Bronson states,

> This was a portrait, three portraits I guess, of Jorge [Zontal] that I took about a week before he died. His father had been a survivor from Auschwitz and he had this idea that he looked much as his father had looked when he came out of Auschwitz. He's blind here and he asked me to take these pictures to document that. So when I finally produced them as a piece, I printed them in sepia on Mylar so they have this sense of memory to them and it's interesting how vivid that echo back to Auschwitz is. This piece is, in fact, in the collection of the Jewish Museum in New York.[18]

Although General Idea was originally based in the fledgling Toronto art scene of the late 1960s, the collective split their time between New York City and Toronto before their demise in 1994 due to the deaths of all members except AA Bronson.[19] They are included among the other American cultural workers here as they were influenced by their time in the politicized art milieu of New York City and their work is clearly in dialogue with other American artists working during this time.

Figure 2.7 AA Bronson, *Jorge, February 3, 1994,* 1994. Sepia prints on Mylar.

[18] *General Idea: Art, AIDS, and the Fin De Siècle*. Directed by Annette Mangaard. Toronto: Vtape, 2008. DVD.
[19] Gregg Bordowitz, *General Idea: Imagevirus* (London: Afterall Books, 2010).

Musician and activist Michael Callen, an HIV-positive gay man and the founder of the People Living with AIDS Coalition, produced a pop album titled *Purple Heart* in 1988.[20] The title of this thematically AIDS-focused album references the medal earned by active-duty United States military personnel injured or killed in battle. Metaphorically, Callen suggests that this is also a medal that should be awarded to people living with AIDS if AIDS was indeed a war being waged against HIV-positive people, particularly the so-called undesirables who felt most under siege: queers, injection drug users, poor people, disabled people, and people of color. According to artist and AIDS activist Gregg Bordowitz, the track "Living in War Time" on Callen's *Purple Heart* album serves as the soundtrack that structures one of the earliest direct action AIDS activist video documentaries, *Testing the Limits: NYC* (1987).[21] Callen also covers Elton John's 1970 piano ballad "Talking Old Soldiers," imbuing it with new meaning as an homage to the first generation of gay men and activists of which Callen was a part who are already war-weary from the ongoing battle against AIDS.

[20] Michael Callen, *Purple Heart*, 1988, CD.
[21] Jim Hubbard, *A Report on the Archiving of Film and Video Work by Makers with AIDS*, [no date] accessed January 20, 2013, http://www.actupny.org/diva/Archive.html; Gregg Bordowitz, *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous and Other Writings, 1986-2003* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

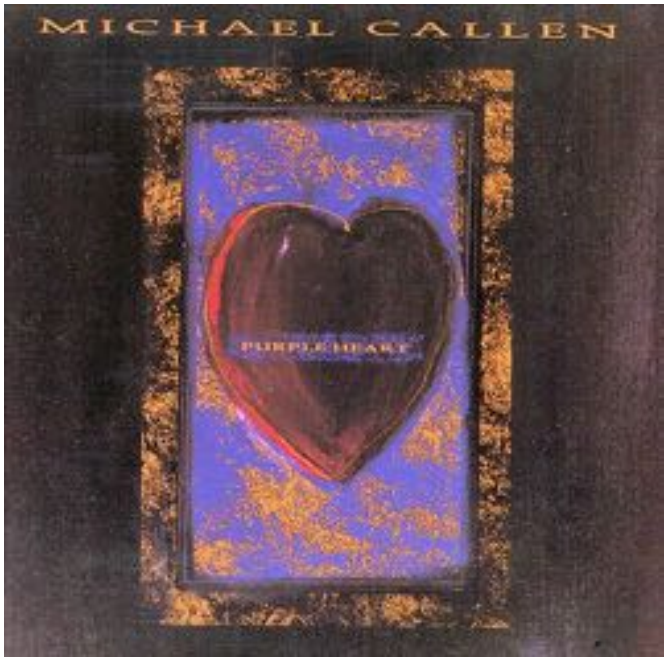

Figure 2.8 Michael Callen, *Purple Heart*, 1988. Album cover art.

A longer iteration of *Testing the Limits: NYC* was produced four years later in 1991 by the same collective, titled *Voices from the Front*. This video documentary aired on HBO in October 1992 and featured segments where activists discussed opposition to the proposed laws to quarantine and tattoo HIV-positive individuals. This documentary also included an interviewee who made the argument that not including people of color in medical trials was equal to genocide.

The war metaphors continue with the Red Ribbon project that was produced through an affinity group within Visual AIDS Artists' Caucus. The Red Ribbon, now a ubiquitous and arguably politically innocuous international symbol, was originally designed to mimic the yellow "support our troops" ribbons popularized during the United States invasion during the Gulf War in the early 1990s.[22] As one of the founding members Robert Atkins put it, "The Artists' Caucus produced the [Red] Ribbon to subvert the onslaught of gooey jingoism unleashed by the Gulf

[22] Nelson Santos, *Not Over: 25 Years of Visual AIDS* (New York, NY: Visual AIDS, 2013).

War and embodied in the yellow ribbon."[23] The activist response to the overwhelming success of the Red Ribbon project and its increasingly depoliticized and muddled meaning, once it had been taken up by celebrity entertainers, was to remind people that AIDS is not simply a fashion accessory. ACT UP Los Angeles printed stickers with an interdictory circle over a red ribbon with the text "AIDS is NOT a Fashion Statement. It is Genocide. Take another step. ACT UP."[24]

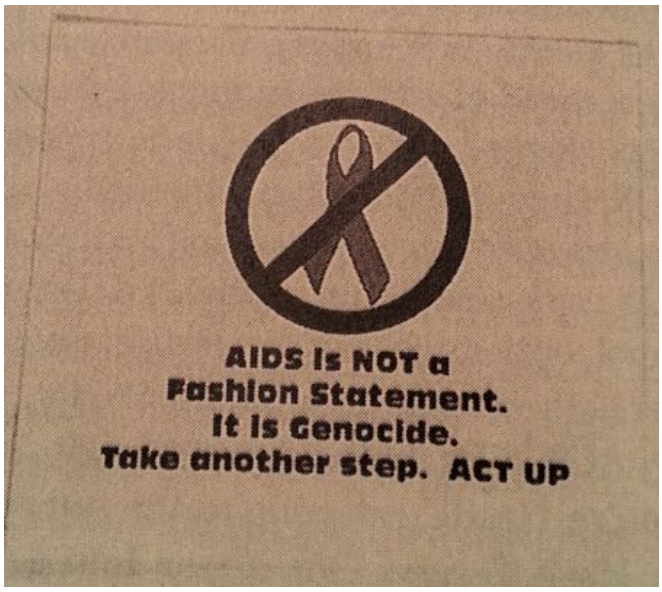

Figure 2.9 ACT UP Los Angeles, *AIDS is NOT a Fashion* Statement, date unknown. Printed reproduction.

Similar wartime sentiments are echoed in the cultural interventions undertaken during one of ACT UP/NYC's most well-known and well-coordinated days of action, referred to as the "Day of Desperation" on January 23, 1991. The night before the big day of action, John Weir, a novelist, cultural critic, and activist with ACT UP/NYC, snuck into the CBS news studios in New York City along with two others and interrupted a live broadcast of the evening news with Dan Rather. Weir, popping on screen briefly shouting "Fight AIDS not Arabs!," articulated a

[23] Robert Atkins, "Off the Wall: AIDS and Public Art," RobertAtkins.net, accessed July 17, 2016, http://www.robertatkins.net/beta/shift/culture/body/off.html.
[24] For a full overview of the debate regarding the red ribbon as depoliticized kitsch, see Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 172-75.

connection between the war abroad and the unaddressed AIDS war at home.[25] Further stressing links between George H.W. Bush's Gulf War and the AIDS crisis in the United States, ACT UP/NYC performed a massive takeover of Grand Central Station, releasing a banner affixed to helium balloons that read "Money for AIDS, Not for War." While neither intervention explicitly made the connection between war, genocide, and the Holocaust as clearly as the banner carried by ACT UP at San Francisco's Pride Parade in 1990 that read "AIDS = GENOCIDE, SILENCE = DEATH", it's clear that AIDS and war are seen on equal footing and easily comparable through the interventions undertaken as part of ACT UP/NYC's Day of Desperation.[26]

Figure 2.10 AIDS Community Television, *Day of Desperation Redux*, 1994. Video Still.

[25] Robert Siegel, writer, "Acting Up on the Evening News," in *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio, June 15, 2001, http://www.npr.org/programs/atc/features/2001/jun/010615.actingup.html.
[26] Rodriguez, Joe Fitzgerald. "ACT UP Protesters Reflect on AIDS Demonstrations 25 Years Ago." *San Francisco Examiner*, June 10, 2015. http://archives.sfexaminer.com/sanfrancisco/act-up-protesters-reflect-on-aids-demonstrations-25-years-ago/Content?oid=2932874.

Figure 2.11 John Winters, *Untitled*, June 1990. San Francisco Pride march heading east on Market Street, coinciding with Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan's speech to the Sixth International AIDS Conference. Photograph.

Two of Los Angeles-based Gregg Araki's films from the early 1990s also portray characters describing the AIDS crisis as genocide. "I think it's [AIDS] all part of the neo-Nazi Republican final solution. Germ warfare you know? Genocide," claims Luke in Araki's self-proclaimed "irresponsible" road movie, *The Living End* (1992). "It's government-sponsored genocide, biological warfare, I mean think about it. A deadly virus that is only spread through premarital sex and needle drugs, it's like a born-again Nazi Republican wet dream come true." says Michelle in *Totally Fucked Up* (1993), to which Patricia adds, "AIDS will go down in history as one of the worst holocausts ever. I mean America is committing genocide against its own people and eventually this plague's gonna rack up more casualties than Hiroshima and Hitler combined. And nobody will ever forgive our lame-shit government for just sitting back

and letting it happen." In the production notes enclosed in the 2002 DVD release of *The Living End*, Araki despondently explains,

> In the back of my mind, I was sort of hoping that by the time *The Living End* was finally released, the AIDS holocaust would be over and the movie would be something of an anachronism. Unfortunately, given our present day sociocultural climate of rightwing oppression and rampant gay-bashing, it seems even more relevant now than when it was written over three years ago [1988].

Figure 2.12 Gregg Araki, *The Living End*, 1992. Luke explaining to Jon that AIDS is genocide. DVD Still.

David Wojnarowicz's performance poetry and visual work also include comparisons between the Holocaust and AIDS. In his collage piece *Untitled (If I had a dollar…)*, he refers to politicians and government healthcare officials as "thinly disguised walking swastikas." This line is repeated in spoken word performances featured in his own 1991 video collaboration *ITSOFOMO* with Ben Neil. The same piece of performance poetry was used in an unfinished video collaboration between Wojnarowicz and Diamanda Galás called *Fire in My Belly* (1989) that was excerpted and re-edited for German filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim's documentary on the impact of the AIDS crisis on New York City artists titled *Silence = Death* (1990). In another photographic collage work titled *Subspecies Helms Senatorius* (1990), Wojnarowicz took a

photo of a plastic spider with a swastika painted on its back and collaged conservative politician Jesse Helms's face onto the spider's face.

Figure 2.13 David Wojnarowicz, *Subspecies Helms Senatorius*, 1990. Color Photograph.

Returning to Rosa Von Praunheim's films, the *Silence = Death* documentary mentioned previously opens with a videotaped performance by the punk rock performer Emilio Cubeiro of his spoken word piece, *The Death of An Asshole* (1989). In this piece he explicitly refers to AIDS as germ warfare before delivering a blistering diatribe against having had war declared on him "and this whole group of people [gays]." He finishes with a screed against AIDS victimhood and takes control of his own life by inserting a pistol into his asshole and pulling the trigger thereby killing himself. *Death of an Asshole* also acts as the title track to his 1990 album released on notorious performance artist Lydia Lunch's Widowspeak record label.

Figure 2.14 Emilio Cubeiro, *Death of An Asshole*, 1990. Cassette insert.

Praunheim's other documentary, titled *Positive* (1990), which was released the same year as *Silence = Death*, focused more on New York City's gay activist milieu fighting the AIDS epidemic. In this documentary, Praunheim interviews gay Jewish activist and writer Arnold Kantrowitz, who explicitly broaches the topic of comparisons between the AIDS crisis and the Holocaust. In Kantrowitz's meditation on the subject, he notes how some take offense to AIDS-Holocaust metaphors, but in his research and self-education about the Holocaust he sees many legitimate comparisons, including: the disappearances of many friends and acquaintances, the general public not caring, the relief exhibited by homophobes that homosexuals were going away similar to that exhibited by anti-Semites during the Holocaust, that many were killed in a short time, and that there was a great loss of contributions to the arts and philosophy due to the death of so many creative gay people and gay intellectuals. The documentary ends with a street interview at a New York City Pride festival with a man named Marty who emphatically states to the camera that AIDS was the Pearl Harbor of gay liberation. To hammer the analogy home further, a quote from playwright and AIDS activist Larry Kramer adorns the cover of the VHS

release from First Run Features, proclaiming: "This is our Holocaust, New York City is our Auschwitz, Ronald Reagan is our Hitler."

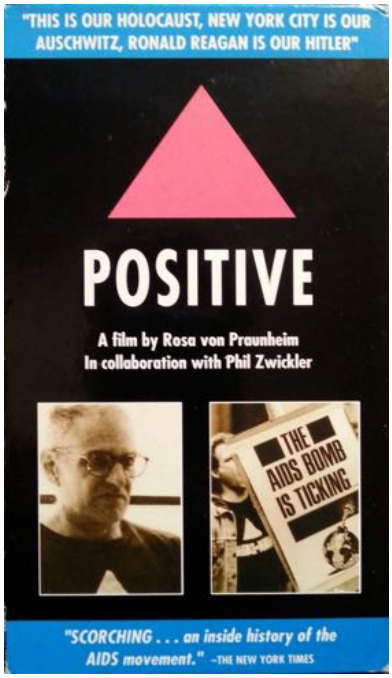

Figure 2.15 Rosa Von Praunheim, *Positive*, 1991. VHS cassette.

Critically acclaimed gay playwright Tony Kushner may be most well-known for his Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Angels in America* (1993) that was given the full made-for-television HBO treatment in 2003, but his 1987 play, *A Bright Room Called Day*, is also noteworthy. In this play, set in both the interwar years of the Weimar Republic and the 1980s in New York City, Kushner clearly compares Hitler's rise to Reagan's amongst thinly veiled references to the AIDS crisis. This comparison caused outrage with theater critics at the time of its production and is largely overshadowed by the success of *Angels in America*.[27]

[27] Frank Rich, "Making History Repeat, Even Against Its Will," review of *A Bright Room Called Day*, The New York Times, January 8, 1991, http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/08/theater/review-theater-making-history-repeat-even-against-its-will.html.

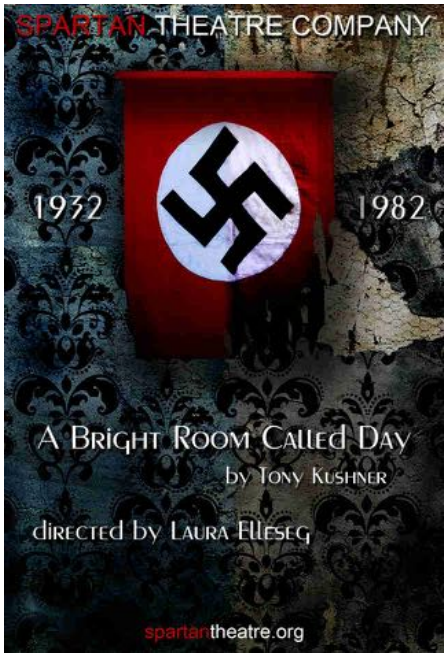

Figure 2.16 Digital poster for Tony Kushner's *A Bright Room Called Day* by the Spartan Theatre Company, Chicago, Illinois. 2014.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres also carries the Nazi Holocaust metaphor throughout a series of untitled works in the late 1980s, often featuring family portraits of Nazi leaders in jigsaw puzzle form. Notable amongst this collection of untitled works is *Untitled (1987)*, which is a photostat with Gonzalez-Torres's signature date-list. This piece starts with "Bitburg Cemetery 1985," referencing President Reagan's ceremonial visit to the graves of Waffen-SS Nazi soldiers at the request of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in order to demonstrate the repaired friendship between the U.S. and Germany after World War II.

Figure 2.17 Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *"Untitled" (Klaus Barbie as a Family Man),* 1988. C-print jigsaw puzzle in plastic bag.

Taking theatrical protests to new levels of ridiculousness, the anonymous collective of AIDS activists known as Stiff Sheets utilized the Holocaust metaphor twice at their January 1989 AIDS fashion show that coincided with a week-long protest vigil outside the Los Angeles County/University of Southern California Medical Center.[28] In John Goss's 1989 video documentary of the event, one person models a nightgown complete with a pink triangle and identification number printed directly on it, invoking the style of concentration camp chic. The MC of the event lets everyone know they should order theirs today, before the grand opening of Auschwitz-Anaheim, where they will all be transferred in the spring. After each of the AIDS-inspired ensembles are shown off before a raucous crowd, the "Parade of Homophobes" follows. In this final segment, activists march down a makeshift red carpet runway with oversized cutouts of busts of notorious serophobic homophobes. Included with Ronald Reagan, Jesse Helms, Lyndon LaRouche, Jerry Falwell, and a few other notorious contemporary enemies of people living with AIDS is Adolf Hitler.

[28] Bordowitz, *The AIDS Crisis Is Ridiculous*, 52.

Figure 2.18 John Goss, *Stiff Sheets*, 1989. Video still.

Figure 2.19 John Goss, *Stiff Sheets*, 1989. Video still.

I provide this detailed list of visual and performance work from the United States that makes the metaphoric connection between the AIDS crisis and war, the Holocaust, and genocide not to belabor my point, but to show how the analogy circulated in common usage across artistic disciplines amongst queer cultural producers at the time. This is not to elide differences in specificity between genocide, war, and the Holocaust, or even to argue that these were the only metaphors in usage by American artists making work about the AIDS crisis at the time. Rather, this brief overview of artistic and cultural works makes clear that this cluster of metaphors was in broad circulation and these works were not isolated in their metaphoric invocations.

It is also important to note that several, but certainly not all, of these queer cultural workers surveyed previously are both Jewish and/or based in New York City. These artists were contending with the ongoing historification of the Holocaust in art and literature, punctuated at the time by the 1978 award-winning, four-part, and nearly-eight-hours-long NBC TV miniseries *Holocaust*, the 1980 Broadway production of Martin Sherman's play *Bent* (1979) that examines the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, and the release of Claude Lanzmann's epic nine-hour Holocaust documentary *Shoah* in 1985. In addition to these three benchmarks of Holocaust cultural production are two groundbreaking texts. *The Men With the Pink Triangle,* translated into English in 1980 after its original publication in French in 1972, served as the inspiration for Martin Sherman's play *Bent*. This book's autobiographical account of a homosexual man's survival in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp remains one of very few testimonial accounts from homosexual survivors of Nazi persecution. *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals* published in 1986 by then-retired gay Jewish academic Richard Plant (born Plaut) provided the first scholarly overview of homosexual persecution in Nazi-occupied Europe.

For young queer and/or Jewish artists living in the United States, the historification and passing on of cultural memories of the Holocaust from older to younger generations are inescapable and clearly influenced the way these cultural workers understood the AIDS crisis in relation to their other identities and histories. The impact of these Holocaust-historicizing cultural productions and texts upon the queer consciousness of an increasingly politicized gay and lesbian community just before and during the emergence of the AIDS epidemic is undeniable, in light of the corpus of queer cultural production responding to the AIDS crisis described in this chapter. With AIDS killing people by the thousands and a number of American politicians responding to the crisis by proposing laws for mandatory testing, quarantine, and tattooing of those infected, the metaphor seemingly becomes unavoidable.[29]

The taking up and general usage of the Holocaust and genocide metaphors in relation to the AIDS crisis is particularly American. Although gay art historian Robert Atkins argues that the taking up of HIV/AIDS as a focus of art-making practices in itself is particularly American due to the lack of an affordable nationwide healthcare system, I would differ by suggesting that it is specifically the metaphor of genocide that is particular to the American HIV/AIDS art-making context.[30] While surveying queer cultural works of other Western countries with similar epidemiological profiles to the United States, it is hard to find similar metaphorical assertions. This could be due to the United States's large Jewish population that fled a hostile Europe before, during, and after World War II, with the highest concentration residing in and around the

[29]Dennis King, "America's Hitler? Behind the California AIDS Initiative," *New York Native*, November 3, 1986.
[30] Robert Atkins, "The Gay and Lesbian Looker: How Queer Artists Revolutionized Art at the End," Queer Arts Resource, [no date] accessed February 21, 2017, http://queer-arts.org/archive/show4/forum/atkins/atkins2.html.

largest epicenter of the AIDS crisis in America, New York City.[31] The United States now has the second largest Jewish population in the world. Also at play in the amplification of the genocide/Holocaust metaphor in America was, and is, the complete absence of a national healthcare system. These two key factors together likely contributed to the circulation and resonance of the genocide/Holocaust metaphor in the United States in relation to the AIDS crisis, but as Roger Hallas demonstrated in his treatise on AIDS, the queer moving image, and witnessing, other historical traumas have been invoked by different constituencies of gay men trying to make sense of the AIDS crisis the world over, including the Holocaust, U.S. slavery,[32] Australian anti-immigrant violence, and apartheid in South Africa.[33]

Although two Australian artists and the Australian chapters of the loose international ACT UP activist group utilized similar Holocaust and genocide metaphors, these pieces come from artists influenced by American artists, media, and activist frameworks. David McDiarmid's *Kiss of Light* series used swastikas in multiple works that he produced a few years after his tenure in New York, where he mingled with ACT UP activists and where many of the previously mentioned artists were based. Despite the fact that the exhibition catalog references for the recent retrospective *David McDiarmid: When This You See Remember Me* (2014) mention only the swastika's pre-Nazi spiritual uses and meanings, it is hard not to make the connection to these other artists making much different meanings from the same symbols. Christos Tsiolkas' 1995 debut novel *Loaded* features Ari, a young poofter protagonist who lists "war, disease, murder,

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[31] Elizabeth Tighe et al., *American Jewish Population Estimates: 2012,* report, September 2013, https://www.brandeis.edu/ssri/pdfs/AmJewishPopEst2012.pdf.
[32] There is one brief metaphor invoked by Kiki Mason in James Wentzy's *By Any Means Necessary* to U.S. slavery. All but this one line utilize Holocaust metaphors.
[33] Roger Hallas, *Reframing Bodies: AIDS, Bearing Witness, and the Queer Moving Image* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 38.

AIDS, genocide, Holocaust, famine…" in one breath, nihilistically explaining how and why we are all essentially screwed. These two examples do not represent the larger cultural milieu's response to or structures of feeling regarding the AIDS crisis throughout the industrialized West outside the United States.

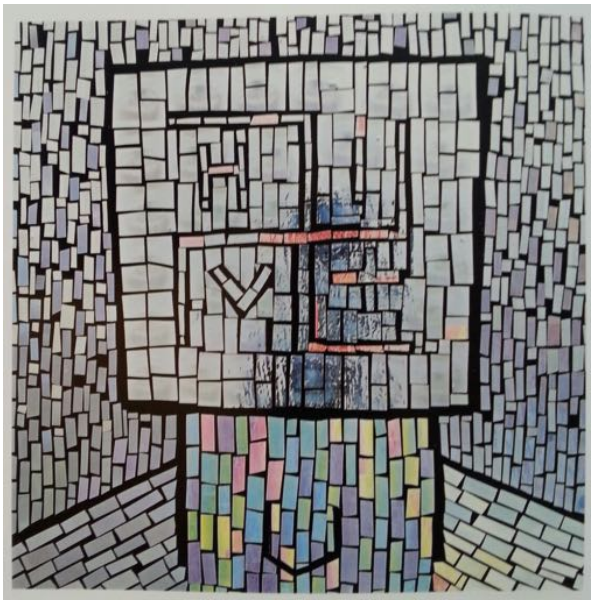

Figure 2.20 David McDiarmid, *Self-portrait IV, Kiss of Light series 1990-91*, 1990. Holographic Mylar film mosaic.

ACT UP groups across Australia coordinated nationwide demonstrations akin to those of their American counterparts. In particular, the largest national day of action was organized around the theme of D-Day. While the Ds of the day that ACT UP Australia chapters referred to were things like "Drugs", "Delays", "Deadlines", and "Death" amongst other Ds, the nationwide effort took place on June 6, 1991, the forty-seventh anniversary of the Allied forces' invasion of Normandy, a turning point in the war against Nazi occupation of western Europe. Of note is the use of the American organizing frameworks for AIDS activism (ACT UP) and the fact that outside of this one day of action, the genocide, Holocaust, and World War II/Nazi references and metaphors are largely absent within the ACT UP archives housed at the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Melbourne.

Figure 2.21 Unknown Photographer, *ACT UP D-Day on the steps of Flinders St. Station, Melbourne*. 6 June 1991

In addition to the Australian examples, a few Canadian uses of the genocide metaphor exist as well. It is easy to trace the influence of the American framework for understanding the AIDS crisis as genocide developed by artists and activists linked to ACT UP. British-born Toronto transplant Michael Smith's Brechtian theatrical production, titled *Person Livid With AIDS: A day in the life of a gay man living with AIDS*, was staged as part of Buddies in Bad Times' QueerCulture festival in 1990. One night's production was captured on a VHS tape and thirty minutes of it was rebroadcast in 1992 on the *Toronto: Living with AIDS* cable program organized by John Greyson and Michael Balser.[34] During the production, Smith invites the audience to watch the band of which he is a member rehearse for an upcoming benefit gig the following week. They perform two songs, the first of which is titled "Genocide" with the repeated refrain, "No, this time we can't just run and hide. No, this time we charge genocide!"[35] This refrain is based on the activist chant popularized at ACT UP rallies in the United States

[34] Tom Folland, "Deregulating Identity: Video and AIDS Activism," in *Mirror Machine: Video and Identity*, ed. Janine Marchessault (Toronto: YYZ Books, 1995), 233.
[35] *Person Livid With AIDS: A Day In the Life of a Gay Man with AIDS*, dir. Michael Smith, Youtube, December 1, 2016, https://youtu.be/z3CmFzrRsK4.

where someone's name precedes the refrain, for example: "George Bush, you can't hide. We charge you with genocide!"[36]

Earlier in the production, the audience sees Michael receiving a phone call from a friend. They discuss the AIDS crisis in both America and Canada. Michael remarks that he is happy to be in Canada, where there is at least universal healthcare despite ongoing difficulties to access the treatment and care available within that system. He laments, "Oh fuck, Karen, it seems like it's bloody war down in the States!" Karen tries to make the argument that it's "bloody war" in Canada too, but the argument is unconvincing, despite its important attempt at foregrounding the challenges to accessing treatment for homeless and drug-using Canadians at that time. From this on-stage performance, it is clear that Smith was connected to his American AIDS activist counterparts and again indicates the extent to which the American AIDS activist framing of AIDS as genocide influenced cultural workers outside the United States.

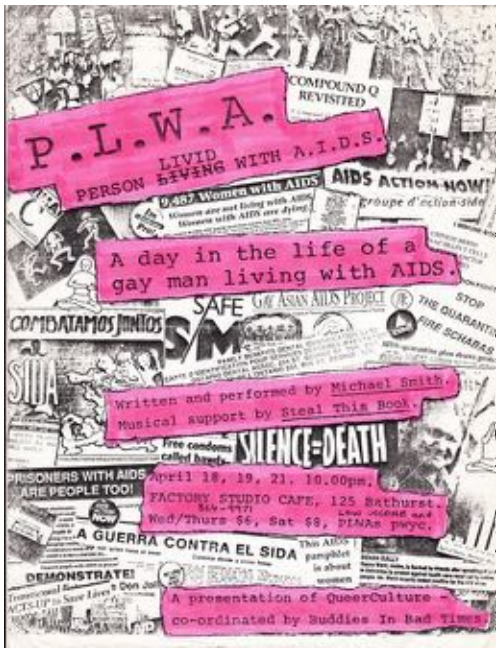

Figure 2.22 Michael Smith, *Person Livid With AIDS*, April 1990. Production poster.

[36] This chant appears on ACT UP/NY's website under a page titled "A selection of ACT UP chants that have served well in the past." http://www.actupny.org/documents/newmem5.html

In Canada, the chant "Jean Chrétien, you can't hide. We charge you with genocide!" circulated during the 1996 International Conference on AIDS in Vancouver.[37] With a large presence of American ACT UP chapter members at the conference and the reworking of a chant that was already used by Americans to vilify heads of state like George H.W. Bush and federal bureaucracies like the National Institute of Health and the Food and Drug Administration, it is clear to see the influence of the American AIDS framing as genocide moving beyond its geopolitical borders, successfully or not.[38]

Lastly, in situating the AIDS genocide/Holocaust analogy in relation to a longer view of queer history and politics, it is helpful to reflect upon how Holocaust and Nazi references came to occupy a place in gay liberation consciousness before the AIDS crisis. Historian Jim Downs mapped this out in his writing on gay liberation newspapers like *Fag Rag*, *The Body Politic*, *Gay Sunshine, Gay Community News*, and others in which discussing the Nazi persecution of homosexuals was common.[39] Downs convincingly argues that these gay liberation papers from the 1970s illuminate the ways in which gay people tried to historically situate gay culture in order to make sense of their present-day situation. This was accomplished through publishing articles that historicized events like the emergence and crushing of Magnus Hirschfield's same-sex-friendly Scientific Humanitarian Committee by Nazis in Germany and the experience of gay men and lesbians in concentration camps in central and eastern Europe during World War II.

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[37] Samantha King, "Consuming Compassion: AIDS, Figure Skating, and Canadian Identity," in *Queerly Canadian: An Introductory Reader in Sexuality Studies*, ed. Maureen FitzGerald and Scott Rayter (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2012), 439.
[38] For a full recap of ACT UP's presence at the Vancouver International Conference on AIDS, see "ACT UP @ Vancouver 1996 International AIDS Conference," ACT UP New York, accessed September 22, 2016, http://www.actupny.org/Vancouver/Vanindex.html.
[39] Jim Downs, *Stand by Me: The Forgotten History of Gay Liberation* (New York City: Basic Books, 2016), 113-141.

This history allowed readers and fellow writers to draw analogies between their lives and the lives of an imagined gay community of the past, setting the stage for the explosion of Holocaust and genocide metaphors in the next decade as the political crisis of HIV/AIDS emerged.

In addition to these works of citizen historians in the gay press excavated by Downs, early movement histories in print and on film and video gave special attention to the impact of the Holocaust on the nascent homosexual rights movement. Barry Adam's *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement* (1987) charts the emergence of homosexual cultures from the 1700s to the 1980s, dedicating an entire chapter to the Holocaust. Of note is his reference to the French Comité d'Urgence Anti-Répression Homosexuelle (CURAH), who, in 1979, demanded reparations for gay victims of Nazi persecution and gay inclusion in Holocaust memorials.[40] While historicizing the gay and lesbian movement of the 1980s, the present of when the book was written, Adams refers to HIV tests as the pink triangle of the 1980s.[41] Lionel Soukaz and Guy Hocquenghem's 1979 experimental film *Race d'Ep* also traces the French gay liberation movement back to the Nazi destruction of Magnus Hirschfield's Scientific Humanitarian Committee, much in the same manner as British video artist Stuart Marshall would do in his 1986 video documentary *Bright Eyes*.[42] These examples again demonstrate that links between gay and lesbian movements and consciousness to the history of the Holocaust were well-established and ongoing before the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic arrived in the early 1980s.

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[40] Adams, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, 123.
[41] Ibid, 158.
[42] Interestingly enough, Marshall would later go on to vehemently disagree with his American gay and lesbian counterparts over the use of the pink triangle and Nazi/Holocaust metaphors, calling the comparison "entirely inappropriate." See Stuart Marshall, "The Contemporary Political Use of Gay History: The Third Reich," in *How Do I Look? Queer Film and Video*, ed. Bad Object-Choices (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 87.

It is also worth noting that cultural works which evidence the continued curiosity in and yearning for an imagined historical gay community continues beyond the days of gay liberation and the worst of the AIDS crisis. The 1995 translation and publication of the autobiography *I, Pierre Seel, Deported Homosexual: A Memoir of Nazi Terror*, Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's documentary *Paragraph 175* (2000), the San Francisco-based GLBT Historical Society's fall 2016 exhibition *Through Knowledge to Justice: The Sexual World of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935)*, and recently built memorials to gay victims of the Holocaust in Amsterdam (1987), Frankfurt (1994), Cologne (1995), Sydney (2001), San Francisco (2003), Berlin (2008), and Tel Aviv (2015) are but a few noteworthy examples. The year 2016 also saw the publication of American historian Clayton Whisnant's book *Queer Identities and Politics in Germany: A History 1880-1945*. 2017 will see a revamped video installation and performance by Los Angeles-based lesbian artist Ann P. Meredith based on her 2014 video documentary *TRIANGLES: Witnesses of the Holocaust*.

Much ink has rightfully been spilled discussing how and why the Holocaust has become *the* event to which acts of government suppression and violence are compared to today, as opposed to the many other historical genocides from which one could choose.[43] However, taking into account the specificity and genealogy of the Holocaust and its repercussions on gay and lesbian people as demonstrated in the works mentioned, offers an understanding of how genocide and Holocaust metaphors came to occupy a place in the gay and lesbian political imagination during the AIDS crisis. It is a metaphor specifically contextualized within a history of

[43] For an elaboration on this concept and the arguments over the use of Holocaust comparisons, see Martin Shaw, "The Holocaust Standard," in *What Is Genocide?, 2nd Edition* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 53-65.

homosexual persecution as opposed to a generic stand-in for the ultimate measure of state violence applicable across time and place.

Returning to Wentzy's short film, after framing the AIDS epidemic as genocide, Mason's words turn ever more towards demanding radical action, while the video of concentration camp carnage in the background becomes more and more visible. While the anonymous narrator on-screen suggests radical actions like holding drug company executives hostage, splattering blood on politicians, trashing AIDS researchers' homes, and spitting in the face of television reporters, we see bulldozers pushing heaps of lifeless bodies into mass graves and deteriorating body parts strewn about. Although the anonymous man demands these actions he acknowledges that most, including himself, find it difficult to conjure up the courage necessary to carry out such action. He concludes by calling upon heterosexual and HIV-negative allies to join the fight and for queers to utilize their queerest gift, creativity, to discover new ways to fight the battle against their continued genocide. In the final seconds of the video, the man slowly moves off-screen, rendering the background footage fully visible as a limp and decomposing body is slowly pulled from a mass grave.

Figure 2.23 James Wentzy, *By Any Means Necessary*, 1994. Video Still. Decomposing body being lifted from mass grave.

Framing Genocide and the Politics of Emotions

Jim Hubbard, a co-founder of the MIXNYC film festival and longtime colleague of James Wentzy, recently exhibited two of Wentzy's videos at the Fales Library at New York University. This took place as part of the 2013 AIDS histories exhibition *"Not only this, but 'New language beckons us.'"* Hubbard's curatorial statement for his contribution to the exhibition refers explicitly to *By Any Means Necessary*, outlining his wariness as a Jew of making analogies between AIDS and the Holocaust—a wariness, he notes, that is often expressed by others. He goes on, "But James Wentzy by combining the physicality of the imagery and the cold-bloodedness of the narration forces me to recognize the connections between mass death from a preventable epidemic and mass death in the gas chamber."[44]

This controversial yet often employed framing of AIDS as genocide in the late 1980s and 1990s by activists and artists alike is a clear indication of the shifting emotional state of gay and lesbian people facing the onslaught of a seemingly unending deadly epidemic. Deborah Gould points out that this framing did not resonate emotionally or instigate necessary political organizing amongst gays and lesbians when Larry Kramer first penned "1,112 and Counting" in the *New York Native* in 1983, using a genocide framework with Holocaust metaphors for understanding AIDS.[45] She notes that by the late 1980s, the AIDS-as-genocide framework began to resonate emotionally and politically with gays and lesbians in ways it had not before. Gould accounts for this shifting emotional habitus—the embodied, somewhat unconscious

[44] Jim Hubbard, "Jim Hubbard on James Wentzy," *"Not Only This, but 'New Language Beckons Us,'"* Fales Library and Special Collections, March 22, 2013, https://medium.com/office-notebook/not-only-this-but-new-language-beckons-us-at-fales-library-and-special-collections-64fdb7a3f9af#.mowuf25nr.
[45] Gould, *Moving Politics*, 165.

emotional disposition of a group formed through social and political forces—in convincing detail, saying in summary:

> …given a context of immense and apparently intentional government neglect, popular and legislative support for quarantine, denial of basic civil rights by the Supreme Court [*Hardwick v. Bowers*], media hysteria, and horrific illness and ever-increasing deaths, lesbians and gay men no longer saw it as farfetched to compare thousands of deaths from a virus with the millions of deaths due to intentional state murder.[46]

Discussing the implications of framing further, Judith Butler argues in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (2010) that,

> Ungrievable lives are those that cannot be lost, and cannot be destroyed, because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone; they are ontologically and from the start already lost and destroyed which means that when they are destroyed in war, nothing is destroyed.[47]

Although Butler's concern in this text is the way the U.S. government frames and justifies the ongoing war on terror from the top down, it is instructive to think through the possible ways her theorizing about framing could be applied to the bottom-up framing of AIDS as genocide by queer artists and activists. If the AIDS epidemic was, indeed, a war between those with and those without state power as so many queers claimed, does that make queers—again amongst other so-called undesirables—ungrievable subjects as far as the U.S. government, the medical establishment, and the so-called general population was concerned? Could the framing of the AIDS epidemic by queer artists and activists as genocide then be understood as an attempt to reframe the crisis in a way that contests the subject position of queers as ungrievable by tapping into the emotional responses related to a familiar "indisputable instance of immorality" like the Holocaust?[48] Could the genocide framework also be used by queers to make a moral argument

[46] Ibid, 169-170.
[47] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), xxx.
[48] Arlene Stein as quoted in Gould, *Moving Politics*, 166.

for the right to grieve on a massively public and political scale?[49] Was the much-contested term "genocide" a helpful mechanism through which queers could challenge their precariousness, tap into a well of strong emotional responses, and mobilize against the deadly complicity of the government, medical establishment, and so-called general population?

In an exchange between David Kazanjian and Marc Nichanian over what the term "genocide" does and does not do in relation to the still unacknowledged Armenian Catastrophe/ genocide, Kazanjian summarizes some of Nichanian's claims:

> It ["genocide"] is not simply a word we use to represent an event we can know. Rather it has become a word that represents us in our use of it. It does so by continually restaging what [Zabel] Essayan and [Hagop] Oshagan figure as the Catastrophe itself: not only the loss of the law of mourning, but also the denial of the loss of the law or mourning. "Genocide" denies this loss and so performs the Catastrophe again and again.[50]

He continues, stating that "…'Genocide' is not itself a silence; rather it imposes a silence by entombing the Event [Armenian Catastrophe/genocide] within the pursuit of a calculable verdict."[51] In this linguistic configuration of "genocide," Kazanjian and Nichanian are concerned about the un-transmittable experience of mass death on such a large scale that it remains indescribable despite linguistic attempts to do so. Furthermore, this passage suggests that naming anything a "genocide" renders its indescribability mute and thus perpetrates the horror of events like state-sponsored mass death in trying to rationalize or calculate the un-calculable. The loss of concern here appears to be the loss that occurs when trying to translate complex and unknowable histories and experiences into language.

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[49] Here I am thinking of another set of videos put together by James Wentzy documenting the many political funerals ACT UP did, including those of David Wojnarowicz, Tim Bailey, and ACT UP's Ashes Action.
[50] David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 129.
[51] Ibid, 130.

Despite these claims to the contrary, how might the word "genocide" also act as a generative naming and performative framing of a catastrophic event like the AIDS crisis, whose complex history has been, as Finkelstein noted, largely "slipped under the shadows of our [current] zeitgeists, and well-worn media tropes supplant more disorderly truths?"[52] How might employing a highly contested term like "genocide" to describe the AIDS epidemic by artists and activists in the 1980s and 1990s perform an opening-up of political power for queer subjects that were considered disposable, undesirable, and ungrievable? Additionally, what political and affective implications might there be to name and remember the AIDS crisis in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s as a form of queer genocide?

Forgetting AIDS as Genocide

During my experience volunteering at a queer and trans youth drop-in center in central Maine over the last decade, an unending amount of energy, resources, and time was squandered on fights to repeal Don't Ask Don't Tell and gain access to same-sex marriage benefits. During this same time, AIDS service organizations were handed the largest austerity measures in the history of the epidemic, marked locally by the closure of the Maine AIDS Alliance, All About Prevention, the Lewiston/Auburn needle exchange, and the Maine Community Planning Group on HIV Prevention, of which I was a member. Numerous services for young queer and trans folks also closed their doors concurrently.[53] Many of the queer and trans young people who came to the drop-in program were devastated in 2009 when the gay marriage referendum failed in Maine only to be overjoyed by its approval by referendum in 2012. The emotional habitus now

[52] Finkelstein, "AIDS 2.0."
[53] Ryan Conrad, "Against Equality in Maine and Everywhere," in *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage* (Lewiston: AE Press, 2010), 43-50.

seemed much like Yasmin Nair and I had previously described in the spring 2011 edition of the online journal *We Who Feel Differently*:

> Years from now, children will draw around campfires and listen to tales of the dark ages when gay marriages were not allowed. Their eyes will widen at this historical fiction: first, gay men and lesbians were repressed; then, they gained a measure of sexual freedom in the 1970s; were struck by AIDS in the 1980s (as punishment for their pleasure-seeking ways); and finally came to realize that gay marriage would be their salvation.[54]

Kenyon Farrow, the former director of Queers for Economic Justice, shares a similar sentiment. Speaking on a December 2012 panel about gay marriage and equality at the New School for Social Policy in New York City, Farrow stated:

> One of the things that I think we need to be very careful [about] is how the push for same-sex marriage is not a natural, it's not… I want to remove this assumption that this [gay marriage] is next step in kind of LGBT… We went from Stonewall and now marriage is what made logical sense. No. That was actually a process that was very much involved in a kind of response to AIDS and a kind of reaction to ACT UP and to some of the more radical elements in queer organizing. And some political choices were made to drive us in this particular direction and that there are a hell of a lot of resources that have also backed up that decision.[55]

The emotional habitus in which queer political work is now done has significantly shifted once again. Whereas anger once had an accompanying radical political vision in the 1980s, anger has now been traded in for respectable calm and political inclusion within the status quo. Queers have somehow gone from demanding universal healthcare during the AIDS crisis to demanding marriage rights so they can access health insurance through partner benefits, assuming one has a job with health insurance benefits in the first place.

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[54] Ryan Conrad and Yasmin Nair, "Against Equality: Defying Inclusion, Demanding Transformation in the U.S. Gay Political Landscape," *We Who Feel Differently*, no. 1 (Spring 2011), http://www.wewhofeeldifferently.info/journal.php?issue=1#AE.

[55] *Marriage and Equality with Melissa Harris-Perry at the New School for Social Policy*. Youtube. Accessed January 20, 2013. http://youtu.be/BnFR4kpDYUE.

An attempt to unpack which events have structured the shift in emotional habitus is beyond the scope of this chapter; however, it is important to note that the structuring function of neoliberal economics alone is not a sufficient optic to account for these changes. It is clear that an epochal shift in political and emotional dispositions amongst gay and lesbian people has occurred within the years of cultural production documented in this chapter. Present-day gay and lesbian politics and visual representations have largely distanced themselves from sexual liberation and HIV/AIDS histories in an attempt to appear respectable and deserving of the tenuous rights gained thus far. Worse yet are the present-day gay and lesbian political organizations and cultural productions that prey upon and co-opt past radical political movements with deeply revisionist agendas. Suddenly the Stonewall riots become a quaint tea party paving the way to nuptial bliss and the AIDS crisis becomes a moment of great maturity for gay men who have now left behind their rebellious, promiscuous, youthful bad boy days at the kids' table and now occupy a proper place at the grown-up table. The question remains: how did such a radical shift in mood or collective affective states, which necessarily shape what is imagined as possible, take place? How do we revive a radical queer political imagination in the present? These questions are examined in Chapter Four.

Remembering the Dead

On October 10, 1988, just two years before he died from AIDS-related illness, Vito Russo delivered a speech at an ACT UP demonstration at the Department of Health and Human Services in Washington, D.C. Titled "Why We Fight," he said,

> Living with AIDS is like living through a war which is happening only for those people who happen to be in the trenches. Every time a shell explodes, you look around and you discover that you've lost more of your friends, but nobody else notices. It isn't happening to them. They're walking the streets as though we weren't

> living through some sort of nightmare. And only you can hear the screams of the people who are dying and their cries for help. No one else seems to be noticing.[56]

Now that most of the trenches filled with the lifeless bodies of quickly forgotten HIV-positive queers are quietly covered over, what does it mean not to historicize this period of the AIDS crisis in the same manner as those who experienced it firsthand and so loudly named it genocide? What does it mean to misremember or forget the war dead who fought courageously so that fags like me could live? My war dead are those same queers, who, like Michael Callen and Richard Berkowitz, helped develop some of the first strategies on how to have sex in an epidemic without becoming another casualty in the ongoing war against queers.[57]

Returning to the questions this chapter opens with: What does it mean to not remember the AIDS crisis on the terms by which it was described by those queer artists and activists who experienced the death and destruction first hand, but are no longer here to tell us about it? What do we make of those who survived and continue to produce AIDS histories through art and visual culture, while abandoning the terms by which their experience was once so readily described?

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[56] Vitto Russo, "Why We Fight" (speech), accessed January 20, 2013, http://www.actupny.org/documents/whfight.html. This speech is also used by Canadian videomaker Mike Hoolbloom in his 1996 short *Letters From Home* and also appears in both *How to Survive a Plague* and *United in Anger*.

[57] Richard Berkowitz and Michael Callen, *How to Have Sex in an Epidemic: One Approach* (New York: News from the Front Publications, 1983).

Figure 2.24 Demian DinéYazhi'/R.I.S.E.: Radical Indigenous Survivance & Empowerment, *American NDN AIDS Flag*, 2015, 11 x 17" poster.

What might reasserting the genocide framework on the queer historical experience of HIV/AIDS do? Could a present-day naming of the past queer collective experience of HIV/AIDS be as generative as I perceive it to have been historically? Might queers who are not already part of other marginalized communities then see themselves in stronger relation to other people's struggles against the settler colonialism, racism, and xenophobia so commonly connected with other genocides past and present? How might an acknowledged history of queer genocide temper queer demands for recognition and inclusion within state forms that have been and can be used to dehumanize us once again? For the moment, the answers to these questions remain entirely speculative, but the reassertion of the AIDS crisis as genocide has crept back into contemporary queer work created by a younger generation of cultural workers. For example, Eric Stanley and Chris Vargas' featurette *Homotopia* (2007), my own experimental short film *things are different now…* (2012), and the transdisciplinary work of queer indigenous artists like Demian DinéYazhi' that put AIDS in direct dialogue with histories of genocidal settler colonialism.

These works, if nothing else, open up a space to imagine what remembering our queer histories differently might mean.

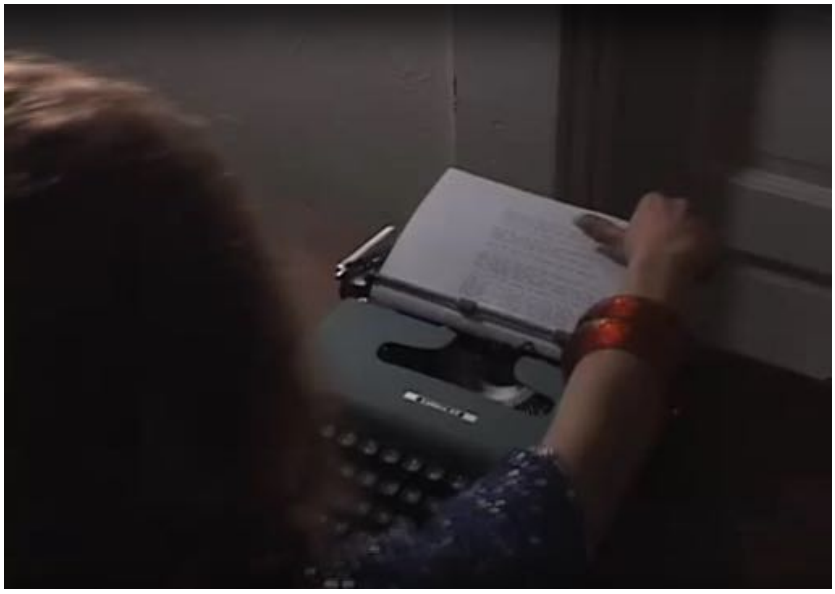

Figure 2.25 Chris Vargas and Eric Stanley, *Homotopia*, 2007. Unidentified character delivering opening manifesto in which HIV/AIDS is described as genocide. DVD Still.

Figure 2.26 Ryan Conrad, *things are different now…*, 2012. Video Still.

Trauma, Memory, Postmemory

If we are to take seriously the claims that the AIDS crisis, as experienced by queer subjects in the United States when the cultural works and discourses examined in this chapter were produced, was in fact akin to genocide, then it is useful to turn to Holocaust and genocide

studies. This allow us to see what theoretical frameworks may be helpful in answering the broad question opening this chapter: what are the stakes of historicizing and canonizing particular cultural memories of the AIDS crisis in the current AIDS revisitation moment?[58] Although some may argue that the time period of focus in this chapter does not resemble an actively calculated and pursued genocide on behalf of state powers, but something more akin to the malicious structured abandonment of a minority population, it is still instructive to follow this line of inquiry. I am much less interested in whether or not the AIDS crisis can officially be considered a genocide or not, but more pointedly in what we might be able to learn if we engage the contributions of genocide, Holocaust, and trauma studies to think through the lasting impacts of the AIDS crisis on contemporary gay and lesbian politics today.

History of science scholar Ruth Leys makes the critical point in *Trauma: A Genealogy*, her historical overview of the competing concepts of trauma circulating since the turn of the 19th century, that the very definition of trauma remains up for debate.[59] Despite this conceptual difficulty, it is useful to work from a shared definition of trauma, particularly one taken up within the Humanities since the 1990s and which has come to prominence in the American academy, in order to proceed. Trauma theorist Cathy Caruth, a leading figure in trauma studies, develops a general definition of trauma:

> In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.[60]

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[58] For a detailed account of the "AIDS revisitation moment," see Alexandra Juhasz and Theodore Kerr, "Home Video Returns: Media Ecologies of the Past of HIV/AIDS," *Cineaste*, Spring 2014, http://www.cineaste.com/spring2014/home-video-returns-media-ecologies-of-the-past-of-hiv-aids/.

[59] Ruth Leys, *Trauma*.

[60] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 11.

Caruth elucidates further that trauma is not located in the event itself, but in how the event continues to revisit those who experienced it first hand, or how it continues to haunt the survivor long after the event itself. It is, in fact, the psychic wound that demands continued attention long after the actual event itself has passed and, in many cases, after the survivor has made it to a place of relative safety. Indeed, it is the very belatedness and unrelenting return of trauma's psychic address that marks it differently than other negative or painful life experiences.

Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed take up Caruth's theory of how trauma functions as a belated and incessant return to the site of catastrophic loss in order to think specifically in terms of the AIDS crisis, which they note very few trauma scholars have done.[61] Castiglia and Reed develop a theory of "de-generational unremembering" in order to connect what they see as the disavowal of radical pre-AIDS gay liberation social, political, and erotic practices that are jettisoned by both AIDS crisis survivors and younger generations of queer people in order to forget an all-too-traumatic memory of the AIDS crisis. This theoretical gesture also appears in Patrick Moore's *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the Abandoned History of Radical Gay Sexuality* (2004) where he, like Castiglia and Reed, argues for the necessity of remembering and honoring a pre-AIDS gay past in order to embark on present-day queer worldmaking projects.[62] However, these two works on AIDS, trauma, and memory, open themselves up to a variety of criticisms. From idealizing a gay past marked by internal conflict, white supremacy,

[61] Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer past* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
[62] Patrick Moore, *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the Abandoned History of Radical Gay Sexuality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004).

misogyny, and transphobia, to overvaluing the potential of identity-based politics and sexual communities, these works commit significant oversights.[63]

To clarify, with this chapter, I do not wish to convey the same trajectory of remembering pre-AIDS gay liberation cultures and their recovery for present-day worldmaking projects the way Castiglia, Reed, and Moore do. Instead, I insist on remembering the catastrophic event of the AIDS crisis and the lasting psychic wounds created by the unimaginable loss of life under conditions of extreme homophobia, state indifference, and gross medical negligence. I foreground the trauma of the AIDS crisis, survivors' memories of it, and the transmission of these memories to subsequent generations of queer people as a generative site to think about queer life and politics in the present as historically bound subjects. This project is not one that nostalgically yearns to relive the days of the AIDS crisis that brought together varying forms of social and political solidarity unimaginable amongst queer people until that time. Instead, this project is one that investigates how the experience of trauma and the transmission of traumatic memories of the AIDS crisis might be productive for thinking about political affinities and acts of solidarity linking communities of people in the queer present. While forgetting may be a strategy of psychic survival and has historically been argued as the cure to trauma, much like Freud's cathartic talking cure,[64] I want to explore how one might forget the catastrophic event enough to go on living, but remember enough so as to not lose sight of the traumatic event so that it can continue to inform the present. Perhaps this is a both/and of Freud's mourning and melancholy, not an either/or. Freud argues that mourning indicates the successful psychic letting

[63] For a detailed analysis of these criticisms, see Tom Roach, "If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past by Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed (review)," *Cultural Criticism*, no. 84 (Spring 2013): 217-224

[64] Leys, *Trauma*, 212-216.

go of a lost object, while melancholy indicates a demobilizing inability to mourn a lost object.[65] I am interested in a scenario in which one can successfully hold onto a lost object while overcoming the debilitating effects of holding onto said lost object. In other words, how might we engage both mourning and melancholia together, not to simply to survive historical traumas by letting go of the past, but to survive the unfolding present that will always be haunted by the traumas of the past?

Central to the understanding of traumatic experiences as described by theorists like Caruth and taken up by Castiglia and Reed is the concept of memory, the psychic mechanism of holding onto an event, not forgetting. Like trauma, the ability to locate a stable definition for memory is difficult in the ever-overlapping fields of memory studies, psychoanalysis, and cultural studies. Castiglia and Reed, along with Marita Sturken, develop similar theories of cultural memory in specific relation to the AIDS crisis. Although these theorists conducted and published their research on opposite sides of the invention of life-saving HIV medications in the mid-1990s, their working theoretical concepts to make sense of memory as both an individual and shared cultural process are useful.

For Castiglia, Reed, and Sturken, scientific arguments about how memory functions in the brain are avoided in pursuit of a more generally used cultural definition of memory. They see memory as a form of recall, at times quotidian and at others quite profound. Memory, Sturken argues, has a role in being able to complete everyday tasks or even recognize the self. Sturken continues to describe memory as that which allows for a continuity between the past and the present and a coherence to life.[66] Additionally, Castiglia and Reed argue that memory is more of

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[65] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *The Penguin Freud Reader*, ed. Adam Phillips (London: Penguin, [1917] 2006).
[66] Sturken, *Tangled Memories,* 1-17.

a creative act enabled by the imagination than a direct retrieval of archived past events. They argue that all acts of recall can be influenced by any subsequent events following the event being recalled, by present-day factors that create the demand for the moment of recall, and by the imagination.[67]

In both their texts, the concept of cultural memory, as opposed to individual memory, is foregrounded in their studies on the AIDS epidemic and memory. While acknowledging that discreet boundaries between individual and cultural memory as well as between memory and history are difficult, Sturken uses the term "cultural memory" to define memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourses yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning.[68] To illustrate this framework, she describes the AIDS Memorial Quilt as a technology through which memories are shared and an object is instilled with cultural meaning by its creators.

In this framework of cultural memory, Castiglia, Reed, and Sturken see cultural memory as a generative framework to understand the processes of worldmaking in the present that is inflected by the way we make meaning through the recall of past events. In Sturken's case, she is interested in how cultural memory can be the basis for oppositional politics within and against official national histories. Castiglia and Reed offer similar optimism for the possibilities of cultural memory, claiming that:

> […]memory is not a transparent re-creation of the past but an imaginative combination of criticism and invention that allows us to wrestle ideals from the losses of the past in order to contemplate them, imaginatively, as possibilities in the present and options for the future.[69]

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[67] Castiglia and Reed, *If Memory Serves*, 11-12.
[68] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 3.
[69] Castiglia and Reed, *If Memory Serves*, 191.

In both cases, practices of cultural memory create the radical possibility of reimagining the way the past comes to bear on the present.

While their scholarly projects differ greatly in tone and political vision from the work of Jose Muñoz, his treatise on queer futurity and utopian longing help further illuminate the stakes at play in creating frameworks for thinking about how memory and the imagination come to bear on the present in crucial, generative ways. In discussing the turn to the no-longer-conscious of the past, Muñoz convincingly argues that:

> The present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and "rational" expectations. Let me be clear that the idea is not simply to turn away from the present. One cannot afford such a maneuver, and if one thinks one can, one has resisted the present in favor of folly. The present must be known in relation to the alternative temporal and spatial maps provided by a perception of past and future worlds.[70]

In this passage, and in the larger project of *Cruising Utopia* from which this passage comes, Muñoz animates the possibilities of radical future queer worldmaking projects through a dialectical relationship between the queer past and present. He argues against evidencing protocols with an empirical aim to retrieve the past in favor of foregrounding utopian longing for what is not here in the present, but in the then and there of imagined past worlds to be discovered through traces in cultural works these past worlds have left behind.

What use, then, is the framework of cultural memory, the collective and ongoing creative process of recall necessitated by a present that is simply not enough for queer life, to understanding the trauma of the pre-protease-inhibitors days of the AIDS crisis and the ways it continues to exert itself on the present? The call of cultural memory for both Castiglia, Reed, and

[70] Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 27.

Sturken acts as an almost therapeutic mechanism against trauma's imperative for survivors to forget in order to psychically heal and continue living. Castiglia and Reed see cultural memory as a strategy against the "de-generational unremembering" caused by the AIDS crisis in order to remember the promise of pre-AIDS gay liberation. Sturken sees memorials such as the AIDS Memorial Quilt or the Vietnam War Memorial as technologies of cultural memory that allow for mourning, healing, and remembering the dead. What is of interest to my research, however, is not how a theory of cultural memory might serve to recover an unremembered promise of the recent past or as a tool to analyze collective processes of mourning that allow for recognition, closure, and survival, but rather how a theory of cultural memory can account for the passing on of trauma from one generation to another.

Holocaust scholar Marianne Hirsch develops a theory of postmemory in her recent work on intergenerational trauma and cultural practices. Hirsch posits that,

> Postmemory describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.[71]

Hirsch goes on to elaborate that postmemory is the work of the imaginative investment in a connection to the past that is not mediated by direct experience, but by creative displacement of one's own narrative by another who was in fact there. In Hirsch's work she describes at length the many processes through which postmemories enter the consciousness of the next generation: oral storytelling traditions, preserved and passed-on household objects, quotidian repetitive behaviors, and in particular, familial photographs.

[71] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 5.

The theoretical framework of postmemory expanded upon by Hirsch fails to account for the passing on of trauma and memory outside of the framework of heterosexual familial procreation.[72] Although Hirsch gestures towards a theory of "affiliative" postmemory, she fails to develop the concept beyond the introduction of her text, and, in fact, does not apply the briefly alluded-to concept to any non-familial accounts of shared intergenerational trauma, queer or otherwise.[73]

In order to develop a queer theory of affiliative postmemory in relation to the passing on of traumatic memories of the AIDS crisis between different generations of queer people, the geopolitical specificities of where such acts take place must be addressed. In the United States, where the cultural work this chapter dwells upon was created, a number of factors contribute to how a culture of postmemory has or has not formed in relation to the historical trauma of the AIDS crisis. The death of many from the AIDS generation due to illnesses and complications associated with AIDS makes the passing on of cultural memory largely available only in the cultural archive they have left behind. These are cultural archives that have been destroyed by families of origin, incinerated at municipal waste facilities because there was no next of kin to claim them upon the creator's death, scattered and diffused amongst networks of friends and lovers, and omitted from official national and local histories as unimportant or tertiary.

For the cultural archives that have survived, there is also the question of whether they can be located. Not only are these cultural archives less popular and relatively more difficult to find, younger queer generations must first learn that there is something to be sought in the first place.

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[72] In Hirsch's introduction to the concept of postmemory, she notes other scholars working on the concept in the field of Holocaust and memory studies, not limited to: Ellen Fine, Celia Lury, Alison Landsuberg, Henri Racymow, Nadine Fresco, Froma Zeitlin, James Young, and Gabriel Schwab.

[73] Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, 36.

It was my own questioning as to why I had no gay men over thirty in my circle of activists, friends, or mentors when I was in my twenties, or the fact that I had no access to queer culture or history in my formal education, that led me to actively seek out these people and cultural archives in order to learn from them. In essence, I located a lack that is difficult to perceive when not being born into an existent cultural communities anchored by biological families.

Unlike ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, the near-universal queer experience of not being born into a biological family with a de facto shared cultural community organized around sexual identity poses a problem to the framework of postmemory as developed by Hirsch. Rather than concede that queers intrinsically cannot experience postmemory or that generational trauma cannot be passed from one generation to another outside the confines of heteronormative families, Hirsch's theory needs a thorough queering that moves away from the assumed framework of reproductive futurism that re-inscribes the biological family unit as the only site through which trauma is passed on.

Furthermore, in locating postmemory in a queer experience, we cannot take for granted the deep homophobia that locates older gay men as dangerous predators whose relationship to younger people, particularly children, can only be conceived of as one of sexual exploitation. The gay witch hunts of the 1980s and 1990s that saw scores of gay men and some lesbians working in educational and childcare settings incarcerated on false accusations of child sexual abuse fortified by junk science is but one iteration of the dominant cultural assumptions about gay men's intentions when interacting with young people, and children in particular. The constant legal threat, not to mention the punitive social costs of mere accusations or insinuations, to the lives of queers who risk interacting with younger queers under this silencing cultural

assumption may have abated some in recent years, but still occupies a space in the broader American imagination .[74]

So what might a practice of passing on traumatic cultural memory look like for queers in relation to the AIDS crisis? What might a non-heteronormative theory of affiliative postmemory look like? While it is not necessarily interesting to reify "family" as a productive way of thinking about queer kinship networks, Kath Weston's work on "families of choice" does the work that Hirsch fails to do, and twenty-five years ago at that. Weston's groundbreaking sociological study sheds light on the ways gays and lesbians create kinship networks that provide mutual care and security: in essence, how gays and lesbians build families despite exclusion from family law. Weston's claims of the existence of varied and diverse queer families are now commonplace in the zeitgeist of queer culture, despite the current drift towards replicating the closed model of nuclear heterosexual coupledom through gay marriage; her assertion that the ways queer people organize their kinship networks amongst friends and lovers is on par with biological heterosexual families challenges the ways in which Hirsch posits postmemory as a largely heterosexual familial affair.

I would contend that the queer experience of intergenerational trauma brought about by the AIDS crisis and transmitted through cultural memory should not be paired with familial postmemory by arguing that queer kinships can constitute families as well. Rather, I would argue that it is more productive to take up the concept of affiliative postmemory in a way that

[74] For a detailed account of this phenomenon, see Debbie Nathan and Michael R. Snedeker, *Satan's Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch Hunt* (New York City: Basic Books, 1996); *Southwest of Salem*. Directed by Deborah Esquenazi. San Francisco: Chicken and Egg Films, 2016. Vimeo.

decenters the concept of family, biological or otherwise, as necessary for the phenomenon of postmemory to emerge. By developing a concept of postmemory through cultural affiliation as opposed to familial, this theoretical tool for thinking about the ways historical traumas are vicariously passed on and relived from one generation to the next remains more open to different applications across cultural communities and not necessarily wed to concepts of family and reproduction. How might networks of people connected through class, gender, region, ability or any other non-familial affinities who may collectively experience a historical truama pass those traumatic memories on to others that share their affiliation? By working with a theory of affiliative as opposed to familial postmemory, cross-generational identification and the passing on of trauma outside the confines of family remains a possibility.

What use are trauma theory and postmemory in the context of the AIDS crisis? At its most basic level, these theoretical frameworks help me understand my own experiences as what Holocaust scholars would call the 1.5 generation. This term refers to those of us who were too young to have experienced the trauma of the event firsthand, but old enough to recall fragments of the event. The 1.5 generation experiences the traumatic event largely through our relationship to the generation who experienced it firsthand. Postmemory helps explain the feeling I get when watching AIDS activist video footage, where I recognize people I have never met as if they were old friends whose histories I know in detail. Much like Hirsch notes that photographs functioned as the technology of postmemory for the Holocaust, video functions for the AIDS crisis in much the same manner. I have been exposed to so many hours of HIV/AIDS-related video footage that these moving images, the people and events that populate them, have come to stand in as if they were my own memories themselves. A theory of postmemory also helps explain how I can chronicle in detail events from the 1980s from memory, yet was born in 1983. It also helps

explain unexplained psychic and physiological phenomena I experience like night sweats, weeping over videos, the panic that sets in after any riskier sexual encounters or onset of even the mildest of flus, and the melancholic attachment to the trauma of the AIDS crisis that in no small way powered me through this harrowing research project.

Beyond explaining my own experience, these two theoretical models of trauma and postmemory help explain the forgetting of some AIDS narratives while others rise to prominence. Trauma theory contributes to our understanding of the hero narratives of recent documentary films like *How to Survive a Plague* and *United in Anger*, where the explicitness of traumatic, slow, painful deaths, like those portrayed in *Silverlake Life: The View from Here* (1993), are shuffled to the cutting room floor. When I taught a course on AIDS film and video last year, it was only after seeing *Silverlake Life* where a pair of gay lovers literally documented each other slowly and painfully dying onscreen from AIDS-related illnesses, that the now-ubiquitous images of heroic AIDS activists in this moment of AIDS revisitation made sense to my students. Until that point, these young people were only ever exposed to AIDS histories through recent documentary films like *How to Survive a Plague* and *United in Anger*. With the deeply personal and gruesome context of queer frailty and death during the AIDS crisis largely absent in these newer documentaries, the exacting political anger portrayed in them was less palpable to my students. Stories of heroism, strength, and collective power have come to the foreground in the political expediency of the present gay and lesbian political moment, where stories of overcoming adversity are favored over remembering images of queer death on a mass scale.

Today, historical images of queer strength and collective power replace painful cultural memories of marginality, structured abandonment, and mass death. In responding to ongoing

institutionalized heterosexism, queers appear to want to be the heroes of their own historical narrative. This comes at the cost of forgetting the conditions of ungrievable subjecthood that may feel escapable for some queers in our increasingly inclusive liberal democracy, but remain the unescapable reality for so many.[75] Postmemory, in its capacity to account for the remembering and transmission of traumatic memories from one generation to another at moments where the conditions of ungrievability undeniably come pressing to the surface, serves as a theoretical model to work against the seductive demands of inclusion that require our forgetting of the recent past. It is not simply a clichéd directive to not forget the past lest we repeat it, but an injunction to recognize and deal with the traumas of the queer past that will always haunt the unfolding present.

[75] Butler's theory of ungrievable subjects bears much in common with Giorgio Agamben's concept of bare life. To see an exploration of bare life in a queer context, see Eric Stanley, "Near Life, Queer Death: Overkill and Ontological Capture," *Social Text* 29, no. 2 107 (2011): 1-19.

Chapter 3

Another Decade of Loss in Our Own Words

> Yeah, I love to spread hate. Just like God did when he killed everybody in Sodom and Gomorrah. No, I don't like gays. Hey homo, go sit down!
>
> - Denis Friel at the third public forum on Portland's non-discrimination ordinance, October 1992[1]

> Christ said to kill the faggots!
>
> - Shouted from the audience at the public hearing on Lewiston's non-discrimination ordinance, January 1993[2]

Introduction

This chapter examines the struggle for sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws in Maine at the municipal and state levels through a close reading of how the local gay and lesbian press described these struggles at the time. Maine, and Maine's largest city Portland more specifically, was the home of more than a dozen gay and lesbian publications, some dating back to the 1970s. During the protracted battles over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law, beginning with Portland's municipal referendum in 1992 and ending with a statewide referendum in 2005, four papers regularly published and documented a public account of the process from the perspective of those most directly affected, gays and lesbians.

The chapter begins by setting the national context of sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law in the United States before providing a historical overview of state and municipal initiatives and referenda in Maine. Following this historical account, I describe the affective framing used by gay and lesbian citizen journalists when discussing this time period in their respective community-based newspapers. Lastly, I draw conclusions about the collective

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[1] "In the Hate Business," *Our Paper* (Portland, ME), November 1992.
[2] Annette Dragon, "Ordinance Provokes Debate," *Apex* (Portland, ME), February 1993.

mood of 1990s shared by gays and lesbians and its impact on the queer political imagination. More simply, I elaborate on the ability of queer subjects to imagine and enact worlds otherwise at the time.

This chapter focuses on Maine for a number of reasons. The sheer number of municipal and statewide initiatives and referenda on sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law paired with the diverse number of community-based gay and lesbian newspapers means there is a rich archive from which to work. As noted in the previous chapter, the importance of the gay and lesbian press on sexual identity, community, and political subject formation cannot be understated in these largely pre-internet times. These community newspapers also allow the battle for sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law to be situated amongst other related and pressing issues of the time: HIV/AIDS, anti-gay violence, attacks on reproductive rights, and the ongoing culture war with the Christian right.

This chapter thematically and chronologically follows the previous chapter. By exploring the traumatic events of the 1990s and early 2000s through studying ways in which the gay and lesbian press represented the battles over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections, I draw a direct relation between this period and the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and early 1990s. I make the argument that while the mid-1990s may have seen a rapid change in life expectancy for queer people living with HIV/AIDS because of the invention of Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapies (HAART), the loss, degradation, and trauma of queer lives continued.

Also, as focused as I am on the political project of this dissertation and its examination of how affect, emotion, and mood compound or contract what I call the queer political imagination, this chapter is also congruous with the so-called rural turn in queer studies. By congruous, I mean to suggest that this chapter's focus on Maine contributes to the collectively produced

corrective to the gross urban-centrism of queer studies to date. Maine, and more specifically Lewiston, was my hometown for more than a decade before this research began. In a small way, this chapter provides the historical and political context of queer life for both myself and my community of origin whose history was never provided to me and which has largely gone undocumented.

Leaving the Metropolis

This chapter is in dialogue with the so-called rural turn in queer studies, that is, this chapter contributes to the growing chorus of voices seeking to de-center the all-too-often urban-centric scholarship about the lives of queer and trans people. This new work was ushered in by Judith Halberstam's astute observation in 2005 that,

> In gay/lesbian and queer studies, there has been little attention paid to date to the specificities of rural queer lives. Indeed, most queer work on community, sexual identity, and gender roles has been based on and in urban populations, and exhibits an active disinterest in the productive potential of nonmetropolitan sexualities, genders and identities.[3]

Indeed, the pretext to this observation is Kath Weston's groundbreaking 1995 research that sought to contextualize the migration of gays and lesbians to urban centers in the 1970s who pursued an imagined sexual community organized around newly crystalized concepts of sexual identity and freedom.[4] Weston claims this population shift to urban centers by many gays and lesbians codified a gay imaginary that validates and renders visible gay lives in urban centers at the expense of setting up rural spaces as inherently hostile, and rural gays and lesbians as unfree,

[3] Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 5.
[4] Kath Weston, "Get Thee to a Big City: Sexual Imaginary and the Great Gay Migration," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2, no. 3 (1995): 253-277.

secretive, or most likely, unimaginable. It is this dichotomy of urban versus rural, with gays and lesbians positioned clearly on the urban side, that sets up the epistemic blind spot in gay and lesbian and queer studies as they emerged as disciplines.

In 1995, there was also a critical call to examine the lives of gays and lesbians within the field of rural studies. UK scholars David Bell and Gill Valentine's call to action in the pages of the *Journal of Rural Studies* titled "Queer Country: Rural Lesbian and Gay Lives" pointed as much to the failure of gay and lesbian studies to address non-urban gays and lesbians as they did to rural studies for failing to take seriously the study of sexuality as it related to rural studies.[5]

On the heels of Halberstam's observation, a number of key texts were produced to critique the presumed metronormativity of queer life in scholarship on sexual minorities, most notably Thomas Waugh's "Passages: Going to Town, Coming of Age" in *The Romance of Transgression in Canada* (2006), Mary L. Gray's *Out In the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America* (2009), Scott Herring's *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (2010), Colin R. Johnson's *Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America* (2013), and the recently-released anthology *Queering the Countryside: New Frontiers in Rural Queer Studies* (2016) edited by Mary L. Gray, Colin R. Johnson, and Brian J. Gilley. Documentary films about queer rural life like *Farm Family: In Search of Gay Life in Rural America* (2004), *Small Town Gay Bar* (2006), and *Out Here: A Documentary Film About the Hearts and Hard Work of Queer Farmers in the U.S.* (2013) supplemented this textual scholarship. Many of these texts and films offer correctives to the urban-centrism of previous representations of, and scholarship on, sexual minorities by providing alternative accounts of queer rural life. Some of

[5] David Bell and Gill Valentine, "Queer Country: Rural Lesbian and Gay Lives," *Journal of Rural Studies* 11, no. 2 (April 1995): 113-122.

these texts, however, call into question the usefulness of the dichotomy between urban and rural as well as the assumed meanings attached to the concepts of urban and rural when both spaces are hugely diverse in both people and experience.

This chapter primarily fits into the former of these categories of work being done in rural queer studies. While the impulse to destabilize definitions and assumptions about what this thing called "rural" is, as the editors of *Queering the Countryside* insist, is more interesting, my political commitments are to offering a thorough materialist historical account that is more relevant to the specificities of queer rural life in Maine. Perhaps in the insular academic world of full-time tenured faculty at the helm of queer rural studies within academia, such contributions seem passé or dated, as the editors appear to suggest in the introduction to *Queering the Countryside*, but the urgency of this kind of work remains. Without these correctives, queer rural life remains invisible, unimaginable, and unviable in the popular imagination and to the disciplines of gay and lesbian and queer studies. Without them, national narratives about viability of queer worlds in the United States remain wildly distorted through tautological stories told by and about New Yorkers, San Franciscans, and other city dwellers.

Non-Discrimination Law in the United States

Sexual orientation and gender identity-inclusive non-discrimination laws in the United States typically seek to ban discrimination in employment, housing, education, public accommodation, and credit for queer and trans people. The pairing of sexual orientation and gender identity in proposed non-discrimination laws is only a recent development, whereas many of the laws proposed in the decade examined in this chapter focus on sexual orientation to the exclusion of gender identity. The first federal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination

law was introduced in April 1974, but after being introduced in the House of Representatives, it stalled in the House Committee on Judiciary.[6] This law was a precursor to a yet-to-be-approved federal non-discrimination employment law that has been introduced in Congress nearly every year since 1994, known as the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA). ENDA remains controversial amongst LGBT activists regarding its recent history of excluding gender identity for the short-term political gains of gays and lesbians. In 2007, ENDA included gender identity in addition to sexual orientation; this died in committee before being sent to the floor for a vote. Openly gay U.S. Representative Barney Frank then reintroduced ENDA without including provisions for gender identity and it comfortably passed through the House of Representatives before dying in the Senate.[7] The proposed federal law has consistently included gender identity protections for trans workers only since 2009, largely because of the outrage expressed by queer and trans activists in the aftermath of the 2007 jettisoning of trans inclusion.[8]

Sexual orientation and gender identity-inclusive non-discrimination laws have a long history indebted to previous movements and legislative actions. Most recognizable is the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that provided non-discrimination protections based on race, color, religion, or national origin in voting, education, employment, public accommodation, and federally funded

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[6] "H.R. 14752, 93rd Congress (1973-1974): Equality Act," Congress.gov, accessed November 07, 2016, https://www.congress.gov/bill/93rd-congress/house-bill/14752.
[7] "H.R. 3685, 110th Congress (2007-2008): Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2007," Congress.gov, accessed November 07, 2016, https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/3685.
[8] Carolyn Lochhead, "House Cuts Transgender People from Hate Crimes Bill," *SFGate*, September 28, 2007, http://www.sfgate.com/politics/article/House-cuts-transgender-people-from-hate-crimes-2538277.php; Patsy Lynch, "Transgender Activists Protest HRC Dinner," *Windy City Times*, October 10, 2007, http://www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Transgender-Activists-Protest-HRC-Dinner/16282.html.

programs.[9] In addition to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its many amendments aimed at expanding and strengthening the original bill, sexual orientation and gender identity-inclusive non-discrimination law is also indebted to the many other social movements and attendant legislative victories regarding non-discrimination protections for minority populations. These legislative precedents include, but are not limited to: the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title IX of Education Amendments of 1972, Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Hate Crime Statistics Act of 1990,[10] the Family & Medical Leave Act of 1993, and the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. constitution in 1868 that enfranchised former slaves and free Blacks and included the Equal Protection clause that has been used to strike down numerous discriminatory laws through Supreme Court challenges, including the ban on same-sex marriage in 2015.

Currently only 20 states prohibit employment discrimination for all workers based on sexual orientation and gender identity, while an additional two states prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation alone.[11] The same 20 states also prohibit discrimination in housing based on sexual orientation and gender identity, while the same additional two states prohibit housing discrimination based on sexual orientation alone.[12] While these housing and employment non-discrimination laws are generally considered a good thing, they do not address the fact that strong housing and employment protections are practically non-

[9] "H.R. 7152, 88th Congress, (1963-1964): Civil Rights Act," National Archives Catalog, accessed November 07, 2016, https://catalog.archives.gov/id/299891

[10] This piece of federal legislation was the first in the history of the United States to explicitly name gay, lesbian, and bisexual people. It is telling that the first law to directly name these sexual minority identity categories was in a law regarding the killing, maiming, and terrorizing of sexual minorities.

[11] "Maps of State Laws & Policies." Human Rights Campaign. Accessed November 07, 2016. http://www.hrc.org/state_maps.

[12] Ibid.

existent in the United States. Workers can be fired by employers at will and renters can be evicted by landlords for virtually any reason, in both cases with little or no recourse. These legislative changes are also often applied unevenly across municipal jurisdictions when administered federally or by states, and do not necessarily connote the necessary cultural change to make these laws relevant to everyday lives of those who experience discrimination.

Dennis Altman and Jonathan Symons make similar arguments regarding the inclusion of gay rights in now globalized human rights discourse. They note that law reforms and legal prohibitions are often insufficient in jurisdictions without social movements demanding cultural change and do little to change people's lived realities.[13] Despite the shortcomings of non-discrimination law in addressing how the complete lack of employment and housing protections more generally undermines population-specific non-discrimination law, I take up sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law as a critical site of research and scholarship in this chapter. My interest is not to provide a scholarly work that bolsters claims for the necessity and righteousness of sexual orientation and gender identity-inclusive non-discrimination law. Instead, I provide a detailed look at the very public protracted battle over such laws in the 1990s and how these battles contributed to the shifting emotional habitus that, I argue, foreclosed the political imagination of queer people at that time and in subsequent decades.

National Context in the 1990s

Before embarking on a case study of Maine-based sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination initiatives and referenda, it is helpful to set the national context. While Maine is

[13] Dennis Altman and Jonathan Symons, *Queer Wars: The New Global Polarization over Gay Rights* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2016).

unique in its referendum and citizen initiative processes, the phenomenon of anti-gay ballot initiatives and referenda on non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation is not unique to this state.

The Williams Institute conducted a study on citizen initiatives and referenda designed to repeal or prevent laws prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity that looked at 120 different state, municipal, and county referenda.[14] Their report begins with the Briggs Initiative in California in 1974, which sought to ban gays and lesbians from employment as teachers in public schools, and Anita Bryant's 1977 "Save Our Children" campaign that sought to repeal non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation through referendum in Dade County, Florida. Well over half of the initiatives and referenda they documented, however, took place between 1991 and 1995. According to the report, of the 120 referenda and initiatives, only five sought to put sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws in place, while 115 sought to repeal and/or block laws enacted to protect citizens from employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. The initiatives and referenda to repeal or block employment discrimination law in this study were successful half of the time.

Referenda are used to either uphold or repeal laws enacted by state legislatures and municipal governments. Essentially, they provide a mechanism so that citizens can overturn laws through a popular vote. Initiatives, on the other hand, are used to enact new laws through popular vote. Many of the initiatives documented by the Williams Institute were used to either preemptively ban non-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation or included

[14] Brad Sears, Nan D. Hunter, Christy Mallory, *Documenting Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in State Employment*, The Williams Institute, UCLA School of Law, 2009. http://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/research/workplace/documenting-discrimination-on-the-basis-of-sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-in-state-employment/

provisions that would invalidate non-discrimination protections that had already been enacted. For example, a statewide initiative could render municipal non-discrimination ordinances based on sexual orientation null and void by limiting the classes to which non-discrimination protections can be applied across the state. In both instances, repeal and invalidation, a minority population's civil rights are voted away by the general public.

Although the Williams Institute report is not an exhaustive study on all non-discrimination initiatives and referenda based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the United States, this study provides one of the most thorough accounts of this issue and offers a useful snapshot of the national context in which Maine's initiatives and referenda took place.

Again, I do not want to suggest Maine is necessarily unique in facing these legislative challenges to sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections, but the Williams Institute study does acknowledge that a small number of states bore the brunt of these initiatives and referenda, naming Maine as one of six states that saw the majority of the state and municipal cases presented in the study.[15] Additionally, Maine earns the title of the state with the most state-wide initiatives and referenda on sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law with four: 1995, 1998, 2000, and 2005. Between the 15 states that saw both municipal and statewide initiatives and referenda, Maine comes in second only to Oregon for the most state and municipal initiatives and referenda combined.[16] Also, it is curious, considering Maine is the least populated

[15] The other states included California, Florida, and Michigan, Oregon, and Washington, all states with a significantly larger population than Maine.

[16] The Oregon Citizens Alliance, a fundamentalist Christian organization run by Lon Mabon, spearheaded a coordinated campaign of voter initiatives in primarily rural parts of Oregon in an effort to preemptively ban sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinances at the municipal and county level. Between 1992 and 1994, OCA passed 20 municipal and 7 county initiatives. The state's three sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law-related referenda in 1988, 1992, and 1994 were all initiated by the same organization.

state in the country on this list of 15 states that bore the brunt of anti-gay initiatives and referenda. It begs the question as to how this series of initiatives and referenda throughout the 1990s and early 2000s disproportionately impacted an extremely small, poorer, whiter, and non-urban queer and trans population in Maine against the larger national context.

While the Williams Institute study concluded in 2009, it is still true to this day that Maine was the last state to face a statewide referendum on a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law in 2005. Maine also occupies the unique position as the only state to uphold a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law at the state level by popular vote. This should not go without noting, however, that in July 2016, Michael Heath, the former director of the Christian Civic League of Maine, and his allies have filed paperwork with the Maine Secretary of State's Office under the name "Equal Rights Not Special Rights." This announced their intent to begin collecting signatures in order to put a repeal vote on Maine's 2005 sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law before voters in November 2017.[17]

Municipalities in eight different states without statewide protections (Florida, Michigan, Kansas, Idaho, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, Texas), on the other hand, have continued voting on initiatives and referenda to pass or repeal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections at the local level. The outcomes of these ballot questions have been negative (six times) more often than positive (four times) for gays and lesbians, particularly in southern states.

[17] Joe Lawlor, "Anti-LGBT Group Organizing Referendum Effort" *Portland Press Herald*, July 18, 2016.

Maine's Initiatives and Referenda History

Maine initiatives and referenda regarding sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law have made their way onto the ballot by two different means. A "Citizen Initiative" describes the process by which any registered Maine voter has circulated a petition and garnered enough signatures to put their proposed law to a popular vote.[18] A referendum, or as it is more popularly known, a "People's Veto," describes the process by which any registered Maine voter has circulated a petition and garnered enough signatures to put a law already enacted by the legislature up for repeal by popular vote.[19] In both cases, the threshold for the number of valid signatures is 10% of the total number of votes cast in the most recent governor's race, and petitioners have 18 months from the approval of their petitions by the Secretary of State's office to gather the required number of signatures.[20] Municipalities have similar but varying requirements, time frames, and signature thresholds regarding citizen initiatives and referenda that put municipal ordinances enacted by the city council or board of selectmen to a popular vote.

Maine is uniquely positioned in the Northeast as the first state to adopt an initiative and referendum process by writing it into the state constitution in 1908 after legislative action and overwhelming approval by voters.[21] Maine's adoption of initiative and referendum provisions in the early 20th century is largely the work of then-leader of the Socialist Party of Maine, Roland Patten, who established the Initiative and Referendum League of Maine. Working closely with

[18] Maine Const., art. IV, pt. III, §18, sub-section 2.
[19] Maine Const., art. IV, pt. III, §17, 19, 20, and 22.
[20] Maine Const., art. IV, pt. III, §17 and §18.
[21] Kenneth T. Palmer and Jonathan Thomas, "Maine," in *The Constitutionalism of American States*, by George E. Connor and Christopher W. Hammons (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 28.

the State Grange and the State Federation of Labor, Patten lobbied the Republican, Democratic, Socialist, and Prohibitionist parties to successfully enact initiative and referendum provisions into law through a constitutional amendment.[22] Today, only 26 states allow initiatives (24) and referenda (23) and Maine and Massachusetts are the only two northeast states with such legal provisions.[23] Otherwise, almost all other states that have provisions for initiatives and referenda are west of the Mississippi, making Maine largely unique on the East Coast in its ability to empower citizens' participation in governance through direct use of initiatives and referenda to enact or repeal state laws.

While the original vision for the use of such processes was assumed to be progressive in nature, the initiatives and referenda of the 1990s have proven otherwise. Since the enactment of initiative and referendum provisions in the early 1900s, its use by citizens was relatively rare until the 1970s. Throughout the 1970s and '80s, the majority of ballot questions focused on progressive environmental issues. It was not until the 1990s that the focus of ballot questions turned to repealing or blocking the rights of gays and lesbians as well as repealing the rights of women to access safe and legal abortions.[24]

Beyond citizen-initiated statewide ballot questions, there is also the possibility of a legislatively referred ballot question. In this case the state legislature opts to put laws being debated in its chambers directly to the voters instead of enacting the law through the state

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[22] Initiative and Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California. "Maine." Initiative and Referendum Institute. Accessed November 7, 2016. http://www.iandrinstitute.org/states/state.cfm?id=10.

[23] Initiative and Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California. "State Initiative & Referendum." Initiative & Referendum Institute. Accessed November 07, 2016. http://www.iandrinstitute.org/states.cfm.

[24] A full list of citizen initiatives and referenda can be accessed on the Maine State Legislatures website. Initiatives: http://legislature.maine.gov/9204/. Referenda: http://legislature.maine.gov/9205/.

legislature. Only one of Maine's four statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ballot questions was referred directly through the legislature.[25] In addition to the state legislature, municipal governments can similarly put controversial municipal ordinances directly to voters rather than enact them through city councils. This has also happened only once in Maine's initiative and referendum history, when the City Council of South Portland put their proposed municipal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance directly to voters in 1998.[26]

Importantly, a "Yes" or "No" vote implies nothing regarding whether or not the outcome of any ballot question has a positive or negative impact on gays and lesbians. For example, a "Yes" vote on the 1998 statewide ballot Question 1 was a vote to reject a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law, while a "Yes" vote on the 2000 statewide ballot question number 6 was a vote in favor of ratifying a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law. This confusion regarding "Yes" and "No" votes on ballot questions and what kind of outcome a "Yes" or "No" vote means, has been the subject of many opinion columns in both the popular and gay press at the time. In this chapter, much care is taken to clearly illustrate how each statewide and municipal ballot question impacted gays and lesbians in Maine, "Yes" or "No."

The following pages of this section provide a review of all statewide and municipal ballot questions regarding sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law, including the exact wording of each ballot question and the election results in both actual number of votes and by percentage of vote. Following these details, each ballot question is briefly described, including details about key players and the state law or municipal ordinance involved. A more thorough reading of the impact of these ballot questions on the gay and lesbian people of Maine follows in

[25] See subsection: *State Referendum 2000*
[26] See subsection: *Maine Municipal Referenda*, *South Portland 1998*

a subsequent discussion of the gay and lesbian press in Maine. This section provides an overview of the factual details to which citizen journalists of the Maine gay and lesbian press responded. All state ballot questions and election results were obtained from Maine Secretary of State's Bureau of Corporations, Elections, and Commissions. All municipal ballot questions and election results were obtained from the respective City Clerk's Office of each municipality implicated.

State Citizen Initiative 1995

> Question 1: Do you favor the changes in Maine law concerning the limitation of protected status to the existing classifications of race, color, sex, physical or mental disability, religion, age, ancestry, national origin, familial status, and marital status proposed by citizen petition?

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	**221,562**	**53.32%**
Yes	193,938	46.68%

Table 3.1 Statewide Citizen Initiative Ballot Outcome, 1995.

The November 7, 1995 referendum sought to limit classifications for present and future non-discrimination laws to the exclusion of sexual orientation and thus invalidate the recently-passed sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinances set municipally by the City of Portland in 1992 and upheld locally by referendum. This initiative strategy is known as "block and repeal." Prior to this referendum, the State Legislature had already passed a statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law on May 5, 1993, only to be vetoed by then-Republican Governor John McKernan (husband of former Republican Senator Olympia

Snowe).[27] This vetoed bill was previously introduced nine times in the state legislature over the preceding sixteen years, demonstrating that the long debate over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law in Maine did not begin with the citizen initiatives and referenda of the 1990s.[28] However, it was the initiative and referendum process that brought this debate out from the Halls of State Legislature and into the public sphere.

Another piece of sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination legislation was discussed in the State Legislature in 1995, but took a backseat to a citizen initiative. The 1995 initiative was organized by Carolyn Cosby's Concerned Maine Families with support from Lewiston native Paul Madore and his group The Coalition to End Special Rights, as well as Jasper Wyman's Christian Civic League of Maine. Maine Won't Discriminate, the group who organized in opposition to the referendum, raised ten times the funding as the "Yes" campaign, heavily saturated the airwaves with political advertisements, and opened six field offices across the state.[29] The gay and lesbian population of Maine first faced the possibility of this ballot question in 1994. To defend themselves from this draconian initiative, they began organizing a popular education and media campaign over a two-year period. Carolyn Cosby and Concerned Maine Families failed to gather enough signatures in time to get this citizen initiative on the ballot in 1994, so the contest at the ballot box in 1995 had actually spanned two years, beginning with Crosby's attempt to qualify this citizen initiative by gathering signatures across the state beginning in the latter half of 1993.

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[27] John Hale, "Legislature Survives Yet Another Session," *Bangor Daily News*, July 3, 1993.
[28] John Hale, "Lewiston Residents Take Sides on Gay Rights," *Bangor Daily News,* October 23, 1993.
[29] John Hale, "Mainers Face Off on Gays," *Bangor Daily News*, October 28, 1995.

State Referendum 1998

> Question 1: Do you want to reject the law passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor that would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation with respect to jobs, housing, public accommodations and credit?

Result	Votes	Percentage
Yes	**145,452**	**51.29%**
No	138,153	48.71%

Table 3.2 Statewide Referendum Ballot Outcome, 1998.

On May 8, 1997 the Maine legislature passed L.D. 1116: An Act to Prevent Discrimination, a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law that was signed into law by then-Independent Governor Angus King on May 16, 1997.[30] Carolyn Cosby's Concerned Maine Families organized the petition drive to initiate a people's veto referendum, gathering well over the number of signatures required. The law was then repealed through a special election referendum on February 10, 1998. In response to the successful referendum, on October 10, 1998, the Maine Civil Rights March took place. Three hundred people marched ten miles from Orono to Bangor to express disgust at the repeal of statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections, followed by a rally of about 500 people.[31]

A 1999 referendum referred through the legislature passed with 71% of the popular vote to amend the Maine State Constitution so that citizen initiatives and referenda would no longer be held as special elections, but would coincide with the next statewide general election.[32] This

[30] Patricia A. Peard, "Human Rights Act Amendment: Yes, No," *Bangor Daily News,* July 19, 1997.
[31] "Civil Rights March." *Bangor Daily News,* October 13, 1998.
[32] "Changes Approved in Constitution," *Portland Press Herald,* November 3, 1999.

change can be read as a direct response to the controversial 1998 special election referendum on statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections that saw record-low voter turnout. The citizens of Maine were clearly showing signs of fatigue around the issue of voting for or against sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections, causing a legislative and popular vote to change the State Constitution, a relatively uncommon occurrence in Maine's history.[33] At the time of this referendum on the timing of citizen initiatives and referenda, the Maine electorate had already voted on two statewide and four municipal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ballot questions within six years.

State Referendum 2000

> Question 6: Do you favor ratifying the action of the 119th Legislature whereby it passed an act extending to all citizens regardless of their sexual orientation the same basic rights to protection against discrimination now guaranteed to citizens on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodation and credit and where the act expressly states that nothing in the act confers legislative approval of, or special rights to, any person or group of persons?

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	**318,846**	**50.38%**
Yes	314,012	49.62%

Table 3.3 Statewide Referendum Ballot Outcome, 2000.

[33] The Constitution of Maine has had 172 amendments between 1820, when it was first signed, and 2016. The 1999 referendum on the timing of special elections was the 167th amendment. The forty-year period between 1950-1990 carries the lion's share of amendments with 88, over half of all amendments. Constitutional amendments since the close of the 1980s are once again a relatively uncommon occurrence.

In April of 2000 the State legislature passed L.D. 2239, *An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination*, with the caveat that said law would go into effect only if given voter approval through a referendum in the upcoming general election.[34] This sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law included language for protections on the basis of gender expression, but also, for the first time, religious exemptions, much to the dismay of many gay, lesbian, and trans activists.[35] Such religious exemptions led to the Catholic Diocese of Maine supporting a piece of sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination legislation for the first time, but also the fracturing of the progressive Yes on 6 Coalition opposing the people's veto. Most notably, the Maine Civil Liberties Union declared their opposition to the proposed legislation, stating, "The wording could exempt some hospitals, charities, day care centers and elderly housing projects," noting that the religious exemption would put certain institutions providing essential services beyond the reach of the law.[36] The law never went into effect as it was rejected by voters by a margin of less than one percent. Paul Volle's Christian Coalition and Michael Health's Christian Civic League of Maine were again behind the people's veto referendum.

State Referendum 2005

> Question 1: Do you want to reject the new law that would protect people from discrimination in employment, housing, education, public accommodations and credit based on their sexual orientation?

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[34] Angus King, "State of Maine Proclamation on An Act to Ensure Civil Rights and Prevent Discrimination," November 27, 2000.
[35]Glen Adams, "House OKs Gay-Rights Referendum the Crucial Vote Means that Maine Voters Likely Will Make a Third Decision in Six Years on the Issue," *Portland Press Herald,* April 5, 2000.
[36] Emmet Meara, "Opponents Clash Over Gay Rights Bill," *Bangor Daily News,* February 17, 2000.

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	**223,274**	**55.10%**
Yes	181,926	44.90%

Table 3.4 Statewide Referendum Ballot Outcome, 2005.

A sexual orientation and gender identity-inclusive non-discrimination law passed by the State Legislature and signed by then-Democratic Governor John Baldacci was upheld for the first time through referendum. L.D. 1196, *An Act To Extend Civil Rights Protections to All People Regardless of Sexual Orientation*, the subject of the referendum, adds "sexual orientation" to the classes covered by the Maine Human Rights Act, where sexual orientation is defined as "a person's actual or perceived heterosexuality, bisexuality, homosexuality or gender identity or expression."[37] The Maine Human Rights Act covers discrimination relating to employment, housing, education, credit, or access to public accommodations.[38] On November 8, 2005, this type of non-discrimination law was upheld for the first time by statewide popular vote by a margin of more than ten percent and included provisions for the protection of gender identity and expression. Maine Won't Discriminate organized the opposition to the repeal effort, while Christian conservative stalwarts Michael Heath and Paul Madore rallied the repeal effort under the name The Coalition for Marriage, pushing voters to view the passage of sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law as a gateway to legalizing same-sex marriage.[39]

[37] Maine Revised Statutes §4553, sub-§9-C
[38] Maine Revised Statutes §4552
[39] Jeff Tuttle, "Gay Rights Group Fills Campaign Coffers," *Bangor Daily News,* October 12, 2005.

Maine Municipal Referenda

Portland 1992

> Shall the proposed ordinance, entitled Amendments to Portland City Code, Enactment of Chapter 13-A, Human Rights Re: Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation, a copy and summary of which is provided below, be repealed?

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	**19,643**	**57.08%**
Yes	14,770	42.92%

Table 3.5 Municipal Referendum Ballot Outcome, 1992.

On May 11, 1992, the Portland City Council passed a citywide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance 7-1 by amending Chapter 13-A of the Portland City Code.[40] The ordinance was proposed by Councilor Peter O'Donnell, a straight ally, in response to a series of gay bashings on the streets of Maine's largest city.[41] At the following City Council meeting on July 20, 1992, a people's veto petition with the required 1,500 signatures was presented to the council, organized by the group Concerned Citizens of Portland with the help of the Christian Civic League of Maine.[42] The City Council then voted unanimously to send the sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance to referendum despite their stated moral opposition to repealing the ordinance.[43] On November 3, 1992, voters rejected the referendum designed to repeal the municipal ordinance by a significant margin, following three

[40] Holly Valero, "It Passed!" *Our Paper* (Portland, ME), June 1992.
[41] "Portland Upholds Gay Rights," *Sun Journal*, November 4, 1992.
[42] Bill Turque, "Gays Under Fire," *Newsweek*, September 13, 1992. http://www.newsweek.com/gays-under-fire-198684.
[43] "Citizen Petition Goes to Referandum (sic) November 3, 1992," *Our Paper* (Portland, ME), August 1992, 3.

heated public policy debates regarding the referendum.[44] Citizens for a United Portland, which would later become Equal Protection/Portland, organized against the referendum. For national context, Bill Clinton was also elected president of the United States as part of the 1992 general election.

Lewiston 1993

> Shall the ordinance pertaining to discrimination based on sexual orientation, adopted by the City Council January 6, 1993, be repealed?

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	4,138	32%
Yes	**8,788**	**68%**

Table 3.6 Municipal Referendum Ballot Outcome, 1993.

On January 6, 1993, 5 of 7 Lewiston city councilors passed a citywide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance similar to that of Portland's after five hours of heated public hearings. On November 2, 1993, Lewiston voters overturned the ordinance in a referendum organized by the All Catholics for Truth (ACT), who were later organized under the local name Citizens of Lewiston for the Repeal of Special Rights and led by Lewiston native Paul Madore with 68% of the vote.[45] Madore's group received support from Cosby's Concerned Maine Families, who were collecting signatures at that time for what later became the 1995 statewide referendum designed to ban enacting sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination

[44] Chris Reed, "Debates! Do They Legitimize the Haters or Offer Common Ground?" *Our Paper* (Portland, ME), November 1992.
[45] Proko, Barbara. "Gays, Others Disappointed in Defeat of Rights Amendment," *Sun Journal*, November 4, 1993.

protections.[46] An additional pro-referendum group called Citizens Opposed to the Special Treatment of Homosexuals was also working to overturn the municipal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance in Lewiston.[47]

Opposition to the referendum was organized by Equal Protection/Lewiston (EPL) headed in part by then-Police Chief Laurent Gilbert. EPL also had an active Under Thirty Committee that focused on turning out young people to vote against the referendum. Following the devastating referendum vote, more than forty local gay and lesbian people protested by taking over the main thoroughfare in downtown Lewiston, shutting down traffic and resulting in six arrests. Police chief Laurent Gilbert, who was clearly in support of the non-discrimination ordinance, described those arrested as a militant fringe group and compared them to David Koresh's Branch Davidian cult members.[48] One protestor described the reason for his participation in the demonstration to a *Lewiston Sun-Journal* reporter as, "We expect to show Lewiston what they've done to us. They killed our rights. They've killed us."[49]

Lewiston also elected its first black mayor, John Jenkins, as part of this general election. Jenkins went on to defeat Paul Madore of the Citizens of Lewiston for the Repeal of Special Rights group for a Maine state senate seat in 1995, becoming the first black state senator in Maine.[50]

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[46] A. Jay Higgins, "Lewiston Gay Rights Defeated," *Bangor Daily News*, November 3, 1993.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Richard Weir, "Protestors Arrested in Lewiston," *Sun Journal*, November 4, 1993.
[49] Ibid.
[50] "Jenkins, John (1952-)," The Black Past: Remembered and Reclaimed, accessed December 22, 2016, http://www.blackpast.org/aah/jenkins-john-1952.

Ogunquit 1998

> Question 4: Shall the Town vote to approve the adoption of a new Title XI of the Ogunquit Municipal Code which Chapter to be entitled, "Human Rights Ordinance"?

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	**383**	**50.59%**
Yes	374	49.40%

Table 3.7 Municipal Referendum Ballot Outcome, 1998.

On November 3, 1998, residents of Ogunquit, Maine's so-called gay beach community, voted in a referendum to strike down a proposed sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance. This proposed ordinance was a direct response to the repeal of Maine's statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law during the February 1998 special election. Activists with Concerned Citizens of Ogunquit gathered enough signatures to have the human rights ordinance placed on the ballot, modeled directly on the former statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law that was repealed less than a year prior. The proposed amendment would have amended the Ogunquit Municipal Code to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the areas of employment, housing, credit, and public accommodations. The referendum loss for the gay community, in this instance, was in part linked to the simultaneous and controversial recall referendum for then-Selectmen John Miller, who was accused of homophobia and discrimination against the gay community.[51] The symbolic loss at the ballot box in Maine's gay beach resort town, paired with the statewide referendum

[51] "Rainbow Flag Fiasco Could Send Maine Official Flying," *The Advocate*, October 27, 1998, 18.

loss in the special election just ten months earlier, was a further blow to the momentum in securing sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law for all of Maine.

South Portland 1998

> Referendum Question: Are you for the ordinance which would prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, employment, public accommodations and the extension of credit?

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	3,952	45.81%
Yes	**4,675**	**54.19%**

Table 3.8 Municipal Referendum Ballot Outcome, 1998.

Like what happened in Ogunquit, this proposed sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance and referendum was a direct response to the recent repeal of Maine's statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law nine months prior. The City Council of South Portland decided to put the issue of reinstating non-discrimination protections directly to the voters instead of passing it through City Council.[52] On November 3, 1998, the initiative passed by a nearly a 10% margin. The ordinance, like the vetoed statewide law, prohibited acts of discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and the extension of credit in the municipality. South Portland Citizens for Justice organized on behalf of passing the ordinance into law.

[52] "South Portland City Council Meeting Minutes," April 22, 1998, 112. http://www.southportland.org/files/3414/6731/1199/Minutes_07-01-1997_to_06-30-1998.pdf

Falmouth 1999

> Question 1: Shall the Town of Falmouth approve the charter amendment reprinted below? "Section 103 Limitations – The Town of Falmouth shall make no ordinance, policy, or regulation regarding sexual orientation?"

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	**2,667**	**59%**
Yes	1,876	41%

Table 3.9 Municipal Referendum Ballot Outcome, 1999.

After nine months of public debate, on April 26, 1999, the Falmouth city council unanimously approved the adoption of a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance that was later subject to referendum.[53] The following November referendum sought to change the city charter in order to repeal current additions and block any future additions to the city of Falmouth's non-discrimination ordinance. It failed decisively with only 41% of the vote on November 2, 1999, allowing the City Council's municipal ordinance to stand. Falmouth Citizens for Equality worked to defeat the referendum while the Falmouth Concerned Citizens Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Orientation, led by local resident Mark Finks, fought for the referendum.

The 1999 general election's decisively more liberal voter turnout that approved Falmouth's local sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance was, in part, also attributed to two highly controversial statewide ballot initiatives that increased voter participation. Question 1 sought to ban so-called partial-birth abortions and was soundly defeated

[53]Tess Nacelewicz, "Falmouth choosing sides over gay rights," *Portland Press Herald,* August 23, 1999.

by a 11% margin.[54] Question 2 sought to legalize medical marijuana, which passed by a commanding 23% margin.[55]

Westbrook 2002

> Referendum Question: Shall the Ordinance entitled Westbrook Human Rights Ordinance Article 1 Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation' be repealed?

Result	Votes	Percentage
No	**3,316**	**51%**
Yes	3,126	48%

Table 3.10 Municipal Referendum Ballot Outcome, 2002.

In the spring of 2002, the Westbrook city council passed a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance. Paul Volle, a local resident and executive director of the Christian Coalition of Maine, spearheaded the demand to put the new non-discrimination law to referendum. Westbrook Citizens for Equal Rights was organized in opposition to the referendum. On November 5, 2002, Westbrook residence voted against the referendum to repeal the sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance by a tight margin of only 3%.[56] Westbrook's 2002 referendum was the last municipal ordinance on sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections subjected to repeal by popular vote.

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[54] Tess Nacelewicz, "Falmouth: Voters Back Ordinance on Gay Rights," *Portland Press Herald*, November 3, 1999.
[55] Meredith Goad, "Mainers Strongly Support Allowing Marijuana to be Used for Medical Reasons," *Portland Press Herald,* November 3, 1999.
[56] C. Kalimah Redd, "In Narrow Decision, Westbrook Backs Discrimination Ban," *Portland Press Herald*, November 6, 2002.

Overview of All Initiatives and Referenda in Maine

Year	Location	Result (margin)	Outcome*	Population Census Data
1992	Portland	Failed (14.6%)	Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance upheld by popular vote.	62,550
1993	**Lewiston**	**Passed (36%)**	**Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance repealed by popular vote.**	**38,333**
1995	Statewide	Failed (6.64%)	Citizen initiative to limit non-discrimination law to the exclusion of sexual orientation defeated by popular vote.	1,243,000
1998†	**Statewide**	**Passed (2.58%)**	**Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law repealed by popular vote.**	**1,259,000**
1998	**Ogunquit**	**Failed (1.19%)**	**Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance repealed by popular vote.**	**892**
1998	South Portland	Passed (8.38%)	Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance enacted by popular vote.	23,901
1999	Falmouth	Passed (18%)	Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance upheld by popular vote.	10,310
2000	**Statewide**	**Failed (.76%)**	**Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law repealed by popular vote.**	**1,277,000**
2002	Westbrook	Passed (3%)	Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance upheld by popular vote.	16,076
2005	Statewide	Passed (10.2%)	Sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law upheld by popular vote.	1,319,000

Table 3.11 Initiative and Referenda Ballot Outcomes, 1992-2005.

* Bolded items indicate that the outcome of the referendum was considered a loss for gay rights.

† Indicates a special election held on a different day than regularly scheduled general elections normally held on the first Tuesday of November.

Maine had four statewide ballot questions and six municipal ballot questions between 1992 and 2005 and one anti-gay citizen initiative that failed to qualify for the ballot in 1994. At ten initiative and referendum questions in total appearing on state and municipal ballots, Maine stands out as the state in which the most sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections were put to popular vote, save Oregon, where the Oregon Citizens Alliance won more than 20 municipal and county ballot initiatives in a two-year period. In terms of municipal and statewide referenda where sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections passed by legislature and city councils were subject to repeal, as opposed to the preemptive ballot initiatives banning said protections that took place in rural areas of Oregon, Maine maintains the number one position. Between 1992 to 2002, there was an average of nearly one ballot question per year, just less than half of which resulted in a negative outcome for gays and lesbians at both the municipal and state levels.

When Westbrook rejected the referendum question on a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance in 2002, it became the twelfth municipality to pass sexual orientation non-discrimination protections. It was also the last municipality to hold a referendum or initiative on the local ballot regarding sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections, likely because of the passage of similar protections statewide three years later. Westbrook joined the towns of Bangor, Bar Harbor, Brunswick, Camden, Castine, Falmouth, Long Island, Orono, Portland, Sorrento, and South Portland. Of that list, only Portland, South Portland and Westbrook faced referenda regarding their sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinances, while Lewiston and Ogunquit remain off the list due to referenda losses.

Interestingly enough, the municipalities that passed sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinances on this list are almost evenly split between what is considered the more liberal first congressional district of southern Maine (seven towns) and the more conservative second congressional district of northern Maine (five towns). The two towns that repealed sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinances by popular vote, again Lewiston and Ogunquit, are evenly split between first (southern) and second (northern) congressional districts. To some degree, these facts defy the commonly-held belief that the more remote and rural parts of the northern half of the state are more homophobic than the southern, more densely populated areas.

Lewiston also occupies a unique role in this set of initiatives and referenda as Maine's largely white, working-class, and uniquely Catholic Francophone city, where voters tend to vote solidly Democrat but very conservatively on social issues. Its Francophone population, which faced anti-Québécois xenophobia and legal discrimination for a century, had no problem electing a black mayor while simultaneously rejecting non-discrimination protections for gays and lesbians by an overwhelming margin during the 1993 general election.[57] It is the only municipality from the interior of Maine that faced a referendum on their sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance, with Bangor being the only other municipality from the interior to pass a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinance. The crushing outcome of the referendum in Lewiston was unsurprising to many because of its

[57] The ability for Francophones to ally themselves with others who face racial and/or ethnic discrimination is no surprise, considering their history of ethnic discrimination and the racializing Francophones as non-white in the Canadian context. It should also be noted that the largest Ku Klux Klan outside of the American South was in Maine, primarily targeting working-class, pro-union, Irish and French Catholics in the first half of the 20th century. With this context, it is not hard to see why racial discrimination, as opposed to sexual orientation-based discrimination, was surmountable at the ballot box at the time.

large Catholic Francophone population. On the other hand, Ogunquit also occupies a unique position as southern Maine's gay resort beach town. The outcome of the referendum that repealed Ogunquit's sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance was a major symbolic defeat for Maine's gay and lesbian activists because it was assumed to be an easy win at the ballot box for gay civil rights.

Citizen Journalism and Maine's Gay and Lesbian Press

This section provides an overview of the Maine gay press and their coverage of the municipal and statewide initiatives and referenda on sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections. I utilize this specific archive of cultural material to examine the changing collective mood of queer people at the time by searching for traces of emergent shifts in gay and lesbian citizen journalists' understanding of themselves in relation to regimes of power that conversely enfranchised and disenfranchised them time and time again at the ballot box. This search for changes in collective mood over a period of time by examining a cultural archive follows Raymond Williams's observation that shifts in structures of feeling are most evident in traces left in behind in culture.[58]

While citizen journalism and the gay and lesbian press do not fit the specific art and literature profile of primary concern for Williams, it is useful to apply a similar lens to the gay and lesbian periodicals examined herein as they catalog a myriad of textual and visual responses to the time period of my primary concern in this section. Indeed, Stuart Hall assailed Williams's narrow focus on fine art and literature as one of his theory's major shortcomings.[59] These

[58] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 133.
[59] Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*, 28-31.

periodicals include opinion pieces, reports from political rallies and events, documentation of cultural interventions, meeting recaps, photography, cartoons, and poetry. Each of these pieces were produced by untrained citizen journalists whose writing is raw, at times incredibly pointed and at others regrettably sprawling, but if nothing else, deeply committed to articulating the concerns and desires of gays and lesbians in Maine.

In addition to Williams's framework for understanding structures of feeling as a methodological justification for investing this chapter so heavily in the words and images that appear in the Maine gay and lesbian press, I also look to historical precedent. As noted by gay journalist and former National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association board member Chuck Colbert, it is no surprise that so many scholars have turned to the gay and lesbian press as source material for research because, "Overall, gay media are a treasure trove of information, fleshing out specifics of LGBT life not found in mainstream media, including a measure of the gay community's texture and temperament."[60]

Tracy Baim, a longtime Chicago-based lesbian journalist and publisher of *Windy City Times*, one of the United States' longest running LGBT papers, provides a useful overview of the development of the gay and lesbian press in her 2012 book *Gay Press, Gay Power*.[61] Like Baim, American University journalism professor Rodger Streitmatter traces a similar and significantly more detailed historical overview of the gay press from its origins in the 1950s to the early 1990s, the time at which his book *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (1995) was published. Using these two publications as source material for reiterating a

[60] Chuck Colbert, "Newspapers: Research Values," in *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*, by Tracy Baim (Chicago, IL: Prairie Avenue Productions and Windy City Media Group, 2012), 426.
[61] Tracy Baim, *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America* (Chicago, IL: Prairie Avenue Productions and Windy City Media Group, 2012).

very brief historical timeline of the gay press in the United States helps situate the gay and lesbian press in Maine, which the rest of this section examines at length, within the national context.

Baim and Streitmatter trace the origins of the gay and lesbian press in the United States to the early newsletters of American homophile organizations of the 1950s and '60s like the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis as well as men's physique magazines from the late 1940s and '50s. Following the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969, Baim notes the explosion of volunteer-run and collectively assembled gay, lesbian, and lesbian-feminist newsletters and newspapers across the United States. By the close of the 1970s, these papers slowly began to professionalize and continued to do so throughout the 1980s, catalyzed by the AIDS crisis. *Philadelphia Gay News* co-founder Mark Segal noted, "We [the gay press] really came of age with the AIDS crisis: it matured us as a media outlet."[62] Streitmatter also argues that it was successful and comprehensive coverage of the AIDS crisis by the gay press that brought distinction and respect to numerous gay and lesbian news organizations that were not previously taken seriously by the mainstream press.[63] This respect and professionalism set the stage for greater financial investment in the gay and lesbian press through advertising dollars in the decades to come.

Baim describes the 1990s as the decade that corporate America woke up to the value of the gay dollar, infusing the gay and lesbian press with thousands in advertising dollars. This ushered in a decade where over 1,000 LGBT print media operations were in service, many with increased publishing frequency, larger page counts, and more color spreads than ever before in

[62] Baim, *Gay Press, Gay Power*, 340.
[63] Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995), 273-275.

the history of the gay press. While the 1980s remained largely a "for us, by us" enterprise, scholar Alexandra Chasin notes the 1990s became the decade in which the gay and lesbian press both reached a national scope, and talk of the gay market became a central feature within the gay and lesbian press.[64]

The 2000s saw a collapse of the gay and lesbian press after a period of accelerated and unsustainable growth most notably marked by the bankruptcy and dissolution of Window Media, the largest conglomerate of gay and lesbian papers in the country. Baim contends that the closure of many papers was the result of shifts in mainstream media who were finally covering gay and lesbian issues in unprecedented ways, as well as increased marketing to of gay and lesbian consumers in general publications, not gay and lesbian-specific ones. Although not noted by Baim, the shift to online digital sourcing of gay and lesbian community news certainly impacted the economic viability of the gay and lesbian press from the late 1990s through the present day.

In closing, Baim reveals that the national and regional gay and lesbian press is now producing its lowest volume of print material since the mid-1970s. As of October 2012, only 125 regional and national newspapers and magazines exist. Today that number is likely even smaller as the digital trend continues to deplete the coffers of both the gay and straight print presses. This shift to the digital as well as the shift of gay and lesbian news from the pages of gay and lesbian publications to the pages of mainstream newspapers is looked at in this Maine-based case study.

As illustrated through the following graphic, trends in Maine's gay and lesbian press follow the national publication trends articulated by Baim, Streitmatter, and Chasin. While there are many organization-based newsletters throughout the period of Maine's sexual orientation-

[64] Alexandra Chasin, *Selling Out: The Gay and Lesbian Movement Goes to Market*, (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 57-100.

inclusive non-discrimination law battles, this chapter takes up what can be described as gay and lesbian newspapers as the subject of its research. While newsletters provide relevant and interesting insight into the initiatives and referenda of the 1990s and early 2000s, newspapers document a broader response to the period, as opposed to more ideologically specific newsletters based in non-profit gay and lesbian political organizations. Organizational newsletters offer a distinct and coherent vision of events shaped by executive directors, paid staff, and boards of directors, while newspapers, with their diverse array of citizen journalists and pages after pages of "letters to the editor," offer broader, arguably more reflective accounts of the sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination initiatives and referenda of the 1990s and early 2000s in Maine.

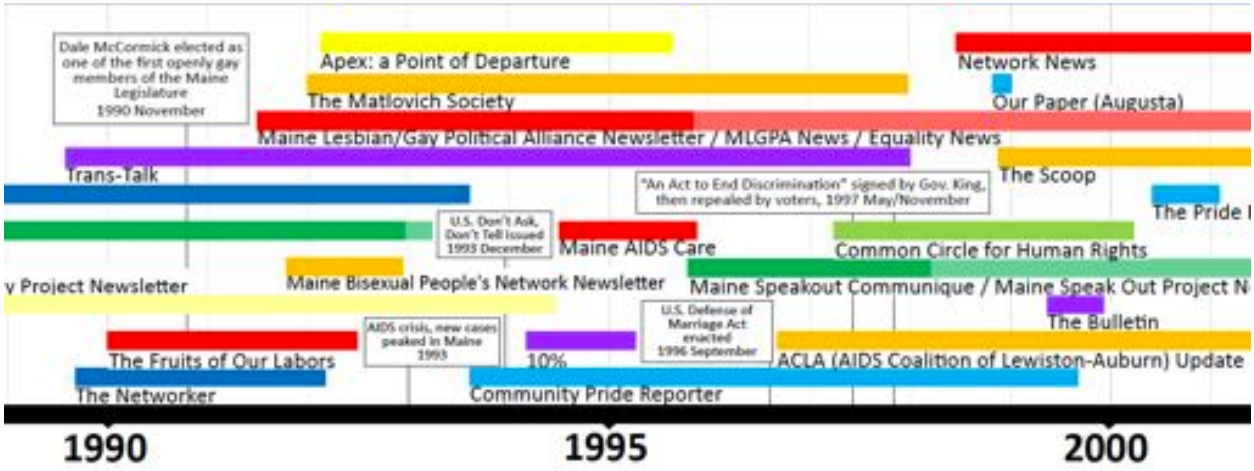

Figure 3.1 1990s timeline of gay and lesbian newsletters and newspapers in Maine, excerpted from the full timeline provided in Appendix A. Image courtesy of and created by University of Southern Maine Libraries' Special Collections based on its LGBTQ+ Collection, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine.

Our Paper, later renamed *The Gay and Lesbian Times of Maine* in 1993 (1983-1993), *Apex: A Point of Departure* (1992-1995), *Community Pride Reporter* (1993-1999), and *10%: Maine's Monthly Newspaper for Lesbians & Gay Men* (1994-1995) are the four gay and lesbian

newspapers that covered the initiatives and referenda period in Maine.[65] Notably, only one of these papers continued beyond 1995 and not one of these gay and lesbian newspapers survived into the 21st century. The shifts from print to digital and from the gay and lesbian press to gay and lesbian news appearing in the mainstream press is discussed following an examination of each of these gay and lesbian newspapers. In particular, I will examine the Maine GayNet Archives, a website maintained by Paula Stockholm that acted as a clearing house of online information for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people of Maine from 1995 to 1998.

A brief note on distribution that applies to all the papers under examination here is that none of them published or documented the number of papers in circulation per issue in their masthead. Additionally, no mailing lists that would account for the geographic distribution or circulation numbers of paid subscribers were available in any of the archival materials at the LGBT Special Collections at the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine where I accessed these papers. The only hints regarding distribution are the small lists of distribution points in Maine (primarily the Portland area), and at times in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, that sometimes appeared within the papers' pages. These locations primarily consisted of gay-owned or gay-friendly businesses, often the very same ones advertising in the newspapers themselves.

***Our Paper* / *The Gay and Lesbian Times of Maine* (1983-1993)**

Our Paper was the first gay and lesbian newspaper in Maine. It was printed on tabloid-sized newsprint paper and was preceded by only a handful of organizational newsletters like the

[65] For a full overview of LGBT periodicals that existed in Maine, see the "LGBTQ+ Periodicals" database available from the LGBT Special Collections at the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine: https://usm.maine.edu/library/specialcollections/lgbt-periodicals

Portland-based *Maine Gay Task Force Newsletter* (1974-1976) that later became *Mainely Gay* (1976-1980) and the Caribou-based *Aroostook Lambda* (1980) that later went by various permutations of the name *Northern Lambda Nord* (1980-1999). The monthly paper was founded by prolific Portland-based lesbian activist Diane Elze in the early 1980s and was managed collectively by about a dozen people for most of its time in print.[66] The collective was a group of unpaid volunteers and the paper remained free to readers, although it did maintain a small fee subscription service for readers dispersed across the state who required receipt by mail in order to access the paper.

The collective chose to change the name of the paper to the *Gay and Lesbian Times of Maine* (*GLT*) with the first issue of 1993 as a visibility strategy. As described in the premiere editorial by the paper's editorial board in the January 1993 issue, the change in name was meant to be a coming-out strategy of sorts after a full decade of publishing under the less obviously gay and lesbian title *Our Paper*.[67] Part of the submission policy that appears in the paper throughout the 1990s reads,

> We welcome and encourage our readers to submit material for publication and to share comments, criticisms, and positive feelings with us. Remember, *Our Paper* is *Your Paper*.[68]

In this stated policy, a community-based approach to producing the paper is evident, and the goal of providing positive representation of gays and lesbians living healthy, happy, productive lives is clear. Despite the request for submissions from readers regarding their "positive feelings," presumably about the content of the paper, that would reflect the growing

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[66] Diane Elze Papers, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Collection, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Libraries.
[67] "Whose Paper Is It Anyways?," *Gay and Lesbian Times of Maine* (Portland, ME), January 1993, 2.
[68] This submission policy was printed in the masthead of each issue of *Our Paper*.

visibility and viability of a community organized around marginal sexual identities, the pages of the paper are filled with contradictory demands and bad/sad/mad feelings.

Like other gay papers across the country, arguments over assimilation versus alternative worldmaking, respectability versus transgressiveness, lesbian feminism versus gay male culture, the niche market versus a so-called community, as well as arguments over the effectiveness of different activist strategies, all found their way into the editorials and letters to the editor published over the years in *Our Paper*. This also includes emotionally charged accounts of the first sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance referendum in Portland in November of 1992, the only initiative or referenda covered by this paper due to its dissolution after its March 1993 issue. These initial accounts of this first referendum process that put gay and lesbian civil rights to popular vote would mark the beginning of a decade of collective moods shifting back and forth between defeat, defiance, and desperation of a minority population under threat.

In an interview with Diane Elze published in August 1992 (well after she left the collective responsible for assembling and publishing the newspaper), she is quoted as saying, "…she feels despair about the state of the world, and she gets depressed and tired just like the rest of us." This quote appears in an interview on the cusp of Portland's November 1992 referendum and years before the repeated losses at the ballot box for statewide and municipal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections. The depression and despair noted by Elze was a response to a decade of losses during the ongoing AIDS crisis, the rolling back of women's reproductive rights, and the growing strength of the conservative religious right in the United States. In short, Elze's comments illuminate the fact that at the outset of these sexual

orientation-inclusive non-discrimination battles, many gays and lesbians already felt exasperated and depressed about their current political realities.

Similar headlines and pull quotes continued throughout the following issues leading up to the 1992 referendum in Portland. Full-page spreads were dedicated to Equal Protection/Portland, the group formed to organize in opposition to the referendum. Guest columns written by the Portland chapter of Queer Nation proclaim their promises to dog referendum organizers in the media and at public events. Public forums organized to debate the referendum were roundly criticized by gay and lesbian journalists as perversely giving equal airtime and space to homophobic vitriol spouted by anti-gay religious zealots as well as legitimizing the homophobic ideology fueling the opposition's referendum question in the first place. A united front amongst gays and lesbians of all political orientations was demanded by some, while others derided the elitist leadership and closeting strategies of the official referendum opposition group.

Figure 3.2 One of the many "Vote No!" political advertisements that appeared in *Our Paper* between August and November 1992.

The 1992 referendum went on to be defeated by a comfortable margin, ensuring Portland's sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance, the first in the state, would be enacted December 5, 1992. That year, Bill Clinton was elected to the presidency of the United States, Oregon's citizen initiative that sought a constitutional amendment to repeal current and block future sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections was defeated, a similarly worded referendum was passed in Colorado that invalidated three municipal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinances across the state, and a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance was repealed in Tampa, Florida. These stories were reported upon alongside the victorious news about Portland's referendum, tempering the celebratory local mood with national realities.

Apex: A Point of Departure (1992-1995)

Apex was an explicitly political lesbian-feminist, anti-racist newspaper based in Portland, Maine. The paper was printed on 11" x 17" cream-colored paper folded in half, much closer in form to an organizational newsletter. *Apex* was assembled and managed collectively by Annette Dragon, Naomi Falcone, Diane Matthews, and Madeleine Winter with a rotating cast of semi-regular contributors of all genders, many of them members of local ACT UP and/or Queer Nation chapters. The paper was freely distributed and sustained financially by a few local advertisers as well as grants from the Astraea Foundation and the Resist Foundation. Dragon, a transplant to Portland in 1990, had previously worked for *Our Paper* in 1991 as a photographer. Upon the launch of *Apex*, she put her writing and camera skills to use where she had much more control over what she was covering and how it would be presented.

It is quite likely that the cover story in the premier issue of *Apex*, a story written and photographed by Dragon about the discrimination faced by a lesbian mom at her son's Boy Scout troop, was the impetus for starting the paper. The story was originally supposed to appear in *Our Paper*, but was canned by editor Tim Grover because he apparently did not think that the story was relevant to other gays and lesbians across the state. While never stated, this story about anti-gay discrimination and the discrimination against a lesbian feminist journalist by a gay publisher likely catalyzed the launch of *Apex* and Dragon's departure from *Our Paper. Our Paper* later reported on the same story, but not until months later and after a barrage of letters to the editor appeared assailing *Our Paper* over its total lack of coverage regarding the lesbian mom of a former Boy Scout.

Similar to *Our Paper*, *Apex*'s self-proclaimed mandate was to "…build and empower our community by providing positive lesbian/gay images."[69] Like all newspapers under review in this section, *Apex* was conceived of as a source of important information for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Mainers as well as an advocacy organization that could contribute to the betterment of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Mainers' lives. Yasmin Nair draws attention to the understandable, yet troublesome pairing of gay media and advocacy work, noting:

> Gay media's biggest reason for existence—the need to record our history along with the oppression we face—is also the biggest weakness. Over the years, gay media in general and gay news media in particular have become calcified into nothing more than a constant advocacy for 'rights' (poorly defined) combined with a deep sense of perpetual victimhood.[70]

[69] Apex's mandate and submission policy was published in the masthead of each issue.
[70] Yasmin Nair, "Do We Still Need Gay News Media?," in *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America*, ed. Tracy Baim (Chicago, IL: Prairie Avenue Productions and Windy City Media Group, 2012), 434.

While Nair is responding to the contemporary, national, and largely digital gay and lesbian media landscape, her concern about the dual role as both journalist and advocate remains. What she points to here is the adherence to reporting positively on gay rights issues as a matter of political advocacy, while never really interrogating the primacy of these rights-based goals in themselves. In essence, the gay and lesbian media have become complicit in the linear progress narrative of rights-based discourse espoused by gay and lesbian advocacy organizations. *Apex* is the only Maine-based gay and lesbian paper to interrogate, to some degree, the demand for inclusion in the face of discrimination, but largely followed the same pattern of blending advocacy and journalism.

Apex's run fully covered the two municipal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination referenda in Portland (1992) and Lewiston (1993) as well as the lead-up to Carolyn Cosby's 1995 statewide citizen initiative to repeal all sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws, and block the expansion of classes eligible for non-discrimination protections in the future. It is unclear why the paper folded just a few months before the 1995 general election, as it is not noted within the newspaper's own pages or in the Annette Dragon Papers in the LGBT Collection at the Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity at the University of Southern Maine. Perhaps the energy it took to run a newspaper while also continuing the fight against anti-gay citizen initiatives and referenda proved too much for this small collective of activists?

The coverage of Portland's 1992 referendum begins by articulating a fierce reading of the national political landscape in an article titled "Betrayed by a Nation" in the premier issue of *Apex* in February 1992. The article frets over George H.W. Bush's presidency and his possible re-election, his apathy towards the ongoing AIDS crisis that is described as "negligent

genocide," the quotidian gay bashings experienced by so many, the possibility that *Roe v. Wade* might be overturned, and the fact that affirmative action and the civil rights movement had been upended. Just three months before the Portland City Council passed the first sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance in the state, the article despondently stated: "Discrimination against lesbians and gays is still legal and the subsequent violence is silently condoned."[71]

In the lead-up to the 1992 Portland referendum, story after story from each monthly paper paints a bleak picture of gay and lesbian life in Maine. These stories included a near-death gay bashing in Portland's Old Port that never even made the mainstream news, the worsening AIDS crisis, the destruction of the nationally touring "Art Against AIDS" exhibition by vandals while on display at the University of Southern Maine, which was described as "the cultural annihilation of the gay community,"[72] the homophobic defacement of AIDS awareness posters at the supposedly-liberal Portland School of Art (the predecessor to today's Maine College of Art), the worry over the possible election of anti-gay rights and anti-abortion Linda Bean to represent Maine's first congressional district in the U.S. Senate, numerous AIDS obituaries, reports of violent sexual assaults on women in public places, the appointment of anti-safer sex family values advocate Leo Martin as State Education Commissioner, further insuring no safer-sex information would reach public school students in Maine, and countless pleas for readers to vote and volunteer with Equal Protection/Portland. While this brief overview of feature stories foregrounds the ominous collective mood of Portland's gay and lesbian population as portrayed

[71] Brittany Fortin, "Betrayed by a Nation," *Apex* (Portland, ME), February 1992, 5.
[72] "Homophobe Defaces Art Exhibit at USM," *Apex* (Portland, ME), April 1992, 7.

in *Apex*, stories of demonstrations and rallies often responded to every urgently described situation, thereby providing proof that despite the bleak times, resistance existed.

The December issue of *Apex* that appeared after the unsuccessful referendum to repeal Portland's sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance only printed one article about the win at the ballot box. Bee Bell, a member of Equal Protection/Portland (EPP), fiercely critiqued the organization she volunteered for because of its exclusion of more marginal queers, anti-democratic hierarchical structure, and its de-gaying of the issue by foregrounding the voices of straight allies in the media. While clearly a victory for gay civil rights, the battle was not without its losses.

The sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protection battles continued in Lewiston shortly thereafter, with a full cover-page spread in the following January 1993 issue. The strategies of EPP were discussed critically back and forth in pages of *Apex* under Letters to the Editor, but were largely adopted by Equal Protection/Lewiston (EPL). The following issues of *Apex* in the first half of 1993 focused heavily on the referendum in Lewiston and the Maine Medical Association's proposed bill, referred to as the Dracula bill by activists, that would allow for non-consensual HIV testing. The Dracula bill was later defeated, but it further mobilized the demand for better care for people living with HIV/AIDS, an end to homophobia in healthcare, and a universal single-payer healthcare system. This was particularly clear in the pages of *Apex* that responded emotionally to the death of a comrade of many of the paper's contributors, Keith Dickens, who died from AIDS-related illness in June 1993. Dickens was a well-known and proud gay Native American man active in ACT UP/Portland and Queer Nation.

Figure 3.3 ACT UP Vampires and mock blood drive at the Maine Medical Association's Legislative Offices in Manchester, Maine protesting the so-called Dracula Bill, Annette Dragon Photographs, LGBT Special Collections, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Library, February 1993.

President Clinton's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy was discussed throughout 1993 and article after article was published in *Apex* describing Clinton's betrayal of the gays and lesbians he had courted so strongly in the lead-up to the 1992 general election. Articles appeared in *Apex* with titles like "Betrayed!" and "Please Ask, Please Tell." Although many who were interviewed in these articles did not have positive feelings about the military, they expressed themselves as "outraged" and called the new policy a "shattering disappointment."[73]

[73] Dennis Lyons, "Betrayed!," *Apex* (Portland, ME), August 1993, 6.

Figure 3.4 Protesters against the Lewiston sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance hold signs protesting the city council's vote in favor of the ordinance, Annette Dragon Photographs, LGBT Special Collections, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Library, January 1993.

As described in *Apex*, EPL would organize largely based on the same model employed by EPP. They focused on the message that discrimination is always wrong, rather than queer lives are valuable, and foregrounded the voices of straight allies in the media as opposed to those of gays and lesbians. Regular contributor Bee Bell noted rumblings of the emerging organization Equal Protection Maine, largely modeled off the organizing work of EPP and EPL, but designed to fight the impending statewide anti-gay initiative on gay and lesbian civil rights as well as to pass a statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law in the legislature. This statewide organizing later became known as Maine Won't Discriminate. The formation of this group was a direct response to Carolyn Cosby's signature gathering at the polls, beginning in 1993 with the explicit purpose of creating a statewide ban on sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections, and the veto of a statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-

discrimination law by then-Governor John McKernan (Republican) after it passed through the state legislature.

In the November 1993 issue of *Apex*, Bell noted the emergence of a group of professional advocates at the helm of this nascent organization, most of whom came primarily from the Maine Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance, a precursor to today's Equality Maine. According to Bell, these professional advocates pushed the organization into a hierarchical structure, sought to exclude the gay and lesbian press from their supposedly open meetings, privileged a media strategy that foregrounded the voice of straight allies, and downplayed the need for cultural change by focusing entirely on legal change. This organizational strategy set up the Maine gay and lesbian rights movement for repeated failure at the state ballot box for more than a decade.

Following the brutal defeat at the polls in Lewiston by a two-to-one margin, reflections on what went wrong figured centrally in *Apex*'s columns and Letters to the Editor. This was followed by reports over the next six months of *Apex* issues on things like the anti-gay protests at a Maine Gay Men's Chorus concert in Farmington; the funding and resource deficit between the wealthier Christian right and the poorer gay rights movement; running interference on Cosby's continued signature gathering, jokingly referred to as "bigot-busting"; more AIDS obituaries, including a four-page tribute to the death of Lewiston-born *Apex* contributor and activist Donald "Leon" Plourde; the continued fights to bring sexual education to public high school students in southern Maine; and finally, an announcement in the September 1994 issue that Cosby's Concerned Maine Families petition had qualified to place an anti-gay rights citizen initiative on the ballot during the 1995 general election.

The pages of *Apex* from the first six months of 1995 covered what had become the usual topics: HIV/AIDS, sex education in public schools, obituaries, gay bashings, and news from

other state's municipal and statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination battles at the ballot box, in the state legislature, and in the courts. The June 1995 issue covers the public hearing at the Augusta Civic Center hosted by the Judiciary Committee of the Maine legislature on the upcoming vote, which decided the fate of Cosby's anti-gay citizen initiative. The three-page spread provides detailed coverage of the explicit homophobia of the Christian conservatives who spoke in favor of the law that a successful initiative vote would require the legislature to enact. Once again, homophobia was on full display in the pages of *Apex* in the collective's attempt to educate their readers about the stakes of the upcoming election. To note their own dismay and ballot fatigue with humor, text at the bottom of the cover page reads: "In honor of Pride, we just couldn't bear to print another picture of Carolyn Cosby on the front page," followed by clipart of fireworks instead. Unfortunately, *Apex* fizzled out in the lead-up to the November 1995 general election, ending publication with their last issue in August 1995.

Although the paper stopped printing before the anti-gay 1995 citizen initiative failed at the ballot box, Dragon continued to document the gay and lesbian people of Maine with her point-and-shoot camera through 1999. The following photograph from the collection of her photographs housed in the LGBT Special Collections at the University of Southern Maine depicts the utter defeat felt by gays and lesbians in the aftermath of the successful 1998 referendum that repealed Maine's first statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law during a special election.

Figure 3.5 Two women sit on the floor in front of a wall with "Vote No Feb 10, Maine Won't Discriminate" signs on it. Annette Dragon Photographs, LGBT Special Collections, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Library, February 1998.

Community Pride Reporter (1993-1999)

Community Pride Reporter (CPR) was the only for-profit newspaper amongst the newspapers discussed in this chapter, and interestingly enough, the one that survived the longest into the 1990s. The tabloid-sized newsprint paper was founded and edited by Winnie Weir, who moved to Portland in 1985 with her partner from Conway, New Hampshire.[74] The issue began with a dollar-per-issue monthly fee for the first few runs, but became free thereafter, primarily relying on local and regional advertising dollars like the other gay and lesbian papers reviewed in this section. At some points, *CPR* printed as a bi-monthly or seasonal paper, and published

[74] R. W. Holmen, "All Truth Is God's Truth," in *Queer Clergy: A History of Gay and Lesbian Ministry in American Protestantism* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2013).

continuously well into 1999, the latest of any running publication from the 1990s. *CPR* covers the 1993 referendum in Lewiston in similar fashion to *Apex* so this review of *CPR* coverage moves ahead to the 1995 election, when Cosby's anti-gay citizen initiative appeared on the ballot.

Despite not having a referendum or initiative to vote on in 1994, *CPR* continued to cover the signature-gathering efforts of Carolyn Cosby's Concerned Maine Families (CMF), much as *Apex* did. This included a four-page spread on CMF's statewide speaking tour with invited Christian conservative husband and wife, Reverend Charles and Donna McIlhenny, from the West Coast. In covering this speaking tour, *CPR* managing editor Bruce Balboni claimed, "The message that 'you're no good' that Carolyn Cosby and the McIlhennys spout about gays is virtually genocide,"[75] citing statistics from a recently released study on gay teens and suicide. While arguably hyperbolic, these words made sense in the Maine context where queer and trans teen suicide was an acknowledged public reality for many years. Most notable was the highly publicized and unexplained suicide of all-star football player and honors student, seventeen-year-old Scott Croteau, in Lewiston, Maine. His death occurred less than two months before the 1995 statewide referendum and catalyzed the rebirth of a floundering Lewiston-Auburn chapter of Outright, Maine's chapter-based support organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning young people.[76] Coverage of Croteau's unexplained disappearance and suicide

[75] Bruce Balboni, "Concerned Maine Families sponsors anti-gay lecture in So. Portland," *Community Pride Reporter* (Portland ME), May 1994, 21.

[76] Croteau's gruesome suicide remained officially unexplained (he was found with a gunshot wound to the head and hanging from a noose tied to a tree in a secluded wooded area on the suburban edge of town). Parents and activists who restarted the Outright/Lewiston Auburn chapter insisted to me that the cause was obvious, but no one in the conservative French-Catholic town of Lewiston wanted to admit it. This story was reiterated to me by Penny Sargent, Nancy Audet, and Erica Rand of Outright/L-A as well as by a queer friend whose brother attended high school with Croteau. The suicide made national news in the *LA Times* and *New York Times*, none

appeared on the *Lewiston Sun-Journal*'s front cover for September 20, 1995 right next to coverage of an anti-gay protest in support of the 1995 initiative, yet the connection between the two events was evident only to other gay and lesbian residents.

The 1995 victory was a joyous moment for Maine's gays and lesbians, particularly the activists who successfully organized against Cosby's initiative. This victory offered a reprieve after the devastating loss in Lewiston that cut short the momentum coming out of the 1992 referendum in Portland. However, this triumph was tempered by the fact that the defeat of Cosby's citizen initiative in 1995 just meant maintaining the status quo: this meant no sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections for the majority of Mainers. The years between 1995 and 1997 saw pages and pages of news coverage by *CPR* following the gay and lesbian movement's push for a statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law in Maine and across the country. *CPR* also saw a drastic reduction in news stories about HIV/AIDS as effective combination therapy treatments rolled out. These articles were replaced with a growing number of stories about the battle for domestic partnership recognition and President Bill Clinton's signing of the Defense of Marriage Act in September 1996.

The elections of Independent Governor Angus King in November 1994 and Dale McCormick, an out lesbian Maine state senator, boded well for efforts to pass a statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law without being vetoed by the governor, unlike

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mentioning that he could have been gay, but instead hypothesized a cause based on a distant relationship with his estranged mother, reifying the importance of the heterosexual nuclear family. See George Epser, "Scotty's Tree Bears Bitter Fruit: A Symbol of an Athlete's Hidden Turmoil That Led to Suicide," *Los Angeles Times*, October 8, 1995. http://articles.latimes.com/1995-10-08/sports/sp-54641_1_bears-bitter-fruit; Ira Berkow, "An Athlete Is Dead at 17 And No One Can Say Why," *New York Times*, October 1, 1995. http://www.nytimes.com/1995/10/01/sports/an-athlete-is-dead-at-17-and-no-one-can-say-why.html?pagewanted=all.

previous efforts in 1993. This became the focus of gay and lesbian activists after the defeat of Cosby's anti-gay citizen initiative during the 1995 general election.

In May 1997, just such a bill was signed into law by Governor King. The June 1997 issue of *CPR* celebrated Pride month with particular vigor, noting Maine had now joined the rest of the New England states with non-discrimination protections for gays and lesbians. Article after article celebrated the legislative win with headlines like "WE DID IT! AT LAST WE REALLY DID IT!" and "Don't Miss the MLGPA Victory Party." Others noted that Cosby's Concerned Maine Family and the Christian Civic League of Maine, under the new directorship of Michael Heath, were promising a people's veto challenge. David Cook's column warned that the referendum process was exhausting the electorate and enabling Christian conservatives to circumvent state governments, exclaiming in exasperation: "Like the frivolous lawsuit, the referendum has become a plague on American life."[77] This exhaustion with the constant fight against anti-gay referendums came well before the seven more that appeared on state and municipal ballots during future elections until gay and lesbian activists were finally successful with a statewide referendum in 2005.

[77] David Cook, "Rant: A Line Item Veto on Gay Rights," *Community Pride Reporter* (Portland ME), June 1994, 10.

Figure 3.6 Governor Angus King signs L.D. 1116, a sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination bill, as Senator Dale McCormick celebrates and a roomful of legislators and activists look on. Annette Dragon Photographs, LGBT Special Collections, Jean Byers Sampson Center for Diversity in Maine, University of Southern Maine Library, May 1997.

As might be expected, the pages of *CPR* following the successful repeal of Maine's first statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law in the February 1998 special election were marked by a defeated tone. Many articles, like "1998: The year of the Challenge? Look to the past, Plan the future..." encouraged readers to look to the past to continue organizing in the future after acknowledging a much-needed period of mourning for the election loss.[78] Articles on local and national gay bashings populated the paper's pages between stories about the election, while news items on HIV/AIDS continued to shrink as well as the community resource listings dedicated to HIV/AIDS services that were included with every issue since publication began. Additionally, continued national coverage of numerous states passing gay marriage bans

[78] "1998: The year of the Challenge? Look to the past, Plan the future…" *Community Pride Reporter* (Portland, ME), March 1998, 9.

through state legislatures and referenda grew, opening another front on gay and lesbian civil rights.

The general election in November 1998 would see two more referenda on municipal ballots in the southern Maine municipalities of South Portland and Ogunquit. While South Portland's election was covered extensively in *CPR* before election day, including a four-page, three-color insert from South Portland Citizens for Justice exalting people to "Vote for Human Rights," the referendum in Ogunquit was surprisingly absent. Perhaps it was assumed that Ogunquit needed no formal organizational efforts or media coverage to win since it was known to be a very gay-friendly vacation destination. Ogunquit's relatively small population, less than one thousand year-round residents, also made it as a noticeably less significant battle compared to South Portland, the city of Portland's most densely populated suburb. Regardless, the absence of coverage before and after the defeat of the sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance in Ogunquit by referendum is puzzling.

The issues of *CPR* following the 1998 general election were not celebratory despite the win in South Portland, and instead turned towards a proposed federal law called the Religious Liberty Protection Act of 1998 (H.R.4019). This bill sought to offer exemptions for religious individuals, businesses, and organizations from sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination laws at the state or municipal levels. The bill did not move beyond committee in 1998 and was reintroduced in 1999 (as H.R. 1691) where it passed a vote in the House of Representatives, but not the Senate.[79] *CPR* went on to print only six more issues after the 1998 general election, ending publication well before the 2000 legislatively-referred referendum that once again

[79] "H.R. 4019, 105th Congress (1997-1998): Religious Liberty Protection Act of 1998," Accessed November 07, 2016, https://www.congress.gov/bill/105th-congress/house-bill/4019

overturned any hope for approving a statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law. *CPR,* like *Apex*, stopped publishing abruptly with no indication that the paper was ceasing publication.

***10%: Maine's Monthly Newspaper for Lesbians & Gay Men* (1994-1995)**

10%'s paper format matched the tabloid dimensions and newsprint paper stock used by *CPR* and *Our Paper*. Its debut issue in February 1994 carried two feature articles on sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections. The first, titled "Referendum Drive Fails," referred to the failure of Cosby's Concerned Maine Families in 1994 to gather enough signatures for their citizens' initiative designed to repeal and block municipal and statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections. The second, titled "Discrimination Suit Settled," referred to one of the first legal cases to test Portland's newly minted 1992 Human Rights Ordinance that included protections for workers based on sexual orientation. The first editorial by the paper's three co-editors, Terri Jones, Rebecca Foster, and Tyler White, described the "dire need" for a quality news source for all gay and lesbian people across the state of Maine and asks its readers, "Do the names Jasper Wyman [the then director of the Christian Civic League of Maine] and Carolyn Cosby [the founder of Concerned Maine Families] send a shiver down your spine?" In other words, the anti-gay initiatives and referenda to date, along with the leaders and organizations responsible for them, were cited as the primary reason for launching a third gay and lesbian newspaper in Maine at the time.

After the paper's debut editorial penned by the paper's editorial board, a small prompt followed, requesting input for the following month's first reader-submitted forum. The prompt reads as follows:

> In the past two years this state has seen passage of a human rights ordinance in Portland, the defeat of a similar ordinance in Lewiston, a Governor McKernan veto of a statewide gay rights bill, and most recently a failed drive to potentially prohibit any future gay rights laws in Maine. With these developments in mind, our monthly forum question for March is: What is the best strategy to gain support for a gay rights bill in Maine?[80]

On page nine of the debut issue, a full-page spread was dedicated to reviewing legal measures regarding sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law around the country. This spread foregrounded news about anti-gay referenda and initiatives while highlighting the experiences of discrimination by gays and lesbians from Colorado, Florida, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Ohio as well as the municipalities of Baltimore and Los Angeles—all places that recently had or were about to face legal battles. Again, this kind of nationwide reporting regarding sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections was ongoing throughout all the gay and lesbian papers in Maine at this time, readily putting the Maine context in dialogue with the national context.

The following issues of *10%* continued to focus on the battle over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections. While Carolyn Cosby's 1994 initiative failed to gather the required number of signatures in order to appear as a ballot question during the general election that year, column after column noted that she and her organization would continue gathering enough signatures for the 1995 election cycle. The editorial board cautioned its readers, noting that national organizations aimed at defeating state and municipal sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections across the country were pumping money and resources into the state to help organizations like Carolyn Cosby's and Jasper Wyman's

[80] "We're Here, We're Queer, and We Have News and Opinions," *10%* (Portland, ME), February 1994, 3.

succeed.[81] Meanwhile, other columnists noted the need to organize in Maine to stop the local extreme right, particularly the Christian Civic League, who were identifying candidates ideologically opposed to sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections and working to get them elected to state office. The framework repeated time and time again in this issue was that gays and lesbians were under attack on multiple fronts and needed to defend themselves.

This same issue also featured an article about Lewiston, the small central Maine city that had just repealed its sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance by a 2:1 margin less than six months earlier. In this article, Richard Robichaud, a local gay resident, was "humiliated and upset" when the municipal court system failed to find enough unbiased jurors for a third time regarding his pending case because he was gay—despite the case revolving around an injury sustained in a car accident with a snowplow in the winter of 1989. The courts used a questionnaire to screen potential jurors to determine if they could be impartial in cases where one party was a homosexual. Each time, the vast majority of possible jurors were disqualified on this basis alone. Robichaud went on to remark,

> There are a lot of problems in this town. There is a lot of homophobia… broken windshields, slashed tires, people getting beat up… I'm proud to be gay but I'm not proud to be a resident of Lewiston, Maine right now.[82]

In this issue alone, nearly half of all articles discuss discrimination against gay and lesbian people, followed by nine articles about HIV/AIDS. Combined, 20 of 28 news items and articles in this issue featured content regarding discrimination based on sexual orientation or the ongoing AIDS crisis. No other newsworthy subject in the gay and lesbian press elicited this

[81] "Cosby is Still Fighting, Are we Fighting Back?," *10%* (Portland, ME), March 1994, 3.
[82] "Lewiston Man Can't Get Fair Trial After Being 'Outed' by *Lewiston Sun-Journal*," *10%* (Portland, ME), March 1994, 2.

amount of attention. This volume of news articles on HIV/AIDS and sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections was emblematic of the times and not exceptional.

The September 1994 issue featured two cover stories focused on the upcoming 1995 election that included Cosby's anti-gay citizen initiative on the statewide ballot. These stories took up the majority of content pages of the issue, some exclaiming in bold letters: "The Fight Has Begun." Shared amongst this local news coverage regarding sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law in Maine was news about the hearings on the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act, including detailed stories of gay and lesbian workers losing jobs on account of their sexuality all over the nation. The 1995 election and anti-gay citizen initiative was featured on the front cover of the following five issues of the paper and occupied a central focus on a significant portion of the paper's interior pages. HIV/AIDS-related news coverage followed as a close second topic with the most content within the paper's pages.

The March 1995 issue was *10%*'s last, and like *CPR* and *Apex*, it dissolved without notice or stated reason. In all likelihood, the Maine market, and more specifically the Portland-based market, could not economically sustain three separate gay and lesbian newspapers simultaneously. Unlike the gay and lesbian newspapers based in larger cities and the nationwide glossy magazines that attracted higher-paying national advertisers in the 1990s as previously outlined by Baim, Streitmatter, and Chasin, none of Maine's papers attracted more than local and regional advertising dollars to sustain their papers. Maine's relatively smaller, poorer, and geographically isolated population appears to have been of little economic interest to these big businesses and caused Maine's gay and lesbian press to be more localized in its advertising and readership.

Maine GayNet

While the gay and lesbian press in Maine began losing papers by the mid-1990s, Maine's only still-publishing paper was *Community Pride Reporter*. *CPR* was the only paper to experiment with an online presence, although unsuccessfully. Maine Gay Network began as a digital mailing list in February 1994, initiated by Paula Stockholm with the stated purpose "to establish a connected-ness network for Lesbians, Gay Men, Bisexuals, etc. and our friends throughout Maine, where we will be fighting for Equal Rights and Equal Protection in 1995."[83] The mailing list would quickly develop into a basic HTML website, listing organizations and resources for gay and lesbian residents of Maine.

Only the summer 1995 issue of *CPR* was digitized in basic HTML and uploaded online for digital distribution through Paula Stockholm's Maine GayNet.[84] Stockholm worked as a journalist for *CPR* throughout the latter half of the paper's existence. Although details about this online collaboration are not available, nor is it clear how digital distribution would help sustain the paper financially with no digital advertising, another aspect of Maine GayNet is worth noting. Instead of continuing to experiment with digital print editions of gay and lesbian newspapers in Maine, the site shifted to fastidiously documenting the growing coverage of gay and lesbian issues in the mainstream press, coverage that consisted primarily of instances of discrimination experienced by gays and lesbians as well as sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination-related initiatives and referenda.

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[83] Paula Stockholm, "Maine Gay Network Announced," Mailing List, February 19, 1995, Maine Gay Network, http://www.qrd.org/QRD/usa/maine/maine.gay.network.announced.
[84] Paula Stockholm, "Community Pride Reporter Summer '95 Edition," Queer Resources Directory, Summer 1995, http://www.qrd.org/QRD/www/usa/maine/cpr/sum95.html.

The Maine GayNet archives include mainstream newspaper clippings and broadcast transcripts from 1995 to 1998, covering the first two elections cycles that included ballot questions regarding statewide sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law. While the hundreds and hundreds of articles themselves are no more illuminating than the news stories recorded in *CPR* during that same time period, the near-obsessive chronicling of every article pertaining to the rights of gays and lesbians in the mainstream press is telling. The sheer volume of work transcribing articles and coding HTML to make this archive available to readers is impressive, considering its creation came before the popularization of content management systems used today, like WordPress, that make this kind of web-based work so much easier and more efficient. The fact that there is no advertising on the Maine GayNet site also indicates this project was driven entirely by volunteer labor and political commitment, not a paycheck. The sheer volume of articles produced by the mainstream press during this period also connotes a shift to greater and more sympathetic coverage of gay and lesbian issues in the mainstream press, as Baim and Streitmatter observed.

Dead, Dying, Defenseless, and Disenfranchised

This chapter provides an overview of the initiatives and referenda in Maine pertaining to sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination law and how the gay and lesbian press in Maine responded to their successes and defeats at the ballot box. While trying to clearly detect and reiterate the mood and tone of this period as articulated by the dedicated, but clearly exasperated citizen journalists reporting on sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protection battles, I have also tried to contextualize the lives of gays and lesbians as reported in the gay press. Stories of AIDS, premature death, gay bashings, employment and housing discrimination, the

erosion of reproductive freedoms, the rise of the religious right and the ensuing culture wars all filled the space between the majority of articles focused on sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination municipal ordinances, statewide laws, and the ensuing initiatives and referenda surrounding them.

In this chapter, I have detailed the electoral events that anchored the battles over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections in Maine along with responses to these events in the gay and lesbian press. In doing so, I have foregrounded the tone expressed by gay and lesbian citizen journalists, trying to contextualize the collective mood shift of a minority population under threat. While social movement scholars like Tina Fetner have thoroughly mapped out how the religious right has shaped the political agenda of lesbian and gay activists in the United States through social movement theory,[85] this chapter explicitly foregrounds the collective emotional disposition of gays and lesbians, rather than footnoting it for an area of further study. I foreground this theme of emotion and collective mood in order to ask questions and theorize how shared affective states amongst minority subjects might expand and contract the queer political imagination. How might collective mood foreclose or expand the ability to imagine and struggle for other, more equitable, more queer worlds to come into being?

In this particular case study, I argue that the collective moods of anger, frustration, defeat, defensiveness, and desperation for queer people in Maine, and nationally, during the sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination battles of the 1990s contributed to setting the narrow vision for queer and trans activism in the following decades. While none of these emotions were intrinsically linked to any specific action or outcome, as Gould notes that anger was often cited

[85] Tina Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*, Minnesota Press, 2008.

as the primary emotion fueling the action of radical activist groups like ACT UP,[86] in this case, the constellation of emotions defining the 1990s for gays and lesbians did lead to a further abandonment of radical queer worldmaking projects. The forced defense posture of gays and lesbians in the crosshairs of anti-gay initiatives and referenda in the 1990s set an urgent tone where self-criticism and the questioning of campaign goals were jettisoned. The demand to be included and recognized by society as equals within the institutions of straight society (marriage, military, state protections), rather than demands to remake of the world in a queerer image, has come to occupy the queer political imagination today. This shift to a politics of inclusion and recognition through fights for gay marriage, openly gay military service, and sexual orientation-inclusive hate crime laws is the focus of the following chapter.

I cannot overstress the line I am drawing here between the AIDS crisis that abated to some degree in the mid-1990s with the implementation of HAART to the battles over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections that grew to a fever pitch in Maine and across the United States just as these drugs became available. It is this continued struggle over, and loss of, basic civil rights that threads the trauma and loss from the early AIDS crisis through to the mid-2000s. Many note the arrival of HAART in 1996 as a moment of reprieve for struggling gays and lesbians in the United States, which it surely was, but I do not want to lose sight of the ongoing struggle, losses, and trauma that continue well beyond this watershed moment of successful biomedical intervention. While drugs may have stemmed the loss of life from AIDS-related illnesses, civil rights losses over basic access to things like housing and employment protections continued unabated for another decade.

[86] Gould, *Moving Politics*.

Chapter 4

Imagine Resistance

Reinvigorating the queer political imagination since 2009!

-Against Equality[1]

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the Against Equality collective, a small activist group that I co-founded with Yasmin Nair in 2009, whose main focus is archiving digital work that critiques the demand for gay and lesbian inclusion in marriage, the U.S. military, and hate crime laws. The chapter begins with an overview of the critiques made in each section of the Against Equality archive, followed by an analysis of how we have arrived at this particular moment in LGBT history that makes these critiques necessary. Following this contextualization, this chapter analyzes the three main activities of the Against Equality collective over the last six years: the creation and maintenance of a digital web-based archive, print publications based on archival works, and cultural production created to activate the archive. The chapter ends with reflections on the successes and shortcomings of Against Equality as a site of resistance to the foreclosing of the queer political imagination.

I juxtapose the two previous chapters focused on cultural archives that illuminate the grave history of loss and trauma in gay and lesbian communities since the 1980s with this chapter focused on a queer activist project in the present. This juxtaposition shows an activist response that attempts to open up the possibilities for radical queer worldmaking projects in the face of a recent history of such intense devastation. While the history of loss and trauma stemming from both the AIDS crisis and the drawn-out battles over sexual orientation-inclusive

[1] This slogan appears on the front page of the Against Equality website: http://www.againstequality.org.

non-discrimination law in the United States has helped shape the reactive demand for recognition and inclusion of mainstream gay and lesbian political organizations, this chapter demonstrates another mode of political organizing, thought, and being in the world is both necessary and possible.

I am also utilizing this dissertation as an opportunity to historicize, reflect, and write critically on a creative activist intellectual project of which I was an integral part. While one could argue whether or not this project fits into the research-creation framework others have developed, I do so here for the sake of legibility in an academic context. In recording my critical reflections in the following chapter, I subject an activist-initiated, collaborative, creative research project to a sustained scholarly evaluation. By taking this creative activist project as an object of study for scholars, I seek to legitimize the collective's intellectual work as a valuable site for further research.

Being a collaborative project, the voice in this chapter moves between "I" in the majority of the chapter to "we" in the sections based on previously written collaborative texts. In describing the collective's politics and actions, there is no other proper voice to speak from than the "we" of the collective, although the critical reflections are all my own.

Lastly, as noted in the introduction, prioritizing this creative activist project as an object of study draws a direct line between an outwardly political project and a scholarly investigation, situating my work firmly in the British cultural studies tradition where scholarship is connected to activist movements and projects.

What is Against Equality?

Against Equality (AE) is a small, all-volunteer, anti-capitalist collective that maintains an online archive of radical queer and trans critiques of the holy trinity of mainstream gay and lesbian politics: gay marriage, gays in the military, and sexual orientation-inclusive hate crime legislation. In 2009, a classist and urban-centric gay marriage campaign in rural Maine resulted in a successful referendum which repealed a gay marriage law. AE began as my own personal blog in response to the Maine-specific context, but was quickly transformed into its current form as a collectively organized online archive of written and visual materials from across the United States and the globe. The process of transformation from personal blog to collective project is detailed later in this chapter.

As an anti-capitalist collective, AE is quite skeptical of the non-profit model employed by multi-million dollar organizations like the Human Rights Campaign and The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.[2] By functioning as anti-profit, not simply non-profit, the collective tries to strike a balance between valuing our own labor and making our work as financially accessible as possible. All our publications and other cultural production (postcards, pins, tote bags, etc.) are kept as affordable as possible while we cheat, steal, and talk our way out of the thousands of dollars of debt we have accrued over the years. This was primarily achieved by applying for as many credit cards as possible year after year, utilizing the one year 0% interest introductory rates on balance transfers for new cards and simply cycling our debt through new cards in an arrangement that essentially gave us a no-interest loan for as long as we needed.

[2] AE is indebted to Incite! for their work articulating a critique of the professionalization and non-profitization of activist organizing. For their detailed critique, see Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, (Boston: South End Press), 2007.

While foregoing non-profit status and fiscal sponsors has rendered us ineligible for grants, it allows us to be more directly accountable to our community as opposed to funders. We have deliberately eschewed a non-profit structure, preferring to operate as a collective. Not being beholden to a board or conventional funding has meant that we struggle financially, but that also keeps us focused on our work, not on endless grant writing, fundraising, and board development.

While AE members often write and make cultural work about our shared politics, we are first and foremost an archive. AE is not an organization, does not have an office, does not have a phone, does not have a volunteer/intern coordinator, and all members have other jobs, often two. The collective maintains the archive in addition to each member's local community activism. We see the intellectual work in our archive as informing our activism and our activism informing our intellectual work. We understand both as forms of labor, and we see both as absolutely necessary for our movements to grow and deliver concrete beneficial changes for all queer and trans people.

Against Equality: An Overview of the Arguments[3]

This section outlines context for, and the common critiques of, the demand for inclusion in marriage, the U.S. military, and hate crime laws as found in our digital archive. Each of these three themes is explored here in detail, describing why we still see a focus on gay marriage as wrongheaded, and how military inclusion and expanded hate crime laws have only served to exacerbate U.S. militarism and expand the prison industrial complex. This section begins with an

[3] This section is based on a lecture produced collaboratively between collective members Yasmin Nair, Karma Chávez, and Ryan Conrad for Against Equality live presentations and events. A version of this section also appears as a chapter in *Decolonizing Sexualities: Transnational Perspectives and Critical Interventions* (2016).

overview of gay marriage critiques, followed by the U.S. military, and then concludes with a look at hate crime laws and the impact of the prison industrial complex on queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people.

Marriage

This first section connects the dots between the rise of neoliberalism in the U.S. and the rise of gay marriage. We define neoliberalism as the intense privatization of everyday life and the formation of a nation-state that increasingly places the burden of care upon the family as a unit as opposed to the state. We situate gay marriage within an economic context with particular emphasis on Edith Windsor, the plaintiff at the heart of the 2013 U.S. Supreme Court case (*Windsor v. U.S.*) that decided the unconstitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). We construct a brief history of how gay marriage came to be *the* cause for the gay movement, a history that has effectively been made invisible in all of the discourse around marriage as an issue of "equality." We begin with a brief explanation of why we use the term "gay marriage" rather than "freedom to marry" or "marriage equality," as AE collective member Yasmin Nair articulated in a recent article for the *Chicago Reader*:

> the term "marriage equality" occludes the fact that the institution many gays and lesbians (but by no means the majority of them) clamor for is in fact embedded in a long history of sexism, misogyny, and racism, which defines people and particularly women and children as objects of possession. Even more importantly, marriage is part of a larger neoliberal enterprise, a greater system of privatization, a state of things where people, increasingly, must enter into private contracts like marriage in order to gain the most basic benefits—like healthcare, or the ability to decide who can receive their estates, small or large, upon death.[4]

[4] Yasmin Nair, "Marry You Must!: Gay Marriage in Illinois," *Chicago Reader*, November 7, 2013, http://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2013/11/07/marry-you-must-gay-marriage-in-illinois.

In using terms like marriage equality or equal marriage, gay marriage advocates attempt to divorce a problematic social construct, "marriage," from its history, which has been about anything but equality. The fervor around marriage has intensified over the last decade or so, and marriage is now very big business. There are, as we write, innumerable television shows about wedding planning and bridal gowns, and the marriage industry has risen from the ashes of marriage itself: consider, for instance, the fact that American first marriages have drastically declined in the past few decades and that most marriages end in divorce.

Yet more than ever, people feel the pressure to marry; most do not realize what power the institution holds until they inevitably get divorced. In the state of Illinois, for instance, there is a waiting period before divorce can be finalized. This renders people, particularly women, as objects incapable of actually knowing what they want—which is to say, women now have the right to initiate divorce, but they will still be told, like children, to wait and think it over. All of this is simply to point out that marriage has not, despite the claims of the U.S. feminist Gloria Steinem,[5] become better, and that it still remains for many, particularly the poor, women, and dependent children, a site of oppression.

Critiques of gay marriage have largely failed to tackle it head-on as an economic problem. The problem with gay marriage is not that it compels people to engage in forms of assimilation or that it cuts short their sex lives, or that it makes them less interesting. The problem with gay marriage in the United States is that it is part of the machinery of neoliberalism and that it functions to both effectively end the state's interest in maintaining the well-being of people and to increase the economic power of the wealthy elite. To combat neoliberalism, which

[5] Barbara Walters, "Walters Interviews Gloria Steinem," ABC News, April 18, 2000, http://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=124030&page=1.

Against Equality readily does through the voices in our archive, we need to combat the institutions that enable it and make it stronger. In the U.S., unlike comparable countries like Canada and Sweden, marriage is all that can supply myriad lifesaving benefits, including healthcare and legal immigration status. If we are to understand the deeply insidious nature of neoliberalism, the point in the U.S. is that it's now necessary to not just think beyond, but against marriage. We have to dismantle the structure that builds marriage into essential benefits.

Liberals, progressives, and most leftists praise gay marriage as a mark of civilized progress while they simultaneously try to understand how and why the U.S. is moving so inexorably and so brutally towards an intensely privatized state where the most basic needs of people, housing, food, healthcare and education are simply not being met. The question then remains, how did liberals and leftists alike, who otherwise constantly call for a change in the economic structure of the U.S., fail to see that gay marriage is a part of neoliberalism?

We now turn to Edith Windsor, the plaintiff at the heart of the DOMA case. Windsor was not legally married to her longtime partner upon the latter's death and was consequently left with a large federal estate tax amounting to over $363,000 (she also owed the state of New York a $200,000 estate payment).[6] Importantly, the issue was never that Windsor was unable to pay that amount because of poverty. The issue was that she felt it was unfair that she should have to pay that amount, an unsurprising refrain from wealthy citizens in the U.S. who often benefit from tax breaks not extended to the average citizen.

The often-unspoken fact of her wealth makes a moment from Chicago's 2013 Pride celebration after the DOMA win even more interesting. A friend sent Against Equality collective

[6] Jim Dwyer, "She Waited 40 Years to Marry, Then When Her Wife Died, the Tax Bill Came," *New York Times*, June 7, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/08/nyregion/woman-says-same-sex-marriage-bias-cost-her-over-500000.html.

member Yasmin Nair a photo of a poster produced by the American Civil Liberties Union that apparently many people carried at the Pride event. The poster reflects how gay marriage serves to occlude and obfuscate the ways in which it is wrapped up in neoliberalism. The poster in question featured Windsor's smiling face and the words "I AM Edie Windsor!" In other words, there are now people marching and celebrating pride everywhere, comfortable in the idea that they are all somehow Edith Windsor. This particular phrase is not to be taken literally, of course, but it speaks to a general and pervasive idea in the gay community that Windsor represents a grassroots impulse towards marriage and she is, in fact, every woman.

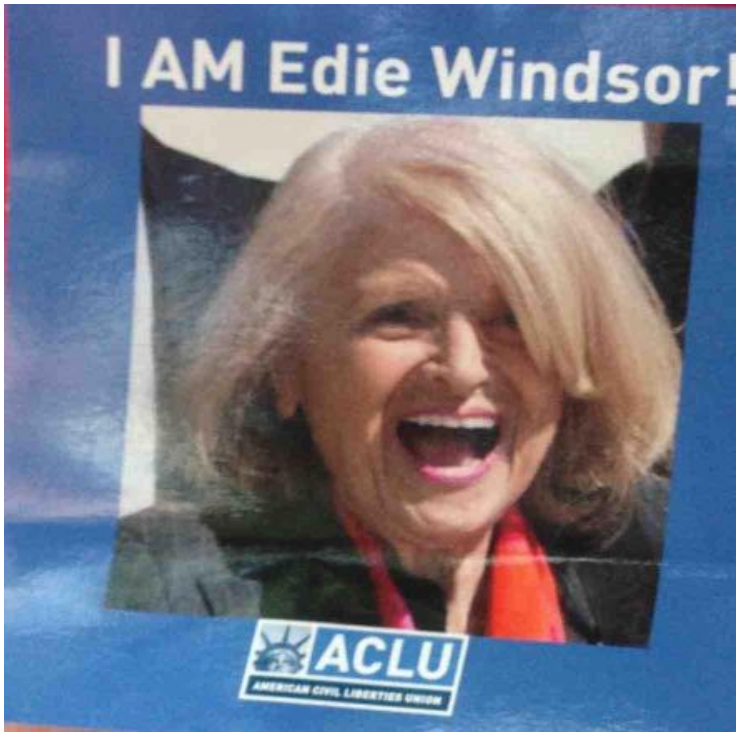

Figure 4.1 American Civil Liberties Union, Poster, Date Unknown.

It is important to trace Windsor's actual history in the context of understanding gay marriage as a manifestation of neoliberalism. The story of how she came to be at the center of one of the most famous legal cases in LGBT history has a lot to do with how the gay movement strategically chose Windsor, having carefully picked her out of a bevy of possible cases, as is often the case in cases that end up on the Supreme Court docket. She was chosen as a perfect candidate, a

grieving and very presentable white, gender-conforming widow with nothing explosive in her past life, and with exemplary social networks and connections. She was often implicitly and sometimes explicitly portrayed as a stereotypical little old lady, perhaps living in a darkened New York City apartment, barely able to keep her lights on as they flickered in the face of poverty.[7] All of this, of course, was palatable for an average person.

In summer 2013, Gender JUST, another Chicago-based organization for which Nair is a member, began their ongoing research project to find out the actual amounts of money that have been poured into marriage campaigns across this country. Gender JUST is doing this because, as radical queer grassroots activists, many members are involved in queer projects such as working with queers in the prison industrial complex, harm reduction programs around drug use, working with LGBTQ youth engaged in street trade that might involve sex work or drugs, as well as better-known issues of LGBTQ housing and healthcare. The agencies and organizations that work on these matters are always desperately scrambling for funds while marriage fundraisers raise literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in a single night.

To put it bluntly, no one has ever seen a Kickstarter for a marriage campaign. Every marriage campaign ever launched in big and small cities and states has been well-funded by organizations like the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and many other state and local groups. What this means on the ground is that an agenda of neoliberal privatization is now at the forefront of this supposed battle for gay rights. This singular concern has effectively swallowed up resources that could and should go to others.

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[7] This is certainly overstated to a degree, but reports often tried to understate the couple's wealth. A *New York Times* profile noted the low costs of the couple's two properties when they purchased them and how undervalued their apartment currently is because it is "unimproved." Again, see Dwyer, "She Waited 40 Years."

Gender JUST discovered that Windsor is worth, by a conservative estimate, approximately seven million U.S. dollars.[8] Which is to say, very few people, and certainly not the people holding that sign, can actually be Edith Windsor. In New York City, a net worth of seven million dollars might not allow a lifestyle like that of billionaire ex-Mayor Michael Bloomberg, but it goes far in most parts of the world. Against Equality emphasizes this matter of Windsor's financial worth because she represents the ways in which the gay marriage fight has been understood and regurgitated as a grassroots struggle engaged upon by millions of lovelorn gays and lesbians when, in fact, it is a massively well-coordinated campaign that has cost a few hundred million dollars since the mid-2000s.[9]

All of this matters because many of the central tenets upon which gay marriage is built as a movement towards equality are benefits that only accrue to the wealthy few like Edith Windsor. One of the biggest arguments around *Windsor v. U.S.* was that this would positively affect all those gays and lesbians faced with estate taxes, but very few of them will ever have to owe those kinds of estate taxes. This sort of argument that all gays will benefit, whereas only a few wealthy gays will benefit, is also true in regards to immigration. Gay binational couples also benefit from overturning DOMA because they may now sponsor their partners for immigration. While it may seem beneficial to all gays and lesbians with partners who are not U.S. citizens, this ignores the necessity of a certain economic value in order to be able to sponsor one's partner. This includes earning a certain guaranteed level of income for a certain number of years. Of

[8] Her two properties alone are worth an estimated $2 million. Again, see Dwyer, "She Waited 40 Years."

[9] Juliet Eilperin, "Gay Marriage Fight Will Cost Tens of Millions," *The Washington Post*, July 2, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2013/07/01/how-much-will-the-gay-marriage-fight-cost-over-the-next-three-years-tens-of-millions; "Tracking the Money: Final Numbers," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 2009, http://www.latimes.com/local/la-moneymap-htmlstory.html.

course, if one's partner happens to be someone who had a minor infraction or entered the country illegally, there is no hope for spousal sponsorship at all.

The many supposed benefits of gay marriage are primarily benefits the wealthier enjoy. The average gay and lesbian person, or average straight person, for that matter, is not likely to accrue an estate worth as much as that left to Windsor. As it stands today, marriage in the U.S. is a significant structural component of the neoliberal machinery of the state. In the end, to position the key problem with gay marriage as essentially somehow only being about people fucking differently, or—horrors!—not at all, is to ignore the much more insidious and pervasive role that marriage plays in the neoliberal state.

Military

After the repeal of the U.S. military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) policy in 2010, and the roll-out of its implementation, most gays and lesbians in the United States praised the policy change. Many on the left in the United States denounce militarism; however, as we and many of our allies continue to note, when it came to the DADT policy, for some reason, liberals felt that they could separate the issue of support for gay and lesbian inclusion from support of the imperial war machine that is the U.S. military. The argument usually went something like this: we may not support militarism, but people should still be able to serve; or, given that mostly poor people and people of color serve in the military, being against military inclusion is taking a stance against poor and queer people of color. We have always disagreed with these arguments, maintaining that we should not support U.S. military imperialism and impunity under any conditions, or allow gays and lesbians to be used as a foil for the alleged spread of freedom and democracy via expanded militarism. We also believe that we should not support the U.S. military

as the only unemployment and jobs program for poor people and people of color in the U.S. But isn't this debate over?

Not so quickly. In July 2013, The Palm Center, a policy and research center focused on enhancing the quality of public dialogue on controversial issues, announced a new multi-year research initiative to assess the possibility for transgender inclusion in the U.S. military.[10] The key question for this initiative was whether it is possible to include transgender troops without undermining military readiness. This research, released in March 2014, analyzed other militaries that already include transgender people, as well as assessed "transgender inclusion in police and fire departments, reviews of relevant policies that prisons and athletic organizations have adopted, assessments of whether and how military doctors could better accommodate medical needs of transgender troops and of how military policies concerning appearance, hair and dress could be amended."[11]

Legal scholar and activist and AE contributor Dean Spade notes that this call for new research and hence naming of this issue as key to the transgender movement has emerged due to a $1.35 million grant by the Tawani Foundation, founded by Jennifer Natalya Pritzker, an heir to the Hyatt fortune, a recently-out trans woman, and a former colonel in the National Guard.[12] Spade's critics argue that the issue was not put on the agenda because of one wealthy donor. Critics maintain that the Transgender American Veteran's [*sic*] Association, which formed in

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[10] Joycelyn Elders and Alan Steinman, *Report of the Transgender Military Commission*, March 2014, http://www.palmcenter.org/files/Transgender%20Military%20Service%20Report_0.pdf.
[11] Palm Center, "New Multi-Year Project To Address Transgender Military Service," news release, July 30, 2013, Palm Center: Blueprints for Sound Public Policy, http://archive.palmcenter.org/press/dadt/releases/new_multi_year_project_address_transgender_military_service.
[12] Chris Geidner, "Meet the Trans Scholar Fighting Against the Campaign for Out Trans Military Service," *BuzzFeed*, September 9, 2013, http://www.buzzfeed.com/chrisgeidner/meet-the-trans-scholar-fighting-against-the-campaign-for-out.

2003 and has worked on issues for transgender veterans since the 1990s, has been a grassroots organization leading efforts in trans inclusion. Furthermore, OUTServe-SLDN, the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, comprised of former service members, has advocated for LGB and T inclusion since 2002.[13] Nevertheless, the issue made headlines for the first time in July 2013, drawing unprecedented attention as a key concern for LGBT inclusion. Meanwhile, as Spade and others repeatedly note, trans and gender non-conforming people, especially the poor and people of color, remain among the most likely to suffer from discrimination, violence, homelessness, and premature death. How military inclusion addresses these concerns of the broader trans community is unclear.

There are more reasons that this debate is not yet over. The pathway to inclusion reflected in the DADT repeal and implementation is also the same logic being adopted more broadly by the U.S. military and security apparatuses. In June 2009, President Barack Obama picked up the tradition of the Clinton administration (dropped by the Bush administration) of deeming June as LGBT Pride Month. After his 2012 declaration, institutions including the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Homeland Security, and U.S. Customs and Border Patrol began officially celebrating Pride (although there had been some local celebrations in earlier years), recognizing their LGBT employees' groups, and providing staff training about the importance of LGBT inclusion to each institution's mission. These events clearly coincide with the broader implementation of the repeal of DADT. To be sure, all people should be able to work in jobs where they are respected, treated with dignity, and safe. But, it is important to interrogate some of the ways that these institutions, each tasked with perpetuating militarism and militarization,

[13] For example, see OutServe-SLDN, "Transgender Service," http://www.outserve-sldn.org/?page=transgender_service.

offer this inclusivity.

Let's begin with the most obvious place, the Department of Defense (DoD), which celebrated Pride for the first time in 2012. Then-DoD General Counsel, now head of the Department of Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson, was the keynote speaker. During his speech, Johnson made it clear that he was not an activist on the matter of gay men and women in the U.S., and in fact, he entered into a sustained study of the DADT repeal without any particular outcome in mind.[14] After revisiting some of the now-familiar results from the study in his speech, Johnson also shared the following long quotation from the study noting these aspects had a big impact on the ultimate recommendation that the risks of repeal would be low:

> Quote. In the course of our assessment, it became apparent to us that aside from the moral and religious objections to homosexuality, much of the concern about open service is driven by misperceptions and stereotypes about what it would mean if gay service members were allowed to be open about their sexual orientation. Repeatedly we heard service members express the view that open homosexuality would lead to widespread and overt displays of feminine behavior among men, homosexual promiscuity, harassment and unwelcome advanced [*sic*] within units, invasions of personal privacy and an overall erosion of standards of conduct, unit cohesion and morality. Based on our review, however, we conclude these concerns about gay and lesbian service members who are permitted to be open about their sexual orientation are exaggerated and not consistent with the reported experiences of many Service members.
>
> In communications with gay and lesbian current and former service members, we repeatedly heard a patriotic desire to serve and defend the nation, subject to the same rules as everyone else. In the words of one gay service member, 'Repeal would simply take a knife out of my back. You have no idea what it's like to serve in silence.' Most said they did not desire special treatment, to use the military for social experimentation, or to advance a social agenda. Some of those separated under Don't Ask, Don't Tell would welcome the opportunity to rejoin the military if permitted.
>
> From them we heard expressed many of the same values that we heard over and

[14] The full text of the *Report of the Comprehensive Review of the Issues Associated with a Repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"* is available online on the DoD website, http://archive.defense.gov/home/features/2010/0610_dadt/DADTReport_FINAL_20101130(secure-hires).pdf

> over again from service members at large. Love of country, honor, respect, integrity and service over self. We simply cannot square the reality of these people with the perceptions about open service. End quote. And last but not least, was this noteworthy quote in the report, which seems to be the favorite of a lot of people. 'We have a gay guy in the unit. He's big, he's mean and he kills lots of bad guys. No one cared that he was gay.' [laughter and applause][15]

Johnson's remarks are incredibly telling about the stakes of inclusion. It is important to parse these comments in order to drive home some key points that make military inclusion an ongoing concern for queers in a post-DADT era. First are the concerns that presumably straight service members had about what open service would mean—gross displays of male femininity, increased sexual harassment (presumably from gay men to straight men), unwanted advances (again presumably from gay men to straight men), and an overall decrease in morale. Johnson calls these stereotypes and misperceptions, and they may very well be that; at the very same time, these concerns doubly function to codify the misogyny of the military, as straight men clearly seem to worry about the correlation between an increasingly feminine environment and diminishing morale at the same time that they worry about being put in a feminized position—as the victims, not perpetrators, of harassment and unwanted advances (there's no mention of sexual assault, though certainly that anxiety is present).

Johnson would not be expected to take this as an opportunity to critique the existing misogyny and sexism embedded in military culture. Instead, he continues with the quotation which unsurprisingly confronts these misperceptions with images of, and words from, "good soldiers," those who we imagine would share disgust with their straight comrades at an increasingly feminized military. These patriotic service members wanted to be "subject to the same rules as everyone else" and have no desire "to advance a social agenda." These

[15] Jeh Johnson, "Remarks at Pentagon LGBT Pride Month Event," Youtube, June 26, 2012. https://youtu.be/9NpYnqEanN0

homonationals not only have no interest in changing business as usual even if business as usual is violent toward them and others like them, they want to prove everyone wrong. Some go to great lengths to do it, a point proven by the "favorite" quotation in the report: "We have a gay guy in the unit. He's big, he's mean and he kills lots of bad guys. No one cared that he was gay."

Therein lies one of the many proverbial rubs. Just as allowing women in combat doesn't make for a kinder and gentler military, gays in the military do not lead to a more open and accepting environment. Instead, the logic that Johnson espouses here insists that gays can be just as mean and murderous as straight service members, and when they are able to prove possession of such characteristics, the fact of their gayness is no concern at all—at least, we presume, for mean, bad-guy killing gay men. But, what about those "bad guys"?

In 2013, the DoD upped the ante, celebrating its first-ever Pride in the Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan, one of the bloodiest and deadliest regions of the entire duration of Operation Enduring Freedom, better known as the War in Afghanistan. The DoD put out a short minute-long video to commemorate the event from the Kandahar Airfield.[16] The video opens with a young white woman, name and branch of military unknown, who says, "I don't wanna be treated special. I just wanna be treated equal." The video then moves to scenes of gay marriage protests or celebrations in the United States, full of homemade signs, Human Rights Campaign equal sign flags, and pride flags, followed by a clip of President Obama signing the DADT repeal. A voiceover by the reporter, who identifies himself as Marine Corporal Caz Krul at the end of the video, explains what has happened since repeal, and the support that members of the armed forces have offered to the LGB community. A man of color, also unnamed, then speaks

[16] Department of Defense, "Kandahar LGBT Pride," Youtube, June 28, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okpNrsBUHWI

about the importance of the repeal and the pride celebration as images of pride parades from the U.S. cover the screen. “It makes my military service well worth it…” he says. When he finishes, the reporter asks, “What does celebrating LGBT pride in Afghanistan mean to the United States?” A white man in uniform, also never named, earnestly answers: “I think it’s very important that we are here representing the United States of America, and we hope that when we leave here we have left all positive qualities on what America is like, and that we’re a [sic] equal country. We treat all our citizens equally.”

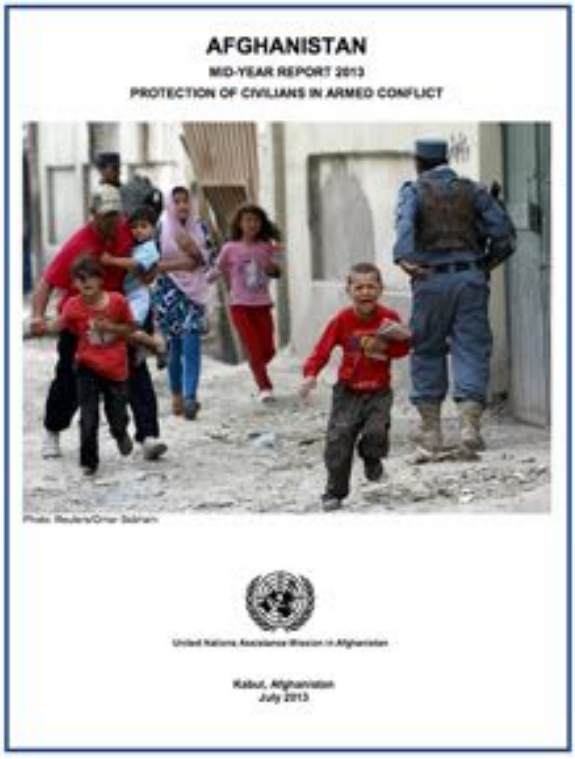

Figure 4.2 UNAMA’s *Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* report, 2013.

Finding reports of the exact number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan is very difficult, and it is even more difficult to find accurate reports of locations of the deaths or the exact cause of those deaths. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released a report on civilian deaths and injuries from January 1 to June 30, 2013 titled *Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*. The report concludes,

> Escalating deaths and injuries to Afghan children, women and men led to a 23 percent resurgence in civilian casualties in the first six months of 2013 compared to the same period in 2012. UNAMA documented 1,319 civilian deaths and 2,533 injuries (3,852 casualties) from January to June 2013, marking a 14 percent increase in deaths, 28 percent increase in injuries and 23 percent increase in total civilian casualties compared to the same period in 2012. The rise in civilian casualties in the first half of 2013 reverses the decline recorded in 2012, and marks a return to the high numbers of civilian deaths and injuries documented in 2011.[17]

A majority of those casualties, 74%, are at the hands of what the report calls anti-government elements, which includes all those "in armed conflict with or armed opposition against the government of Afghanistan and/or international military forces,"[18] whereas only 21% are directly attributed either to pro-government forces or conflict between pro- and anti-government forces.[19] As the report simply put it, "Civilians again increasingly bore the brunt of the armed conflict in Afghanistan in early 2013. Civilians particularly in conflict-affected areas experienced the grim reality of rising civilian deaths and injuries coupled with pervasive violence which threatened the lives, livelihood and well-being of thousands of Afghans."[20] The report also notes that Kandahar, along with Helmand, remains one of the two most impacted regions.

It is unclear to the AE collective how to reconcile the image of a young enlisted Marine or soldier who does not want special treatment but just wants to be treated equal, with horrifying images such as the report's cover image of terrified people running for their lives. Are their lives and deaths the price of equality, as so many inclusion champions suggest? Is the carnage of the now LGBT-inclusive war machine just an example of how freedom is not free? How should LGBT people respond to their inclusion in the U.S. war machine?

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[17] United Nations Mission Assistance in Afghanistan, "*Afghanistan: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict,"* July 2013.
[18] Ibid, 13.
[19] Ibid, 17.
[20] Ibid, 24.

Prisons

LGBT-inclusive federal hate crime law in the United States—commonly referred to as the Matthew Shepard Act—was enacted as part of the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act. Hate crime laws work by increasing penalties for acts of violence and intimidation that are already illegal (i.e. harassment, assault, rape, murder) if it can be proven that the violence carried out was motivated by anti-LGBT sentiments. Hate crime legislation in the United States has its roots in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protected victims of violence based on race, color, religion, or national origin. These protections were expanded in 1994 to include gender-based violence against women, and in 2009, to include perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

The effectiveness of such laws has already been called into question by many feminists, people of color, and queer activists.[21] As prison abolitionists, Against Equality opposes any expansion of the prison industrial complex, including the expansion of policing, surveillance, and prosecutorial powers of the carceral state, even when such expansions are supposedly enacted on our own behalf, for our own safety. Historically, we know that neither prisons nor the carceral state has ever protected sexual and gender minorities from violence, and both have been and continue to be the site of violence for queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people, particularly those who are also of low income, people of color, immigrants, young people, sex workers, and/or drug users.[22] Furthermore, as Chandan Reddy points out in his 2011 book,

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[21] Many of these critiques are republished in Against Equality's *Prisons Will Not Protect You* anthology (AE Press, 2012).

[22] See Joey Mogul, Andrea Ritchie, and Kay Whitlock, *Queer (in)justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011); Eric Stanley and Nat Smith, *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2011).

Freedom with Violence, the Matthew Shepard Act was passed with specific penalties for young offenders.[23] With the already disproportionate surveillance, policing, arrests, and convictions for people of color in the U.S. context, it is fair to assume that this expansion of hate crime laws will have a disproportionate impact on the lives of young people of color.[24]

Against Equality uses a critique of hate crime legislation to provide an opening for a broader queer critique of the prison industrial complex. As it has been argued in this chapter, marriage, military service, and hate crime laws serve as the holy trinity of contemporary gay and lesbian assimilationist politics in the United States, and it is through this critique of inclusion in the heteronormative status quo that we aim to have broader political conversations about the prison industrial complex. Dean Spade astutely points out five myth-busting facts about violence and criminalization in the introduction to Against Equality's 2012 anthology *Prisons Will Not Protect You:*

- Jails and prisons are not overflowing with violent dangerous people, but with the poor, the disabled, and people of color.
- Most violence does not happen on the street between strangers, but between people who know each other in places we are familiar with.
- The most dangerous people, those who end and destroy the most lives, are on the outside running our banks, governments, courtrooms, and wearing military and police uniforms.
- Prisons aren't places to put serial rapists and murderers, they are the serial rapists and murderers.

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[23] Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the U.S. State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[24] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2010).

- Increasing criminalization does not make us safer, it simply feeds the voracious law enforcement systems that devour our communities, often for profit.[25]

Hate crime law also obscures sources of anti-queer and trans sentiment and violence by making it personal (i.e., bad people hate the gays) while leaving structural forms of violence in place. Police officers, the National Guard, the U.S. military, Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and detention guards, prison guards, Homeland security, private security firms: these people will never be charged with hate crimes for the violence they uphold and inflict.

Instead, more and more cases surface where laws that were intended to protect minorities are being used to prosecute them. Three black lesbians were charged with an anti-gay hate crime for assaulting a gay man in Boston in 2012,[26] and hate crime charges were brought against a black teenager in Brooklyn for assaulting a white couple in 2013.[27] These are examples of what Paul Butler, author of *Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice,* points out as the use of hate crime laws to defend majority populations from minority populations.[28] Worse yet were the hate crime charges sought against black youths in the aftermath of the 2001 Cincinnati race riots

[25] Dean Spade, "Their Laws Will Never Make Us Safer," in *Against Equality: Prisons Will Not Protect You*, by Ryan Conrad (Lewiston, ME: AE Press, 2012), 4-6.
[26] Richard Weir, "Lawyer: Lesbians' Assault on Gay Man Can't Be Hate Crime," Lawyer: Lesbians' Assault on Gay Man Can't Be Hate Crime, February 25, 2012, http://bostonherald.com/news_opinion/local_coverage/2012/02/lawyer_lesbians%E2%80%99_assault_gay_man_can%E2%80%99t_be_hate_crime.
[27] Thomas Tracy and Barry Paddock, "Brooklyn Youths Attack Couple in Car in Racial Attack: Cops," NY Daily News, October 20, 2013, http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/brooklyn/brooklyn-youths-attack-couple-racial-attack-cops-article-1.1490901.
[28] Michel Martin, "Former Prosecutor Pens A Hip-Hop Theory Of Justice," *NPR News: Tell Me More*, November 19, 2009, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120567780.

spurred by the shooting death of an unarmed black teenager by a white police officer.[29]

Figure 4.3 Lookout Advertising, *Blue Lives Matter* Billboard, Brainerd Road in Chattanooga, TN. Winter 2015.

Even more compelling in showing how troublesome the framework of hate crimes is, are the recent debates over the inclusion of police officers as a protected class within hate crime laws. The Fraternal Order of Police has been calling for hate crime protections for police officers for years, but much more pointedly after the popularization of the Black Lives Matter movement that shone a spotlight on police brutality, misconduct, obfuscation, and utter arrogance towards black Americans.[30] When the people required to protect queer and trans people from unjust violence and harassment respond to their own calling-out of unjust violence harassment and ineptitude by proclaiming "Blue Lives Matter!" and demanding their own hate crime protections, it could not be clearer that what may have seemed like a good idea is not working out as once imagined.

By using hate crime laws as a way to open up a critical queer lens on the prison industrial

[29] Steve Miller, "Cincinnati Rioters Face Hate-Crime Penalties," *The Washington Times (Washington, DC)*, May 11, 2001, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2001/may/11/20010511-022957-5256r/.
[30] National Fraternal Order of Police, "Congress Answers FOP's Call: Bill to Expand Hate Crimes Law for Police Introduced in the House," news release, March 18, 2016, https://fop.net/CmsDocument/Doc/pr_2016-0318.pdf.

complex, a number of other queer issues emerge relating to its seemingly unending expansion: the criminalization of self-defense as seen in the case of the New Jersey 4 and CeCe McDonald; the anti-gay witch hunts against the many school teachers and daycare workers accused of child sexual abuse like the San Antonio 4, Bernard Baran, and Stephen and Melvin Matthews; the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure, a disease that disproportionately impacts gay and bisexual men, particularly men of color, in the United States and Canada; the harassment of and arrest of trans women, particularly trans women of color profiled as sex workers, as demonstrated most recently by the Monica Jones case;[31] and the legacy of brutal and ineffective laws organized around concepts of sexual deviancy (i.e. sex offender registries, civil commitment) of which queer, trans, and gender non-conforming people were and are primary targets. Against Equality explores many of these issues at length in the archive we have assembled and in the publication projects we have produced.

AE's goal here is not to critique the criminal punishment system for the sake of problematizing it, but to ask questions that help forge a pathway towards developing a form of restorative justice that moves beyond the punitive model—a model which more often than not compounds or hides problems rather than deals with them by restoring the dignity of all involved and repairing the harm done. Both liberals and conservatives use the perennial "get tough on crime" rhetoric in a cynical bid to win elections. AE looks forward to a day when getting tough on the neoliberal capitalist causes of crime—poverty, inadequate safe and affordable housing, insufficient healthy food and water, lack of resources and treatment for drug users, dismal opportunities for meaningful educational and employment, barriers to accessing healthcare, racist

[31] Kavish Harjai, "Monica Jones and the Problem of 'Walking While Trans'," Innocence Project, June 30, 2016, https://www.innocenceproject.org/monica-jones-walking-while-trans/.

and exploitative immigration policies—becomes the focus of our spineless political leaders and our supposedly grassroots social justice movements. We know this shift only comes through a combination of fierce critique and grassroots political action and we believe the collective work of Against Equality is an integral part of a process that envisions a future without prisons.

How the Right Has Shaped the Current LGBT Political Moment

> I sometimes think the gay movement would be much better off if it said, 'Yes, we do harm society and it's a good thing.'
>
> - Dennis Altman in conversation with Gore Vidal[32]

This section briefly details how the religious right has contributed to shaping contemporary conversations about gay and lesbian rights. While scholar Tina Fetner has produced a thorough sociological study on how the religious right shaped lesbian and gay politics in 2008, this section offers a close look at how the rhetoric and framing by the religious right has caused a reactive shift in gay and lesbian rights campaigning.[33] This reactive shift in the late 1980s and 1990s has culminated in rhetorical strategies employed by gay rights organizations which utilize claims of respectability as a strategy to win legislative and judicial battles over gay and lesbian rights, and in particular, gay marriage.

In addition to Fetner's analysis, this section offers a look at the way radical contemporary queer and trans activist projects like Against Equality are challenging both the conservative right and the liberal left dichotomy around LGBT issues and rhetorical framing. This dichotomy presumes that anyone opposed to so-called gay rights like gay marriage and openly gay military

[32] Denis Altman, "Interview With Gore Vidal," *Christopher Street* 2, no. 7 (1978).
[33] Fetner, *How the Religious Right*.

service must be conservative and homophobic. Such a dichotomy only serves to oversimplify the debate and silence critiques coming from the queer left.

Whose Agenda?

The "gay agenda" is generally understood to be a pejorative phrase popularized by religious conservatives in the 1990s who were negatively describing the perceived advancement of legal rights and broader cultural acceptance of gay and lesbian people.[34] Many gay and lesbian activists in the United States and around the globe are still working tirelessly to deflect and dismantle this kind of hostile rhetoric coming from the religious right, most often through sleek public relations campaigns and costly legislative lobbying that relies on rather dubious, often unconvincing "we are just like you" rhetorical strategies. A number of non-profit organizations in the United States carry out this kind of work, two of the largest and most well-funded being Freedom to Marry and Marriage Equality USA. Freedom to Marry consists of two distinct, well-funded sub-organizations: the nonpartisan Freedom to Marry Incorporated, and the explicitly partisan political action committee (PAC) Freedom to Marry Action. Freedom to Marry Incorporated claims that its resources are used to "develop and pursue educational, organizing, and advocacy strategies" and employs five staff members whose work is specific to public relations and social media. According to their website, Freedom to Marry Action Incorporated is entirely committed to legislative lobbying by the remaining four staff members at Freedom to Marry who are not administrators.[35] Marriage Equality USA's website boasts a media team of

[34] Didi Herman, *The Antigay Agenda: Orthodox Vision and the Christian Right* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
[35] Evan Wolfson, "The Team," Freedom to Marry, accessed October 03, 2014, http://www.freedomtomarry.org/the-team.

five people while referring to the importance of media work by declaring it "the mouthpiece of modern culture."[36]

Freedom to Marry and Marriage Equality USA are among the largest single-issue gay marriage advocacy organizations in the United States. Multi-issue organizations like the Human Rights Campaign, Lambda Legal, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, the American Civil Liberties Union, and many other smaller statewide organizations all devote varying degrees of their resources to lobbying and multimedia public relations campaigns in support of gay marriage. These multimedia public relations campaigns and legislative advocacy work are detailed at length on their respective websites complete with normative rhetoric touting the worth of gays and lesbians in long-term monogamous relationships alongside images of smiling, middle-class-appearing couples.[37]

In contrast, activist groups like Against Equality embrace the religious right's branding of gays and lesbians as terrorist extremists who are out to destroy traditional marriage, the family, and the nation.[38] Well before AE's existence, this sensational anti-gay rhetoric was canonized in the formative 1993 propaganda video *Gay Rights/ Special Rights: Inside the Homosexual Agenda*, produced by Reverend Lou Sheldon, founder of the Traditional Values Coalition. This film served as a response to the growing visibility of gays and lesbians as a result of activism

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[36] Marriage Equality USA, "Media Center," MEUSA | Media Center, accessed October 03, 2014, http://www.marriageequality.org/media_center.

[37] For examples see: American Civil Liberties Union, "LGBT Relationships," Accessed September 26, 2013. https://www.aclu.org/issues/lgbt-rights/lgbt-relationships; Human Rights Campaign. "Marriage Center" Accessed September 26, 2013. http://www.hrc.org/campaigns/marriage-center; Lambda Legal. "Marriage, Relationships and Family Protections." Accessed September 26, 2013. http://www.lambdalegal.org/issues/marriage.

[38] Ronnie W. Floyd, *The Gay Agenda: It's Dividing the Family, the Church, and a Nation* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 2004).

around nondiscrimination policies and HIV/AIDS. At the time, gays and lesbians were fighting very public referendum battles over city and state nondiscrimination ordinances like Colorado's Initiative 2 and Oregon's Ballot Measure 9 in 1992; organizing a national march for gay rights in Washington, D.C. in 1993; and participating in confrontational media-savvy AIDS activism with groups like the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

This anti-gay rhetorical device can still be found today in propaganda produced by the religious right, notably: Americans for Truth About Homosexuality, Defend the Family International, Family Research Council, the American Family Association, MassResistance, and the organization Truth in Action, which produced a short film in April 2012 similar to that of the Traditional Values Coalition, titled *The Radical Homosexual Agenda*, as part of their online Truth That Transforms webcast. Instead of engaging and working to reject the claims of a "gay agenda" made by those positioned within the religious right, AE shamelessly says: "Yes! We are your worst nightmare!"

This strategy of embracing the religious right's worst nightmare is a humorous, yet serious component of AE's critique of the place of inclusionary politics in a radically equitable queer future. Against Equality is certainly not the first to take such a radical position on marriage and the family as, for more than a century, many feminist scholars and activists have laid the foundations for this work.[39] AE situates itself in this radical feminist lineage, and the labor of

[39] For examples, see Ezra H. Heywood, *The Collected Works of Ezra H. Heywood* (Weston, MA: M & S Press, [1872] 1985); Voltairine De Cleyre, *On Marriage: Sex Slavery, Bastard Born & They Who Marry Do Ill* (Philadelphia: Monkeywrench Press, [1908] 1995).; Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover Publications, [1911] 1969); Paula Ettlebrick, "Since When Is Marriage a Path to Liberation?" in *Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Law*, ed. William B. Rubenstein (New York: New Press, 1993); Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality*.

these scholars and activists is essential to AE's work in the contemporary gay and lesbian political moment.

As a collective of queer cultural workers, academics, and activists, AE ironically embraces the contemptuous slander manufactured by the religious right. Instead of expending our energy clamoring for respectability and inclusion, we work towards a world where marriage is no longer a prerequisite for basic human rights like healthcare, where narrow legal definitions based on the ideological supremacy of nuclear family structures—gay or straight—no longer limit the viability of other possible kinship networks, and where the administrative apparatus of imperialist nation-states can no longer restrict the movement of bodies across confining regulatory, and often arbitrary, borders.

In the context of U.S. neoliberalism, the family is the nucleus through which the state disburses essential benefits, like healthcare, and basic privileges like determining who has the right to visitation in hospitals. These are based on narrow conceptions of "caregivers" and "family." Only recently has the privilege of hospital visitation been granted to nonromantic partners in the United States, allowing people to give these to close friends without the necessity of a romantic or familial relationship.[40] In addition, significant benefits that impinge upon or expand the rights of people to move across national borders are based upon marital status and outdated conceptions of families constructed around spousal breadwinners.

Given this material context, the remainder of this section explores the benefits, as well as potential drawbacks, of embracing the conservative notion that queers are pushing a threatening

[40] Details from the April 15, 2010, memo from the Obama administration to all hospitals that receive funding through Medicare or Medicaid regarding hospital visitation rights is no longer available at Whitehouse.gov, but a copy is still available online at http://i.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2010/images/04/15/2010rightspatients.mem.final.rel.pdf

and destabilizing "gay agenda." This section will consider the liberatory effects of actually pursuing this feared gay agenda to its endpoint and is based on the premise that the "gay agenda," set up as the supposed nemesis of the right, actually resembles the same values of normalcy, morality, and respectability so prevalent in gay marriage campaigns in the U.S.

The Problem with Equality

The rhetoric of equality, much like the rhetorical strategies used by gay and lesbian political organizations to contend with the religious right's "gay agenda" claims, is firmly grounded in politics of respectability.[41] Gay journalist LZ Granderson makes this link unmistakably clear in his May 10, 2012 TEDxGrand Rapids talk, "The Myth of the Gay Agenda."[42] In this presentation, Granderson argues against the existence of a so-called gay agenda as proclaimed by the religious right while also making a case for the legalization of gay marriage. Through a veneer of liberal sarcasm, Granderson explicitly links these two themes while making affective claims about his status as an upstanding citizen, hardworking journalist, and capable father of a "respectful young man." Unfortunately, the politics of respectability engaged here by Granderson—and more broadly by contemporary mainstream gay and lesbian political organizations—have considerable consequences, as the rest of this section demonstrates.

Equality rhetoric demands that sexual minorities limit their vision for the most fantastically equitable queer futures, where material and affective needs are met through egalitarian collective self-determination, to the hetero status quo. Instead of demanding legal

[41] For further discussion about the politics of respectability in the context of contemporary queer and trans politics, see David M. Halperin and Valerie Traub, *Gay Shame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[42] *The Gay Agenda Now: LZ Granderson at TEDxGrandRapids*, Youtube, June 13, 2012, https://youtu.be/iOByGJskqks.

protections that reflect the varied kinship networks and queer family structures that fall outside the compulsory ideology of conjugal monogamy,[43] queers are corralled into making their families fit the narrow current legal definitions of family. As noted by family law scholar Nancy D. Polikoff, "the civil rights victory of marriage for those gay and lesbian couples who seek it may come at the expense of law reforms benefiting a wider range of families."[44] She emphasizes the flaws of this narrow vision by suggesting that more equitable futures for LGBT people start with asking what LGBT people actually need, and not by asking what straight married people already have that gays and lesbians do not.

To exist in family structures that defy marriage laws and public/private-sector policies that naturalize and incentivize nuclear family structures is to risk financial losses, limit one's access to even the most basic forms of healthcare, restrict one's ability to perform citizenship, cross nation-state borders, and more. With so many material benefits at stake, it is no wonder that access to healthcare and immigration rights for bi-national couples figures so prominently in the publication materials of normative groups like the Human Rights Campaign, Freedom to Marry, and Lambda Legal.[45] However, as Chrys Ingraham asks in her materialist study on the wedding industrial complex, why is the distribution of social and economic benefits based on marital status and not on other qualities like the "ability to breathe, for example?"[46]

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[43] For a case study on the diversity of family configurations and kinship networks of gay men and lesbians, again see Weston, *Families We Choose.*

[44] Nancy D. Polikoff, *Beyond Straight and Gay Marriage: Valuing All Families Under the Law* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), 29.

[45] Human Rights Campaign, *Answers to Questions About Marriage Equality?* (Washington DC: Human Rights Campaign, 2009); Evan Wolfson, *Why Marriage Matters: America, Equality, and Gay People's Right to Marry*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004); Lambda Legal, *Will Marriage Help Us Get Spousal Health Insurance?: Considerations for Same-Sex Couples*, (New York: Lambda Legal, 2008).

[46] Chrys Ingraham, *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1999), 17.

Potential risks that come with defying the current legal framework of marriage and forfeiting its attendant benefits as described above include poverty, illness, premature death due to lack of access to adequate care, imprisonment, indefinite detention, and deportation.[47] Calling this desperate situation a choice and not acknowledging the state coercion that determines many marriages, creates a false sense of autonomy and choice in our neoliberal society.[48] When a person is in a position of having to be married or go without healthcare and possibly die, or get married to someone with citizenship or be deported to a place with the possibility of murder or imprisonment, this is hardly call this a choice. Polikoff sharply asserts, "While the movement for marriage equality has insisted it is fighting for same-sex couples to have the choice to marry, marriage is not a choice if it is the *only* way to achieve economic well-being and peace of mind" (emphasis hers).[49]

The queer political imagination, once rooted in the visionary and confrontational politics of the late 1960s and 1970s and exemplified by the quote from Dennis Altman with which this section opens, has withered away, leaving queers with little imagination and few political options other than assimilation. Jaye Cee Whitehead points out this historic disjuncture in her sociological analysis of gay marriage and neoliberalism, stating:

> The structural possibility and apparent advantages of building 'families of choice' with multiple sources of dependency and financial support are not an immediate reality for the proponents of same-sex marriage[…] The fact that these alternative

[47] These 1,138 federal benefits are defined in detail in the *GAO-04-353R Defense of Marriage Act: Update to Prior Report* (U. S. General Accounting Office, 2004). George Chauncey also argues that these benefits, and the likely deleterious outcomes of not having access to them, make marriage an important fight for gay and lesbian people. While he uses this as an example as to why marriage is so important for gays and lesbians to fight for in his text *Why Marriage?* (2004), I argue the same point for deinstitutionalization of marriage so that marital status no longer has such a large impact on one's quality of life.
[48] Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 8.
[49] Polikoff, *Beyond Straight and Gay Marriage,* 133.

> models exist should make us wonder why proponents of same-sex marriage are working for inclusion in the marriage model rather than capitalizing on momentum from the sixties and seventies that was working toward deinstitutionalizing marriage privilege within the law.[50]

Instead, marriage has become the de facto self-explanatory rationale and mechanism for distributing material benefits and life chances. It is now conform or die.

This particular critique, that queer and trans people are given the choice to conform or die, could be construed as hyperbolic. Yet, for many gays and lesbians, as well as straights, in the only industrialized nation without some form of basic universal healthcare, the only way to access medical benefits is through employment or to marry someone who is lucky enough to have health insurance through their employer. This is the cold, hard truth of conformity. As AE collective members who are also activists working on issues like HIV/AIDS, healthcare, and immigration rights, especially for queer populations, we know all too well that the state often effectively coerces people into marriage partnerships. These are often fictitious partnerships, like the ones between queers and straight people for the sake of immigration and naturalization—as depicted in Ang Lee's 1993 gay immigrant drama *The Wedding Banquet*. In many cases, these coerced partnerships are only one of very few options to stay alive for someone otherwise being forced to return to a country of origin where their sexuality could earn them a death sentence or lack of healthcare for deadly medical conditions.[51]

The rhetoric of equality articulated by mainstream gay and lesbian rights organizations shrinks the possible political strategies to what AE defines as a losing game of seeking mere inclusion within systems, institutions, and cultural traditions that largely reproduce social and

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[50] Jaye Cee. Whitehead, *The Nuptial Deal: Same-sex Marriage and Neo-liberal Governance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 18.
[48] For additional case examples, again see Polikoff, *Beyond Gay and Straight Marriage* or Whitehead, *The Nuptial Deal.*

economic inequalities.[52] Frantic calls for "Equality now!," typified by events like the Full Equality Now rally organized by San Diego, California-based Unite to Make It Right on December 4, 2010, ignore the fact that marriage culturally and economically privileges the formation of conjugal couples over all other familial forms. As Elizabeth Freeman argues, these demands further solidify an unequal society where conjugal couples have greater access to public resources, while the uncoupled struggle to work around a legal, economic, and cultural logic that marks some more equal than others.[53]

The state-by-state drive to secure gay marriage in the U.S. and the multimillion-dollar non-profit sector, complete with six-figure salaried career activists, produced costly public relations campaigns.[54] These media offensives primarily worked to convince ambivalent and would-be voters that the gays are just like them, save the gendered difference amongst the neo-nuclear gay families. Look no further than the 2009 and 2012 pro-gay marriage campaign materials in my home state of Maine, where the smiling, white, gender-conforming, middle-class-appearing, able-bodied families in picturesque suburban backyards look no different than those who appear in the anti-gay marriage campaign materials, save the occasional same-sex couple. In essence, the visuals narratives are indistinguishable from another.

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[52] Ingraham, *White Weddings*, 163-164.
[53] Elizabeth Freeman, *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), viii.
[51] The organization GuideStar (www.guidestar.org) provides access to the financial statements of registered non-profits in the United States in an easily searchable online database. Here you can review Forms 990 and 990-PF filed by non-profit organizations with the United States Internal Revenue Service, detailing six-figure executive director salaries and program costs of gay marriage organizations. The Human Rights Campaign, for example, had 12 paid staff who received salaries of $128,000 to $283,000 in the 2010 fiscal year.

Figure 4.4 Power point slide of image samples from "Yes on 1" and "No on 1" campaign websites used in AE book tour presentations in 2010.

The pro-gay marriage campaign materials loudly proclaimed, "See! We are just like you!" For once, it would be nice to see a media campaign about valuing all families that features queer and trans people in all our freaky and not-so-freaky glory. The list of possibilities might include two leather daddies and their cherished young leather boy, an intergenerational S&M dyke couple, the autosexual androgynous punk rocker, the fat trans femme and her girlfriend and her girlfriend's two boyfriends, the single immigrant lesbian with a sustaining circle of dear friends, the cooperative-farming collective of blended families, the single gay son living with and caring for his elderly mother, and the butch single mom. Perhaps we would be better off admitting that a lot of us queers are not that fantasy image of familial security à la *Leave It to Beaver*, that we never will be, and that these othered family structures are integral to many of our emotional and economic survivals. This is not merely a call for celebrating all families or more diverse media representations of queer families, but a life-and-death demand to fundamentally

restructure the social and economic benefits of family law to support and reflect our actual familial realities as they are.

Additionally, what kind of violence is done when the diverse family structures described above are actively disappeared by gay marriage campaigns that are more concerned with proving how normal and deserving some gays are than they are with actively supporting and protecting the varied and vital familial structures on which many of our queer lives depend? Who is further marginalized, and in what ways, when reactive mainstream gay and lesbian organizations allow the religious right to define the discourse about our lives and worth? What happens when campaigns like those for gay marriage soak up and then squander all the emotional energy and financial resources of various communities where essential services for queer and trans people —such as elder care, housing, addiction treatment, mental health services, HIV/AIDS services, and anti-violence advocacy—are quickly disappearing?[55]

If queer lives and family structures are as varied as imagined earlier in this section, then why would we demand inclusion in a society and legal framework that explicitly reduces the ways in which we can articulate our partnerships and meet both our material and affective needs? Instead of demanding inclusion, queers can and should be demanding the transformation of hetero-supremacist society so that all families are valued under the law and marital status has no bearing on one's access to basic things like healthcare and immigration. This is AE's demand: forget equality. Those on the margins need something far better to both survive and thrive.

[55] While numerous examples are available to prove the impact of austerity on agencies serving queer and trans people, I again point to my own published case study in Maine. See Ryan Conrad, "Against Equality in Maine and Everywhere," in *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage* (Lewiston: AE Press, 2010).

Embracing the Irony

On the surface, the name Against Equality conjures up some of the worst images of the disgustingly homophobic and transphobic religious right who make outrageous claims about gays and lesbians being largely responsible for terrorism,[56] natural disasters,[57] AIDS,[58] and the Holocaust,[59] amongst other things, and therefore not to be regarded as fully human. What kind of group would actually declare, in unabashed politically incorrect fashion, that they oppose equality? Once people find out that AE is actually a collective of queer activists, they either get the campy joke of over-identifying with the religious right embedded in our group's confrontational name and ask more questions, or lump us in with other conservative gay and lesbian organizations. We have been accused of being similar to the Log Cabin Republicans—an organization of gay and lesbian Republican Party members founded in the U.S. in 1977—and GOProud, a nonpartisan, ultraconservative organization for gays and lesbians founded in the U.S. in 2009 that thankfully disbanded in 2014.

The confusion our name and battle cry often incite is an intentional component of our project. We believe that this productive confusion elicits deeper probing of the so-called LGBT equality issues that are otherwise defined by the one-dimensional sloganeering seen on daily liberal and conservative news programs in the U.S. When people realize queer activists on the

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[56] *CNN Presents: God's Warriors*, prod. Christiane Amanpour (United States: CNN, 2007), http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2007/gods.warriors/.
[57] "Pastor John Hagee on Christian Zionism," interview, *National Public Radio: Fresh Air* (audio blog), September 18, 2006, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6097362.
[58] Bryan Fischer, "No More Taxpayer Funding for AIDS Research," *Renew America* (blog), December 2, 2010, http://www.renewamerica.com/columns/fischer/101202.
[59] Scott Eric Lively and Kevin Abrams, *The Pink Swastika: Homosexuality in the Nazi Party* (Keizer, OR: Founders Pub., 1996).

political left, not merely the religious right, are articulating the anti-equality politics of AE, this can lead to productive questions. For example, "How can *they* be against equality?" which then begs the question, "What is 'equality' and how do we define it?"

This confusion has made many interesting things happen that more direct and obvious sloganeering would not allow. A lengthy book review of *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage* (2010) was published by Ben-Peter Terpstra on the conservative Daily Caller website under the title "Not all gay activists support gay marriage,"[60] and then re-blogged on the websites of the resolutely anti-gay marriage group the National Organization for Marriage[61] and the ultra-right-wing Christian legal group the Alliance Defense Fund;[62] our spoofy satirical blue-and-yellow "greater than" stickers that make a mockery of the Human Rights Campaign's blue-and-yellow equal-sign logo have appeared on high-end sports cars next to Tea Party bumper stickers; a livid gay math professor showed up to a university event ready to shout us down, only to leave largely convinced of our broad-based social and economic justice platform; LGBT university alumni groups have tried to have our events cancelled at their alma maters; members from statewide equality organizations have refused to dialogue with AE at our events; and a few presumably gay or lesbian activists have sent death threats detailing the ways in which they intended to cut up my "inbred, white trash, redneck" body into pieces and dispose of me in a dumpster.[63] Similar threats were sent to Yasmin Nair, detailing in explicitly racist terms the ways

[60] Ben-Peter Terpstra, "Not All Gay Activists Support Gay Marriage," The Daily Caller, January 4, 2011, http://dailycaller.com/2011/01/04/not-all-gay-activists-suppor-out-against-gay-marriage/.
[61] National Organization for Marriage, "NOMblog: Not All Gay Activists Support Gay Marriage," January 5, 2011, http://www.nomblog.com/3554/.
[62] Alliance Alert, "Not All Gay Activists Support Gay Marriage," January 4, 2011, http://www.alliancealert.org/2011/01/04/not-all-gay-activists-support-gay-marriage.
[63] The full contents of the message I received is quoted within a short article, "I called Lady Gaga evil and got death threats on Facebook," appearing on the Bilerico Project days after it was

in which she would be dismembered. To say the least, we are causing trouble, but more importantly, these responses show just how little room there is to question the reactive logic of equality and the rhetoric of assimilation.

Setting Back the Movement

As Dennis Altman so eloquently put it nearly forty years ago, if society is as heterosexist, racist, transphobic, sexist, classist, ableist, and xenophobic as many of us queers know it to be from our bodily lived experiences in the world, then society as it exists is detrimental to our well-being and we are better off dismantling it, not joining in to reinforce deeply inequitable legal and cultural traditions like marriage.

Against Equality, along with other more radical leftist queer and trans activist groups like Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention (LAGAI), which opposes both militarism and marriage in the United States, or the now defunct New York City-based Queers for Economic Justice that fought for economic justice in the context of sexual and gender liberation, have become the bad queers who flaunt their sexual difference and complicate the single-issue gay and lesbian political campaigns that depend upon a veneer of societal respectability and the partitioning of political issues. Kenyon Farrow, the former director of Queers for Economic Justice, as quoted in Carlos Motta's *We Who Feel Differently* (2011), states:

> …economic justice issues and massive imprisonment are so clearly based on race and class and the ability or opportunity to access material resources as well as the likelihood of your body and physical presence to be criminalized by the state. The national mainstream equality movement in the LGBT population is not dealing with these issues because they think in order to win the policy agenda they set, they have to present the LGBT community as "normal" as middle America. Meaning the community and all of its promotion, advocacy, TV shows, sitcoms,

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received. It is available at http://www.bilerico.com/2010/12/i_called_lady_gaga_evil_and_got_death_threats_on_f.php

> all that has to present as white, straight America. The movement isn't interested in challenging larger structures of racism or economic deprivation because it sees value in assimilating the few gay and lesbians who can assimilate into white, middle-class, Christian, capitalist patriarchy…. I don't think the LGBT movement has a vision for where it is going. I think it has made politically expedient choices without actual vision for change or consideration of their policy choices and what these campaigns ultimately mean.[64]

By asking similar questions, like "What kind of equality are we talking about and for whom exactly?" or raising intersectional critiques as Farrow does here, we have been accused of derailing or setting back the movement for equality for gay and lesbian people.[65] If we, as queer and trans activists, are going to leverage massive amounts of capital, emotional energy, and other resources for political gain, we best make sure we fight for social and economic outcomes that benefit the greatest number of people. To do this, the most marginalized, not simply the most convenient and respectable, must be at the center of our organizing strategies.[66]

On a practical and personal level, AE is not for or against gay marriage nor do we have an interest in purist political posturing that polices others' behavior. The point is that the dichotomy of the gay marriage debate is a distraction from larger structural questions about how we, as a society, want to collectively organize ourselves. Unfortunately, the reactive rhetoric of the gay marriage campaigns sounds more and more like former U.S. President George W. Bush:

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[64] Carlos Motta, *We Who Feel Differently* (Bergen, Norway: Ctrl Z Publishing, 2011), 41-42.
[65] Comments on the Slog post "Gays Against Equality" (April 2011, http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2011/04/01/gays-against-equality), or comments from AMERICAblogGay post "Queers Against Equality" (April 2011, http://gay.americablog.com/2011/04/queers-against-equality.html), are particularly notable to illuminate this point.
[66] For a detailed account of creating movement strategies that center the most marginal, see Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Brooklyn, NY: South End Press, 2011).

"You are either with us or with the terrorists."[67] This you-either-support-gay-marriage-or-you're-a-homophobic-bigot sentiment has been, and continues to be, articulated to us at our own events and in online comment sections of media work the collective has undertaken. This mode of thinking squanders the queer political imagination while restricting its vision of social and economic justice to the legal confines of the status quo here and now.

If AE—and others like us who are committed to a more egalitarian reworking of the family and the nation—are indeed setting back the so-called movement, perhaps that is not such a bad thing after all? If we are marching in the direction of limited legal familial definitions and intensely privatized social safety nets, setting the movement back or stopping to think seriously about the direction we are headed cannot be a bad thing. After taking stock and thinking in broader terms, perhaps marriage is not the best strategy or even the best way to ensure everyone's material and affective needs are met, gay or straight. Difficult times require difficult strategies and we must relocate our energies in strategies that build diverse, broad-based coalitions and fight for what really matters: collective self-determination that ensures no one's material and affective needs are left unmet.

In using the concept of self-determination, AE is not evoking the neoliberal principle of personal responsibility, but rather calling for a political framework that recognizes that varied communities have different needs that can no longer be met solely by the prescriptive models of monogamous romance and families headed by breadwinners. In addition, we must begin to question the basic paradigms upon which most so-called reform has been based thus far and, instead, demand structural changes that aid in removing barriers to access and equity. For

[67] Eric Stanley, "Marriage Is Murder: On the Discursive Limits of Matrimony," in *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage*, ed. Ryan Conrad (Lewiston, ME: AE Press, 2010), 15-18.

instance, in the realm of healthcare, AE finds it more productive to continue to demand universal healthcare rather than reinforce the classist assumption that gays and lesbians can and should access such basic healthcare needs through employment and marriage. In immigration law, it is reductive and retrograde to continue to push for "family-based" reform to include same-sex couples when the objective should be ending economic hardships that instigate the continued forced migration of people across borders while simultaneously working to open up immigration opportunities based on need, not romantic or marital status.

The Cost of Respectability

As illustrated in this section, "the gay agenda," as a rhetorical device of the religious right used to inspire resentment and fear of LGBT people, has made an undeniable impact on the conservative turn in contemporary gay and lesbian politics, most demonstrably in recent gay marriage campaigns in the United States where respectability figured centrally. Gay and lesbian organizations have been baited into working hard not only to deflect the contemptuous bile thrown their direction by religious conservatives, but to prove how normal, similar, and deserving certain gays and lesbians are in order to access particular legal protections like marriage. This reactive rhetorical appeal to normalcy and respectability is a strategic measure to win public opinion in the short term, but at a cost that has not been and never will be fully addressed within the narrow logic of legal equality.

Digital Archives: Assembling a Chorus of Dissent

I have spent the majority of this chapter explaining the arguments made by the Against Equality collective as well as the social, economic, and political context in which these

arguments are made in the United States. I now shift to describing the material components of the project. After describing the collective's digital archives, print publications, and cultural interventions, I move to my reflections on the project.

While most traditional archives begin with accumulation of physical documents and ephemera, often stored in humidity-controlled environments and acid-free storage boxes, AE's archive begins with the digital. In October 2009, I published my materialist critique of the pro-gay marriage campaign in Maine on a personal blog titled Against Equality. Maine was in the midst of a people's veto referendum to repeal a gay marriage law that had already passed in the state legislature and was signed by Democratic then-governor John Baldacci. In the coming weeks, I received an overwhelming response, primarily positive, from other queer and trans activists across the U.S. with whom my writing and analysis resonated. With these notes of thanks, some people included links or attachments to their own writing about gay marriage, or similarly the issues of gay and lesbian inclusion in the U.S. military or federal hate crime laws. Quickly, I reworked my personal blog into an ad hoc archive of critical queer writing and cultural work that shared a common critique of the three main issues (or holy trinity) of contemporary gay and lesbian politics: gay marriage, gays in the military, and sexual orientation-inclusive hate crime laws.

Figure 4.5 Against Equality, screen capture of military digital archive, 2016.

After six months of working on this ad-hoc archive in a piecemeal fashion, Yasmin Nair and I re-founded the project together as a collective. In the following year, Deena Loeffler and Karma Chávez joined the collective and Alexandra Silverthorne joined as technical support for organizing and maintaining the digital archive. Once this core group of five members coalesced, we have stayed constant for going on six years. During this time, we went on to more sharply

organize the digital archive through re-launching our website in November 2011. The website continues to exist today as its current form pictured above. After the re-launch, we collectively developed criteria for including written or visual pieces in the archive and actively gathered pieces for the archive beyond what was already submitted to us by fellow activists sympathetic to the project.

It is also worth noting that only two of the five collective members live in the same city, let alone the same region or country. None of us live in the supposedly queer meccas of San Francisco or New York city, but find ourselves in smaller cities and towns from the mid-west, south, mid-Atlantic, and north east. Thus our experiences and perspectives on queer and trans life are necessarily different, but complementary none the less. This geographic distance has also required collectively produced materials to be mediated through the technologies available to us, and has made us more decentralized and perhaps even more cooperative than other projects based out of single locations. Although we have all met one another face to face at one time or another, never have we all been assembled at the same time and place in number greater than three.

AE does not publish any new writing on the AE website, but provides archives of pieces that were previously published elsewhere online or in print. Part of the logic behind this decision lies in the fact that the collective finds it ethically dubious to publish new writing without proper compensation. In archiving only previously published work, we forego the ethical conundrum of taking advantage of the unpaid labor of writers. Whether or not writers were compensated for their work where they published previously, we can only hope. The only new writing that has ever appeared as part of Against Equality's work are the introductions to each of the three pocket-sized anthologies, for which we financially compensated each of the authors a modest

sum of one hundred dollars, and the new preface to the three-in-one volume that was collectively authored by AE. In keeping with this standard for compensating contributors for new work, artist Chris Vargas was paid the same one hundred dollar sum for each of the four book covers he designed for the collective's anthology series.

The assembled archive spans over 100 years of feminist and queer critique of the demand for inclusion in heterosexist and patriarchal institutions. With that said, there are pieces in the archives that do not utilize what we would consider appropriately sensitive language today. Some pieces contradict one another or utilize an ideological framework not cogent with today's political or cultural realities. To clarify where we, as a collective, stand on the heterogeneous and, at times, contradictory work we have assembled together, we developed a curatorial statement about our archive in 2012:

> Against Equality is committed to archiving radical work from all parts of our collective queer history, which is as messy, complex, and complicated as any other. We archive pieces without censorship or exegesis because we believe that an unclouded historical overview is preferable to one that is apologetic or revisionary – after all, our collective began as an effort to combat the erasure of queer radical history and activism by the mainstream gay and lesbian community. To that end, we recognize that, sometimes, the pieces we archive demonstrate language or ideology that is not seamlessly in line with what we might consider preferable today. Rather than revise or erase, we leave all that in as part of our ongoing effort to document queer history as what it was, not what we wish it would have been. In the same way, we also ask that any submissions to the archive be exactly as they originally appeared, without revisions to language or politics.[68]

This curatorial statement about the archive is a firewall against the ahistorical criticism from the left that we received in the past because we are seen to have archived works that are not in line with contemporary thinking and preferred language. It also serves as an injunction to deal

[68] Against Equality. "Marriage." Accessed September 27, 2016. http://www.againstequality.org/about/marriage/.

with the queer past on its own terms and in its own historical context, as opposed to ahistorical, revisionist, or idealized approaches to the recent past.

The digital archive assembled by AE has linked seemingly disparate and singular voices of resistance to the hetero-status quo in the far corners of the internet to an un-ignorable cacophony of queer dissent.

Self-Publication: Seizing the Means of Production of Knowledge[69]

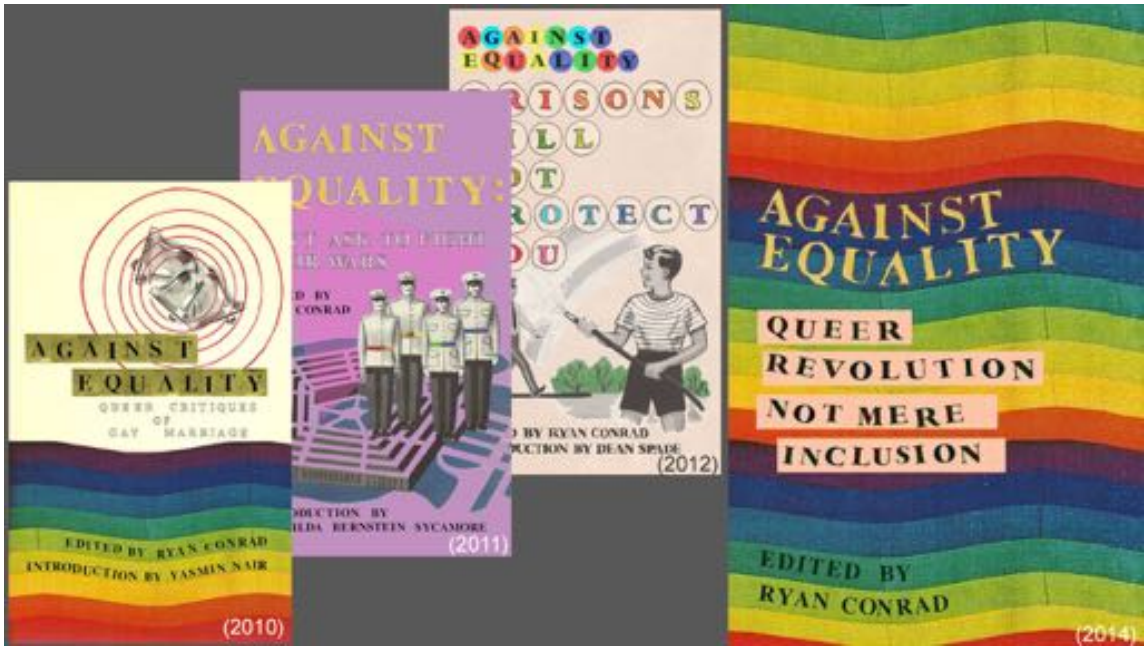

Figure 4.6 Against Equality, complete collection of publications, 2010-2014.

Against Equality's publications are meant to serve as an introduction to the diverse array of radical queer and trans critiques leveled against mainstream gay and lesbian politics. We hope that by engaging with the ideas in our publications, readers can go on to build broader and more nuanced critiques that best reflect the specificity of their own communities. These collections are

[69] Part of this section is based on a text produced collaboratively by the collective for the publication of AE's final anthology, *Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion* with AK Press in 2014.

by no means exhaustive or complete, but represent what the collective has agreed are some of the best and most convincing arguments assembled in our online archive.

Beyond the immediate purpose of building a larger, more critically engaged community of radical queer and trans activists, we see the relevance of our published collections as more important today than ever before. As mentioned previously, the U.S. has seen the repeal of DOMA in the summer of 2013, the end of DADT in autumn 2011, and the passage of federal hate crime laws in the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act. In light of these events, we want to be sure that voices of queer resistance are not erased and written out of history. These essays are like bread crumbs, laying out different pathways to justice and resistance for those that dare to imagine a more just world. When people look back on these desperately conservative gay times, we hope our collective voices can be an inspiration to those who come after us—those that look to our queer histories, just like we did, as a site of rejuvenation, excitement, and hope.

Why Publish?

It feels like the entire publishing industry is collapsing in upon itself, save for a few niche indie presses and a couple of mega-conglomerates, yet AE has chosen to publish books anyway. Perhaps initially this decision seems foolish or financially reckless, but we find ourselves committed to the printed word for a number of important reasons. While it may be surprising for city dwellers to learn that not everyone has high speed internet access or seamless cell phone coverage, rural queers know all too well what it means to be on the losing side of the digital divide. Rural poverty aside, even if many small town queer and trans people wanted to purchase high-speed internet access or cell phone data plans, such consumer options are often not available. Quite simply, the fiber optic cables and cell phone towers do not exist.

Telecommunication companies will not entertain the idea of putting them up because they are not profitable in sparsely populated areas. Regional libraries and schools often become the main lifeline to online access, but these spaces are surveilled and policed in ways that make it difficult and uncomfortable, if not outright dangerous, to access queer and trans materials online.

Aside from those who do not have online access due to lack of infrastructure, there are others who simply are not interested in learning how to use computers, let alone learning how to efficiently navigate through endless amounts of internet garbage in order to access what we have culled together in our archive and publications. Whether they are older individuals who have not worked on computers most of their lives or those of a new generation who would rather go without, publishing work from our digital archives in print form is complementary and provides greater access.

Lastly, in terms of access, there are a large number of queer and trans people left behind by nearly all of our so-called gay and lesbian community organizations: those who are incarcerated. With little, but more often no internet access, incarcerated queer and trans people are left out of conversations that happen largely online. Through our publications and free books to prisoners policy, a collaboration made possible through partnering with the Madison, Wisconsin-based LGBT Books to Prisoners project, we extend these conversations to many who do not and never will be granted online access. It is imperative that we, as a radical queer and trans social and economic justice movement, not abandon our friends and family held captive by the state, regardless of the harm they may or may not have once caused.

Beyond access to online versus physical printed media, there is an important point regarding what we comically refer to as "seizing the means of production of knowledge." Our first three pocket-sized anthologies were all self-published. This allowed us to work outside

typical academic or publishing industry timelines and also allowed AE, as an activist group with no profit motive, to maintain full control over the project. It allowed us to take online op-eds and blog posts and put them into print where they then became official knowledge. Once in book form, the ideas presented together became reputable source material for scholarly research. University instructors now teach our work across the United States, Canada, and perhaps beyond. Our anthology that combined our three pocket-sized anthologies into one book boasts placement in over 150 libraries worldwide, most of them university libraries.[70]

It is doubtful that the work we have archived would be in such large circulation if these pieces remained a series of disconnected online materials. Once our work became official knowledge through print, the ideas and critiques provided in the anthologies were approached with more seriousness and weight. Instead of being isolated extremists, we became a coherent and defiant set of voices demanding greater attention to the failures and limited vision of mainstream gay and lesbian equality politics.

And, of course, there is always the bookness of a book. While we provided our latest anthology as an e-book due to prohibitive overseas shipping costs, there is still that irreplaceable feeling one gets when folding down the corner of a page and writing notes with a pencil. The feeling of gathering for a book club discussion, where well-worn pages are smudged with traces of shared meals and discussed, reworked, challenged, and built upon. The feeling of passing on a cherished book to a lover, friend, or the next generation of queer and trans activists who will look to this moment for traces of resistance as we did with previous decades. The feeling one just does not get from gathering around the glowing screen of a laptop or tablet.

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[70] WorldCat. "Search Results: Against Equality Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion." August 01, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2016. https://www.worldcat.org/title/against-equality-queer-revolution-not-mere-inclusion/oclc/858603259&referer=brief_results.

Against Equality's final anthology was assembled at a moment of historical coincidence. On June 26, 2013, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *United States v. Windsor* that invalidated DOMA as unconstitutional. On that same day, the Court ruled that proponents of California's Proposition 8, which banned same-sex marriage, did not have constitutional standing to defend the law in the courts, making same-sex marriage legal again in California. Around the same time, AE finalized and announced a collaboration with AK Press to publish the collective's three existing pocket-sized anthologies as a single volume.

By no means are we implying that significant judicial decisions related to gay issues are equivalent to an independent publisher deciding to publish a radical queer book. We simply want to note that what will likely go down in history as the greatest marker of gay assimilation in the U.S. ironically came at the same time as queer radical history began to reach greater mainstream visibility. While we, archivists of queer politics, take no credit for the decades and even centuries of truly insurgent queer radical work that precede us, we cannot help but underscore the significance of this political moment for this and other reasons.

The DOMA and Prop. 8 decisions were handed down by the same Supreme Court that effectively rendered the 1965 Voting Rights Act null and void the previous day.[71] A week earlier, the same court also dealt a significant blow to Miranda Rights. The court argued that if an accused's silence occurs before their right to remain silent is read to them, prosecutors can use that silence against them.[72]

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[71] Pat Garofalo, "A Congress of Convenience for Supreme Court Conservatives," *U.S. News & World Report*, June 26, 2013, http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/pat-garofalo/2013/06/26/supreme-court-conservative-hypocrisy-on-doma-and-voting-rights-act.
[72] Gabriel Grand, "Salinas v. Texas: The Biggest Change to Miranda Rights That Slipped Under Everyone's Radar," *Policy Mic*, July 02, 2013, https://mic.com/articles/52453/salinas-v-texas-the-biggest-change-to-miranda-rights-that-slipped-under-everyone-s-radar.

There was some consternation that the same court could render such seemingly incongruent decisions. How could nine justices collectively, even with recorded minority dissent, conclude that gay marriage was an inalienable right? "[Proposition 8...] directly subverts the principle of equality at the heart of the Fourteenth Amendment, and is an affront to the inalienable right to pursue one's own happiness that has guided our nation since its founding," according to an Amicus Brief filed by the Libertarian right-wing Cato Institute.[73] How could the Supreme Court conclude that marriage needed legal protection and encouragement, but that voting was a right now easily accessed by a Black and Brown population which had, according to its summation, come so far that it no longer needed a jurisprudential Act to deter infringement?

The level of disenfranchisement is greater than ever in this historical moment. Several states have already moved to institute voter identification laws and other restrictions with the end of Voting Rights Act protections.[74] Escalating poverty and consistent underemployment and unemployment mean that the United States now faces greater inequality than ever before, with wealth concentrated in the pockets and bank accounts of a very elite few. In many rural areas and major urban centers, public schools are being gutted in favor of private or charter schools, denying youth the chance at a quality public education and also denying workers the opportunity of jobs with union protection.[75]

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[73] Brief for the Cato Institute and Constitutional Accountability Center as Amicus Curiae, Hollingsworth, et al v. Perry, et al, 570 U.S. No. 12-144, (2012), http://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/perry-filed-brief-prop-8.pdf

[74] Michael Cooper, "After Ruling, States Rush to Enact Voting Laws," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/06/us/politics/after-Supreme-Court-ruling-states-rush-to-enact-voting-laws.html.

[75] RPP International, *Challenge and Opportunity: The Impact of Charter Schools on School Districts*, report (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 2001), http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/choice/district_impact.pdf

There are clear connections between economic disenfranchisement, serious impediments to voting rights and education, and the furthering of a neoliberal economy which depends upon highly selective resource concentration. What commentators and most of the left in their desperate attempt to valorize gay rights still fail to consider is this: these decisions are deeply entwined in each other, and one indubitably leads to the other. Against Equality contends that the rise in a particular notion of gay rights, a term never espoused by Chief Justice Roberts's Supreme Court, is particularly dependent upon erasing the political and economic rights of the most marginal.

The Against Equality anthologies remind us and the world that there is a queer radical/ left history that has not been co-opted into dubious support for gay rights at the cost of furthering neoliberalism. AE's anthologies, and the digital archive more broadly, exist to document the ongoing resistance to an ever-evolving, well-marketed gay agenda which has actively erased radical queer history by rewriting recent events into a narrative of inevitable capitalist progress, one where gays and lesbians flock towards marriage, military service, hate crime legislation, and the prison industrial complex.

The contents of the AE publications range from the deeply personal to methodically analytic, but their driving force is structural. The stories of experiences gathered here do not simply provide personal testimony, but also sharpen the critiques presented. Additionally, these publications collect and presents forceful reminders that queer resistance is not only against the oppression of people defined as queer, but against all disenfranchisement, and that this resistance is not merely a pale version of free love, but fully embedded in the political legacies of Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre, and many others. The resistance archived in AE's publications

does not merely shout out for sexual liberation, as important as that might be, but insists upon a radical political and economic reorientation of the world.

Cultural Production: Over-identifying with Commodification

Against Equality's first foray into cultural production was developed at the launch of the project. In 2009, I designed blue and yellow stickers with the ">" mathematical symbol as a spoof of the then ubiquitous Human Rights Campaign's "=" stickers. The symbol became the logo of Against Equality, humorously poking fun at the well-funded mainstream gay and lesbian rights organization most known for its work on gay marriage, gays in the military, and sexual orientation-inclusive hate crime law. While the stickers are jocular in nature and fit squarely in an activist tradition of culture jamming as popularized in recent history by groups like the Billboard Liberation Front, Adbusters, and the Yes Men, the stickers and logo are quite serious in their critique. In essence, the "greater than" symbol demands we look beyond the rhetoric of equality and search for transformative solutions that aim higher than inclusion in the status quo. Why settle for mere equality?

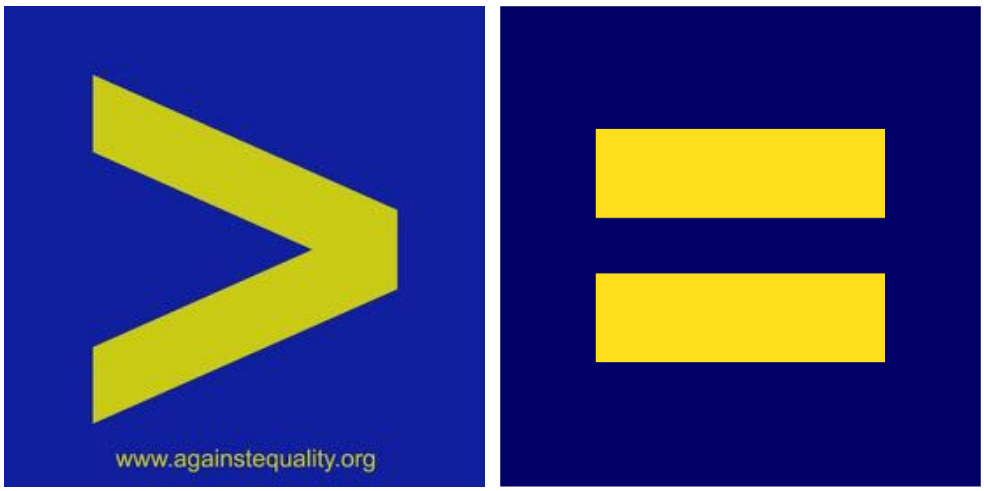

Figure 4.7 Against Equality, *Greater Than logo* 2.5" x 2.5" sticker, 2009; Human Rights Campaign, *Equal Sign logo* 2.5" x 2.5" sticker, undated.

While assembling the archive, the inclusion of visual and performance work was foregrounded. Although more difficult to include in a digital archive due to the ephemeral nature of many cultural interventions, AE did pull together some works in the archive. The difficulty in locating and archiving this kind of cultural work led AE to pursue two call-for-art postcard projects. The goal of these projects was to activate the archives by encouraging the production of visual work that aligned with the political critiques found much more easily in textual work. The first call for art resulted in the production of three individually designed postcards by artists Liz Kinnamon, Buzz Slutzky, and Chris Vargas that were included as an insert in the first AE anthology, *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage* (2010). The second call for art for an additional postcard series resulted in three additional postcards individually designed by Sam Wallman, Cristine Drach, and myself that were, like the first, added to the digital archives and distributed through AE's online store.

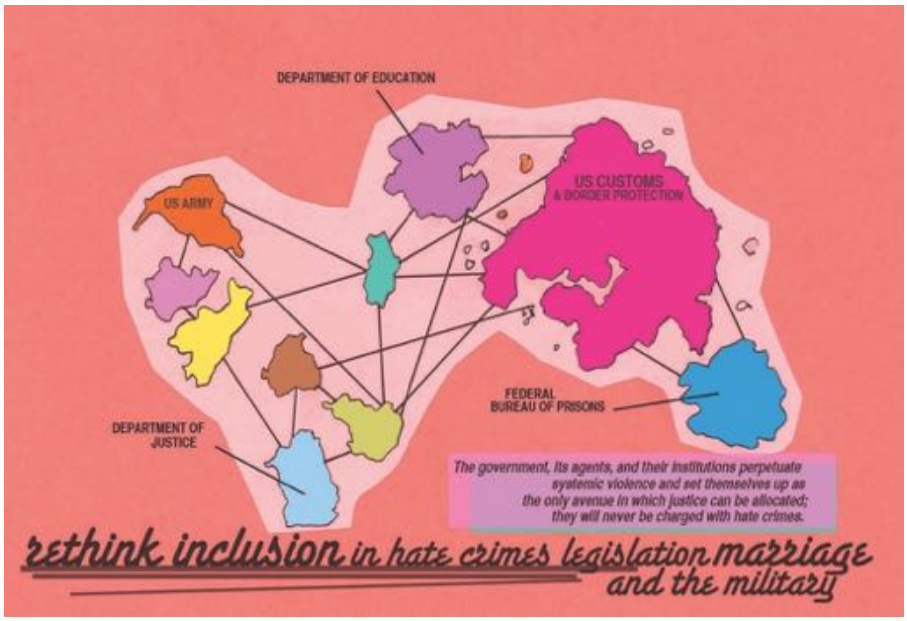

Figure 4.8 Liz Kinnamon, *Rethink Inclusion* 4" x 6" postcard for the 1st Against Equality postcard series, 2010.

Figure 4.9 Sam Wallman, *The Gay Marriage Debate* 4" x 6" postcard for the 2nd Against Equality postcard series, 2012.

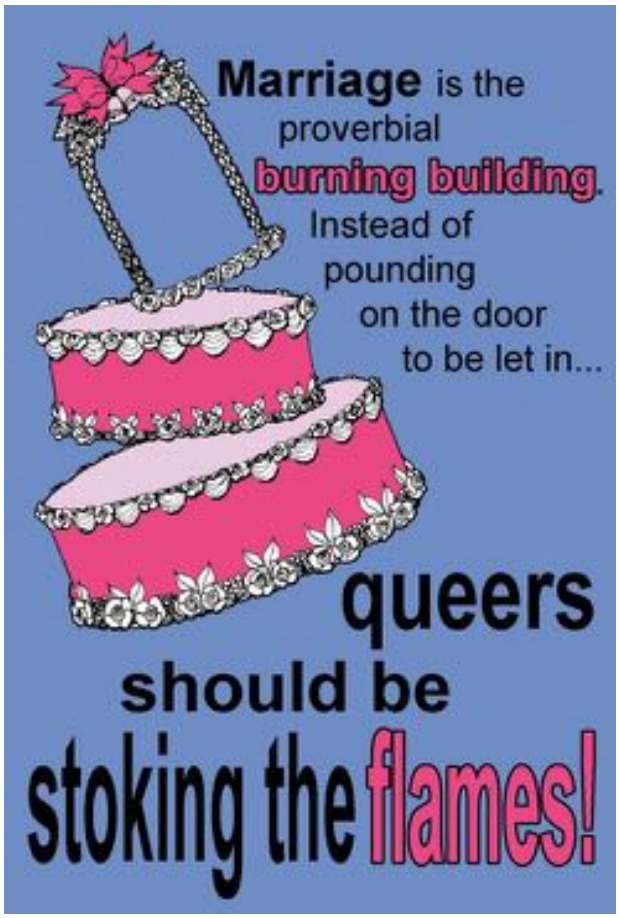

Figure 4.10 Ryan Conrad, *Marriage Is the Proverbial Burning Building* 4" x 6" postcard for the 2nd Against Equality postcard series, 2012.

Figure 4.11 Against Equality, set of three 1" buttons, 2010.

Between productions of the two postcard series, AE also produced a series of 1" buttons, including the original AE greater than logo and two new designs. The "Just Say No to Marriage" button was inspired by Nancy Reagan's laughable 1980s "Just Say No to Drugs" campaign. In part, this comedic gesture suggests marriage is the drug of the gay rights movement, or, as queer provocateur Bruce LaBruce put it in his 2004 radical-chic satire film *Raspberry Reich*, "Heterosexuality is the opiate of the masses."[76] The second button, "Marriage = Death," was inspired by the Reagan-era AIDS activist poster "Silence = Death" that was discussed previously in Chapter Two. The intention with this inflammatory button was to drive home the fact that AIDS service organizations at the time of this button's production were either closing or cutting back services, while organizations focused on gay marriage were seeing their budgets continue to grow rapidly.

[76] *Raspberry Reich*. Directed by Bruce. LaBruce. Berlin: Cazzo Film, 2004. DVD.

Figure 4.12 These two images served as the inspiration for the AE button series. Left: Nancy Reagan speaking at a "Just Say No" rally in Los Angeles, 1987. Right: Silence = Death project's poster, 1986.

In celebration of the collective's fifth anniversary, AE began offering a range of products through an on-demand print company, Society6.[77] By this time, we had already closed the online store on the AE website as it was proving too onerous a task to keep up with producing goods and filling orders. As the collective functions entirely on volunteer labor, our energy was spread too thinly and we decided that maintaining the archive took precedent over filling orders for the handful of cultural products the collective produced and sold at cost. The fifth anniversary collection of goods was largely meant to poke fun at ourselves for maintaining an online store for nearly five years by over-identifying with the production of unnecessary goods to sell. This camp strategy of over-identification was first articulated by Slavoj Žižek to describe Eastern European political art that chose to over-identify with oppressive communist ideologies in order to skewer

[77] For a full listing of products AE made available through Society6 see the online listing: https://society6.com/againstequality.

them and is a practice still in use today.[78] Comedy news acts like Steven Colbert and the Yes Men's World Trade Organization impersonations continue this cultural practice of over-identification today much like our own intervention. By emulating the ridiculous range of products for sale with the Human Rights Campaign logo on them, we offered up a critique of the non-profit industrial complex that over-emphasizes the importance of selling material goods as opposed to actual political organizing. For AE's fifth anniversary, people could purchase overpriced t-shirts, sweatshirts, tote bags, throw pillows, cell phone covers, framed art prints, clocks, shower curtains, and even duvet covers with our "Just Say No to Marriage" logo. Thankfully, most people understood the joke and only a handful of tote bags and t-shirts were ever ordered.

Figure 4.13 Against Equality, *Just Say No to Marriage* duvet cover ($99) and shower curtain ($68), 2014.

While we jest at our own foray into the production and selling of cultural products, AE holds a paradoxical relationship to its wares. All cultural interventions of the collective served as

[78] Slavoj Žižek, "Why Are Laibach and NSK Not Fascists?" *M'ars*, 1993, 3-4.

points of critiques in themselves. The collective framed these low-priced cultural objects as conversation starters, a means to a conversation as opposed to an end in itself. While the online store became too large a burden to continue as the collective's work became more well-known, we poked fun at our growing popularity and the way non-profits bring in money from branding and selling a wide range of objects to constituents and allies.

It is important, however, to reflect on the ways in which these objects helped activate the archive and the politics of the work therein. Never were we simply trying to sell unnecessary things to people in order to increase our operating budget or salaries. Instead, Against Equality sought to create cultural interventions through highly visible everyday objects that were intended to disrupt the assumed consensus that all queer and trans people are in agreement about our inclusion in marriage, the U.S. military, and hate crime law.

What Can an Archive Do?

The primary misconception of Against Equality is that our project constitutes something more than an archive. Through nearly one hundred speaking engagements over the last six years, we have seen a real hunger for an organized social and economic justice movement that foregrounds the needs of marginal queer and trans people. Criticism has been levied against us at events, mistaking the failure to produce action that can only be spawned by broad-based social movements as our shortcoming. Against Equality is not a social movement, a coalition, or even an organization in the sense that we do not maintain a physical office, phone number, postal address, paid staff, or a board of directors. AE is a small yet tenacious archive with a savvy handful of activist intellectuals who worked together across state-designated boundaries to

reframe the national conversation on gay and lesbian inclusion in marriage, military, and hate crime law in the United States. Nothing more, nothing less.

Since our inception, we have also been criticized for not providing alternatives as part of our critiques. Our continued response is that the structures of assimilation are so tenacious that they need, first and foremost, hard and insistent critiques in order to dismantle the authority and power they have accrued over the years. Additionally, every contributor to AE's anthologies and every member of the small Against Equality collective is connected to other projects that radically alter the political landscape. Whether we work on grassroots organizing against privatization of Chicago schools, the criminalization of HIV non-disclosure laws in Canada, health disparities in underserved communities, or ties between militarization and queer immigrant discourses in the United States, our individual and collective work persistently points out alternatives to the privatized state and the brutality of the prison industrial complex and the military. In other words, we critique because our lives depend upon it in both our activist and archivist work.

AE's slogan since its inception is to reinvigorate the queer political imagination. While measuring the success of this goal is difficult as the imagination remains in the realm of the immaterial, we see the shift in national conversations around gay and lesbian inclusion over the last decade in the United States as evidence that we have played some small part in making other, more just worlds imaginable and possible. Yet our critiques, as noted in Chapter One, make arguments that assume the existence of rational subjects whose political and emotional attachments are easily aligned by clear information and cold critique. While we may have helped shift the conversation in the United States regarding gay and lesbian inclusion in state institutions like marriage, the military, and hate crime protections, we have utterly failed at addressing the

emotional conditions and collective moods that created the attachment to, and the demand for, inclusion in said institutions in the first place. While one could argue that AE's satirical cultural interventions lampooning the present-day political organizations working on behalf of gays and lesbians is a certain kind of affective intervention as well, it is not enough Our critiques may have expanded a queer class consciousness or provided a much-needed intersectional corrective to temper the demands of whitewashed and professionalized mainstream gay and lesbian political organizations, but our critiques have not succeeded in addressing the psychic conditions that led to this moment in history.

Perhaps such a task is not the appropriate role for AE as a decidedly activist project primarily focused on archiving and historicizing dissent in the midst of a moment of urgent political upheaval, but such a task cannot go unaddressed. While AE may have broken the seemingly self-evident consensus on the needs of gay and lesbian people in the present, as a larger queer and trans social and economic justice movement, we have yet to address the history of trauma and loss of the recent queer past that created the context for broadly forgetting and jettisoning the struggles and goals of the more radical queer past. While some may argue this foreclosure of the queer political imagination is a result of neoliberalism's privatizing affects that have accelerated at an exponential rate since Reagan, I cannot help but reiterate that the material alone cannot account for this loss of imagination. Instead, if we are to combat the foreclosure of the queer political imagination, we must also remember, address, and continue to account for the loss and trauma of the recent queer past.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

> My interest in history is that it is not yet finally wrapped up. Another history is possible. Another turning is waiting to happen.
>
> - Stuart Hall speaking in *The Stuart Hall Project*, 2013[1]

> I am interested here in the emergence of revolutionary counter-moods, those world-altering moments where new alliances, new enemies, and new fields of action become visible and urgently compelling.
>
> - Jonathan Flatley[2]

This dissertation research began with a question: "Beyond the growing shift towards neoliberal forms of governance after the emergence of gay and lesbian social movements in the late 1960s, what fueled the strong conservative turn in gay and lesbian politics during the 1990s in the United States?" This broad research question, alongside a number of smaller and more pointed research questions, lead me to work with affect theory in order to develop my concept of the queer political imagination and hypothesize how it expands and contracts. While my research into three cultural archives from the recent past that explore historical traumas specific to gay and lesbian people in the U.S. does not provide a comprehensive answer to my research question, my research does contribute to a fuller understanding of the forces that have come to bear upon the queer present.

In Chapter One, I situate this research project within the expanding field of affect studies and the broader field of cultural studies. In focusing on affect, emotion, and mood, I seek a

[1] *The Stuart Hall Project*, dir. John Akomfrah (United Kingdom: BFI, 2013), DVD.
[2] Jonathan Flatley, "How A Revolutionary Counter-Mood Is Made," *New Literary History* 43, no. 3 (2012): 504.

conceptual model that allowed for the greatest potential number of actions and attachments to be distilled from negative emotions or shared negative affective states. I begin with Gould's emotional habitus and Williams's structures of feeling to demonstrate such possibilities. I then utilize Flatley's affective mapping and Muñoz's utopian attunement to think through how we might bring new moods, emotional fields, and possible actions into being in the service of radical queer worldmaking projects.

Chapter Two looks at the history of the AIDS crisis and the once commonplace metaphors of genocide and mass death used in AIDS activist art to describe the crisis by those most directly impacted. I dwell on why these metaphors have seemingly evaporated from the histories now told about this time period, and to what ends. In doing so, I connect this queer historical trauma to the theoretical work of trauma and Holocaust studies to open up ways in which we might understand how the historical trauma of the AIDS crisis continues to work upon present-day queer politics.

In Chapter Three, I connect this line of inquiry from the AIDS crisis through to the 1990s and early 2000s. By focusing on legal battles and electoral losses over sexual orientation-inclusive non-discrimination protections in Maine, I link the devastating losses of life during the worst years of the AIDS crisis to wide-scale legal losses over basic employment and housing protections that continued well into the 2000s. My central argument is that these two histories, one a loss of life and the other a loss of subjecthood, tempered the more radical demands of queer social justice movements, signaling the foreclosure of the queer political imagination. These historical traumas set the stage in the decade to come for a normative politics of recognition and inclusion featuring gay marriage, openly gay military service, and sexual orientation-inclusive hate crime protections.

Chapter Four challenges today's gay and lesbian politics of recognition and inclusion by foregrounding the work of Against Equality, a collective whose purpose is to push back against the paucity of today's gay and lesbian politics and reinvigorate the queer political imagination with possibility. I posit that while AE is a much-needed activist project that has done great work in helping reframe the national conversation around politics of recognition and inclusion in the U.S. (and gay marriage in particular), it has failed in addressing historical traumas outlined in the previous chapters. While the intersectional critiques offered by the AE collective are critically important in addressing the urgency of today's political climate, I conclude that it is through addressing these historical traumas that any present-day reframing and reorienting of queer politics will be most effective.

I have left the reader to do some of the work tying these chapters together while weaving a number of loose theoretical threads (affect, emotions, mood, trauma, memory, political imagination, worldmaking) between them. I insist on this arrangement of chapters because I am trying to draw out some of the factors that contributed to the increasingly conservative turn in gay and lesbian politics in the 1990s without establishing an over determined causal relationship. These chapters elucidate a number of factors that contributed to the narrowing of the queer political imagination. They do so without limiting the dynamics of this trend or preclude other possible influences and factors. In short, these chapters offer an observation and an assertion about how the afterlives of queer historical traumas remain unaddressed in contemporary queer politics to the determent of future queer worldmaking projects. Whether such a claim can be synthesized from these chapters is up to the reader to decide, but this sprawling and ambitious dissertation project remains a provocation for thinking through queer historical traumas and their present-day impact none the less. This is a provocation that I can only imagine originating from

an explicitly interdisciplinary project within the humanities like my own. While such a loosely tied-together structure in this dissertation project may appear unfinished, it is indeed intentional for the aforementioned reasons.

For a special issue of *Social Text* edited in 2005 by David Eng, José Muñoz, and Judith Halberstam, they ask, "What's queer about queer studies now?"[3] They question the usefulness of the term "queer" at a moment in history when gay and lesbian identities revolve around consumerism and legal battles for inclusion within deeply inequitable, often violent state institutions. In much the same way, this dissertation seeks to revive queerness as a site of resistance, although taking an entirely different approach. Eng, Muñoz, and Halberstam demand a renewed intersectional valence for queerness that takes into account the crises of the contemporary political moment at which they write, much as Against Equality demanded a few years after them. On the other hand, in this dissertation, I argue for queerness that does not abandon its origins in same-sex desire, loss, and historical trauma, as an enabling strategy that allows for *queer* to address the contemporary crises outlined in Eng, Muñoz, and Halberstam in *Social Text*. They argue for an intersectional queerness that deals directly with

> ...the triumph of neoliberalism and the collapse of the welfare state; the Bush administration's infinite "war on terrorism" and the acute militarization of state violence; the escalation of U.S. empire building and the clash of religious fundamentalisms, nationalisms, and patriotisms; the devolution of civil society and the erosion of civil rights; the pathologizing of immigrant communities as "terrorist" and racialized populations as "criminal"; the shifting forms of citizenship and migration in a putatively "postidentity" and "postracial" age; the politics of intimacy and the liberal recoding of freedom as secularization, domesticity, and marriage; and the return to "moral values" and "family values" as a prophylactic against political debate, economic redistribution, and cultural dissent.[4]

[3] David Eng, José Muñoz, and Judith Halberstam, "Introduction: What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?" *Social Text*, no. 84/85 (2005).
[4] Ibid, 2.

In this dissertation project, I argue for bringing a queerness to the fore that is emphatically situated in the historical traumas of the 1980s and 1990s, the historical traumas that I describe as case studies and explore as archival corpuses in Chapters Two and Three. Situating today's queerness against historical traumas that bear upon it may very well serve as a much-needed prophylaxis against forgetting the devastation of the recent queer past. It is in remembering and reorienting oneself to the history of loss and trauma, as Flatley articulates in his theory of affective mapping, that one can find individual and collective affinities in the present and common cause against mutual enemies.

In short, this dissertation insists on a queer temporal drag, or a stuck-ness in the 1990s, in order to see and understand the traumas of the decade and how they come to bear upon the present. Bill Clinton's Democratic presidential bid in 1992 broke the Republican Reagan/Bush stranglehold on the American electorate, ushering in a supposedly liberal decade after years of conservative reign. While intellectual projects like Bradford Martin's *The Other Eighties* (2011) helpfully map out an often untold history of social justice movement activism during the conservative Reagan/Bush years, liberals and leftists alike tend to lose the urgency and rancor once a Democrat occupies the White House. This dissertation is a contestation of the imperative that we must look to, remember, and honor resistance movements only during challenging historical periods, which of course we must, but demands that we equally remember the historical traumas carried out during more permissive periods under supposedly liberal regimes.

In his one-man 1991 show *Mambo Mouth*, John Leguizamo's character Manny, the transgender Latina street-walking sex worker, exclaims "You're a Latina of the '90s, get with the program, *mija*!" to encourage her friend to embrace her modern womanhood. The phrase "Get with the '90s!" reverberated throughout popular culture to insist everyone catch up with the

changing times and move on from the past (Reagan to Clinton, New Wave to Hip-Hop, neon fashions to heroin chic, etc.). Quite to the contrary, I implore today's queer activists and thinkers to "Get with the '90s!" in order to dwell on the historical traumas that have shaped and narrowed today's queer political imagination. This is a demand to revisit a difficult period of the recent past to better understand how we have arrived at such a dismally unimaginative queer present.

By insisting on an attachment of the queer in queer studies to its original emergence in the academy in the early 1990s, I go against the prevalent trend in queer studies to always search for new uses of queer detached from same-sex desire.[5] In this dissertation project I also insist upon a formulation of queer studies that suffers from being excessively white, male, class-privileged, urban-centric, and gender-normative, much to the opposite of the predominantly queer women of color-run Against Equality collective. This dissertation is, in part, an admonition for white, class-privileged, and gender-normative gays and lesbians to remember (for those who were there) and to learn (for those who were not there) these histories so that intersectional alliances in the present are not motivated by guilt or charity, but by an embodied sense of solidarity. My address and line of thinking in this dissertation is directed at influencing and moving this audience, of which I am a member, to action. Black and brown, trans and gender non-conforming, and other even more marginal subjectivities hardly need reminders of ongoing historical traumas and the tenuous current-day positions of privilege they are unlikely to occupy.

This limited scope and audience is a strength, not a shortcoming, of my project. While many privileged and/or white activists move to diverse urban centers and prove their anti-racist and progressive politics through integrating themselves in racialized communities, I find this

[5] For a detailed discussion of this ever-changing search for the new queer of queer studies, see, Kadji Amin, "Haunted by the 1990s: Queer Theory's Affective Histories," *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 3-4 (2016).

kind of action and thought foolish. It is not as if the San Francisco Bay area, or New Orleans, or whatever racialized community queer white people decide is cool to invade and gentrify next, needs more queer white anti-racists. White activists must do much-needed work in white communities, as it is not the responsibility of racialized people to do this. My project's scope is largely to convince queer white people that they ought to see themselves in closer relation to other marginalized people through developing a sense of their own historical traumas. I am unaware of other queer people doing this kind of intellectual or activist work targeted at radicalizing marginal white populations such as those in Maine from where I come. Sadly, more often than not, poor and/or non-urban white people have been abandoned by the Left only to be influenced and organized by Christian fundamentalists and white supremacists to all of our detriment.

History always comes to bear upon its subjects in the present. Like Stuart Hall, I always want to challenge and contend with how this history is told, who tells it, and to what ends. In no small way this dissertation attempts to do just as Hall suggests in the epigraph of this final chapter. Against the linear progress narrative and smug pragmatism of contemporary gay and lesbian politics, I, too, wish to uncover another history, provide another turning, and bring what Flatley calls "revolutionary counter-moods" into being. I long for those moments when the possibility of radical queer political thought and action becomes not only obvious in our imaginations, but most desirable.

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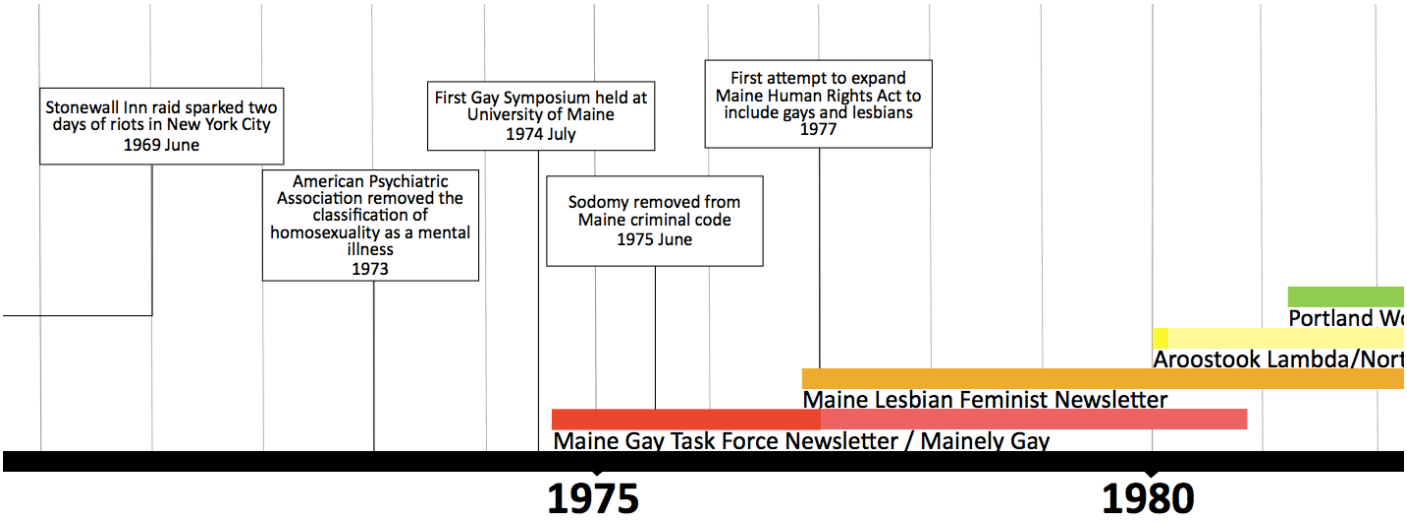
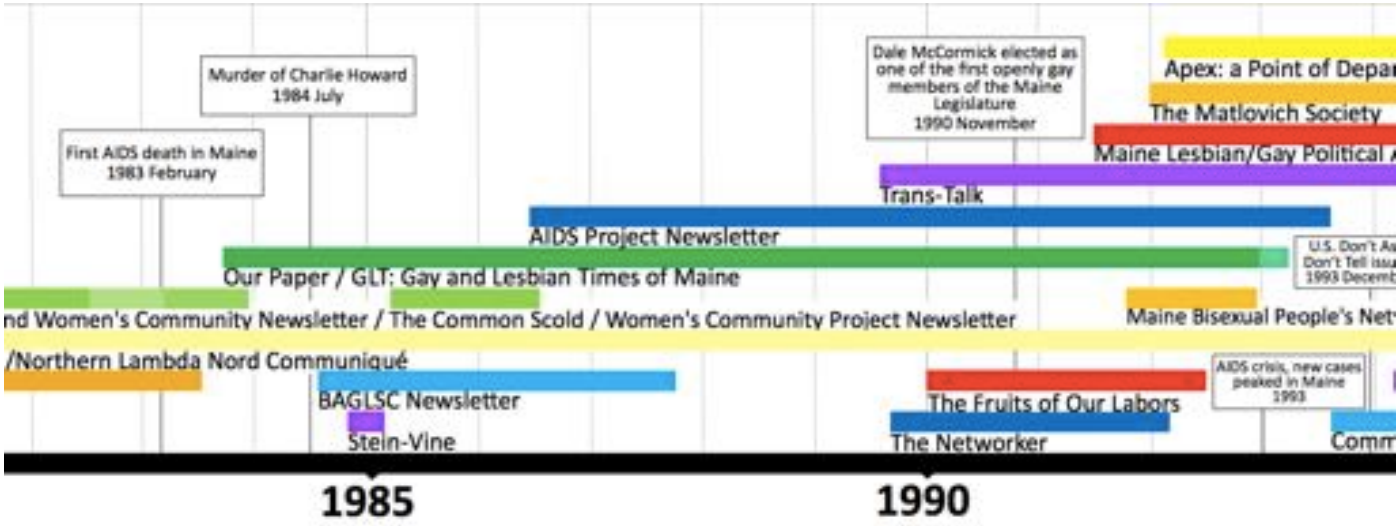
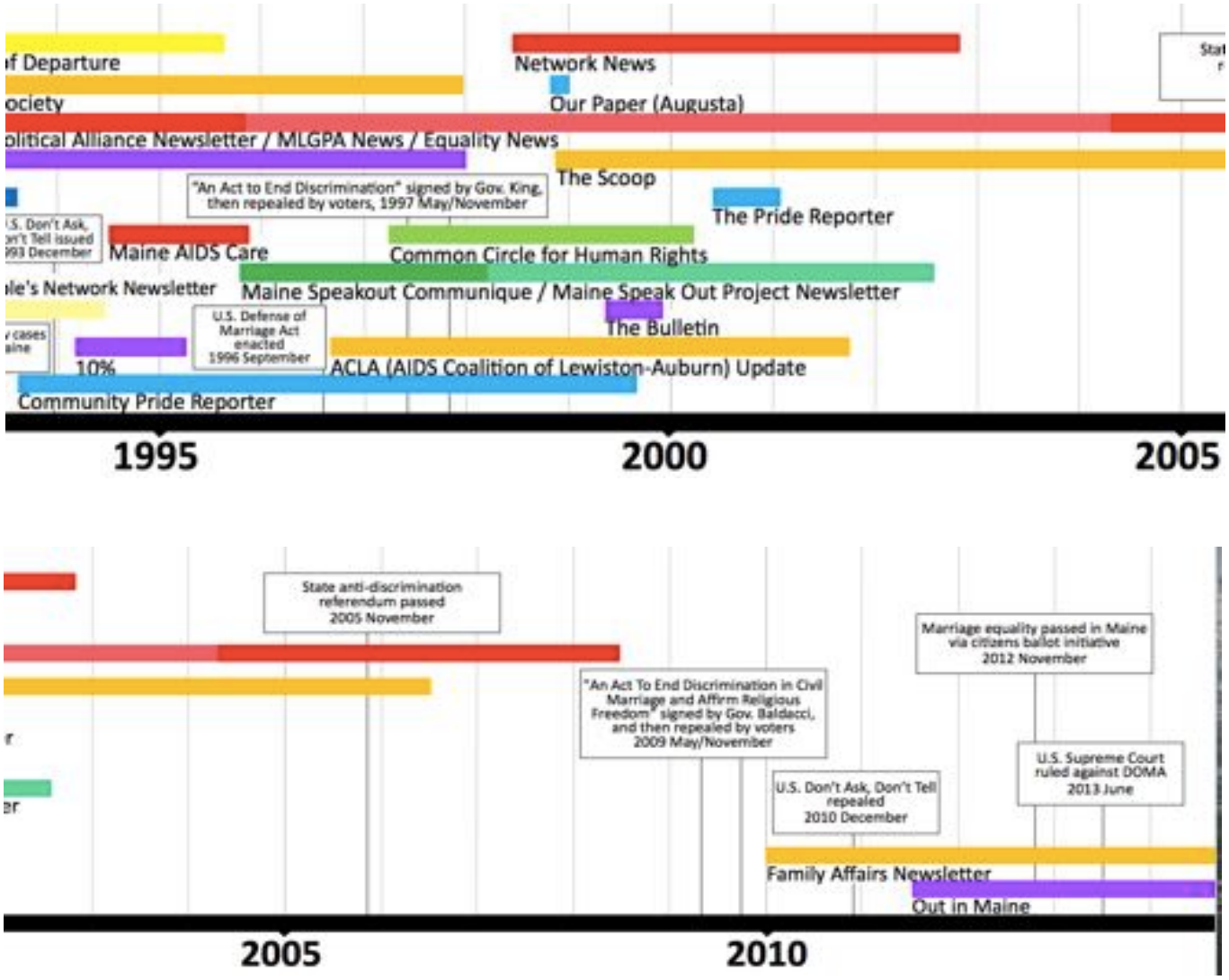
Appendices

Maine Gay and Lesbian Newspaper Timeline Graphic







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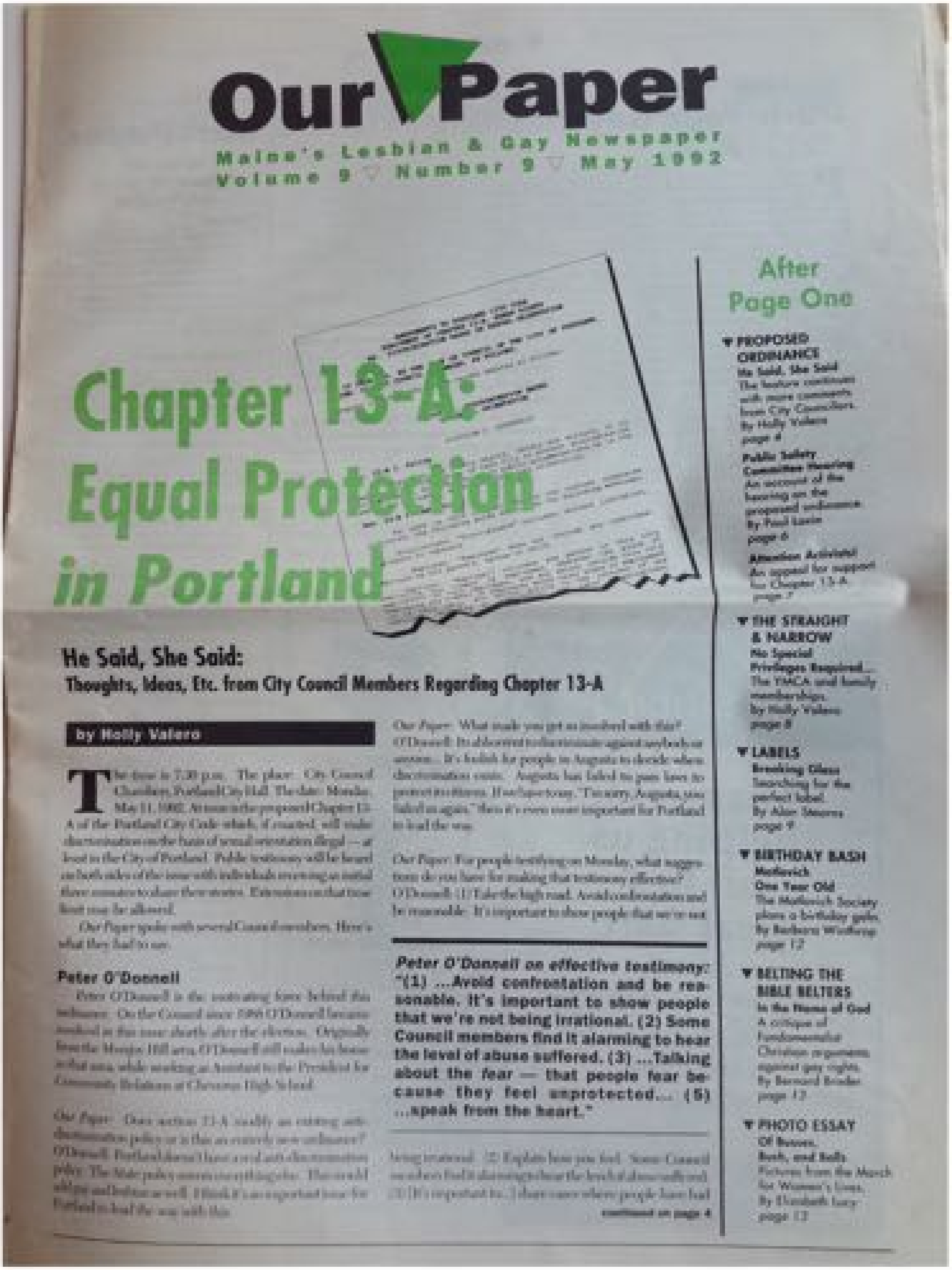
Selected Covers from Maine Gay and Lesbian Newspapers

Our Paper



Our Paper

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Chapter 13-A: Equal Protection in Portland

He Said, She Said:

Thoughts, Ideas, Etc. from City Council Members Regarding Chapter 13-A

by Holly Valero

The time is 7:30 p.m. The place: City Council Chambers, Portland City Hall. The date: Monday, May 11, 1992. At issue is the proposed Chapter 13-A of the Portland City Code which, if enacted, will make discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation illegal — at least in the City of Portland. Public testimony will be heard on both sides of the issue with individuals receiving an initial three minutes to share their stories. Extensions on that time limit may be allowed.

Our Paper spoke with several Council members. Here's what they had to say.

Peter O'Donnell

[illegible]

Peter O'Donnell on effective testimony: "(1) ...Avoid confrontation and be reasonable. It's important to show people that we're not being irrational. (2) Some Council members find it alarming to hear the level of abuse suffered. (3) ...Talking about the *fear* — that people fear because they feel unprotected... (5) ...speak from the heart."

Our Paper: What made you get so involved with this?

[illegible]

Our Paper: For people testifying on Monday, what suggestions do you have for making that testimony effective?

O'Donnell: (1) Take the high road. Avoid confrontation and be reasonable. It's important to show people that we're not being irrational. (2) Explain how you feel. Some Council members find it alarming to hear the level of abuse suffered. (3) It's important to... [illegible]

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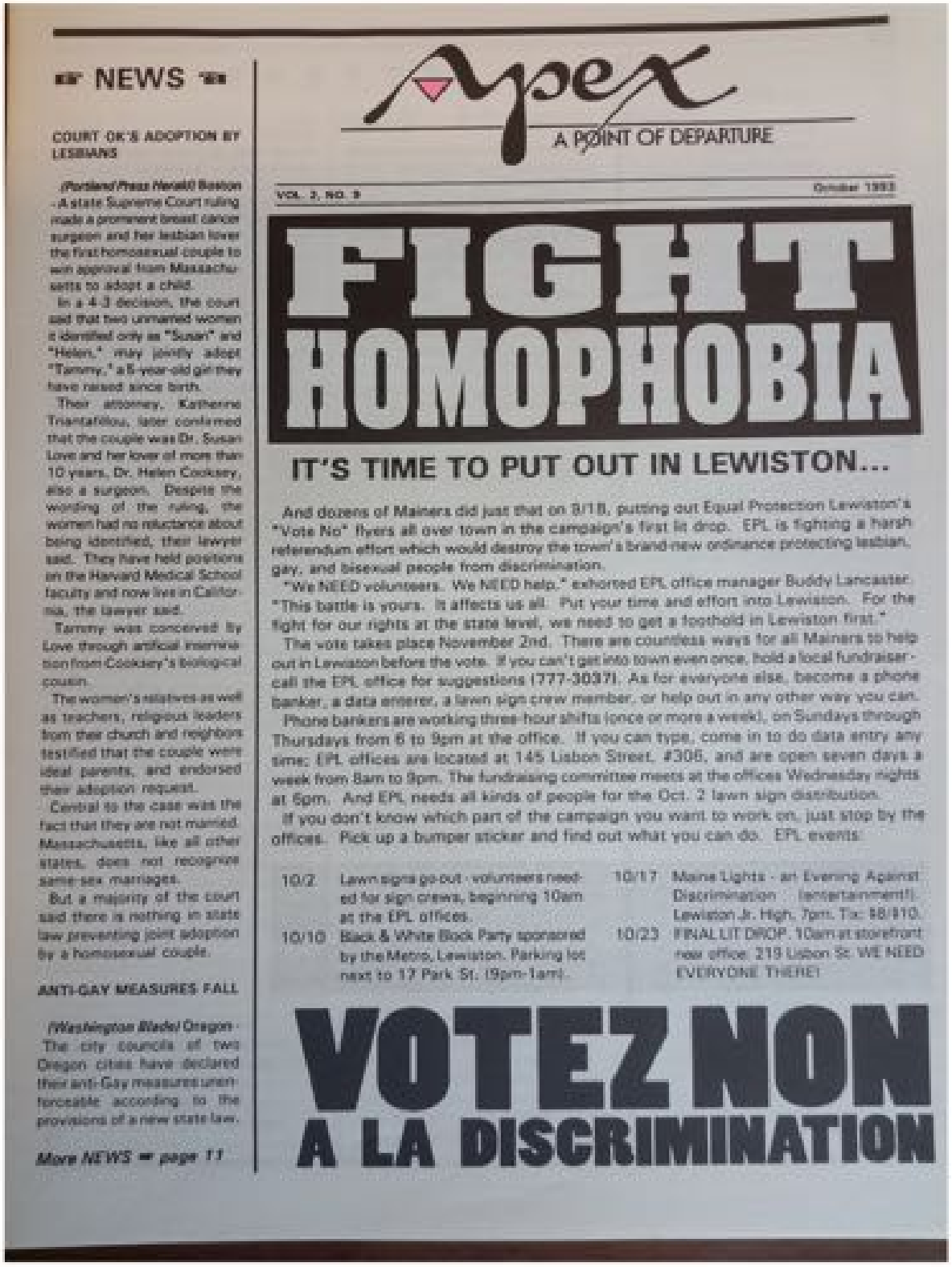
After Page One

Apex



NEWS

COURT OK'S ADOPTION BY LESBIANS

(Portland Press Herald) Boston - A state Supreme Court ruling made a prominent breast cancer surgeon and her lesbian lover the first homosexual couple to win approval from Massachusetts to adopt a child.

In a 4-3 decision, the court said that two unnamed women it identified only as "Susan" and "Helen," may jointly adopt "Tammy," a 5-year-old girl they have raised since birth.

Their attorney, Katherine Triantafillou, later confirmed that the couple was Dr. Susan Love and her lover of more than 10 years, Dr. Helen Cooksey, also a surgeon. Despite the wording of the ruling, the women had no reluctance about being identified, their lawyer said. They have held positions on the Harvard Medical School faculty and now live in California, the lawyer said.

Tammy was conceived by Love through artifical insemination from Cooksey's biological cousin.

The women's relatives as well as teachers, religious leaders from their church and neighbors testified that the couple were ideal parents, and endorsed their adoption request.

Central to the case was the fact that they are not married. Massachusetts, like all other states, does not recognize same-sex marriages.

But a majority of the court said there is nothing in state law preventing joint adoption by a homosexual couple.

ANTI-GAY MEASURES FALL

(Washington Blade) Oregon - The city councils of two Oregon cities have declared their anti-Gay measures unenforceable according to the provisions of a new state law.

More NEWS = page 11

Apex

A POINT OF DEPARTURE

VOL. 2, NO. 9 October 1993

FIGHT HOMOPHOBIA

IT'S TIME TO PUT OUT IN LEWISTON...

And dozens of Mainers did just that on 9/18, putting out Equal Protection Lewiston's "Vote No" flyers all over town in the campaign's first lit drop. EPL is fighting a harsh referendum effort which would destroy the town's brand-new ordinance protecting lesbian, gay, and bisexual people from discrimination.

"We NEED volunteers. We NEED help," exhorted EPL office manager Buddy Lancaster. "This battle is yours. It affects us all. Put your time and effort into Lewiston. For the fight for our rights at the state level, we need to get a foothold in Lewiston first."

The vote takes place November 2nd. There are countless ways for all Mainers to help out in Lewiston before the vote. If you can't get into town even once, hold a local fundraiser - call the EPL office for suggestions (777-3037). As for everyone else, become a phone banker, a data enterer, a lawn sign crew member, or help out in any other way you can.

Phone bankers are working three-hour shifts (once or more a week), on Sundays through Thursdays from 6 to 9pm at the office. If you can type, come in to do data entry any time; EPL offices are located at 145 Lisbon Street, #306, and are open seven days a week from 8am to 9pm. The fundraising committee meets at the offices Wednesday nights at 6pm. And EPL needs all kinds of people for the Oct. 2 lawn sign distribution.

If you don't know which part of the campaign you want to work on, just stop by the offices. Pick up a bumper sticker and find out what you can do. EPL events:

10/2 Lawn signs go-out - volunteers needed for sign crews, beginning 10am at the EPL offices.

10/10 Black & White Block Party sponsored by the Metro, Lewiston. Parking lot next to 17 Park St. (9pm-1am).

10/17 Maine Lights - an Evening Against Discrimination (entertainment!). Lewiston Jr. High, 7pm. Tix: $8/$10.

10/23 FINAL LIT DROP. 10am at storefront new office: 219 Lisbon St. WE NEED EVERYONE THERE!

VOTEZ NON A LA DISCRIMINATION

Community Pride Reporter

CPR — September, 1994 Page

FREE

Community Pride Reporter

The newspaper for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community of Maine.

VOL. 2, Number 3 SEPTEMBER, 1994

Q: "So, you're saying gay people don't qualify for civil rights?" Cosby -- "Absolutely ! They don't deserve protection.."

See Cosby, page 13

HUD awards AIDS grant

Members of the five organizations that make up HAVEN, the collaborative that received $669,000 from HUD are, from left to right, Maureen Connolly, Linda Jipson, Mary Mosair, Sandy Titus, Cynthia Lambert, Frannie Peabody, Joe Brannigan, Bill Toth (seated), Charlie Wysocki, Rich Bouchard, Deborah Shields and Chris Bolton.

See HUD, page 4.

EPM/Bangor responds to Cosby and CMF

See Bangor, page 22

Jim Martin, co-chair of EPM/Bangor, spoke at a Bangor City Hall press conference, August 15, denouncing CMF's referendum.

10%

10%

Maine's monthly newspaper for lesbians & gay men

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 2
MARCH 1995

Supreme Court to hear Colorado appeal

by Rebecca Foster
Editor

WASHINGTON -- The Supreme Court said Feb. 21 that it will hear Colorado's appeal of a ruling that declared the state's controversial anti-gay rights amendment to be unconstitutional.

The justices agreed to review a Colorado Supreme Court ruling last year that the measure denies gays equal protection under the law. The ruling rejected the argument that the amendment was a valid exercise of state power.

The high court action to hear the case could have far-reaching implications for gay rights battles around the country. The justices will hear arguments in the case in the term starting in October, with a decision likely in 1996.

If the Supreme Court upholds Colorado's ruling, it could nullify several voter-initiated anti-gay referendum efforts in Maine.

The amendment, blocked by the courts from taking effect, would have established gay rights laws in Bowdoin and Augusta that banned discrimination in jobs and housing based on sexual orientation.

The AIDS Project plans "Spring for Life" auction

PORTLAND - The AIDS Project (TAP) marked its 10th anniversary with a fundraising reception Saturday, January 21. The reception was hosted by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Maine and kicked off a year-long commemoration of TAP's work and history.

Several speakers presented their testimonies at TAP's Indoor Archbishop current TAP executive director Deborah Shields, who thanked the more than 400 day-to-day volunteers that provide services to people with AIDS/HIV. Shields also announced a special performance from the Maine State Legislature commemorating TAP's 10 years of service from House Representative Mark Adams. Entertainment was provided by the Maine Gay Men's Chorus.

This month, the AIDS Project holds

continued on page 8

CMF sends fundraising letter; targets AG, Diversity Commission

by Terri Jones
Editor

PORTLAND- Letters signed by Carolyn Conley and Lawrence Lockman soliciting funds for Concerned Maine Families were mailed during the early part of February. As reported, the letters continue familiar CMF claims including the "affluence of the gay community", and that CMF is defending the integrity of the referendum process and civil rights legislation.

A particular target of the letters is the Report of the Governor's Commission to Promote the Understanding of Diversity in Maine released in December 1994. CMF's Vice Chairman, Lawrence Lockman accuses the Commission of proposing a "gay militant department," "thought Police" brigade empowered to investigate and harass Maine people for any expression of alleged "homophobia."

The letter calls the report a "master plan for a sweeping new program of gay affirmative action laws, including taxpayer subsidies to homosexual owned businesses." That would create "set-asides of Community Development Block Grants," for any business claiming to be gay-owned.

The letter also repeats earlier CMF claims that the Attorney General's Office has inflated the numbers of hate and bias crimes against gays and lesbians. "You may have heard news reports about the prevalence of 'hate crimes' in Maine. These stories are based on bogus statistics cooked up by the state Attorney General's Office. At taxpayer expense, attorneys working out of the AG's office have encouraged [women's] to file anonymous complaints about non-criminal acts such as name-calling - and even published letters to the editor, if a letter is deemed to be "homophobic," the letter states. These so-called "hate crimes" complaints are then relied on in only reports of alleged hate crimes. The result is grossly exaggerated statistics implying that Maine is a hotbed of anti-gay violence and bigotry.

Where contained by MPC Lewiston Maine and Diversity Commission

continued on page 4

AN OPEN LETTER FROM CMF'S VICE CHAIRMAN, LAWRENCE E. LOCKMAN

Dear Friend of CMF,

I want to take a moment to let you know how vitally important CMF's ballot initiative is to Many of the Maine we all know and love.

You may have heard news reports about the prevalence of "hate crimes" in Maine. These stories are based on bogus statistics cooked up by the state Attorney General's Office. At taxpayer expense, attorneys working out of the AG's office have encouraged homosexuals to file anonymous complaints about non-criminal acts such as name-calling - even publishing letters to the editor, if a letter is deemed to be "homophobic," the letter states. These so-called "hate crimes" complaints are then relied on in only reports of alleged hate crimes. The result is grossly exaggerated statistics implying that Maine is a hotbed of anti-gay violence and bigotry.

These inaccurate and misleading statistics are the basis for gay militant claims to "victim" status in Maine. Now they want to force their ideology of gay liberation on every family, school, business, and church in our state.

Can you imagine having a state-funded, gay militant government "Thought Police" brigade empowered to investigate and harass Maine people for any expression of alleged "homophobia"? Gay extremists and their allies in state government have already published a detailed blueprint for enabling any written or spoken opposition to their agenda.

Their master plan calls for a sweeping new program of gay affirmative action, including taxpayer subsidies to homosexual owned businesses.

These shocking radical proposals are outlined in the report of the Commission to Promote the Understanding of Diversity in Maine. If enacted by the Legislature, the Diversity Commission's recommendations would grant protected minority status based entirely on how people say they have sex. Any business claiming to be gay-owned or managed would be eligible to apply for the proposed minority "set-asides" of Community Development Block Grants.

The Diversity Commission proposals are nothing less than a colossal scam to help one of America's richest and politically powerful special interests steal from Maine's hard-pressed taxpayers.

CMF has taken the lead in exposing the fraud and duplicity of the gay rights movement, including the outrageous monies and powers grab outlined in the Diversity Commission report. Frankly, our Maine initiative is the last best hope for blocking legislative enactment of special status and affirmative action based on sexual orientation. We can close the door on the selfish demands of this selfish special interest group. But we can't do it without your help.

Your generous contribution will enable CMF to reach thousands of Maine voters with our expose of the Big Lie of gay extremism. Please accept my personal thanks for your support.

Sincerely,

[signature] Lawr. Lockman

P.S. So much depends on Maine! Gay militant activists have publicly stated that CMF's campaign is the most formidable challenge they've ever faced - one that could undo 8[illegible] years of gay activist gains - one that could set the terms of debate nationally. Please be as generous as you can. So much depends on us!

Copies of the Concerned Maine Families' fund raising letter began appearing in Maine approximately February 9 asking for donations to help stop the "selfish demands" of "one of America's richest and politically powerful special interests."

Full text of Dialogue in James Wentzy's *By Any Means Necessary*
Written by Kiki Mason

I am someone with AIDS and I want to live by any means necessary.

I am not dying: I am being murdered. Just as surely as if my body was being tossed into a gas chamber, I am being sold down the river by people within this community who claim to be helping people with AIDS. Hang your heads in shame while I point my finger at you.

"Activists" now negotiate with drug companies just as the Jewish councils in the Warsaw ghettos of World War II negotiated with the Nazis. 'Give us a few lives today,' they insist, 'and we'll trade you even more tomorrow.' AIDS careerists--both HIV-positive and HIV-negative--have exchanged their anger for an invitation to the White House. It is their megalomania and the illusion of power that buys the silence of these so-called community leaders. And where does that leave the rest of us? We're left fighting for our lives while a group of well-educated, affluent white 'homo-sexuals' sit on community boards and advisory councils while we're left to die on the streets.

Our service organizations are a joke. Gay Men's Health Crisis: With all their money and clout, all you get is a free lunch, group therapy and free counseling via my favorite question, 'Have you made out your will yet?' AmFAR? It hasn't funded clinical trials in two years, and when it did, the studies were pathetic. AmFAIL is more like it. Or, how about the AIDS Inaction Council?

Jewish leaders established organizations to run their ghettos and we do the same in a desperate attempt to gain some control over a living nightmare. Everyone is selling you out. We refuse to plead with the U.S. government or negotiate with the entire medical-industrial complex for your lives. We have to get what we need by any means necessary.

A wealthy, well-connected hetero friend recently said to me, "I'm amazed that you guys haven't turned to terrorism—everybody's afraid of you anyway. Why not use that fear to save yourselves?" Make no mistake. This is what we're left with. If you choose to negotiate your life away with scum bags, fine. But I'm going out fighting. This is my message to everyone with AIDS: If you think the end is near, take someone with you. Hold the president of a drug company hostage. Splatter your blood across the desk of a politician. Trash an AIDS researcher's home. When some silly-assed, blow-dried, brain-dead TV reporter asks you a stupid question about living with AIDS, spit in his face. Call the police and tell them you've put LSD in the water supply in retaliation for our genocide. Do it so they'll know what it's like to have your life ripped apart.

Unfortunately, we are a 'gentle, loving people.' Many of us lack the strength and conviction required for these brave actions. A friend of mine said the other day that as long as we were threatening a drug company, get him into its compassionate-use drug trial: 'I'm so tired of what we have to do to stay alive.' Me, too, baby. Me, too. But do it we must.

To all you supportive HIV-negatives: I call on you to make this sacrifice as well. This is not just tough talk. I truly believe that the current state of AIDS will not change unless radical steps are taken immediately. If you don't believe me, then take a good, hard look at the war on cancer.

Creating terror is not just screaming, making an artistic statement or getting in touch with your anger. True anger is not a flame. True anger is ice. True anger is calm and sure. It does not require legions of people to succeed. It requires determination as strong as steel. An act of terror can be large or small, innately personal or massively public. Let's use our queerest gift, creativity, to Do the Right Thing. I know some of you are shaking your heads as you read this. Many of you will no doubt shrug it off. Go ahead. But remember, I want to live. By any means necessary.