

A RADICAL HISTORY  
& LEGACY

1969

STONEM

WENT



**This Pride Month Devotional: Radical History & Legacy** is meant to be a resource for you to think through different topics and remember the people and efforts in radical LGBTQ+ history. This devotional covers many difficult topics, so take the time you need. Each topic or person has an excerpt from an article with questions to help you think through the information. Please use this devotional to write, draw, or think through any or all of the questions. Ask questions that come up for you that we didn't write down. This is not all encompassing, so view this as a jumping off point into learning about radical LGBTQ+ history and legacy. We would also love to see what you created in response to the questions or information that you think is important for others to know! If you want to share, tag @jcpride2020. We hope everyone comes away having more carefully examined their own lives, values, and worldview and how we fit into the legacy created by the people before us.

# TERMS & DEFINITIONS

## **ABOLITION**

the practice or ideology of abolishing a system, practice, or institution (like police, prisons, ICE, etc.)

## **AIDS EPIDEMIC**

a public health crisis where many people were getting HIV/AIDS with little care for people affected, mostly because it heavily effected LGBTQ+ and Black people

## **ANTI-CAPITALISM**

political ideology and movement that wants to replace capitalism with another economic system that brings liberation and justice

## **ANTI-QUEER/ANTI-LGBTQ**

against or opposed to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people and liberation

## **ASSIMILATION**

the process of minority and oppressed groups losing their culture, values, or practices and taking on the culture of the dominant group; a form of genocide

## **BLACK PANTHER PARTY**

a Black revolutionary socialist political organization, originally the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense

## **CAPITALISM**

an economic and political system in which everything is controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the people who do the labor to make the profit

## **COLONIALISM**

the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

## **DECOLONIZATION**

the undoing of colonialism where Indigenous people have self-determination over their land and people

## **GENDER BINARY**

the Western classification of gender into two distinct, opposite forms of man and woman

## **GLOBAL SOUTH/GLOBAL NORTH**

terms for land and people that suffered colonialism and global capitalism and the countries that profited from it

## **IDENTITY POLITICS**

a politic of centering the concerns and agendas of oppressed people based on their identities, this term was coined by the Combahee River Collective

## **LEFTIST/RADICAL**

a person who believes that there are unjustified inequalities (because of racial capitalism) that need to be abolished, use terms like communist, anarchist, etc.

## **LIBERAL**

a person who believes in liberalism, a political and economic ideology that values capitalism and individualism

## **LIBERATION**

the act of setting someone free from imprisonment, slavery, or oppression

## **MISOGYNY**

prejudice against women, with particular forms like transmisogyny (prejudice against transgender women), misogynoir (prejudice against Black women)



## **PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX**

a term used to describe the overlapping interests of government and industry that use surveillance, policing and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social and political problems

## **QUEER**

a person whose sexual or gender identity does not correspond to established ideas of sexuality and gender

## **RACIAL CAPITALISM**

an economic and political system that make profit from creating a race system and using this to exploit people based on these racial identities

## **STONEWALL**

series of riots by members of the LGBTQ+ community against a police raid that began on the morning of June 28, 1969, at the Stonewall Inn in New York City

## **TRANS(GENDER)**

a person whose gender does not correspond with their gender assigned at birth; includes non-binary people, people whose genders are not strictly man or woman

## **TRANSPHOBIA**

prejudice against trans people

## **TWO-SPIRIT**

a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is term only for Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity

## **WHITE SUPREMACY**

a system that believes that white people are superior to those of all other races, especially the Black race, and should therefore dominate society (see racial capitalism)

# COLONIZATION AND THE GENDER BINARY

[https://medium.com/@Michael\\_Paramoo/transphobia-is-a-white-supremacist-legacy-of-colonialism-e50f57240650](https://medium.com/@Michael_Paramoo/transphobia-is-a-white-supremacist-legacy-of-colonialism-e50f57240650)

"The normalization of the gender binary in our current age has resulted in widespread disdain and violence being directed at trans people for merely existing. Susan Stryker states in her book *Transgender History* (2008) that "because most people have great difficulty recognizing the humanity of another person if they cannot recognize that person's gender, the gender-changing person can evoke in others a primordial fear of monstrosity, or loss of humanness." To be trans is perceived as a detachment from humanness; a departure from some flawed conception of "human nature"; although it really is only a disengagement from the binary position forcefully assigned and policed onto our bodies by a Western society which asserts that our bodies are our destinies." "In *Becoming Two-Spirit: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country* (2006), Brian Gilley emphasizes how both academic scholarship and colonial-era sources have documented gender diversity within Native American societies as a "fundamental institution among most tribal peoples," adding that their "ideas about gender did not employ the gender-binary, bodily-sex-equals-gender view commonly found in European society"... A research project by PBS documenting gender-diverse cultures throughout the world, stated that "on nearly every continent, and for all of recorded history, thriving cultures have recognized, revered, and integrated more than two genders." Yet, gender and sexual diversity remain under constant attack today as a legacy of Western colonial agendas..."

"European colonizers intentionally sought to eradicate, what academic and researcher Scott Morgensen refers to

in *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (2011) as “Indigenous possibilities” that challenged the boundaries of white European masculinity. The earliest colonizers in the Americas looked to the existing sexual and gender variance of Indigenous people as a means of marking them as racially inferior and uncivilized: a justification for a forever unjustified genocidal conquest. Targeting Indigenous gender and sexual variance was done to “teach both colonial and Indigenous subjects the relational terms of colonial heteropatriarchy.” European colonizers marked Indigenous gender and sexual variance as inferior for the purposes of asserting their white cisgender heterosexual manhood as the pinnacle of human existence. Those who were marked as living outside the limited Western understandings of gender and sexuality violently imposed upon Indigenous cultures ‘became targets of violent efforts to reconfigure Indigenous society in colonial and masculinist terms.’”

## QUESTIONS:

**What was the purpose for Western society (i.e. Europe and its colonizers) to have and enforce a gender binary?**



How do you see yourself or others uphold the gender binary? How can we break out of it?

Who is oppressed through the gender binary? Who is most often targeted for breaking the gender binary?

How does the gender binary and colonialism work with racism, especially anti-Blackness?



# LGBTQ+ RADICALISM

<https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2019/may/lgbtq-radicalism-as-a-framework-beyond-rights/>

"LGBTQ radicalism represented one strand—or better, one large grouping of strands—in a web of sexual politics. Gay, lesbian, trans, and bisexual radicals of the late 1960s and early 1970s placed themselves on the left. They embraced anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and internationalism; favored tactics of street protest and direct action; and criticized liberal strategies of legal rights and electoral change, calling them inadequate or assimilationist. These stances put radicals in tension with the homophile movement, meaning gay and lesbian organizing as it had developed from the late 1940s to 1960s. While some homophile groups held leftist roots, the movement was predominately liberal in orientation. [2]LGBTQ radicals split from homophiles on issues including the Vietnam War, Black Power, feminism, self-expression, and protest tactics. For example, in March 1969, gay radicals in San Francisco asked the city's homophile activists to abandon the goal of gay inclusion in the military and instead to oppose the Vietnam War draft.[3]When the homophiles refused, the radicals struck out on their own and formed the local Gay Liberation Front. This organization's name purposely echoed the terms of national liberation struggles in Algeria and Vietnam.LGBTQ radicalism overlapped with organizing by people of color, though certainly not all LGBTQ people of color identified as radicals, and white radicals practiced uneven antiracism.[4]Likewise, many gay and lesbian radicals resisted bisexual and trans self-assertion in practice, even as they celebrated gender transgression and sexual fluidity in theory.[5]The terms of recognition were limited by broader social realities,

especially for trans people. Activism could risk making a carefully guarded trans identity public, while people in sex work or street economies often found they were seen as the wrong kind of subjects for organizing. The contemporary term LGBTQ helps to open a broader narrative and to name change over time. Still, the dominant categories of LGBTQ radicalism remained gay and lesbian in the late 1960s through 1980s, with bisexual and transgender (or variations) incorporated slowly, principally from the 1990s on. Starting in the late 1980s, the category-crossing framework of queer politics offered a critique of assimilation and of neat boundaries between identities... Popular narratives of LGBTQ history tend to describe the late 1960s as a short-lived era of political theater, soon eclipsed by more coherent legal, legislative, and electoral advocacy for gay and lesbian rights. But it is more accurate to describe the gay and lesbian rights framework as growing alongside radical approaches. By the mid-1970s, radicals were building a lasting gay and lesbian left. Through publications, protests, conferences, and local campaigns, they organized in defense of the radical underground, in support of gay and lesbian prisoners, against racism in gay bars, and on many other concerns. They were guided variously by socialist-feminist, Marxist-Leninist, women of color feminist, and anarchist approaches. Across these differences, they shared a view that sexual and gender freedoms were inseparable from broader revolution, and that gay and lesbian people had something to teach the wider left."

## QUESTIONS:

What does this piece mean by **homophile**? What is the difference between a **homophile** and an **LGBTQ+** radical?

Why did **LGBTQ+** radicals view electoral work (i.e. passing gay marriage, military inclusion, etc.) as **assimilation**?

WHY DID **LGBTQ+** RADICALS VIEW ELECTORAL WORK (I.E. PASSING GAY MARRIAGE, MILITARY INCLUSION, ETC.) AS **ASSIMILATION**?

IMAGINE: IF WE DON'T WANT TO FIT INTO THIS WORLD, WHAT KIND OF WORLD ARE WE TRYING TO **CREATE**?

HOW DO WE **NOW** WORK TO **BUILD SOLIDARITY** IN OUR **COMMUNITY**? BETWEEN **WHITE LGBTQ+** PEOPLE AND **BIPOC LGBTQ+** PEOPLE? BETWEEN **CIS GAYS** AND **TRANS FOLKS**?



# BAYARD RUSTIN

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/rustin-bayard-1910-1987/>

“Bayard Rustin was one of the most important, and yet least known, Civil Rights advocates in the twentieth century... Quakerism, and NAACP leaders W.E.B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, who were frequent visitors, proved influential in Rustin’s life... In Harlem, he enrolled at the City College of New York, began singing in local clubs with black folksingers including John White and Huddie Ledbetter, became active in the efforts to free the Scottsboro Boys, and joined the Young Communist League, motivated by their advocacy of racial equality. By 1941, Rustin quit the Communist Party and began working with union organizer A. Philip Randolph and A.J. Muste, leader of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). Together they organized the March on Washington Movement which protested segregation in the military and African Americans exclusion from employment in defense industries. Their protests resulted in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issuing Executive Order 8802 creating the Fair Employment Practices Committee. Rustin along with FOR members George Houser, Bernice Fisher, and James L. Farmer helped create the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) which pioneered the civil rights strategy of non-violent direct action. In 1944, he traveled to California to help protect the property of Japanese Americans interned during the war. In 1947, he and Houser organized the Journey of Reconciliation, the first Freedom Ride testing the Supreme Court decision outlawing racial discrimination in interstate travel. After organizing FOR’s Free India Committee, he traveled to India to study nonviolence; and to Africa meeting with leaders of the Ghanaian and Nigerian independence

movements. As a pacifist, Rustin was arrested for violating the Selective Service Act and was imprisoned at Lewisberg Federal Penitentiary from 1944 to 1946. Throughout his civil rights career he was arrested twenty-three times, including a 1953 charge for vagrancy and lewd conduct in Pasadena, California. Rustin was openly gay and lived with partner, Walter Naegle, at a time when homosexuality was criminalized throughout the U.S. He was subsequently fired by the FOR, but became executive secretary of the War Resisters League. He also served as a member of the AFSC task force that wrote one of the most widely influential pacifist essays in U.S. history, "Speak Truth to Power: A Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence," in 1955. In 1956, Rustin went to Montgomery, Alabama and advised Martin Luther King, Jr. on nonviolent strategies of resistance during the Montgomery Bus Boycott. King and Rustin helped organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). However, in 1960 New York Congressman, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. forced him to resign from SCLC due to concerns shared by many black leaders about Rustin's homosexuality and communist past. Due to the combination of the homophobia of these leaders and their fear he might compromise the movement, Rustin would not receive public recognition for his role in the movement. Nevertheless, Rustin continued to work in the Civil Rights Movement, organizing the seminal 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom with A. Philip Randolph."

## QUESTIONS:

What stood out to you from Rustin's life?

Bayard Rustin is an amazing person that lived into the idea of solidarity. Many of the groups that Rustin worked with eventually rejected him because of his identities and experiences of being Black, gay, and communist, yet he continued his work. How do we show solidarity, even with people that may not fully extend that same solidarity to us?

RUSTIN DID A WIDE RANGE OF WORK FOR ALL OF HIS LIFE, WHAT STRATEGIES, EVENTS, OR IDEAS MADE YOUR HEART SWELL UP? WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THAT?



# ANTI-WAR ORGANIZING

<https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2019/may/lgbt-q-radicalism-as-a-framework-beyond-rights/>

“Many who embraced liberal frameworks of gay, lesbian, or LGBT rights saw their radical colleagues as pursuing left agendas at the expense of gay and lesbian concerns.

But radicals argued that the politics of gender and sexuality could not be addressed without transforming structures of class, race, and nation. Thus, in the split over the draft, gay liberationists saw the Vietnam War as part of a system that oppressed them as gay people.

They defined draft resistance as a means of subverting the masculine norms that excused antigay violence.

Many gay radicals encountered intense homophobia in the student left but found a welcome in antiwar veterans' and GI groups. By 1971, several leaders of Vietnam Veterans Against the War came out as gay, antiwar GI newspapers covered gay politics with interest, and gay radicals organized open contingents in antiwar marches”

## QUESTIONS:

**Why do you think there was such intense homophobia in student organizing but not so much in antiwar veterans groups? Is this still true?**

There are many LGBTQ+ people in the military or who consider going into the military. How do we keep our people out of the military/actively rejecting imperialism and colonialism?

LGBTQ+ AND PEOPLE LIVING OUTSIDE OF WESTERN GENDER AND SEXUAL NORMS ARE LIVING ALL ACROSS THE GLOBE, BUT MANY SUFFER DIRECT ATTACKS FROM THE US MILITARY. WHAT IS NEEDED FROM PEOPLE IN THE US TO SUPPORT YOU, YOUR LAND, YOUR PEOPLE?

WHAT DOES ANTI-WAR ORGANIZING LOOK LIKE WHERE YOU ARE?

WHAT CAN ANTIWAR ORGANIZING LOOK LIKE NOW?  
WHAT CAN IT LOOK LIKE FOR THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY?

# LESLIE FEINBERG, **STONE BUTCH BLUES**

<https://www.lesliefeinberg.net>

“Context is everything in politics, and Stone Butch Blues is a highly political polemic, rooted in its era, and written by a white communist grass-roots organizer. I’m so ill, however, that at the time of publication I am only able to write these three brief notes.

## ON LANGUAGE

The use of the word “transgender” has changed over the two decades since I wrote Stone Butch Blues. Since that time, the term “gender” has increasingly been used to mean the sexes, rather than gender expressions. This novel argues otherwise. I have been isolated by illness from discussions about language for more than half a decade. So I can only note that, like planes, trains and automobiles, the same technological vehicles of hormones and surgeries take people on different journeys in their lives—depending on whether their oppression/s is/are based on sex/es, self/gender expressions, sexualities, nationalities, immigration status, health and/or dis/abilities, and/or economic exploitation of their labor. I agree with CeCe McDonald, who wrote from a prison cell: “We need for our mission to promote racial, social, and economic justice for trans youth, with freedom to self-define gender identity and expression.” <http://supportcece.wordpress.com/>

## ON PRONOUNS

I respect each person’s pronoun as an important part of their personhood. My own pronoun usage has had to be complex because of overlapping oppressions. But in recent years, I have become as concerned with the pronoun we as I am with the pronouns she, he and ze. I am including links to two articles I wrote after Stone Butch Blues, which are about the pronoun we: “Many



Histories Converged at Stonewall: Lavender & Red 71”

<http://www.workers.org/2006/us/lavender-red-71/>

“Honoring LaTeisha Green”

<http://www.transgenderwarrior.org/ltgreen>

ON REVISION

Everything that exists is subject to change and development. This 20th Anniversary Edition of *Stone Butch Blues* is as close to the original as possible. But the technologies that produced the first edition were too old to use in recovering the original printed text. The novel had to be turned into a new digital manuscript. It had to be retyped from the print edition, proofread numerous times and copy-edited. I wrote the novel on a borrowed laptop, I wrote it at night after work, I was told to cut it by a third just before it went into production, and I wasn't as trained as I am now at copyediting. For twenty years, typos, missing copy and other small mistakes have marred the novel and have made me stop and say out loud when I was reading from the book in public:

“That was a mistake!” This new edition has allowed me to fix those errors. As my eyesight destabilized and I became so sick I couldn't re-read the novel, Minnie Bruce and proof-reader Becca Shaw Glaser went through the book, found questions and brought those to me. I made all decisions about errors that were found in the original. I have always approached editing and copy-editing and revision—my own work and that of others—with great respect for the original text. I brought that same ethic to this new edition of *Stone Butch Blues*. If it wasn't broken, I didn't fix it. I'm not of the school of filmmaker George Lucas who went back to *Star Wars* and changed who shot who first. The poet/writer who most meaningfully sums up for me the guiding ethics of revision is Audre Lorde, who said a revision should make the work “more of what it needs to be in order to do the emotional work it was intended to do.”

# QUESTIONS:

What language is important to you?

What do you think about when the author says "I have become as concerned with the pronoun we as I am with the pronouns she, he and ze"?

REVISION IS ABOUT CHANGE. THINKING ABOUT AUDRE LORDE'S QUOTE AT THE END OF THE PASSAGE, WHAT IN YOUR LIFE OR YOUR WORK NEEDS CHANGE OR REVISION? WHAT DOESN'T?

# SOUTHERNERS ON NEW GROUND (SONG)

<https://southernersonnewground.org/who-we-are/vision-mission-history/>

“Since 1993, SONG has been known, both regionally and nationally, for its organizing and training work across issues of race, class, gender, culture and sexuality with both LGBTQ people and allies. We work to build and maintain a Southern LGBTQ infrastructure for organizers strong enough to combat the Southern-specific strategy of the Right to divide and conquer Southern oppressed communities using the tools of rural isolation, Right-wing Christian infrastructure, racism, environmental degradation, and economic oppression. We formed to build understanding of the connections between issues and oppressions, do multi-racial organizing, and develop strong relationships between people who could and should be allies. During our life as an organization we have learned that movement building requires grassroots organizing, leadership development, deep analysis, listening/data collection, inter-generational relationships, the linking of social movements, and good long-term planning. Some of SONG’s major accomplishments include: crafting the first-ever Southern, LGBTQ-led, traveling Organizing School for small towns and rural places all over the South; training over 100 Southern and national racial and economic justice organizations to integrate work around homophobia and transphobia into their work; holding over 50 Southern sub-regional retreats for Southern Queer People of Color; continuing to be one of the only LGBTQ organizations in the US that truly listens, responds, and represents LGBTQ folk in small towns and rural places; and in 2008 holding the largest gathering specifically for Southern LGBTQ organizers in the last 10 years. Most recently, the coalition-strong campaign in GA



where SONG was central in winning an injunction against a key aspect of HB 87 (Arizona copy cat laws), wherein 'harboring of illegal aliens' was made punishable by law for individuals and organizations. Long-term goals of SONG are to build, drive, amplify, and support Southern inter-sectional movement work thru regional capacity building, leadership development, and organizing. All of our work centers the shared interest of women, LGBTQ people, people of color, and immigrants—in who we are as SONG's leadership and membership, and the analysis and work we create. We start at the place of lifting barriers and breaking the isolation that prevents people from participating fully in economic, social, and political life through creating an organizational home for LGBTQ Southern organizing and LGBTQ Southern people. This creates a space for Southern LGBTQ people to enter a political home: a space for understanding conditions and patterns, building analysis, and organizing. From this space, we grow the work of liberation."

## QUESTIONS:

What do you know about Southern radical LGBTQ+ movements, people, organizations, etc? If you don't know much, why could that be?

If you're from the South, draw the South that continuously work towards liberation

WHY IS SOUTHERN LGBTQ+ ORGANIZING SO IMPORTANT TO THE SOUTH AND EVERYWHERE ELSE?

**PLUG IN: SOUTHERNERS ON NEW GROUND (SONG) HOLDS MANY EVENTS FOR THEIR MEMBERS TO LEARN AND STRATEGIZE TOGETHER, LIKE THEIR ANNUAL BAYARD RUSTIN CONVENING FOR THEIR BLACK, BROWN, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR MEMBERS THAT WAS HELD IN NEW MARKET, TN LAST YEAR. THERE'S REGIONAL WORKING GROUPS AND CHAPTERS ACROSS THE SOUTH. IF YOU'RE A QUEER SOUTHERNER LOOKING FOR AN ORGANIZATION TO GROW WITH, PLUG IN HERE!**

# HISTORY OF IMPRISONING AND ABOLITION

[Podcast: Rustbelt Abolition Radio, Ep. 12 Settler](#)

[Colonial and the Struggle for Abolition](#)

This episode grapples with the relation between incarceration and settler colonialism. Kelly Lytle Hernández, abolitionist writer and professor of History and African American studies at the University of California-Los Angeles, discusses her latest book, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles*.

Hernández talks about 6 stories of policing and incarceration in Los Angeles: 1) Imprisonment of Native People 2) Imprisonment of Poor White Men (1880-1910) 3) Invention of Immigrant Detention (around the time of increasing prejudice against Chinese immigrants) 4) Imprisonment of Mexican People during the Mexican Revolution 5) Imprisonment of Mexican People based on new borders and lack of documentation 6) the Increased Imprisonment of Black People (1900-now).

“So, the United States is a settler state. Settler colonialism is a strain of colonization that is not organized around resource extraction or labor exploitation; resource extraction such as mining and labor exploitation such as chattel slavery absolutely do occur within settler colonial context and are critical to settler colonial societies, but the principal objective of settler colonial projects is land. On that land colonists envision building a new, permanent, reproductive, and racially exclusive settler society... In other words, eliminating Indigenous peoples, and disappearing racialized outsiders, as well as non-reproductive sexual deviants, is the basic thrust of social relations and institutional practices in settler societies such as the United States.”



Part of how the United States did this was policing and imprisoning people that did not fit into settler society and capitalism based on the U.S.'s ideas of race. This meant first imprisoning Indigenous people, then immigrants (Mexican people, Chinese people, and later Black people trying to migrate West), but it also included people that did not fit into racial capitalism for other reasons. "Beginning in the 1880's, the settlers criminalized and caged thousands upon thousands of poor white men, but especially the white men dislocated from land and work after the U.S. Civil War, amid the rise of corporate capitalism [a capitalist economy dominated by corporations that control the factors of production and the profits]. These men were widely disparaged... for migrating constantly, for living in homosocial communities (all male communities) and for loving in homosexual ways. These men either could not or would not abide by Anglo-American settler norms such as heading nuclear families, acquiring Native land, and permanently settling down."

## QUESTIONS:

**How do these stories of policing and incarceration match or differ from the history of policing and incarceration in other communities?**

**If historically, oppression of queer people is based in capitalism, how do we practice anti-capitalism to honor our history?**

**What does it mean to reject capitalism?**

**DO YOU THINK ANTI-CAPITALISM IS QUEER? IF NOT, SHOULD IT BE AND HOW SO?**

**Angela Davis, famous abolitionist thinker, was recently quoted during a discussion: "I don't think we would be where we are today, encouraging ever larger numbers of people to think within an abolitionist frame had not the trans community taught us that it is possible to effectively challenge that which is considered the very foundation of our sense of normalcy." What are some things we take as "just the way it is" (like the gender binary) that we actually have the power to dismantle and reimagine a world without?**

# BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC) QUEER RESISTANCE AND WHITE GAY ASSIMILATION

<https://psmag.com/social-justice/taking-freedom-claiming-our-lineage>

## "KEY POINTS:

- In the 1960s, the Compton Cafeteria and Stonewall riots in San Francisco and New York signaled a turning point for the organizing of queer people of color. While the Stonewall riot is now seen by mainstream LGBT history as a proclamation of gay identity, and the Compton riot is all but forgotten, in actuality, both events were led by queer and trans people outside of the mainstream.
- LGBT and queer resistance to police violence cannot be separated from the history of LGBT resistance. This activism has been separated from the work of activists only relatively recently, as LGBT agendas have moved into the mainstream.
- In the 1970s, gay liberation movements looked to the Black Panther Party and worked together to end police violence.
- The late 1970s and early 1980s marked the end of many radical queer groups, due to interference from the FBI and single-issue "gay-friendly" campaigning. However, many new organizations, such as the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, Black and White Gay Men Together, and Dykes Against Racism Everywhere, worked against police violence as part of their agenda.
- In the 1980s and 1990s, the AIDS epidemic brought a resurgence of queer militancy. This was similar to the post-Stonewall riot activism of the early 1970s, particularly in the form of direct action and resistance



from groups such as ACT-UP.

- The issue of police violence has been divisive in queer communities. Many mainstream groups, such as Human Rights Watch, have seen anti-gay violence as coming not from the state or police, but from crime.
- Throughout the long history of policing of queer communities in New York City, queer, trans, and gender-non-conforming people have creatively resisted and survived police brutality and police violence.
- Currently, mainstream LGBT activism looks to change federal hate crime legislation, but grassroots organizations challenge homophobic and transphobic violence within a broader movement to decrease our reliance on police, prisons, and courts.
- Particularly for trans women of color, fighting legislation aimed against sex work is crucial to ensuring rights and ending policing and surveillance.
- Unfortunately, many of the largest national LGBT organizations constantly recall and reference the liberatory and antipolice Stonewall riot as a battle cry for their homonormative agenda: marriage, military inclusion, access to the market, and hate crime legislation."

## QUESTIONS:

What ways can we fight oppression without using policing and prisons (structures that will go back to hurt oppressed people)?

Queer resistance has historically included fighting police brutality, how does mainstream LGBTQ activism water down the fight for queer liberation?

What can solidarity look like between the LGBTQ+ community and other communities?

For more info:

<https://millennialsarekillingcapitalism.libsyn.com/episode-27-trans-liberation-through-decolonial-marxism-with-feroz>

# ANTI-COP QUEER HISTORY

<https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2019/may/lgbt-q-radicalism-as-a-framework-beyond-rights/>

“Police abuse presented another galvanizing issue.

Opposition to police harassment, entrapment, and raids certainly predated Stonewall and bridged homophile and gay liberation organizing. But while homophiles had principally turned to the courts, the kindling of a new radicalism was struck in protests to defend urban spaces frequented by trans people, people of color, and young, countercultural gay and lesbian community. The 1966 riot at Compton’s Cafeteria, led by trans women and drag queens in San Francisco, and protests at Los Angeles’s Black Cat bar, led by younger gay men in 1967, were two early flashpoints.[7]LGBTQ radicals’ responses to police were tied to their transgressive approaches to gender and sexual expression. Homophile activists were not prudish; many defended the publication of erotica and pornography, citing rights to privacy and free speech. [8]But they were more likely to suggest that gay men and lesbians should address police mistreatment by avoiding cruising sites, visiting only the most “respectable” (white and middle class) gay bars, or refraining from gender transgression. As the sexual revolution and counterculture took hold, homophiles’ relative normativity fell out step.[9]Radicals sought freedom through public difference: not just a right to privacy, but the ability to express gayness “in the road, in the streets.”[10]Alongside these claims, radicals expressed antiracist critiques of police. They described mistreatment of LGBTQ people as continuous with other police abuses, especially against Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican people. At times, particularly when responding to police abuse of gay and lesbian people of color, they understood racism and homophobia as



working together. By 1969, LGBTQ radicals began to join in defense of the Black Panther Party and its jailed leaders. This support raised controversy in gay liberation and lesbian feminism, as many were shaken by the misogyny and homophobia expressed by Black Panther Party leader Eldridge Cleaver. But the Panthers drew strong backing from people of color groups such as Chicago's Third World Gay Revolution and New York's Black Gay Caucus, as well as from mixed groups with a strong presence of people of color, such as the Gay Liberation Front in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., and Gay Women's Liberation in the Bay Area. Expressions of solidarity grew wider following Huey Newton's declaration, in the fall 1970, of the Party's support for gay and women's liberation.[11]"

## QUESTIONS:

**LGBTQ radicals resisted the police for what reasons? Are these reasons still true for today?**

**The Black Panther Party provided protection and community defense for the first Prides, how do we honor that history?**

HOW DOES RACISM (PARTICULARLY ANTI-BLACKNESS), HOMOPHOBIA, AND TRANSPHOBIA WORK TOGETHER? WHAT ABOUT OTHER FORMS OF OPPRESSION?

WHAT DOES "QUEER LIBERATION" MEAN TO YOU?

HOW IS BLACK LIBERATION TIED TO QUEER LIBERATION? HOW CAN WE BUILD A LGBTQ+ RADICAL MOVEMENT THAT SUPPORTS AND FIGHTS FOR BLACK LIBERATION?

# AUDRE LORDE ON MALCOLM X

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1982-audre-lorde-learning-60s/>

"MALCOLM X is a distinct shape in a very pivotal period of my life. I stand here now – Black, Lesbian, Feminist – an inheritor of Malcolm and in his tradition, doing my work, and the ghost of his voice through my mouth asks each one of you here tonight: Are you doing yours? There are no new ideas, just new ways of giving those ideas we cherish breath and power in our own living. I'm not going to pretend that the moment I first saw or heard Malcolm X he became my shining prince, because it wouldn't be true. In February 1965 I was raising two children and a husband in a three-room flat on 149th Street in Harlem. I had read about Malcolm X and the Black Muslims. I became more interested in Malcolm X after he left the Nation of Islam, when he was silenced by Elijah Muhammad for his comment, after Kennedy's assassination, to the effect that the chickens had come home to roost. Before this I had not given much thought to the Nation of Islam because of their attitude toward women as well as because of their non-activist stance. I'd read Malcolm's autobiography, and I liked his style, and I thought he looked a lot like my father's people, but I was one of the ones who didn't really hear Malcolm's voice until it was amplified by death.

I had been guilty of what many of us are still guilty of – letting the media, and I don't mean only the white media – define the bearers of those messages most important to our lives. When I read Malcolm X with careful attention, I found a man much closer to the complexities of real change than anything I had read before. Much of what I say here tonight was born from his words. In the last year of his life, Malcolm X added a breadth to his essential vision that would have brought him, had he



lived, into inevitable confrontation with the question of difference as a creative and necessary force for change. For as Malcolm X progressed from a position of resistance to, and analysis of, the racial status quo, to more active considerations of organizing for change, he began to reassess some of his earlier positions. One of the most basic Black survival skills is the ability to change, to metabolize experience, good or ill, into something that is useful, lasting, effective. Four hundred years of survival as an endangered species has taught most of us that if we intend to live, we had better become fast learners. Malcolm knew this. We do not have to live the same mistakes over again if we can look at them, learn from them, and build upon them...There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives. Malcolm knew this. Martin Luther King, Jr. knew this. Our struggles are particular, but we are not alone. We are not perfect, but we are stronger and wiser than the sum of our errors. Black people have been here before us and survived. We can read their lives like signposts on the road and find, as Bernice Reagon says so poignantly, that each one of us is here because somebody before us did something to make it possible. To learn from their mistakes is not to lessen our debt to them, nor to the hard work of becoming ourselves, and effective."

## QUESTIONS:

WHEN LORDE SAYS **THAT SHE IS INHERITING MALCOLM AND HIS TRADITION, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHO IS MALCOLM X AND WHAT ARE HIS TRADITIONS?**

**AUDRE LORDE ALSO TALKS ABOUT HOW THE MEDIA HAS POWER TO DECIDE WHO WE FIND VALUABLE AND WHOSE MESSAGES ARE IMPORTANT. HOW HAS THE MEDIA KEPT RADICAL MESSAGES AWAY FROM US? WHY?**

**This speech contains a famous quote from Lorde, "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives." What does this mean to you?**

**"each one of us is here because somebody before us did something to make it possible. To learn from their mistakes is not to lessen our debt to them, nor to the hard work of becoming ourselves, and effective." Reflect on this quote and write/draw/think about what that means for your self.**

# COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/combahee-river-collective-1974-1980/>

"The Combahee River Collective, founded by black feminists and lesbians in Boston, Massachusetts in 1974, was best known for its Combahee River Collective Statement. This document was one of the earliest explorations of the intersection of multiple oppressions, including racism and heterosexism. For the first time in history, black women openly and unapologetically communicated their sexual orientations in the midst of their social justice work, no longer trading their silence for permission to engage in political struggle. The Collective's name refers to a resistance action by Harriet Tubman in 1863 in South Carolina, the Combahee River Raid. Tubman freed more than 750 slaves in this unique military campaign, the only one in U.S. history conceived and directed by a woman. After attending the 1973 National Black Feminist Organization's (NBFO) regional conference, the Collective's founders began meeting on their own in Boston in 1974. They experienced much disillusionment with the second wave of American feminism from the 1960s along with the civil rights, black nationalism, and Black Panther movements. They thus knew from the beginning that their new platform would include struggles against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression. By summer of the Collective's first year, the members broke from the NBFO to become a separate black feminist group. The group initially focused on consciousness-raising among black feminists and black women. Eventually they faced internal disagreements that reflected class and political differences among the members. Demita Frazier, Beverly Smith, and Barbara Smith were



the primary authors of the Combahee River Collective Statement in 1977. They articulated the concept of multiple oppressions, critiquing both sexual oppression in the black community and racism within the wider feminist movement. The authors focused on identity politics and challenging racial-sexual oppressions. They sought to destroy what they felt were the related evils of capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy while rejecting the belief in lesbian separatism. Finally their statement acknowledged the difficulties black women faced in their grassroots organizing efforts due to their multiple oppressions. The Collective sponsored seven black feminist retreats between 1977 and 1980. These retreats, held mainly along the east coast, drew thousands of women. The meetings promoted consciousness-raising but they also allowed the gathering of information and generated needed support for many women who, heretofore, had worked in isolation. One example of the impact of their work came in 1979, after the murder of 12 African American women in Boston. In response, the Collective organized and linked coalitions across the community in a bi-racial effort to address this tragedy. The Combahee River Collective disbanded in 1980. Their greatest impact was in preparing the way for current-day community organizing among people of color who face both sexual and racial oppression."

# QUESTIONS:

CRC MEMBERS USED **IDENTITY POLITICS** AS A WAY TO **EDUCATE** AND "**RAISE CONSCIOUSNESS.**" HOW DO YOU **FIND IDENTITY POLITICS HELPFUL, EITHER IN ORGANIZING OR IN UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD?**

HOW DO **RACIAL, SEXUAL, HETEROSEXUAL, AND CLASS OPPRESSIONS** WORK **SIMILARLY, DIFFERENTLY, OR TOGETHER? WHAT ARE THEIR ROOTS?**

What are **other Black feminist and lesbian histories** that you know? **Do you know any from where you are at?**

# MARSHA P. JOHNSON

<https://legacyprojectchicago.org/person/marsha-p-johnson>

"Survival after a permanent move there in 1966 was difficult. At times she waitressed or panhandled, but mostly she worked the streets. Along the way Black Marsha became Marsha P. Johnson. When she was asked by a judge what the "P" stood for, she retorted "Pay it no mind" – which was the philosophy of her incandescent life. Marsha was memorably present at the Stonewall Riots in 1969 where any number of actions have been attributed to her legend – including shimmying up a lamppost to drop a heavy weight that shattered a police car's windshield. In the early 1970s Marsha, along with her friend Sylvia Rivera, co-founded Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.) – one of the first transgender rights organizations in the country. In spite of her influence and popularity, Marsha's life was by no means easy. Breakdowns, religious visions, health scares, numerous threats by disgruntled johns, and run-ins with the law served as a dark counterpoint to her buoyant personality and unabashedly colorful attire. Naturally theatrical, she appeared regularly with the flamboyant performance group, the Hot Peaches Review, and was photographed by Andy Warhol as part of his "Ladies and Gentleman" Polaroid series in 1974. In spite of all she had endured, Marsha was a bright light of love and acceptance in a world that was anything but welcoming. She was a survivor."



# QUESTIONS:

WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MARSHA P JOHNSON?

MARSHA P. JOHNSON WAS A RADICAL TRANS, BLACK PERSON, HOW DO WE HOLD HER MEMORY WITH HONOR?

When you read her name and philosophy "Pay it no mind," what does that phrase mean in your own life?

# SYLVIA RIVERA

<https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/centrovoices/chronicles/memories-sylvia-rivera-pioneer-lgbt-rights-movements>

"Sylvia Rivera, a veteran of the Stonewall uprising of 1969, was an indefatigable fighter for the rights of gay and transgender people. As time passed and the gay rights movement became more mainstream she continued to lead a vigorous fight against the movement's marginalization of the poor, Latino and Black queers and trans people...Sylvia Rivera's Talk at LGMNY, June 2001 Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, New York City. You see, I don't pull no punches, I'm not afraid to call out no names. You screw with the transgender community and the organization Street Transgender Action Revolutionaries will be on your doorstep. Just like we trashed the HRC for not endorsing the Amanda Milan actions, and then when they threw us a piece of trash, we refused to accept it. How dare you question the validity of a transgender group asking for your support, when this transgender woman was murdered? No. The trans community has allowed, we have allowed the gay and lesbian community to speak for us. Times are changing. Our armies are rising and we are getting stronger...But these are days that we have to reflect on. This is a month that's very important. I may have a lot of anger but it means a lot to me because after being at World Pride last year in Italy, to see 500,000 beautiful, liberated gay men, women, and trans people and being called the mother of the world's transgender movement and the gay liberation movement, it gives me great pride to see my children celebrating. I mean, it was a hurting feeling that on May 4th we had history-breaking civil rights in for city council. Our bill was finally introduced. Wow! We waited this long! But where

were my sisters and brothers? Where were my children in numbers, and the girls that work these corners even got the nerve enough to come into public and go onto that I liberated? Very few allies showed up. But what made me proud was that the trans community showed up in numbers, and the girls that work these corners even got the nerve enough to come into public and go onto something that they would never consider doing, which was to walk on City Hall because they are all afraid of the police, but they were there. Amanda Milangot killed last year, five days before Gay Pride. We waited a month to have a vigil for her. Three hundred people showed up. What kind of a—doesn't the community have feelings? We are part of the gay and lesbian community! That really hurt me, to see that only three hundred people showed up. And it's not like it was gonna be a long vigil, I mean we went from 36th Street to 42nd Street. So, when we call people, not only to sponsor our actions, we expect to see bodies there. I mean, but like I said, we're capable of doing it on our own because that's what we're learning now, after thirty-two years, that we cannot depend on nobody, except our own trans community, to keep pushing forward. But remember that as you celebrate this whole month, of how you are liberated. And I feel so sorry for those that are not able to read the history of the Stonewall around the world. And we have to blame once again all the publishers and whatnot. I tried to push Martin Duberman's publishers to have the Stonewall book translated into Spanish. But they felt that the book would not sell in Third World countries, in Latin countries. Which is a lot of crap! Because the only way that you're going to learn the history, especially if you're far away and just coming out, is to be able to pick up a book and read about the history of the Stonewall and how you were



liberated. I know many of our countries are not as liberated as the United States, as far as the gays are concerned, especially Latin American countries, because once again you got to remember that we have to play that big macho role, you know, men, we have to make lots of babies! But it's a shame that it has taken thirty-two years for people to finally realize the history of the trans involvement in this movement. And in that note, I hope to see you when I send out the e-mails to you, and I hope you pass that on. That I hope to see a lot of you there for the Amanda Milan actions and I once again wish you all a very happy gay pride day but also think about us."

## QUESTIONS:

**WHAT DO YOU FEEL/THINK ABOUT WHEN SHE SAYS 'I ONCE AGAIN WISH YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY GAY PRIDE DAY BUT ALSO THINK ABOUT US'?**

**THIS SPEECH, RIVERA TALKS A LOT ABOUT HER FRUSTRATION AROUND BEING A STONEWALL VETERAN, FIGHTING FOR GAY AND TRANS LIBERATION, AND BEING SOLD OUT/BETRAYED BY THE BROADER LGBTQ+ MOVEMENT. IS THIS STILL A PROBLEM FOR THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY? DO YOU KNOW OF ANY EXAMPLES??**

She also talks about how it was hard to get a book on Stonewall translated into Spanish. Why do you think that was the case and why does Rivera feel it is important to have this history translated?

Rivera also mentions how other countries are "not as liberated as the United States," what do you know about international gender and sexuality movements? What could you learn?

# MISS MAJOR GRIFFIN-GRACY, TRANS ELDER AND ACTIVIST, ON STONEWALL

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/oralhistory/transcripts/NYC+TOHP+Transcript+054+Miss+Major+Griffin-Gracy.pdf>

“Lewis: I’d like to ask you more about transgender services, more recently. But I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the Stonewall Riots and what that was like. Griffin-Gracy: You know what? It was scary, it was something that happened all the time, where the police come in and are shutting down bars. And it happened all across the United States, not just New York, everywhere. They come, take that night stick, hit the door down, the lights come on and you’re streamed out. That’s the routine, that’s what they did, everybody knew it. Uh, they checked for ID to see if minors were in the bar. And the routine started but nobody would budge, everyone would just look at each other. And when we got our nerves together and everybody decide “Okay, we’re going to go out”, a fight ensued and all this crap that I’ve been hearing through the years, “Oh someone threw a shoe, someone threw a molotov cocktail, someone did something else, someone slugged a cop.” I don’t know what happened! All I know is, a fight ensued. And we were kickin’ their ass. So much so, they backed into the bar for protection. And then the next thing you knew, the riot squad was there and then it was on. And I had learned from some friends in Chicago, if you’re ever in a situation with a cop, do something to piss him off enough to knock you out. Cause if they don’t knock you out, they will continue to beat your ass till they break bones in your body. Hit a rib, if they puncture your lung, you die. So I spit in his-snatched this cops mask, spit in his face, he knocked my black



lass out. And he dragged me to the fucking truck and threw my ass in there. But I'm still here. It was a mess. And the interesting thing was it went on for days, just one night, "Oh Stonewall, that one"- it went on for three or four days. It, it went on. And the funny thing was I remember hearing in my head people yelling from their apartments "The girls are kicking the cops asses over at Stonewall!" Well yall weren't down there fighting! You were yelling from the fucking safety of your window, while we were getting brutalized, you know, down there. But when a a parade came, couldn't find us anywhere! And I forget the name of that child that had the blue Cadillac, you know some little right white boy that buys the blue Cadillac, that was always by Stonewall. But um, in his car, in the parade, was a couple of the drag queens that he used to like, that performed. None of my girls! You know, Sylvia wasn't- I didn't see Sylvia there, in the front, where she should've been. And it's not about me, I don't give a shit whether they acknowledge or know about me, I mean, it has to do with, Sylvia and Marsha were trying to take care of the community before we really knew that we needed to be taken care of. They had a vision, they saw what was coming. And they did their best to protect us. To make us aware of it."

Miss Major has been working for TLGBQ liberation for decades and is continuing that work in Little Rock, Arkansas. You can find out more about her current work at the House of GG: <https://houseofgg.org/>.

## QUESTIONS:

WHAT WERE **THE CATALYSTS, THE REASONS, THAT STONEWALL HAPPENED?**

MISS MAJOR MENTIONS **HOW ANOTHER STONEWALL VETERAN, SYLVIA RIVERA, ISN'T RESPECTED OR UPLIFTED THE WAY SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN. WHO OFTEN GETS LIFTED UP BY THE BROADER LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY AND WHO DOESN'T? WHY?**

Stonewall is **considered to be the first Pride, and was sparked by police brutality towards the LGBTQ+ community. Considering the roots of Pride, do you think the Prides of today honor our history?**

What can **we do to really honor our elders, their work, and the meaning of Stonewall?**

# STAR

<https://www.nswp.org/timeline/event/street-transvestite-action-revolutionaries-found-star-house>

“Following the 1969 Stonewall Riots, transgender sex workers Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P Johnson founded Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). STAR started following a sit-in at Weinstein Hall at New York University in 1970. The sit-in was to protest school administrators canceling a dance because it was sponsored by a gay organisation. The sit-in brought together many gay groups, including Gay Liberation Front and Radicalesbians. They were successful in regaining the venue for the dance. Sylvia and Marsha saw that the needs of street youth and transgender youth were not being taken in account by other early gay groups. They founded STAR to fill this gap. STAR opened their first STAR House in a parked trailer truck in a Greenwich Village parking lot later that year. It functioned as a shelter and social space for trans sex workers and other LGBT street youth. However, the pair arrived one day to find the trailer was being towed, with as many as 20 youth still sleeping inside. This experience made them decide to find a more permanent home for STAR House. “Marsha and I decided to get a building,” Rivera told Leslie Feinberg in 1998. “We were trying to get away from the Mafia’s control at the bars. We got a building at 213 Second Avenue.” Sylvia and Marsha paid the rent on the building by doing street sex work at night. They hoped to use the top floor of the building to teach the youth how to read and write during the daytime. STAR House was many firsts. It was the first LGBT youth shelter in North America. It was the first trans woman of colour led organisation in the USA. And



lit was the first trans sex worker labour organisation. STAR later expanded to other cities, before eventually collapsing in the mid-1970s. It has recently been revived in New York City."

## QUESTIONS:

**STAR WAS STARTED BY STONEWALL VETERANS SYLVIAN RIVERA AND MARSHA P JOHNSON. WHEN YOU ARE TOLD ABOUT THEM, ARE YOU TOLD ABOUT GROUPS LIKE STAR AND GAY LIBERATION FRONT? ARE THEIR GOALS AND VALUES TALKED ABOUT?**

**THIS GROUP WAS STARTED FOR TRANS SEX WORKERS AND LGBTQ+ STREET YOUTH. WHAT ORGANIZATIONS DO YOU KNOW NOW THAT WERE STARTED BY AND FOR THESE GROUPS?**

What ways can **LGBTQ+ groups** now or groups that you work with be intentional about **supporting** and **placing** into leadership **trans sex workers** and **LGBTQ+ homeless youth**?

How do we start to **fight the oppression** of these groups and **change the conditions** around the **dangerousness of sex work** for **trans people** and the **conditions of poverty** and **homelessness** for **queer youth**?

# BESSIE SMITH

<https://afropunk.com/2019/03/black-blue-queer-empress-bessie-smiths-reign/>

“Regardless of your beliefs or affiliations, one cannot fight the fact that the Black church is responsible for building and shaping decades of musical eras, and providing all those eras with icons. Some of the most powerful singers in history lent their voices to the booming pews of Sunday worship before they threw voices across tents, clubs, pubs and eventually, concert halls. One alum of the Black church choirs was Elizabeth “Bessie” Smith, the Queer Empress of the Blues. Bessie started out as a chorus dancer in a traveling troupe that housed another jazz great, Ma Rainey. Under Rainey’s tutelage, Bessie transitioned from dancer to singer and her talent astounded to the point that she was soon headlining her own shows. Bessie Smith already filled almost any room she sang in as she traveled the country, before settling down in Philadelphia where she was discovered and signed by Columbia Records in the early 1920s. “Downhearted Blues” was her first commercial hit, serving as the introductory chapter to a 165-song, 2 million record-selling career that would have her heralded as the most successful Blues singer of all time. Ma Rainey and Bessie were two Black women earning amounts unheard of to Black women in their day. Bessie made so much money that she would travel around in a private train car, riding her luxurious self through the South and all over the limited expectations of her day...Her Queer, Black Womanhood was her power and she used her voice to spread it far and wide, even when the world was too backward to see its full glory. She crooned about her attraction to women and men and she vocally lamented the woes of both. In person, she



was boisterous and extravagant — a braggadocious Black artist of the 1920s. Her shows were large affairs with 40 performers involved. She knew what she could achieve and she demanded her full worth, taking her freedom from the very clutches of oppression. She knew about the sharp edges of existence and she used her gift to soften edges of her own, to a point. Although alcoholism affected her life and poisoned her career, it did not stop her — and had she not lost her life to injuries sustained in a car accident in 1937, she would have gone on to dominate for decades. The power of Black queer women at the turn of the 20th century is obscured behind a thick veil of whitewashing and heteronormative historical revisionism. But, true to Black womanhood, legends are too good to be ignored or forgotten. To be able to remember — and re-remember — all of Bessie is the privilege and responsibility of the queer community and the world at large. She is one of its many voices and an artistic advocate for its experiences. All hail Bessie Smith, the Queer Empress of Blues."

## QUESTIONS:

**LISTEN: BESSIE SMITH WAS AN APPALACHIAN, SOUTHERN, QUEER, BLACK WOMAN FROM A WORKING CLASS FAMILY IN CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE. TURN ON A SONG OF HERS IF AND LISTEN TO HOW THOSE IDENTITIES INFLUENCED HER MUSIC. WHAT DO YOU HEAR?**

WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM HER LIFE AND HER MUSIC?

What could it look like to live into yourself like how Bessie Smith was living into her fullness, in a time where it was very difficult for her to do so?

# ESSEX HEMPHILL

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/hemphill-essex-1957-1995/>

“Brash, bold, provocative, and edgy. These are just some of the many words that were used to describe the poet and performer Essex Hemphill who was known for his outspoken, direct, and often confrontational poems and articles. Hemphill was also unapologetic about his open homosexuality. The oldest of five children, Hemphill was born on April 16, 1957 in Chicago, Illinois to parents Mantalene and Warren Hemphill. Although he was born in the Midwest, he was raised in Washington, D.C during his formative years. During his early teens, Hemphill began to write poetry. In the fall of 1975, Hemphill enrolled at the University of Maryland at College Park where he studied English. While an undergraduate student at the university, he began to further explore and cultivate his literary curiosity and talents. In 1978, he and fellow student Kathy Elaine Anderson founded a journal entitled Nethula Journal of Contemporary Literature. It was during a poetry reading at Howard University in 1980 that he proclaimed his homosexuality. After his tenure at Maryland, Hemphill joined the performance poetry group, Cinque, in the early 1980s. His partners in this effort were Wayson Jones and Larry Duckett. Although the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic had already ravaged the gay community for some time, by the mid-1980s the majority of Americans were now aware of its devastation. Hemphill's first books, *Earth Life* (1985) and *Conditions* (1986), both addressed the impact of AIDS on both the black community and the larger gay community. His critically acclaimed anthology, *In the Life*, which also appeared in 1986,



brought Hemphill his first significant national recognition. In the Life, one of the first collections of writings by gay black men, opened to the general public the topic of homosexuality in African America.

Hemphill's Brother to Brother (1988), a collection of essays written by gay black men, was also considered groundbreaking at the time."

## QUESTIONS:

**ESSEX HEMPHILL USED HIS ART TO BRING LIGHT TO ISSUES FACING HIS COMMUNITIES. HOW CAN ART BE USED FOR LIBERATION?**

**MANY OF HIS WORKS WERE GROUNDBREAKING AND VITAL FOR MANY PEOPLE TO READ, BUT ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TO GAY BLACK MEN. WHAT WORKS OF ART, EITHER FROM HEMPHILL OR OTHERS, WERE GROUNDBREAKING OR DEEPLY IMPACTFUL FOR YOU?**

**TRY IT OUT: AS YOU HAVE BEEN REFLECTING AND LEARNING THIS PRIDE MONTH, WRITE A POEM ABOUT SOMETHING THAT HAS IMPACTED YOU SO FAR (YOU DON'T NEED TO CREATE THE GROUNDBREAKING POETRY OF OUR TIME, JUST BE YOU AND WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THINKING ON THIS PRIDE MONTH)**

# HARLEM RENAISSANCE

<https://www.theroot.com/the-gay-harlem-renaissance-1790864926>

"Quiet as it's kept, along with [Countee] Cullen, a number of the brightest lights of the Harlem Renaissance fell somewhere along the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) rainbow spectrum. It actually isn't that quiet. Claude McKay, Wallace Thurman, Alain Locke, Richard Bruce Nugent, Angelina Weld Grimké, Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Langston Hughes, all luminaries of the New Negro literary movement, have been identified as anywhere from openly gay (Nugent) to sexually ambiguous or mysterious (Hughes). In a 1993 essay, "The Black Man's Burden," Henry Louis Gates Jr., The Root's editor-in-chief, notes that the Renaissance "was surely as gay as it was black." In the last few decades, a number of authors and filmmakers have revised the revisionist history of the period and unlocked history's closet. The book *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (2003), by A.B. Christa Schwarz, puts the life and work of Cullen, McKay, Nugent and Hughes in an LGBT context...The Harlem of the 1920s, which produced a flowering of art, music and writing, was indisputably gay. Being "in the life" was part of the landscape of the community. The 1983 essay "T'Aint Nobody's Bizness: Homosexuality in 1920's Harlem," by Eric Garber, puts it in sharp focus: At the beginning of the twentieth century, a homosexual subculture, uniquely Afro-American in substance, began to take shape in New York's Harlem. Throughout the so-called Harlem Renaissance period, roughly 1920 to 1935, black lesbians and gay men were meeting each other [on] street corners, socializing in cabarets and rent parties, and worshiping in church on Sundays, creating a language, a social structure, and a complex network of institutions."



# QUESTIONS:

WHAT DID YOU ALREADY KNOW ABOUT THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE?

HOW HAVE BLACK LGBTQ+ PEOPLE LED, CREATED, AND SHAPED QUEER CULTURE?

Who are the Black queer creatives that you look up to?

Do you think artistic and cultural spaces tend to be more open for LGBTQ+ people? why or why not?

# ATLANTA'S QUEER HISTORY

<https://www.atlantahistorycenter.com/explore/online-exhibitions/atlanta-in-50-objects/lgbtq>

“As one of the most welcoming American cities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, Atlanta is recognized as a city where equality is promoted and celebrated. The Atlanta History Center holds an important collection of manuscripts, photographs, periodicals, film, and artifacts documenting LGBTQ history in Atlanta. In 1971, the Georgia Gay Liberation Front led the first organized march from Peachtree Street to Piedmont Park with about one-hundred participants. The annual event occurred until recently in late June to mark the anniversary of the June 28, 1969, police raid and uprising outside the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village. The Stonewall Riot served as a catalyst for the gay liberation movement in the United States. Today, Atlanta's Pride Parade occurs in the cooler month of October to coincide with National Coming Out Day. The event typically attracts as many as 200,000 participants. According to the LGBTQ media outlet Georgia Voice, “Atlanta is epicenter of the LGBT South. Home to a vibrant gay community ... it's easy to see why The Advocate dubbed Atlanta as America's 'gayest city' of 2010.”

For more info: a timeline of LGBTQ+ history in Atlanta

<https://thegavoice.com/news/atlanta/portrait-community-lgbt-atlanta-timeline/>

## QUESTIONS:

WHAT ELSE DO YOU KNOW ABOUT LGBTQ+ HISTORY IN ATLANTA?

ATLANTA IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST LGBTQ+ HUBS IN THE SOUTH, IT IS ALSO KNOWN AS GAY MECCA. WHAT OTHER PLACES IN THE SOUTH ARE IMPORTANT TO LGBTQ+ PEOPLE? WHAT ABOUT RURAL PLACES?

Especially if you're Southern, what significance does Atlanta hold for you?

Atlanta was home to radical LGBTQ+ organizing, it had chapters of ACT UP and Gay Liberation Front. What radical LGBTQ+ organizing happens today in ATL?

Atlanta held and still holds a LOT of queer Southern culture. What are some of your favorite queer Southern cultural events/places/people/organizations from ATL?



# INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

<https://www.oah.org/tah/issues/2019/may/lgbtq-radicalism-as-a-framework-beyond-rights/>

“By the end of the 1970s, LGBTQ radicals played central roles in campaigns against the New Right. Their participation in such alliances were strategic and contingent. Dominant frameworks posed liberal engagement in the Democratic party as the best means of curtailing conservatism. Leftists were suspicious of whether these avenues could be successful and wary of losing their independence by joining in. Threats such as California’s Proposition 6 (the “Briggs Initiative”), which sought to ban gay and lesbian teachers, and the Supreme Court decision upholding laws against sodomy (*Bowers v. Hardwick*, 1986), drew leftists and liberals together in large mobilizations.[12] Yet LGBTQ radicals also fought back against conservatism through other means. They brought gay and lesbian issues into activism against the racist right; they worked in the antinuclear and anti-apartheid movements; and most powerfully, they organized gay and lesbian solidarity with Central America—that is, in movements against U.S. intervention in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. The Central American solidarity movement began in the mid-1970s among Central American exile and immigrant communities. It grew across the Reagan-Bush years, peaking in the mid- to late-1980s. LGBTQ people not only participated in straight-dominated Central American solidarity groups, but also formed distinct, specifically gay and lesbian organizations and travel brigades. Latinx gay and lesbian activists, including Central American exiles and immigrants inside the United States, played important roles.[13] The movement bridged LGBTQ and Latinx communities, especially in San Francisco, Los

Angeles, and the Southwest. It also built ties to gay and lesbian organizing inside Central America, challenging the assumption that LGBTQ identities belonged to the global North. Gay and lesbian solidarity developed particular strength in support of Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution, which overthrew a U.S.-backed dictatorship and replaced it with populist socialism. The Sandinista government's lack of codified antigay policy stood in clear contrast to the early years of the Cuban Revolution, and this, combined with the strong presence of women Sandinista leaders, galvanized feminist, lesbian, and gay support.[14] LGBTQ radicals in the United States described themselves and Central Americans as sharing common enemies under Reagan and Bush. They saw cuts to U.S. social programs as conjoined to efforts to overthrow the Sandinistas and to back the right-wing Salvadoran government. With the AIDS crisis mounting, bumperstickers, banners, and chants declared "Fight AIDS, Not Nicaragua," and "Money for AIDS, Not War." Informed by this, at the start of the first Gulf War in 1991, queer and AIDS activists interrupted the CBS Evening News by storming the broadcast studio chanting "Fight AIDS, Not Arabs." [15]

## QUESTIONS:

**WHAT WERE THINGS THAT LGBTQ+ LATINX ACTIVISTS DO IN THE LGBTQ+ MOVEMENT AND IN CENTRAL AMERICAN MOVEMENTS? HOW DO LGBTQ+ LATINX ACTIVISTS, ORGANIZERS, AND REVOLUTIONARIES TODAY WORK IN LGBTQ+ GROUPS? IN IMMIGRANT GROUPS?**

WHAT CHALLENGES DO LGBTQ+ LATINX PEOPLE FACE  
IN THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY?

HOW CAN THE LGBTQ+ MOVEMENTS OF TODAY COMBAT  
IMPERIALISM AND BUILD SOLIDARITY WITH PEOPLE IN THE  
GLOBAL SOUTH?

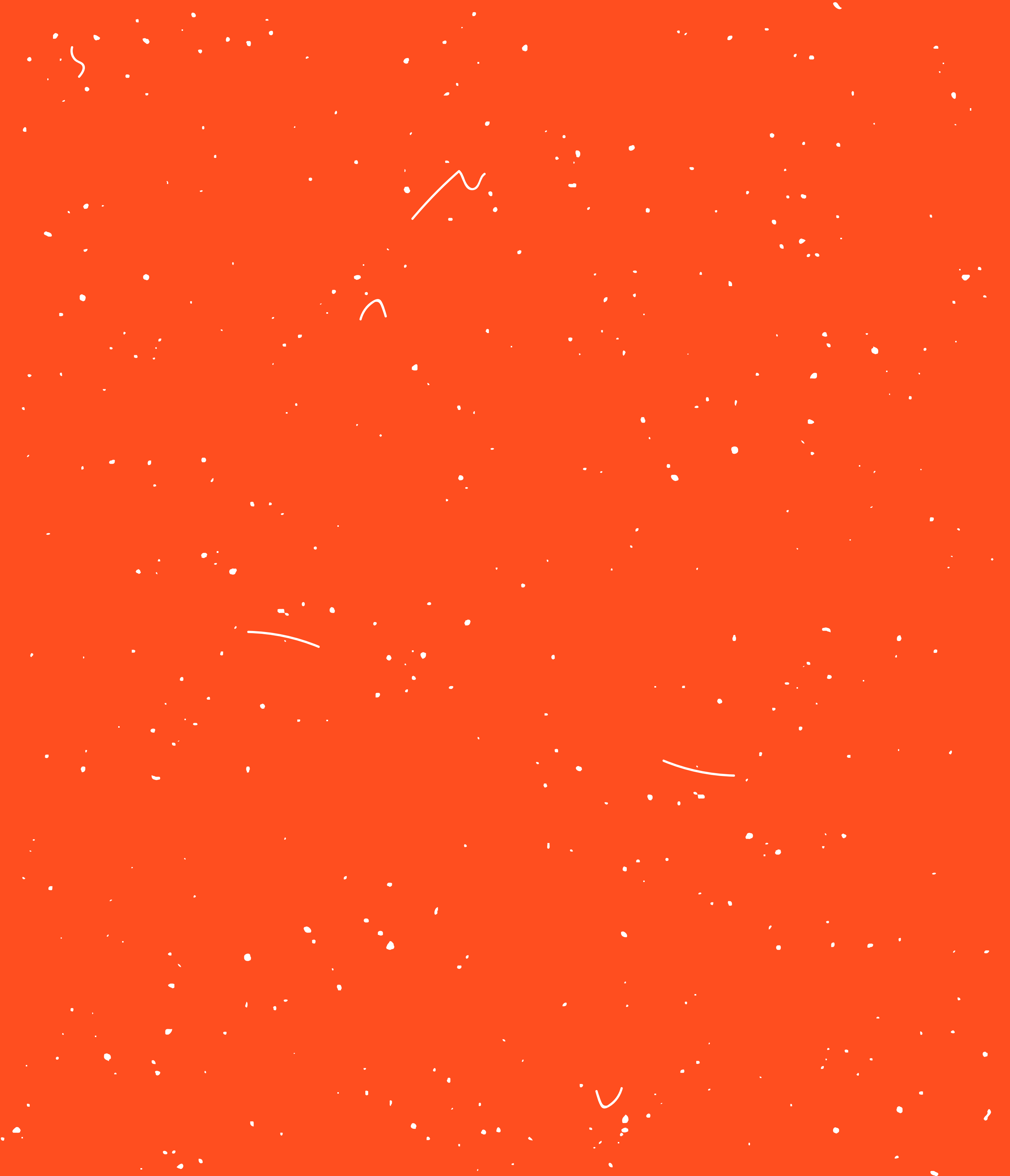
For people in the US South, how do we build solidarity with folks  
in the Global South? What struggles do we have in common?  
What is different that we should lift up as we talk about  
"Southern" issues?



**THANK YOU ALL FOR GOING THROUGH THIS PRIDE  
MONTH DEVOTIONAL: RADICAL HISTORY & LEGACY. WE  
HOPE THAT YOU'VE BEEN ABLE TO SOAK IN A LOT ABOUT  
OUR ELDERS, VALUES, AND MOVEMENTS THAT ARE A  
LOOKING TOWARD QUEER LIBERATION.**

**PLEASE REACH OUT WITH CURIOSITIES, CONCERNS, OR  
NEEDED SUPPORT. YOU CAN EMAIL  
CAL@HIGHLANDERCENTER.ORG.**

**HAPPY PRIDE, YALL**



**JEFFERSON COUNTY PRIDE**



**Highlander**  
RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER