

The Gay Liberation Youth Movement in New York

**“An Army of Lovers
Cannot Fail”**

Stephan L. Cohen



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Abbreviations

CR	Consciousness raising (consciousness-raising)
CSLD	Christopher Street Liberation Day (commemorated Stonewall, Gay Pride in current usage)
CSLDC	Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee
DOB	Daughters of Bilitis (lesbian homophile group)
FTM	Female to male
GAA	Gay Activists Alliance
GLF	Gay Liberation Front
GSA	Gay-Straight Alliance (now found in many high schools)
GSL	Gay Student Liberation (an NYU group)
GWHS	George Washington High School (the site of the Gay International Youth Society)
GY	Gay Youth, later called GLYNY (Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York) and then BiGLYNY (Bisexual, Gay, and Lesbian Youth of New York), and finally BiGLTYNY (Bisexual, Gay Lesbian & Transgender Youth of New York).
IGIC	International Gay Information Center, collection now located in the NYPL Manuscripts and Archives Division. (Incorporated in 1982, it succeeded the History Committee of the Gay Activists Alliance.)
Intro 475	NYC gay rights bill advocated by GAA (Intro 2 was a similar later bill)

LFL	Lesbian Feminist Liberation (originally associated with GAA)
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
LHA	Lesbian Herstory Archives (located in Brooklyn, New York)
MSNY	Mattachine Society of New York
MTF	Male to female
NCGO	National Coalition of Gay Organizations
NGTF	National Gay Task Force
NYPL	New York Public Library
NYU	New York University
PFLAG	Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (see http://www.pflag.org)
S.G.O.	Student Government Organization (official high school student leadership group)
SONDA	New York State Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act
S.T.A.R.	Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries

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I dedicate this book to gay liberation youth activists and to the homophile and queer activists who preceded and follow them.

Introduction

Between 1966 and 1975, North American youth activists under the age of twenty-one established dozens of high school and community-based gay liberation groups that are the intellectual and political forerunners of more than three thousand present-day school-based Gay-Straight Alliances and community programs on record.¹ The adolescent (and young adult) members of the remarkably early Stonewall era gay liberation youth groups battled disenfranchisement due to sexuality, gender variance, and age. They sought personal affirmation, collective liberation, and institutional change.

New York City was home to a number of groundbreaking groups—including Gay Youth (GY), Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.), and the Gay International Youth Society of George Washington High School—from the advent of gay liberation to its dissolution and the rise of identity politics by 1975. Group members ranged in age from pre-teen to twenty-one (and older in the case of S.T.A.R.).² These three groups are notable for their early dates of origin, autonomy, visibility, range of member identities (gender, sexual, racial, and ethnic), extent of their activities (including publication, outreach, organization) and Movement influences (gay liberation, the anti-war movement, feminism, Black liberation, Youth Liberation, high school student rights, and the New Left).

Gay Youth provided a social and political outlet for those under twenty-one; formed in February 1970, it was initially one of many New York Gay Liberation Front cells.³ It became an “autonomous organization founded, run and organized exclusively by youth”⁴ under the leadership of Mark Segal (now publisher of *Philadelphia Gay News*). GY’s *Gay Journal* printed “Gay Movement News,” social announcements, and discussions on sexuality. Consciousness-raising was incorporated into general meetings and provided an opportunity for youth to understand personal behaviors within a social and political context. New York GY conducted outreach (in

high schools, via the press, and the gay community) to help overcome isolation “wherever young people congregate.”⁵ After Gay Liberation Front’s dissolution, GY overcame financial and leadership woes. It reinvented itself and wended a peripatetic path, housed by community institutions, gay liberation groups, and many churches in lower Manhattan, until joining the Gay and Lesbian Community Center, ca. 1983 where—with extraordinary longevity for a gay liberation era group—it remained for nearly two decades.

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.) espoused free gender expression, an end to prison injustice and homelessness, and the creation of an inclusive community that rejected binding definitions of gender and sexual identity. Sylvia Rivera and Marsha Johnson, two young “street queens who knew the oppressions of race and economics as well as sexuality” founded S.T.A.R. in 1970 following the five-day gay liberation takeover of an NYU dormitory sub-basement.⁶

S.T.A.R. was important because it provided young street transvestites with a refuge, peer support, and a platform. S.T.A.R. leader Sylvia Rivera spoke out on behalf of Street Transvestites for Gay Power. She condemned police and NYU coercive strong-arm tactics and politics, proclaiming, “If you want Gay Power, then you’re going to have to fight for it. And you’re going to have to fight until you win.”⁷ For Rivera, “gay” meant non-heteronormative (or “queer” in today’s lexicon), crossing sexual and gender boundaries to include lesbians, gay men, and transvestites, as well as the street youth who had participated in Stonewall and camped out on the benches of the nearby vest pocket Christopher Park, commonly known as Sheridan Square. S.T.A.R.’s participants ranged in age from teens (and perhaps younger) to twenties.⁸ The group’s multi-racial, transgender Lower East Side communal household was termed “the most interesting and lively house in New York.”⁹

School-based gay liberation groups were also organized. Breck Ardery, narrator of *June 28, 1970, Gay and Proud*, “a living history of the homosexual rights movement,” reported, “Many gay high school students are also beginning to become active in the fight for their rights.” Joshua Harris, explained, “we feel that high school students right now are so full of ideals and they can change some of the old ways of thinking, the old school of thought, and this is why we encourage high school students to join us.”¹⁰

The Gay International Youth Society, was founded in 1972—seventeen years before the first officially recognized Gay-Straight Alliance!—by students at the Manhattan George Washington High School with support from the Gay Activists Alliance, a group that “welcomed people of

all political stripes provided that they were united in principles of unity,” the fight “for gay civil rights.”¹¹ The predominantly Third World members (nine lesbians, six gay men, and five straight friends) received help from an enlightened faculty advisor and a supportive principal. These students wrote, “To maintain our rights and dignity, we must assert ourselves and our very being! . . . The very nature of coming-out demands that we become political; there is no other choice.”¹² These students understood that the development and expression of sexual identities required political activism. For them, gay liberation involved more than peer support. It required the creation of youth-defined space to help overcome individual isolation, promote consciousness-raising, and organize. Cognizant of the protections afforded by the NYC Board of Education High School Bill of Rights, members sought to improve school climate for teachers who feared that coming out would undermine their classroom authority; NYC teachers also faced harassment and job loss. The school-based gay club was openly publicized as seen in a descriptive article disseminated in a Gay Youth pamphlet. An edited version later appeared in a Youth Liberation publication entitled *FPS* (an acronym that purportedly “stood for nothing” not even fuck public schools). Members envisioned a coalition of high school groups, a dream that foreshadowed today’s Gay Straight Alliance movement.¹³

Gaps in the historical record of queer youth activism have denied historians, practitioners, researchers, and youth themselves the opportunity to understand the accomplishments of gay liberation youth groups within the larger social context of the sixties and seventies. Young gay liberationists created non-commercial youth-defined spaces offering peer support and a non-sexual forum to discuss questions about sexual and gender identities. Today’s queer youth activists similarly seek to effect change in their schools and communities. Gay liberationist youth were masters of political and social agitation. Present-day queer youth organizers (and even aging activist mentors) may be surprised, instructed, and inspired by the achievements of an earlier generation of activists committed to gay liberation, personal affirmation, and organization.

THE EVOLUTION OF QUEER YOUTH GROUPS

Scholarship on queer youth group praxis has largely focused on individual groups.¹⁴ In a prior analysis of queer youth groups from 1966 to the present day, I found only a limited examination of how group ideology and practice have changed over time.¹⁵ It was nevertheless clear that understandings of sexuality and group practices such as regulation of membership and governance have been shaped by the historical and ideological context.

As I distinguished group types by setting, ideology, and starting date, I uncovered a rich and largely unexplored early history of innovative gay liberation youth groups from 1966 to 1975. Shortly after acquiring a large collection of 1970s gay liberation newspapers auctioned online, I chanced upon the existence of pre-1975 gay liberation high school groups while leafing through the yellowed pages of GAY, a post-Stonewall publication edited by Jack Nichols and Lige Clarke. Excited by this find, particularly given that contemporary Gay-Straight Alliance literature traces GSA origins to 1989, I searched for the existence of other gay liberation youth groups.

My examination of early gay liberation newspapers, texts, directory listings, as well as interviews (compiled in Appendix One) reveals that by the early 1970s a sizable network of gay liberation youth groups had emerged, not only on the East and West coasts but also in the U.S. heartland and the South. For example, as early as 1966, Vanguard (with its young drug users, hustlers, leathermen, and sissies) and the girl gang Street Orphans had organized in San Francisco. Other groups included Young People's Group in Miami; Sodom Radical Bisexual Free Communist Youth in Hayward, CA; a coming out group in Washington, D.C.; Alternatives for Teenage Gays in Chicago; and San Francisco Bay Area Gay Teenagers. New York Gay Youth, discussed in Chapter Four, had affiliates nationwide.

During the course of this research, I found that youth were full-fledged participants in—and leaders of—autonomous gay liberation groups that fought oppression in the schools, prisons, judicial system, universities, mental hospitals, church, and nuclear family. Gay Youth, Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, and the Gay International Youth Society of George Washington High School are three such groups that helped to radically transform the environment faced by earlier generations. They openly and defiantly changed school climate, broke isolation via social gatherings, consciousness-raising, and protest, and encouraged affirmation long before the current wave of school-based Gay-Straight Alliances.

This book explores a number of key questions: (1) How did gay liberation (informed by other Movement struggles) catalyze young gay liberation activists? (2) Why did youth form and join groups distinct from adult homophile and gay liberation organizations and what did they derive from the experience? (3) How did various understandings of sexual identity shape membership criteria, patterns of organization, decision-making, the role of participants, and efforts to effect social change. These questions are also relevant to present-day educators and queer youth activists. Ideology continues to shape group praxis. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, as gay liberation ceded ground to the politics of mainstream assimilation, revolutionary gay liberation youth groups were gradually overshadowed

by adult-led social service programs. Likewise, later queer and transgender activists have questioned rigid identity categories, thereby softening restrictions that potentially excluded bisexual, transgender, and other non-conforming youth.

How did adolescents cope prior to gay liberation? In Chapter One, I examine the circumscribed role of homophile groups such as Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society with adult only membership requirements. Some high school students developed informal networks, but for those under twenty-one with same-sex attractions, support was difficult to find.

In Chapter Two, I analyze how queer youth group practice (the manner in which groups address coming out, sexual identity, school climate, and risk) has been shaped by sexual ideologies (various understandings of sexuality and sexual identity). According to Shively and DeCecco, *sexual identity*, incorporates biological sex and three psychological components: gender identity (one's conviction of being male or female), social sex role (femininity and masculinity), and sexual orientation.¹⁶ I discuss how youth group understandings of sexual identity have evolved and changed over time.

Gay liberation youth groups (e.g., Gay Youth, S.T.A.R. and George Washington High School's Gay International Youth Society) are one of eight program types briefly described here in roughly chronological order of emergence.¹⁷ *Informal underground networks* brought together adolescents in a variety of locales during the 1950s and 1960s. *Gay liberation groups*, beginning in 1966, called for the broad-based overthrow or transformation of sexist, racist, and economically oppressive institutions. *Community-based programs* initiated by social service professionals in the 1970s have offered emotional support and social services to youth.¹⁸ No longer gay liberation activists and organizers, youth were largely treated as social service clients. *School-based counseling programs*, led by Project 10 in 1984, have supported "sexual minority" students facing the victimization and harassment often induced by homophobia.¹⁹ Since 1985, four *alternative schools* have provided separate and safe educational environments for youth while addressing social service needs.²⁰ *Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)* first established in 1989, have incorporated ideologies where sexual orientation may be seen as an authentic and definitive essence (a core aspect of identity), as an issue that requires political and social action, or as a socially constructed code that shifts according to the cultural and historical setting.²¹ An *anti-homophobia education group* founded in 1993 applies critical and queer discourse in which both oppressive social structures and socially constructed codes of sexual identity are challenged.²²

Online forums dating from the 1990s offer anonymous dialogue where multiple ideologies are expressed among their ever-shifting memberships.²³ More recent extended social networks (such as myspace and facebook) are outlets for expression and support. Video sites such as youtube enable adolescents to affirm identity and even become role models for a worldwide audience able to respond with questions, validating commentary, and additional autobiographical videos.

Educational scholarship has largely overlooked the history of gay liberation youth groups conveying the mistaken impression that the earliest groups serving LGBT youth were programs such as Project 10, Horizons, and Hetrick-Martin, all initiated in the late 1970s and 1980s.²⁴ Early gay liberation texts provide a limited record of several key youth groups and more recent histories only hint at their full extent and importance.²⁵

In Chapter Three, however, we see a 1966 to 1975 epoch of gay liberation youth groups notable for their early date, strong militancy, and nationwide reach. I examine youth group formation and ideology within the broader context of the NYC gay liberation. In order to analyze the complex interplay between adult and youth groups, I compare and contrast their missions. I have found that adult and youth groups worked together in order to unravel the cocoon of stultifying traditional sex roles reinforced by family, school, church, and state.²⁶

Gay Youth, S.T.A.R., and the Gay International Youth Society (examined in Chapters Four, Five, and Six respectively) were catalyzed by, worked in concert with, and/or received support from adult gay liberation and homophile groups including New York Gay Liberation Front, Gay Activists Alliance, and New York Mattachine Society. Examining each youth group's practice within an ideological framework, I ask:

- How were members' experiences shaped by ideology and group practice?
- Did groups encourage the assumption of a homosexual identity, construction of personal identity, or challenge discourse about fixed identity categories?
- What were the physical settings?
- How were groups organized?
- How did groups address decision-making?
- How did adult groups foster student activism? Did adults function as youth group therapists, counselors, facilitators, activists, or participants?
- What were the roles of youth?
- What were criteria for membership?

- How were multiple identities addressed (ethnicity, race, gender, or class)?
- How did groups define homophobia, “coming-out,” gay, lesbian, and transvestite?
- What was the relationship between queer youth groups and what Szalacha has termed “sexual diversity climate?”²⁷
- How was ideology related to the dynamic of the relationship between groups and climate?

NYC GAY LIBERATION YOUTH ACTIVISM: THE HISTORICAL RECORD

While the history of community- and school-based gay liberation youth-led groups (1966 to the mid-1970s) has been largely unexplored, pre-1975 gay liberation texts and more recent scholarship offer tentative profiles of S.T.A.R. and Gay Youth. Neither body of literature has adequately examined the unacknowledged existence of high school clubs that were visible decades before the present-day organization of three thousand Gay-Straight Alliances. Because GSA literature dates its origins to 1989, it thereby unfortunately portrays a movement shorn of its historical antecedents.

In addition, the sparse research on all queer youth programs has been outweighed by studies investigating risk including harassment, violence, deprivation of educational opportunity, and HIV infection.²⁸ Adolescents with same-sex orientation are more than twice as likely as their peers to attempt suicide.²⁹ Scholars have only begun to consider the important interplay between ideology, group practice, and the experiences of queer youth.³⁰ Educators have generally overlooked the ambitious achievements of gay liberation youth-led groups.³¹ Yet these groups addressed issues that bear directly on risk reduction including psychological, social, political, and even physical support. Gay liberation clearly shaped the experiences of youth, yet a review of the literature reveals only brief mention of Gay Youth, tantalizing fragments of S.T.A.R.’s history, and no examination of gay liberation high school clubs.

Gay Youth (GY)

Although Gay Youth, as an organization, catalyzed groups across the country, scholarly study of Gay Youth has been quite limited. Indeed, GY members struggled to reconstruct their own history for the group’s twentieth anniversary celebration held in 1989.³² Donn Teal, in his comprehensive study of the gay liberation movement, provided the most in-depth

(although truncated) description of Gay Youth's goals, its newsletter, its nationwide reach, and its ideological stance.³³ Social commentator and activist John Francis Hunter noted of GLF (and the similarly textured GY) dances that the "savagely clenched and upraised fist is the salute that punctuates every hard rock selection blared out." Furthermore, the members of both GLF and GY loathed "pretension and gloss and bourgeois propriety."³⁴ Toby Marotta later recorded GY's genesis within the context of GLF.³⁵ Still, contemporary educators and historians have given Gay Youth scant attention apart from a brief mention of Toronto Gay Youth in two Canadian texts.³⁶ Yet, GY had a significant impact. It spurred the organization of affiliates throughout the U.S. and Canada, supported the formation of high school gay liberation groups in the early 1970s, and maintained a radical political stance long after the dissolution of the gay liberation movement.

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.)

Gay liberation histories touch on transvestites' activism, the irrepressible Sylvia Rivera, and S.T.A.R.'s participation in the gay liberation movement.³⁷ Historian Donn Teal captured the fervor of Rivera's Gay Power chant in the first anniversary march of the Christopher Street rebellion.³⁸ GAA leader Arnie Kantrowitz painted a brief personal and political portrait of the life of "Rosa Garcia," a.k.a. Sylvia Rivera, street hustler and charismatic transvestite activist.³⁹

In addition to portraying the founding personalities, early histories offer a fragmentary composite picture of S.T.A.R., revealing its origins in the midst of a gay liberation occupation at NYU.⁴⁰ Karla Jay recorded a first-hand student account in *Tales of the Lavender Menace*.⁴¹ Activist and journalist Arthur Bell chronicled S.T.A.R.'s relationship to both Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance, theorizing that internal GAA ideological conflict contributed to its recalcitrance toward providing financial support.⁴² In a later gay liberation study, Marotta tangentially examined S.T.A.R., suggesting that disaffection with GAA prompted its formation.⁴³ *The Gay Insiders USA*, an eclectic guide by John Francis Hunter (a.k.a. John Paul Hudson) highlighted the political outlook of S.T.A.R. members and their participation in the 1971 Albany, NY march to promote anti-discrimination legislation.⁴⁴

Sylvia Rivera's prominence as a gay liberation and outspoken transgender activist has garnered recognition for S.T.A.R.⁴⁵ Martin Duberman's *Stonewall* documents how Sylvia, Marsha P. Johnson, and others sheltered young homeless street transvestites in a Lower East Side tenement.⁴⁶ Sylvia recounts her own life story and highlights S.T.A.R.'s

importance in *genderqueer*.⁴⁷ Published interviews clarify the group's ideological underpinnings, its concern for prisoners, and its commitment to revolutionary change born out of a struggle for survival.⁴⁸ Miller, Marotta, and Nagourney and Clendinen mention Sylvia's participation in the Gay Activists Alliance: petitioning for gay rights, arrest, and City Hall testimony.⁴⁹ Recent texts include S.T.A.R. photographs.⁵⁰

S.T.A.R. coalesced during the unbridled passions of the early gay liberation movement, but was undone by the ideological fractiousness unveiled during the 1973 Christopher Street Liberation Day rally. The bitterly public feud—Sylvia storming the stage to speak out for imprisoned transgender half-sisters, Jean O'Leary of Lesbian Feminist Liberation condemning men who impersonated women for entertainment and profit, and Lee Brewster of Queens Liberation Front castigating lesbians for their refusal to let drag queens be themselves—exposed dramatically contrasting views on the meaning of gay liberation (later examined by writers, historians, and activists including Deitcher, Marcus, Marotta, and Vaid).⁵¹

Gay International Youth Society of George Washington High School

Scholars have disregarded high school clubs established during the early 1970s. Washington High School, with more than three thousand multi-ethnic students, was the site of an impassioned and violent struggle for student rights, community control, and racial equity (see Appendix Two news account chronology). Student leader Donald Reeves, author of *Notes of a Processed Brother*, documented the strands of youth activism that preceded a school-based gay liberation group.⁵² Participants hoped for student activism citywide and their group received coverage in the Youth Liberation press.⁵³ Archival records, gay liberation publications, and interviews document school-based gay liberation groups (or attempts at organization) in New York, suburban Maryland, Detroit, and Los Angeles (see Appendix One).⁵⁴ A careful examination of gay liberation histories and recent scholarship reveals no mention the George Washington High School gay-straight club, its ties to Gay Youth, or the critical support offered by the Gay Activists Alliance.

CONTRASTING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG LESBIANS AND GAY MALES

GY, S.T.A.R., and the Gay International Youth Society do not reflect the experiences of all LGBT youth from this period. Some high school students found supportive college and adult groups. For example, one teenager raised on the “wrong side of the tracks,” Lee Leroy (later a freelance stylist

for *Vogue* and now deceased from AIDS), was unmercifully harassed for his glam rock “in your face” attitude, clothes purchased at the Pollyanna Shop, lipstick, and eye shadow. He turned to the local Kent State University gay liberation group.⁵⁵

A close study of directories from the period show no lesbian-centered youth groups.⁵⁶ One young lesbian group—a girl gang known as Street Orphans—has been documented.⁵⁷ However, many radical lesbians were young. The Washington-based collective known as the Furies was comprised of twelve lesbians from eighteen to twenty-eight years old.⁵⁸ High school students spoke out in the lesbian press.⁵⁹ The first Midwest Lesbian Conference, sponsored by the Radicalesbians of Yellow Springs, Ohio, in February 1972, addressed high school women’s concerns.⁶⁰ Pamela Walker (now a history professor at Carleton University) recalls, “young lesbians gravitated towards feminist organizations. . . . Gay organizations by the mid-1970s were seen as ‘male’ and not feminist and expressing ‘bad politics’ (a phrase often used).” Women who associated with gay male groups were liable to be identified as suspect.⁶¹

Activist Gerald Hannon (later embroiled in Canadian government prosecution of *The Body Politic* for articles on intergenerational relationships) contrasted the experiences of female and male couples. He found that adolescent gay males appear to have experienced greater social isolation.⁶²

THE SPIRIT OF THIS RESEARCH

This book documents the important contributions of community- and school-based New York City gay liberation youth groups prior to 1975. Gay Youth, Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, and the Gay International Youth Society addressed a gamut of social injustices affecting the lives of queer and straight youth. They were part of a gay liberation movement built upon an earlier courageous homophile struggle. This study is dedicated to the spirit of liberation expressed by youth in these early groups.

Chapter One

Prior to Gay Liberation: Sin, Crime, and Illness

In American society prior to gay liberation, young people wrestling with issues of sexuality were traditionally confronted by societal barriers characterizing same-sex acts as sinful, criminal, and/or the result of mental illness. Age presented an additional obstacle to gay youth, denying them entry into the culture of bars, an established venue for fellowship. Fearful of “contributing to the delinquency of a minor,” homophile organizations generally refused membership to those under twenty-one.¹

For much of the twentieth century, physicians and psychoanalysts debated whether homosexuality was a vice of weak-willed individuals, an acquired form of insanity, or a degenerate congenital defect.² The 1952 American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* classified homosexuality as a Sociopathic Personality Disturbance, thus giving a medical legitimacy to official and unofficial discrimination.³ Homosexuality, once construed as deviant, sinful, and criminal, was now categorized as a sickness among a class of individuals known as homosexuals. In the 1968 *DSM-II*, sexual deviations including homosexuality were reclassified as Personality Disorders.⁴ The psychiatric profession attempted to pinpoint homosexuality’s cause, classify cases, and find a treatment for its cure.

EDUCATORS’ AND RESEARCHERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON HOMOSEXUALITY

Educational discourse echoed medical discourse. Before the 1970s, the discussion of homosexuality in relationship to education was likely to be ignored or treated with an *a priori* assumption of deviance and illness.⁵ The multiplicity of homosexual behaviors documented by Kinsey et al., and their cautionary advice to refrain from the use of the words “homosexual”

and “heterosexual” “as substantives which stand for persons, or even as adjectives to describe persons,” was largely disregarded within popular and academic discourse; it was however observed by adult activists who generally used the term “homophile” to describe their groups.⁶

Perplexed and troubled by feelings of difference, adolescents were confronted with a homophobic body of literature and a frequently hostile educational system. Sociologist Willard Waller considered homosexuality to be contagious, asserting in *The Sociology of Teaching* (first published in 1932) that the homosexual was liable to develop “an indelicate soppiness in his relations with his favorites.”⁷ He described personality traits principals and superintendents could use to screen prospective male teachers or identify and fire homosexuals already on staff.⁸ The profession’s numerous female teachers were not addressed. These and other predatory attributions rendered educators both vulnerable and reactionary.

The pathological view continued. Bieber’s 1962 study of 106 homosexual patients ascribed same-sex attraction to an unrealistic fear and loathing of the opposite sex that was defined as a pathologic condition.⁹ Youth (as activists Allen Young, Randy Wicker, and Barbara Gittings recall) found few positive gay role models.¹⁰ Oppressive texts such as Bergler, *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life*, 1957; Ellis, *Homosexuality: Its Causes and Cure*, 1964; and Charles Socarides, *The Overt Homosexual*, promulgated views of illness and deviance that caused pain and suffering to readers.¹¹ Daniel Webster Cory’s *The Homosexual in America* was a rare exception.¹²

The theme of deviance shaped curriculum. In NYC, a commonly used sex education text emphasized the unhealthy nature of post-pubescent same-sex affections and the threat predatory adults posed to youth.¹³ This put at risk the very teachers who might otherwise have been able to best assist youth. In New York City, the Board of Education’s Board of Examiners refused to license openly homosexual teachers.¹⁴

OVERTCOMING ISOLATION

Sexual identity development, and thus LGBT student activism, was stymied in the hostile 1950s climate. Barbara Gittings recalled that during the pre-Stonewall era “the big questions for my generation were: ‘Are we normal?’ ‘Are we sick?’ ‘Are we criminal?’ We didn’t ask ‘What legacy are we leaving for the next generation?’ Although we certainly assumed that what we were doing would result in a better world.”¹⁵ Support was tenuous. Interviewed in the movie *Silent Pioneers*, a black lesbian emphasized, “Nobody talked about racism.” Maua Adele Ajanaku, recalled, “If something happened

to me in a bar I couldn't count on anybody standing up and covering my back.”¹⁶

Randy Wicker found the public image of homosexuality bore no relation to his experience as an adolescent.¹⁷ Press accounts presented homosexuals as communists or exotic creatures with falsetto voices. In the 1950s, Burgess and Maclean, labeled as “communist sympathizers” and spies for Russia, were respectively described by the *New York Times* as “admittedly homosexual” and prone to “homosexual tendencies” when drunk.¹⁸ The young and wealthy Leopold and Loeb, infamous as thrill seekers, committed the page one crime of the century, the murder of fourteen-year-old Robert Franks in 1924.¹⁹ Wicker questioned such characterizations.

I had no basis to doubt it in one sense because I wasn't out. But I wasn't effeminate. I didn't speak in a falsetto voice. I loved America and wasn't disloyal—so my rejection of the “stereotype” was simply intuitive.²⁰

Nevertheless, some adolescents did manage to break their isolation and collectively identify feelings of difference. Writer and editor Jack Nichols established an informal high school student group.²¹ Jack shared books such as Daniel Webster Cory's *The Homosexual in America* with friends, developed a social network, held gatherings, and even found key supportive adult mentors.²² While this group of friends was by necessity unobtrusive, it accomplished two of the three steps towards personal affirmation later taken by Gay Youth, namely: breaking isolation and consciousness-raising (leading to the third step of visible protest).

Queer adolescents (and adults!) found informal spots for social interaction. In Florida, young teenagers gathered at a drug store counter.²³ During the early 1950s, Hollywood Boulevard was the place to meet a carload of compatriots.²⁴ In NYC, hustlers and drag queens congregated behind the New York Public Library in Bryant Park, although gays meeting there were subject to police entrapment. Jacob Riis Park in Rockaway, Queens was a popular meeting place during the 1950s and 1960s.²⁵ A revelatory late 1940s photograph shows same sex dancing; couples are apparently jitterbugging by the Long Beach, Long Island dunes (fig. 1.1).

Gay visibility outside of circumscribed safe enclaves carried its dangers. Donald, recorded in *Word Is Out*, explained:

In the sixties [prior to 1969] if you said something to someone about relationships between two men, somebody might want to punch you in the face. Now if you rap to a brother, if he's gonna deal, he'll deal.²⁶



Fig. 1.1. “Pt. Lookout, Long Beach, NY, late 1940s, same sex dancing on the beach.” (Photographer unknown, Collection 017: Gay Beach Photographs, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

The risk of exposure, inability to act, paucity of safe meeting places, and lack of information stymied teenagers from developing a gay identity and finding community.²⁷ Even as late as 1979, many gay males did not come out until adulthood.²⁸

HOMOPHILE MOVEMENT

During the 1950s and 1960s, homophile organizations such as the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society began to challenge the characterization of homosexuality as an illness. The original left leaning Mattachine Society founded by Harry Hay in 1950 (named after the French Société Mattachine in turn derived from the “Italian ‘mattachino’ meaning a court jester who dared to tell the truth to the king”) ²⁹ partook in a ritual in which members stood in a circle and repeated after the Moderator, “Let us hereby resolve that no young person among us need ever take his first step out into the dark alone and afraid again.”³⁰ Hay, a radical force in the early homophile movement, sought to unify isolated

individuals, educate and develop a homosexual culture, and lead via political action.³¹

Members fearful of McCarthy-era persecution unseated its original leadership and Mattachine became increasingly circumspect. It and other homophile groups sought social assimilation, tolerance, and “civil rights within the existing system,” emulating the goals and tactics of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.³² The Mattachine Society endeavored to:

promote educational research projects in all phases of sexual deviation; to aid sexual deviants against discrimination and help them in their adjustments to society; to educate the general and professional members of the public concerning the problems of the sexual deviant.³³

The Daughters of Bilitis was named for “the heroine of the fictional *Songs of Bilitis* by Pierre Louys portrayed as a contemporary of Sappho and living a lesbian life.”³⁴ It served “women over twenty-one years of age interested in furthering the education of the variant, in assisting her to adjust to society, and in working towards the goal of educating the public toward an acceptance of the homophile in society.”³⁵

The Daughters of Bilitis and Mattachine sponsored public forums, published journals, and bravely demonstrated “to call attention to injustices perpetuated against homosexuals.” Jack Nichols, Frank Kameny, Lilli Vincenz and seven others held the first gay civil rights picket of the White House on April 17, 1965.³⁶ The efforts of homophile groups to “integrate the homosexual citizen into the community” established the groundwork for the gay liberation movement.³⁷

BARRIERS TO YOUTH

Homophile groups, whose members were vulnerable to being stigmatized as “dirty old men/women,” were off-limits to adolescents.³⁸ Even during the 1970s, many adolescent males were loath to admit an age and high school status that identified them as “jail bait.”³⁹ Young lesbians faced similar hurdles. Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, the founders of Daughters of Bilitis, wrote:

The teenage Lesbian has a particular problem which has not been met. Homophile organizations, like the Daughters of Bilitis, have had to refuse membership to those under 21 for fear that they will be charged with “contributing to the delinquency of a minor.” The teenager has no one to turn to.⁴⁰

Homophile organizations continued to bar adolescent participation even after the upsurge of gay liberation. Julie Lee Lehman, Secretary and Lesbian Counselor, Daughters of Bilitis, N.J., corresponded with women of all ages throughout the country. Adolescents posed questions about lesbianism, coming out, access to support, literature, and even personal problems. Lehman wrote thoughtful and supportive responses to the prodigious influx, but as late as August 1972, she invariably advised young lesbians to wait for the age of majority before approaching a local DOB group.⁴¹

The coming out stories documented adolescents' lack of awareness about same-sex attraction.⁴² Even the lucky few who received familial support were only able to interpret their feelings years later. Elena recounted, "The many guilt-laden years when I felt I was a misfit, a queer or a pervert. . . . The only knowledge I had about Lesbians came from Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness*, which my mother gave me when I was 14 and in the throes of a serious crush on a girl in high school."⁴³ Deborah Goleman Wolf's analysis of coming out experiences revealed a pattern of gradual self-recognition—often beginning in childhood or adolescence, but slowed by isolation, lack of information, and fear of disclosure, particularly prior to gay liberation. Coming-out involved:

- (1) an attraction, sometimes as early as the age of five, to a girl playmate;
- (2) a strong crush on a female teacher; (3) an awareness of fantasizing romantic scenarios about a specific girlfriend, usually in one's teens;
- (4) the drabness or "unnaturalness" experienced in trying to date boys and not really wanting to; (5) finally coming across some mention of homosexuality, often vivid and negative, and realizing that one is probably a lesbian; (6) trying to correlate with this realization all the negative stereotypes absorbed from the prevailing culture; and (7) finally coming to terms with it in some way and trying to find others like oneself.⁴⁴

Some adolescents cognizant of same-sex attractions managed to associate in informal ways that mitigated detection and censure. The lucky few found supportive role models, sympathetic adults, and literature. Ideological and practical barriers posed by the family, church, state, schools, and medical establishment stifled opportunities for formal organization. Homophile groups were unable to counter societal strictures and adequately address youth concerns, but gay liberation smashed the age barrier and inspired youth activism.

Chapter Two

Ideology and Practice: Program Types

The gay liberation youth groups examined in this book comprise one of eight types that have arisen since the 1950s. Missions and practices have evolved along with the social and political climate. Homophile organizations (pre-1966) laid the groundwork for gay liberation groups (1966 to the mid-1970s). Later groups were influenced by the assimilationist movement for sexual minority rights (1970s onwards), and quickened by queer activism (1990s to present).

The first publicly recognized queer youth organizations in the U.S. were not established until 1966, but there were earlier *informal underground networks* of adolescents. In 1953, at the age of fifteen, writer and activist Jack Nichols was inspired by Daniel Webster Cory's book *The Homosexual in America*.¹ Three ideas were transformative for Nichols: moving from "handicap to strength"—a view he took very much to heart, discrimination's corrosive power to provoke self-doubt and disdain for other homosexuals, and the prevalence of homosexuals.² Nichols shared the book with high school friends and established a sub-rosa social group.

David Carter's *Stonewall* documents NYC gay youth who banded together years before the Stonewall riots. High school student Robert Rivera (a.k.a. Birdie) and other gay youth initiated the Commando Queens, a gang for those between eleven and eighteen years of age, during the mid-1960s. The group had a precise "code of ethics." Birdie explained, "You had to be kind to someone every day; you had to make sure your makeup was okay; couldn't be dirty; had to protect somebody who was getting beat up, someone who was queer; couldn't wear bras or girdles, no leather."³

In a more informal pre-Stonewall example, Nick, whose oral history was recorded in *Word Is Out*, described a private seventh grade party, when:

all of a sudden, these two gals just started to French-kiss one another—I guess we were around thirteen. They were just kissing and kissing. So we put on these slow records, and all of the boys were dancing together to these real slow fifties' rock-and-roll records, and all the gals were sitting over on the couch French-kissing. And I really loved it!⁴

Gay liberation youth groups (1966—mid 1970s) called for revolutionary change. For example, Gay Youth advocated personal and social transformation, joining forces with other gay liberation groups. It challenged age of consent laws and ageism. Nineteen-year-old GY leader Mark Segal, who today is publisher of *Philadelphia Gay News*, argued that any retraction of sodomy laws should also include those under twenty-one.⁵ The stakes were high. “In nine states, sodomy laws were explicitly rewritten so that they only applied to gay people,” beginning with Kansas in 1969 and followed by Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, Tennessee, and Texas in the 1970s.⁶ As recently as 2003, a Kansas teenager faced a 17-year sentence for consensual sex with a younger teen, before the conviction was overturned.⁷

S.T.A.R. adolescents and young adults established a communal transgender household, advocated an inclusive gay liberation program of transvestite rights, and served homeless street youth in a direct hands-on manner, thus formalizing pre-existing street bonds. High school students invited gay liberation and homophile speakers such as Frank Kameny to schools and organized groups with political and social goals.⁸

After the era of gay liberation, an emphasis on assimilation and civil rights yielded *community-based social service programs* for queer youth. Beginning in the mid-1970s such programs could be found in Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, New York, Seattle, and San Francisco.⁹ They have typically offered social connection, emotional support, housing, medical referrals, HIV education in response to the AIDS crisis, employment assistance, and youth advocacy.

Since 1984, with the founding of Project 10 in Los Angeles, *school-based programs* have helped sexual minority students cope with homophobia and harassment. Studies of such programs (Project 10, two Texas support groups, and a Maryland counseling group) reveal ideologies in which sexual orientation is defined by one's core essence, rather than social and cultural forces (a perspective known as essentialism).¹⁰ While these groups provide safe and confidential meeting places intended to promote self-esteem and reduce risk, the acceptance of sexual identity is viewed as a predetermined stage process—a misinterpretation of theories that in fact acknowledge the importance of sociocultural and historical

forces in shaping sexuality development.¹¹ In one such group the counselor asserted that “self-identification as a bisexual is simply a step toward full acceptance of one’s homosexuality.” One boy resisted this ideological bind. He ultimately rejected the label “homosexual.” Asked, “When did you decide you were bi?” he speculated, “When I took out all the blocks in my head?”¹²

Four *alternative schools*, both public and private, have provided separate and safe educational environments for queer youth while addressing social service needs. The earliest was New York’s Harvey Milk School, founded in 1985. Public programs also include the Los Angeles EAGLES Center—Emphasizing Adolescent Gay, Lesbian Education Services (1991)—with a large percentage of Latino students, and Toronto’s Triangle School Program (1995).¹³ The private Walt Whitman Community School, in Dallas, Texas, was established in 1993. Such schools provide a supportive environment to students who may have experienced catastrophic coming-out experiences, systemic homophobia and subsequent violence, homelessness, substance abuse, and prostitution, often rendering them exhausted and initially unable to express themselves.¹⁴

The advent of *Gay-Straight Alliances*, from 1989 onwards, has encouraged the integration of lesbian, gay, straight, bisexual, transgender, and questioning students.¹⁵ Beginning in 1990, just as Gay-Straight Alliances gained a foothold in high schools, Queer Nation initiated “direct-action struggles against homophobia” in over 50 American and Canadian cities.¹⁶ Ideologically, GSAs incorporate disparate views. Sexual identity is viewed variously as a biological imperative, socially constructed artificial divide, and/or an artifact of political and social oppression.

Online safe spaces, first established in the 1990s, offer anonymous communication where ideology reflects an ever-shifting membership.¹⁷ An *anti-homophobia education* program initiated in 1992 and established in 1993 supports critical and queer discourse in which members both advocate social change and study their own understandings of gender and sexual identity.¹⁸

SEXUAL IDEOLOGIES: CONSTRUCTIONS OF SEXUAL IDENTITIES

Each of these group types has been influenced by contrasting *sexual ideologies*, mental frameworks that shape how individuals and societies construct and understand sexual identities.¹⁹ Educator and scholar James Sears diagrams sexuality and gender using concentric circles of a sexual diversity wheel juxtaposing biological sex, gender identity, gender

role (social sex role), sexual behavior, and sexual identity on a continuum from gay to straight.²⁰ Identities are continuously shifting in response to the interplay of history, culture, and power. Individual identity is not an accomplished fact; it is an evolving “production” constituted within a *positioned* context.²¹

Belief systems determine the meanings that groups have historically ascribed to sex, sexuality, types of love, identities, femininity, and masculinity.²² Accordingly, programs have viewed sexual expression as an avenue to personal and political liberation, helped members to assume a fixed homosexual identity, encouraged youth to assert a personal identity, and/or challenged discourse about fixed identity categories.²³ Hall defines ideologies as:

the mental frameworks—the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation—which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works.²⁴

Sexual ideologies are rooted in philosophical traditions that contrast realism (categories construed as footprints or reflections of a universal reality) with nominalism (categorical names representing a socially constructed order).²⁵ Scholars Boswell, Fuss, Sedgwick, and West have contrasted essentialist (realist) and social constructionist (nominalist) sexual ideologies, their theoretical underpinnings, and social implications.²⁶

In “Liberationists Clients, Activists: Queer Youth Organizing, 1966–2003,” I considered how the ideologies relevant to program praxis—*essentialism, existential constructivism, gay liberation, critical theory, and queer theory*—maintain or challenge the political status quo.²⁷ Worldviews range from objective to increasingly subjective. Gay liberation youth groups were part of a movement that embraced radical change and rejected regulated, categorical views of sexual identity. In my analysis based upon the sociological work of Burrell and Morgan, Capper, and Sears, I arranged ideologies on a two dimensional field. One axis represents views on the nature of science (objective to subjective); the other represents perspectives on the nature of society (regulation to radical change) (fig. 2.1).²⁸

Here, I situate the three youth groups under study within this framework. While gay liberation clearly shaped group practice, critical theory and existential constructivism were also important. In addition, S.T.A.R. brazenly surfaced gender and sexual identity issues that would later concern queer theorists.

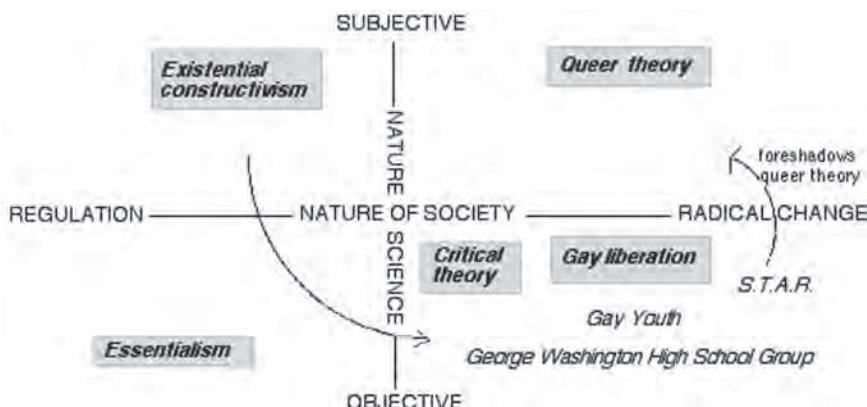


Fig. 2.1. Ideologies Relevant to Queer Youth Group Practice.

Social Change as Incremental and Regulated

Essentialism has dominated western views on race, gender, and sexual orientation. In its most constricting form, essentialism reduces “the complex questions of sexual, racial, and even class differences to irreducible biological imperatives,”²⁹ thereby reinforcing many social prejudices and stereotypes that are often elevated to scientific truth. During the decades before gay liberation, the act of naming oneself within an essentialist framework was freighted with stereotypical religious, psychiatric, and legal definitions of deviancy. Youth, unable to join adult homophile organizations, found few sources of support. Gay liberationists, building on the preceding homophile movement’s incremental challenge of stereotypes, would refuse to be branded, and thereby diminished, by labels which presented sexual identity as culture-independent, constant throughout history, and binary (heterosexual or homosexual). Racial categories have been subjected to similar challenge. Cornel West, for example, has argued, “blackness has no meaning outside of a system of race-conscious people and practices.”³⁰

In contrast, an *existential constructivist* approach assumes a subjective, personal ascription of meaning to same-sex desires, fantasies, and behaviors. Personal experience dictates definitions of individual identity but does not directly challenge existing social order.³¹ Programs such as Chicago’s Horizons, founded in 1978 with an existential constructivist understanding of sexual identity (e.g., Rogerian, experiential, or Reality therapy) provide a safe climate that fosters trust in self and personal experience.³² Sexual identity formation entails the discovery or construction of an

authentic self without fully analyzing the regulation of experience by social forces.³³ It was an encounter group that sparked the idea for a gay liberation group at George Washington High School. In this case, students also reframed personal dilemmas within a broader political context of prejudice, sexism, and power.³⁴

Radical Social Change

Critical theory seeks to emancipate the oppressed (and oppressor) via a pedagogy that objectively analyzes how and in whose interests “social, cultural, and institutional practices” define identities.³⁵ Educator Joseph Grannis argued the school serves as a model of society.³⁶ Critical theorists have defined this relationship in economic and political terms: “The educational system helps integrate youth in the economic system” through a set of social relations that replicates the hierarchical division of labor in the workplace³⁷ where social relations and classroom knowledge are shaped by ideology.³⁸ Legitimacy is conferred insofar as the curriculum is congruent with the power and interests of the larger society.³⁹

Gay liberationists incorporated critical theory’s challenge to dominant power structures. A 1972 iteration of the Gay Youth Rights Platform directly challenges the educational status quo, by insisting on:

an end to repression of gay youth within the school and religious systems. (Compulsory education is a form of imprisonment, and must end.) We demand the right to form our education according to our needs. Young people must have the complete knowledge to understand and unhindered rights to experience their own choices of sexuality.⁴⁰

Gay liberation raised the collective consciousness of a generation that sought to abolish oppressive institutions that reinforced traditional sex roles. Individuals previously steeped in personal guilt and self-rejection renounced preoccupation with homosexuality’s etiology. Gay liberation presumed an “innate polymorphous, androgynous human nature.”⁴¹ GLF member Jim Fouratt rejected “artificial categories defining human sexuality, [that served] to protect and perpetuate the institutions and systems in power whose end result is only to dehumanize life,” proclaiming “off the word homosexual!”⁴² Personal liberation was linked to political liberation of institutions (the nuclear family, schools, and courts) that served capitalist interests.⁴³ Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) leader Carl Wittman, in his 1969/1970 “Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto”, urged, “Free ourselves: come out, everywhere; initiate self-defense and political activity; initiate community institutions; think.”⁴⁴ The Third World Gay Revolution

platform demanded “a free non-compulsory education system that teaches us our true identity and history, and presents the entire range of human sexuality, without advocating any one form or style.”⁴⁵ New York’s Radicalesbians—one of numerous local lesbian feminist groups throughout the United States—extended the analysis of New York GLF, emphasizing revolution as “process not goal.”⁴⁶

Driven by a pre-Stonewall liberation ethos, San Francisco teenagers, too young to join adult organizations, founded their own groups. The advent of gay liberation in New York City catalyzed several youth groups. Gay Youth broke social isolation and demanded an end to sexism and compulsory education. Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries challenged gender norms and afforded shelter to homeless adolescents. At George Washington High, students emulated the social and political goals of Gay Youth and the Gay Activists Alliance. By the mid-seventies many, but not all, gay liberation groups had foundered, and the role of youth had shifted from activist to a client in need of social services.

Queer theory, arising nearly two decades after gay liberation, promotes radical change and invokes subjective processes. Extending gay liberation’s challenge of sexual categories, queer theorists have analyzed the status of categories *per se* and questioned positivist representations of a single truthful reality.⁴⁷ Multiple subjective interpretations of sexuality subvert monolithic traditional notions of sex, gender, sex role, and sexual orientation. Rather than merely demand inclusion, an end to discrimination, and rights for non-normative sexual minorities, queer theorists dispute normative constructions of sexuality.

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, in its call for a “full voice in the struggle for liberation of all people” and a demand for “identification of the opposite gender” for transvestites, foreshadowed the queer theoretical contention that biological sex ≠ gender, as well as its affirmation of gay liberation’s refusal to assimilate.⁴⁸

IMPLICATIONS

Gay Youth, S.T.A.R., and the high school-based Gay International Youth Society rebelled against classifications based upon illness, sin, and criminality. Gay liberation (and to a lesser degree, existential constructivism and critical theory) shaped group practice. These groups were visible, strident, and youth-led. They engaged in outreach and consciousness-raising. In a cyclic process, youth helped spark the gay liberation movement that in turn encouraged the formation of dozens of community and school-based gay liberation youth groups in the U.S. and Canada.

Chapter Three

Gay Liberation Shapes Youth Activism

During the 1950s, options for queer youth were limited. Homophile groups, the foundation of gay liberation movement to follow, were generally officially off-limits to those under twenty-one. A few intrepid youths did congregate in public locales and develop informal underground networks.¹

By 1966, three years prior to the Stonewall Riots, adolescents in San Francisco's Tenderloin breached heretofore rigidly enforced age barriers. Young hustlers, dealers, drug users, transvestites, effeminate "hair fairies," and runaways (supported by progressive ministers at Glide Memorial Methodist Church) established Vanguard, a group that challenged typical notions of propriety, even within the existing homophile community.² Members fought against exploitation by slumlords, opportunistic merchants, drug pushers, and real estate speculators—all reinforced by the apathy of church and state that contributed to a corrupt city power structure. In August 1966, Vanguard and Street Orphans (a young lesbians group) rioted at Compton's all-night cafeteria that served as a "hang-out for gay hustlers, 'hair fairies,' queens, and street kids of every gender who were too poor, too young, or too gender transgressive to be allowed in the bars."³

The NYC police raid on the Stonewall Bar in June 1969 precipitated a rebellion that accelerated the transformation of the political and personal landscape. Passion, stridency, and *visibility*—sparked by the street kids camped out in Christopher Park who played a critical protest role at Stonewall—soon replaced the homophile movement's search for acceptance and assimilation.⁴ Pop art, acid rock, psychotropic drugs, and the hippies' expression of peace, love, and happiness changed the cultural landscape. The women's movement, Black liberation, Young Lords, and anti-war protests catalyzed gay liberationists to use words, gestures, and acts of love to challenge an ageist, sexist, patriarchal system.⁵

Adopting a gay identity in 1969 meant more than simply affirming one's same-sex orientation by declaring oneself "a homosexual"; it meant positioning oneself in relation to a clearly articulated set of commitments and ideals associated at the time with radical politics. First and foremost, being gay in 1969, 1970, or 1971 meant being out of the closet and against the Vietnam War.⁶

Thousands of gay liberationists would (as one placard announced) "come out against war and oppression,"⁷ decrying the war's sexist underpinnings: "One-two-three-four, we don't want your macho war."⁸ The April 1971 *Gay Flames* article, "May Day is Gay Day" (fig. 3.1) proclaimed:

For many years, many of us went to anti-war marches hiding our gayness. . . . Now, we say to the anti-war movement that Gay Liberation Is Anti-war Movement / Movement Against War. Yes, May Day Is Gay Day—our gayness and our liberation movement is a basic anti-war statement in itself.

War, American style, is a man's game, where, to prove his masculinity, he must maim or kill women, children, the very old, the very young, and his own brothers. War is an extension of our own oppression because it reinforces the masculine image of males, and forces them into playing roles where the end result is the death of millions of people.

The concept of sexism relates directly to the machinery that grinds out war after war.⁹

Sexual acts were construed as transformative revolutionary acts. A 1970 Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day marcher conveyed colorful anti-war sentiment with the T-shirt slogan, "Suck Cock to Beat the Draft."¹⁰ Gay liberation was part of "the Movement," drawing upon and supporting feminist, Black liberation, and anti-war ideologies (fig. 3.2). This ethos is captured by a placard declaring "NO ONE IS FREE UNTIL EVERYONE IS FREE!!" carried by GLF demonstrators (fig. 3.3). Black New York City high school students had previously used identical language (found in the speeches of Martin Luther King) to emphasize how anti-racist educational reforms would also benefit White students.¹¹ In the spring of 1970, *Come Out* published New York GLF's mission statement.

Gay Liberation Front is a revolutionary homosexual group of men and women formed with the realization that complete sexual liberation for all people cannot come about unless existing social institutions are



Fig. 3.1. "Washington D.C. Peace Rally, April 24, 1971," Women reading *Gay Flames* "May Day Is Gay Day" issue. (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 1064A, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

abolished. We reject society's attempt to impose sexual roles and definitions of our nature. We are stepping outside these roles and simplistic myths. We are going to be who we are. At the same time, we are creating new social forms and relations, that is, relations based upon brotherhood, cooperation, human love, and uninhibited sexuality. Babylon has forced us to commit ourselves to one thing . . . revolution.¹²

In a flurry of organizing, the new generation of gay liberationists established hundreds of groups, many with adolescent members.¹³ The highly visible and vocal Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries



Fig. 3.2. "Gays Say Out Now," Washington D.C., April 24, 1971. (Richard C. Wandel, 1064C.)

sheltered vulnerable teenagers.¹⁴ Youth also formed their own strictly under-21 groups. Directories, articles, early gay liberation literature, and activists themselves offer evidence of a largely forgotten, but surprisingly robust U.S. and Canadian gay youth movement that resulted in the founding of at least forty under-21 groups from 1966 to the mid-1970s (see Appendix One).

New York Gay Youth, for those under twenty-one, organized national affiliates not only on the East and West coasts, but also in the Midwest, Plains, and South. Some considered these Gay Youth chapters to constitute a movement in its own right.¹⁵ High school groups sponsored social and educational events, inviting gay liberation and homophile representatives. Gay liberation shaped their practice (see Table 1).¹⁶



Fig. 3.3 "Detail from *Come Out!* centerfold photo collage." (*Come Out!* 1, no. 1, 1969: 8–9.)

Table 1. Characteristics of gay liberation youth groups (1969—circa 1975) in the U.S.

Characteristic	Description
Ideology:	Gay and pre-gay liberation: sexual liberation for all people requires existing social institutions be transformed or abolished.
Mission/goals:	Political and social outreach to overcome isolation and achieve a revolutionary society where all are free.
Organization:	Grassroots. Open meetings. Officers chosen in some groups.
Setting:	Open and non-confidential.
Membership:	Defined by commitment to gay liberation. Multiple racial, ethnic, gender identities. Children as young as nine expressed interest. Groups run by and for youth (see GY participants, Chapter Four).
History:	GY and S.T.A.R. grew out of post-Stonewall activism. San Francisco's Vanguard and Street Orphans (a young lesbians group) predate Stonewall. San Francisco's Tenderloin district, “the flashpoint of homophile and . . . minority civil rights activism,” was home to street youth and adults, transgendered people, drag queens, hustlers, and others who organized with support from Glide Memorial Church. ¹⁷ Vanguard and Street Orphans “later became the old Gay Liberation Front in San Francisco.” ¹⁸
Role of youth:	Social activists, leaders, demonstrators, writers, and members of gay liberation movement.
Role of adults:	Partners and allies.
Outreach:	Via Movement newspapers, GY's <i>Gay Journal</i> and <i>Vanguard</i> newsletters, protest marches, street actions, radio shows, dances, community center support.
Practice:	Consciousness-raising linking the personal and political, public demonstrations, organizing, outreach to peers, participation in the broader Movement.
Sexual identity:	Androgynous human nature. Identities transcend “straight” definitions of sex role, gender, and sexual orientation.

(Continued)

Table 1. Characteristics of gay liberation youth groups (1969—circa 1975) in the U.S. (Continued)

Characteristic	Description
Homophobia:	Homophobia (even before the term was coined in the late 1960s) was linked to sexism, racism, and a host of oppressions eventually expressed in the chant “Gay, Straight, Black, White; Same Struggle, Same Fight.”
Youth experience:	Social interaction, transformation of consciousness, understanding of oppression, proud expression of non-conforming identities.
Climate:	Public statements of visibility and pride help end isolation. Coalition with other Movement groups promotes social change. Vocal challenge to religious, medical, and legal discourse.
Coming-out:	“Gay is good.” Publicly visible declaration. To be oneself. To create new forms of social relations freed from constricting sex roles.

MAPPING IDEOLOGICAL CONNECTIONS: NYC GAY LIBERATION YOUTH GROUPS

S.T.A.R., Gay Youth, (and the less prominent) George Washington High School's Gay International Youth Society comprised only one part of the fabric of an early broad-based NYC gay liberation movement (outlined in Table 2).

As a Gay Liberation Front sub-group and then independent with national affiliates, Gay Youth was well positioned to comment on gay liberation's progress. *Gay Youth's Gay Journal* offered the following summary:

GAA [Gay Activists Alliance] flourished quickly and witnessed maverick growth, while GLF became more and more radical. GLF [Gay Liberation Front] continued to have dissension within its memberships, with more groups forming upon leaving GLF. Women, because of male-chauvinism within GLF, separated and formed Radicalesbians. Street people felt they couldn't relate with GLF, since they were treated as a lower form of life, and formed Street Transvestites [sic]

Evolution of Selected Gay Liberation and Homophile Groups

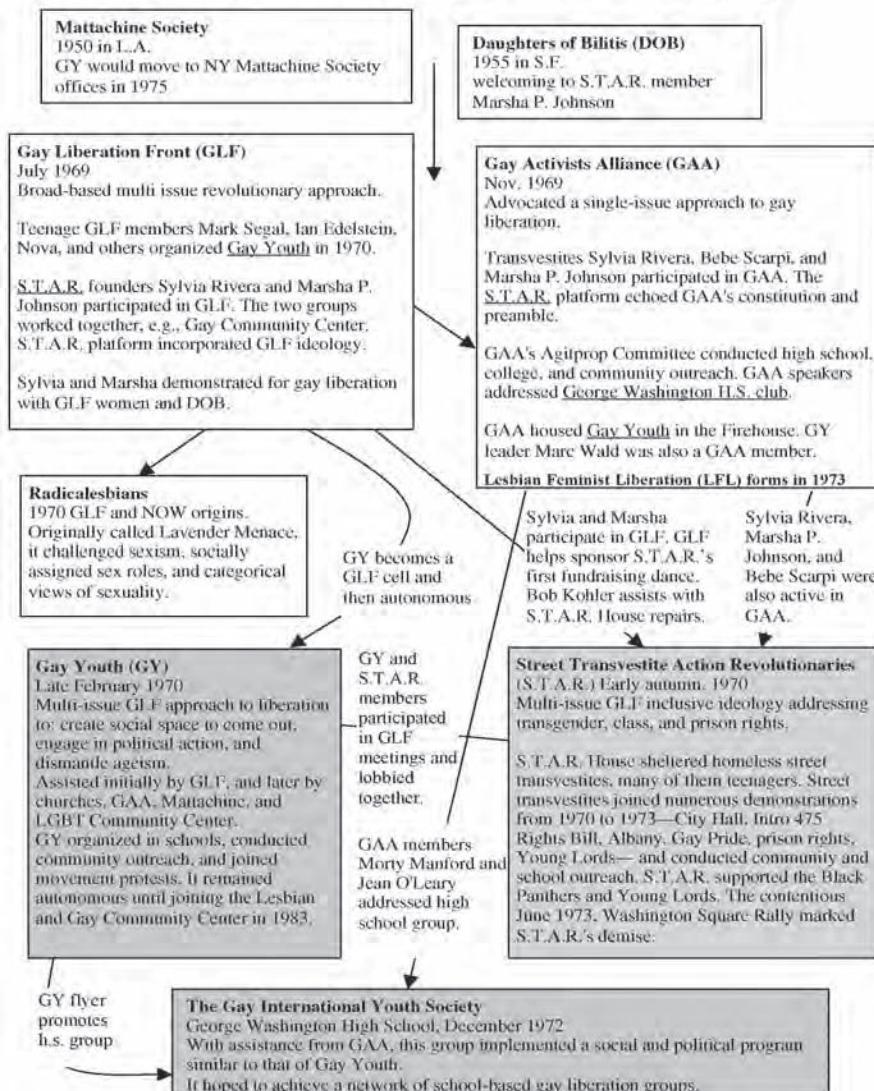


Table 2. Evolution of Selected Gay Liberation and Homophile Groups showing New York gay liberation and connections giving rise to Gay Youth, S.T.A.R., and the Gay International Youth Society.

Action Revolutionaries (STAR), and Transvestites and Transexuals (TAT). Another group, Gay Youth, left GLF because we thought we could relate better to our own age group. This is the story of what's happened in New York as well as other major cities in the United States.¹⁹

Other adult groups—GAA, Radicalesbians, and ultimately even the previously recalcitrant Mattachine Society—also included or interacted with youth. GY members helped organize Christopher Street Liberation Day marches, protested NYU's closure of Weinstein Hall, and lobbied school officials.

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries' first dance was supported by GY and co-sponsored by Gay Liberation Front with whom it also joined to organize the short-lived Gay Community Center. Street transvestites were also members of GLF and GAA where they participated in numerous protests, City Hall hearings, and anti-prison abuse organizing.

As gay liberation evolved, the Gay Activists Alliance engaged in an ambitious outreach effort; AgitProp (agitation-propaganda) Committee speakers addressed hundreds of high school and college students, community groups, political groups, and block associations.²⁰ The committee agitated “for large-scale change in the attitudes of people—to stop discrimination.” Over a four-month period, it conducted about sixty speaking engagements (most of them in high schools) preceded by written materials and a film.²¹ In 1972, GAA speakers addressed Washington High School’s NYC gay-straight club. Students rather than adults initiated the club, and participants represented a multiplicity of sexual, gender, and racial identities.²²

Gay Youth's Platform

Organizational break-ups and alliances were common. Gay Youth demands reflected GLF roots and an anti-sexist Radicalesbian/GLF stance. GY demands also resembled those of the contemporaneous Third World Gay Liberation which called for full legal protection of all human self-expression—whether of Third World people, women, or youth—and the abolition of the nuclear family that “perpetuates the false categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality by creating sex roles, sex definitions and sexual exploitation.”²³ Every child was seen to have the “right to develop in a non-sexist, non-racist, non-possessive atmosphere, which is the responsibility of all people, including gays, to create.” Third World Gay Liberation advocated:

a free non-compulsory education system that teaches us our true identity and history, and presents the entire range of human sexuality, without advocating any one form or style; that sex roles and determination of skills according to sex be eliminated from the school system; that language be modified so that no gender takes priority; and that gay people must share in the responsibilities of education.²⁴

Breaking down age barriers was key to GY's platform. Its demands are voiced within the context of fighting ageism, whether within the nuclear family, schools, or even the gay liberation movement itself. Gay Youth and S.T.A.R. shared concerns about prison injustice and discrimination against those with less power. The GY platform evolved. The following hard hitting version, by Mark Segal and Philip Janison, was a revision of earlier work.²⁵

GAY YOUTH RIGHTS PLATFORM

WHEREAS gay people are challenged by a unique set of circumstances in such a way gay youth are challenged by a different sometimes harder set of circumstances;

WHEREAS women must be free and equal. Sex role stereotyping in education must end. Institutional sexism in the law, employment, the church, and the family must be stopped. Women are systematically oppressed by a male supremacist society;

WHEREAS ideas should be judged on their merit and people on their kindness or wisdom;

THEREFORE we demand an end to repression of gay youth within the school and religious systems. (Compulsory education is a form of imprisonment, and must end.) We demand the right to form our education according to our needs. Young people must have the complete knowledge to understand and unhindered rights to experience their own choices of sexuality.

WHEREAS the nuclear family roles are not in the best interests of gay men and women, our heterosexual sisters, and society as a whole and young people are considered property to be molded in the image of their parents;

THEREFORE we demand an end to parental abuse of gay youth in all forms.

THEREFORE we demand the right to live in a manner where we can learn co-operation of the community rather than the oppression of the male-dominated family and society.

(THEREFORE we demand not only re-affirmation of, but action upon the repeal of the age of consent laws on the local, state, and federal levels.)

THEREFORE we demand the immediate release of all gay juvenile sisters and brothers involuntarily incarcerated in mental institutions due solely to their sexual preferences. We further demand that brothers and sisters desiring counseling for mental and emotional problems as a result of oppression sickness because of society and its repressive attitudes, be given proper counseling without the attempt to "cure" them of their sexuality.

THEREFORE we demand the release of all juveniles who are imprisoned for victimless sex acts.

THEREFORE we demand that juvenile authorities acknowledge gay individuals and couples as suitable foster placements.

THEREFORE we demand an equal voice in all matters concerning ourselves and Gay Liberation in general. We strongly urge that from now on all groups being invited to attend any conference or convention send at least one delegate who is under 21, and make an honest evaluation of their attitudes and relations towards third world gays and women.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we demand an end to ageism in all forms, (equal privileges and rights afforded so-called "adults," and fair treatment with equal respect).

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we demand an end to ageism as it relates to younger gays exploiting older gays.

Under 21 Caucus of SWR/NCGO June 30—July 3, 1972

Passed by Planary [sic] Meeting of SWR/NCGO by unanimous decision [sic]²⁶

Platform of Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries

S.T.A.R.'s platform combined terminology reflecting Gay Liberation Front's revolutionary anti-capitalist convictions with Gay Activists Alliance demands for employment protections and freedom of expression.²⁷ S.T.A.R.

leaders Sylvia Rivera and Marsha Johnson (spelled Marcia by some) participated in GLF and GAA. Bebe Scarpi (Scarpinato), a college student who lived with her family in Queens, was also an active GAA member.

S.T.A.R. called for an end to the oppression of transvestites and street people rendered vulnerable by their youth and conditions of homelessness, disease, prostitution, and drugs. Paid sex with heterosexual men rendered transvestites especially subject to disclosure and subsequent violence. S.T.A.R. offered an analysis of societal injustice and plan of action.

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries

The oppression against Transvestites of either sex arises from sexist values and this oppression is manifested by heterosexuals and homosexuals of both sexes in the form of exploitation, ridicule, harrassment [sic], beatings, rapes, murders.

Because of this oppression the majority of transvestites are forced into the street and we have formed a strong alliance with our gay sisters and brothers of the street. Who we are a part of and represent we are; a part of the REVOLUTIONARIES [sic] armies fighting against the system.

1. We want the right to self-determination over the use of our bodies; the right to be gay, anytime, anyplace; the right to free physiological change and modification of sex on demand; the right to free dress and adornment.
2. The end to all job discrimination against transvestites of both sexes and gay street people because of attire.
3. The immediate end of all police harrassment [sic] and arrest of transvestites and gay street people, and the release of transvestites and gay street people from all prisons and all other political prisoners.
4. The end to all exploitive practices of doctors and psychiatrists who work in the field of transvestism.
5. Transvestites who live as members of the opposite gender should be able to obtain identification of the opposite gender.
6. Transvestites and gay street people and all oppressed people should have free education, health care, clothing, food, transportation, and housing.
7. Transvestites and gay street people should be granted full and equal rights on all levels of society, and full voice in the struggle for liberation of all oppressed people.

8. An end to exploitation and discrimination against transvestites within the homosexual world.
9. We want a revolutionary peoples' government, where transvestites, street people, women, homosexuals, puerto ricans, indians, and all oppressed people are free, and not fucked over by this government who treat us like the scum of the earth and kills us off like flies, one by one, and throws us into jail to rot. This government who spends millions of dollars to go to the moon, and lets the poor Americans starve to death.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

S. T. A. R.²⁸

Incorporation of Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) Ideology: Civil Rights Protections

As a member of GAA, Sylvia Rivera would have attended an orientation outlining GAA philosophy, use of *Robert's Rules*, and the group's democratic process. Indeed, archival copies of S.T.A.R.'s platform and GAA's constitution and bylaws were filed together.²⁹ While GAA was a single-issue organization, New Left ideas identifying the systemic mechanisms responsible for gay oppression were incorporated into its preamble.³⁰ GAA stipulated:

We as liberated homosexual activists demand the freedom for expression of our dignity and value as human beings through confrontation with and disarmament of all mechanisms which unjustly inhibit us: economic, social and political. Before the public conscience, we demand an immediate end to all oppression of homosexuals and the immediate unconditional recognition of these basic rights.³¹

GAA demanded the "right to our own feelings" (to embrace same sex attractions free from question or challenge), "right to love" (to express feelings in action), "right to our own bodies," and "right to be persons" (to freely express individuality) and "be bearers of social and political rights" (guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights).³² GAA was completely and solely dedicated to the homosexual cause.³³ The section, "The Right To Our Own Bodies," stipulated:

This is the right to treat and express our bodies as we will, to nurture, display and embellish them solely in the manner we ourselves determine independent of any external control whatsoever.³⁴

The S.T.A.R. platform, including explicitly transgender concerns, expressed similar sentiments:

We want the right to self-determination over the use of our bodies; the right to be gay, anytime, anywhere; the right to free physiological change and modification of sex on demand; the right to free dress and adornment.³⁵

The sense of personal liberation arising from a synthesis of New Left ideals, activist tactics, and a reform agenda was expressed by Marty Robinson, a GAA founding member:

Old-line gay groups react in dismay to the new recklessness, the militancy, the honest forceful demand for total liberation. It's a joyous demand, and more than that, it contains the potential for great political power. . . . gays comprise one of the largest minorities in America. They are capable of getting the representation they need, but can only do so, it seems, by public confrontations that make politicians face and respond to issues they otherwise avoid.³⁶

S.T.A.R. positions on employment protection (particularly its second demand) mirrored GAA initiatives to pass employment and housing legislation, repeal state sodomy laws, and prohibit police entrapment.³⁷ Sylvia Rivera and other transvestites participated in GAA petition drives, demonstrations, and direct confrontations that prompted city council hearings. (Sadly, NYC legislation was only passed in 1986, after the GAA had disbanded.)

Expression of Gay Liberation Front (GLF) Ideology: Revolution

Sylvia, Marsha, Nova, and other transgender GLF members shared GLF's (and its many cells') multi-faceted revolutionary conviction against sexism, capitalism, and racism. For example, S.T.A.R.'s insistence on a "revolutionary people's government" bears much in common with GLF's Red Butterfly cell, "an association of gay men and women who as revolutionary socialists see their liberation linked to the class struggle."³⁸ Red Butterfly's analysis of oppression focused on "the interests and ideologies of an authoritarian capitalist society" perpetuated by "the nuclear, authoritarian, patricentric, monogamous family" that treated children as property. Red Butterfly's members rejected token (and therefore revisionist) reforms that did not address the fundamental structural oppression of women, children, and third world people. "Our goal is not better bars, recognized marriage, entry into

the military or even jobs." Rather, this GLF cell condemned imperialist wars waged to maintain an inequitable, unjust, ecologically unsound system.³⁹

S.T.A.R. agitated for each and every element of its platform. S.T.A.R.'s demand for self-determination resembled GLF's call to step outside of restrictive sex roles and definitions. S.T.A.R. identified sexism as a root cause of oppression, as did Radicalesbians and Gay Liberation Front. It is the demand for "a revolutionary peoples' government . . . where all oppressed people are free" and not left in "jail to rot" that Sylvia's voice is most apparent. The document was a pronouncement of S.T.A.R.'s official status.

Mission of The Gay International Youth Society

This Washington High School group saw social rights (to congregate, hold dances, and openly meet) as dependent upon political struggle. Using terminology similar to that of Gay Youth, the club's students proclaimed:

To maintain our rights and our dignity, we must assert ourselves and our very being! this is political! The very nature of coming out not only demands that we become political, but there is no other choice. . . . This present imbalance of student civil rights [threat of violence and harassment that limit student freedom] is political!!! And to end this discriminating abuse, political organizing becomes mandatory.⁴⁰

SUMMARY

While gay liberation analyses informed the platforms of these three illustrative groups, it was the unique personal experiences of adolescents and young transvestites that colored group practice. Personality also played a key role. Youth leaders were outspoken, determined, and energized. Each group applied the tenets of gay liberation to address issues of primary concern, whether age discrimination in the case of Gay Youth, class and transgender issues affecting street transvestites, or the social and political aspirations expressed by high school students.

Theory was put into action. Gay Youth rallied those under twenty-one. While adolescents were welcome to participate in GLF, Radicalesbians, and GAA, their particular concerns involving coming-out, family reaction, and school survival were not fully addressed. The GY phone line housed in Mark Segal's East Village apartment provided an initial contact for isolated teenagers. Frightened hesitant callers recorded their concerns and anxieties on the GY answering machine, often without leaving a contact number, much to the consternation of GY volunteers who could only hope they would either call again or attend a GY meeting.⁴¹ GY reached

out to schools, published a journal, held dances, and continued to insist that social change involved political action.

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries focused on the problems of disenfranchised transvestites, in particular discarded youth with few resources for survival. As a group, transvestites asserted greater authority and power than they had previously wielded as GLF and GAA participants. Sylvia Rivera and Marsha Johnson used their hustling proceeds to help support the twenty transvestites and hustlers who initially lived in a tractor-trailer truck and then at S.T.A.R. House. Survival, prison rights, transvestite pride, and freedom were addressed within this short-lived tenement commune.

The George Washington High School group, with the help of Gay Activists Alliance, implemented a social program and demanded political rights, thereby repeating GY's message within a school setting. The club envisioned a network of gay liberation youth groups within New York City schools.

In the next three chapters, I examine each of these groups in detail.

Chapter Four

Gay Youth (GY)

Gay Youth is critical to this history because of its early founding date, nationwide reach, diverse membership, journal, school outreach, dedication to gay liberation, and longevity. Initiated by Mark Segal in February 1970, GY was initially one of Gay Liberation Front's many cells.¹ After the dissolution of GLF, it was housed by churches, GAA, and the New York Mattachine Society. GY continued as an independent self-governing gay liberation group until about 1983 when it joined New York's Lesbian and Gay Community Center and accepted adult oversight. Most recently known as BiGLTYNY (Bisexual, Gay Lesbian & Transgender Youth of New York), it seceded from The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center around 2000 and became affiliated with the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services.² BiGLTYNY maintains its Yahoo.com group registration, but the organization is no longer active.

GY PARTICIPANTS

Gay Youth's initial members joined the gay liberation movement at a time when "the idea of gay liberation as a product of Stonewall was still being formed."³ Gay Youth reached out to isolated youth. Throughout its first two years, GY's core membership consisted of about ten males (of whom three were black and the remainder white) and one or two females.⁴ Members included Mark Segal (of Jewish working-class origins) who was the GY chairman/president and supported himself as a taxi driver, waiter, and bartender in an East Village gay bar, Mark Horn (GY's vice president and later president when Segal moved back to Philadelphia was apparently first enlisted by Mark at a Kent State protest), Michael Knowles, Jeff Hockhauser, Nova (a Black queen active in GLF), Stan, Michael Clark, Richard Marino, Mathew Fisher, Tony Russomanno (later also involved in GAA), Thommy

Mohan, and Ian Edelstein.⁵ The initial 1970 group also included twelve-year-old Richard Johnston, son of *Village Voice* columnist Jill Johnston, author of *Lesbian Nation* (1973).⁶ Most participants had homes, but Sheridan Square street kids struggling to survive also attended GY events. Mark Segal considered Sylvia Rivera and Marsha Johnson to be honorary Gay Youth members, and Segal himself was seen as an honorary member of Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries.

During its days in the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse (ca. 1972 to 1974), members were primarily sixteen to eighteen years old and meeting attendance generally ranged from ten to twenty.⁷ GY continued to be a resource for the very young. Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) president Morty Manford described receiving a mother's phone call just as GY was meeting at the GAA Firehouse. She wanted her nine-year-old son "to meet other young gay men." The disbelieving Manford spoke to him; he recalled the boy "wanted to communicate, he wanted to lay the groundwork, he wanted to feel more comfortable before coming to the meeting."⁸ Two GY attendance lists from meetings in 1974 and 1975 indicate sixteen and twenty-three attendees respectively; perhaps one quarter were girls.⁹

GY'S GENESIS

The Gay Liberation Front, Radicalesbians, and later the Gay Activists Alliance and Lesbian Feminist Liberation included many young participants, yet these groups did not fully meet the needs of youth. Mark Segal and others identified the necessity of peer support, social and political youth space, and elimination of ageist laws that held young people hostage "as property to be molded in the image of their parents."¹⁰ GY founders were determined to: (1) end ageist attitudes that isolated LGBT youth, (2) create an autonomous and recognized place within the gay liberation movement, (3) break isolation, thereby helping youth to achieve affirmation within youth defined spaces, and (4) catalyze a national movement.

(1) Addressing Ageism and Youth Rights

GY blended gay liberation's focus on the personal and political with youth liberation. Ian Edelstein, a young GLF and GY member, explained GY participants "felt distinct differences between their attitudes and those of old Homosexuals on various sexual, social, and political issues," and pointed out that younger members intended to avoid "rhetoric" and "political ideologies."¹¹ The group, although less sectarian than GLF, was explicitly political. Issues of social injustice were linked both in ideology

and practice. In addition to gay liberation, GY demonstrated in support of women, transvestites, prisoners, Young Lords, Black liberation, and ending the Vietnam War.

The group emphasized an anti-ageist outlook. The nineteen-year-old Segal argued that the retraction of sodomy laws should include those under twenty-one. Age of consent laws effectively isolated youth from those adults who were concerned with appearance, propriety, and legal ramifications even in non-sexual situations.

Segal, who considered GY to be “a division of GLF,” used its members’ youth as a leverage point. He recalls, “We got away with everything we wanted. I used to like to believe that I could argue as long as they could, but maybe not now in hindsight, maybe because we were young. . . . But

. . . the minute I would say something and they would not give me what I wanted for my caucus, I would always say, ‘You know, you’re discriminating against us because we’re young.’ Boom!!! I got what I wanted! I knew how to play that card.”¹²

(2) Youth as Full-Fledged Independent Actors

Mark Segal was the driving force behind Gay Youth’s formation. As a young gay liberationist, Segal happened upon the Stonewall Riots with Marty Robinson and other members of the Mattachine Action Committee. Using chalk, Marty, Mark, and other Action Group members inscribed messages on the pavement to promote the following night of protest. “It was Marty that came up with a box of chalk. And it was Marty’s direction that we—members of the Action Group—took those pieces of chalk and started writing on Christopher Street. This was our way of communicating. . . . We have never used chalk before; we would always have the handouts. . . . and that’s how the next night began.”¹³

Segal recounted how members of the Action Committee questioned whether he “was old enough to talk and make policies for the group.” At the same time, they solicited his perspective on youth once agreement was reached. Segal wrote in *GY: Gay Youth’s Gay Journal*, “If I’m not wrong, I believe by now that the movement has learned to live with young members, old members and by now female members . . . and is in the process of learning to live with the transvestites and transexuals. It’s about time!”¹⁴

Teenagers contributed to the gay liberation movement. Mark Segal, of course, was an outspoken GLF participant. GY’s third president, Marc Wald (ca. 1973), was an active member of GAA and GY-Long Island (fig. 4.1). His name appears on a 1972 Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee contact list and he also participated in 1973.¹⁵ Lynne, a “teenage dyke” from Long Island, experienced a tumultuous coming-out at fifteen. A



Fig. 4.1. “Bridgeport CT, July 30, 1971 Action,” with Marc Wald holding the corner of the GAA Long Island banner and Paul Stack on left holding tube; Manford in profile, behind and to the right of Stack. (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 444C, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

romance with a friend proved overwhelming to both, prompting a suicide attempt. She searched for signs of community in *Village Voice* ads and accompanied by a friend braved a nighttime trip to a GAA Firehouse dance. Covertly escaping closeted Long Island whenever possible, she became the youngest member of GAA’s Lesbian Liberation Committee (later to become the independent Lesbian Feminist Liberation).¹⁶

(3) Creation of Gay Liberation Youth Space

The necessity of personal and public youth-created spaces is expressed in GY literature. Segal had written in the group’s journal that GY was “an autonomous group formed to fill the void left by other gay groups. These groups did not cater to the young gay: hence, our mission.”¹⁷ By providing venues for youth to freely socialize, in stark contrast to the commercial (often Mafia-run) bars, GY enabled youth to understand their personal identities within a liberation context.

GY, as an independent group, also would have been insulated from the political correctness and streak of leftist Puritanism—never “exploit” the

Movement to advance yourself personally—at work within Gay Liberation Front. Perry Brass (who was a young writer, NYU student, and co-editor of GLF's newspaper *Come Out*) remembers:

this attitude of political correctness at all costs crippled a large number of the people who came through GLF; they always felt this rope around their necks of judgement, of what we used to call “confrontation and criticism” that left many of us unstrung and in tears, and constant “self-criticism.” People at meetings would say, “I criticize myself for———” A confession of not coming up to some standard of political consciousness. You had to use a huge dose of irony to get through this alive.¹⁸

Tony Russomanno recalls Gay Youth meetings had “very little substantive discussion. The important thing was that there were people there talking. It didn’t really matter what they were talking about.” The critical factor was “being open.”¹⁹ He attended his first meeting Sunday afternoon at a church on Manhattan’s East Side. Tony “looked in, walked around a little bit, kept walking back and forth around the block trying to decide whether to go in or not.” Wary of what to expect, he finally decided to enter. Tony remembers, “It was very low key. Nobody made a big deal about anything. I mentioned that I heard about the group somehow and Mark said, ‘Oh yeah, I saw you walking around outside and I figured you would either come in or you wouldn’t.’”

Tony explains, his first recollection of a gay person was “seeing a couple of guys from the Mattachine Society” appear on the David Susskind show. “They were all wearing . . . dark suits, white shirts, and skinny black ties, and they all had paper bags over their heads. Presumably one of those guys was probably Harry Hay.” For Tony, the choice was clear: “I didn’t want to be one of the guys with the paper bag over my head.” Gay Youth provided a “very strong sense of community” where he could be open. It wasn’t necessary to even talk “about what we had in common. We knew we had something very strong in common.”²⁰

Gay Youth’s numerous social and political events—dances, movie nights (including a Mae West series), meetings, social get-togethers, and protests—created community settings less prone to dogmatic debate where one could decipher and define sexual feelings and the meaning of relationships.²¹ It was a “chance for young gay people to make gay friends their own age, and to meet people in similar situations.”²² Although GY was limited to those under twenty-one (a reversal of the usual age limit), adults did attend its dances and were welcomed to meetings (e.g., John O’Brien of the Socialist Workers Party); however, GY established the rules of engagement.²³ Mark Segal recalls:

Whatever was a fad from that point from GLF, we did it! Consciousness-raising was in, okay, we did it, but we weren't going to do it the way they were going to do it. They took everything way too seriously. And I was a happy young gay kid. I was dealing with some people who weren't so happy, and I wanted to make them happy. . . . That's why we did the Mae West. That's why we did the dances. Our whole emphasis was, "hey, it's gay, let's be happy."²⁴

GY even claimed public spaces for its own. Like S.T.A.R. and a broad array of movement groups, GY employed graphics, poetry, and slogans to express organizational identity and perspective. The group's first of many buttons, designed by Mark Segal, depicted a house whose roof was marked "GAY YOUTH" and sheltered the acronym "GY" within. Conversely the central GY may be seen as supporting "GAY YOUTH." The buttons—with their Day-Glo yellow lettering—were designed to signal the collective presence of GY members as they danced together in the bars.

(4) "That Movement is Gay Youth"

Breaking isolation, offering peer support, and linking social interaction to political activism locally and nationally were key. GY targeted youth with its printed, radio, and movement outreach.²⁵ GY chapters formed nationwide with additional groups in Canada (see Appendix One).

GY's activism struck an ideological and practical chord. A fourteen-year-old Gay Youth advocate (presumably from Massachusetts, given his reference to Walpole State Penitentiary) wrote that after coming out to his class, he was peppered by prurient "myths and questions" that "astounded."²⁶ The author found parents' power to accept, force change, or disown more threatening than his classmates' relative indifference. Social opportunities were few. Bars were off-limits, cruising risky, and answering ads nearly as problematic. The writer asserted, "That is why gay youths need to organize. We need each other for support, reassurance, and for confidence when there is no one else to give it." Older gays, although supportive at times, were not always able to empathize, and the author viewed adult rejection as potentially "cruel and sadistic."²⁷ Speaking of the significance of collective action and respect for youth, he concluded:

The gay community is beginning to realize that there is a movement that needs to be realized and accepted by the gay community. That movement is Gay Youth. It will be up to us to tell and educate our



Fig. 4.2. “Gay Youth button.” (Courtesy of Mark Segal.)

parents about being gay. We are the ones who will carry on where others have left off. . . . What we symbolize is the future. . . . In the years past we have been shunned and ignored. . . . What we want is to be recognized as individuals with minds of our own.²⁸

The original New York members laid the groundwork for GY. Nova and Thommy Mohan collected donations at the 8pm GLF Sunday night meetings held at the Church of the Holy Apostles social hall.²⁹ Nova wrote a *GLF News* article, “The Gay Youth group is looking around for help.”³⁰ GY member Thommy, who attended NYU as did Perry Brass, “was studying literature and eventually got into the Yale Drama School to study playwriting.” Perry (co-editor of *Come Out*), recalls, “We were fairly close GLF friends—I always loved running into him and we would talk about literature, writing, poetry (he was trying to write poetry), and literary criticism.”³¹ Brass also recalls:

the divine Nova, a great transgendered creature whom I adored back then: totally original young man, who was maybe 19 or 20, and gorgeous, I mean Fab-u-lasss in the most intense way.

I have no idea what happened to him (or her, in the more pc language). Nova was not strictly speaking a “she.” He often dressed as much young male as female [Fig. 4.3]. But he was a great dancer, and I can still hear his voice and the way he spoke—hugely poetic, outrageous, and very sweet. He was tall, about 6’, and looked wonderful. I still remember one GLF dance when he jumped in like a torpedo, and once on the dance floor unhooked his bra and threw it into the middle of the crowd. “Now that’s women’s liberation!” one of my friends said, sighing.

He was also wonderfully stylish, unlike Sylvia Rivera and Marsha Johnson—and loved to “mop,” or shoplift from stylish boutiques. As a girl, he wore long boots and short miniskirts, and looked like an incredibly chic model with beautiful high posture and élan.³²



Fig. 4.3. “Nova at a GLF meeting ca. 1970.” (Photograph by Diana Davies, misidentified as “Marsha P. Johnson of G.L.F. and S.T.A.R.” NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Diana Davies, Box 2, GLF. Identified by Bob Kohler, July 21, 2003 and Perry Brass, January 7, 2007.)

From early on, GY developed a coherent identity and program. An early flyer heralded its upcoming *Gay Journal* and another, “Gay Youth: The Group and What It Is” (also published in its journal), announced a “new group consisting of male and female gays under 21” that was “both political and social (with an accent on social).”³³ An article announcing the group appeared in GLF’s *Come Out*.³⁴ Meetings were scheduled at 6pm, just before the socialist Red Butterfly 7pm meeting in the same location.³⁵

GAY LIBERATION IN ACTION: AN ARMY OF LOVERS CANNOT FAIL

Gay Youth implemented what historian John D’Emilio identified as radical gay liberation’s three major accomplishments, here presented in a different sequence: (1) *Liberation* (“a new language and style of homosexuality”): “Radical GLF’s. . . . represented homosexuality as a revolutionary path toward freedom, as a step out of the constricted, stultifying gender roles of middle-class America.” (2) *Affirmation*: The term “coming-out” was transformed into a public affirmation of homosexual identity rather than limited to covert acknowledgement to other gays and lesbians. “It embodied the insight that ‘The personal is political’ as no other single act could.” (3) *Organization*: The movement had a “mania for organization” resulting in over a thousand gay and lesbian groups by 1973, of all sizes and shapes and affiliations.³⁶

In the following sections, I examine Gay Youth’s quest for (1) liberation with an emphasis on youth concerns; (2) affirmation involving peer support, social outlets, communal approach to identity formation, and chance to be heard; and (3) organization with loosely linked affiliates, a nationally distributed journal, and support for school activism.

Free Ourselves: Come Out, Everywhere

Like Gay Liberation Front, Gay Youth quickly developed a theoretical analysis of sexism and sexuality. Ian Edelstein, an early GY member, expressed his personal views in a “Gay Youth Liberation Paper” published by *Come Out*. Perry Brass remembers, “Ian Edelstein was quite wonderful—a really interesting, beautiful kid, from Queens, I think. He got involved with GLF at 15, which made him the youngest person at the meetings. I think his parents knew nothing about him, but he knew he was gay at that time. He was a lovely, sweet, bookish, shy handsome young man.”³⁷ In 1970, Ian wrote:

Since sexist attitudes are profitable to society, they are carried out into the family, the schools and other institutions. . . . The

institution's function is to perpetuate the views which turn the wheels of society . . .

I'm tired of being used as a symbol of the guilt and fear of society. No more of this shit! Confront and recognize your problems. The fact that you are oppressing me is a symptom of the repression and fear of the Homosexuality in your own bodies.

By not being easily identified by the superficial roles of society we threaten this society. Putting people uptight about their own assigned identity. Smashing that trick mirror which reflects the beauty of the society they have structured . . .

We are demanding understanding: an understanding of your Homosexual feelings. And the ridding of society's fantasies and distortions, getting down to your own human nature.

You will have to confront us. No longer can you reject Homosexuals or Homosexuality. We reproduce within you, you can't be rid of us. An awakening is inevitable.³⁸

Gay Youth's Gay Journal argued that political change (an end to sexism, ageism, racism, and prejudice against homosexuals as enforced by the family, schools, and state) would foster freedom within relationships no longer regulated by consumer-oriented objectifying mass media manipulation. Touching on critical theory's analysis of social regulation via economic forces, the article condemned subjugation within marriage and of children, warning, "When intimacy means treating someone else as an object, dehumanizing a brother or sister, then intimacy is a cloak for oppression."³⁹

Gay Youth ideology, particularly as expressed by the 1972 "Gay Youth Rights Platform," echoed Carl Wittman's 1969/1970 "Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto." Wittman wrote a bill of rights that defined sexuality within a liberation context and rejected societal attitudes of homosexuality as makeshift, opposite-sex-hating, genetically induced, or caused by broken homes. The manifesto included youth and gender non-conformists. Schools were critiqued for treating homosexuality as an "unfortunate problem" at best. Youth were acknowledged as independent "sexual beings." Courageous gays who transgressed gender norms were cited as the Movement's "first martyrs." The manifesto concluded, "Free ourselves: come out, everywhere; initiate self-defense and political activity; initiate community institutions; think . . ."⁴⁰

Gay liberation endorsed the battle to dismantle sexism with its corrosive effects on women and men.⁴¹ The author of "Gay Is Better" described a hierarchical system of "in control" men dismissive of women as emotional

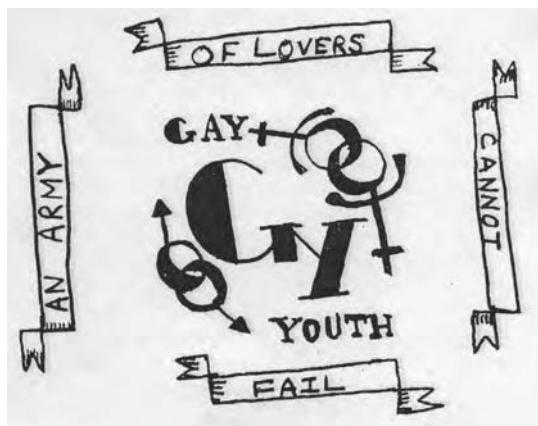


Fig. 4.4 “GY: An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail.” (Marc Wald, pen and ink drawing, *fps: the Youth Liberation news service*, no. 32, 1973, 10.)

and weak. He wrote, “Straight men will accept gay men as long as they can dominate them like they dominate women.”⁴² The article, published by Youth Liberation press, appeared alongside a drawing by Marc Wald, GY’s third president, where he inscribed, “An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail,” then in common usage among gay liberationists (see fig. 4.4). Its derivation lies in a tale transmitted by Apollodorus in Plato’s *Symposium*.⁴³ He tells of a drinking party in 416 B.C. Athens, held at the house of young poet Agathon where Socrates, Aristodemus, “two other young literary men” Phaedrus and Pausanias, physician Eryximachus, ribald playwright Aristophanes, and intoxicated latecomer—the general Alcibiades—debate the nature and merits of eros with rhetorical flair.⁴⁴ Phaedrus describes soldiers (perhaps alluding to the Sacred Band of Thebes) whose bonds of affection contributed to military success:

And if there were only some way of contriving that a state or an army should be made up of lovers and their loves, they would be the very best governors of their own city, abstaining from all dishonour, and emulating one another in honour; and when fighting at each other’s side, although a mere handful, they would overcome the world.⁴⁵

In their continuing discussion on the meaning of eros, Aristophanes submitted “original human nature” was altogether different from the present day:



Fig. 4.5. “Fresco of a Greek symposium, 475 B.C.,” from the Tomb of the Diver, held by the Paestum Museum, Italy. (In the public domain, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Symposium1.jpg>.)

The sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now lost, and the word “androgynous” is only preserved as a term of reproach.⁴⁶

Aristophanes revealed all of humankind—circular creatures with two faces, four hands, and four feet—had been split in halves by the gods and henceforth experienced eros as the union of separated beings seeking completion. The adult male erastes and the younger beloved or eromenos long for each other, as do women separated from women, while “men who are a section of that double nature which was once called androgynous are lovers [or more accurately, seducers] of women.”⁴⁷

GY (albeit in a slightly less martial fashion than the Sacred Band) voiced its desire to remake society, overturn sexism, and free youth to “form our education according to our needs” with the “unhindered rights to experience their own choices of sexuality.”⁴⁸ Gay Youth of New York and Long Island (in a motion submitted by Marc Wald at the second meeting of the National Coalition of Gay Groups held in Washington, D.C.) demanded:

an end to ageism in all its forms. . . . action upon the repeal of the “age-of-consent” laws on the state, federal, and local level. . . . equal privileges, and rights afforded to so-called “adults” and . . . equal respect. . . . an end to parental abuse of Gay children in all forms. . . . an end to repression of gay children within the school, and religious systems. . . . equal voice in all [sic] matters concerning ourselves, and Gay Liberation in general. . . . equal

representation within the body of elected officers of the National Coalition of Gay Organizations.⁴⁹

These demands were incorporated into “The Gay Youth Rights Platform” written by Mark Segal and Philip Janison of the Philadelphia-based Gay Youth National Committee and unanimously endorsed at the Southwest Regional Conference of the National Coalition of Gay Organizations (NCGO) held June 30th to July 3rd 1972.⁵⁰ Youth Liberation News Service reported Gay Youth of Los Angeles, represented by Jay Fisher and Peter Romich, “was the most effectively organized and prepared group at the conference and was frequently commended by other attendees.”⁵¹ The platform submitted by the Under 21 Caucus addressed the abrogation of rights due to a plethora of interconnected inequities (see Chapter Three). A year or two later, while stationed at the GAA Firehouse, Gay Youth adopted an abridged platform incorporating the Under 21 Caucus language; abolition of age-of-consent laws was a recurring theme:

Gay people are challenged by a unique set of circumstances, and young gay people by an even more difficult and complicated set of circumstances—

Whereas in the nuclear family and in society as a whole, young people are considered property to be molded in the image of their parents;

We demand an end to parental abuse of youth.

Whereas we are compelled to participate in the American educational system;

We demand the right to organize and actively participate in social and political groups which reflect our own interests and needs.

Whereas in the American legal system, you, and gay youth in particular are declared sick and/or unjustly branded criminal(s) and denied the right to decide for themselves what to do with their own bodies;

We demand the repeal of all laws concerning consensual sexual acts, especially age-of-consent laws, and the release of all juveniles who are imprisoned for victimless sex acts.

GAY, STRAIGHT, OR BI-SEXUAL: If you support these demands, come out to our next meeting.⁵²

A Gay Youth flyer ca. 1974 listing the address for the Church of the Beloved Disciple shows ideological continuity:

The need for the organization of gays under the age of 21 has been recognized in almost every major city in the United States. Gay Youth organizations in Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York were formed for the expressed purpose of solidifying the young homosexual community for a challenge; an opposition to government regulations in areas regarding rights for young gays, but more importantly, these organizations are serving the function of helping young gays come out, with people the same age, with whom they can identify.

The function of Gay Youth is two-fold: To actively oppose the ageist laws. To provide young gays with an alternative to the usual process of personal liberation, which often involves the bar scenes, baths, and prostitution. This is accomplished by conducting dances, rap sessions, leafleting, and weekly meetings of Gay Youth.

We maintain that a person reaches adulthood as individual circumstances dictate, and to generalize and pronounce adulthood to be universally reached at 21 is pure simple ageism. Ideally, there should be no age limits with regards to sex or censorship. But since we are dealing with an archaic system, the best we can hope for is a lowering of the age limits.⁵³

Coming Out: A Path to Affirmation

GY provided a social and political context for sexual identity development. Overcoming isolation was the first step, followed by consciousness-raising, and then full involvement in protests and organizing. This approach was a hallmark of the gay liberation movement. Asserting the need for GY in *Gay Sunshine*, Mark Segal asked older gays to consider how support might have eased their own coming out process.⁵⁴ Sexual identity development was a tenuous endeavor. A “Homosexual News” radio interview with Mark Segal at the age of nineteen illustrated the dearth of information or role models. “At first I was having sex with somebody but I didn’t realize that I was gay, it was just something I was doing. Then I realized I was gay and thought, ‘My God, I can’t tell my parents!.’ . . . This sort of hits you. I don’t think most people know they’re gay when they’re first having sex with another man or woman.”⁵⁵

Step 1: Breaking Isolation

Outreach—via demonstrations, leafleting, call-in radio shows, television, press, and school talks—was an essential first step. Mark Segal recalls,

“For us, going to a demonstration was like going to a picnic. . . . I leafleted practically every night.” Segal’s priorities were “demonstrations, leafleting, and then my life.”⁵⁶ GY appeared in a 1974 WABC television production entitled, “Homosexuality: The Open Secret,” where members discussed the problems they faced.⁵⁷ While addressing school audiences, Segal repeated GY’s telephone number multiple times, allowing students to memorize rather than risk exposure by writing it. The GY phone line was installed in his fifth floor East Village walkup apartment. The initial telephone contact allowed the caller to discuss concerns, fears, and options with a GY member.⁵⁸ Callers sometimes left devastatingly “horrible messages” without return numbers, and Mark (returning in the early hours of the morning after leafleting and socializing) could do little but record a new message directed to the caller and “sit there and wait” the following morning.⁵⁹ At least one caller per month expressed suicidal feelings. Segal recalls, “That was a regular occurrence.”⁶⁰

GY addressed the need for emotional support. While the group served multiple functions, it was perceived (with some truth) as “the come-out cell of the Gay Liberation Movement.” GY declined to label a person’s sexuality. The possibility of a “rap session” with a volunteer GY facilitator offered a non-judgmental exploratory setting.⁶¹

The group provided youth-defined social venues. “Our initial achievements were our dances, held for the entire gay community.”⁶² The first “mixer” in which young people could “enjoy dancing, food and refreshments in an atmosphere free of drugs, alcohol and adult control” was attended by over fifty people.⁶³ One Gay Youth Dance flyer welcomed everyone of every age to a Saturday, December 5, 1970, dance to be held at Alternate U from 9:00 pm “till?” with “light show, sound system, dancing, free movies, community information, and more.”⁶⁴ A similar announcement appeared in *Gay Youth’s Gay Journal* (fig. 4.6). The protective Segal, concerned that adolescents at GY dances might be overwhelmed by the attentions of adults, was advised otherwise by the youths themselves, one of whom explained “some of us like the older men.”⁶⁵

Step 2: Consciousness-raising

During GY’s earliest years, decision-making was conducted via consensus (of course, Mark’s voice was the loudest), but the need to speak to others and understand personal issues within a political context made consciousness-raising an important constant.⁶⁶ A GY flyer explained, “an important part of our general meetings [held every Sunday night at Alternate U.] is a

consciousness raising session, in which we discuss our life styles and views on gay life.”⁶⁷ The first meeting addressed problems “handling” parents and the “question of how frank we ought to be with them.” Guilt, precipitated by coming out, was “a major concern of Gay Youth.”⁶⁸

Step 3: Protest

Understanding oppression provided the tools necessary to “join the Gay Liberation Movement” as active participants.⁶⁹ On June 28, 1970, Gay Youth marched in the first commemoration of the Stonewall uprising. (Members would also help organize later marches.)⁷⁰ Historian and activist Donn Teal noted marshals came from the ranks of NY GLF, Philadelphia GLF, Homophile Action League, Daughters of Bilitis, and others, including “under-21’s” from Gay Youth who, claiming the prerogative of youth, assembled up front.⁷¹ With their banner (fashioned from a bed sheet Mark Segal had decorated with black magic marker) in hand, they positioned themselves under the Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day banner supported by a lambda-clad marcher.⁷² (The brainchild of GAA activist and graphic artist Tom Doerr, the lambda—inscribed on the shields of ancient Spartan soldiers—represents the “point of greatest activity in an equation” and it became GAA’s symbol of gay liberation.)⁷³

The march proceeded from the Village up Sixth Avenue to Central Park. Transvestites (S.T.A.R. did not yet exist) joined in. Sylvia Rivera (who recalled being with the GAA contingent) and Bebe Scarpi marched together; Marsha P. Johnson was there.⁷⁴ There was an atmosphere of expectancy

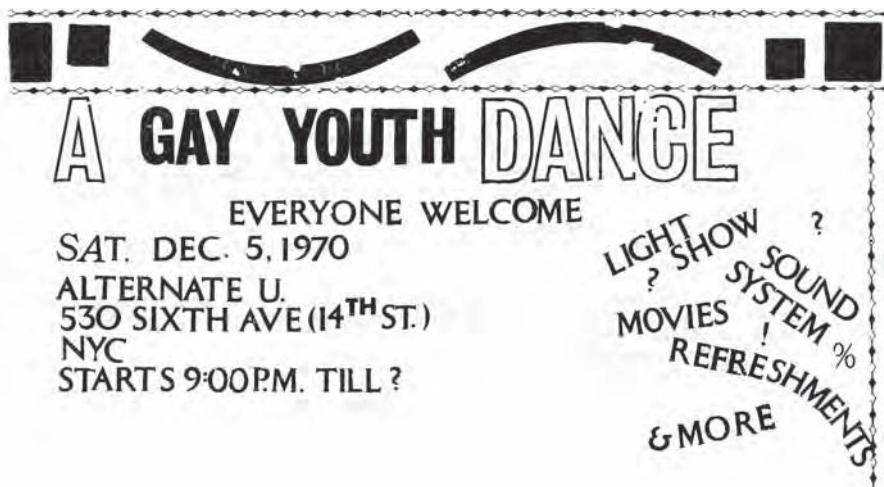


Fig. 4.6 “A Gay Youth Dance.” (*GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 2, 1970, 8.)

and apprehension, with moments of heightened tension when stones were hurled off a roof.⁷⁵ Teal recounted:

The young and not-so-young of old-line organizations . . . would stride with “infant” gay militant clubs whose first birthday hadn’t been celebrated. But it was every homosexual’s birthday: how many hundreds of non-organization gays, women and men who might someday join, might never join, might even return to their closets at that day’s end, now stood proud or trembling, but stood, under the slim Day-Glo rectangles of MSNY, among the blue T-shirted, gold lambda’ed Gay Activists and mauve T-shirted (shades of the) Lavender Menace, and between the ten- to fifteen-foot banners—unfurled and uplifted in strong reds and blues and yellows and greens—of GAY LIBERATION FRONT, GAY ACTIVISTS ALLIANCE, PHILADELPHIA. . . . and,



Fig. 4.7. “Gay Youth, Christopher Street Liberation Day, June 28, 1970.” Clarence stands behind Gay Youth banner, on right. Boy with sunglasses, misidentified as Mark Horn (who would in September 1970 spot the GY banner at an anti-war protest, and ask Mark Segal, “Where have you been all my life?”). GAA lambda-clad marcher holds pole of Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day 1970 banner. (Editors of QQ Magazine, “*Gay Freedom 1970*,” New York City: Queen’s Quarterly Publishing Co, 1970, 6–7; Mark Horn identified by Tony Russomanno, email communication with author, October 12, 2006.)

at parade head, CHRISTOPHER STREET GAY LIBERATION DAY 1970 beside an American flag [carried by a boy initially assembled with the Gay Youth cohort] (fig. 4.8).

“Gimme a G!”
 “G!”
 “Gimme an A!”
 “A!”
 “Gimme a Y!”
 “Y!”
 “Gimme a P!”
 “P!”
 “Gimme an O!”
 “O!”
 “Gimme a W!”
 “W!”
 “Gimme an E!”
 “E!”
 “Gimme an R!”
 “R!”
 “Whatawe want?”
 “GAY POWER!”
 “Whendawe want it?”
 “NOW!”

Rey (Sylvia) Rivera's voice was imperious, his expression selfless, then and as he cheer-led hoarsely along the sixty-block hike that was to end over an hour later. It was 2:10. The parade had begun. New giant steps to follow those giant steps of just a year before.⁷⁶ (figs. 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, and 4.10.)

Mark Segal experienced what remain two of the biggest thrills of his life: first, viewing the expansive crowd from the vantage point of a 57th Street lamp post and then being moved to beatific silence as he joined the “Gay In” on Central Park’s Sheep Meadow where against all odds a multitude had gathered. “That was so poignant that moment, and I just remember hugging so many people—hugging, hugging, hugging, hugging everybody” (figs. 4.11, 4.12, and 4.13).⁷⁷



Fig. 4.8. "Let's March!" (Editors of QQ Magazine, "Gay Freedom 1970.")



Fig. 4.9. "Washington D.C. contingent and Daughters of Bilitis." (Editors of QQ Magazine, "Gay Freedom 1970.")



Fig. 4.10. "Lavender Menace: Everything they say we are, we are." (Editors of QQ Magazine, "Gay Freedom 1970.")



Fig. 4.11. "MARCH AGAINST-ANTI-HOMOSEXUAL CONDITIONS The Gay Liberation Day Parade entering Central Park on the way to the Sheep Meadow," NY Times front page photograph. Mark Segal just ahead (and between) "Gay Pride" and "Christopher Street Gay Liberation Day Banner" bearers. (Photographer Michael Evans, *New York Times*, Redux; appeared in Lacey Fosburgh, "Thousands of Homosexuals Hold a Protest Rally in Central Park," *New York Times*, June 29, 1970, 1, 20.)



Fig. 4.12. "The arrival." (Editors of QQ Magazine, "Gay Freedom 1970.")



Fig. 4.13. "Central Park Sheep Meadow." (Editors of QQ Magazine, "Gay Freedom 1970.")

Other demonstrations followed. GY marched alongside GLF and against the Vietnam War. It was the first LGBT group to endorse Jane Fonda's "Free the Army Show" then on tour in Vietnam. (Segal angrily withdrew his endorsement after Fonda's intemperate reaction to a kiss between two lesbian comics during a NYC benefit. She later apologized.)⁷⁸ GY joined an array of gay liberation groups occupying NYU's Weinstein Hall in protest of homophobic university policies, an exploit that prompted Sylvia Rivera and street transvestites to create Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (described in Chapter Five).

GY even protested what it saw as the counter-revolutionary preaching of the gay Reverend Troy Perry of the Metropolitan Community Church. Segal was persuaded to halt the protest and attend Perry's address. He recalls their approaches were vastly different, but much of Perry's message resonated and the encounter yielded a friendship.⁷⁹

In addition to speaking to high school classes, GY staged small protests of school conditions in far-flung suburban locales.⁸⁰ A captivating photo of one such demonstration shows GY member Richard Marino jauntily posed, mouth pursed, arms akimbo, and head tilted just so, displaying a sign, "Why are the cops so fascinated with us?" with the (somewhat bemused) policemen looking on.⁸¹

Experiences of Youth

Gay liberation enabled adolescents to find community and handle societal pressure. They grew to understand themselves, experience friendships, and initiate sexual relationships with peers. As a very young child, Dmitri had his first sexual encounter with another four-year-old boy. He discovered gay liberation at the age of thirteen after perusing an in-depth *Life Magazine* pictorial essay (that he has kept to this day). To this aficionado of truck-stop sex (often for hire), the idea of community was a revelation. Intrigued, he traveled by train from suburban Connecticut to the GAA Firehouse where he learned of Gay Youth. At his first meeting, he was hesitant to speak, or even fully join the circle of attendees. Yet, he dropped in on GY when his "chance" ventures to New York coincided with GY meeting times.⁸²

But my involvement in Gay Youth was pretty bizarre. I was a pretty troubled teenager. I was actually spending a significant amount of time having sex with guys for money. . . . and then spending the money on drugs (and VW repair). So I was struggling to build a positive gay identity by going there (I at least was a healthy enough person to recognize that I needed to do that, I guess) but at the same time was doing everything I could to put myself at risk.

The guys who I met there were, for the most part, very caring and supportive when I talked to them (though I don't think I ever told anyone exactly what all was going on), but I kept some distance, mainly out of fear. I think I made a lot (in my own head) of how I was living in Connecticut at the time and they were New Yorkers, so we were really quite different.

The whole GAA/GLF experience was very positive for me, just knowing they were there, but I didn't really do much to get involved. I always thought it was so appropriate that GAA was at the Firehouse, because my experience of it was like being around fire—having a fear of getting too close, but at the same time an intense fascination with it.⁸³

For Dmitri, GY and GAA represented opportunities to learn about the gay community in a non-sexual setting. By the age of sixteen, he found life at home untenable and abruptly left for NYC in his VW bug where he settled in a \$75 per month East Village tenement. The first morning, he discovered a dead junkie sprawled outside the building. By seventeen years of age, he had developed a worldview shaped by gay liberation theory (including Wittman's "Gay Manifesto") that he shared during sexual encounters with incredulous self-described straight family men. The gay liberation movement (GY and GAA in particular) provided a social context, support, and political analysis. Dmitri went on to develop his own social network.⁸⁴

Testimonials from five sixteen to nineteen-year-old GY members convey the group's importance ca. 1974/1975. Five primary themes are apparent.

(1) *GY's peer support helped to counter "straight" societal pressures.* Alison Agrest, sixteen, indicated GY helped the "young, troubled, or confused homosexual. . . . Meeting with other gays of our own age category . . . can ease some of the pressure."⁸⁵ Certain challenges, such as eviction by condemnatory parents, could be serious.⁸⁶ GY, designed to "meet the needs of the under-21 Gay Youth" (Phil Santiago, eighteen) was based solely on the premise of "people helping people" (Alison). "By speaking your problems to others or simply by listening, 'G.Y.' is always trying to provide relief for confused gays of the 'younger set.' . . . You'll never know just how good you can feel about yourself, And your sexuality" (Alison).⁸⁷

(2) *GY provided a social outlet* generally unavailable to those under eighteen, New York's drinking age. Melvin Andrews, age seventeen, wrote, "It also gives us a place to be with others, a place to make new friends and exchange new ideas." According to Phil Santiago, "For the younger Gays, who can't get into the bars, or for older Gays who don't like bars, Gay Youth serves as a sort of 'Social-club' where Gay Youths, male and female

can congregate to enjoy each other's company. So far, Gay Youth has come quite a long way from what it used to be. Topics discussed in the meetings range from how to tell your friends you're gay to advice on getting a gay-oriented job. Meetings are held every Saturday from 2 to 5, at the offices of the Mattachine Society.”⁸⁸

(3) *Members found a communal approach to personal challenges.* In contrast to later social service approaches that delineated (often essentialist) paths based upon pre-defined notions of sexual identity and even adolescence, GY members constructed their own alternatives. Melvin, seventeen, stated, “Gay Youth is a very important organization for young people. I say this because it's a group of young gay people searching as a whole to find new answers and questions.”⁸⁹

(4) *Social interaction was important, but identity was a pressing concern.* Joe, nineteen, wrote, “Gay Youth has provided me with a place where I can go to meet people and, most of all, a place where I can be myself.” In Melvin’s view, the group was “especially important for those who have just come out and are searching for true gay identity. . . . Gay Youth has given me a sense of awareness. It has supplied me with the incentive to try to live a meaningful life as a gay person. I now feel able to cope with the everyday problems that so many gay people have to undergo.”⁹⁰

(5) *GY was a place to be heard.* According to Joe, “While G.Y. has the potential to do much more, sometimes it's enough to know that there is a place I can go where someone will listen.” Nonetheless, meetings did have drawbacks. Thomas, age nineteen, found conversation could be “broken and varied” making it difficult to follow.⁹¹ Owen Wilson, age twenty-nine, of the Mattachine Society, wrote that Gay Youth opened possibilities. Its very existence was to be seen as a success.

Young gays can meet and talk to each other about their problems and experiences, their fears and joys, their relationships with their parents, their families, and their friends; they can talk about their schools, their wants and their needs. That there is sometimes chaos at meetings, that sometimes they dissipate into little groups around the room and play guitar and sing and shout, that sometimes some of the men use feminine pronouns for themselves to go with made-up feminine names, that sometimes there are only four or five around the library table just doesn't matter much.⁹²

Owen viewed GY autonomy as an integral part of the endeavor, saying, “They run their own meetings and succeed or fail on their own terms,

and the priorities change when they want them to change.” He preferred the process of making one’s own mistakes to being manipulated. In his view, “they represent a possibility: the possibility to come out of your room to meet with other young gays for whatever reason or for no reason.⁹³

Gay liberation served as Mark Segal’s high school and college. He found an intensive communal program of coalition and community building, political endeavor, consciousness-raising, newspaper publishing, and friendships that continue to shape his life.⁹⁴

From NY to Seattle, Columbus to Louisville, Tampa to Los Angeles

The idea of creating a national movement quickly took hold. Segal contacted gay liberation activists and provided an arsenal of pamphlets and organizing ideas.⁹⁵ *Gay Youth’s Gay Journal* announced contacts for “Gay Youth and Its Affiliates Around the Country” including: Youth Caucus of GLF Los Angeles, Danny Weeks of GLF Tampa, Tony Russomanno of GLF-Detroit, Mattachine Society in Washington D.C., Allen Ryan of Seattle’s Dorian Society, and Joe Covert of GLF Philadelphia. GY’s “National Headquarters” were initially in New York.⁹⁶ Gay Youth founder Mark Segal described the process.

We are a fast-growing organization nationally with chapters in nine cities: Boston, New York, Washington D.C., Tampa, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Seattle, and Los Angeles. Some of these chapters are not full-fledged members of Gay Youth National, but are affiliates. The affiliates agree to follow most of the regulations of Gay Youth and to support any national action sponsored by Gay Youth in their city.⁹⁷

The actual rules were far looser. Mark approached organizing with entrepreneurial optimism.⁹⁸ The announcement of the Detroit group was more hopeful than accurate; Russomanno’s Detroit gay liberation activism involved a college protest, not a Gay Youth affiliate. Many groups were indeed established. The gay press and correspondence indicate additional GY groups in Louisville; Baltimore; Valley Stream, Long Island; Syracuse, NY; Worcester, MA; Columbus, Ohio; Chicago; and Denver (see Appendix One).⁹⁹

Canadian youth also organized. In early 1970, the *Body Politic* reported Gay Youth Toronto anticipated “dances, rap sessions, high school projects including open conferences or discussions, and weekly meetings of GY members,” but ageist Canadian federal law failed to “recognize the basic sexual liberties of gays under 21.” GY, “in the process of organizing,” invited youth to contact John Powers or attend Sunday afternoon meetings

at CHAT, a homophile group.¹⁰⁰ Near verbatim passages resurfaced in a ca. 1974 New York GY flyer.¹⁰¹

In 1972, the Youth Liberation News Service reported Gay Youth of Los Angeles was “a growing force evolving from the under-21 rap group at the Gay Community Services Center.” This “independent coalition” of high school and college students and those “who have found the educational system too oppressive” emphasized political and social aims similar to GY New York.¹⁰² The group identified needs specific to gay youth: coming out, parental problems, schools, youth status, and lack of social outlets for young people to “examine themselves, and their relation to a repressive culture and a gay subculture.” GY Los Angeles planned multiple programs including semi-permanent housing for ten to fifteen gay youths in “The Youth Collective” willing to pool resources with additional community support and Gay Youth Awareness Groups to:

explore the nature of human sexuality and gayness with an openness and mutual trust which is prohibited in socializing institutions to which young people are subjected daily. We will deal with feelings associated with being gay in an oppressive school setting, family setting, and among one’s peers. We will explore the etiology of homophobia, so that we may better understand those with whom we must interact. And we will see to discover alternative modes of relating to others that will maximize our own needs for self-expression while reducing the inevitable conflicts of being different in a culture which values sameness.¹⁰³

GY Los Angeles offered a gay youth telephone hotline, family counseling referrals, the weekly consciousness-raising rap session, and one-to-one peer counseling. Anticipated school outreach would raise the consciousness of students and faculty. Gay Student Unions and a Speakers Bureau would “help gay students and faculty relate to their own sexuality in a positive and liberated manner, to be open with their gayness and form the catalyst of gay social movements on campus.”¹⁰⁴

Members addressed high schools, colleges, Juvenile Hall authorities, youth groups, and other organizations. Working in conjunction with the Gay Community Services Center, GY Los Angeles arranged the release of imprisoned juveniles with subsequent support to “help them achieve their own goals for themselves.”¹⁰⁵ Finally, GY Los Angeles sponsored “Gay-ins,” parties, picnics, and dances. Youth were also invited to attend weekly Center dances.¹⁰⁶

Washington, D.C. GY participants expressed similar themes in a ca. 1974 radio interview:

- The importance of social interaction and peer support;
- Organizational issues including autonomy, formal organization, group disintegration and reinvention;
- Nature of relationships with adults;
- Gay liberation ethos in which coming out was a personal and political process and membership was not based upon sexuality;
- School repression penalized those unable to pass as heterosexual.¹⁰⁷

The interviewees described Washington, D.C. GY as “a place for gay youth to be among their peers” and even as “a peer counseling group.” In the words of one member, “empathy is what we provide.” Gay liberation media coverage and even library access to “new gay liberation-type books” had eased isolation, but GY (as its members explained) provided a clear pathway to personal affirmation.

Usually when people come in we ask them how they heard about the group and we ask them what their situation is at home. . . . It's inside of them and they've wanted to get it out for a long time. And so they just open up right away. They just pour it out, or maybe they'll be talking to one member about something they have in common . . . camping or it might be theatre. They'll find a common ground and then they'll go in deeper. It's like how anybody makes friends or companions. That's how it usually begins. We don't sit down and say, “What's your problem.” It's just a friendly atmosphere.¹⁰⁸

Peer discussion was a first critical step to buoy newcomers; GY members hoped events, whether a rally or picnic, would increase group cohesion.¹⁰⁹ (In the late 1970s, the adult-led Horizons youth group in Chicago developed a similar coming out process where youth moved from secrecy to visibility.)¹¹⁰ The Washington, D.C. GY members, speaking during an apparently transitional period ca. 1974, had adopted a constitution and were considering “a chairperson to moderate discussion during meetings” and assure official representation. Meetings, as “a free conglomeration of individuals,” drew up to thirty participants from city and suburbs, with five or six attending regularly. Membership was not based upon sexuality. With a preponderance of males, the group hoped to increase participation by females. Radio show participants reasoned the group had disintegrated and then reorganized due to stagnation, personality and policy clashes, and ultimately apathy.¹¹¹

Autonomy was prized both on an individual and group level. Members cited drawbacks to certain intergenerational relationships:

You don't have to put up with exploitation by older men. A lot are exploitative of gay kids. We're chicken. You know, we're desirable. We're young. . . . We can't really get a good perspective on what life is about with this sheltered little world with your big brother off in his apartment in the suburbs. Whereas, you have to have a clear outlook on what's going on around you and to humble yourself you should be with people your own age to see exactly where you are at.¹¹²

An offer by Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) to adopt and rename the Washington, D.C. group, "Youth for Sexual Freedom," was rebuffed. The exclusion of the word "gay" was apparently intended to mitigate "legal hassles" or charges of child corruption; however GY rejected this closeted approach. It did gladly accept adult support on its own terms; members found the Quaker House to be a safe relaxed meeting place.¹¹³

The Washington members also critiqued inimical school settings where social strictures prompted students to assume a façade injurious to those without protective macho camouflage, "the ones who are the scapegoats and the ones everyone picks on and ostracizes." GY Washington sought to encourage youth to come out, find peer support, create "an alternative to the straight social pattern," and shed repressive roles. The group also planned to attend Gay May Day and High School May Day events organized in 1971 to end the Vietnam war by shutting "down the federal government through nonviolent direct action."¹¹⁴ The Gay May Day Tribe—part of the 25,000 plus May Day Tribe—"offered up an expansive radical vision, in which gay liberation could not only transform laws or lifestyles, but also undermine the very foundations of war—for, they promised, "an army of lovers would not fight."¹¹⁵

Gay Youth chapters were established in even more hostile climates. The small five-member Louisville, Kentucky group, in spite of community antagonism and physical dangers, distributed leaflets rejecting spurious claims of disease and also contacted school principals. One flyer asked:

Do you feel there is more to your life than hiding in the closet straight society assigns you? Are you tired of being told you're sick? Fearing or hating your own sexual identity? HOLD ON! You are not alone.

There are a lot of people who feel just like you. Don't be afraid to be yourself.

The flyer alerted young men and women that GY was dedicated to helping them realize their potential and announced "THE DISEASE IS FIGHTING BACK!" Closing with the ringing words "JOIN US!" it invited youth to contact Benjie Palmer at Gay Liberation Front, 637-6030.¹¹⁶ A letter from Benjie to Mark Segal highlights the Louisville group's organizing strategy and the important, although distant, connection to GY New York.

Our membership has grown to five, an imposing number considering we are living in the midst of the bible belt. We are having great difficulties getting members because the kids here are afraid of the red-neck jagg-offs, a fear that I can well understand because the straights here are usually out for blood. (And usually get it, too.)

As yet, there has been little reaction to the leaflet. Positive reaction that is. I have been playing with the type writer and have been sending letters to various high school principals. Reaction here too, has been nil. And in this city, until we have more members, we can do little more than write letters and leaflet.

Please send more Gay Youth goodies. We are a bit hampered by the lack of them. We would also like to know whether or not we are affiliated with New York Gay Youth or if we are more or less on our own . . .

Peculiarly yours,

Benjie Palmer¹¹⁷

GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal

In addition to direct communication between groups, movement publications provided an important avenue for outreach. GY received coverage in *Gay Sunshine*, *Fag Rag*, *Come Out*, and Youth Liberation's *FPS*.¹¹⁸ The multi-faceted Youth Liberation Press based in Ann Arbor, Michigan dedicated articles and whole issues to lesbian and gay youth activism with coverage of GY, the experiences of lesbian and gay youth, and their demands.¹¹⁹ In 1975, Youth Liberation queried GY New York about its status. Two months later, Artie of GY responded, "There still exists a Gay Youth of New York," with news of a recent move to Mattachine offices. Artie detailed plans for a hot-line and school outreach.¹²⁰

Early on, GY launched its own publication, *GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal*, a national effort listing “in alphabetical order” the following editors: Kiokem Bridge, a.k.a. Michael Clark of Oyster Bay, Long Island, Tony Russomanno, reachable via GLF-Detroit, and Mark Segal.¹²¹ Printed on a borrowed Gestetner mimeograph machine on variously colored free paper, the first release advertised annual subscriptions of twenty-six issues for four dollars “subject to change.”¹²² At least three issues were published from 1970 to 1971. The journal published commentary, analysis, and articles addressing sexism, women’s issues, anti-imperialist struggle, gay liberation, and personal exploration, in an editorial policy that applied the gay liberation maxim, “No one is free until everyone is free.”

Segal saw *GY's Gay Journal* as a political and social outlet for “Gay Movement news from around the country, stories, poetry, [and] comics.”¹²³ Non-standard sexual identities were explored. Two young GY authors interviewed a leatherman and pondered a verbal lesson on dress codes and sexual mores in a “somewhat naïve, serialized evening of cruising” (fig. 4.14).¹²⁴ The journal printed notice of a women’s takeover of a former city Women’s shelter to house a “Lesbian Center, feminist school, child and health care facilities . . . and many other services.”¹²⁵ It carried, courtesy of Liberation News Service, a poem by Leonel Rugama (Sandinista student and guerilla killed by troops of the corrupt and repressive U.S.-supported Somoza regime) that spoke to the plight of Nicaraguans who “die of hunger” in contrast to the costly moon flights in which Bible-reading astronauts brought “glad tidings to all Christians. . . . Blessed be the poor, for they shall inherit the moon.”¹²⁶

Bridge and Segal glowingly described a projected gay political takeover of California’s rural Alpine County as a plan to construct social institutions, define a strong, pliable, and vastly original cultural identity, and “seek out rosy, fresh and viable personal relationships. . . . We will create our own economy based on social justices, where a plethora of capital of the heart flourishes.” The young authors concluded, “A gay Alpine County connotes grandiose splendor. Peripteral mansions, lavender and pink and rosy, sunset red, will be homes of joy. . . . We’ll all be high on the wind, the stars, the sunshine. . . . Satisfaction comes!” A late news extra offered a starkly contrasting report warning that in the event of a takeover, the Board of Supervisors threatened to “dissolve the county.”¹²⁷

The second issue reported divisions among feminist, Black, radical, and moderate forces within the gay liberation movement, explaining that “following the lead of New York, Chicago, and Ann Arbor, the Gay

Liberation Front of Detroit appears headed for an internal split." The moderates seceded, forming the Detroit Gay Activists to support "gay life styles" and political action via "legitimate means."¹²⁸ The journal's "Bulletin Board" listed the many New York gay groups (DOB, GAA, GLF Women, GLF, Gay Youth itself, Radicalesbians, S.T.A.R., Third World Gay Revolution) and community resources (Gay Food Co-op in the Gay Community Center and an upper West Side coffee house named People's Coffee Grounds).¹²⁹

GY's journal, distributed to various affiliates, evoked a critical response (perhaps due to the flowery prose) from a GY Louisville leader who wrote:

Mark, We are returning the papers to you, because we feel Gay Youth-Louisville has trouble enough without selling a newspaper that makes us ill. Please forgive our condescending opinions, for we are not snobs. However unless you can come up with a paper obtaining a realistic approach to our problems then I am afraid that the Gay Journal is going to fall flat on its sexual identity.

Love Benjie

Gay Equality NOW!¹³⁰

Addressing Homophobia

Connections between GY affiliates were quite fluid; however, groups did support each other on issues of national importance such as protections for gay youth.¹³¹ A 1972 press release from Gay Youth National, at that time located in the GAA Firehouse, publicized the case of a sixteen-year-old Alexandria, VA, gay male runaway whose mother had filed a warrant. He was arrested and charged as an "uncontrollable youth" who was "in need of supervision." GY indicated it had initiated a legal defense fund for this and other cases and referred to possible legal recourse including the "Emancipated Minors" statute.¹³²

New York Gay Youth also faced hostility. Randy Wicker, in his 1970 *Gay* column, "The Wicker Basket," reported the case of six or seven GY members "more amused than concerned" when taunted by a single harasser as they entered an 8th Avenue pizza stand after their Sunday night meeting at the Church of the Holy Apostles on 28th Street and 9th Avenue. However, when a large number of mostly Puerto Rican neighborhood kids gathered outside and the pizza stand manager

AN EVENING ON THE PROMENADE



A SOMEWHAT NAIVE, SERIALIZED EVENING OF CRUISING
by one of the strange teeny boppers of Christopher Street

episode one

And here we are again. God, it's so early, only two A.M. Mike and I walk toward Christopher St., both of us smiling over the fact that though neither of us wants to leave alone, we don't intend to leave together. (For those of you that are either newly out or terribly naive, Mike and I are at that good old American pastime, CRUISING!)

The food we had at Mama's has us both pleasantly nauseous and more important than that, we're both, oh, how shall I put it, anxious.

We turn off the corner of Greenwich and are on Christopher Street.

The first interesting sight that greets our eyes is a man, about thirty-two, contentedly perched against a lamp post. He is fairly attractive, tall and all decked out in black leather. This is not to mention the chains. My first thought is that he's probably a High School English Teacher during the day.

Mike suddenly tells me I should look at what's dangling.

I call him a size queen three or four times before I realize that the dangling object he's referring to is the ring of keys hanging from the man's belt.

"His keys are on his left side," Mike says. "Isn't that supposed to mean something?"

"I don't know, why don't you write Eugenia Sheppard and ask her?" I answer.

"That's not a bad idea."

"What? Sheppard?"

Mike looks at me, possibly getting a bit annoyed. "No, Chanel, of course. I mean, maybe I could write to one of the Gay Publications. They should know."

"Why don't you save yourself a stamp and ask him?"

"I don't know, he might whip us or something."

"Oh, shit!"

I walk over to the man. I hope I look confident. I doubt it though.

"Excuse me, sir," I begin, "bu you, er, have your keys hanging on the left side of your belt. Ummmm, is that supposed to have some kind of, er, sexual, so to speak, connotation?" I'm trying like hell to sound studious.

He stares at me for a minute.

"It meynuns that ah luhk to hurt people in sex," he answers, in the best Texan accent that I ever come out of New Jersey.

"Mike, his face filled with total awe can't resist blurting out the inevitable question: "How?"

Mike does a lot of dumb things.

Our Gay John Wayne then begins to describe all the charming things he likes to do with his hands, and other objects during sex. He is quite descriptive. He manages to get to the subject of lubricant.

"Nothin' but spit and chewing' gum for me."

"Chewing Gum?" I ask.

"Up!"

"That's what I'd call TACKY to a degree" I can't help but saying.

He then gives me a dirty look, and Mike a hungry one.

Mike is beginning to blush, which is a pretty good trick. (Mike's black.)

We make our exit and walk down the street discussing him. The question going through our minds, is: How should we react to him? Can we consider him a freak? Is he weird? We were in a leeringly philosophical sort of mood.

AN EVENING ON THE PROMENADE, CONTINUED

Thinking about it we remember that some people in the so-called "straight" society put us down as weird and freaks. So, can we put him down for doing what he feels is right for him? As long as he's not hurting anybody (anybody that doesn't want to be hurt, that is), how can we possibly begin to put him down? A question for thought.

We end that particular episode with a good old fashioned "Right On" for his benefit, (quite effective, these cliches) and are back, off down Christopher Street, on to further adventures.

(In future editions,, our Gay Alex's in Wonderland will,,,,,,cruise a car,,,
visit a 50's type bar,,,,, run into straight friends,,,,,meet a Drag Queen,,,,,, drop
into an After Hours Bar,,,,,,stare at the Docks,,,,,and,,,,,wonder of all wonders,,,
SCRELL (WE HOPE..)

Fig. 4.14. "An Evening on the Promenade" by one of the strange teeny boppers of Christopher Street. (GY: *Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 2, 1970, 1.)

refused to let the GY members telephone a nearby GLF meeting, they exited amidst “a barrage of thrown bottles and bricks.” One member was slightly injured before a policeman was sighted and the pursuers deterred. Wicker reported, the GY president expressed regret that they had not “stayed and confronted them.” Clergy later notified police and the ongoing harassment was stopped.¹³³

State-sanctioned abuse was a serious threat. A nationally televised show exposed the brutal treatment of two incarcerated Chicago juvenile offenders considered to be “socially deprived” (i.e., they lacked “the opportunity of having a mother or father or other authority figure . . . [to] . . . learn some social or moral values”). After being caught for consensual “homosexual conduct,” the two thirteen-year-old boys (one Black and the other White) were drugged and tied spread-eagle to beds for more than three days to achieve “therapeutical behavior modification” and discipline.¹³⁴ These two boys were rendered particularly vulnerable by their homosexuality, class background, and youth. Segal recalls cases where gay men subjected to mental hospital aversion therapy had died.¹³⁵

GY leaders condemned such mistreatment. Mark Segal and his lover Philip Janison established Gay Youth National Committee in Philadelphia to provide both ideological leadership and practical support.¹³⁶ In their strongly worded Gay Youth Rights Platform passed by the National Coalition of Gay Organizations, state-sanctioned abuse was addressed:

*THEREFORE we demand the immediate release of all gay juvenile sisters and brothers involuntarily incarcerated in mental institutions, due solely to their sexual preferences. We further demand that brothers and sisters desiring counseling for mental and emotional problems, as a result of oppression sickness because of society and its repressive attitudes, be given proper counseling without the attempt to “cure” them of their sexuality.*¹³⁷

Gender non-compliant children also faced abuse. “The Gender Identity Research Treatment Program,” a U.C.L.A. psychiatric clinic behavior modification program, attempted to reprogram effeminate boys between four and ten years of age. Parents were trained to apply a point system that rewarded masculine behaviors and chastised effeminate habits. Youngsters were shown videos of their “mincing” mannerisms and encouraged to criticize each other’s feminine behaviors.¹³⁸

Segal built upon his experience with Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries. He reached out to Radical Queens Philadelphia “a pro-feminist

group promoting the rights of transgender people” established by Tommi Avicoli Mecca and Cei Bell with Sylvia Rivera and S.T.A.R. in mind. Tommi and Mark drafted recommendations pertaining to effeminate boys.¹³⁹

Whereas Effeminate boys are subject to ridicule, harassment, & verbal & physical abuse in school, in the home, and on the street.

Therefore be it resolved that the indoctrination of manhood, & *maskulinity* is Oppressive & Destructive to the Gay & Feminist struggles.

Therefore be it resolved that Transvestite & Transexual Gay Youth have the right to cross-dress, take hormones, & otherwise endow their bodies as they choose. This includes both female & male Transvestites and Transexuals.

Whereas Effeminate boys in orphanages & homes are subject to rape & all forms of harassment from staff & other boys[.]

Therefore be it resolved that we demand separate quarters for them, full protection from rape & other abuse, and where possible immediate release & adoption into Gay homes and/or Communes.¹⁴⁰

The draft recommendations were submitted to the Gay Youth National Committee and in all likelihood distributed to at least some GY chapters.

In 1973, Segal embarked on a media campaign as a Gay Raider, “zapping” the Mike Douglas talk show and Walter Cronkite CBS news broadcast as an uninvited and sudden “guest” in order to challenge the code of silence.¹⁴¹ Gay reported, several Raiders targeted Philadelphia’s City Hall where Segal “handcuffed himself to the bannister [sic] . . . directly overlooking the Liberty Bell with its famed inscription, ‘Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.’”¹⁴²

Fomenting Liberation in the Schools

Gay Youth reached out to high school students via demonstrations, flyers, its journal, and radio. It publicized student organizing efforts with a flyer accompanying an article, “gay group started at george washington h.s.” (ca. 1972):

The school system is oppressive to all who are forced to participate in it. Amongst these people are gay students, who either must hide or who are just coming out—in constant fear of being found out.

And since the high school is a microcosm of society in general, gay students are expected to keep their self-identity buried under the unfounded and senseless prejudices of their “authorities” prejudices which are based upon backward social, political, and economic ideas. If a student is found out to be gay, he or she will most probably be rushed to the dean, have his or her parents called, and all hell will break loose.

But gay people will no longer tolerate this oppression. Throughout the world, gays are rising up and demanding their just and true rights as human beings. Recognizing the power and function of independent liberation movements, gays have learned much from the black liberation movement and the women’s liberation movement, and have created the gay liberation movement.

We therefore as gay students demand the same rights (social and political) as “straight” students.

We therefore make the following demands upon the city high schools of New York:

1. the right to form gay groups of both a social and political nature.
2. the right to be included and to receive fair representation in any high-school course dealing with sexuality (as both sexual beings and as a political movement in a changing society with changing cultural values), and if none exist, to have them created.
3. the right to be treated as equal human beings, which includes the removal of all textbooks and other educational media that treat homosexuality as an aberation [sic], rather than as an integral and important part of human sexuality.¹⁴³

GY also indicated the group’s awareness of student rights, the inherent difficulties of school-based gay liberation activism, and its willingness to offer support.

IF YOU ARE A GAY STUDENT, GAY TEACHER, OR STUDENT OR TEACHER WHO FEELS THAT THESE ARE JUST DEMANDS AND WANT TO WORK TO SEE THAT THEY ARE MET IN YOUR SCHOOL, PLEASE CONTACT US, OR COME TO OUR WEEKLY MEETINGS. THE BOARD OF EDUCATION HAS STATED THAT

ALL STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO FORM ANY GROUP OF THEIR CHOOSING, AND THIS MUST INCLUDE GAY STUDENTS. IF YOU ARE GAY, HAVE THE COURAGE TO COME OUT AND DEMAND YOUR RIGHTS. IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE NOT READY TO DO SO YET, BUT WOULD LIKE TO MEET PEOPLE IN SIMILAR SITUATIONS AND TO MAKE GAY FRIENDS YOUR OWN AGE, COME TO GAY YOUTH. PEACE, AND GAY LOVE, YOUR SISTERS AND BROTHERS OF GAY YOUTH.¹⁴⁴

Appeals were made to school officials. Chairman Mark Segal wrote GY was “designed to ameliorate the horrid conditions under which gay people live. In order to offer succor to homosexuals’ sufferings, we as a service to the nation, are offering speakers for assembly periods or meetings in high schools such as yours.”¹⁴⁵

Individually and in small groups, GY speakers addressed an average of two (often suburban Long Island) high school classes a month, thereby informing students of GY’s existence and raising consciousness about gay liberation in sessions that invariably included a question-and-answer period.¹⁴⁶ Sex role stereotyping, sexism, and gay oppression were linked, but Segal’s favorite moment was one in which he emphasized gay liberation and anti-war activism. He would ask, “Anybody here who doesn’t want to go into the service, go into the draft, I’ll sign a letter saying I’m your lover. Kids would line up!” Finally, Segal would repeat GY’s telephone number, allowing students to discreetly memorize it. “A lot of kids a day or two later would be calling and crying their heart out.”¹⁴⁷

Liberation, Love, and “The Kid Who Wanted Books on Queers”

A handwritten document, a work in progress that included edit marks, outlined both practical and theoretical issues, apparently school and community outreach talking points. Sexual identities and relationships were seen within a political context. The document treated “problems of coming out to parents, friends, how to, what to do.” It addressed “prejudices faced by gay people from a straight and gay society” including “work, housing, condescension,” and “put downs” by those in the closet. *Identity construction*, “How to react to the way people feel; do I let people influence my self-conception?” led to *relationships*, “Am I trying to . . . mirror” the relationships of straight people? “What do I want from my relationship? Role playing.”¹⁴⁸

The key questions were “What is ‘Gay Liberation?’ What it means to you. Are you liberated and if so, how did you become liberated.”

Inherent in the document is liberation as a redefinition of relationships and understandings of sexuality, rather than a plea for acceptance within existing oppressive institutional structures. The writer also considered the *nature of love*. “Is it important in my relationships?” conflation of “sex with love,” and “Have I ever been in love?” Evidently well-tutored, s/he addressed *manifestations of “gay life”* in the form of “bars, cruising, S&M, B&D [bondage & discipline], gay people in the movies,” as well as understanding, avoiding, and handling sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁴⁹

GY monitored the gay liberation movement. Its files contained an excerpt from Laud Humphrey’s *Out of the Closets*, Warren Blumenfeld’s “School is not a Gay Place to Be,” a father’s account of coming out to his two young children, and an article on Greek love that commended the “Gay Youth movement.”¹⁵⁰

GY incorporated articles from the gay press into its own outreach efforts. The group released a two page flyer with a letter, entitled “The Kid Who Wanted Books on Queers,” written to the *Body Politic* by C.P., a second year high school student. It announced “Gay, Straight, or Bisexual: If you support these views, come out to our next [weekly] meeting.”¹⁵¹ The student reflected on the gains of gay liberation and the plight of schools:

Granted the radicalization of women and gays has broken down a number of sex and sexuality-related barriers and stereotypes. It has also brought a certain political awareness to students. Many gay students are now less secretive about their sexuality. But they still have a long way to go. Sexism is sometimes insidious and sometimes blatant, but it is always present.¹⁵²

C.P. described how steps for gay liberation—“coming out in high school, fighting for the right to have homosexuality represented fairly in the school library, or for the right to have a gay liberation speaker . . . talk to students”—were cautiously received and delayed by educators in a school “instilling and reinforcing myths about gays, women, blacks, Indians, and other oppressed groups.” C.P. envisioned a “massive struggle to destroy those myths and build a new society.”¹⁵³

Social Services Resource

GY provided direct support to street kids. Mark Segal explains, “They needed a place to stay. We got them a place to stay. They needed food. We got them food. They needed someone to talk to. We were there to talk.

Those that came into the group that needed help, those were the real reason we existed.”¹⁵⁴

The group became known within New York City’s social service network. Based upon a referral from Identity House (“a counseling center . . . designed to serve . . . the gay and bisexual community in New York,” founded in 1971), Joe Enright, a vocational counselor with the Court Employment Project, contacted GY “as a possible resource” for young gay people in the project’s “alternative to the criminal court process.”¹⁵⁵

GY’s frequent moves took a toll. Enright’s letter, dated August 28, 1974, was answered nearly one year later on July 19, 1975, just after GY had settled in the Mattachine Society’s offices. The GY writer invited referrals, describing GY in terms of peer support.¹⁵⁶ GY files included an outreach letter from Parents of Gays stating the importance of being “united in our common love for our daughters and sons.”¹⁵⁷ GY continued to contact social service groups. For example, in 1981, GY spokesperson Aner Candelario notified the “Switchboard” of GY’s goals (peer dialogue and support, youth activities including “camping, museums, plays . . . ” and the expression of youth ideas via protest and political action) and promised to send news of upcoming events.¹⁵⁸

RENAISSANCE: REASONS FOR GY’S LONGEVITY

GY, with its fluid membership, was to reinvent itself at least twice during its first six years, maintaining autonomy, gay liberation ideology, and some awareness of its own history. Its ca. 1972 “Gay Youth Renaissance” at the GAA Firehouse flyer (hand lettered and printed by GAA member Steve Ashkinazy on the temperamental GAA duplication machine) provides evidence of this rebirth.¹⁵⁹

Six factors contributed to the longevity of Gay Youth: (1) adult support, (2) a national network, (3) an insistence on autonomy, (4) historical memory, (5) defined governance, and (6) dedication to gay liberation. An overview of Gay Youth’s nomadic existence over thirty years time provides a sense of the group’s determination and the support role played by adult groups. Gay Youth’s commitment to youth-defined gay liberation was initially and constantly its *raison d'être*.

(1) Adult Support

One of the key factors in Gay Youth’s longevity—even long after GLF and GAA had foundered—was the willingness of church and community groups to offer assistance, if only for the storage of papers and a meeting space. GY welcomed adult help where necessary, but maintained a self-authoring

youth-led stance. Unlike S.T.A.R. for whom liberation also entailed physical survival, GY continued to move its headquarters from place to place. It raised limited funds via dances and fundraisers to print flyers and maintain a small bank account.

At personal and organizational crisis points, some GY leaders (often surreptitiously since this constituted a betrayal of youth leadership ideals) sought advice from professional counselors such as Steve Ashkinazy. A counselor at the Institute for the Protection of Gay and Lesbian Youth, later renamed the Hetrick-Martin Institute, Ashkinazy was a driving force behind the Harvey Milk School and founder of Madrigal House, a Brooklyn shelter for homeless LGBT youth that later closed due to lack of funds and support.¹⁶⁰ GY continued to meet the needs of youth, although there were periods of internal dissent when middle class and street kids disagreed over focus and direction.¹⁶¹ GY's stubborn longevity speaks to adolescents' desire to come out, find affirmation and peer support, and engage in political action. The process is all the more remarkable because for its first thirteen years GY was entirely independent.

Initially a Gay Liberation Front sub-group, Gay Youth retained this link, holding meetings at the Alternate U (a loose-knit leftist "people's university" with classes held in its loft space) as did GLF and a wide range of other leftist groups.¹⁶² (GLF founding member Martha Shelley explained that when GLF members, then numbering about two dozen, first approached Alternate U, they met "mostly gay people who had been involved with the political Left but were forced to stay in the closet. They were leftists who were closeted gays, just as we were gays who were closeted leftists.")¹⁶³ By the summer of 1970, GY listed the Church of the Beloved Disciple as a meeting place.¹⁶⁴ In 1971, GY was holding business meetings in the short-lived Gay Community Center along with GLF, GLF Women, S.T.A.R., Radicalesbians, and Third World Gay Revolution, until a theft of center funds closed the premises.¹⁶⁵ Sunday afternoon meetings were scheduled for a Chelsea basement where GY invited youth to "hang-out and rap, listen to music, and most importantly, meet people your own age."¹⁶⁶ In 1972, the Church of the Holy Apostles, a welcoming Episcopal institution committed to social justice and open to GLF, also hosted GY.¹⁶⁷

GY settled into the Wooster St. GAA Firehouse—where "it always had a home"—at some point after the May 1, 1971 opening.¹⁶⁸ The ca. 1972 "Gay Youth Renaissance" flyer announced its Firehouse meetings.¹⁶⁹ Arsonists targeted the Firehouse in the early morning hours of October 15, 1974, but GY may have already relocated back to the Church of the Beloved Disciple, "the Catholic church of the gay community," on 14th St. (fig. 4.15).¹⁷⁰

The Mattachine Society, previously unwilling to admit those under twenty-one, housed GY during the mid-seventies, offering office space at its Christopher Street location steps away from the former Stonewall bar. The itinerant youth group's path included addresses generally located around West 14th St. (bordering Manhattan's West Village and the then working-class Chelsea).¹⁷¹ The Gay Switchboard served as its telephone contact. In 1983, the group, still "operating out of an old milk crate in the storage room of the Metropolitan Community Church," announced its imminent move to the Gay and Lesbian Community Center on 13th St. where it later ceded some autonomy to an advisory board. It announced, "After nearly fourteen years of existing in the gay community by the skin of our teeth . . . Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York is going to make the big time!" The letter continued, GLNY ("completely youth run") offers "weekly support groups, peer counseling, social activities, and referrals to other organizations and services."¹⁷² The group "took the show on the road back in 1999/2000." A BiGLTYNY yahoo.com group "remains only to prevent any non-authorized persons from claiming the name" and "BiGLTYNY is not currently active."¹⁷³ Its last listing provided the telephone number for the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services.¹⁷⁴

(2) Gay Youth National Committee

One of Gay Youth's strengths was a governance structure that supported continuity of leadership. This meant that when Mark Segal moved to Philadelphia, vice-president Mark Horn could step in. Segal and his lover Philip Janison continued to support GY efforts by establishing and running the Gay Youth National Committee, a GY umbrella group.¹⁷⁵ Segal would later initiate the Committee on Youth and Ageism. GY New York asked the committee to help resolve a variety of financial and leadership crises relating to governance and autonomy.

(3) Autonomy

"From day one" GY was willing to accept adult support, financial contributions, and ideas, but it bluntly and unequivocally insisted on its independence—and adult groups respected this—otherwise (as Mark Segal quips) "they were oppressing us, of course!"¹⁷⁶ This insistence on autonomy mirrors the views of NYC students who advocated a student Bill of Rights in 1970 and George Washington High School gay liberationists in 1972.

The issue of autonomy was a heated one. Steve Ashkinazy recalls that GY "was like a bargaining chip between GAA and GLF," vied after



Fig. 4.15. “Gay Youth Meets Saturday, 2pm at 348 W. [West 14th Street],” address for the Church of the Beloved Disciple. (Photograph by Leonard Fink, 1974, Collection 026, Folder 22, The National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

by both organizations.¹⁷⁷ Later, the National Gay Task Force proposed to incorporate the group. Signs of strife were made public in an October 1974, article by GLF member and muckraking gay liberation journalist

Ralph Hall who attacked GAA's ostensible plan for a \$3000 gay youth radio campaign. Asking why GAA and NGTF wanted Gay Youth "under their wings," Hall indicated GY (then located in the Church of the Beloved Disciple) had expressed displeasure it had not been consulted about the advertisement.¹⁷⁸ This purported takeover, discussed in prior GY meetings, evoked several quick and sharp responses in the form of three letters dated November 7, 1974.¹⁷⁹ GY President Michael Wolcott advised GAA, temporarily stationed at Man's Country bathhouse following the loss of the Firehouse, against duplicating the GY group within GAA, thereby undermining GY's status as "the sole recognized youth organization for gays of New York." Vice President Gary Comolli and Secretary Douglas Rodriguez warned GAA against such "futile," "meaningless," and "time-consuming projects." Wolcott wrote Philip Janison of the Philadelphia-based Gay Youth National Committee, expressing his concern that "GAA is still expecting us to either merge with them or aid their newly formed 'group.'" Janison responded by offering to affirm GY autonomy and meet with Wolcott on an upcoming NYC visit.¹⁸⁰

GY leaders shouldered the obligation to maintain the group's youth-led status, but problems arose. Leaders faced the strain of adjudicating heated internecine battles. Steve Ashkinazy explains he and the Hetrick-Martin Institute were contacted by several GY leaders who expressed a "need to talk" privately and in confidence. They were troubled by personal and organizational issues of a social and structural nature. Ashkinazy's private consultations highlighted how adherence to a categorical youth-only policy could overwhelm.

Ashkinazy examined and ultimately refuted the argument that "a gay youth program that was clinical was pathologizing gay youth." A problematic case illustrating the pitfalls of obligatory youth leadership (that by definition excluded adult participation) arose at an annual conference of gay youth organizations, probably in the late 1980s. A youth-led program failed to incorporate for three years running because papers were improperly done. The kids worked independently to complete the forms, unaware that adults in a similar situation would have obtained professional help. Mentoring, often associated with disempowerment, could have respected the need for "children to develop as individuals and as independent thinkers." Without assistance, youth handling unrealistic expectations of "expertise and experience" lost the benefits of incorporation.¹⁸¹

After GY had moved to the Community Center, its leaders struggled to resolve political friction between several street youths and those with homes. The resulting alienation threatened to split the group in two.

Ashkinazy surmised that conflict resolution skills or consultation might have helped prevent this rift.¹⁸²

(4) Governance: A Snapshot from 1974

GY's organizational structure contributed to its stability. The group initially had a president and vice-president. GY weekly meetings (attended by five to ten people, and never more than twenty) were run by consensus, modeled after GLF, but socializing predominated.¹⁸³ Several years later, voting appears to have replaced consensus; the positions of secretary and treasurer were added. Ashkinazy recalls that GY meetings in the Firehouse had a leader or chair. The meeting was called to order; business was addressed and (barring a crisis) adjourned for social interaction.

Business meeting minutes (from April 27, 1974, and on a near-weekly basis from September 21, 1974, until December 7, 1974) offer a snapshot of GY governance practices and key issues from that period. Topics included meeting-place arrangements, adult-youth relationships, connections to adult groups including a possible merger with GAA or the more traditional National Gay Task Force, survival of Gay Youth, social activities, outreach to high schools, and finances.¹⁸⁴ Autonomy was a topic of concern.

During this time period, GY had a formal organizational structure. The president or vice president officiated; the secretary took minutes; the treasurer managed financial transactions and bank accounts; authority was delegated; subcommittees were formed; and attendance lists were confidential. The November 9th minutes state, “the first page of the Constitution was read by our Parliamentarian . . . It was then agreed and passed with the presence of eight official members.” Voting might have been done (at least in some cases) by secret ballot.¹⁸⁵ The October 5th minutes distinguish eligible voting members; those of December 7th refer to a vote of fifteen (and one abstention) out of sixteen in an “official-membership vote,” although the nature of the eligibility requirements are not stated.

At the 2:30 pm, April 27th, meeting, the president spoke of a possible move to the Church of the Beloved Disciple, one thousand forthcoming circulars, a Mattachine meeting on the NYC gay civil rights bill “Intro 2,” and a motion for GY to move to its new church meeting space. A stated two-thirds majority voting policy to overturn a previous resolution was “ruled out of order by the President,” and the motion passed with five in support, one against, and three abstentions. No report was given from the vice president due to absence. The Secretary’s reading of the April 20th minutes was accepted and the Christopher Street Liberation Day march

itinerary was read. The treasurer reported a balance of \$12.00. With no new or old business to address, the motion to adjourn was passed and the meeting ended at 2:45 pm, a scant fifteen minutes long.

On September 21, the Metropolitan Community Church and Church of the Beloved Disciple were discussed as possible meeting locations. Members also considered holding a rap session, a cabaret, and a dance (to be followed by others if successful). “Letters, leaflets and bumper stickers will be made.” If there were a good turn out, another event would be planned for December.

An adult National Gay Task Force spokesperson proposed interviews to affirm GY’s existence and the “healthy and happy” status of its participants. A year-old NGTF gay foster parent program for “young kids” was also mentioned. GY members consented “to be interviewed by a professional psychologist” and to strengthen relations with NGTF, noting a “daylong series of workshop presentations.” The possibility of a merger was broached at several meetings, but ultimately rejected.¹⁸⁶

Intergenerational relationships (“views on chicken hawks [men interested in adolescents], ages of chicken hawks, some chickens want permanent hawks”) and sexual relations between youths were also considered. The minutes reveal members’ agreement that two young boys caught “having sexual relations would probably be reprimanded and sent to reform school.” One speaker explained a drawback to the “chicken–hawk relationship” was its unstable nature—“hello, hop in bed, goodbye. . . . but the experience is enjoyed.”¹⁸⁷ (In the early 1980s, a more ominous question arose regarding adult youth relations. A rival adult-directed social services group named Gay and Young—critiqued by GY for its rumored fifteen-year-old minimum age limit and negative attitudes towards drag: the “face of respectability” needed for grants—broke its promises of assistance, but served as a clearinghouse for men to have sex with boys. Joyce Hunter, at that time a social services intern, reported her concerns to Hetrick and Martin—founders of the Institute for Protection of Gay and Lesbian Youth, now known as Hetrick-Martin—who interceded and Gay and Young closed. The event catalyzed IPGLY to move from fact-finding and advocacy to direct services.)¹⁸⁸

The 1974 Minutes also detail a “camp” sensibility.¹⁸⁹ The September 28th meeting reportedly lacked sufficient official members to consider rumors of a possible merger of GY with the National Gay Task Force. It was presided over by “Michael Wolcott, a possible candidate for the Queenship.” The October 12th minutes recorded by Secretary “DR” (Douglas Rodriguez) announced “HER MAJESTY, OUR NEW QUEEN, one Michael Wolcott, Queen of the Lilies which are in Bloom, opened the meeting” by reading a GAA critique of a homophobic “Marcus Welby, M.D.” television show.

The *New York Times* reported the actor playing the fourteen-year-old looked closer to sixteen. The show was replete with “semihysterical stereotypes, neatly complemented with all-understanding saints,” making it evident why gay activists objected.¹⁹⁰ Minutes also indicated that GY was to have a checking and savings account; collections totaled \$8.35.¹⁹¹

Despite changes in leadership and locale, GY maintained its political and social aims. Isolation of youth was a recurring concern. According to the October 26th minutes, “Her majesty opened the meeting by reading a flier from Timothy A. Gelatt.” The group agreed to “hopefully (some day)” contact metropolitan area high schools and towards that end decided to contact the flier’s author. Social outlets for suburban gay youth were clearly needed. The minutes concluded:

Her majesty then read us a letter from a boy in New Jersey named “Brad” who is very lonely. Afterwards, it was agreed that the “Social Hour” of our weekly meetings would be emphasized, and we did thus. \$2.56

BUSINESS MEETING ADJOURNED!¹⁹²

Dances and other fundraising events (such as a women-only flea market at which GY hoped to be represented by Wendy Ballard) provided income, but there were hurdles, including the reported theft of \$244 from the treasury.¹⁹³ November 2nd minutes indicated finances were “\$39.15 in the blue” and the Treasurer “was to pay the debt endowed upon us by The Twinkie King,” conceivably a former GY officer who had absconded with the group’s funds.¹⁹⁴ In December, the question of “How can GY raise money?” absorbed the group. A near unanimous vote authorized the president “to establish an Activities Committee for the Purpose of Fund-Raising” with members Doug (presumably Secretary Douglas Rodriguez), Alan Greenburg, Glenn Blistein, Tony Campo, and Wendy Ballard as “advertising consultant.”

Fundraising supported outreach and visibility, with the group determining the need for a GY outreach pamphlet, “letting the closets know that we exist.” Radio and television media were to be contacted by the Secretary. Fundraising remained the dominant issue and a dance contract for Aladdin’s Cave was discussed.¹⁹⁵

(5) *Historical Memory*

Group history, occasionally garbled but often accurate, was transmitted, to be partially forgotten at times, and ultimately unearthed. Knowledge of past events helped sustain the organization during difficult times. For

example, Executive Secretary Douglas Rodriguez wrote a memorandum to the membership concerning “the impeachment of President Michael Wolcott and the present morale of our organization.” He noted,

Less than five years ago, the very renown and highly esteemed GAY YOUTH of New York was almost dissolved as a result of circumstances similar to the ones with which we are now facing. . . . Gay Youth existed only in name with only four or five people serving as an excuse for its full membership.

Afterwards, we saw the sudden arrival and almost instantaneous departure of one John Chiaffalo, whose effect on our group is still felt by many today. This too is another “challenging battle” for us. Yet, up until now, we’ve managed to survive.¹⁹⁶

Rodriguez, charting uncertain waters, sought “to revitalize and return the prestige & honor which our organization so rightfully deserves.”¹⁹⁷ He called for the membership and Executive Committee to avoid an impeachment process that might dissolve GY and to energetically support the anniversary dance, despite the organization’s near bankruptcy. (GY’s commitment to maintaining its history continued. Mark Segal and other alumni were invited to its anniversary celebration during the 1990s.)¹⁹⁸

(6) Dedication to Gay Liberation

GY held true to its youth-led gay liberation roots even as the Movement adopted an assimilationist civil rights agenda, other gay liberation youth-led groups disbanded, and adult-led social services programs emerged. At various points (e.g., during the group’s circa 1975 Mattachine days) peer support was emphasized; but notes for a speech given by GY leader Mark Moffett at an April 29, 1980, rally evince a more revolutionary liberatory analysis. Moffett, from “a broken home with many homophobic family members” who a year earlier at age 14 had taken “a job washing dishes in New York and moved into his own apartment,”¹⁹⁹ questioned the “self-proclaimed leaders who have spent the movements [sic] time, energy and patience, brown nosing the democratic party,” the “self-oppressive attitudes,” and the movement’s straight, white, middle-class values. He announced Gay Youth’s support for a collectively run, inclusive, and progressive movement that manifested bonds of “love, unity, anger, and presence we had during the Stonewall. . . . regardless of sex, color, age, social, and spiritual beliefs.”²⁰⁰

Apparently many of the issues that ten years earlier had galvanized GY’s founders and were acknowledged by early gay liberationists resurfaced

in this transformed, more conformist atmosphere. Less than one month later, Gay Youth of New York resigned from the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights rejecting it as “an obstacle to Lesbian and Gay Liberation” due to its ageist attitudes (lack of youth representation, confounding “child,” and “children” with immature and worthless); refusal to fully debate the change of age of consent due to Lesbian Feminist Liberation pressure; stifling of discussion on intergenerational relationships; and the censuring of fifteen-year-old GY spokesperson Mark Moffett.²⁰¹

“WHEREVER YOUNG PEOPLE CONGREGATE”

Gay Youth expressed the ideals of gay and youth liberation reinforced within a maelstrom of social upheaval that included women’s liberation, Black liberation, the sexual revolution, anti-war activism, and New Left ideology. Like New York GLF, GY called for a revolutionary form of personal and political transformation. Coming out was more than personal; it was political. Breaking isolation was the first step. GY conducted outreach “wherever young people congregate”—in the high schools, via the press, gay community—thereby overcoming isolation.²⁰² Next, consciousness-raising enabled youth to reconsider issues of sexual identity and relationship within a gay liberation context. Given support and affirmation, newcomers became full-fledged movement activists. In short, GY created youth-defined spaces and built a community that included social and political outlets. It provided an alternative to Mafia-run bars and illicit sexual encounters with older men.

GY acted locally, via public protest as well as school, community, and national outreach. First established in New York, the group sparked similar initiatives across the United States (a phenomenon reproduced by later adult-led LGBT youth groups and more recent student-led Gay-Straight Alliances).²⁰³ High School Gays United in Boston adopted the Gay Youth name. Certainly, LGBT youth in major urban centers organized (as might be expected), but so did their compatriots in less prominent locales such as Louisville, KY; Tampa, FL; and Worcester, MA.

GY’s ambitious program had lasting effects. Mark Segal (now the publisher of *Philadelphia Gay News*, writer, and political activist) reflects, “Everything we did then taught me to do what I’m doing today.”²⁰⁴ GY, not high school, provided an education in activism and political organizing. Many, but not all, GY members would go on to college and professional careers. “Tony Russomanno became a news reporter in New York and now works as the environmental reporter for KPIX-TV, the CBS station in San Francisco.”²⁰⁵ GY’s first vice president, Marc Horn, “is in advertising in New York.”²⁰⁶

A number of participants have passed away. Nova disappeared a few years after GLF folded. Brass recalls, “Peter Ruffit, one of my friends who is now deceased, bemoaning that Nova had disappeared, perhaps back to New Jersey, perhaps even dead.”²⁰⁷ Jeffrey Segal, a lively, intelligent, expressive, outspoken, sweet soul attended Hampshire College where Dmitri Belser and I knew him during the mid-1970s. As a young gay activist, he frequented the Firehouse and possibly participated in GY. After completing his studies at Hampshire, he went on to earn a doctorate of psychology. Jeff later passed away from AIDS.²⁰⁸ Mark Wayne Moffett Jr.—student of American literature classical pianist, and AIDS volunteer—died due to HIV related causes in 2005.²⁰⁹

Mark Segal and GY’s other members (including Danny Weeks, Tony Russomanno, Mark Horn, Allen Ryan, Joe Covert, Kiokem Bidge—the pen name of Michael Clark, Nova, Marc Wald, and Mark Moffett) added the powerful voice of youth to the burgeoning gay liberation movement. They focused on social and political change, wrote position papers, published, addressed rallies, and bravely spoke at schools. Gay Youth offered crucial peer support, youth-defined gay liberation settings, a political platform, social interaction, a communal and political approach to personal challenges, and a chance to explore identity issues. It was a place to speak and be heard. When asked how Gay Youth had shaped the years to come, Tony Russomanno explained, “I was then out, so that relieved me of a lifetime of guilt and hiding and closeted behavior.”²¹⁰ GY also welcomed the most vulnerable, including New York’s homeless street kids, and worked in conjunction with its “half-sister” organization Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries.

Chapter Five

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.)



Fig. 5.1. "Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries," left to right: Randi (hand on hip), Sylvia Rivera front and center, Bubbles with arms around unknown queen, Clarence possibly in back. (Photograph by E. Bedoz, pseudonym for Ellen Schumsky, *Come Out* 1, no. 7, 1970; Individuals identified by Bebe Scarpi, telephone conversation with author, December 31, 2006.)

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

S.T.A.R. defies neat categorization. Its participants were societal outcasts rendered economically, socially, and psychologically vulnerable because of gender non-conformity, youth, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and poverty. The group's impact was more powerful than its small size of twenty or thirty participants would have predicted. Even before S.T.A.R. was founded, street transvestites worked to catalyze, define, and promote gay liberation.

From its inception in 1970, S.T.A.R. focused on survival, countered societal injustice, and asserted an unapologetic transvestite identity. Led by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, S.T.A.R. offered shelter and sustenance to "throw-away" transvestite youth—distinguished by physical characteristics: shaved eyebrows, hair long enough to attach a fall, perhaps pierced ears, dress, and most importantly, self-identification.¹ The group also stood up for the street kids who occasionally donned androgynous "scare drag" and touches of make-up. S.T.A.R. fought against abuse perpetrated by prison officials, mental institutions, police, and the legal system. Within Maslow's hierarchy of needs, S.T.A.R. addressed a range from "deficiency" (physiological, safety, belonging, esteem) to "growth" (to know and understand, self-actualization) in a manner that recognized and celebrated gender variation.²

In the Vanguard of Gay Liberation

Overcoming adversity is but one aspect of their story. Street transvestites were in the forefront of the gay liberation movement—joining those responsible for the Stonewall Rebellion: transvestites and lesbians who resisted inside the bar, street kids protesting outside, including Jackie Hormona reported to have "kicked a cop," the effeminate gay male "flame queens," and the "lesbian who fought the police" along with other gays, lesbians, agitators, students, and passers-by.³ Street transvestite Marsha P. Johnson was seen climbing a lamppost and dropping "a bag containing a heavy object" on a police car windshield, shattering it.⁴ Although Sylvia Rivera later explained that she had come down the avenue, turned the corner and joined the protest⁵ (this would presumably have been on one of the subsequent nights, as neither Bob Kohler nor Marsha saw Sylvia that first night).⁶

With the formation of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), street transvestites would draw on their movement experience to advocate full rights and recognition for transvestites, street youth, prisoners, and the disempowered, thereby laying the groundwork for the transgender

movement (along with Queens Liberation Front, initiated by Lee Brewster). S.T.A.R. participants—Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Bubbles Rose Lee, Andorra, Bebe Scarpi, Bambi L'Amour, Miss Pixie, and others—fought for the inclusion of gender liberation within the fabric of gay liberation, using the term “gay” in the inclusive fashion now conveyed by the word “queer.”

Survival to Self-Actualization

Life on the streets was a tenuous proposition. For street kids and transvestites, compatriots who eked out lives on the margins, it meant a cycle of rejection, homelessness, prostitution, petty (and sometimes more serious) crime, panhandling, flophouse hotels, and drugs. The youths inhabiting the vest-pocket Christopher Park adjacent to Sheridan Square instigated (along with others) the June 1969 Stonewall Rebellion that ignited the gay liberation movement. GLF activist Bob Kohler witnessed, “fourteen-, fifteen-year-old kids with cigarette burns all over their bodies from a father



Fig. 5.2. “Marsha and Sylvia march with the S.T.A.R. banner, 1972 Christopher Street Liberation Day,” followed by Queens Liberation. (Photograph by Leonard Fink, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th St, NY, NY 10011, Collection 025, Folder 08.)

who found out they were gay—or were permanently scarred, and certainly mentally scarred forever, and thrown out and living out of bags in Sheridan Square.”⁷ They depended upon hustling, theft, and handouts for survival, occasionally donning “scare drag” (thereby meeting legal requirements for a minimum of three articles of “gender-appropriate” clothing, giving rise to a motley ambiguous look) to attract clients. After hustling for “johns” until near dawn, they retreated to their territory, washing in the little water fountain, and claiming park benches to sleep on. A few scrounged together funds for nearby fleabag hotels.⁸

Street kids and transvestites related to adults mainly through the commerce of sex and police harassment that emphasized their powerlessness and anonymity. Kohler may have been the only adult in their lives to freely offer help (whether pocket change, warm clothing, or empathy) without expectation.⁹ Sounding a cautionary note against a tendency to glamorize or sanitize life stories marred by moral alienation, he reflected, “there was no value in their lives, no value at all. Nobody placed any value in them.”¹⁰ Street life was permeated with violence committed by and against youth. One young transvestite stabbed her lover in the eye. Another met her death tumbling from a window of Brooklyn’s St. George Hotel. A street queen awoke on a rooftop “burned to a crisp” by searing sunlight. Dusty, known for her unintentionally humorous quacking voice, was murdered en route to Saint Vincent’s Hospital, after a hotheaded altercation led to violence.¹¹ “Terrible things happened. There were a couple murders by them.”¹²

S.T.A.R.’s communal efforts provided a respite from the street. Sylvia and Marsha hustled to sustain their “kids” physically, but they also offered community and affirmation. Trans counselor Reid Vanderburgh and Andrew S. Forshée write “many [of today’s] homeless transgender youth willingly subvert their trans identities in order to feel safe, eat, and find a place to sleep.”¹³ In contrast, S.T.A.R.’s prescient assertion of transvestite identity provided adolescents with sorely needed role models. Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries fostered self-reliance that enabled transvestites to both publicize the underlying causes of oppression and collectively fight back.

A Political Platform to Effect Social Change

Grounded in the rigors of street life, street transvestites developed a platform to address injustices—lethal prison conditions, police harassment, an inimical legal and mental health system, discrimination against transvestites in housing and employment—and demand social revolution. S.T.A.R., along with GLF and GAA organized pickets, visited prisons and mental institutions, publicized inmate mistreatment, and helped form the Gay

Community Prison Committee.¹⁴ S.T.A.R. supported the Young Lords and the Black Panthers. Street transvestites marched arm in arm and rallied in support of gay rights. The group was a signatory to a letter by Ti-Grace Atkinson indicting the church for its oppression of women.¹⁵ S.T.A.R. helped run an early Gay Community Center.¹⁶ Transvestites testified in favor of the GAA-originated NYC gay rights bill “Intro 475,” addressed students, and wrote articles for the gay liberation press. S.T.A.R. amplified individual voices and raised transvestite issues within the heart of the gay liberation movement, thereby garnering recognition.

Legacy

S.T.A.R. left a legacy beyond its brief existence, tumbledown tenement, and vocal participants. Like Gay Youth, it fought for an inclusive gay liberation movement that represented a “revolutionary path toward freedom.”¹⁷ Gender, not just homosexual orientation, was central. In S.T.A.R.’s case, affirmation involved the invention and public statement of transgender identity. S.T.A.R. leaders Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson had experienced racial, gender, age, and economic discrimination early in their lives. At ages eleven and seventeen they found each other and later attempted to formalize the one community where they fit—that of street-savvy transvestites and hustlers. Sylvia and Marsha simultaneously juggled physical, emotional, psychosocial, and political goals. In Sylvia’s words, street transvestites “formed S.T.A.R. because my brothers and sisters kept using us when they needed us, but they weren’t treating us fairly. So we wanted to be by ourselves.”¹⁸

Its outspoken activism, nourished by the gay liberation movement, embodied a number of ideological premises. S.T.A.R. understood that gender ≠ biological sex, a precursor to contemporary queer theory. It insisted that gender identity be a part of gay liberation’s radical challenge to the political regulation of acceptable sexual orientation and sex roles. S.T.A.R. supported gay liberation’s call for the revolutionary transformation of a host of oppressive institutions including schools, corporate capitalism, the nuclear family, prison, police force, legal system, and church.

Writer and activist Michael Bronski observed, “out of almost nothing Sylvia and Marsha essentially started what was to become, more than 20 years later, the transgender movement that we know today.”¹⁹ (Additional antecedents include San Francisco “Black Cat” drag performer José Sarria who ran for office in the early 1960s and the Tenderloin gender transgressive youth who in 1966 organized, rioted, and began publishing *Vanguard*.)²⁰ Sylvia, before her death in 2002, advocated the inclusion of transgender protections in SONDA, the New York State Sexual Orientation

Non-Discrimination Act.²¹ Her views closely mirrored S.T.A.R.'s original platform.

One of our main goals now is to destroy the Human Rights Campaign, because I'm tired of sitting on the back of the bumper. It's not even the back of the bus anymore—it's the back of the bumper. The bitch on wheels is back.²²

The state bill, with transgender provisions, was signed into law January 16, 2003.²³

DEFINITIONS

“Transgender” is an umbrella term of recent origin and ascribed meaning. Anthropologist David Valentine sees it as “useful shorthand in describing non-normative genders; as a way of recognizing and objectifying a group of diverse people who have not always been seen to inhabit the same category.”²⁴ In 1970, street transvestites represented one of many permutations of gender expression, both in dress and political ideology. Street transvestites considered themselves kindred to the haphazardly adorned homeless street kids living nearby the Stonewall. They occasionally took hormone shots, didn’t want a sex change, hustled for a living, and identified themselves as transvestites, “girlies,” or “femme queens” in common parlance.²⁵ There were other circles as well. Elegant transvestites performed in venues such as the “82 Club.”

Queens Liberation Front was organized by the distinguished Lee Brewster, originally a member of Mattachine who became “one of America’s first pioneering transvestite activists.”²⁶ Brewster hired the lawyers to overturn city ordinances and thereby ca. 1971 (in his own words) “legalized the wearing of ‘drag’ in New York City bars and cabarets. No longer could a club be closed, or patrons arrested just because there was a crossdresser present.”²⁷ In fact the challenge to city code went further; struck were the words “homosexuals, lesbians, or persons pretending to be . . . ” thereby giving homosexuals the right to congregate, legalizing gay clubs and parties. “Girls in three” were a bust no longer.²⁸

The outrageously camp Warhol superstar set—Holly Woodlawn, Jackie Curtis (for whom Mark Segal was briefly stage manager), and Candy Darling—pushed the boundaries of NYC avant-garde performance art.²⁹ For Holly, life was a performance. Good friends Tony Russomanno, Arthur Bell, and Mark Segal were cruising up 6th avenue in a cab. Tony recalls:

Arthur “looks over and says ‘Oh, there’s Holly. Pull over.’ And it was Holly Woodlawn tromping up and down the avenue somewhere in her heels and Arthur says, ‘Holly, Holly!’ and she jumps in the car—fans herself—and says, ‘Rush rush here. Rush rush there’ . . . That was one of several great lines that stuck with me. . . . It was just that scene in her street transvestite, street transexual outfit, whatever she was doing, and sitting in that car being so obsessed with having something so important to do, that her life was just so complicated and full that she could only say that ‘Rush rush here. Rush rush there.’³⁰

S.T.A.R. leader, Marsha P. Johnson, made the following distinctions:

A drag queen is one that usually goes to a ball, and that’s the only time she gets dressed up. Transvestites live in drag. A transsexual spends most of her life in drag. I never come out of drag to go anywhere. Everywhere I go I get all dressed up. A transvestite is still like a boy, very manly looking, a feminine boy. You wear drag here and there. When you’re a transsexual, you have hormone treatments and you’re on your way to a sex change, and you never come out of female clothes.³¹

THE GENESIS OF S.T.A.R.

S.T.A.R.’s formation was predicated upon four factors. Street transvestites were (1) mobilized by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson who had met years earlier as very young hustlers on 42nd Street; (2) motivated by central themes that included survival, sheltering youth, creation of family, expression of non-traditional gender identities, their uncertain place in the gay liberation movement, and experience of societal injustices; (3) nourished by gay liberation ideology; and (4) catalyzed by the occupation of NYU’s Weinstein Hall.

(1) Mobilized by Its Leadership

S.T.A.R. was reliant upon the force of personality for its survival. In contrast, Gay Youth (initiated by Mark Segal) developed a comparatively constant organizational structure and received community support. Of the three transvestites active in GAA and S.T.A.R., “Bebe [who in addition to GAA was primarily affiliated with Queens Liberation Front] was the rational one. Sylvia was the one totally consumed by anger, . . . and Marsha was sometimes there and sometimes not.”³² (Bebe was a Queen’s College

student with a home who was involved in S.T.A.R., Queens Liberation Front, GAA, and a Queens College gay liberation group she founded.)³³

Sylvia was the driving force behind S.T.A.R., and “compromise didn’t exist in her vocabulary.”³⁴ Survival required fortitude and a reductionist black and white approach.³⁵ Sylvia saw “anyone’s oppression as her own oppression.”³⁶ Marginalized as a transvestite, Sylvia’s Puerto Rican and Venezuelan heritage sharpened her already acute awareness of discrimination.

Family, safety, and economic survival were intertwined with Sylvia’s revolutionary ideals. She hoped to realize the supportive family, economic security, and validation that she herself was denied. Her friend Bebe Scarpi recalls how in later years Sylvia idealized the security of the Donna Reed, white picket fence, perfect middle class existence (a sentiment Bebe heard Sylvia express in a long distance Spanish telephone conversation with Con Edison co-workers from a sun splashed Florida vacation patio, drink in hand).³⁷ The odds were formidable. Sylvia recognized the systemic underpinnings of homelessness, rejection, police abuse, and prejudice. Her stark political and economic fight demanded uncompromising fortitude.³⁸

Sylvia’s angry and confrontational style, at times unleashed by alcohol and drugs, could intimidate. But she fought for gay liberation with great dedication and fervor and she was not alone in her anger. For many gay activists, to author and live a revolutionary worldview in the face of political, religious, and family censure stirred a sense of guilt that was frequently excised by anger or dulled by mind-altering substances. Former GAA president Richard Wandel explains:

I would say that there was a fair number of alcoholics or addicts [among gay activists], not necessarily meaning heroin. . . . But I would also say that one of the characteristics of addiction, whether it’s alcohol or other drugs, is anger, in that Marty Robinson once said the purest cure for guilt is anger. Okay, and I wouldn’t take that totally literally and say I agree one-hundred percent but he’s got a damn good point you know. And I think in many ways that kind of person, that kind of loaded, angry person, was very necessary.³⁹

Anger was often used by liberationists to foment political and social change. For GAA, the change in civil rights laws was the ostensible goal, but the core struggle was deeper and more personal. GAA political leaders held the New Left conviction that civil rights legislation was a tactic—a cathartic rallying point that enabled activists to assert their own individual emotional liberation.⁴⁰ The political fight for civil rights also facilitated

personal liberation, reminding homosexuals to come out, to struggle, to “refuse to re-embrace guilt.”⁴¹ When emotional pain (masked, but also unleashed by alcohol and drugs) was transmuted into anger, it fueled action. Wandel reasoned further, “I think our faults and our virtues are usually the same thing and it’s a matter of degree and what needs to be done.”⁴²

(2) Motivated by the Central Themes of Adversity, Identity, and Respect

Street transvestites sought security, self-definition, and recognition (concerns still facing transgender and intersex youth).⁴³ Their existential struggle was put into harsh relief on Friday, September 25, 1970 (one and one-half years after the Columbia University student occupation) when the NYC Tactical Police Force forcibly evicted twenty-nine activists who claimed NYU’s Weinstein Hall for the gay community. The occupiers had parried with NYU, which they saw as an agent of institutional oppression, for joint student and community use of the dormitory’s sub-basement.

The sit-in highlighted seminal themes (examined in the subsections below) affecting street transvestites. Without job skills and an education, transvestites faced a daily *quest for survival and security*. Their *desire for community, family, and identity* found form in a loose-knit tenuous street community. Transvestites found little tolerance (and few role models) for the *expression of gender at odds with biological sex* until gay liberation and the women’s movement created greater possibility by challenging sex role stereotypes. Street life involved homelessness, sex work, drugs, and violence. It entailed, *police harassment and prison abuse*. Street transvestites sought to *assert their rightful place within gay liberation and broader society*. Imbalance of power was always an underlying factor.

Quest for Survival and Security

Coping with homelessness, hunger, and prostitution permeated street transvestites’ lives. As a youngster, Bubbles had undergone periods of hunger and starvation. Randy Wicker recalls when he “talked to her about ‘overeating,’ Bubbles would argue that ‘if you have ever gone hungry like I have, you would understand that there is no such thing as eating too much.’”⁴⁴ Sylvia, born Rey José Christian Rivera Mendoza on July 2, 1951, had narrowly avoided death at an early age.

Grandma raised me, because my mom committed suicide when I was three. Her second husband was a drug dealer, and she didn’t want drugs in the house. He threatened to kill her and me, so the only way that she knew to cop out was she poisoned herself and she also tried to poison me [by lacing milk with J.R. rat poison].⁴⁵

Rey's maternal Venezuelan grandmother found herself with two motherless children and surrendered Rey's sister to the stepfather. When the grandmother fell ill, Rey was sent to St. Agnes Home. Later moving to Long Island with his grandmother's female friend and common law husband, Rey endured violent treatment. Sylvia recalled thinking, "I don't have no father. I don't have no mother, and I'm not putting up with none of this shit no more."⁴⁶ Rey soon ran away and was initiated into NYC street life at the age of eleven. Alcohol, drugs, crime, violence, and mental illness were rife. Economic prospects for dispossessed gay youth and transvestites were largely limited to sex work, panhandling, and theft.

Transvestite hustlers risked disclosure and thus attack by straight clients. By 1972, Marsha P. Johnson had barely escaped five life-threatening assaults.⁴⁷ Hustlers endured multiple arrests for prostitution and loitering. Significantly, a flurry of 42nd Street arrests followed an Arthur Bell *Village Voice* article in which S.T.A.R. members divulged their hustling patterns.⁴⁸ Bubbles, was later extradited to Louisiana where she faced serious criminal charges.⁴⁹ It was said that she been involved in a murder.⁵⁰

Hustling provided income, but it was also a means of reasserting a certain modicum of power. Marsha, in the Bell article, explained:

During the daytime they all call us fags and freaks. . . . At night I get even. I freak on them. I make them pay for the insults they give me. I can have a nice conversation with them, give them words of wisdom. But I'm getting back at them, my way.⁵¹

Contemporary adolescent male to female (MTF) sex workers describe sex work in terms of power, fear, shame, financial gain, violence, and passing as "real" (as female). One states, "I know when I'm out on the stroll I feel sexy, like I have power, even though I know it's not true." Another affirms, "Yeah, you feel like you have power, because it's all these white men coming to me for sex, but really it's they who have the control."⁵²

The criminal justice system posed an additional threat to street kids and transvestites. Gay Liberation Front was continually bailing out Young Lords, Black Panthers, transvestites, and its own people. Prison conditions were horrific and harassment was common. Bob Kohler was obligated to wait from 9:00 AM until 5:30 PM to bail out Billy (a naïve fifteen-year-old "scared, scared kid" arrested during a police sweep) and Christine (a "hard old queen"). The sadistic guards lied to an emotional and distraught Billy and told him that no one had come, forcing him to wait an entire agonizing day.⁵³

Bob Kohler supplied the wet and bedraggled kids with pocket change and clothing to protect them from the freezing weather. They were prone to sudden bursts of anger and violence in their dealings with people, but nonetheless lavished affection on Kohler's dog. Four to six weeks after Stonewall, Kohler recalled listening to the kids recount their dreams and plans for sex change operations. They were aware of post-Stonewall gay liberation organizing, but were uninvolved in it.⁵⁴ "They did not want to leave that park. They were afraid. That was home for them," but overcoming their fear, several accompanied Kohler to solicit clothing and money from NY Mattachine. Although their request was declined, Mattachine's president, Dick Leitsch, made a personal contribution.

Shortly after, Boom Boom Santiago and another street kid, eager to please, joined Kohler to solicit support from GLF, then meeting in Washington Square Church.⁵⁵ Kohler targeted inconsistencies in GLF's rhetoric and action, stating, "Here are the people that you're supposed to be helping. Meanwhile they're starving, they're dying, they have no clothes, they have no food. They're the ones who started the goddamn [Stonewall] riot" that catalyzed the gay liberation movement. By then in his forties, Kohler's insistence that a resistant and skeptical GLF welcome these homeless youth was met with hostility. It was Lois Hart's cogent, calm support that both persuaded attendees to take an interest and soothed the kids' prickly feelings. Kohler noted, "Without Lois, I don't know if there would have been a Gay Liberation Front."⁵⁶

While street kids did intermittently attend the occasional GLF meeting (sometimes simply to score drugs), they "felt totally out of place. . . . They felt there was no place in GLF for them," although some participated in Gay Youth and Mark Segal would occasionally shelter them in his East Village walk-up apartment.⁵⁷ By and large, they were considered pariahs and ignored. However they enthusiastically participated in many demonstrations. Kohler recalls, "we marched every five minutes" and the street kids joined, carrying banners and chanting, lending their presence to multiple causes, including the anti-war protests (fig. 5.4).⁵⁸

Street kids and transvestites were two overlapping but distinct groups that included Lola Montez, the winsome Boom Boom Santiago who enthusiastically volunteered to become president of GLF!, Jackie Hormona who on rare occasions dressed in "scare drag," and is visible in photographs of the Stonewall Riots and a 1969 march holding a GLF banner (fig. 5.4), Orphan Annie, Christine, Michele, and Raquel Wilson, known as the "queen of sex."

Black Bambi later participated in S.T.A.R. Nova was active in GLF and helped organize Gay Youth.⁶⁰ International Chrysis was a striking



Fig. 5.3. “Bob Kohler, one of the GLF founders, 1970.” (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Diana Davies Collection, Box 1: Photographic Prints of Individuals and Group Portraits, Gay Liberation Front.)

young drag performance artist whose imprisonment became a cause célèbre (“Free Chrysis”). Michael Macchitti and Billy are now deceased (as are many others). There was a kid named “Tommy Schmidt who was rather sage. He would sit there and make these profound pronouncements and at one point he said ‘well Nova, you were queen of the sixties, but the seventies belong to Marsha.’”⁶¹



Fig. 5.4. “GLF marches on Times Square, Fall 1969: street kids brandishing the Gay Liberation Front banner.”⁵⁹ From left to right: Orphan Annie? John? Dolores (elbow raised), unknown, Bill Weber? (wearing scarf), and Jackie Hormona. (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Box 2: Photographic Prints of Organizations and Demonstrations, Gay Liberation Front, one of a series.)

Search for Community, Family, and Identity

While survival was paramount, childhood leitmotifs related to establishing community, family, identity (and concomitant respect and security) shaped Sylvia’s activism. At the age of eleven, Rey was welcomed into 42nd Street’s loose-knit culture.⁶²

I was too young to go to the few clubs that existed, but there were many house parties. They were called rent parties. There was always something going on. And it was fun, you know, because people needed money for their rent. Fifty cents, a dollar . . . you helped somebody out and you might end up crashing there some time. That was basically the scene for the youth back then, except for the drag balls. But you had to be a little older than I was to start going with that group of people.⁶³

Rejecting the name of Carmen (her mother’s name) Sylvia was christened by an “old butch dyke” and “old queen” (“the godfather

and godmother of 42nd") who "would decide what name would fit you properly." They determined, "There is no Sylvia right around at this realm. If there is we don't know about it. You'll be a Sylvia. What's the other name that you like?" I said, 'Well, I like Lee,' so it became Sylvia Lee Rivera and it's always been that way."⁶⁴

The christening party for Sylvia at the apartment of the "old butch dyke" was attended by at least fifty people, "There were more Spanish than black and very few white drag queens." The group included a preacher from a Pentecostal Spanish church, Marsha, a friend Chickie, and Sylvia in a beautiful white gown. "Everybody was gay and it was beautiful just to be around all these people."⁶⁵

It was like being reborn and having a new life. You knew you were going into a different life. And I remember him saying when he put the water on my head . . . "Now don't forget that this is going to be a hard life" and it sure was.⁶⁶

In the early 1960s Sylvia, by then almost twelve, met Marsha pan-handling on 42nd Street and 6th Avenue, "You have any spare change, you have any spare change?" Sylvia introduced herself as Rey, but immediately recalled, "Oh no, they already changed it to Sylvia." Marsha initiated her into the art of panhandling.⁶⁷ (Marsha's catch phrase, "Spare change for a dying queen," would later win renown.)

Marsha was seventeen and already described herself as an "old queen. I've been around for so long." She was disconcerted by Sylvia's age of eleven, and said, "Oh miss thing, you're so young. You really should be home with your mother." The more experienced Marsha extended a protective, maternal mantle that Sylvia later offered to the S.T.A.R. kids. Invited to panhandle by Marsha, Sylvia insisted on hustling, only to be carted off by police. She caught a glimpse of Marsha still on the street, waving goodbye.⁶⁸ Sylvia explained:

We stood by each other, had each other's back for many years. And even back in the days of pre-Stonewall, we would sit on 44th Street, a lot of us girls like Marsha and Vanessa, Miss Edwina, Miss Josie, a whole bunch of us, would sit around in a room. We'd be getting high or something and we'd start talking politics. We'd start talking politics and about when things were going to change for us as human beings.⁶⁹

Years later, under her leadership, S.T.A.R. would formalize these itinerant street family bonds, offering physical and emotional refuge. The

house was a collective effort; food (and drugs) were shared and young transvestites were no longer obliged to hustle. S.T.A.R. was a springboard for political action as street transvestites both participated in and organized demonstrations on behalf of the disenfranchised. In doing so, it pushed the boundaries of the struggle for gay liberation.

Freedom to Develop and Express Non-Traditional Identities

S.T.A.R. provided an outlet for the expression and construction of heretofore forbidden gender and sexual identities. Marsha, née Malcolm Michaels, was a devout Christian who viewed gayness as an intangible and unobtainable dream. She remained “asexual for seventeen years” until arriving in New York and discovering “all these nellie things hustling near Howard Johnson’s at 6th Avenue and 8th Street.”⁷⁰ Marsha, who Karla Jay recalls as “a fiercely strong drag queen,” had a winning personality. Karla detailed a Fall 1969 van ride sitting in Marsha’s lap “en route to liberating a bar.” Marsha, simultaneously “feeling up” both her own and Karla’s left breast, lamented, “It just ain’t fair . . . I’ve had all these shots and thangs, and all I’ve got to show for it is these here lemons. And you ain’t done no work, and you’ve got watermelons!” Karla, who could only laugh, gave Marsha’s breast a “tentative feel” and confirmed Marsha’s assertion.⁷¹

Marsha developed her own style. Described by friends as a “saint,” “charismatic queen,” and “myth,” her dress was a mélange of “camp-garbage” chic, flower power, and grade school innocence.⁷² Bob (formerly Flash) Storm recalled she

set all these new trends in dressing. She was the abundance and beauty of street trash. And flowers, always flowers. Going after this sky-high energy with extreme make-up and colored wigs and pins and jewelry. She looked like an ornament when she was done.”⁷³

Although generous and warm-hearted, Marsha also experienced bouts of mental illness and infrequent violent outbursts that sometimes found expression in her “male persona as Malcolm.”⁷⁴

In Sylvia’s case, audacious sexual behavior, effeminacy, and tumultuous feelings provoked family turmoil. It was initially Rey’s effeminate habits (make-up worn to Catholic school and use of his grandmother’s perfume) that caused strife. Rey’s first sexual experience with a guy at the age of seven (apparently of his own volition) was followed by further exploration.

My first sexual experience was at seven, [with] a guy and then I just kept on wondering what it would feel like . . . cause I never had sex

again until I was like ten. It was the year that I ran away cause I was just turning eleven and I finally made it with another guy and I was completely thrilled, but I was always very effeminate and people would always tease my grandmother about that and that really bothered her. That summer when I went back home to my grandmother's on the Lower East Side I just started going, going out and having sex with all these boys . . . And I found 42nd Street.

Rey was alerted to its existence by subway passengers who pointed out the group from the hustling locale known as "the block" returning from Coney Island.⁷⁵ The queens would get on and the adults would comment, "Look, look, look! Look at that mariposa,"⁷⁶ or "'Oh, look at the patos'—which means 'faggot'—and 'This is where they all hang out.'"⁷⁷ On 42nd Street, Rey was exposed to an unfamiliar culture. Sylvia recalled, "I didn't know that people were charging." Much to the young Rey's delight and surprise, a man approached with an offer of \$10.00 and stated, "I want to have sex with you." Sylvia recalled her youthful response. "Ten dollars!? Oh wow! Ten dollars of my own. Let's go!"⁷⁸

Spotted by neighbors (who wondered if the grandmother were a pimp), Rey suffered the indignity of exposure and his grandmother's condemnation. Rey attempted suicide and spent several months in Bellevue. Soon after, Rey left home only to suffer the ignominy of being escorted back to Bellevue wearing full make-up and embarrassingly pacing behind his grandmother. Sylvia recalled, "I know that she loved me in her own way but I never really felt that love."⁷⁹ Many years later, Sylvia explained:

As I've grown up, I've realized that I do have a certain attraction to men. But I believe that growing up the way I did, I was basically pushed into this role. In Spanish cultures, if you're effeminate, you're automatically a fag; you're a gay boy. I mean, you start off as a young child and you don't have an option—especially back then. You were either a fag or a dyke. There was no in-between. You have your journey through society the way it is structured. That's how I fit into it at that time in my life. Those were the words of that era. I was an effeminate gay boy. I was becoming a beautiful drag queen, a beautiful drag-queen child.⁸⁰

Rey was not alone in facing ostracism. Other children contended with hardship due to effeminacy, homosexual orientation, transgender identity, and poverty. Black Bambi, a young transvestite, found herself unable to assume protective camouflage. She was a "uniquely beautiful queen who never had a chance to be a boy." Attired in male garb, she was attacked in the subway

“for being a dyke. . . . she just looked so real” and she was unable to avoid harassment.⁸¹

S.T.A.R. promised empowerment, equality, and respect. Building upon GLF demands, street transvestites claimed “the right to self-determination over the use of our bodies; the right to be gay, anytime, anyplace; the right to free physiological change and modification of sex on demand; the right to free dress and adornment.”⁸² In addition, they declared, “transvestites who live as members of the opposite gender should be able to obtain identification of the opposite gender.”⁸³ When asked whether she pictured herself as a woman or a man, Marsha averred, “I think of myself as me.”⁸⁴

Prison Abuse and Police Harassment

Transvestites sought to end prison and police mistreatment, joining forces with gay women’s liberation (see fig. 5.5). Suicide attempts, sexual assault, and



Fig. 5.5. “Gay Liberation Front Women (and DOB?) demonstration, Criminal Court, City of New York,” ca. 1969 or 1970. Marsha with a “Y” and Sylvia an “E.” (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Diana Davies Papers, box 7, folder 13.)

drug use were common. Imprisoned youth (whether male, female, or transgender) were particularly susceptible.⁸⁵ Forced to navigate a prejudicial legal system, transvestites were permitted “to walk” while multiple minor charges such as loitering accumulated.⁸⁶ Without bail or legal counsel, those with extensive records often remained imprisoned for years awaiting adjudication. Marsha, stymied by a \$500 bail (reduced from \$1000), pled guilty to prostitution, choosing a thirty-day sentence and record over purgatorial delay. While posting bail for another street person, Bob Kohler unexpectedly encountered Marsha facing prostitution charges. The judge addressed Marsha

“May I ask you is it Marsha P. Johnson” and the response “Yes it is” [in a rasping singsong voice] and he said, “Can I ask you what the P is for?” She said, “Pay it [snap of the fingers] no mind.” We broke up. [He said], “Forget about it. Case dismissed. Get her out of here!”⁸⁷

Sylvia herself evaded conviction for shooting a “john” incensed to discover Sylvia was a biological male.⁸⁸ For Sylvia (and other teenagers), jail time brought rapes, beatings, and an introduction to drugs. A Riker’s Island reformatory cellblock was dedicated to homosexual youth under twenty-one.⁸⁹ Sylvia found family and perfected the art of self-protection. Interviewed by Martin Duberman, Sylvia described an early (pre-S.T.A.R.) teenage jail experience:

Bambi I met in jail the first time that I had to wait to go to trial. The most beautiful black drag queen that you could ever see. She’s passed on to her reward too now . . . We met on Riker’s Island. We were going to breakfast, and she looked at me and I looked at her and she says, “Well who are you bitch?” and I’m like, “Since when did they let dykes stay over with the . . . fags?” She’s like, “Well I’m not a dyke.” She says, “My name is Bambi L’Amour.” . . . ”My name is Sylvia.”⁹⁰

They became friends and acted “like two crazy abnormal bitches.” Sylvia recounted, “walking down the corridor to go to the mess hall” they would hail a cab, yelling, “Taxi, cause we would always stay at the end of the line. ‘Taxi, take us to, take us to 52nd and Broadway cause we gotta make some money.’ Everybody thought we were crazy.” In self-protection, they feigned insanity, barricaded themselves behind picnic tables in the day room, and ignored the other prisoners. Asked by Miss Penny, “You all shoot drugs?” Sylvia (an inexperienced adolescent) falsely responded, “We do drugs all the time.” Their first experience left them “sick as dogs for the next three days.”⁹¹

Sylvia recalled another incident where awakening in a holding cell, in need of a fix, and having lost the short-lived protection of an acquaintance taken “upstairs to the Tombs,” she was left to her fate by the corrections officer, “Enjoy yourself, boys, have fun.” Sylvia quickly established rules (“I’m sorry, I just don’t get fucked up”). Hiding her “ulterior motives” and compelled to accede to oral sex, Sylvia relates how she chomped down hard on the “boy’s dick until I drew blood,” suffering a beating until she released him. She recalled, “By the time I got to Riker’s Island that evening, it was, ‘That’s the crazy bitch that bit that boy’s dick. Leave her alone.’ It was always good to play crazy.”⁹²

S.T.A.R. would later publicize grievances about multiple arrests, egregious delays, beatings by guards, and rape. Street transvestites would join the Gay Community Prison Committee, organize protests, interview prisoners and attempt to provide legal aid. Ultimately, they hoped to dismantle the very state institutions in a capitalist society they deemed responsible for their woes.

Place of Transvestites Within Gay Liberation

S.T.A.R. “came out of GLF” and was shaped by the experiences of transvestites within GAA.⁹³ The status of transvestites within the gay liberation movement was a contested one. Early gay liberation held an inclusive view of social restructuring (protest, change in consciousness, and smashing hierarchical sexist roles in order to encourage a more fluid approach to sexuality and gender) that provided ideological space to transvestites already primed for revolutionary activism by their own personal histories. Kate Millet recognized the jarring, disruptive power of the drag queen

. . . as she minces along a street in the Village, the storm of outrage an insouciant queen in drag may call down is due to the fact that she is both masculine and feminine at once—or male, but feminine. She has made gender identity more than frighteningly easy to lose; she has questioned its reality at a time when it has attained the status of a moral absolute and a social imperative. She has defied it and actually suggested its negation. She has dared obloquy, and in doing so has challenged more than the taboo on homosexuality, she has uncovered what the source of this contempt implies—the fact that sex role is sex rank.”⁹⁴

Easily identified and already subject to discrimination, street transvestites and youth angered by prejudicial treatment were uniquely prepared to engage in the types of explosive front-line confrontation risked during the Stonewall Riots. While relatively vulnerable to the criminal

system, some were knowledgeable about its workings and inured to its oppressive dictates.

Politically, street transvestites had the “moral” upper hand, but some within the Movement saw them as expendable. “There was (very often) a need from these people to stand behind the ‘third world’ members of GLF: in other words, to use them. It became transparent at times—so people like Sylvia and Marsha were lauded publicly, but ignored or laughed at.”⁹⁵ Gay liberationists challenged binary codifications (gay vs. straight, male vs. female), but understandings of transgender identity were inchoate. The single issue GAA, to its credit, overrode recalcitrant and even hostile members by refusing to support a bill that eliminated transvestite legal protections. Richard Wandel explains, “we would not play the game of, well, we could pass it if we eliminate these people.”⁹⁶ S.T.A.R. called for an “end to exploitation and discrimination within the homosexual world.”⁹⁷ Bebe explained:

With two men the only difference between them and two guys on the street is that two men love each other . . . You don’t have to embrace stereotypes in order to be gay so it was looked at as an anachronistic method of trying to be gay and in the truly liberated society there would be no cross gender identity. You could be a feminine man, but you wouldn’t opt to dress and act like a woman.⁹⁸

Thus, street transvestites eventually organized on their own behalf. Marsha noted, “If a transvestite doesn’t say I’m gay and I’m proud and I’m a transvestite, then nobody else is going to hop up there and say I’m gay and I’m proud and I’m a transvestite for them.”⁹⁹ Sylvia organized S.T.A.R.’s first official meeting in this spirit of self-reliance.

(3) Nourished by Gay Liberation Ideology (June 1969 to September 1970)

The ways in which transvestites addressed the central themes discussed above (survival, community, forging a transgender identity, and their status within the gay liberation movement) evolved, as did the gay liberation movement itself. Gay liberation’s inclusive gender-bending, sex role smashing, revolutionary free-for-all provided an open—what might be termed “queer”—space that initially included gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites, heterosexuals, youth, and effeminists (men who joined radical feminists’ fight against sexism as the basis of all oppression of which homophobia was one aspect).¹⁰⁰ Within GLF and GAA, transvestites learned a political lexicon that explicitly defined and challenged sexism,

racism, corporate capitalist injustice, and civil rights violations. When transvestites determined to fend for themselves, they were equipped with a robust ideological arsenal they had lacked as isolated individuals.

The stories of Sylvia and S.T.A.R. are interwoven. After Stonewall, her insular New Jersey life and night shift job in Accounts Payable was pierced by a *Gay Power* headline: “Shit! There we are!” Unable to contact GLF, she and Josie (fully made up, but not in drag) attended a meeting of the newly formed Gay Activists Alliance at the Church of the Holy Apostles. After experiencing some “static” at the door, they seated themselves in the last row (“nigger on the bus” fashion) having read (singled out) Italian-American Bebe Scarpi who followed their sharp-tongued Spanish repartee. Sylvia recalled, “That evening we became acquaintances cause there was something about Bebe that was beautiful and there still is.”¹⁰¹

Shortly thereafter, on April 15, 1970, Sylvia was arrested on 42nd Street collecting GAA petition signatures promoting a City Council gay rights bill “prohibiting public or private employment discrimination on the basis of homosexuality” and repealing “existing laws prohibiting the solicitation for and participation in homosexual acts between consenting adults.”¹⁰²

Now eighteen years old and intent on garnering support for housing and employment protections, Sylvia was oblivious to a nearby anti-war demonstration. She recounted, “I had completely forgotten about everybody else’s civil rights including stopping the war. I was too busy involved with gay liberation.”¹⁰³ The Tactical Police Force who broke up the peace demonstration on 6th Avenue confronted Sylvia. She defended her constitutional right to petition.

I said, “Well I’m not going anywhere.” Now I’m beginning to get a little shaky. . . . I said, “Oh god, they’re going to beat me.” I said, “Oh well you already started it. You might as well finish it.” “Well are you going to move.” I said, “No I ain’t moving.” Well by then the police cruiser had pulled up behind me. They very nicely picked me up and threw me in the car. I said, “Oh well, off to jail one more time.”¹⁰⁴

It was the first arrest in the history of GAA.¹⁰⁵ Sylvia was denied the requisite telephone call by police determined to avoid an uproar. Legal Aid directed her to plead guilty. She adamantly refused, posted the \$50 bail out of her own pocket, and left with petitions in hand with the signature of one of the arresting officers, “a Jewish cop. He was young. He was very good looking. I remember his wishing me the best of luck.” Sylvia immediately called GAA President Jim Owles.¹⁰⁶

At the first court hearing at 100 Centre Street, GAA and a large GLF contingent rallied to Sylvia's support. It was her first encounter with Bob Kohler of GLF. Called forward, Sylvia froze, immobilized by fear. Rallying to her defense, "everybody in the court room" stood up.¹⁰⁷ Prompted by Jim Owles, Sylvia gathered her courage and wearing "these big wide bells and a tunic top with a little strap" with GAA embroidered across her chest, came forward. The charges, as Sylvia recalled, were disorderly conduct, unlawful assembly, and "creating a riot." Attorney Harold Weiner serendipitously offered his legal services. Throughout the multiple hearings, Sylvia was bolstered by a strong GLF and somewhat sparser GAA presence.¹⁰⁸ GAA assumed legal fees, informed the general membership at weekly meetings, and organized silent courtroom vigils in Sylvia's defense.¹⁰⁹ The Legal Action Committee condemned Sylvia's treatment and the American legal system.¹¹⁰ Charges were dropped on August 28, 1970, after the arresting officer's third failure to appear. The petition campaign continued unabated. At a meeting of the Village Independent Democrats, Sylvia—incensed by New York City Council member Carol Greitzer's lukewarm support and peremptory refusal to accept the petitions—swiped her with the stack and insisted she take it.¹¹¹

Working within the GAA, Sylvia began to refine her effective but initially naïve political style. Writing a letter to *Gay Power*, she threw her energies into GAA's coherent plan for action and encouraged other transvestites to join her.

HI, THERE:

I want to tell you a little about a new gay group. The Gay Activists Alliance. I really want to talk to my sister queens. So girls, pay me a little mind.

Well, girls, many of us were waiting for a group like GAA. I knew many of us when we used to talk about the day we could get together with other gays and be heard and ask for our freedom and our rights.

Well, sisters, the time and days are here and Gay Activists Alliance is here to stay. We are here to stop all the discrimination and police harassment and to change laws for the gays. We want the complete liberation of all homosexuals.

We have many committees, and many things that we are working at and we must keep on working to liberate the gays. But you will really enjoy yourself because you're doing it for a cause and that's the gay cause.

So girls, don't be afraid to come and see us. Because I want to let you all know we are welcome here at GAA. The members are all right, they don't put down no one because they act different or wear make-up. We are all

gay. Girls, we are needed. So come on down to the Church of the Holy Apostles, Ninth Avenue at 28th Street, Thursdays at 8 P.M. See you soon,
SYLVIA¹¹²

Homeless and Immersed in the Movement

Sylvia immersed herself in the gay liberation movement, marching alongside Bebe on the first Christopher Street Liberation Day ("gay pride"). However, she disregarded day-to-day obligations. Having lost her job, home, dog, and sewing machine, she found herself, just nineteen, sitting in Christopher Park with shopping cart and suitcase, newly homeless, and single after a long-term relationship. She recalled, "GLF was there." Bob Kohler passed by and told her, "Sylvia, they're having a sit-in" at NYU's Weinstein Hall. Bob offered to haul the shopping cart; Sylvia carried the suitcase. Bob encouraged her "Come on we need you there." Her melancholy lifted as she sighted other street people with belongings. Marsha was there, as were Bubbles Rose Lee, and Andorra. Everyone had a place to stay.¹¹³

(4) Spurred by the NYU Occupation: The Catalytic Juncture (September 20 to 25, 1970)

Adversity prompted transvestites' ire, and gay liberation offered a springboard for liberation, but it was the occupation of Weinstein Hall that spurred street transvestites to organize. Internal NYU memoranda later unearthed by Richard Wandel document the legal machinations and misrepresentation employed by NYU to block the gay community dances.¹¹⁴ A memo from Miguel de Capriles, Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary to President Hester clarified, "University facilities *can* be used by outside organizations" given the proper approvals, belying the President's statement, "No agency within the University has the right to grant the use of University facilities to outside organizations."¹¹⁵ The occupation followed a precedent established by massive student strikes at Columbia University and NYC public schools. Student and community activists threatened "stormy weather" after the university (under what proved to be false auspices) denied access for gay dances open to the community.¹¹⁶

The NYU Washington Square campus became a symbol of homophobic institutional intransigence. On September 20th, twelve people met (eight from NYU's Gay Student Liberation, Michael Brown of Christopher Street Liberation, Martha Shelley of Radicalesbians, John Lauritsen of GLF, and GAA member Arthur Bell in an individual capacity). Subgroups wrote a pamphlet, duplicated it at Alternate U, occupied Weinstein's sub-basement, and elicited support at GLF's Sunday night meeting.¹¹⁷

The occupation created new possibilities: (a) It catalyzed a hotbed of creative discussion, consciousness-raising, and the cross-fertilization of ideas born from the interactions between heretofore discrete groups of lesbians, activists, students, and street people; (b) Within this hothouse, Sylvia began discussing S.T.A.R. House and received support from non-transvestites; (c) The eviction by the heavily armed Tactical Police Force ignited Sylvia's revolutionary and emotional zeal.

Coming Together: Spin the Bottle and Political Dialogue

The takeover became an energized arena of impromptu consciousness-raising, political activism, and planning that sparked the idea for S.T.A.R. The sub-basement occupiers mobilized against the university's "moral judgment on our gay life style."¹¹⁸ Numbers varied from "ten at 5 a.m. to hundreds during the day."¹¹⁹ *Gay Flames* reported 80 "students and supporters" led by NYU Gay Student Liberation.¹²⁰ They were joined "by a large delegation from the GLF Sunday night meeting and by a strong showing of street gays from the gay ghetto areas around NYU." Additional street people joined the action on Monday.¹²¹ Karla Jay observed, "Most of the students were horrified. They had been in New York for less than a week and they were being overrun by radical faggots and dykes. One of them asked . . . whether we were really revolutionaries or part of a street theater group."¹²² Bell wrote:

Monday, some short gay stubbles were seen in the upstairs corridors. The sit-ins had taken to the dorm floors to speak to the men and women student residents about gay demands. Why the sit-in downstairs? Talk, talk, talk, on Weinstein steps, in bunk beds, in the cafeteria, buzz, buzz, gay rights, administration, justification, stepping on toes, chartered group, sit-in, pigs, support, equality, liberation. A floor by floor vote was taken.¹²³ Student opinion shifted and community access was favored by a two to one margin.¹²⁴

On Monday (the second night) GAA member Michael Morrissey and Sylvia (who was fresh off the streets and "really dirty" because of her hotel eviction), Bubbles, and Tina showered in the newly discovered matron's bathroom. "The queens" pooled make-up and "Sylvia started dressing in drag."¹²⁵

The occupation fostered dialogue and the prospect of unexpected alliances. *Gay Flames* noted:

The occupation was long and grueling. The air conditioner froze us. Most of the students were afraid to come down and meet us. But

more than anything it was gay; it was different from other sit-ins. Long lines of gay people bunny-hopping to “Power to the people!,” chanting, dancing, stomping, high on the people. . . . We played charades. We played spin-the-bottle—all kinds of us together—transvestites, middle-class people, people used to passing for straight, blacks, whites, latinos, street people, students. A lot of barriers and fears were broken down. We were coming together. In love—together. Strong and proud together.¹²⁶

For two days, street people bunked in the rear on amassed couches while lesbians camped on the pool tables out front, but the divide between lesbians and transvestites fell.¹²⁷ Morrissey explained:

we all started mixing together, sleeping together and all of the queens and the lesbians really started getting along very well. On the 4th day we . . . were all sitting at a table having coffee and playing cards and Sylvia said, “I never knew lesbians like you. The only lesbians I knew were street dykes. But you’re all really nice.”¹²⁸

Certain divisions remained. GSL spokesperson Ellen Broidy expressed her disappointment at the distrust of revolutionary straight students and opposition of black students who “insisted the University remove these decadents.”¹²⁹ A supportive, but unapprised, GAA committee chairperson in a GAA lambda t-shirt also alienated Broidy. On Wednesday, occupiers and the newly formed NYU Liberation Front called for additional forces, but Arthur Bell’s suggestion to solicit GAA involvement was “loudly booed.”¹³⁰ However, reciprocity replaced earlier divisions between lesbians and transvestites. Judy (an aspiring carpenter refused by the union) said, “I’ve never known any drag queens before.” Sylvia interjected “transvestites.” The lesbians were soon divulging makeup tips. By the occupation’s end, with the transvestites refusing to leave, Judy was in tears and determined to stay, saying, “I’ve got to, she’s my sister.”¹³¹

The occupation yielded long-term bonds and an awareness of contrasting views about identity and gender. Judy “used to laugh [and say] I’m not a dyke. I’m a woman.” Sylvia responded,

Yes I understand that, . . . but you gotta understand we come from two different backgrounds. I’m a street person . . . and women that looked like you in the community that I came from would always [play] the real masculine role and strap themselves down and go out and play the field as men.”¹³²



Fig. 5.6. “Gay Action N.Y.U” (probably) the Weinstein Hall sub-basement, Sylvia Rivera seated with arms raised with Bubbles to left. (Ellen Broidy, “gay action n.y.u.,” *Come Out* 1, no. 7, 1970: 4?)

The Sit-in Precipitates the Idea of S.T.A.R. House

Morrissey’s journal of Weinstein sit-in events and an Arthur Bell article on S.T.A.R. both indicate that the sit-in was a pivotal moment that led to S.T.A.R.’s formation.¹³³ Bell’s revelatory book, “*Dancing the Gay Lib Blues*,” substantiates this, noting that “as a result of the NYU sit-in” street transvestites spoke out as “Street Transvestites for Gay Power.”¹³⁴ (The formal declaration of S.T.A.R. came later.)¹³⁵ Morrissey wrote that it was “down at Weinstein [that] Sylvia first got the idea of a home for street people.”¹³⁶ She spoke to Bob Kohler, she spoke to Judy. Judy said she’d do all of the electrical and carpentry work.”¹³⁷

The occupation provided an opportunity to educate the young, “impressionable” students that NYU sought to shield.

Every once in a while, some straight student would come down to the laundry room to peek at the freaks, and sometimes he or she would stop to chat the next time. Many of us spent time explaining our life styles, scrounging for doughnuts, and passing out whatever information we had about things on the outside . . .¹³⁸

Street people encouraged dialogue. After students questioned Sylvia and Michael about the cellar goings-on, they responded, “Why don’t you come down tonight.” They purchased (with student contributions) peanut butter and other comestibles, pilfered some meat, and “set up a breadline behind the bar.”¹³⁹

At Thursday’s joint student-squatter meeting, students drafted a contract “supporting the sit-in” and a dance for the following night. While this meeting was in progress, Sylvia, Michael—and, according to Bell—Clarence¹⁴⁰

ran uptown to the GAA meeting. When we got there, the heads started turning again. I'm sure they thought it was a new plot, the general membership is frightened by Sylvia and think she's a troublemaker. They're frightened by street people. Sylvia stood up at the beginning of the meeting and said we're having a sitin [sic] at the subcellar of NYU and we'd like as many of you as possible to come down as individuals to sit with us because the students are coming down tonight. She said thank you, and we've got to get back there now. The way they were reacting to us was like they didn't give a care, they couldn't relate to us.¹⁴¹

However, GAA members led by Bebe Scarpi did join the sit-in and a few additional GAA members arrived later that night.¹⁴²

The Eviction Sparks Anger

On Friday afternoon, the Tactical Police Force outfitted “with riot helmets and billy clubs” evicted the occupiers.¹⁴³ Bob Kohler recalled:

Sylvia was nuts. She almost got us killed . . . The cops came in and they actually leveled guns on us. They lined up and the guy said, I will count to ten. You people have ten seconds to vacate and they stood there with their guns. Sylvia starts screaming, give me a G!¹⁴⁴

Sylvia, mixing passion and politics with teenage conviction, was quick to join or lead acts of civil disobedience, but she paid a cost for her “Spanish crazy” volatility.¹⁴⁵ However, Kohler noted that Sylvia was “very important” to the Movement. During the six days and five nights of the occupation, she was “one of the most vocal protestors . . . concerning the relationship of NYU to the homosexual community.”¹⁴⁶

After the eviction, tensions mounted. Michael Morrissey phoned Marty Robinson with news of the likely upcoming demonstration and ubiquitous police presence. Marty warned, “the whole thing had been planned by the radical elements of GLF as a plot to confront the police” and advised Michael to leave immediately. Morrissey voiced deep resentment that Robinson “was making tactical decisions when his presence that night with the GAA banner might have helped.”¹⁴⁷

With a big demonstration on the steps of Weinstein Hall “boiling up into a very heated riot,” Jim Fouratt recklessly encouraged Sylvia to take to the streets, a provocative and even life-threatening act given the heated, “really nasty,” confrontational atmosphere. Bebe, cognizant of the explosive circumstances and Sylvia’s volatility, told Jim, “If she leads the charge I’m pitching



Fig. 5.7. "Weinstein Hall, NYU, a moment of relative calm, September 25, 1970." (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Diana Davies Papers, Box 6-Additions: Contact Prints and Negatives, Folder 41-Weinstein.)



Fig. 5.8. "Sylvia and others (perhaps Bebe?) outside Weinstein, September 25, 1970." (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Box 6, F41.)



Fig. 5.9. “Back to the streets, September 25, 1970,” middle to right: Sylvia, in attire typical for her during that era, holding shopping bag, Bubbles, unknown, behind is Bob Kohler in headband and dark T-shirt with white piping. (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Box 6, F41.)

you right after her . . . and he stepped back.” Bebe recalled it was nighttime and “I want you to know. I was a college kid. I was scared.”¹⁴⁸

During the demonstration’s final moments, it was the transvestites and some others who wished to remain on Weinstein’s steps. Lacking numbers they dispersed, marched to Sheridan Square, and later to Alternate U.¹⁴⁹ Dorm rooms and homes awaited both student and adult activists. Street transvestites once again faced the streets. (One year later, as an NYU student who had just moved into Weinstein, Tony Russomanno found “no evidence that anything had occurred. It was a complete sea change. You know, it was if openness [towards lesbian and gay people] had always had been there.”)¹⁵⁰

WEINSTEIN’S AFTERMATH: “GAY POWER—WHEN DO WE WANT IT?”

Transvestites were tired of running. They would soon coalesce as “Street Transvestites for Gay Power.” Sylvia’s rage and energy were crystallized.

Her flyer “GAY POWER—WHEN DO WE WANT IT? OR DO WE?” challenged people “to stand and fight,” not tomorrow or the next day, but today. Sylvia condemned both living in the closet and the heavy-handed “Pig Power” wielded to “beat and harass our Gay brothers and sisters” or “catch someone hustling.” In her view, defeat for gay liberation meant the loss of “all the other [movement] fights all over the country.” The flyer concluded, “You people run if you want to, but we’re tired of running. We intend to fight for our rights until [sic] we get them.”¹⁵¹ (According to *Gay Flames* and Teal, this marked the formation of a new organization, but Bebe Scarpi perceived Sylvia to be defining herself as a street transvestite gay liberation advocate. She would only later declare the start of Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries.)¹⁵²

Gender Identities: Conceptual Reshaping

Street transvestites issued challenges that continue to resonate. In 1998, transgender activist Leslie Feinberg described a Trans liberation movement “sweeping the stage of history.”

We are again raising questions about the societal treatment of people based on their sex and gender expression. This discussion will make new contributions to human consciousness. And trans communities, like the women’s movement, are carrying out these mass conversations with the goal of creating a movement capable of fighting for justice—of righting the wrongs.

We are a movement of masculine females and feminine males, cross-dressers, transsexual men and women, intersexuals born on the anatomical sweep between female and male, gender-benders, many other sex and gender-variant people, and our significant others. All told, we expand understanding of how many ways there are to be a human being.¹⁵³

Street transvestites explored these very complexities of gender, sexual orientation, and biological sex. Their efforts were of particular import to “gender variant youth [who even today] experience extreme psychological and socio-cultural stressors due to the limited support and understanding they receive from their families, peers and other significant adults.”¹⁵⁴

S.T.A.R. used (and when necessary, created) symbols and language to convey a nuanced conception of gender. Street transvestites hotly debated how to graphically represent transvestite identities. Copies of the “GAY POWER” flyer included contrasting hand-drawn sketches of male/female symbols.¹⁵⁵ Various permutations of crossbars and arrows expressed S.T.A.R.’s reconfiguration of three aspects of sexual identity: biological

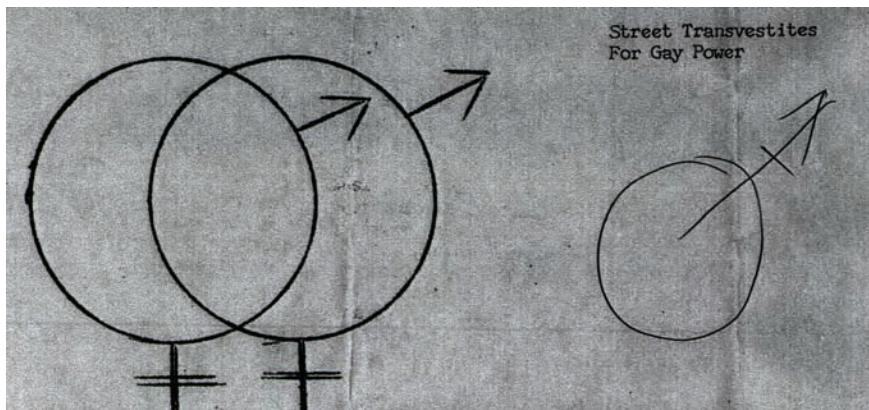


Fig. 5.10. Street Transvestites for Gay Power, “Gay Power—When Do We Want It? Or Do We?” (NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Papers of Arthur Bell, Box 94, Weinstein Hall-N.Y.U. Sit-In folder.)

sex, gender identity, and orientation. They debated the political and artistic implications of various gender representations, including the length and position of the linking crossbar and whether to use one symbol or two.¹⁵⁶ Several variations were adopted. The single version, a circle penetrated by a cross-barred arrow (fig. 5.10, right side), later appears with craftsmanlike double-lined precision on a GLF/S.T.A.R. dance flyer.¹⁵⁷

Paired and tripled symbols presented alternate views of connection, relationship, and interdependence. A three-fold configuration (fig. 5.11) accompanied Sylvia’s article, “Transvestites: Your half sisters and half brothers of the Revolution” published in the Winter 1972 issue of *Come Out*, detailing the loss of jobs, homes, “friends, family because of lack of understanding of our inner-most feelings.”¹⁵⁸

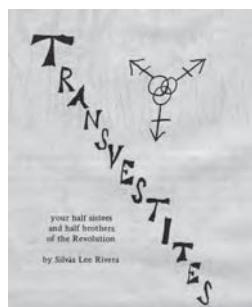


Fig. 5.11. “Transvestites: Your half sisters and half brothers of the Revolution.” (Sylvia Lee Rivera, *Come Out* 2, no. 8, Winter 1972, 10.)



Fig. 5.12a) "S.T.A.R. button and b) "Gay Revolution button." (Courtesy of Mark Segal.)

Yet other variations, in the form of a single star attached to a crosshatched arrow, graced S.T.A.R.'s manifesto, button, and the banner unfurled at gay pride marches (fig. 5.12a).¹⁵⁹ The S.T.A.R. and Gay Revolution Party buttons (fig. 5.12b) showed marked similarities. The latter placed a gyrating lavender star on a background of revolutionary red. (Gay Revolution challenged "straight" as the "systematic channelling of human expression into . . . static social institutions and roles," asserting, the original social expression of straightness was gender: the division of humanity into the castes, woman and man, on the basis of the biological sexes, female and male.)¹⁶⁰

By inventing icons and language, seen in the call to "Free Our Half Sister Bambi,"—"half sister" denoting a male to female (MTF) transvestite—S.T.A.R. was engaged in the conceptual process of both reflecting and shaping reality. Historians Kennedy and Davis document the conceptual and linguistic evolution of gender and sexual identity categories such as "butch" and "femme" that defined lesbian identities. Assumption of typically male characteristics and behaviors "was the basis for most lesbians' identities." The "aggressive, autonomous, and/or interested sexually in women" butch "was the lesbian. . . . But from the mid-1950s on, woman to woman attraction became the dominant way of defining and expressing lesbian identity."¹⁶¹ Today, transgender inclusion within the LGBT umbrella engender the official recognition that Sylvia fought for as a street transvestite or "femme queen."

Anthropologist David Valentine argues “that ‘transgender,’ rather than being an index of marginality or ‘an out of the way discourse’ is in fact a central cultural site where meanings about gender and sexuality in contemporary American culture and are being worked out in complex ways.”¹⁶² Valentine suggests, and I would also argue, that gender variance, when considered apart from other aspects of sexual identity (orientation, biological sex, and sex role) serves to demarcate an outsider position.¹⁶³ Likewise, problems faced by intersexed people have a social and cultural basis. Curtis Hinkle, founder of Organisation Intersex International, writes, “the most challenging problem that intersex people face is the arbitrary division of sex and gender into two categories.”¹⁶⁴

S.T.A.R. logos portrayed complexity. The process of self-definition shifted and blurred boundaries. Group membership would confound the gay liberation movement and society at large. However at this juncture, gay liberation involved revolutionary political commitment, not the imposition of identities that marked one as in or out.

Street Transvestites for Gay Power (October 1970)

Translating their rapidly evolving ideological awareness into action, Street Transvestites for Gay Power organized an October 5, 1970 rov-



Fig. 5.13. “Bellevue Hospital Protest, October 1970,” From left to right, unknown, Bob Kohler, and Sylvia Rivera. (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 217B, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

ing rally beginning at NYU's Loeb Student Center at noon, proceeding to Bellevue Hospital, and concluding at Loeb that night.¹⁶⁵ The *Village Voice* reported 25 picketers at noon with signs: "NYU MUST SERVE THE COMMUNITY, COME OUT OF YOUR IVORY TOWERS AND INTO THE STREETS, GO GAY—BEAT NYU, and AN ARMY OF LOVERS CANNOT LOSE."¹⁶⁶

A Davies photograph shows Marsha draped in a fur coat, cigarette in hand, her gaze penetrating and insouciant, holding a "Power to the People" sign in protest of Bellevue policies (fig. 5.15). The roving demonstrations reiterated earlier demands about NYU and Bellevue:

- (1) Space for a 24-hour gay community center, to be controlled by the gay community. (2) Open enrollment and free tuition for gay people and all people from the communities NYU oppresses. (3) All NYU students, employes [sic], and faculty have the right to be openly gay, without fear of retaliation by NYU.

- (1) An end to the oppression of homosexuals and all people in Bellevue Psychiatric Prison—the end of shock treatment, drugs, imprisonment, and mental poisoning. (2) Free medical care, dental care, and preventive medicine under community control, including free abortions controlled by community women, with no forced abortions and no forced sterilization, without regard to age or obtaining permission from anybody.¹⁶⁷

Sylvia's leadership was critical to S.T.A.R.'s success. Street transvestites faced societal antipathy with assertiveness and pride, rejecting the stereotypical view of drag as apolitical entertainment. John Paul Hudson, writing under the pen name John Francis Hunter, captured the impact of Sylvia's indomitable presence in an undated NYU Loeb Hall appearance.

The most legitimate unsettling spokesperson for oppressed Gays is not Perry or Owles or Baker or Kameny, but rather Sylvia Rivera of Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR). These people are serious! Sylvia knows what it is like to be aggrieved against, and reviled by, heterosexuals—and even Gays themselves.

I happened to catch Sylvia and her lieutenants, Marcia [sic], Eudora [Andorra?], and Bambi stride in through the lounge of Loeb Hall in martial cadence. They were wearing funky street drag—leather hot pants, runny hose—freaking out the cozy students. Ghengis Khan entering the 'civilized' outskirts of a Near Eastern city. Rape! Plunder! More



Fig. 5.14. "Sylvia declares, Power to the People,' Fall 1970"

(Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 218E, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

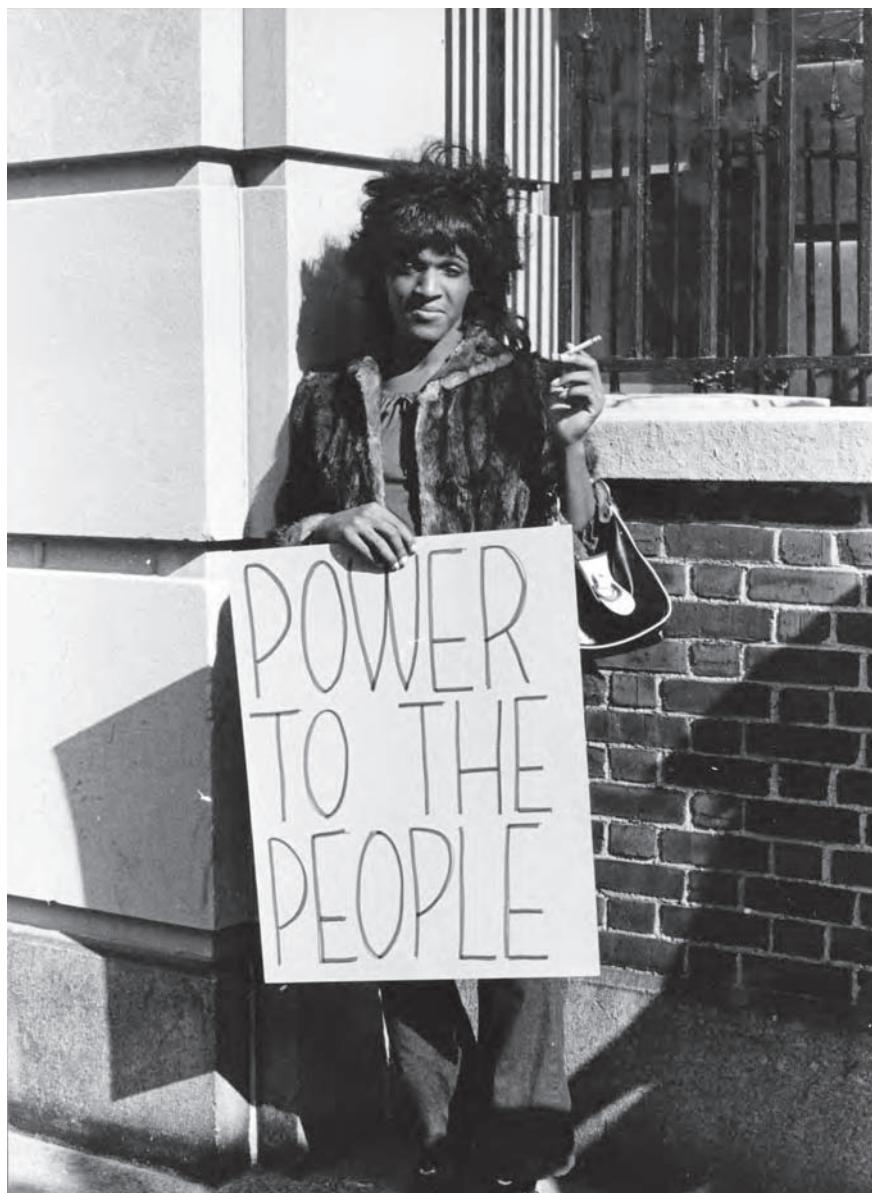


Fig. 5.15. “Marcia [sic] P. Johnson pickets Bellevue Hospital to protest treatment of street people and gays.” (Photograph by Diana Davies, [Fall 1970], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Diana Davies Papers, Box 7, Folder 13.)

than a conqueror really—Spartacus, a slave risen, once abused, now a superior being; an aristocrat whose native intelligence and refusal to submit to The Man have brought about a new kind of hybrid which is, at least superficially speaking, something startlingly different. A political drag queen indeed! . . .

At the podium, Sylvia takes forever lighting her cigarette. Sitting there cross-legged, she repeatedly flips the lighter—and you care more about that than anything in the world. Get it lighted, Sylvia! Let us off the hook! Let us know whether you are going to castrate us! Finally she glowers through her false lashes and begins her insurrectionist diatribe, intimidating us and ending, “We don’t believe in cooperating with The Man. We’re dedicated to blowing up the next building and killing the next cop.” Deni Corveilo of Radical lesbians asserts (as do GLF women) that, until the day the “effeminate” male is the most admired, we haven’t obliterated male chauvinism.¹⁶⁸

NYU administrators eventually relented, allowing the fledgling student group and GAA to cosponsor an open dance in the contested cavernous sub-basement Arthur Bell likened to a sound stage. Bebe collected donations for the “fabulous” and well-attended event. Sylvia made her first public appearance in full drag, wearing “her famous red fall,” heels and makeup (complete with lashes). The crowd loved it, finding her appearance “outrageous but appropriate.”¹⁶⁹

S.T.A.R. DECLARES ITSELF AS AN ORGANIZATION (FALL 1970)

The Breaking Point: Ensuring Shelter and Respect

Two fundamental issues ultimately catalyzed S.T.A.R.’s formation: (1) the pressing need for shelter faced by underage and adult transvestites and (2) the outcast status of transvestites both within and outside the gay liberation movement. Transgender adolescents were particularly vulnerable to homelessness, poverty, and the rigors of hustling, violence, and societal rejection. An organization offered the prospect of role models, dependable shelter, the strengthening of street family bonds, an opportunity to express non-traditional gender identities, and recognition within the gay liberation movement.

In addition, transgender rights were a thorny issue within the Gay Activists Alliance and transvestites wanted “a group that would support drag rights.”¹⁷⁰ Richard Wandel, GAA president from December 1971 to

December 1972, theorized that class differences, operating in a subtextual and incompletely acknowledged fashion, heightened tensions.¹⁷¹

Determination to Collectively Address Homelessness

Sylvia and Marsha were determined to protect their street family. Politicized, they concluded capitalism rendered survival all the more difficult. They relied on each other and attempted to safeguard younger transvestites from the necessity and dangers of hustling. A tractor-trailer provided temporary refuge. Sylvia recalled, “We planned. We fought . . . We knew that we could make it, but . . . we were thinking about the young kids. I mean we slept in doorways.”¹⁷²

Interviewed by Martin Duberman in 1990, Sylvia recounted their harsh existence. “Marsha and I would go out and hustle. We’d pick up breakfast and what not, you know for the kids . . . We would tell them . . . if you don’t want to go out there and sell your body, don’t do it. But if you want to, you do it on your own. Cause whatever you get, you gotta remember . . . to push back into helping all of us.” She and Marsha assumed protective, parental roles.

We were coming down the street one day from the Silver Dollar on Christopher Street . . . and the trailer was being moved and we’re looking at each other like “Oh my god, the kids, all the kids are in there,” so of course we see all these young queens and young boys, you know young hustlers jumping out of the back of the truck, out of this trailer. . . . We dropped all the food. Cause . . . we used to always go to the Silver Dollar like by six o’clock, whenever daybreak broke whatever money we had we’d combine and we would get everybody something to eat. And we would wake everybody up and feed them, and well we gotta do what we gotta do; go panhandle, go do what you gotta do. That was the funniest scene. We’re standing there like two yentas. I mean we’re talking about two crazy women. “Oh my god, the kids, the kids!” And she’s standing there “Oh lord Jesus, lord Jesus, please, please, don’t take the children.” Two crazy women and hysterical and we’re in full drag. . . . The truck drivers never looked back.¹⁷³

As luck had it, only one of the twenty was hauled away; she narrowly averted arrest after being transported to California “stoned out on downs” (and later telephoned).¹⁷⁴ “This is when we decided . . . we have to go talk.”¹⁷⁵

Gender Outsiders Within the Gay Liberation Movement

Affirmation and emotional support were particularly important to the wellbeing of gender variant street youth who had endured ostracism and hostility within their neighborhoods, schools, and families of origin. Shelter alone was insufficient.

Transvestites did experience solidarity and support within the gay liberation movement: Karla Jay remembers heady times at the Alternate U where she “danced with women, men, drag queens, and sometimes, myself” and where Marsha provided a “running and hilarious commentary on everyone at the dance.”¹⁷⁶

However, transvestites also endured ambivalence, hostility, and downright rejection. GAA’s efforts to debunk stereotypical myths of the “femme queen” and the “butch dyke” undercut full recognition of transgender concerns. Interestingly, Daughters of Bilitis members welcomed Marsha, but many lesbian feminists rejected anachronistic “butch” and “femme” roles. Similarly, transvestites were thought to demean the status of women.¹⁷⁷ Ironically, even Marsha’s husband frowned upon her association with transvestites.¹⁷⁸

Marsha spoke of “oppression by other gay brothers,” but those in “freak drag, with no tits, no nothing” (a form of “gender fuck” or radical drag, intended to disrupt gender norms) and transvestites such as Natasha (in male attire and without breasts) were accepted.¹⁷⁹ Marsha surmised that gay men were not “used to seeing transvestites in female attire. . . . When they see me or Sylvia come in, they just turn around and they look hard.”¹⁸⁰ GAA militant and writer Arthur Bell openly highlighted the tension, writing that S.T.A.R.

is mainly into whoring and radical politics. Their philosophy is to destroy the system that's fucking us over. They're a sub-culture unaccepted within the subculture of transvestism and looked down at in horror by many of the women and men in the homosexual liberation movement. Sylvia and Marsha and Bambi and Andorra with their third world looks and their larger-than-life presences and their cut-the-crap tongues do not “fit” at a GAA meeting. “We don't relate to each other,” says Sylvia. Marsha says, “Why should I go to their dances? No one asks me to dance. I freak them out.” S.T.A.R. didn't do too well with the Gay Liberation Front toward the end, either. The S.T.A.R.s relate very well to themselves, and to a certain segment of the “live and let live” street people. But by and large, they're the great unwanteds.¹⁸¹

Rich Wandel, GAA officer and its second president, reasoned that the hostility could also been due to economic class.

For Sylvia it was probably less about gender issues, actually, than it was about class issues, I think. And about economic class. . . . So she would push the envelope for example, by going to a GAA dance, probably not alone. And officially this was a donation, not a charge. And she would push that envelope to make sure that that was true. And she would probably go with an attitude that she was going to have trouble and . . . to that degree, provoked the trouble. One gets the impression she preferred to have a problem getting in than for somebody to say just go right in.¹⁸²

Sylvia herself acknowledged her contentious attitude. Asked to run for GAA office, she concluded, “I would rather be someone who can stand here and argue with the hierarchy than be the hierarchy.”¹⁸³ At GAA meetings, Sylvia would “scream and she’d cry and she’d make outlandish statements,” behavior summed up in the moniker “drama queen.” GAA member Steve Ashkinazy recalled, “There were people who loved her, people who hated her and some people who did both, because she disrupted so many meetings.”¹⁸⁴

S.T.A.R.’s First Meeting

Transvestites created their own forum. An initial meeting was attended by Sylvia, Marsha, Bubbles, Andorra, Bambi, Bebe (called to Manhattan at Sylvia’s request), and perhaps several other young kids.¹⁸⁵ Marsha declined the presidency, in spite of Sylvia’s desire to honor her (“When we started our group, cause it was mine and Marsha’s . . . I wanted to give her the prestige”) with the prior endorsement of founding members. Marsha, who knew her limitations (“I tend to go off in other directions”) declined, instead suggesting that she be vice president, a response which troubled Sylvia, who recalled the night she and Marsha had contemplated “a group [and home] of our own” as one of the few conversations where Marsha maintained clarity. Bubbles (“she was in that trailer that morning too”) agreed to arrange the rental with the Mafia.¹⁸⁶

Fundraising and GLF Support

With aspirations of a S.T.A.R. House to shelter her street family of kids and adults, Sylvia arranged for a joint S.T.A.R. and GLF dance on Saturday, November 21, 1970, at Alternate U with funds borrowed from GLF and Gay Youth.¹⁸⁷ All were welcome. The gay community’s support was critical to Sylvia and Marsha’s foster street family:

All proceeds of this dance will go toward legal assistance, housing, clothing, food, etc., for street people and other members of the gay community. POWER TO THE PEOPLE.

GAY LIBERATION FRONT / STREET TRANSVESTITE ACTION REVOLUTIONARIES¹⁸⁸

Sylvia, who was unkempt and disheveled, collected the money (totaling as much as \$600 or \$700) at the door armed with a knife; she pocketed part of the proceeds for personal use. Her kids presented her with “the most beautiful bouquet of red roses and I sat there and I cried. . . . my kids, they were my kids, they were my kids.”¹⁸⁹ Early childhood familial loss had now been supplanted by a more political kinship of choice.¹⁹⁰

Mission

The core of Sylvia’s activism was a heated commitment to Gay Power. This entailed gay solidarity and upholding the rights of those disenfranchised due to gender, youth, imprisonment, homelessness, and sexuality. S.T.A.R.’s mission (discussed in Chapter Three) addressed both practical and philosophical demands for personal self-determination and an end to job discrimination, police and prison harassment, and medical abuse. Employment, sustenance, and political efficacy were addressed, as were legal recognition and economic redress for transvestites and street people in the form of “free education, health care, clothing, food[,] transportation, and housing, and full voice in the struggle for liberation of all oppressed people.”¹⁹¹ Equality within the broader society and the gay community was emphasized. The outlook was revolutionary and all-inclusive; as Marsha expressed to Allen Young:

We believe in picking up the gun, starting a revolution if necessary. Our main goal is to see gay people liberated and free and have equal rights that other people have in America.¹⁹²

Transforming a World of Darkness

Sylvia and her compatriots sought recognition and security. In a poem published in *Come Out* in the Spring/Summer of 1971 (when S.T.A.R. House existed), Sylvia uttered a cry for freedom and acceptance. Sylvia asked:

Do you know what it is to live in a World of Darkness?

Where people put you down for being what you are.
Day or night it is always darkness for us of the Life.

Do you know what it is to live in a world of darkness?

I wish you knew.

Castigating the injustice of harassment to gays, lesbians, transvestites, and others in “the Life,” and echoing how from early childhood on she herself had been threatened by the darkness of death and the pain of ostracism, Sylvia wrote:

This is not freedom, I ask you. Is it? . . .

Do you know what it is to live in a world of darkness forever. No you don't, do you? If you only knew the feeling to be cast away in darkness.

Sylvia Lee Messne.¹⁹³

The Gay Community Center

The collectively run Gay Community Center (GCC) founded by GLF activists and S.T.A.R. members offered the bright prospect of a thriving communal gay space during its short-lived existence. Located in a large West Village loft at 130 West 3rd Street,¹⁹⁴ it was a place to meet:

as people, not sex objects. A place to dance in. A place to hold classes in things we'll need to survive and grow: karate, theatre, crafts, discussion groups, history of gay oppression. We need a place to provide services for the gay community: legal, medical, housing, jobs, a gay switchboard. A free food program, day care for children. We need to have a space in which to start to understand the things that keep us apart: sexism, racism, loneliness, fear. We need to discover what we can become as fully actualized gay people. We've never had a place to try it before!¹⁹⁵

The Center combined spirited community-building with revolutionary fervor. It held a “Celebration of Love and Life,” and welcomed participation by “oppressed sectors of the Gay Community.”¹⁹⁶ Tensions mounted as various factions sought to claim Center space.¹⁹⁷ S.T.A.R. demanded (and won) representation on the GCC Collective, equal voice in all decisions, and one Saturday a month for S.T.A.R. benefits; however its demand for a private S.T.A.R. room was rejected.¹⁹⁸

Black Panthers and Young Lords

S.T.A.R. and GLF viewed liberation as a multi-issued, unified struggle of gays, Black Panthers, anti-war protestors, and leftists seeking to achieve a social and economic revolution. Sylvia borrowed (or, as Marsha claimed, embezzled) S.T.A.R. funds to attend the People's Revolutionary Congress. In 1970, GLF and S.T.A.R. marched with Young Lords from East Harlem to the United Nations to protest police repression. According to Bob Kohler, the gay contingents were spurned, or at best barely tolerated.¹⁹⁹ Interviewed by transgender activist Feinberg, Sylvia recalled, "it was one of the first times the STAR banner was shown in public, where STAR was present as a group."²⁰⁰

S.T.A.R. HOUSE (CIRCA NOVEMBER 1970 TO JULY 1971)

S.T.A.R. House was significant as the first communal shelter on record that explicitly served street transvestites. It provided sustenance, emotional support, and a sense of spiritual harmony. Free gender expression was the norm. The House was a base for political organizing. Its existence inspired later communal endeavors including Brooklyn's Transy House, Sylvia's final residence after periods of homelessness. Established in 1994, founder Rusty Moore writes:

I think the historical significance of STAR is that it was probably the first political/social initiative of the trans community in New York City, and certainly the first focused on the problems of throw-away youth in our community.²⁰¹

Located in a destitute neighborhood at 213 E. 2nd Street, between avenues B and C, S.T.A.R. House was physically and metaphorically on the margins. The formerly thriving East Village (ca. 1964–1968) was now the site of a fading and commercialized hippie counterculture centered on Saint Mark's Place, six blocks uptown and several blocks west of S.T.A.R. House. The working class immigrant neighborhood to the east of Avenue A known as Loisaida (derived from the Hispanic pronunciation of Lower East Side) was primarily Puerto Rican.²⁰² Living conditions were far from glamorous. Sylvia, interviewed in 1979, recalled:

We had a S.T.A.R. House—a place for all of us to sleep. It was only four rooms, and the landlord had turned the electricity off. So we lived there by candle light, a floating bunch of 15 to 25 queens, cramped in

those rooms with all our wardrobe. But it worked. We'd cook up these big spaghetti dinners and sometimes we'd have sausage for breakfast, if we were feeling rich.²⁰³

Previously inhabited by elderly Jews, the now “dilapidated hellhole” had a roof, toilets that wouldn’t flush, rusty tap water, and no heat.²⁰⁴ To gain access you had to climb over piles of rubble.²⁰⁵ Bubbles negotiated the \$200 rent with owner Mike Umbers (a Village business and real estate Mafioso with a five year prison record) who claimed the legal rent was \$310.²⁰⁶ Umbers (a self proclaimed “gay catalyst”) contracted with Bubbles to “fix the place up, collect the rents and securities.”²⁰⁷ Marsha, and the teenage Bambi, Andorra, and Sylvia repaired the balky boiler, all but Marsha shooting up drugs in anticipation of an imminent explosion. Plumbing was restored with jury-rigged hoses. Sylvia unsuccessfully hoped to establish a S.T.A.R. school for young uneducated transvestites, with the expectation of assistance from GLF and GAA professionals that never materialized. Sylvia recalled Bob Kohler as the one person who responded, helping with repairs, painting, and clearing debris.²⁰⁸

The décor was political. In the house’s final days, Bell noted posters on walls, including “Free All Political Prisoners” and “Free Angela Davis,” as well as the folded scarlet S.T.A.R. banner from Christopher Street Liberation Day marches.²⁰⁹

It was not a formal homeless shelter. Drug usage was endemic. There were no membership rolls. Participants, both younger and older than Sylvia, were drawn by bonds of friendship, the promise of food and shelter, and a shared political outlook.²¹⁰ The group consisted of Sylvia Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson, Bubbles, Andorra, Bambi L’Amour, Miss Pixie, Black Bobbie, and Pookie, a security guard who dealt drugs. Speedy, who worked for Umbers, also lived in the building.²¹¹ Sylvia, Marsha, Bambi, and Andorra (a heavy set “high yellow black queen” who looked like a woman when corseted) sold themselves on the streets.²¹² Sylvia explained:

A lot of [the younger transvestites] went home. Some of them I lost; they went to the streets. We lost them, but we tried to do the best we could for them. The contribution of the ones who didn’t make it out into the streets, who wanted something different, was to liberate food from in front of the A&P. . . .

So the house was well-supplied, the building’s rent was paid, and everybody in the neighborhood loved STAR House. They were impressed because they could leave their kids and we’d baby-sit with

them. If they were hungry, we fed them. We fed half of the neighborhood because we had an abundance of food the kids liberated. It was a revolutionary thing.²¹³

Hustling, panhandling, and theft were supplemented by fundraisers including dances and a bake sale.²¹⁴ With Marsha's maternal oversight, "those four rooms were a warm respite from the streets."²¹⁵ Kohler recalled dining there with Sylvia, Marsha, and others in drag, as well as Marsha's straight husband number six who lived in New Jersey and "got his head blown off" when he attempted to kill a plainclothesman. Marsha, Sylvia, and other transvestites attended his New Jersey funeral in drag.²¹⁶

The tenants were motley and unique. In a visit, Bell reported meeting Pearlie May, "a woman in man's clothing," who contemplated joining the Sisters of the Resurrection Monastery because "the spirit is leading me there."²¹⁷ Marsha Johnson regretted that she was unable to really assist one young lesbian resident beset by drug addiction and the pilfering of her methadone. Marsha herself was overwhelmed by the traumatic death of her husband (gunned down in March while "out to get some money to buy some drugs") and loss of her dog.²¹⁸

Non-transvestites (including Gay Revolution Party and GAA member Kenneth W. Lundgreen who went under the aegis of Spinstar) were welcome.²¹⁹ S.T.A.R.'s platform (embellished by stars) included a handwritten notice on three sides that read, "To Join—See George Cleveland. You don't have to be a transvestite. Join The 'Food Collective.'"²²⁰

S.T.A.R.'s irregularly scheduled meetings were attended by as many as thirty people. Sylvia served as president, Marsha as vice-president, and Bubbles held fiscal responsibility for rental payments. Marsha identified multiple hurdles to participation including indifference to revolutionary politics. It was "hard to get in touch with transvestites" conditioned to counter loneliness by seeking relationships in bars, a pattern also found in gay male bar culture.²²¹ Outreach was conducted via articles and listings in gay liberation publications, flyers, demonstrations, workshops, conferences, and word of mouth. Sylvia envisioned additional chapters in Chicago, California, and England.²²²

Concerned by the high incidence of drug use among street transvestites, and the vulnerability of the young, Marsha hoped S.T.A.R. (even after the loss of S.T.A.R. House) could "reach people before they get on drugs, 'cause once they get on drugs it's very very hard to get them off and out of the street. A lot of people on the streets are supporting their habits. There's very few transvestites out on the streets that don't use drugs."²²³

Drug use (including heroin, cocaine, alcohol, and methadone) was pervasive within S.T.A.R. House itself. Sylvia, introduced to heroin as a young Riker's Island prisoner, "became a junkie for many years."²²⁴ (The extent of addiction among adolescent male inmates prompted prison officials to sequester diagnosed addicts in a Reformatory dorm originally intended to counter suicides.)²²⁵ Some S.T.A.R. House residents attempted unsuccessfully to break their habits. Sylvia recalled, "whenever we bought methadone we would always mix it with wine or booze and then drink it," but the effects could be lethal. June died from "methadone poisoning and booze." (Sylvia eventually locked herself in Marsha's house and went "cold turkey" during an excruciating several days.)²²⁶

In the face of adversity, S.T.A.R. House was guarded by the sanctity of its colorful saints. The sinful transgressions of hustling, stealing, drugs, and violence might have been inescapable, but Sylvia's code of morality forbade harming one's own.²²⁷

We'd all get together to pray to our saints before we'd go out hustling. A majority of the queens were Latin and we believe in an emotional, spiritualistic religion. We have our own saints: Saint Barbara, the patron saint of homosexuality, St. Michael, the Archangel; La Calidad de Cobre, the Madonna of gold; and Saint Martha, the saint of transformation. St. Martha had once transformed herself into a snake, so to her we'd pray: "Please don't let them see through the mask. Let us pass as women and save us from harm." And to the other three we'd kneel before our altar of candles and pray: "St. Barbara, St. Michael, La Calidad de Cobre: We know we are doing wrong, but we got to live and we got to survive, so please help us, bring us money tonight, protect us, and keep evil away." We kept the sword of St. Barbara at the front door and the sword of St. Michael at the back door to ward off evil. We were watched over.²²⁸

S.T.A.R. ACTIVISM

From 1970 to 1973, S.T.A.R. pushed the political boundaries of the gay liberation movement. Sylvia rarely relinquished an opportunity to speak out on behalf of transvestites, the impoverished, prisoners, and street people. Transvestites participated in scores of gay liberation demonstrations, the Black Panther's People's Revolutionary Congress, and a Young Lords march. S.T.A.R. in its numerous public protests reportedly chanted, "Go Left! Go Gay! Go Pick Up the Gun!" as did others (including the anti-Vietnam war Gay May Day Tribe).²²⁹ During NYC gay rights hearings,

transvestites testified on behalf of gay and transgender protections. S.T.A.R.'s colorful confrontational activism, promoted by its vivid scarlet and violet button, was a mix of revolutionary action and advocacy of transgender rights.

“The City’s Island of the Damned”²³⁰

Sylvia was at her most impassioned when contesting the brutal and unfair treatment of imprisoned transvestites, street kids, and gays. In the Spring of 1970, Riker’s Island alone held upwards of four thousand boys separated from the adult males in the overcrowded Reformatory and the Adolescent Remand Shelter. Those identified as homosexual (often due to effeminacy) were housed separately.²³¹ Living in unsanitary conditions, inmates were subject to physical abuse by corrections officers. Young males, females, and transvestites risked sexual aggression by other inmates.²³² Rape and suicide attempts were commonplace. Heroin use was rampant. Over sixty percent of prisoners were awaiting trial, unable to post bail.²³³ Inmates rioted against the oppressive conditions, authorities’ refusal to act, lack of medical care, deaths, and denial of education.²³⁴ (These uprisings were part of a countrywide struggle in which prisoners such as George Jackson, author of *Soledad Brother*, was subjected to lethal repression.)²³⁵



Fig. 5.16. “Christopher Street Liberation Day, 1973, Sylvia and Bebe power salute.” (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 587A, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

S.T.A.R. and others including Arthur Bell of GAA alerted the community to the injustice perpetrated against adults and adolescents in prisons, mental institutions, and juvenile detention facilities.²³⁶ Arthur and Sylvia interviewed former dancer and aspiring dance therapist Chris Thompson, “a black male transvestite” and who sought treatment for asthma and was instead locked in Bellevue Hospital’s psychiatric wing. Thompson lauded S.T.A.R.’s efforts. Ridiculed by staff for sexual and gender deviance, Thompson was, in fact, accepted by patients. Ensnared by “Catch-22” regulations, Thompson’s incarceration stymied the very housing search critically needed to avoid transfer to a state mental hospital.²³⁷

The gay, movement, and mainstream press described a prison system in utter disrepair. The radical *Gay Flames* proclaimed “U.S. Justice = Gay is Guilty,” “Street Transvestite Murdered,” “Support Lesbian, Transvestite, & Gay Inmates,” “Killers Go Free While Gays Rot in Jail.”²³⁸ A *Village Voice* headline announced the chilling words of an anonymous inmate of the infamous Tombs who shouted from a broken window, “We have no mouth and we must scream.”²³⁹ *Gay Flames* reported:

In the last several weeks, the Lesbian-Gay-Transvestite community has come to an awareness concerning the conditions of lesbians and gay males and transvestites being held in the prisons, hospitals and juvenile centers of New York City. This new consciousness began when Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) brought the pleas of a transvestite being held at Bellevue Hospital to public attention, and it increased greatly when Raymond Lavon Moore, a black gay male, was murdered by guards in The Tombs.²⁴⁰

His brutal death was falsely presented as a suicide, and widely covered in the NYC press. The Chairman of the Investigatory Board of Correction wrote an article acknowledging the catastrophic conditions and announced a detailed reform plan.²⁴¹

Gay Community Prison Committee

On January 17, 1971, homophile representatives (Bob Milne of Mattachine, DOB absent but committing full support), a street person (Ron Ballard), and gay liberationists (Bob Brandt as coordinator, his lover Ken of GLF and *Gay Flames*, Sylvia of S.T.A.R., Andy of GAA) met at the Gay Community Center to organize a Gay Community Prison Committee to investigate abuse, raise bail money, assure visitation rights, support prisoners, and possibly sponsor mass protests and arrests.²⁴²

The Committee and Third World Gay Revolution documented Moore's death and released a flyer, "When the Prison Gates are Opened the Real Dragon Will Fly Out—Ho Chi Minh," in English and Spanish.²⁴³ The gay community participated in spontaneous protests and advocated long-term reform. Mark Segal of Gay Youth recalls liberation groups targeted the Women's House of Detention on a weekly basis.²⁴⁴ At one such protest, liberationists chanted "Unity House of D," and "Free Our Sisters, Free Ourselves" in the collective fight against "sexist AmeriKKKan institutions."²⁴⁵

S.T.A.R. and GAA jointly sponsored a march from the GAA Firehouse to Wards Island State Hospital offshore upper Manhattan to hold a "Candle Vigil" in support of Marsha Johnson and protest "the treatment of gay sisters and brothers in state hospitals and prisons."²⁴⁶ In 1973, Marsha herself marched with the sign, "Free Our Half Sister Bambi" (fig. 5.23). Gay Youth and S.T.A.R. had also joined forces. Mark Segal recalls a visit he and Sylvia paid to a Riker's Island prisoner. Sylvia, in familiar territory, exuded a finger-snapping attitude and Mark discovered the confines of a cell.²⁴⁷

The Gay Activists Alliance continued to battle heinous prison conditions throughout the 1970s. It won rights and education programs for young gay, mostly black and Hispanic male inmates aged sixteen to twenty at the Riker's Island prison.²⁴⁸

March on Albany (March 14, 1971)

In 1971, S.T.A.R. attended a large Albany State House demonstration organized by the upstate Tri-Cities Gay Liberation Front to demand repeal of state laws against sodomy, solicitation, loitering, and impersonation as well as passage of housing and employment protections.²⁴⁹ GAA president Jim Owles proclaimed, "We're not here to *ask* for something. We're here to *demand*. We're here to confront the legislature . . . We're here to give them one large consciousness-raising session" to which the crowd's chant of "Justice! Justice! Justice!" reverberated off the State Capital.²⁵⁰ Sylvia spoke, representing S.T.A.R. She was in good company. Kate Millet told the crowd:

To hear the chant for justice going up over and over. . . . That call for justice—I've felt it like a little voice in my gut, hurting and wailing, for years and years. And today it feels so damn good to say it out loud. We came here to see the man today, and we've got a lot to tell him.

It's past the time that our freedom as given to us. But it's a thing we're going to have to take, and we know that. Remember how much



Fig. 5.17. “Albany Gay Liberation Rally, March 14, 1971.” (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 295E, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)



Fig. 5.18. “Kate Millet speaking at Albany Gay Liberation Demo, March 14, 1971.” Morty Manford of GAA is at far right, S.T.A.R. seen on steps. (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Diana Davies Papers, Box 2.)



Fig. 5.19. “S.T.A.R. People Are Beautiful People, March 14, 1971.”

(Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 291A, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

they owe us. Remember what they've put us through. So let's begin the revolution—and this is a very special one: it's about love and health, and it's even got kisses in it and a sense of humor.”²⁵¹

The crowd was “spirited and colorful, transvestites in brilliant costume making up a welcome part of the march together with every other sector of the gay community.”²⁵² The following year, Sylvia would remain behind, incarcerated in Riker’s Island, and Andorra upheld a street transvestite presence.²⁵³

Mutual Allies: Gay Youth and S.T.A.R.

Street transvestites helped build the gay liberation movement. Their initiatives affected youth and adults. S.T.A.R. and Gay Youth developed mechanisms to cope with the tumultuous political atmosphere. Sylvia and Marsha, who participated both in GLF and GAA, were known to rant . . . in the guise of an announcement.”²⁵⁴ Mark Segal (founder of Gay Youth) recalls, “If you could shout them down you won.” Even then he “knew how to create coalitions” and (unlike most GY members) thrived on intense political debate.²⁵⁵ Mark explains:

Sylvia, in a sense was GLF's resident drag queen, and let me tell you, when she had a point, she'd stay with it until it reached consensus (that was the only way in GLF to get off of one agenda item and onto another—another reason the meetings went on and on).

I was the baby of the group. At 18 they allowed me to organize on my own. The same was true for Sylvia. Gay Youth and STAR held dances together and movie nights. Another thing we did was coalition: When there was a dispute in GLF, we sided together and fought until we reached a compromise—usually when everyone was just getting tired.²⁵⁶



Fig. 5.20. “Gay Liberation Front meeting at Washington Square Church [or perhaps Church of the Holy Apostles], 1970.” Pictured are: Steve Dansky (in front of pole, wearing vertically striped shirt) seated between Steve Ault (on left in horizontal stripes) and longhaired Earl Gavin in white shirt. Henry Iwasa on right with hands clasped. Ellen Schumsky, aka Bedoz, in front of Steve Ault. Ellen Broidy on far left. Mandela poster designed by Susan Bevere, Lois Hart’s lover. Missing here are: Jimmy Fouratt; Martha Shelley; Karla Jay; Bob Kohler; the people from *Come Out* including Perry Brass; and others. (Photograph by Diana Davies, ca. Fall 1970, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Diana Davies Papers, Box 8: Oversize Photos; Perry Brass, personal communication.)

Mark Segal encouraged coalition building, but tension existed, particularly between transvestites and GLF women who denounced Sylvia's use of the term "sisters," pointing to their very different histories.²⁵⁷ Sylvia, a formidable and potentially threatening presence, held the power to intimidate. After one particularly violent outburst, Ori [Aurie?], a petite Japanese GLF woman thought "she was going to die." She saw Sylvia as a "very angry, very strong Puerto Rican man." Despite Bob Kohler's counsel, Sylvia denied holding male privilege and its aggressive misuse.²⁵⁸

The Church

Gay Youth and S.T.A.R. challenged the authority of the church hierarchy as the enterprising action of one audacious young member demonstrated. The Gay Community Center reported the upcoming trial of Joe N. charged with the "unlicensed peddling" of *Gay Youth's Journal* in Saint Patrick's Cathedral.²⁵⁹

S.T.A.R. and Gay Youth, along with GAA, GLF, Mattachine Society, NYU Gay Students' Liberation, and Radicalesbians, endorsed a DOB letter supporting feminist Ti-Grace Atkinson's indictment of the Catholic Church. DOB condemned the church as a "ruthless foe of abortion, sexual law reform, divorce, birth control and human dignity" and asked



Fig. 5.21. "S.T.A.R. Stands Before New York's Saint Patrick's Cathedral." (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Diana Davies Papers, Box 6, Folder 47.)

how long it would continue to “misuse its political power under the guise of religion.”²⁶⁰

Christopher Street Liberation Day (CSLD)

As an organization, street transvestites achieved visibility via protests, publicity, outreach, and S.T.A.R. buttons. The presence of Sylvia, Marsha, adolescent transvestites, and Lee Brewster of Queens Liberation Front was an important existential declaration. Leonard Fink photographs (figs. 5.22 and 5.23) offer a rare view of S.T.A.R. kids marching with a determined Sylvia (wearing Lady June’s jumpsuit, a friend who had “passed on to her reward”).²⁶¹ Carrying the S.T.A.R. banner, she extends a hand towards a young queen. Marsha P. Johnson (her cape trailing) presents the partially obscured message, “Free Our Half Sister Bambi” and “Pass ‘73’ Intro . . . ” the GAA gay civil rights bill. Lee Brewster of Queens Liberation Front—sporting a tiara and sign, “We Are Only Number Two But We Do Try Harder”—sashays in the foreground.

As a youngster, Sylvia had searched for community on 42nd Street. In 1970, transvestites marched as individuals or members of GAA and GLF. By 1971, S.T.A.R. was one of the many CSLD march participants.²⁶² Arthur Bell reported on the wide ideological cross-section of mostly under-thirty marchers that included the GLF offshoots (Gay Women’s Liberation, Gay Youth, Third World Gay Liberation); transvestites Sylvia, Marsha, Bebe, and Natasha; the Gay Revolution Party; Radicalesbians; campus groups; DOB (in the process of “re-inventing itself”), and the conservative service-oriented Mattachine Society and West Side Discussion Groups. Photographs from 1972 and 1973 show S.T.A.R. marching nearby Queens Liberation Front (figs. 5.2, 5.22, and 5.23).

In 1974, Marsha was photographed (without Sylvia) speaking to a small group (fig. 5.24). Carrying “Join GAA!” flyers, her sleeveless outfit adorned with buttons (“Love Gay Youth” and a GAA lambda) and her skin beglittered, she was crowned with a floral garland. Behind her, partly obscured by her shoulder, are a young Gay Youth and GAA Agit-Prop school outreach activist.²⁶³

Outreach

Education was an important tool. S.T.A.R. addressed students and received recognition beyond NYC.²⁶⁴ Sylvia was a featured speaker at a Queens College “Gay Day” presentation coordinated by Bebe Scarpi, with gay and lesbian activists Arthur Bell, Mama-Jean DeVente, and Rose Jordan (who strove to uphold an open attitude towards transvestites).²⁶⁵ Sparks flew between Sylvia and Jean.²⁶⁶ The regulation of group boundaries along



Fig. 5.22. “Christopher Street Liberation Day, 1973, S.T.A.R. and Queens Liberation Front” marching through Columbus Circle. They are rounding Columbus Circle and Central Park. (Photographs by Leonard Fink, 1973, Collection 026, Folder 24, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th St, NY, NY 10011.)



Fig. 5.23. “Christopher Street Liberation Day, 1973, S.T.A.R. and Queens Liberation Front” marching through Columbus Circle. They are rounding Columbus Circle and Central Park. (Photographs by Leonard Fink, 1973, Collection 026, Folder 24, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th St, NY, NY 10011.)



Fig. 5.24. “Marsha P. Johnson, 1974 Christopher Street Liberation Day”
(Photograph by Leonard Fink, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th St, NY, NY 10011, Collection 026, Folder 22.)

lines of biological sex and orientation would contribute to gay liberation’s fragmentation.

S.T.A.R. joined GLF, GAA, Mattachine Society, DOB, Radicalesbians, FREE, Third World Gay Revolution, and university departments in a 1971 “Conference on Gay Liberation” sponsored by Rutgers University Student Homophile League.²⁶⁷ GAA educational forums included sadism, masochism, and leather; bisexuality; and transvestism. A photograph of Marsha and Miss Pixie marks their attendance at one of gay liberation’s first conferences.²⁶⁸ Speakers from S.T.A.R., Queens Liberation Front, and GAA addressed the March 10, 1972, inaugural event on transvestism.²⁶⁹

Outreach could take subtler but equally powerful forms. Sylvia’s intransigent free form public expression did not go unnoticed. At the Sylvia Rivera Community Memorial held in New York’s Judson Church, one transgender speaker reminisced that as a biological boy surrounded



Fig. 5.25. “Sylvia Rivera, age 18, in New York City.” (Photograph by Kay Tobin Lahausen, Manuscripts and Archives, NYPL.)

by classmates on a school outing, she glanced across the street and felt the shock of life-affirming recognition upon seeing Sylvia cavorting by a fountain—perhaps the very day Kay Tobin, Sylvia, and other GAA members were returning from a demo at “The Tombs” (officially the Manhattan House of Detention) “to protest treatment of gay inmates, many of whom were transvestites.” Kay asked Sylvia to pose for a photograph (fig. 5.25).²⁷⁰ That single glimpse of Sylvia helped end years of one young person’s isolation, fear, and doubt.

EVICTION FROM S.T.A.R. HOUSE (JULY 1971)

S.T.A.R. House established approximately two months after the Weinstein occupation (ca. November 1970) closed in July 1971. By my calculation, it lasted only nine months.²⁷¹ But the ideas and issues it generated (transvestite liberation, housing homeless transgender youth, establishing a platform for social change) were consequential then and now.

The demise of the house was dramatic and swift. Sylvia's disastrous Christopher Street encounter with landlord Mike Umbers revealed that Bubbles had reneged on rental payments. Sylvia sped off to 2nd Street by cab and confronted her. Bubbles evasively cited house expenses. A threatening Umbers arrived shortly after, demanding payment. With Bubbles' life in jeopardy, Sylvia acknowledged the debt, but courageously warned Umbers that she herself would testify against him if Bubbles were harmed. Umbers relented, but S.T.A.R. was evicted.²⁷² Sylvia recounted that before leaving, pipes were ripped out and "the refrigerator went out the back window."²⁷³

The imminent eviction led to further hardship. During one of Arthur Bell's visits, Bambi remarked, "We wanted to find another building so the last five days we've been working very hard. Too hard. Andorra was picked up by a detective."²⁷⁴ Bambi expounded,

I'd have liked to stay here—save our money—get something nice for the fall and move from the East Village. We can't do that now. We'll have to spend our money on eating out and sometimes on hotels. . . . At least in this hole you could always come home. If you're broke, you could go next door and borrow a dollar or two. The neighbors are nice. They've got good hearts.²⁷⁵

The long-term outlook was tenuous. Some street transvestites overdosed and others were "knifed by johns. Sylvia Rivera [eventually] retired to a domestic life upstate as a food preparer" an existence that Sylvia explained was ultimately undone by crack.²⁷⁶

DREAMS DEFERRED

GAA Fights for Intro 475 in a Series of City Hall Hearings

With the loss of its house, S.T.A.R. deferred its ambitions for a communal shelter and focused on transvestite recognition within the gay movement and society at large. This goal was brought into high relief during City Hall hearings on municipal gay rights legislation Intro 475 to prevent "discrimination based on a person's sexual orientation."²⁷⁷ Orchestrated by the Gay Activists Alliance in September 1970, the amended code was intended to:

eliminate and prevent discrimination in employment, in places of public accommodation, resort or amusement, in housing accommodations

and in commercial space because of race, creed, color, national origin, sexual orientation, or physical handicap.²⁷⁸

GAA sought significant job, housing, political, and economic protections as well as “the right of all New Yorkers to the privacy of their own bedrooms.”²⁷⁹ The group lobbied, petitioned, and (upping the ante after nine months) staged successive protests that yielded three “tumultuous public sessions” from October to December.²⁸⁰

Two elements of the S.T.A.R. platform were particularly germane to the hearings, S.T.A.R. maintained, “transvestites and gay street people should be granted full and equal rights on all levels of society, and full voice in the struggle for liberation of all oppressed people.” The group also demanded “an end to exploitation and discrimination against transvestites within the homosexual world.”²⁸¹

At the first public hearing held October 18, 1971 “many members of the gay community felt that supporters of the bill—both gay and straight[—]were not relating to the issue of transvestism and indeed were suppressing that issue in order to ensure the bill’s passage.”²⁸² GAA



Fig. 5.26. “Intro 475 Demo: ‘L-to-R—Sylvia Rey Rivera, Marcia P. Johnson, Jane Verlaine, Barbara Deming, Kady Vandeur, Carol Grosberg, unidentified,’ 1970?” (Photograph by Diana Davies, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Diana Davies Papers, Box 2, Gay Liberation Marches.)

equivocated and initially submitted to removal of transvestite protections, but ultimately endorsed them.²⁸³ Lee Brewster, Bebe, and Sylvia argued transvestites “were being used as scapegoats by the gay movement” seeking to explain its failure to pass.²⁸⁴ *Come Out* reported:

At the second hearing [city councilors] DeMarco and Sharison went into a heavy Transvestite baiting number in order to turn the “respectable” Homosexuals against the flamboyant. But we remained strong and united as was demonstrated when the pigs tried to rip off a group of transvestites. They were surrounded by angry Gays and forced to release our half-sisters who proudly walked to the front and took seats in the first row.²⁸⁵

Weaving together the various accounts of the November 15, 1971 hearings yields a lively scenario. Council member DeMarco questioned Richard Amato of GAA’s Fair Employment Committee, “What if we employ a Mr. Shultz on Monday and Tuesday we get a Miss Shultz. That’s the problem. I just saw two people in dresses trying to get in the men’s room.”²⁸⁶ DeMarco’s comment, “What about that thing coming out of the bathroom there?” prompted June Bartel who had just exited the women’s room to indignantly counterattack. She squatted down, lifted her skirts, and demanded, “How can you tell if I’m a man or a women?” causing a near brawl. Bebe relates, “Out of nowhere comes the Tactical Police force [dressed in full riot gear] . . . and I remember mocking people downstairs (so I was told) and Sylvia jumping” from the second floor balcony. As Bebe and the others came bustling down the stairs to investigate the commotion, they collided with the Tactical Police who, in an abrupt reversal of direction, “went down,” tumbling backwards. It was over in “two seconds.” The androgynously attired Bebe was called to testify,

because of the queens I was considered the logical one. . . . I remember raising my hand and DeMarco ‘psssst, psssst’ and he said yeah ‘sane one.’ . . . I remember quoting from the ceiling. There were some wonderful things written about rights.²⁸⁷

The inscriptions read:

“Equal and exact justice to all men of whatever state or persuasion,” Jefferson; “Let us have a government of the people, by the people, for the people,” Lincoln; “Our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand,” Washington.²⁸⁸

Bebe recalled:

One line broke them up completely. . . . [Asked what] you do in the case of either Mr. Smith or Mr. Black who goes to school dressed as Mr. Smith one day and Miss Smith the next, I said well most jobs had dress codes and I said they keep sending cops out dressed as women to pick up drugs. . . . You spot these men a block away. If they had used us, they would be far more effective.²⁸⁹

DeMarco next “brought up the teaching issue” after Bebe had “nailed him on the cops.” Bebe instigated a massive show of homosexual hands that dropped when she asked, “Who here was taught by a[n openly] gay teacher?”²⁹⁰ “Look around you!” [Bebe] told the council. ‘We all went to heterosexual teachers! And look at us!’”²⁹¹ DeMarco’s faulty cause-effect logic that homosexual (and by analogy transvestite) teachers produced homosexual students was effectively torpedoed.

The Gay Activist reported:

“Bebe” Scarpi, a transvestite in male attire, gave testimony on the minority group, [s]he pointed out that transvestites used the men’s room because they’d been warned they would be subject to arrest if they entered the ladies room. And even transvestites had to heed the call of nature. Bebe, a student at Queens College, gave what amounted to a short course on the lifestyle and problems of transvestites with such charm, ready wit and intelligence, that even the Councilmen appeared beguiled . . . Chairman Sharison seemed unable to comprehend that some transvestites were heterosexual. He wanted to know whether Bebe believed transvestites would be protected by Intro 475. “Only as a homosexual, not as a transvestite,” Bebe explained, and perhaps the Councilman would care to enact legislation protecting the transvestite.

In fact, the bill’s employment protections covered gay men, not transvestites. “They were relegating us to a netherworld of illegality.” Bebe remembers it as “one of my greatest performances I should say.”²⁹²

GAA Points of Contention

The question of transgender rights exposed tensions and contradictions.²⁹³ On December 10, 1970, the GAA endorsed the “repeal of laws making transvestism illegal in New York State.”²⁹⁴ Ted Rauch, writing in the *Gay Activist*, strove to clarify the meaning of gay liberation and decried discrimination against transvestites.

If we are demanding our rights, we are demanding *all* of our rights. All gay people including transvestites are entitled to the same rights of employment, housing, and public accomodation [sic] as all straight people.

But the issue of transvestism brings up another and deeper question. What essentially is gay liberation all about? Is it a matter of affirming that we are the *same* as everyone else? Are we stressing our common humanity *at the expense of* our individuality? Does the fact that we are all entitled to the same human rights mean that we should conform to some common denominator? . . .

Gay liberation implies liberation for all people. We are not only demanding our rights, affirming our pride, we are telling all people to do the same, to discover themselves, to celebrate their own unique beauty and the sense of their shared humanity. . . . It was transvestites who created the gay liberation movement during the Stonewall riots. If now, as it seems, we are in danger of forgetting what the movement is all about, perhaps we should turn to transvestites to remind us.²⁹⁵

Two days after the second Intro 475 hearing, Lee Brewster of Queens Liberation Front castigated the GAA membership for perpetuating discrimination. He cited the political changes effected by transvestites on behalf of the entire community, Stonewall, and oppression reinforced by “straight homosexuals,” a reminder of the fundamental underlying principle that “nobody is free until everybody is free.” Brewster proclaimed:

There is a saying that “Hell hath no fury as a woman scorned!” Queens Liberation Front now takes battle stations and this tonight, is our first volley.

How ironic! How tragic! To be forced to use stratagems [on] our own brothers and sisters! An utter waste of time and energy. Precious moments that should be used against our common enemy—the bigots, the uneducated, the misinformed, the intolerants, and the hypocrites. That homosexuals should be among that number is perhaps the saddest commentary of all. . . .

Suddenly, just as victory is approaching for the gay movement, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the price may be at the expense and the exclusion of still yet another minority—the homosexual transvestite commonly known as the drag queen. . . .

You are the true faggots! You who have felt the sting of bigotry and discrimination may now try to sell your sister away and offer ‘her’ up as a political sacrificial lamb.

We will not go! To be denied our rights by some straights is to be expected-but intolerable by our own community. We will not stand mute to help you prove your machismo. . . .

We founded the Gay Liberation movement.

[In our] most recent endeavors QUEENS did not exclude the straight homosexual from our court battles. We [won] those rights for the entire gay community. And now we demand in the name of justice and fair play the same treatment. However, I must warn you . . . that in the absence of your support you will feel that HEAVEN AND HELL have no fury like a DRAG QUEEN SCORNED!!!²⁹⁶

During the third hearing on Friday, December 17, 1971, transvestites were barred from rest rooms. Attempted arrests were blocked by chants of “Gay Unity” and “Gay Power.”²⁹⁷ Bebe Scarpi, wearing “a long red skirt . . . hair pulled and a [curl] piece fitting in the back” approached the bathroom and asked a policeman, “What are you doing?” Hearing that “we’re checking everybody before we let them use the ladies’ room,” Bebe asked why. The policeman “said some of them are transvestites and I went in and I came out and I said, ‘By the way you didn’t check me.’”²⁹⁸ The radical *Come Out* derided gender-specific bathrooms, but the homophile *New York Mattachine Times* accused transvestites of jeopardizing the bill with “misguided” bathroom use.²⁹⁹

Ordinarily, Sylvia was an extemporaneous speaker with conviction and fervor, but her face was still bruised by police. Sylvia, who “always thought she had great legs,” wore a conservative dress, hair in a bun, and a “Garboesque big hat.” This was her “dressing white woman” look, chosen “to get her point across.” The hat served to hide a broken nose inflicted by police at a recent demonstration. Bebe recalls, “I remember the cops saying, ‘You should have seen that one last time. She looked gorgeous. I don’t know what happened to her.’ And I remember looking over my shoulder. I said, ‘She got arrested last week. One of your bulls worked her over.’” Sylvia read, in surprisingly muted fashion, a statement based on S.T.A.R.’s platform outlining beatings and denial of housing to transvestites. Also in attendance were June and Marsha, “kind of stoic sitting off by herself, sort of there and not there.”³⁰⁰ The bill was defeated in January 1970.³⁰¹ It seemed “a party vote, with defeat a foregone conclusion.”³⁰² *Come Out* writer, Field Mouse, suggested that in a fixed game one would do better to knock the cards out of the dealer’s hand.³⁰³

The battle for passage of the GAA-initiated New York City gay and transgender civil rights protections continued for years. Reintroduced

under a variety of names, a 1986 bill (lacking transgender protections) was passed, and finally amended in 2002 to incorporate transgender rights. Sylvia supported the NYC anti-discrimination bill and lobbied from her deathbed on behalf of New York State transgender protections.

Power to All the People?

Early in 1972 following the hearings, Sylvia noted that transvestites and street people were on the “front lines,” and deserved dignity and credit for their contributions. In her letter to the gay community she asked:

Remember the Stonewall Riots? That first stone was cast by a transvestite half sister June 27, 1969 and the gay liberation movement was born.³⁰⁴ Remember that transvestites and gay street people are always on the front lines and ready to lay their lives down for the movement. Remember the transvestite half sister that was out gathering signatures for the Homosexual Civil Rights Bill petition and was arrested on 42nd Street. Remember the N.Y.U. sit-in? Transvestites and gay street people held the fort down and didn’t want to cave in that Friday night after we had been removed from the sub-cellar.

So sisters and brothers remember that transvestites are not the scum of the community; just think back on the events of the past two years. You should be proud that we are part of the same community and you should try to gain some knowledge of your transvestite half brothers and sisters and our valid life style. Remember we started the whole movement that 27th day of June of the year 1969!

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries meet Friday at 6:00 p.m. at Marsha Johnson’s, 211 Eldridge Street, New York, N.Y., apt. 3. For information write: S.T.A.R., c/o Marsha Johnson, at the same address.

Power to all the people!³⁰⁵

The loss of S.T.A.R. House, the fracturing of the gay liberation movement, and the struggle to maintain the organization made it nearly impossible to care for indigent street youth. In a 1972 interview with Allen Young, Marsha pointed out a decline of demonstrations and the end of S.T.A.R. meetings. Sylvia found temporary refuge with friends on 109th Street. Marsha returned to her 211 Eldridge Street apartment that once again became S.T.A.R.’s *de facto* address.³⁰⁶ Marsha maintained high hopes for a new home, bail fund, and lawyer to assist arrested transvestites. She dreamed of S.T.A.R. dances to replenish an empty bank account, telephone, and a recreation center, as well as a day when transvestites would no longer have to hustle to survive.³⁰⁷

Marsha hoped to build bonds with GAA and the broader community. She relished the day when transvestites would be able to say, “My name is Mister So-and-So and I’d like a job as Miss So-and-So.”³⁰⁸ She was still prepared to live openly and fight back. When asked by Allen Young if she ever had to use her mace can, she responded, “Not yet, but I’m patient.”³⁰⁹

Out on the Front Lines

S.T.A.R.’s successes and Sylvia’s determination to protect “her kids” were all the more remarkable given transvestites’ vulnerability to the police and prison systems, two institutions in direct (if often adversarial) contact with transvestites and street youth. Sylvia nonetheless continued to engage in vocal and spirited resistance. She was a catalyst and public figure often used by the Movement. Bebe recalled:

Someone said let’s do civil disobedience and Sylvia jumped in the street. . . . That’s the crux of the problem with Sylvia . . . She was good to go. So when you wanted someone to storm City Hall, to make that kind of a statement or to lay down in traffic and get the shit beat out of her, you would call for Sylvia . . . When the press came to ask what this was about, they succeeded in keeping Sylvia away . . . In that sense she was always used.³¹⁰

As a transvestite, Sylvia experienced a heightened threat of isolation and potential abuse by the criminal justice system. When Intro 475 underwent a third vote, about one hundred “diehards of the Gay Liberation Movement . . . massed outside City Hall on April 27, 1973 anxiously awaiting what seemed an almost certain victory.” At news of the bill’s narrow defeat, the crowd formed an impromptu blockade of outgoing Brooklyn Bridge traffic.³¹¹ Lesbian activist, Noreen Harnik, reported:

about 40 or 50 of us sat in the rain-soaked gutter while the others cheered us on. It took the police only seconds to move in, dragging people roughly away. Sylvia Rivera lay spread eagled before a car, as usual the first to take action. The rest of us quickly followed—some sitting, some squatting.³¹²

Five women and fifteen men were arrested.³¹³ A wet and bedraggled Sylvia in mini-dress was hurled into a waiting police wagon, caught by the brothers and sisters inside; Sylvia recalled, Jean O’Leary did not come to her assistance.³¹⁴ Demonstrators rocked the wagon until it tipped. Detainees

were eventually taken to the First Precinct Station House and segregated by gender. The women sang as they were booked, while Sylvia, in drag, was isolated in a distant room. This typical treatment prompted a well-grounded fear, “What if they come in here and just kill me? . . . Beating the shit out of me . . . I could deal with, but my whole fear in my mind was that they would kill me . . . I would panic . . . I was very panicky at that point in my life.”³¹⁵

Panic was counterbalanced by bravado. Her infamous dizzying ascent of City Hall during a protest several days later captivated attention and sparked the crowd’s enthusiasm. Bebe recalls, Sylvia arrived following a night of hustling and high on “speedballs” (an injection of cocaine and heroin). Fortified by a few drinks in a nearby bar, she and Bebe joined the demonstration whereupon Sylvia kicked off her heels, braced herself with a swig, and (attired in polyester bell-bottoms with midriff exposed) scaled City Hall to cheers and chanting below.³¹⁶ (Although the legendary version of this tale depicts Sylvia in high heels, this was not actually the case.)³¹⁷ Climbing and praying, Sylvia reached the narrow ledge to find the window barred against her. She continued taking nips from the bottle. The cops shouted, “Sylvia, if you jump, we won’t take you to jail.”³¹⁸ Insisting on a denouement by ladder or window, she was instead arrested (as were twelve others within City Hall chambers, presumably on this same day).³¹⁹

S.T.A.R.’S DEMISE: THE WASHINGTON SQUARE RALLY (JUNE 24, 1973)

Sylvia’s dreams of collective family, protecting young transvestites, recognition by a broad gay movement, and an end to injustice were overwhelmed by a maelstrom of ideological disagreement, personal demons, and ongoing hardship. During the months leading up to the June 1973, Christopher Street Liberation Day (CSLD), the gay liberation movement was beset by ideological rifts. The National Gay Task Force advocated incremental civil rights. Lesbians fighting against sexism had begun to espouse separatism. The CSLD Committee, mainly comprised of GAA members, did its utmost to ensure a harmonious march and rally, by focusing on entertainment and choosing two speakers (Morris Kight and Barbara Gittings) considered unembroiled in NYC’s fractious infighting.³²⁰

The march included transvestites of a decidedly glamorous tone who made their mark thanks to CSLD Committee member Bebe Scarpi’s behind-the-scenes organizational encouragement. Bebe recalled how she went down to the last of the live showcase clubs—the “connected” 82 Club (at



Fig. 5.27. “82 Club in the vanguard of the 1973 Gay Pride March.” Jean Chandler is behind the “8” Gigi del Fuego behind the “L” and Chrysis San Laurent on the far right by the letter “B.” (Photograph by Leonard Fink, 1973, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th St, NY, NY 10011, Collection 026, Folder 24.)

82 East 4th St.)—and recruited showgirls in full regalia to assemble in the early dawn hours. Lead marchers included Chrysis and Jean Chandler who, as last featured entertainer, crossed over to the curtain and with Gypsy Rose Lee flair dropped her bra at the end of the act.³²¹

When Sylvia spoke of that day to Martin Duberman, she explained she was wearing a jumpsuit that had belonged to June [Bartel], “a very close friend, . . . another queen that hustled the streets” who had “died of methadone poisoning and booze. . . . We knew that she was a hair dresser in South Philly and we went trekking, and this in between me having to stop off in little bathrooms or little alley ways to shoot up . . . I said, ‘Well, I’m not dealing with this’ . . . but it was a hair rising [sic] experience. . . . Just to see her laying there the way she was took a lot out of me.”³²²

The Committee’s peacemaking plan backfired. Sylvia—passionate and outspoken, fueled by alcohol (and perhaps drugs) as well as Arthur Bell’s inflammatory exhortation, and eclipsed by 82 Club artist Ty Bennett conveyed by convertible in regal fashion—insisted on speaking.³²³ This



Fig. 5.28. “Gay Pride March, June 24, 1973.” Marsha in cape, unknown, and Sylvia holding banner. (Photograph by Leonard Fink, 1973, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th St, NY, NY 10011, Collection 026, Folder 24.)

moment is typically depicted as one in which transvestites were denied a platform, but Sylvia refused to play by the organizing committee's orderly rules. She stormed the stage in a manner that might have been countenanced in GLF's free-for-all give and take culture, but amounted to speaking out of turn given CSLD guidelines.³²⁴ Winded but determined, Sylvia grasped the microphone as a prop and confronted the crowd. "You all better quiet down." Her admonition was met by jeering and booing. Undeterred, Sylvia proceeded, her amplified voice ringing out.

I've been trying to get up here all day, for your gay brothers and your gay sisters in jail. They write me every mother-fucking week, and ask for your help, and you all don't do a god-damned thing for them.

Have you ever been beaten up, and raped, and jailed?

[By this point, the crowd began to quiet down and respond.]

Now think about it.

They've been beaten up and raped. And they have had to spend much of their money in jail to get their self home and to try to get their sex change.

The women have tried to fight for their sex changes or to become women of the Women's Liberation and they write S.T.A.R., not the women's group. They do not write women. They do not write men. They write S.T.A.R. because we're trying to do something for them.

I have been to jail. I have been raped many times by men, heterosexual men that do not belong in the homosexual shelter. But do you do anything for them? No! You all tell me go and hide myself between my legs.

I will no longer put up with this shit

I have been beaten.

I have had my nose broken.

I have been thrown in jail.

I have lost my job.

I have lost my apartment.

For gay liberation.

And you all treat me this way? What's wrong with you all?

Think about that!

[applause]

I do not believe in a revolution.

But you all do.

I believe in the Gay Power.

I believe in us getting our rights, or else I would not be out there fighting for our rights.

That's all I wanted to say to your people.

If you all want to know about the people who are in jail—and do not forget Bambi l'Amour, Andorra Marks, Kenny Messner and other gay people who are in jail—come and see the people at S.T.A.R. House on 12th street, on 640 East 12th Street between B and C, apartment 14.

The people that are trying to do something for all of us and not men and women that belong to a white middle class white club. And that's what you all belong to.

REVOLUTION NOW!

“Gimme a G!”

“G!”

“Gimme an A!”

“A!”

“Gimme a Y!”

“Y!”

“Gimme a P!”

“P!”

“Gimme an O!”

“O!”

“Gimme a W!”

“W!”

“Gimme an E!”

“E!”

“Gimme an R!”

“R!”

“Gay [voice breaking], Gay Power!”

“Gay Power”

“Louder!” [Doubled over, her hoarse voice breaking] “Gay Power.”³²⁵

THE AFTERMATH

After Sylvia's breach of the planned agenda, Jean O'Leary of Lesbian Feminist Liberation insisted on an opportunity to speak.³²⁶ For O'Leary, biological sex marked a definitive boundary and Sylvia was “a genital male.”³²⁷ O'Leary, in sharp contrast to Billie and Tiffany's comic Andrews Sisters drag act, decried drag entertainment as misogynist and demeaning. (Long after,

O'Leary expressed regret for maintaining a rigid politically correct anti-drag stance.)³²⁸ When Jean was booed by the audience, the soft-spoken MC, Vito Russo, beseeched the crowd to allow her to continue. Jean, representing the increasingly separatist lesbian feminist stance, sought to counter lesbian disenfranchisement and second-class status reinforced by a male dominated Movement.³²⁹ Lesbian feminists saw transvestites' stereotypically feminine mannerisms and dress as an indirect attack on women.³³⁰

Lee Brewster of Queen's Liberation Front followed O'Leary. He railed against lesbians who would deny transvestites the rightful place and respect due those who had fought on the front lines of the Stonewall Riots. It was only when Bette Midler appeared to regale the crowd with her winning rendition of "You've Got to Have Friends" that tempers were temporarily soothed.³³¹

For Sylvia, battling her way to the microphone, the event was a culmination of indignities suffered not only within straight society, but also within the gay liberation movement. It was a watershed moment, both personally and politically. Transvestites faced rejection on two fronts. The increasingly assimilationist and essentialist gay civil rights movement, spearheaded by groups such as National Gay Task Force, had begun to focus on legal and medical reforms, largely excluding issues of gender identity. Lesbian feminists had begun to forge cultural and political bonds based on their oppression as women and lesbians. Transvestites, seen as biological males enacting hated, archaic feminine stereotypes, were suspect. Gay Youth survived in this climate, but support for young street transvestites was far more problematic.

Six years later, wearing a T-shirt emblazoned "I'm Human Too," Sylvia reflected, "Around that time, the street queens were being drummed out of the gay movement—'stereotypes' and 'bad role models' we were called."³³² Sylvia recalled that Judy (whom she first met in the Weinstein Hall occupation) sent her a touching letter afterwards; "she actually felt the same thing that I felt, that the Movement was coming apart at the seams because no one could understand one another."³³³

By the mid-seventies social, personal, and economic revolution had given way to an incremental gay civil rights agenda promoted by professional organizations. This more limiting vision of the acceptable "gay" left little room for the construction of outré gender identities, thereby limiting possibilities for transgender youngsters. Many gay liberation youth groups disappeared. In 1971, GAA's Ted Rauch had expressed strong support for transvestites.³³⁴ In contrast, Lou Todd, a GAA board member in one of GAA's "later incarnations" informed Bebe Scarpi on the floor of the Firehouse that "transvestites have no place in the modern gay movement," a surprising expression of what was usually ambient or subliminal.³³⁵

S.T.A.R.'S IMPORT

In studying S.T.A.R., one runs the risk of glorifying the personalities and the organization. Sylvia was not universally appreciated. S.T.A.R. could be dismissed as a motley, short-lived experiment. Yet, beset by homelessness, drug addiction, violence, and institutional oppression, this visionary group managed to leave a legacy that continues to resonate.

S.T.A.R. did more than shelter homeless transvestite street youth and adults. It provided a political platform, lent legitimacy to non-traditional gender expression, and formalized a transgender identity. Working within the Movement and on behalf of street transvestites, S.T.A.R. enacted themes of survival, family, communal interdependence, and gay power. In a leap of faith far beyond the vision of social service agencies, street transvestites provided an example of gay liberation praxis (action-reflection-action), with an admitted emphasis on action. Sylvia made an impassioned plea to recall the plight of the disenfranchised, the poor, and the jailed (largely Black and/or Spanish-speaking and often young).³³⁶

The need for gender inclusive and trans-defined space is ever present. Facing rejection within school and family settings, transgender youth risk depression, anxiety, homelessness, physical, verbal, and sexual mistreatment, drug and alcohol abuse, self-mutilation, suicide, family violence, and HIV infection.³³⁷ In a multi-city U.S. study, HIV incidence among 15-year-old males who have sex with males was 0%. By age 22, 9.7% were infected, with substantially higher rates associated for multiracial, African American, Hispanic, transgender, and homeless young men.³³⁸ Present-day transgender youth advocates reiterate key elements of S.T.A.R.'s mission: the importance of peer and adult support, the right to freely define and express gender identity, control over one's own body, and competent non-pathologizing medical and psychiatric care.³³⁹ "Gender variant children, because they are told that they do not fit in, are in a constant search for an affirming environment, where they can be themselves."³⁴⁰ In a sad turn of events, street youth by the Hudson River piers face antagonism from an increasingly gentrified West Village,³⁴¹ responding in part to reported acts of violence and extreme behavior. A campaign to "privatize, sanitize, and control public spaces," initiated by Mayor Giuliani in 1994, may have also heightened neighborhood intolerance.³⁴²

S.T.A.R. fought for transvestites' rightful place in the Movement, a contention that Sylvia never relinquished. Interviewed by Duberman in 1990, Sylvia explained:

I want the community to know that we exist and that we will always exist and that we are part of them. . . . Everything should have been under one umbrella fighting as a movement together, not as different segments of a movement.³⁴³

A latter day Gay Pride anecdote recounted by Sylvia's long time friend Bob Kohler is telling. The lesbian and transvestite contingents had vied for the lead position. Outmaneuvered, Sylvia and the other transvestites reluctantly gave way. About to proceed, Bob Kohler, in a time-honored ploy, advised Sylvia to wait. This seemed a perplexing and even contrary recommendation until, with the lesbians receding in the distance, the march had been reconfigured. Transvestites were once again visible in the lead.³⁴⁴

S.T.A.R. put theory into practice before the theory had been formulated. It rejected the conflation of sex and gender as do today's queer theorists who contest binding stereotypes and embrace seemingly wild permutations of gender identity, sex role, and sexual orientation. Those identifying as transgender or bisexual have been treated with skepticism.³⁴⁵ Queer theorist Eve Sedgwick has expressed general disinterest in the idea of a "bisexual identity."³⁴⁶ The formulation of a model of difference that asks who is included and who is excluded entails "a specifically historicized understanding of sexual identities, politics, and communities."³⁴⁷ S.T.A.R. merits scholarly attention for demonstrating how categories other than homosexual "resist heterosexual hegemony."³⁴⁸

Transgender activist Leslie Feinberg rejects a purely theoretical discourse that ignores practical lessons offered by pre-Stonewall bars of Buffalo, New York, frequented by "butch" females and men who were "queens." S/he writes, "People of all sexes have the right to explore femininity, masculinity—and the infinite variations between—without criticism or ridicule."³⁴⁹

Towards the end of her life, Sylvia managed the food pantry at Metropolitan Community Church, serving the hungry and needy. She ran the kitchen with ironclad authority (proud of it having passed NYC health department inspection). She assumed a position of respect previously denied to her, becoming in a sense an "elder of the community."³⁵⁰ Marsha and Sylvia, survived by her life partner Julia Murray, have become iconic figures who continue to inspire. Written in the seventies, J. Centola's poem "The Divas of Sheridan Square" paid homage to the denizens of Sheridan Square, Marsha P. Johnson among them.

THE DIVAS OF SHERIDAN SQUARE

HAVE YOU SEEN ALL THE DIVAS OF SHERIDAN SQUARE

KROOZIN DOWN TO THE RIVER BY MORTON STREET PIER
SOME ARE DARK, TOUGH AND TAKI, SOME FLAWLESSLY FAIR
I AINT DISHIN
JUST WISHIN
I COULD BE STANDIN THERE

DEAR MISS LANCE, TALL AND TRASHY AND EVER SO PROUD

SHE'S STILL KROOZIN AND LOOSIN AND BEING QUITE LOUD
AS SHE SWISHES BY GAYLY ON HER PINK FAIRY CLOUD
SHE'S A MYSTIC MIRAGE
TO THE WHOLE JOHN WAYNE CROWD

ARE THOSE HOT LEATHER NUMBERS STILL DOIN THE ROCK
ARE THE STREET PEOPLE KROOZIN, THEIR BLUES SHOVED IN HOCK
EACH ONE PAYIN HIGH DUES
IN A HIGH CULTURE SHOCK

IS MISS MARSHA STILL TIPPIN AND SPREADIN GAY JOYS
AIN'T A THING THAT SHE'S MISSIN, CANT GET FROM THE BOYS
EITHER WORKING THE HIGHWAY OR CHECKIN THE SCENE

MISS THING ALWAYS SPARES CHANGE
FOR SOME STONE DYING QUEEN

IS THE FAIR ROLLERINA STILL SKATING AROUND

IS SHE STILL MAKING MAGIC ALL OVER THE TOWN
SHE CAN ROLL UP A RAINBOW AND ROCK IT BACK DOWN
SHE'S A STREET-SKATING STAR
IN HER WHITE FAIRY GOWN

IS MISS BAMBI STILL SLEEPING ALL OVER THE STREET
CAN I STILL COP SOME POPPERS WITH ALL THE ELITE
ARE THE OLD GIRLS STILL TRIPPING, THE CHICKENS STILL SWEET
MISSIN ALL THAT'S DISCREET

HAVE YOU SEEN ALL THE DIVAS OF SHERIDAN SQUARE
KROOZIN DOWN TO THE RIVER BY MORTON STREET PIER
SOME ARE DARK, TOUGH AND TAKI, SOME FLAWLESSLEY FAIR
I AINT DISHIN
JUST WISHIN
I COULD BE STANDIN THERE³⁵¹

Chapter Six

Gay International Youth Society of George Washington High School: High School Gay Liberation Groups

During the early 1970s a flourishing gay liberation movement inspired NYC high school students to organize a number of school-based gay liberation groups. In December 1972, students at George Washington High School, located on Audubon Avenue and 193rd Street in Manhattan's Washington Heights section north of Harlem, formed a group they would later call the Gay International Youth Society. The very existence of 1970s high school gay liberation groups has been overlooked in present-day Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) literature, yet much like contemporary GSAs, the George Washington group sought to transform the school environment; it was student led and its members were gay, bisexual, and straight.¹ It advocated public visibility, the creation of social space, and political activism.² The club's membership was representative of the multi-ethnic student body at the overcrowded school.³

Gay liberation clubs were also reported at the all-boys DeWitt Clinton and the prestigious Bronx High School of Science.⁴ Students were rumored to have organized groups at Charles Evans Hughes, the High School of Music and Art, F.D.R., and Erasmus of Brooklyn.⁵

High school organizing was not just a New York City phenomenon. The Gay Students Council, a coalition of California university and high school groups, was "formed during the Spring of 1972 by local gay groups at eight southern California colleges."⁶ It included Gay Youth of Los Angeles with "primarily high school students" and new groups at "several Los Angeles City high schools."⁷

In Wheaton, Maryland, seven Kennedy High School juniors and seniors formed a club in 1973, to confront "prejudice, repression, and ignorance related to homosexuality."⁸ When a social science class speaking engagement extended to homophile leader Frank Kameny by Steve (a

seventeen-year-old club member) was denied by the administration, the school paper news editor arranged a Kameny interview and initiated a petition drive signed by 350 of the school's 1300 students.⁹

Younger students also organized. A savvy suburban Washington D.C. junior high school student attended a gay liberation consciousness-raising group facilitated by Warren Blumenfeld and developed plans to establish his own school group.¹⁰

A Detroit high school student, Sequoya, described an attempt to form a "Cass Testicle High Screw" chapter of GLF (obviously a play on the name Cass Technical High School); however, the "three sponsors were threatened with arrest," apparently for "contributing to the delinquency of minors."¹¹ Sequoya reported, "We were forced to disband when no teachers were willing to take the 'risk.'"¹² Decrying a litany of high school injustices, the author concluded, "The only way in which we can combat this sexism in the high schools (and the junior highs as well) is to organize under the GLF Youth Caucus and make our demands and fight for them. High school gays must *COME OUT* of their closets NOW!"¹³

THE DYNAMICS OF GAY LIBERATION AT GEORGE WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

The Gay International Youth Society was notable for its visibility, multi-ethnic membership, leadership, and connection to the Gay Activists Alliance and Gay Youth (then located in the GAA Firehouse). Elie Lamadrid, an eighteen-year-old Third World student, developed the idea for a gay club after attending an after-school encounter group in mid-December 1972. According to the students, the group's advisor, Mr. Alexander Levie, as "a 36 year old self-proclaimed Jewish middle-classer. . . who believes in the civil rights of all minority groups, thought it was an excellent idea."¹⁴ He presented it to the school's assistant principal, "an ageless woman," who in turn approached the enlightened principal, Samuel Kostman. The club held its first meeting on December 20, 1972.¹⁵

Three weeks later, GAA speakers Jean O'Leary (soon to be leader of Lesbian Feminist Liberation) and Morty Manford (GAA activist who would become its third president, and the son of Jeanne and Jules Manford with whom he founded Parents of Gays, now known as PFLAG) addressed the club's first open forum attended by twenty-five people, "offering information, answering questions, and giving advice to help the continuation and growth of the group."¹⁶ After the meeting, O'Leary described the students as "dynamite people."¹⁷

Students explained the twenty members were “predominately Third World, and curiously, as is not the case in most other gay groups with mixed sexes,” lesbians outnumbered gay men nine to six.¹⁸ The five other members were straight friends. Less than six months later, the club had some fifteen gay, straight, and bisexual members from the sophomore, junior, and senior classes. Women comprised a slight majority and there was “a disproportionate number of Spanish-speaking people.”¹⁹

SOCIAL CHANGE GALVANIZES GWHS GAY LIBERATION

The students created the group in order to *have a social outlet*, but in their view, profound change also necessitated *political activism*. Student actions and words reveal the confluence of conditions that led to the Gay International Youth Society’s formation and contributed to its efforts: (1) gay liberation’s transformation of student consciousness, (2) a prior history of widespread high school student engagement in the Movement, (3) a tumultuous city-wide struggle for greater student and community control, (4) the response to educational inequities at GWHS, (5) guarantees afforded by a Board of Education certified students’ Bill of Rights, (6) a newly instituted pro-active school administration that encouraged student participation, and (7) outreach and support of the Gay Activists Alliance and Gay Youth. Student participation in a personal encounter group was both the pivotal spark and model for the club and its practice. I address each condition in the following sections.

(1) Gay Liberation and School Climate

Student views were influenced by gay liberation’s multi-issue, vocal program of unapologetic political and social change. Like the Gay Activists Alliance and Gay Youth, the George Washington group embodied gay liberation’s focus on liberation, organization, and affirmation.²⁰ From 1969 to 1971, NYC high schools experienced great unrest over community control, student rights, and inequitable educational policies; apparently, the issue of gay liberation did not precipitate violent dispute. Even so, NYC students faced a denigrating curriculum, hostility from educators, and peer harassment. In 1972, the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) reported that a commonly used NYC high school text included a scant half page on homosexuality that warned, “when such a preference carries on past puberty and into adulthood it becomes a matter for concern.”²¹ It also cautioned, “some adult homosexuals attempt to lure unsuspecting children and teenagers into their way of life.”²²

Diane Devlin, a lesbian sophomore at a specialized New York City high school, wrote of interrogation by a female school physician critical of her short hair, social life, and lack of feminine grace. Her mother was also questioned.

In order to avoid additional confrontation, Diane transferred to a neighborhood school.²³ This experience resonated with another young lesbian who declared, “I can’t remember any one incident where the word ‘homosexual’ was spoken by a teacher.”²⁴ At a Brooklyn middle school with a largely Black and Spanish-speaking population, students reported being called “faggots” and “punks” by a guidance counselor.²⁵ School hostility had repercussions. Many male hustlers had dropped out due to “pressures . . . on sexual outsiders,” not academic difficulties.²⁶ George Washington students spoke out:

To maintain our rights and our dignity, we must assert ourselves and our very being! this is political! The very nature of coming out not only demands that we become political, but there is no other choice. . . . This present imbalance of student civil rights is political!!! And to end this discriminating abuse, political organizing becomes mandatory.²⁷

Students demanded respect: “We can continue being mocked, and forced to hide in our closets—or we can decide to be respected as any other human being, and walk and live proudly in the communities where we work and play.”²⁸

An examination of this group’s history illuminates the ways in which the students applied the tenets of gay liberation to their own school situation. Consciousness-raising enabled club participants to redefine themselves—to evolve a politics out of experience.²⁹ Membership crossed lines of race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. Gay, bisexual, and straight participants sought to create a space to socialize and organize; they advertised the club throughout the school.³⁰

(2) The Movement

Gay liberation was critical to the group’s formation, but change in student consciousness and the resultant high school protest owed much to the cumulative and ubiquitous expression of Black Power, Women’s Liberation, the New Left, anti-war protest, Gay Liberation, and Youth Liberation.³¹ The gay club was established in a school environment that combined “two intertwined strands” of the youth movement as defined by Keith Hefner, director of Youth Liberation Press from 1971 to 1979: “participation in the broader social movements of the decade . . . and . . . youth activism on behalf of specifically youth-related causes.”³² Hefner wrote:

The connections among broader social issues and “youth-for-youth” causes were complex and inseparable. Students who wanted to protest the war found themselves in conflict with school policies which limited

free speech. Students active in civil rights issues quickly saw that the racial composition of school faculties was an important battleground. When young people took to the streets to protest they became painfully aware of their lack of legal rights and protection. It's not surprising that an overarching term—The Movement—was needed to encompass the wide range of personal and social protests of the time.³³

An active high school underground press documented extensive student activism nationwide.³⁴ In 1969, educator and editor Diane Divoky estimated that 500 independent school papers had newly emerged. Papers included the *Black-Youth Alliance Newsletter* in NYC; the *New York High School Free Press*; the *American Revelation* in Elgin, Illinois; the *South Dakota Seditionist Monthly* in Alberdeen; *Nameless Newsprint* in Boston, MA, *Time's Up* at Cambridge High and Latin School in MA; *Naked and Screaming* at Bridgewater-Raynham Regional High School in MA; the *Bombstead Bullsheet* at Albert Einstein High School in Kensington, MD; and the *First Amendment* at Northwood High School in Silver Spring, MD.³⁵ The NYC-based High School Independent Press Service (HIPS) "sparked the first tenuous communication among papers scattered about the country."³⁶ Students espoused cogent, informed, and radical social critiques. In the words of a thirteen-year-old sophomore at Bronx High School of Science, one of the city's examination schools:

The Radical-Hippie-Yippie-Black Panther-Militant-Anarchistic-Subversive-Anti-American-Ultrafanatic-New Left-Communist Infiltrated-Moscow-Peking Controlled-Drugridden-Takeover-Conspiracy-Plot, in short, the revolution is misreported, distorted, disregarded, underestimated, and INEVITABLE.³⁷

A NYC school district superintendent, quoted by Leonard Buder of *The New York Times*, explained the link between the Movement and student unrest, saying, "The war in Southeast Asia, what happens on college campuses, social injustices in our society, all these things can be the cause of new demonstrations and disruptions in our schools."³⁸ (The spirit of the High School Free Press lingers, with the Internet as a means of communication. The article, "Ten Ways to Rock Your School, Power to the Youth," states, "Damn, we know that it's the schools and our parents that are crazy, not us.")³⁹

(3) NYC High School Student Protest

In the years prior to the formation of the gay club, GWHS students were among the many seasoned, albeit inflammatory, high school activists who

combined astute political action with more chaotic violent disruption.⁴⁰ GWHS student unrest was due to deep-seated disagreement over community control and inequitable school conditions. Students had previously engaged in activism. At the High School of Music and Art, they left class and rallied in nearby Central Park, reading poetry and singing in King's honor. Soon after, the school "hippies" began to demonstrate against the Vietnam War.⁴¹

The 1968 United Federation of Teachers strike against school decentralization affected 1,120,000 students. It was opposed by the African-American Teachers' Association which supported racially representative community control.⁴² The strike was the catalyst for the formation of numerous liberation schools "where every student who came wanted to learn, and every teacher wanted to teach."⁴³ There were no grades, tests, competition, cramming, or cheating.⁴⁴ Students learned about school leadership, pedagogical models, and power dynamics. An eleven-year-old intermediate school student who had attended a relaxed liberation school initiated a petition that contrasted the harsh disciplinarian principal with the open-minded educator who had assumed leadership during the strike. Attacked by the principal, the student and his family filed suit in federal court to uphold the boy's right to petition.⁴⁵ High school students at two liberated schools published the underground *Weakly Reader* (a clear play on the ever-present *Weekly Reader*).⁴⁶ Student leader Reeves wrote:

Massive student agitation continued, and students began organizing unions along ethnic and political lines. The teachers' strike, deemed racist, had set the tone for widespread student violence that would be justified by the fact that "even our teachers," who espoused the law, broke it.⁴⁷

The liberation schools had the far-reaching effect of alerting students to "the difference between education and indoctrination."⁴⁸ Self-protective administrative resistance to student and community control sparked Ocean Hill-Brownsville's two thousand-strong student rebellion, and ultimately the November 1968, Citywide Strike Committee consisting of students from thirty-five primarily Black high schools who mobilized an estimated 400,000 students to boycott the schools.⁴⁹ Fifteen hundred youths demonstrated at the United Nations with signs reading, "No student power, no peace," "We demand that student reps be on all school boards," and "Off with the 45 minutes, on with the vacations," which was a reference to the extended school day, a legacy of the teachers' strike.⁵⁰ In Reeves' view, "the teachers' strike gave birth to the high school student movement" that was soon inflamed by the May 1970, Kent State and Jackson State University killings and the U.S. invasion of Cambodia.⁵¹

(4) Educational Inequities at GWHS

With a large Third World population, George Washington High School was one of the school system's many flashpoints. Political differences may have precipitated a much earlier disagreement. In 1936, WPA artist Lucienne Bloch had painted a multiethnic mural of "African, Asian, European, and American musical forms and art, each [panel] a mélange of instruments, patterns and figures engaged in music and dance." Painted in "rich earth tones" around the school's music room, the mural conveys a "vision of music as a unifying force" (fig. 6.1).⁵² Bloch explained, "It exists with the building, and is a continuation of the ideals of the building. It is almost a concentration of the ideals of the building."⁵³ The principal had the original mural plastered over, perhaps based upon the belief Bloch was a communist, given her prior work with artist Diego Rivera.⁵⁴

Ideals of "racial integration and world peace"⁵⁵ gracing the music room walls were once again sorely tested. In 1969, students demanded school

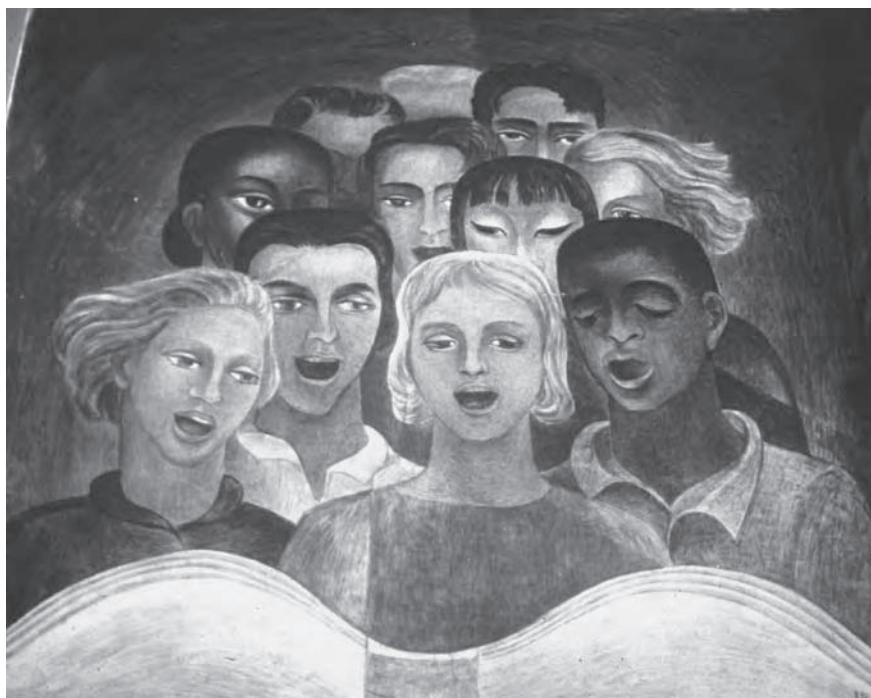


Figure. 6.1. Detail of *Evolution of Music* (1936–38) by Lucienne Bloch at George Washington High School, New York City. Photo courtesy of the New York City Department of Education.

holidays honoring the birth and assassination of Malcolm X.⁵⁶ By February 1970, students and parents initiated a protest against overcrowding, illegal suspensions, poor advising, and scheduling snafus; they advocated the implementation of a parent-staffed grievance and advising table.⁵⁷ They contended that guidance practices promoted courses of study that precluded college admission for many students.⁵⁸

According to the school's principal, Samuel Kostman, who was assigned in December 1971, GWHS had "probably experienced more violence and conflict than any other high school in the country."⁵⁹ The guidance table dispute pitted student and parent advocates of "improved curriculum, guidance, and program procedures and better treatment of minority students" against the United Federation of Teachers that insisted on professional guidance standards and school safety.⁶⁰ Parent and student activists expressed mounting frustration as school officials resisted, acceded to, and reneged on demands. There were many parent and student protests. Students roamed the building singing (presumably the 1968 Beatles) song "Revolution." Escalating a community lobbying campaign of the Board of Education and courts, students resorted to near daily violence including: fires (as many as eight a day), stink bombs, riots, stabbings (four in one day), ransacking of the principal's office, and demands for student bail contributions that included violent extortion. Newspaper coverage documented an ongoing litany of complaints and violent outbursts.⁶¹ Injury to students, teachers, and even police was rife. At one point, a twenty-three-year-old female teacher was beaten unconscious.⁶² (See the timeline of GWHS news coverage in Appendix Two.) This politicized environment linking educational inequity and racism continued for several years.

(5) Guarantees Afforded by the NYC High School Students' Bill of Rights

One outcome of NYC student unrest was the 1970 Board of Education approval of a High School Bill of Rights that bolstered the determination of GWHS gay liberationists to organize in 1972.⁶³ The GWHS gay activists wrote:

All well and good if the principal approves—but what if he or she disapproves? Do the principals, the assistant principals, the faculty advisors have the right to decide what student groups have the right to form? Or is it the right of the students to decide?⁶⁴

The 1970 Bill's authors (Donald Reeves, Vickie Ginsberg, and others including GWHS supporters) drew upon the U.S. Constitution, an ACLU paper on academic freedom, Student Governing Organization materials, Afro-American Student Association demands, "Women's Rights" by the

NYC High School Women's Coalition, and a NYC Board of Education resolution.⁶⁵ They demanded a "truly representative" student government; freedom of expression; an end to "illegal use of police" to reinforce school administrative authority; counseling on abortion, contraception, and the draft; and the elimination of racist and sexist tracking.⁶⁶

The Bill's primary organizer, High School of Music and Art student Donald Reeves, was of Jamaican and Costa Rican ancestry.⁶⁷ His personal history alerted him to the categorical and biased lens of race. Reeves had been "conditioned to refer to people's nationalities and religions rather than skin color."⁶⁸ Black liberation and therefore Black consciousness were foreign concepts to him. He recognized that race was (in this case) an American construct. Reeves wrote, "I realized that although I consciously struggled within my mind, absolutely determined not to see race, I saw race and saw *through* race."⁶⁹

What I had failed to understand was that the emergence of a Black collectivity was a direct result of the racism that has pervaded practically all institutions in society. And the institution most efficiently designed to withhold truth and preserve racism was the educational system.⁷⁰

Sexual orientation was another such lens, but rather than define group membership by sexual identity, gender, or race, students crossing all such lines organized around political and social needs (as had Gay Liberation Front, Radicalesbians, Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, Gay Youth, the Gay Activists Alliance, and many others). This contrasts strongly with later school-based groups such as Project 10 whose memberships during the 1980s and 1990s were often shaped and sometimes regulated on the basis of sexual identity.⁷¹

In 1970, the Movement encompassed those fighting for student rights, community control, and racial equality. When Bill of Rights and George Washington community activists were confronted by menacing police who prevented dialogue at a Board of Education hearing, savvy student leaders sought legal counsel and newspaper coverage to achieve the Bill's enactment.⁷² They reached out to vocational high schools and built numerous alliances with student and community groups, including the Student Mobilizing Committee (supported by the Women's Coalition and Gay Liberation Front).⁷³

The NYC student General Organization passed the Students' Bill of Rights on February 18, 1970.⁷⁴ On June 30th, at the start of summer vacation, acting school superintendent cannily announced a watered down Board of Education version.⁷⁵ Cognizant of the protections it afforded, George Washington High School gay liberationists declared:

According to the H.S. Students' Bill of Rights, which was approved by the New York City Board of Education, any group of students have the right to form any political or social organization of their choosing—regardless of how popular or unpopular the cause is that they champion.⁷⁶

The students were correct in their assertion. Although lacking the fuller protections in the original student-authored version, the Board of Education approved Bill of Rights stated:

Students may form political and social organizations, including those that champion unpopular causes, providing they are open to all students and governed by the regulations pertaining to student government regarding extracurricular activities. These organizations shall have reasonable access to school facilities.⁷⁷

The original Bill went further, stating, “students shall have a right to meet on school property to discuss or express their opinions on any topic,” even one “not a part of a prescribed school exercise.” The authors wrote, “Students are entitled to freedom of expression, not only in the classroom, but everywhere in the school.”⁷⁸

The gay liberation club students expressed a willingness to uphold their license to organize. They threatened, “The American Civil Liberties Union, among other legal-rights groups, is willing to take to court any high school that refuses to respect this right.”

(6) Administrative Support and GWHS School Climate

George Washington's radical political climate of conflict and animosity fostered activism and student awareness, but it was not until the end of 1972 that GWHS students initiated the gay club. By this point, principal Samuel Kostman transformed the 1970 armed camp atmosphere into one of more non-violent expression, a change that mirrored the marked decrease in student protest and campus violence during the early 1970s.⁷⁹ Kostman later wrote of his experience as “mediator and leader,” explaining that he sought to rechannel school conflict and animosity via non-violent avenues for expression such as community “speak-outs.” No fixed stopping point was set; discussion continued while participants remained. Kostman also sponsored a country retreat and an academy alternative school for struggling students.⁸⁰

Gay liberationist students found the support of faculty and administrators. The club's capacity to reduce harassment and create a more respectful school environment complemented Kostman's corollary peace-making

strides. The club's members still feared verbal or physical abuse from straight students and opted to hold dances off school premises.⁸¹ They realized that the transformation of school climate had to involve political change.

(7) *Gay Liberation “Agitators” Foster GWHS Student Activism*

The Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) and Gay Youth (GY) contributed to the club's success. For the GWHS club members, coming out was far more than personal self-acknowledgement. These students (as individuals and as an officially recognized group) were challenging a code of silence. Students welcomed the assistance of GAA speakers who could abet their gay liberation cause.⁸²

GAA’s AgitProp Committee

The importance of GAA backing was conveyed in the by-line, “Young gay people working with the New York Gay Activists Alliance,” in an article describing the GWHS group.⁸³ GAA was not the first organization to reach out to high school students. Other homophile and gay liberation groups—including Mattachine (with Bob Milne in New York, and Frank Kameny, Lily Hansen, and Barbara Gittings in Washington D.C), GLF, and GY—addressed an average of two schools per month. Kameny remained an entire day at one school after being invited to speak to eight additional classes. *Gay* reported, “the students, almost all black, were generally receptive, although many had erroneous preconceptions about homosexuals and homosexuality. . . Many left the classes wearing *Gay is Good* buttons.”⁸⁴ GAA’s unique scope and depth of organization facilitated the high school activism seen at George Washington, Mount Vernon, DeWitt Clinton, and other metropolitan area high schools.⁸⁵

On July 15, 1971, the GAA endorsed an AgitProp Committee mandate to prepare outreach materials, promote their use in schools, and speak to students. This outreach effort successfully reached thousands of students, including those at George Washington High School. Teenagers were among the large racially diverse mixed-gender membership of what became GAA’s second largest committee (after the Lesbian Liberation Committee). Teenage members included Jill Johnston’s son, a “young waif” of fifteen or sixteen, a sixteen-year-old boy nicknamed Harpo, Claude Wynn who also became chair of the Third World Committee, and John Variotis.⁸⁶ AgitProp met weekly, as did all GAA committees, and embarked on an ambitious campaign. The name AgitProp (upheld by committee leftists) represented a mantra repeated at every meeting to “agitate and propagate,” i.e., to encourage people to come out of the closet.⁸⁷ (The term was a “contraction of the words ‘agitatsiia’ and ‘propaganda’ [and] was an omni-present activity in

the post-Revolutionary Soviet Union. . . intended to inculcate and promote appropriate social class values among the masses.”)⁸⁸ The Committee described three tasks:

1. To prepare for presentation in New York and suburban schools, written, oral, and audiovisual materials on the subject of homosexuality and gay liberation.
2. To arrange with teachers, administrators, and student leaders for the use of such materials in classes, assemblies, student newspapers, etc.
3. To organize and run a speakers’ bureau under the direction of the President.⁸⁹

AgitProp announced its philosophy to a GAA general meeting, stating, “Our primary purpose is to politicize high school students who are gay, and to motivate them to assert their rights and dignity by coming out and joining the struggle for liberation.”⁹⁰ Second, the committee served notice that harassment had to end and they marshaled a number of different strategies to achieve it. Priority three, education, eventually reached students, community members, and even military personnel.⁹¹ Committee members crafted a message for audiences that they already knew would be largely straight. The GAA mandate called for AgitProp to confront institutional lies about homosexuality, emphasize, “that gays comprise a vast segment of humanity, and that gay is every bit as natural, normal, and healthy as straight.” They developed strategies to highlight varieties of gay oppression and ways to dismantle it.⁹²

Morty Manford described AgitProp’s mastermind, Eric Thorndale, as “a very bright anarchist who developed a program of understanding” that prepared members to address young people’s questions, concerns and insecurities. He “developed lots of propaganda, written literature that we distributed.”⁹³ GAA leader Arthur Evans wrote of a 1970 “zap” of Mayor Lindsay at the Metropolitan Opera, “Some of us even wore tuxedoes, including GAA’s Mr. Natural, Eric Thorndale. (Even so, though, Eric decided to go barefoot, for the sake of sartorial balance.)”⁹⁴

AgitProp challenged its members to consider the audience’s point of view from “every conceivable viewpoint.”⁹⁵ The committee would encourage “the emergence of young political agitators for gay liberation.”⁹⁶ Access to college students was relatively easy, but high schools were problematic.⁹⁷ AgitProp announced its first high school engagement in December 1971, and called it a “cause for singular rejoicing.” In one week, the committee addressed one thousand students in high schools and colleges throughout the Northeast.⁹⁸ Its mandate had rapidly been implemented.

We continue to be swamped with invitations to address high school and college students who are the prime targets of our militant message of gay pride. Student reaction to our presentations has been most favorable, several students who heard us only weeks ago have *come out* and joined GAA—including one suburban high school body president [whose father was the town Republican chair]⁹⁹

This high school boy came in the company of a young lesbian student (who later participated in AgitProp). Joe Kennedy, who briefly chaired AgitProp, recalls, “It was incredibly brave and daring for them to venture into the city and ‘be seen’ entering the Firehouse.”¹⁰⁰ At that same suburban presentation, an adversarial student had “persisted in making anti-gay comments in the guise of asking questions.”¹⁰¹ Joe Kennedy’s fellow speaker, the late John Bucalo responded, “such a blatant need to express homo-hatred usually indicated that the person doing it feared or knew he was secretly gay himself. That nearly provoked a physical confrontation.”¹⁰²

Typically, AgitProp was invited by a guidance counselor, social studies teacher, or an instructor in the area of human sexuality, but “often there was a gay group at the school.”¹⁰³ Such was the case at George Washington High School where GAA members were invited to speak at an open forum. Speaker Morty Manford is deceased, but his views are known. Interviewed by historian Eric Marcus when he was a lawyer in the New York attorney general’s office, Manford recalled his intense battle to come out as an adolescent. “The conflict was over trying to repress my homosexuality in order to conform to society’s values.”¹⁰⁴ In 1983, Manford explained he had “been imbued with all of the social myths about homosexuality, where the church said we were sinners and legislatures said we were criminals. Capitalists said we were subversives. Communists said we were decadent.”¹⁰⁵ GAA provided a rapid and transformative political education; Manford shed injurious, internalized myths, committed himself to gay liberation, and began an educational process that soon won his parents’ support.¹⁰⁶

At GAA we first and foremost wanted to send a message to other lesbians and gays in the closet that there was an alternative to the homophobic message that we’d all been imbued with. Second, wherever there was anti-gay and anti-lesbian discrimination, we would oppose it. We addressed a vast range of discriminatory policies, from the policy at certain gay bars of excluding transvestites to avowed employment discrimination against gays by private industry.¹⁰⁷



Figure 6.2. “GAA action at Fidelifacts Employment Agency, NYC, January 18, 1971,” Morty Manford is on right wearing long scarf. (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 261A, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

Manford and GAA activist Arthur Evans expounded upon “the theory and practice of confrontation tactics in the gay liberation movement” used to counter institutional heterosexual oppression.¹⁰⁸ They explained theatrical sit-ins and events, known as “zaps,” achieved “sensational publicity” that broke isolation and helped create a mass movement. Manford and Evans viewed vocal protest as a cathartic process to purge feelings of guilt and unleashed rage. Zaps served to unify and motivate gay liberationists.¹⁰⁹

Jean O’Leary also addressed the GWHS gay club. She stressed the importance of “organizing and coming out” at this type of speaking engagement. She explained that we were “outcasts within our own families.” For youth, the “last place to go for solace was home.”¹¹⁰

For AgitProp speakers who directly challenged the educational status quo, school speaking engagements could be emotionally freighted events. Steve Ashkinazy, a GAA activist, later became a Hetrick-Martin Institute LGBT youth counselor who lobbied for and helped organize the Harvey Milk School. He recalls, “I think partly we were afraid . . . Back in those



Figure 6.3. “Jean O’Leary, NYC Pride Parade, June 24, 1973.” (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 584D, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

days it was a feeling of safety. . . It was very controversial." An AgitProp documentary video, ca. 1972/1973, shows a panel of speakers (including Steve Ashkinazy; Bebe Scarpi; and teenager Claude Wynn, an AgitProp member and Third World Committee chair); one panelist was smoking a cigarette.¹¹¹ Ashkinazy commented after viewing the video, "I think it was about defiance. . . He was the chair of the AgitProp." The message was, "I'm sitting here in a high school classroom and I'm going to blow your mind."¹¹²

AgitProp produced a reading list, educational materials, and videos of GAA zaps.¹¹³ The committee released a booklet entitled "*Sexuality and Justice*" that was distributed before speaking engagements and would have been available to the George Washington group.¹¹⁴ It contained stories of harassment, GAA protest, and the unconstitutionality of sodomy laws. In a list of facts about homosexuality, the writers identified institutional lies, e.g., about child molestation and the fear-mongering allegation that gays hoped to convert others to homosexuality. The booklet asserted, "living in harmony with one's sexual nature is not wrong. It is right."¹¹⁵ Students were advised to ask questions, demand facts, and "speak out against sexual bigotry." GAA hoped students would "encourage the formation" of school and college gay groups, and thereby, relate without facades.¹¹⁶

New York high school students were more uninformed than hostile. AgitProp recorded commonly asked questions that revealed the prevailing attitudes about identity ("How do you know you are gay? When did you first discover you were gay?") and coming out ("Do your parents know you are gay? How did they react?"). They found stereotypical notions about relationships (gay male, lesbian, and straight), promiscuity, role-playing, and bars. Questions were also asked about sex. Children were a concern: "Would you raise . . . children to be gay? Won't your sexuality make your child gay?" Students wanted to know whether gay people were attracted to straight people, and how people met.¹¹⁷

Gay Youth and GWHS Gay Liberation Activism

Gay Youth also viewed the schools as a site of contention and mobilization. In a flyer accompanying a GWHS student-authored article, GY condemned an oppressive school system that obligated youth to acquiesce to senseless prejudice.¹¹⁸ The flyer asserted students' right—as codified in Board of Education regulations—to organize for social and political organization. It called for representation of gays in high school courses "as both sexual beings and as a political movement." It also advocated treatment as "equal human beings" whose homosexuality is fairly represented in school

curricula “as an integral and important part of human sexuality.”¹¹⁹ GY (encouraging lesbian and Third World participation) invited students for political action or to “meet people in similar situations and to make gay friends your own age” at its weekly Saturday meeting “on the second floor of the Gay Activists Alliance.”¹²⁰

GROUP PRACTICE OF THE GWHS GAY CLUB

The Encounter Group Is the Spark: Existential Constructivism in Action

Gay liberation provided the political context, but the practical application of existential constructivism—a school sponsored encounter group attended by Elie LaMadrid—provided the idea and model for the gay liberation group.¹²¹ Psychologist Carl Rogers described the encounter group as a self-actualizing environment to explore “personal growth and development and improvement of interpersonal communication and relationships through an experiential process.”¹²² A gay liberation context meant that students could explore sexuality and relationships as more than a personal (or even interpersonal) psychological endeavor. Personal growth within a liberation climate also meant understanding and countering sexism, ageism, racism, and U.S imperialism.

In May 1973, less than six months after the gay club’s establishment, its new leader Philip Hilton explained that consciousness-raising was the central element of the group’s practice. “We are trying to get our problems in the open and trying to understand each other and to cope.”¹²³

Consciousness-raising (CR) was central to women’s liberation, Radicalesbian, Gay Liberation Front, and Gay Youth practice. Leery of succumbing to the divisiveness of GLF meetings (and concerned that emotional vulnerabilities could be exploited in the form of ad hominem attacks), the Gay Activists Alliance adopted a more structured alternative to CR.¹²⁴ In a 1972 study on sensitivity groups and the gay liberation movement, Kevin Burke and Murray Edelman wrote, “consciousness raising is a process of redefining ourselves [and] . . . of recognizing how we are defined by the dominant culture.” The exchange of experiences and feelings fostered the development of “new attitudes towards ourselves, a new identity.”¹²⁵ Inherent in this process was Paulo Freire’s concept of praxis, quoted by the authors: “Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it.”¹²⁶

An article by NY GLF men reveals how consciousness raising, adopted from the women’s liberation movement, recognized the causes of alienation within an oppressive society.”¹²⁷ CR was meant to be distinguished from

group therapy, encounter groups, and forms of political organizing. Life experience, rather than preconceived ideology, was the starting point. “We as gays must redefine ourselves IN OUR OWN TERMS, from our own heads and experience.”¹²⁸ Group process consisted of individual testimonies and a concluding discussion. Topics discussed by these GLF men included: coming out, school experiences, sex roles, objectification, relationships, sexual experiences, family, racism, class, and religion. The men wrote:

In our CR group, we have been finding new ways of relating to each other. We approach a true functioning democracy with no leaders, providing support for one another in our attempts to change our role-oriented behavior. Gays need not be isolated; strength comes from the fusion of consciousness. . . The CR group is our “movement.” It is the focus of our political activities and the basis of our struggle to free ourselves and smash sexism.¹²⁹

Autonomy

George Washington’s gay liberation activists echoed NYC student leader Donald Reeves’ critique of Student Government Organization (S.G.O.) powerlessness.¹³⁰ They wrote:

The Student Government at George Washington is typical of most others in the city public schools; that is, they are allowed to participate in social organization, but they have little or no political power—political organization is basically denied them. The S.G.O. at George Washington H.S. was not empowered to approve the gay club; they merely acted as puppets under the direction of the principal by giving \$50 as feed starter for the group. Who decides what is worthy for the students, the principal—or the students themselves?¹³¹

Student Activism and School Sexual Diversity Climate

Like GAA, the Gay International Youth Society hoped to change the school climate for both students and teachers. Students wrote:

Now it is up to us, the gay students, to have the courage to come out, so that we can help our gay brothers and sisters, as well as ourselves. If we demand the right to form our own groups, our self-pride, confidence, and self-respect will life in high school much more bearable. For all of us.¹³²

The heated struggle between educators and students had previously precipitated conflict among students themselves.¹³³ Black and Latino student interaction was particularly volatile. The club's second student head, Philip Hilton, reported that the school's three thousand students were thirty per cent Hispanic, forty per cent Black, with the remaining thirty per cent divided among Greeks, Irish, and others. Yet, the gay club still managed to navigate what had been an inflammatory social climate. Emphasizing the interplay of culture and the group's multi-cultural "international" membership, Hilton stated, "in this school the Spanish have a machismo thing. However, the gay group, which is an international group, has a disproportionate number of Spanish-speaking people."¹³⁴

Students publicized the group "throughout the entire school," held weekly meetings, planned dances and envisioned "a coalition of all the gay groups in the city high schools, if such is necessary for our survival and continued growth, both socially and politically" with the support of outside groups such as the Gay Activists Alliance that was identified as "more than willing to give any kind of support that is requested."¹³⁵ The help, enacting AgitProp's mandate to support student activism, was forthcoming.¹³⁶

Although links between schools were tenuous, other groups were organized at DeWitt Clinton High School and, with Morty Manford's help, at the Bronx High School of Science.¹³⁷ Washington club leader Phillip Hilton reported that contact between high school groups was limited, but a DeWitt Clinton representative came to one of the club's meetings with GAA, where he explained the difficulties of organizing in Clinton's all-boy environment.¹³⁸ Other schools were also reported to be organizing. Ben Franklin students had mobilized, and unconfirmed rumors hinted at gay liberation groups at Charles Evans Hughes, the High School of Music and Art, F.D.R. and Erasmus High School in Brooklyn.¹³⁹ Ben, a "politically precocious" teenage GAA member, participated in an informal suburban Bayonne, New Jersey high school group.¹⁴⁰

Parents and Teachers Respond

Mobilization was not limited to students. Manford explained how Parents of Gays was established. "I had organizing fever. The gay movement was young. It was exciting. It had to grow. It had to take root in our society in every nook and cranny." He and his parents organized together, with the first public meeting in February 1972, attended by six people.¹⁴¹ That spirit helped energize parents, high school students, campus groups, and gay politicians.¹⁴²

Students dared to risk organizing within schools at a time when even gay teachers hesitated to do so, and though desirous of teacher support,

understood their recalcitrance. The “young gay people working with the New York Gay Activists Alliance” wrote:

And when a faculty member decides to request a faculty gay group, who shall that brave person have to ask? The principal—or the students? Does anyone have the right to give permission at all? Gay teachers are still not ready to come out and support such student groups, and the situation is the same at George Washington. Gay teachers fear coming out for many reasons, but a main one is the fear that it would impair their functional ability as teachers. . . It is up to these students to create an atmosphere that will help them too. We need their support and advice on how to tackle the oppressive school system that continues to deny gay students the chance to form their own social and political organizations in school.¹⁴³

Teachers were *in fact* at risk. In addition to lobbying for the passage of NYC bill Intro 475, GAA documented firings and denial of licenses.¹⁴⁴ Acting on its own Fair Employment Committee case history research, the GAA picketed the Board of Education (figs. 6.5 and 6.6) and staged attention-getting, often theatrical actions—“zaps”—against the widespread practice of job discrimination. Targets included Mayor Lindsay, the school Board of Examiners, and employers such as Bell Telephone and Filofax.¹⁴⁵ The *Gay Activist* reported, “On April 13, 1971 approximately 60 GAA members, accompanied by several members of New York GLF, zapped New York City’s Board of Examiners which [controlled] the licensing of city school-teachers and [had] consistently discriminated against homosexuals in issuing licenses to teach.”¹⁴⁶ The decision to occupy was taken after the Board of Education tacitly endorsed Board of Examiners Chair Gertrude Unser’s view that “homosexuals [were] unfit to teach because they represented a moral, physical, and psychological danger to students.”¹⁴⁷

Coffee was brought up and people made themselves comfortable singing liberation songs and chatting with the friendly secretary who remained in the office. A few high school students came in and a general rap session commenced, beginning with all the “regular questions” about “natural” and “unnatural acts.” The conversation soon changed, however, to such issues as employment and police harassment; by the time the rap was over, many were beginning to see the need for gay activism.¹⁴⁸

Teachers followed the lead of GAA and students. The Gay Teachers Association (GAA activist Marc Rubin was a founding member)



Figure 6.4. “GAA picket, Board of Education, 110 Livingston St., Brooklyn, NY, January 25, 1971,” Morty Manford in lead followed by John Paul Hudson. (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 267F, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.)

was created on September 1974, less than two years after the George Washington club.¹⁴⁹ Its by-laws included a call “to help Gay students, who experience discrimination or who are having trouble in finding their own identity, in need of assistance whether such need be legal, financial, [or] emotional.”¹⁵⁰ The Association reached out to youth, in 1977 hosting a panel of gay high school students and in the 1980s joining with Gay Youth (by then known as Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York) to raise funds for the Joseph E. Zogby scholarship fund.¹⁵¹

Group Ideology and Practice

Student efforts to reduce school hostility foreshadowed a contemporary phenomenon: Gay-Straight Alliances are associated with greater security for queer students and a reduction in homophobic slurs.¹⁵² The public affirmation of identity, practiced by students then and now, can transform social climate. Even essentialist, closed-door, school-based counseling groups have moved towards visibility, with improved conditions for queer teachers and students.¹⁵³ Szalacha reasons “a GSA disrupts the normal conversation—the

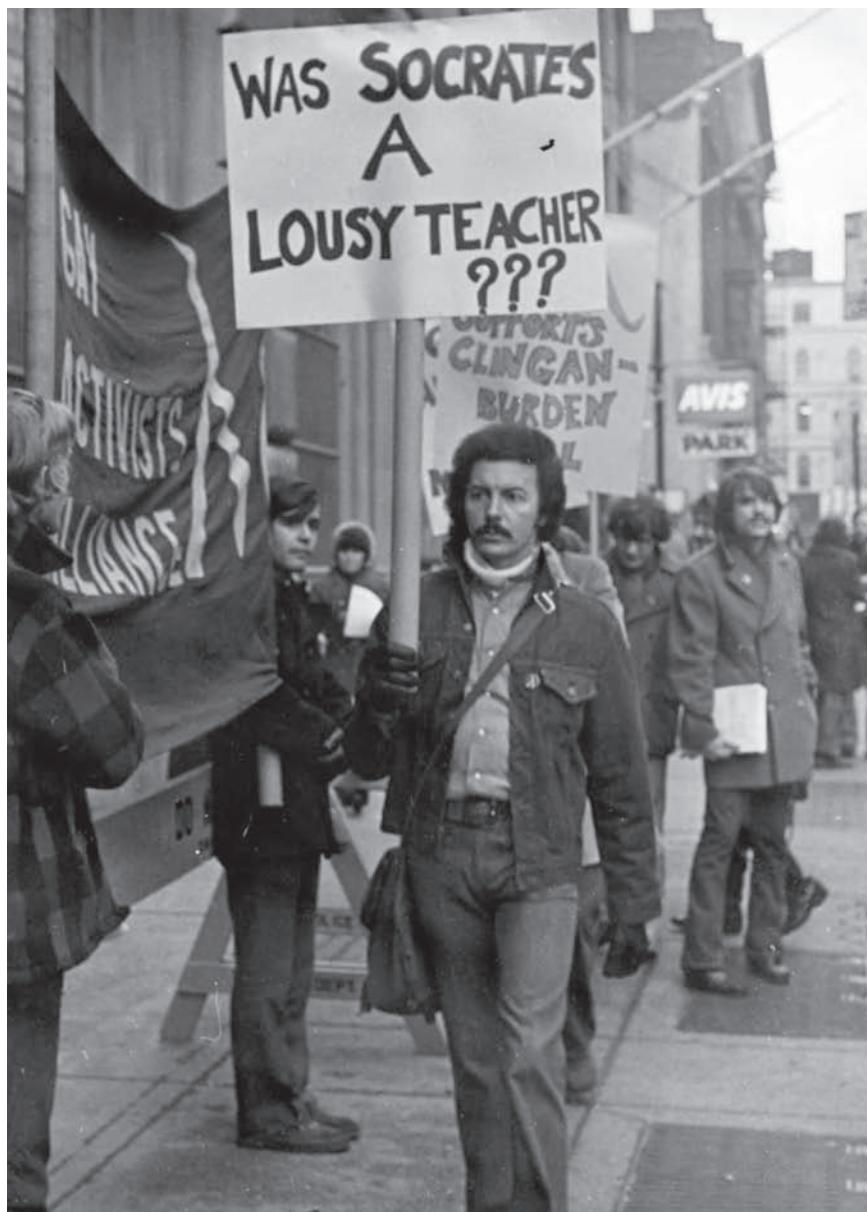


Figure 6.5. “John Paul Hudson, ‘Was Socrates a lousy teacher?’” (Photograph by Richard C. Wandel, Collection 060, 265D.)

assumptions of heterosexuality—and challenges the notions of ‘traditional masculinity and femininity’ that govern school climates.”¹⁵⁴

TRANSITION AND LEGACY

School-based gay clubs were catalyzed by gay liberation, a high school student rights coalition, and the Movement. Students asserted their autonomy with vocal gusto, finding support from under- and over-21 gay liberationists. New York students were also energized by recent struggles for community control of the schools. At George Washington High School, the encounter group offered a model for dialogue about personal growth and relationship. Educational philosophy also helped promote gay liberation youth activism. Pamela Walker, of Carleton University, recalls that SEED (Secondary Education Exploration and Discovery) a very sixties educational experiment modeled on A.S. Neil’s Summerhill, “allowed a gay culture to develop there that helped to build Gay Youth Toronto.”¹⁵⁵

During the 1970s, with the end of the Vietnam War, student voices became less strident. Nixon was impeached. Many underground newspapers ceased publication.¹⁵⁶ The gay liberation movement faltered and retrenched. Lesbian separatism gained momentum. As Movement groups slowly lost ascendancy in the shift towards identity-based politics, gay high school groups apparently ceased operation. During the late 1970s and 1980s youth maintained and even established some new community-based groups, but an ethos of professional management and the provision of social services predominated.

Educators formed school-based groups such as Project 10 that maintained privacy and emphasized support rather than political action. Community and school-based revolutionary activism was overshadowed by the incremental civil rights approach promoted by the National Gay Task Force and Human Rights Campaign Fund.

It was not until the 1990s that Gay-Straight Alliances supplanted adult-organized school support programs. GSAs (initiated in 1989 at two private schools: Concord Academy by Kevin Jennings and in Andover at Phillips Academy by teacher Boutilier approached by a lesbian and straight student) unknowingly followed in the footsteps of earlier high school gay liberationists.¹⁵⁷ Three conditions critical to 1970s high school gay liberation may have also catalyzed contemporary GSAs. In 1972, NYC students were energized by (1) gay liberation ideology, (2) a High School Students’ Bill of Rights, and (3) the practical support of grassroots gay liberation

groups. Contemporary GSAs have directly benefited from (1) the ideological and activist impetus of queer direct action groups, (2) federal, state, and local legal protections, and (3) the support of LGBT and professional educational organizations.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Act Up and Queer Nation rejected assimilation and embraced vocal protest.¹⁵⁸ Civil rights gains in the form of the 1984 Equal Access Act, state educational codes, initiatives such as the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program, and professional group resolutions have improved the educational climate.¹⁵⁹ GLSEN, the Gay-Straight Alliance Network at <http://www.gsanetwork.org/>, and even religious groups have assisted students by promoting educational materials, conferences, and online communication.¹⁶⁰

George Washington students envisioned a network of NYC gay student groups, an interrupted dream that has now been realized nationwide with over three thousand school-based groups formed since 1989.¹⁶¹ GSA leaders have offered mutual support to combat recalcitrant educators and homophobic school boards. They have litigated, lobbied, and demonstrated. The Gay International Youth Society of George Washington High School leaves an edifying history of student activism, autonomy, and diversity of membership.

Conclusion

Achievements of Gay Liberation Youth Groups

In this study, I have investigated how gay liberation catalyzed youth to act, and examined why they formed and joined groups distinct from adult homophile and gay liberation organizations. I asked what participants derived from the experience. Each of the three focal groups (Gay Youth, Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, and the Gay International Youth Society of George Washington High School) was energized by gay liberation and the rich interplay among multiple liberation movements that reframed personal struggles within a theoretical context that linked an injudicious war, capitalist inequities, sexism, racism, ageism, and anti-gay prejudice.

Building on what came before, each group broke new ground. In spite of differences in membership and mission, a pattern of achievement emerges. The groups were autonomous. Youth joined to find peers, support, and political outlets. They were able to come out and develop an understanding of sexual and gender identity within a liberatory context that was not commercial, furtive, or strictly sexual. The groups:

- Created self-defined gay liberation space (for social interaction, consciousness-raising, peer support, political organizing, and shelter in S.T.A.R.'s case);
- Promoted a coming out process that involved outreach, consciousness-raising, and protest;
- Addressed hardships that were somewhat different:
 - GY focused on ageism, lack of youth recognition, harassment, violence, institutional abuse, school activism, and the paucity of social settings for queer youth;

- S.T.A.R. sought to end homelessness, prison and police abuse, derision by others, and a host of related social inequities; it advocated control over one's own body and free gender expression;
- The GWHS gay club emphasized high school students' rightful needs to meet in safety, socialize, transform a hostile school atmosphere, organize, and uphold their right to self-determination;

In addition, all three groups:

- Promoted recognition and respect regardless of age, sexuality, race, economic status, or gender;
- Offered peer support (and in the cases of GY and GWHS consciousness-raising) to freely explore sexuality, gender identity, and sex roles;
- Developed a platform to effect political and social change on a local, institutional, and national level;
- Organized other activists and strengthened the gay liberation movement.

Here, I summarize each group's achievements, compare and contrast them in order to identify key factors contributing to their formation and success, and make suggestions for further research.

GAY YOUTH (GY)

Gay Youth, established in late February 1970, as an offshoot of Gay Liberation Front, pursued its primary goal, coming out within a gay youth liberation context, by creating queer youth spaces in which adults were guests. GY broke barriers of silence and invisibility. It opposed ageist laws (that increased youth isolation) and provided a lifeline to teenagers seeking peer support. GY "dances, rap sessions, leafleting and weekly meetings," where youth were able to explore sexual identity in non-sexual settings, were welcome alternatives to bars, baths, and hustling.¹

Gay Youth is noteworthy for its ambitious national outreach, radical ideology, and longevity. It offered hesitant adolescents a bridge to the gay liberation movement. For GY, social change demanded political protest, which in turn led to affirmation. GY joined gay liberation marches, prison demonstrations, the occupation of Weinstein Hall, and anti-war rallies.

Gay Youth affiliates operated, not just in U.S. urban centers, but also in smaller cities including Worcester, MA; Syracuse, NY; Tampa, FL; and Louisville, KY (with additional groups in Canada). After separating from GLF, it successfully navigated a complicated fourteen-year path until joining the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (as it is now called). While adult groups adopted a civil rights/social services agenda, Gay Youth of New York remained remarkably true to its gay liberationist roots; it railed against the interconnected institutional nature of oppressions until at least 1980 when Mark Moffett, a GY leader, refused fragmentation and compromise:

Today hundreds of thousands of people marched on Washington in an attempt to set back the Gay and Lesbian Rights movement, 10 YEARS!

We are here to ask ourselves do we have a unified progressive movement that is ready to combat these sexist, ant[i]-gay bigots. The answer is “NO.”

Castigating the “self-proclaimed leader” for “brown-nosing” the Democratic Party, Moffett advised:

It is time to take the movement out of the hands of these self-righteous incompetents, and awaken every East-side faggot, every alienated Brooklyn dyke, every Lesbian and Gay, man, womyn and child, who thinks the movement is a waste, or not worthy of their support. . .

Gay Youth feels there should be an establishment of a new movement which will fight for all our varied individual needs as Lesbian and Gay people. . . [to] be led by all of us.²

Gay Youth ultimately called itself BiGLTYNY (Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Transgender Youth of New York) as lesbians, bisexuals, and finally transgender people were recognized as distinct and important constituent groups.

STREET TRANSVESTITE ACTION REVOLUTIONARIES (S.T.A.R.)

GY and S.T.A.R. had an affinity, perhaps based on their shared outsider status (due to youth in one case and transgender identity in the other). From its inception in the fall of 1970, S.T.A.R. fought transgender oppression and sought to protect young street queens. Grounded in the rigors of street life, S.T.A.R. provided transvestites with a platform to address focal issues—lethal prison conditions, police harassment, housing and

employment discrimination—within the broader context of Gay Power. S.T.A.R. grew out of the Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance. These gay liberation groups reframed personal hardships within a political context, but transvestites experienced inconsistent recognition (ranging from strong support to cases of downright rejection) that left them bitter and determined to organize.

Sylvia was irrepressibly loud in her demands for societal change. She envisioned a broad-based and inclusive community with gay liberation for all. Her 1990 exchange with Martin Duberman highlights the importance of inclusion, recognition, and the historical record:

Last year I felt a little bit more appreciation, but the years prior to that I knew they didn't want me there and I would make it a point [to march]. I only missed two marches in twenty years, but I make it a point to be there for the simple fact that I want to show them that I am still alive and that I am still a frontrunner. And you gotta remember your history. They always try to keep us out of their history and they'll always try to do that.³

The call for Gay Power surfaced time and time again throughout S.T.A.R.'s history. For Sylvia, there was no going back. Individual street transvestites lacked clout, but together they were able to forge a collective voice to protest social, economic, and legal injustice. Acutely aware of the constantly shifting ideological line defining insiders and outsiders in society and the gay community, S.T.A.R. contested any view that relegated transvestites to the sidelines. S.T.A.R. raised gender identity as a central ideological concern and claimed a rightful and recognized place in the Movement, a position that Sylvia never relinquished. In 1990, Sylvia explained:

I want the community to know that we exist and that we will always exist and that we are part of them. . . Everything should have been under one umbrella fighting as a movement together, not as different segments of a movement.⁴

GAY INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SOCIETY OF GWHS

The mere existence of high school gay liberation groups during the 1970s was a remarkable achievement. The Gay International Youth Society is noteworthy for its vocal stance, particularly compared to the meeker closed-door counseling approach of later school-based groups. Its students were politicized, informed about student rights, supported by educators, and energized by the gay liberation movement. At a time when many gay and

lesbian teachers feared the repercussions of coming out, GWHS club explicitly sought to transform school climate, for teachers as well as students, decades before the tentative efforts of a now vibrant GSA movement.

Recent generations of students have rediscovered activism, resulting in more than 3000 school-based Gay-Straight Alliances on record.⁵ GSAs function as (a) LGBT support groups, (b) fledgling groups where typically several brave students (of undefined orientation) address school heterosexism, and (c) activist social justice groups that closely resemble the much earlier 1972 George Washington High School club.⁶ Indeed, 1993 Massachusetts Safe Schools Program literature explains:

GSAs are student-led, non-curricular school clubs providing a safe environment for queer youth and heterosexual allies to offer support, discuss feelings and experiences, learn about homophobia, educate each other and the school community, participate in social, cultural, educational, and political events, and “build community spirit, mutual understanding and support among gay and lesbian students and their friends.”⁷

The Gay International Youth Society showed broad-based sexual, ethnic, racial, and gender diversity. In 2000 (twenty-eight years later) many Massachusetts GSAs were predominantly female, heterosexual, and White (with race and ethnicity conceivably reflecting high school population).⁸ Gender representation was unequal (female, 70%; male, 29%; and transgender, 1%).⁹ In contrast, the Youth Society’s focus on student rights, autonomy, international participation, and consciousness-raising may have contributed to its inclusive membership.

THEN AND NOW: SUPPORTING QUEER YOUTH ACTIVISM

S.T.A.R.’s dissolution was symptomatic of the general retrenchment and splintering of the gay liberation movement. Notably, while GLF, GAA, Radicalesbians, high school groups, and S.T.A.R. faltered, Gay Youth—in flux, but faithful to its political roots—persevered. A number of factors contributed to group formation and success: the ideological climate, group leadership and governance, degree of need and types of support (including peer networks), formal protections, the extent to which youth were stigmatized, and each group’s historical memory.

Ideological Climate

The gay liberation movement created new possibilities that encouraged youth activism. It provided an ideological framework, models for change,

visibility, and practical support. Youth were able to define their own spaces, come out (to peers, within the gay liberation movement, on the streets, and at school), and use consciousness-raising to understand sexual identity within a political context.

Other broad ideologies catalyzed gay liberation youth groups and shaped youth experience. Critical theory's analysis of institutional power and oppression was apparent in the stance of S.T.A.R., GY, and (to a lesser degree) the Youth Society. The encounter group, a practical application of existential constructivism (with an emphasis on safe climate for expression, immediacy of feeling, mutual trust, a softening of defenses, ability to hear one's peers and understand their perspectives, and innovation) sparked the idea for the GWHS gay club.¹⁰

The changing ideological backdrop, loss of S.T.A.R. House, and transformation of the gay liberation movement conspired against S.T.A.R.'s brand of revolutionary politics. The shift from an inclusive gay liberation ideology to identity politics ("the tendency to base one's politics on a sense of personal identity—as gay, as Jewish, as Black, as female . . .")¹¹ resulted in the frequent exclusion of transvestites, bisexuals, and practitioners of sadomasochism, to name but a few.

By 1973 the Gay Liberation Front (committed to leftist ideology, shunning the straight press, and torn by factionalism) had long since fractured and GAA was being overtaken by the National Gay Task Force ("task force" being a military term) with a more assimilationist program of civil rights and social services. Rather than work to dismantle oppressive institutions such as the military or marriage (seen by gay liberationists as a stifling, sexist codification governing property and inheritance), the "professional gays" (Bebe Scarpi's term) sought to reform and join those very same institutions. Mainstream gay culture became increasingly consumer-driven and co-opted by commercial interests.

Marsha survived on Christopher Street. She slept in a bathhouse for seven dollars, stored garments in a Port Authority locker, and adorned herself at department store make-up counters. In 1979, (experiencing frequent breakdowns and institutional stays, and yet immortalized in Andy Warhol photographs) she offered her unique perspective on the transition from political militancy to a lighter more festive approach she called the Gay Love Party.

When I started I carried the S.T.A.R. banner, and then it became the GAY POOR PEOPLE banner and it's been GAY LOVE for the last couple of years. I think that says everything. All the gay love party will do is give gay birthday parties. I'd like to give birthday parties for Charles

Ludlam, Jackie Curtis, Harry Koutoukas, Bob Kohler, Sylvia Rivera, Bambi L'Amour, Bob Storm, Holly Woodlawn, John John, and Hot Peaches.¹²

S.T.A.R., Gay Youth, and the Youth Society thrived while gay liberation thrived, but by the mid-1970s the political and ideological climate was moving from revolution towards assimilation. During the Reagan era, gay liberation groups were eclipsed by closed-door counseling and social service programs. In contrast, a renewal of queer activism in the late eighties and early nineties was followed by the tentative and then explosive growth of school-based Gay Straight Alliances. In the current millennium societal debate continues, but is apt to skirt consideration of complete and fundamental change so clearly expressed by the Movement. Instead, the incremental civil rights issues of gay marriage and military service have moved center stage. (Anti-war protests have exposed this nation's longstanding aversion to engaging in the penetrating political analysis so common in the sixties. The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq have raised comparisons to the Vietnam War including the false justification for war, demonization of the other, violations of the Geneva Conventions including civilian deaths and torture, and the apparent long-term aims of continued military and economic domination. Columnist Harvey Wasserman writes of the misguided exercise of U.S. imperial might, in this case the "idea that our white, Christian nation has the right, the duty, the divine mandate to dominate whomever we please, especially those countries with resources we want, like oil.")¹³

Ideological clarity was not the sole factor that determined the success of Gay Youth, S.T.A.R., and the Gay International Youth Society. Governance, maintaining a balance between need and support, experience of stigma, and the retention of group history also affected group stability.

Leadership and Governance

Resolute and outspoken leaders were essential to group success; a robust system of governance fostered GY's continuity. Mark Segal's relentless push to form Gay Youth eventually won GLF support. He later groomed GY's vice-president to take his place. When Mark moved to Philadelphia ca. 1972 and embarked on a career as a "Gay Raider," he continued to support GY by writing position papers. He also maintained a national headquarters that not only facilitated contact between affiliates but also shepherded GY New York through a number of financial, takeover, and leadership crises.¹⁴ Although GY dissolved and then regrouped multiple times, it maintained

its identity and structure. GY minutes referred to a “constitution,” and officers provided continuity. Other strong leaders followed in Mark Segal’s footsteps.

S.T.A.R.’s situation was more tenuous. Sylvia acted with passion on behalf of street transvestites, gay prisoners, and the gay movement. She was a militant transvestite, an outspoken, dramatic, and controversial figure who was perceived by some as flagrant and irresponsible. In 1974, Bebe Scarpi wrote:

Despite one’s opinion of Sylvia I can attest to the purity of her intent and dedication, and, no one will dare deny she is one gutsy queen. She is the first to march, the first to be arrested but the last to be consulted on planning sessions, and the last to share in the fruits of any victory or publicity.¹⁵

When Sylvia began “slipping into despair,” and turned to mind-numbing drugs that allayed her awareness of being used and rejected, S.T.A.R., already suffering from the loss of S.T.A.R. House, collapsed.¹⁶ Although deprived of Sylvia’s resourceful initiative, Marsha remained an active and stoic presence, but was unable to maintain S.T.A.R.’s momentum.

Need and Support

The extent of need and the degree of support affected success and longevity. All three groups addressed belonging, affirmation, and political awareness, but for S.T.A.R., gay liberation also meant shelter, food, an end to prison abuse, and free gender expression. Protected from the most extreme privations of homelessness, violence, uncertainty, and abuse endured by street transvestites (and street kids), GY and high school club members focused on outreach, social interaction, visibility in schools, and political change.

S.T.A.R.’s vision holds relevance for the treatment of today’s throw-away queer youth. While S.T.A.R. was bolstered by Gay Liberation Front and worked with Gay Activists Alliance, its ambitious program of a S.T.A.R. school and house fell prey to the logistics of survival and social support, problems that continue to this day. Large numbers of queer youth still face homelessness, prison abuse, parental mistreatment, and health risks.

In contrast, Gay Youth (in its many incarnations) was able to meet its office, telephone, and meeting space needs with the help of adult groups including Gay Activists Alliance, Mattachine Society, churches, and gay community centers. Street transvestites had fewer allies and resources.

Educators, gay liberation groups, advocacy groups, and the development of networks have contributed to school and community change. George Washington students found sympathetic school personnel and the GAA AgitProp Committee ready to offer assistance. GAA reached out to schools, community, military, and prisons (to reform abysmal conditions for young gay prisoners).¹⁷ This support function is now carried out by groups such as Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN); Hetrick-Martin Institute; and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG).

The George Washington High School gay club envisioned a citywide network of gay high school clubs, but never achieved strong school alliances. Yet, such networks have helped sustain groups. For example, California high school and university groups developed a successful coalition in the early 1970s.¹⁸ Beginning in 1980, the youth-led (and adult-mentored) Boston Alliance for Gay and Lesbian Youth (BAGLY) sparked a network of Massachusetts AGLYs that continues to this day.¹⁹ GLSEN presents student stories related to the political, legal, social, and personal aspects of Gay Straight Alliance organizing. The proliferation of Gay-Straight Alliances across the country since 1989 (with more than 3000 registered with GLSEN) owes much to student leadership and organizational support.²⁰

Protections: Resolutions and Regulations

Legal protections and the support of an advocacy group were particularly important to the establishment of the George Washington High School gay club. The NYC Students' Bill of Rights helped justify its establishment. The ACLU was ready to protect students' right to organize. Similarly, students successfully lobbied for the 1993 Massachusetts Safe Schools Program that supports Gay-Straight Alliances. The 1984 Equal Access Act, state educational codes, and professional organization resolutions have improved the educational climate.²¹

New York City finally passed transgender civil rights protections on April 24, 2002. "The bill was the culmination of three years of effort by the New York Association for Gender Rights Advocacy (NYAGRA), other transgender groups and activists, and LGBT and straight allies."²² Sylvia was credited as the "driving force behind the legislation."²³ State Senator Tom Duane stated, "In my heart, I will always see this as Sylvia's bill."²⁴ On January 16, 2003, New York State finally approved SONDA, a state bill with transgender provisions that Sylvia lobbied for from her deathbed.²⁵ These protections may encourage further efforts by and for transgender youth. Most, if not all, of these protective developments were outcomes of earlier homophile and gay liberation struggles.

Stigma

Rejection and harassment may provoke youth activism, but a hostile environment can also overwhelm. Street transvestites were quite vulnerable and often unable or unwilling to camouflage their circumstances. They lived with constant uncertainty.

Edmond White, writing six years after the Washington Square furor and the demise of S.T.A.R., suggested that the drag queen was an “unpleasant reminder of discarded effeminacy,” believed by some to mock women although this clearly was not their intent. The presence of transvestites caused cognitive dissonance by blurring the distinctions between categorical opposites. Transvestites have been both despised and revered as “interstitial entities” and seen as shamans, particularly among Blacks and Native Americans.²⁶ Gender outlaw Kate Bornstein points to culturally defined aspects of gender assignment, citing the respect for gender ambiguity among some Navajos and Kodiak Islanders.²⁷ For White, the rejection of transvestites revealed homophobia and self-rejection. S.T.A.R. and Gay Youth viewed transvestite and gay liberation as linked, inseparable struggles.²⁸ Today, the inclusion of the “T” within the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community has mitigated rejection. Likewise, the term “queer” carries the broadly inclusive political edge once conveyed by the word “gay.”

Historical Memory

Gay Youth leaders applied their knowledge of the group’s history to weather financial, leadership, and logistic crises. Its members were motivated by a sense of the group’s accomplishments and longevity. Indeed, Gay Youth was able to record and transmit its history (with admitted discrepancies that included a briefly asserted and incorrect claim that GY was founded in 1966).²⁹ Gay Youth relied upon oral transmission, documents that included its mission statement and later “constitution,” scholarly texts (most notably by Donn Teal), newspaper coverage, and its own research efforts. Various GY groups also participated in radio and television shows.

S.T.A.R. also preserved its heritage. Sylvia inscribed the names and family contact information of her transvestite street family in a Bible.³⁰ But historical memory alone was insufficient to maintain the group in the face of a faltering Movement, unrelenting adversity, and Sylvia’s loss of spirit. Even so, the legacy of S.T.A.R. continues to motivate activists.

Information about gay liberation high school clubs was initially disseminated and maintained. For example, in 1976, and then again in 1978, the Youth Liberation Press published an article originally written

by GWHS students (with assistance from GAA) ca. 1973.³¹ Unfortunately, awareness of gay student activism waned, and after a decade-long hiatus, students and teachers (apparently unknowingly) reinvented school-based clubs in the form of Gay-Straight Alliances. A clear and acknowledged historic record might have hastened this revival.

Future Research

The development of queer youth groups in New York City represents but one part of a story that took place throughout the U.S. and Canada. It is my hope that the compilation of groups in Appendix One will promote future investigation. Questions remain about Gay Youth, its development over time, and the interaction between affiliates in activist hotspots such as California. I have identified high school-based gay liberation groups in Los Angeles, Detroit, suburban Washington, D.C., and New York City. What was the full extent of high school and even middle school organizing? How did student and community groups interact in various locales? Underground high school papers, archival records, and oral histories may yield additional examples of school-based gay activism.

There is also a rich history of community organizing. Vanguard and Street Orphans merit particular attention for their 1966 origins and eventual reconfiguration as the San Francisco Gay Liberation Front. Sodom Radical Bisexual Free Communist Youth in Hayward, California is of great historical interest for its audacious name, political outlook, and unique focus on bisexual youth. Scholars working on regional histories may uncover additional examples. The stories of young lesbians differ from male and transgender counterparts.

GAA's AgitProp Committee deserves in-depth investigation. Its program (duplicated by Chicago GAA) was remarkable for the numbers reached, quality and complexity of its ideological debate, preparation of written and video materials, and consistent follow-up. Sadly, important GAA educational tapes that document AgitProp's work are missing. Their recovery would greatly contribute to an understanding of gay liberation's impact on school culture and student attitudes.

Hope

The accomplishments of groups such as Gay Youth, S.T.A.R., and the Gay International Youth Society need to be widely told. Their histories are particularly poignant because many of the dedicated youth and adult activists who helped build these groups are no longer living, yet their dreams remain. In one of scores of personal invitations to an historic 1972 party, Morty Manford wrote to GAA activist and AgitProp mastermind Eric Thorndale:

Let us lay bare the structure of our society. More important, let us implement the yearnings of our species for a responsive social contract. Polarize the abused from the abusers; the down-trodden and the humane from the tyrants and their lackeys. Speak the equality of Homosexuals, women, youth, Blacks, American Indians, migrant workers, laborers; and implement the ideals of justice on our behalf—in behalf of us all. None are too old or too young, too Black or too white, too different or too the same.

Let the City of Babel topple to a horizontal where equality of opportunity and justice remain open to those now at the very top and those now at the very bottom.

Let us topple the City of Babel in our Revolution. Though the toppling be tough, it is not freedom the burden, only the pursuit of freedom.

And while we engage that burden—the light of the future, let us make fun. Let us reward our efforts by nurturing and satisfying our bodily sensibilities and hungers.³²

Gay liberation youth groups comprise but one of many program types that have evolved within an historical and ideological context. Each type has limitations and strengths that delimit membership, roles of youth and of adults, characterization of sexual identities, the coming-out process, participants' experiences, and ways of contesting homophobia and discrimination.

Asserting, “No One Is Free Until Everyone Is Free!” youth of all genders, sexual orientations, races, and ages helped transform the world and developed skills that they continue to use today.³³ It is my hope that their stories and place in the Movement will become more widely known to scholars, educators, and the general public, and most importantly inspire future queer youth activism.

Afterword

As an underlying aspect of this research, I explored how the concept of identity shifts when filtered through the lens of contrasting ideologies. My starting point was a personal one. As a modern dancer, the immediacy of movement—existential constructivism in action—has provided an avenue for self-expression and assertion.

In *The Dancer's Quest*, published in 1935, Elizabeth Selden postulated that as the body moves through time and space, the possibility of deep-seated centering and ordering presents itself; the “absolute demand is precisely the personal experience, the projection of an imminent vision into the space without.”¹ Dance pioneer Doris Humphrey saw “pure” dance as a “phenomenon to be discovered, invented, or both.”² In my own life, a primary point of reference has been the inventive and expressive possibility of dance. I have had the good fortune to soar, express, and create as a dancer in Danceworks directed by the eminent June Finch and while working with Dorothy Hershkowitz, a vibrant and talented dancer and choreographer, recently deceased but forever cherished.



Afterword Fig. 1. The author, Stephan Cohen, in a free-spirited moment during a Danceworks performance (Artistic Director June Finch) at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum 1997.

Appendix One

Gay Liberation Youth Groups— 1966 to 1975

This appendix was compiled from directories, listings in the gay and lesbian liberation press, histories, interviews, and archival records. Other than Gay Youth's own incomplete directory, the liberation press did not treat youth groups as a separate category. Starting dates and known or likely closing dates are indicated. In certain cases, only the date of the directory listing or reference is noted. I have also included dates for Gay Youth's address changes.

This appendix focuses on groups in the United States, and to some degree, Canada. While it is doubtful that the directory is complete, a number of themes are apparent: the extent of queer youth activism, pre-Stonewall origins of two groups and a burst of post-Stonewall gay liberation organizing, existence of a national network of Gay Youth groups, establishment of high school groups in a number of locations, and activism on the part of transgender youth and young adults. Sodom Radical Bisexual Free Communist Youth in Hayward, CA merits special notice for its remarkable name and bisexual (not to mention Sodom and communist) references.

Queer youth organized throughout the U.S. and Canada. Vanguard and Street Orphans were founded in San Francisco in 1966. Gay Youth, originally a New York GLF cell established in 1970, was one of many U.S. and Canadian affiliates.

Gay liberation school-based groups—at least three in New York City, several in Los Angeles, one in Maryland, and perhaps a Junior High School group in Virginia—are an important and largely neglected phenomenon. They are the forerunners of contemporary Gay-Straight Alliances.

S.T.A.R., a groundbreaking group fighting for the rights of street transvestites within a broader gay liberation movement, was not strictly a youth group, but many participants were underage.

UNITED STATES:

SOUTH

FLORIDA

Young Peoples Group (listed 1972)

2175 N.W. 26th Street

Miami, Florida 33142¹

- *Gay Youth*, Tampa, Florida (1970)
“get in touch with Danny Weeks through GLF”²

KENTUCKY

- *Gay Youth*, Louisville, Kentucky (1970/1971)³

NORTHEAST

MASSACHUSETTS

High School Gays United (ca. 1972)⁴

HSGU was formed “to bring together all gay high school students—male and female—for two reasons: to meet and get to know each other without being hassled about our ages, and because we believe that gay men and women must work together to end all discriminatory laws concerning homosexuality.” The group announced “weekly meetings, rap sessions, dances, and other activities.” Contact info included Homophile Union of Boston’s telephone number and address.⁵

- *Boston Gay Youth (BGY)* (ca. 1972/1973 to 1975)⁶
“(Formerly High School Gays United)”
“A group run by and for gay men and women of high school age.”

Mail address is Room 509, 419 Boylston St, Boston, MA (also HUB’s address). Meetings held at Charles Street Meeting House, 1pm Sundays.⁷

It is possible High School Gays United faltered before being reinvented as Boston Gay Youth. A 1972 Fag Rag Gay Pride Week announcement includes a Gay Youth meeting time and announces discussion of “possible plans for an on-going Gay Youth group.⁸

- *Worcester Gay Youth* (ca. 1973)
Saturdays
1:00–3:00pm—82 Franklin St., Rm. 31, Worcester⁹

NEW YORK

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.) (1970 to 1973)

213 E. 2nd Street, NY, NY, location of S.T.A.R. House ca. November 1970 to July 1971.

211 Eldridge St., Apt. 3, NY, NY, 10002¹⁰ (Marsha's apartment given as the 1973 address).

- *Gay Youth*, New York (1970 to 2001, and possibly later)

Organizers and/or contacts for Gay Youth affiliates were associated with various local groups including Youth Caucus at GLF Los Angeles, GLF Detroit,¹¹ GLF Philadelphia, GLF Tampa, Florida, Washington D.C. Mattachine, and the Dorian Society in Seattle. By late 1970, the GY Journal listed groups in Los Angeles, Tampa, Detroit, Washington, D.C., Seattle, Philadelphia, with the National Headquarters in NYC¹² and organizing in San Francisco, Chicago, and Ann Arbor.¹³ Other locations were Denver,¹⁴ Valley Stream, NY, Boston where GY met at the Charles Street Meeting House Sundays at 2pm,¹⁵ Worcester,¹⁶ and Toronto.¹⁷ Gay Youth began as a cell within GLF, before striking out on its own. It continued after GLF faltered, finding GAA support and a home in the Firehouse, turning to Mattachine at some point after the Firehouse burned. GY changed its name to Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York (GLNY). It moved to the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center on 13th Street where it accepted adult oversight, eventually calling itself Bisexual, Lesbian and Gay Youth of New York (BiGLYNY). It was still recognized in 2001, although largely subsumed into the Youth Enrichment Services. By December 2003 the Center no longer listed the group.

1970

Gay Youth, New York

c/o Alternate U.

530 Sixth Avenue,

New York, New York¹⁸

"New York City, National Headquarters—meetings at Alternate U. . . Sundays at 7:00pm"¹⁹

1970

Meetings: every Sunday, 6PM; 300 9th Avenue.²⁰

(the address of Church of the Holy Apostles social hall)

1971

Gay Youth (under 21): Sundays, 7 p.m. Gay Community Center, telephone 982-9874. The Center is also listed as the meeting place

for GLF, GLF Women, Radical Lesbians, Third World Gay Revolution; and S.T.A.R. “no regular meetings.”²¹ A GY leaflet entitled “Certified Gay Youth Closet” (ca. 1971) explained:

Our social meetings are on Sundays from 4 to 8pm in the basement of 360 W 28th St. at Ninth Ave. There you can hang-out and rap, listen to music, and most importantly, meet people your own age. Free refreshments!

Our business & political meetings are Wednesdays, 6:30 sharp, at the Gay Community Center at 130 W 3rd st., off Sixth Avenue.²²

1972

c/o Church of the Holy Apostles
300 Ninth Ave.
New York, N.Y. 10001²³

ca. 1972

c/o Gay Activists Alliance
99 Wooster St
New York, New York 10012²⁴

The GAA Firehouse located at 99 Wooster St. opened May 1, 1971²⁵ and GY conceivably moved in ca. 1972.²⁶ Steve Ashkinazy recalled that GY “always had a home at the Firehouse” as did others—“everyone used the Firehouse.”²⁷

1974

Oct 15, 1974 the GAA Firehouse burned down, due to arson.²⁸
4/27/74—“GY cam [sic] move to the Church of the Beloved Disciple”²⁹

1974

Church of the Beloved Disciple
348 West 14 Street
NY, NY 10011³⁰

“GAY YOUTH meets every Saturday at 2:00 p.m. at The Church of The Beloved Disciple, located at 348 West 14th Street. In addition,

we also have a phone at the New York office of The Mattachine Society (212) 691-1068”³¹

1974–1975

59 Christopher St, New York, N.Y. 10014
(offices of the Mattachine Society)
phone 212 691-1060³²

1975?-1980?

Gay Youth of New York
26 9th Avenue
Between 13th and 14th St.
3rd floor
242-1212³³

Gay and Lesbian Youth

A hand-drawn flyer, illustrated with a person’s outline, invited those twenty-one and under to join Gay Youth of New York every Saturday afternoon for a peer rap group at the 9th Avenue address. The Gay Switchboard at 777-1800 was the contact number. The flyer sports a square symbol of four male/female symbols with the letters GY.³⁴

ca. 1980?

Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York
675 Hudson St on the third floor. Corner of 9th Ave and 14th St.
“Gay and Lesbian Youth will only be at this address until the end of March and is currently looking for a new meeting space.”³⁵

1983

Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York
208 W. 13th St. 10011

“After nearly fourteen years of existing in the gay community by the skin of our teeth . . . Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York (formerly Gay Youth of New York) is going to make the big time!” GLYNY “is completely youth run” and offered “weekly support groups, peer counseling, social activities, and referrals to other organizations and services.” Still “operating out of an old milk crate

in the storage room of the Metropolitan Community Church,” the mailing address given for Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York is 208 W. 13th St, also the address of the Lesbian and Gay Community Center.³⁶

1984 to 2001

GLNY officially joined the Lesbian and Gay Community Center given the stipulation that the previously youth-led group accept the Center’s assignment of an adult advisor.³⁷ GLNY was eventually subsumed within the Center’s Youth Enrichment Services (YES). Its name was changed to include bisexuals, BiGLNY, and finally modified to *BiGLTYNY*—Bisexual, Gay Lesbian & Transgender Youth of New York. In 2001, it was still listed as a program on the Center’s web site.

2003

Youth Enrichment Services (YES) in the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center no longer makes mention of the group.³⁸

2004

BiGLTYNY is listed with the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. www.hx.com indicates the telephone number is 212-966-6477 and describes it as a “youth-run group for queer youths, ages 13–21. Call for details”³⁹

2003-2007

BiGLTYNY maintains a yahoo group, but the organization is no longer active.

- *Gay Youth*, Long Island, NY (ca. 1972)
Marc Wald
% GAA of L.I.
Box 493
Valley Stream, L.I., N.Y. 11580⁴⁰
- *Gay Youth*, Syracuse, NY
103 College Pl.
Syracuse, N.Y. 13210⁴¹

*Gay International Youth Society at
George Washington High School (1972)*

5019 W. 192nd St.
New York, NY 10033
Att: Alex Levy
212-781-5370⁴²

In 1973, *Gay* reported three New York City gay high school groups: George Washington, DeWitt Clinton, and the Bronx High School of Science—as well as several more were “rumored to be in the process of forming.”⁴³ Other rumored groups included: Charles Evans Hughes, High School of Music and Art, F.D.R., and Erasmus of Brooklyn.⁴⁴

MID-ATLANTIC

PENNSYLVANIA

- *Gay Youth*, Philadelphia (1970)

Gay Youth's Gay Journal initially specified, “get in touch with Basil O'Brien through GLF Philadelphia”⁴⁵ and by issue two, “get in touch with Joe Covert at GLF-Philadelphia.”⁴⁶ According to Philadelphia GLF leaflets (quoted by Teal) GY was:

1) To act as a basic introduction to GLF; 2) Trying to relate to ourselves as fellow oppressed human beings and not just as sexual objects; 3) ‘Coming together’ in the sense of getting out heads together, determining where we are in the gay world, and finding alternatives to the depressing scene at Rittenhouse Square and all that it connotes.⁴⁷

Gay Youth and Mature Gays (1974)

“Mondays 9 pm. Horizon House, 12 & Lombard”⁴⁸

Women's Center “Lesbian rap group for teenage women” (1974)

Coming out as a young person is one of the most difficult things to experience in a life. With everyone fighting against you, it's necessary to have love and support.

The Women's Center is organizing a Lesbian rap group for teenage women. The group has been meeting informally so far, and is setting up a schedule now. For information, call SA9-2001.⁴⁹

MARYLAND

- *Gay Youth*, Baltimore (1970s)

Willie Brashear was one of its leaders. According to Randy Wicker, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, the headstrong Willie bought fifty or one-hundred Christmas trees, determined to hold a GY fundraiser. GY went ahead and successfully sold the trees downtown; it even received television coverage. Willie (abused by his step-father and betrayed by his mother's complicity) eventually moved to NYC where as a teenager he danced at the Gaiety club and engaged in sex for money. Taught the lamp business by Randy Wicker, he opened his own shop as an adult. Willie was eventually diagnosed with HIV and initiated an AIDS support group.⁵⁰

John F. Kennedy High School club, Wheaton, Maryland (1973)

A gay male at John F. Kennedy High School in Wheaton, Maryland, along with seven other juniors and seniors established a club to fight the “prejudice, repression and ignorance related to homosexuality” at the school.⁵¹

WASHINGTON D.C.

- *Washington Gay Youth (GY)* (1970)

Gay Youth's Gay Journal suggested one “contact Mattachine Society for information.”⁵² A group participant from the mid-seventies wrote of GY’s importance:

I came out in the summer of 1974 by going to a meeting of “Gay Youth”—which met Fridays at the Quaker House located on Florida Avenue. We were a very loosely organized group, mostly males but a few young women, too. We met on Fridays in a circle, talked of the struggle to identify as gay and cope with family and peer pressures, and figure out how we would live our lives. Afterwards we would attempt to go out to the bars and discos. We had parties at members’ homes and often went to Food For Thought on Connecticut at Florida Avenue.

For me it was a life raft and without GY, I probably would have fallen apart. It was so treacherous to be openly Gay in those years, despite being post-Stonewall. GY was critical to my staying alive.

During those years, we also worshipped Betty Fairchild of Parents and Friends of Gays. Deacon Macubbin was a major help to GY because he provided space above his shop Earthworks/Lambda Rising on 20th Street before Quaker House took us in. We had a booth at the early Gay Pride

street fair on 20th Street and there was a picture of ME at the GY “kissing Booth” in the George Washington University newspaper once!⁵³

Coming out group (early 1970s) It was facilitated by Warren Blumenfeld and met at the Washington Free Clinic. A junior high school student, intent on gaining experience in order to establish his own group in suburban Virginia, briefly participated in the Washington D.C. coming-out group with high school, college, and adult members.⁵⁴

“*A group of gay teenagers*” (1971)

“A group of gay teenagers is now meeting each Saturday afternoon at one o’clock at the Metropolitan Community Church. Age limit is 13 to 19 years of age. The group will be moving to the Arlington County Youth Services Center as it grows.”⁵⁵

MIDWEST/PLAINS

COLORADO

- *Gay Youth*, Denver (1972 listing)
c/o Tony Cartwright
1041 Ogden 204
Denver, CO 80218⁵⁶

ILLINOIS

Alternatives for Teenage Gays, Chicago (November 1972 to June 1974)
Alternatives, Inc., c/o Susan Kahn
5866 N. Broadway
Chicago 60626⁵⁷
275-1076 (after 12 noon)

Alternatives for Teenage Gays was initiated by Susan Kahn during her tenure as a staff member of Alternatives, Inc., “a drug abuse prevention and treatment program.” She wrote, “Gay youth in high school are often some of the heaviest drug abusers—a situation precipitated by the extreme fear, loneliness, insecurity and paranoia that accompany being gay in a closeted high school subculture with no one to rap with about their gayness.” Having found outreach to high school youth to be a “difficult and frustrating task” given gay people’s “fear of exposure,” Kahn sought to invite youth to “come and rap with me, and hopefully other gay youth” to “deal with some of the shit society dumps on us and with some of the heavy trips we dump on ourselves.”⁵⁸

A follow-up notice entitled “for us young lezzies” announced “Susan Kahn, the only lesbian feminist on the staff of Alternatives, Inc., is rapping with teenage gays in an outreach program.”⁵⁹ *Lavender Woman* listed the group from January 1973 to June 1974.

- *Gay Youth*, Chicago (1973 listing)
171 W. Elm St
Chicago, IL 60610
(312) 664-4708⁶⁰

MICHIGAN

Youth Caucus—(under 21 only) (1971 article)
meets every Sunday, 6:30 pm
Call 874-4846

A high school student, Sequoya, described an attempt to form a “Cass Testicle High Screw” chapter of GLF; however the “three sponsors were threatened with arrest,” apparently for “contributing to the delinquency of minors.” Sequoya reported, “We were forced to disband when no teachers were willing to take the ‘risk.’” Decrying a litany of high school injustices, the author concluded, “The only way in which we can combat this sexism in the high schools (and the junior highs as well) is to organize under the GLF Youth Caucus and make our demands and fight for them. High school gays must COME OUT of their closets NOW!”⁶¹

- *Gay Youth*, Detroit (1970)
3025 E. Grand Blvd.
Apt 209
Detroit, Michigan
313-874-4846⁶²

Gay Youth’s Gay Journal announced “get in touch with Tony Russomanno through GLF Detroit.”⁶³ Tony does not recall founding a Detroit GY group, but did organize a college protest in Detroit.⁶⁴

- *Gay Youth*, Ann Arbor (1970)

Gay Youth’s Gay Journal also suggested one “get in touch with Tony Russomanno of GLF Detroit who is forming GY of Detroit, and helping people from Ann Arbor to start a GY” (an announcement that was apparently an optimistic leap of faith on Mark Segal’s part).⁶⁵ According to the *Leaping Lesbian Supplement* (ca. 1978),

“Gay Youth Group meets Mondays at 3:30 p.m., 608 N. Main Street (upstairs, yellow house across from McCoy’s Market)”⁶⁶

OHIO

- *Gay Youth*, Columbus (1972 listing)

“High School students interested in forming a coffee house for informal raps, contact Bill, Gay Youth, c/o GAA.”⁶⁷

WEST COAST

CALIFORNIA

Gay Teenagers, San Francisco (1972 listing)
1055–56 Street, Oakland, California⁶⁸

Pacific Center, Berkeley, CA (1974)

Jack Fertig “in 1974 helped start a gay youth rap group at the then just-starting Pacific Center”⁶⁹

San Francisco Bay Area Gay Teenagers (1972 listing)
c/o Seth 415–548–4190⁷⁰

Street Orphans, San Francisco (1966)

A lesbian street group or girl gang which remains almost entirely undocumented.⁷¹

Vanguard, San Francisco (1966 to ca. 1970)

The group—comprised of hustlers, drug users and dealer, street youth, and leathermen—published the colorful *Vanguard* covering conditions in the Tenderloin, neighborhood organizing, gay male and lesbian sexuality, drug use, hustling, poetry, literature, and research studies. *Vanguard* received support from Glide Memorial Church.⁷²

- *Gay Youth*, Los Angeles (1970)

Gay Youth’s Gay Journal specified, “talk to Youth Caucus at GLF”⁷³

Lesbian Tide advertised Gay Youth meetings for those under twenty-one on Fridays 7:30 pm at the Gay Community Services Center.⁷⁴ *Gay Sunshine* announced, “information on meetings, gay youth awareness raps call 482–3062” (the telephone number of the Gay Community Services Center).⁷⁵ “For the first time, gay students, faculty, and staff have moved beyond local organizations and individual campuses to form a region-wide organization known as The Gay Students

Council of Southern California (GSC) of Southern California” with the “official roster” indicating the following address:⁷⁶

1614 Wilshire Blvd
L.A., CA 90017
Phone (213) 482-3062⁷⁷

Several Los Angeles City High Schools (1972)

“For immediate release” the Gay Students Council, “formed during the Spring of 1972 by local gay groups at eight southern California colleges,” listed thirteen member groups from four and two year colleges, and “Gay Youth of Los Angeles (primarily high school students).” New student groups forming included “several Los Angeles City high schools.”⁷⁸

Growing American Youth (GAY) in Los Angeles (1969?)⁷⁹

Sodom Radical Bisexual Free Communist Youth (1972 listing)
Box 4132
Hayward, California⁸⁰

WASHINGTON STATE

- *Gay Youth*, Seattle (1970)
Gay Youth's Gay Journal specified, “talk to Allen Ryan of the Dorian Society.”⁸¹

CANADA:

- *Gay Youth*, Toronto (1972)

Gay Youth Toronto, “a social and support group for people under twenty-one years of age,” was organized in the Spring 1972. McLeod notes, “The group’s early organizers included John Powers and John Sullivan. By April they were meeting every Sunday at New College, 40 Willcocks Street, but soon moved to the CHAT Centre” (Community Homophile Association of Toronto).⁸² The SEED school (Secondary Education Exploration and Discovery), based on the free-school model of A.S. Neil’s *Summerhill*, “allowed a gay culture to develop there that helped to build Gay Youth Toronto.”⁸³ The Canadian Lesbian & Gay Archives holds records of Gay Youth chapters (some undated) in a number of other Canadian locales: Gay Youth Guelph (ON); Gay Youth Niagara (ON); Gay Youth of Montreal (PQ); Gay Youth Society (Halifax, NS).⁸⁴

Appendix Two

Chronology of George Washington High School News Coverage

Irving Witkin, a teacher and Dean of Boys at GWHS, documented events in *Diary of a Teacher: The Crisis at George Washington High School* (New York: United Federation of Teachers, 1970). The violent disagreement over advising, community control, and race (documented in *New York Times* coverage) spiked in 1970 and 1971. Newly assigned principal Samuel Kostman implemented policies fostering dialogue, respect, and conflict resolution. (Note: the abbreviation NYT is used for *New York Times*.)

1969

“George Washington High Disrupted,” NYT, May 7 1969, 33.

“Fires and Disturbances Close Washington and Wingate Highs,” NYT, May 8, 1969, 39.

“Classes Resumed At Washington H.S.,” NYT, May 10, 1969, 62.

JANUARY 1970

FEBRUARY 1970

MARCH 1970

“George Washington High Shut after Disturbances by Students,” NYT, March 3, 1970, 32.

Alfonso A. Narvaez, “Classes Canceled in Uptown School: Protests Again Halts Lessons at George Washington,” NYT, March 4, 1970, 31.

“200 Students Sit in at Washington High,” NYT, March 6, 1970, 44.

Martin Arnold, “Head of George Washington High School Resigns,” NYT, March 7, 1970, 22.

- Andrew H. Malcolm, "Dispute over Table Shuts Washington High Again," *NYT*, March 10, 1970, 30.
- "Washington High Resumes Classes," *NYT*, March 11, 1970, 35.
- "30 Protesters Sit in at the Office of Washington High's Principal," *NYT*, March 13, 1970, 58.
- Arnold H. Jubasch, "Fire Closes Washington High; Court Blocks Parents' Protest," *NYT*, March 14, 1970, 16.
- "Disorders Close Washington H.S.; Seven Small Fires Started and Four Students Seized," *NYT*, March 17, 1970, 23.
- "2 Sides in Dispute at Washington High Returning to Court," *NYT*, March 18, 1970, 49.
- Alfonso A. Narvaez, "Classes at Washington High Resume with Police Patrols," *NYT*, March 19, 1970, 47.

APRIL 1970

- Robert D. McFadden, "George Washington High Melee Results in Arrests of 13 Students," *NYT*, April 11, 1970, 33.
- Robert D. McFadden, "Washington High Scene of 'Rampage'; 6 Youths Arrested," *NYT*, April 16, 1970, 12.
- Leonard Budner, "Mediator Called by Acting Principal to Settle Dispute over Parents' Table at George Washington High," *NYT*, April 18, 1970, 11.
- "Washington High Remains Closed; Negotiations over Weekend Were Unsuccessful," *NYT*, April 20, 1970, 40.
- "George Washington High to Remain Closed Today," *NYT*, April 21, 1970, 27.
- "Court Bars a Grievance Table in Washington Height's School," *NYT*, April 22, 1970, 19.
- "Grievance Table Is Won at School: Parents at Washington High Granted Their Demand," *NYT*, April 23, 1970, 37.
- "Parents at Washington High Reject Table Plan," *NYT*, April 24, 1970, 24.
- "The Disruption at G.W. High," *NYT*, April 25, 1970, 24.

MAY 1970

- Leonard Budner, "School Officials Focus on Violence," *NYT*, May 4, 1970, 40.
- Leonard Budner, "Rampage Closes Washington High: Students Set Lockers Afire and Damage Lunchroom," *NYT*, May 7, 1970, 56.
- "George Washington High Will Stay Closed Today," *NYT*, May 11, 1970, 5.
- Leonard Budner, "Washington High Reopens Today; Parents Divided," *NYT*, May 13, 1970, 30.
- Jacqueline McCord [Parent activist], "Complaint Table (Letter to the Editor)," *NYT*, May 14, 1970, 36.
- "7 Complaints Filed as Table Is Opened in Washington High," *NYT*, May 16, 1970, 16.
- Leonard Budner, "New Unrest Jolts Washington High: Students Battle as Teachers Balk at Patrol Duty," *NYT*, May 28, 1970, 78.

JUNE 1970

"Washington High Girl Guarded after Harassment by Students," NYT, June 3, 1970, 48.

SEPTEMBER 1970**OCTOBER 1970**

Steven R. Weisman, "4 Students Knifed and 2 Police Hurt," NYT, October 17, 1970, 1.

Steven R. Weisman, "Washington High Closed as Teachers Talk Today," NYT, October 19, 1970, 21.

Leonard Buder, "The Tragic Case of Washington High," NYT, October 23, 1970, 42, 45.

"Washington High to Stay Closed to Pupils Monday," NYT, October 24, 1970, 28.

Leonard Buder, "Washington High to Resume Today: Seniors to Be Admitted in a Test of Orderliness," NYT, October 27, 1970, 49.

M. S. Handler, "Teachers Ask Jury Inquiry into Washington Heights Violence," NYT, October 28, 1970, 30.

"Hearings Are Urged on Washington High," NYT, October 30, 1970, 20.

NOVEMBER 1970

Leonard Buder, "Scribner Warns against Violence, but He Upholds Peaceful Dissent in the Schools," NYT, November 21, 1970, 28.

DECEMBER 1970

Leonard Buder, "2 Hurt, 3 Seized in School Melee: Clash Is at Washington High—Clinton Student Arrested," NYT, December 2, 1970, 23.

C. Gerald Fraser, "Washington High Gets Fourth Principal This Year," NYT, December 3, 1970, 75.

Leonard Buder, "Parents Allege Student Shifting: Board to Look into Charges at Washington High," NYT, December 16, 1970, 39.

"Teacher Beaten Unconscious, Washington High Student Held," NYT, December 18, 1970, 46.

JANUARY 1971

Alfred Gutmann, "To Stop Shifting Pupils (Letter to the Editor)," NYT, January 9, 1971, 26.

Leonard Buder, "School Rescinds Transfer Orders: George Washington Pupils May Stay, Board Rules," NYT, January 15, 1971, 39.

Leonard Buder, "High School Loses Its Complaint Table," *NYT*, January 21, 1971, 30.

FEBRUARY 1971

C. Gerald Fraser, "5 Seized and 5 Hurt in Fights inside George Washington High," *NYT*, February 20, 1971, 31.

MARCH 1971

APRIL 1971

MAY 1971

Leonard Buder, "Scribner Gives Plan to Assist Students Who Are 'Turned Off,'" *NYT*, May 26, 1971, 38.

JUNE 1971

William K. Stevens, "Washington High: From Riot to Hope," *NYT*, June 1, 1971, 41, 60.

"More Than Administration (Editorial)," *NYT*, June 4, 1971, 34.

"3 Fires in 24 Hours Force the Closing of Washington High," *NYT*, June 11, 1971, 39.

OCTOBER 1971

Eric Pace, "Washington High Disrupted Again: 4 Students and a Policeman Injured in Disorders," *NYT*, October 31, 1971, 35.

1972

Andrew H. Malcolm, "Weekend in Country Calms Washington H.S. Tempers," *NYT*, January 11, 1972, 39, 74.

1973

"High School Notes: 100% Attendance is 'In' At George Washington," *NYT*, December 1, 1973

Notes

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. For queer youth groups listings, see, “Youth: Canada,” GayScape, JW Publishing, Inc, 2006, <http://www.gayscape.com/menuyouth.html>; Quebec Alliance for Queer Youth Quebec Alliance for Queer Youth, <http://rejaq.alterheros.com/en/?p=7>; “GLSEN Club Directory: Students & GSAs,” GLSEN, <http://www.glsen.org> *Queer America*, <http://www.queeramerica.com/>. Gay college groups (of which almost 175 were established by 1974) were a potential resource for adolescents, but not included in this study. John D’Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 192.
2. The GY under twenty-one age limit was not necessarily enforced. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
3. Ian Edelstein, “Gay Youth Liberation,” *Come Out* 1, no. 4 (1970): 17. Mark Segal, email communication with author, May 2, 2004.
4. National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011, <http://www.gaycenter.org/resources/archive/collection/008>.
5. Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), 214–215.
6. David Deitcher, *The Question of Equality: Lesbian and Gay Politics in America Since Stonewall* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 40.
7. Street Transvestites for Gay Power, “Gay Power—When Do We Want It? Or Do We?” [1970?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Papers of Arthur Bell, Box 94, Weinstein Hall (N.Y.U.) Sit-In folder.
8. Bebe Scarpi, interview by author, NYC, July 24, 2003.
9. Arthur Bell, *Dancing the Gay Lib Blues: A Year in the Homosexual Liberation Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971), 189.
10. Breck Ardery, “June 28, 1970: Gay and Proud,” 33 1/3 RPM, (includes an interview with Joshua Harris), William Ardery, New York, NY.
11. GAA principles discussed with David Goldman, telephone interview with author, October 1, 2006.

12. “gay group started at george washington h.s.,” [1973?], The Gay Rights Movement: Mattachine Society of New York, Inc. IGIC, NYPL, Reel 23, Box 12, Folder 5 (Gay Youth).
13. “Gay Lib Grows in N.Y.C. High Schools,” *Gay* 4, no. 101 (1973): 10; Young gay people working with the New York Gay Activists Alliance, “Student Group Thrives at George Washington High,” in *Growing Up Gay: A Youth Liberation Pamphlet*, eds. Keith Hefner and Al Autin (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Youth Liberation Press, 1978).
14. See for example, Roberta Ginsberg, “In the Triangle/Out of the Circle: Gay/Lesbian Students’ School Experience” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Texas, 1996); Virginia Uribe and Karen M. Harbeck, “Addressing the Needs of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth,” in *Coming Out of the Classroom Closet: Gay and Lesbian Students, Teachers and Curricula*, ed. Karen M. Harbeck (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1992), 9–28; Gilbert H. Herdt and Andrew Boxer, *Children of Horizons: How Gay and Lesbian Teens are Leading a New Way Out of the Closet* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993); Lynne E. Muller and Joyce Hartman, *Professional School Counseling* 1, no. 3 (February, 1998): 38–41; and Lance McCready, “When Fitting In Isn’t an Option, Or, Why Black Queer Males at a California High School Stay Away from PROJECT 10,” in *Troubling Intersections of Race and Sexuality: Queer Students of Color and Anti-Oppressive Education*, ed. Kevin K. Kumashiro (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 60–85.
15. Stephan Cohen, “Dances of Identities: Investigating the Praxis of Programs for Queer Youth” (Qualifying Paper, School of Education, Harvard University, 2002).
16. From Stephan Cohen, “Liberationists, Clients, Activists: Queer Youth Organizing, 1966–2003,” *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues In Education* 2, no. 3 (2005): 68. Article copies available from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1–800-HA WORTH, E-mail address: docdelivery@haworthpress.com; Michael G. Shively and John P. De Cecco, “Components of Sexual Identity,” in *Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Male Experiences*, eds. Linda Garnets and Douglas C. Kimmel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 80–88.
17. Stephan Cohen, “Dances of Identities.”
18. See, for example, Gilbert H. Herdt and Andrew Boxer, *Children of Horizons*.
19. Virginia Uribe and Karen M. Harbeck, “Addressing the Needs of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth”; Virginia Uribe, “The Silent Minority: Rethinking Our Commitment to Gay and Lesbian Youth,” *Theory Into Practice* 33, no. 3 (1994): 167–172.

I use the term “sexual minority” advisedly as it ignores the continuum of sexual orientation discussed by Kinsey. Alfred C. Kinsey and Institute for Sex Research., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1953); Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell Baxter Pomeroy, and Clyde Eugene Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Co., 1948).

- Queer theorists have disputed definitive sexual identity categories and ask how such labels are constructed and applied. See, for example, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, *Thinking Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989); William Pinar, *Queer Theory in Education, Studies in Curriculum Theory* (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1998); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); and Steven Seidman, "Identity and Politics in a 'Postmodern' Gay Culture: Some Historical and Conceptual Notes," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 105–142.
20. See Calvin Edward Knight, "The Triangle Program: Experiences of Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Students in the Classroom" (Masters Thesis, University of Toronto, 2000); J. Lownsborough, "Are You a Happy Homosexual," *Toronto Life*, November, 1996.
21. For GSAs, see Eileen De los Reyes, "Moving From the Field of Terror to the Field of Hope: Project 10 East, a Gay-Straight Alliance," in *Pockets of Hope: How Students and Teachers Change the World*, eds. Eileen De los Reyes and Patricia A. Gozemba (Westport, Conn.: Bergin & Garvey, 2002), 95–124; Janice Doppler, "A Description of Gay-Straight Alliances in the Public Schools of Massachusetts" (Doctoral Dissertation, Social Justice Education Program, University of Massachusetts, September, 2000); and Laura Szalacha, "The Sexual Diversity Climate of Massachusetts' Secondary Schools and the Success of the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students" (Doctoral Dissertation, School of Education, Harvard University, 2001).
22. Ian Rutherford, "Teens Educating and Confronting Homophobia: Space, Anti-oppression Education and Identity" (Master of Arts, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 1998). For a comprehensive analysis of group types, see Stephan Cohen, "Dances of Identities."
23. See Mary L. Gray, *In Your Face: Stories from the Lives of Queer Youth* (New York: Haworth Press, 1999).
24. See Emery Hetrick and A. Damien Martin, "Developmental Issues and Their Resolution for Gay and Lesbian Adolescents," *Journal of Homosexuality*, no. 14 (1/2) (1987): 25–43; Arthur Lipkin, *Understanding Homosexuality, Changing Schools: A Text for Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999); A. Damien Martin and Emery Hetrick, "The Stigmatization of the Gay and Lesbian Adolescent," *Journal of Homosexuality*, no. 15 (1/2) (1988): 163–183; Jeff Perrotti and Kim Westheimer, *When the Drama Club is Not Enough: Lessons from the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); and Virginia Uribe, "The Silent Minority: Rethinking Our Commitment to Gay and Lesbian Youth," *Theory Into Practice* 33, no. 3 (1994): 167–172.
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26. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
 27. Laura Szalacha, "The Sexual Diversity Climate of Massachusetts' Secondary Schools."
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 29. Stephen T. Russell and Kara Joyner, "Adolescent Sexual Orientation and Suicide Risk: Evidence from a National Study," *American Journal of Public Health* 91, no. 8 (2001): 1276–1281, see pp. 1276, 1280.
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 33. Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants*.
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 35. Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality*.
 36. Donald W. McLeod, *Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada: A Selected Annotated Chronology, 1964–1975* (Toronto: ECW Press/Homewood Books, 1996); Becki Ross, *The House that Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995).
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49. Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999); Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality*; and Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History*.
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- David Deitcher, *The Question of Equality*; Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality*, 295–297; and Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*, (New York: Anchor Books, 1995).
52. Donald Reeves, *Notes of a Processed Brother*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).
 53. Author unknown, “George Washington Goes Gay”; “gay group started at george washington h.s.”; and Young gay people, “Student Group Thrives.
 54. Jack Nichols, telephone interview by author, December 30, 2002; Warren Blumenfeld, telephone interview by author, December 1, 2002.
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8. William G. Tierney and Patrick Dilley, "Constructing Knowledge," see p. 51.
9. Irving Bieber et al, "Conclusions (originally published as Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study of Male Homosexuals)," in *The Homosexual Dialectic*, ed. Joseph Anthony McCaffrey (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 84–100.
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- York Times* (1956): E4, Drew Middleton, "Spy Revelation Arouses Britain: Foreign Office and Security Attacked on Case of Burgess and MacLean," *New York Times*, September 20, 1955, 19.
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 24. Nancy Adair and Casey Adair, *Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives* (San Francisco: New Glide Publications, 1978), 116–117.
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 31. Ibid., 175–178. Quote on Mattachine's name, Central Connecticut State University Archives, *The Mattachine Society, Inc. of New York: Historical Note*, <http://wilson.ctstateu.edu/lib/archives/other/hist.html>; Also see, Harry Hay and Will Roscoe, *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of its Founder* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 47–50.
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39. Dmitri Belser, email communication with author, May 3, 2004.
40. Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, "Realities of Lesbianism," 5.
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5. Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), 214-215.
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7. "ACLU Asks Kansas Court to Overturn 17-Year Prison Sentence of Bisexual Teenager (8/11/2003)," ACLU, <http://www.aclu.org/lgbt/crimjustice/11868prs20030811.htm> Times New Roman I. Until the 2003 Supreme Court decision striking down state anti-sodomy statutes, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas still outlawed same-sex acts; thirteen states plus Puerto Rico criminalized opposite- and same-sex behaviors (the primary enforcement target) with Idaho setting a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. The American Civil Liberties Union, '*Crime' and Punishment in America: State-by-State*

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 12. Roberta Ginsberg, "In the Triangle/Out of the Circle, 88.
 13. Calvin Edward Knight, "The Triangle Program: Experiences of Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Students in the Classroom" (Masters Thesis, University of Toronto, 2000); Oscar Wolfman, "Homophobia in Education: Dividing Practices of Sexuality in Two Ontario Public School Boards" (Masters Thesis, Carleton University, 1996).
 14. Calvin Edward Knight, "The Triangle Program," 85, 99. Green Chimneys Children's Services group worker Rebecca Klein notes, "young sex workers do not favor, for the most part, the label 'prostitute'" with its "implied moral judgment." Rebecca Klein, "Group Practice with Transgendered Male to Female Sex Workers," in *Social Services with Transgendered Youth*, ed. Gerald P. Mallon (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1999), 95–109, quote p. 96. GY did refer to "prostitution." In a Duberman interview, Sylvia generally spoke of hustling, rather than prostitution. She did not use the term "sex

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29. Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking*, 39.
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ONCE UPON A TIME . . . during November of 1969 in informal discussions: Jim Owles, Arthur Evans, Kay Tobin, Marty Robinson, Tom Doerr, Richard Flynn, Arthur Bell, Donn Teal, Leo Martello, Steve Adams, Fred Orlansky, Gary Dutton, Fred Cabellero, and occasionally

others shared their concern—even anger—that the potentials for social and political change regarding the oppression of the homosexual community were not being used most effectively.

From common experience in other organizations they all agreed that a structured, single-issue approach would best accomplish their initial goal of law reform, to give the homosexual citizen the rights and freedoms granted to every other citizen. In January of 1970, after framing a constitution, choosing a name, a symbol [the lambda], and officers, this small group rented a meeting space, put an ad in *the Village Voice*, and when two new people showed up, . . . an organization was born. Jack Nichols, “3 DECADES-OLD NEW YORK GAY POLITICAL DIVISION PERSISTS: Tensions Between Factions Erupt Because Individual Styles Differ; Strategies & Histories at Issue which Some Would Force on Others,” *GayToday*, October 31, 1997, <http://gaytoday.bard-puppy.com/garchive/world/103197wo.htm>.

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29. S.T.A.R., “Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries” [1971?].
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41. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. The date is cited in Ian Edelstein, "Gay Youth Liberation," *Come Out* 1, no. 4 (1970): 17. The announcement, "A gay youth group is being formed, any people interested, must be under 20, call 677-8049" appeared in "Odds & Ends," *GLF News* (March 28, 1970): 1. A follow-up announcement declared, "A Gay Youth Group has been formed . . ." *GLF News* (April 11, 1970). The meeting place was "the church" [of the Holy Apostles].

GLF cells included 28th of June (published *Come Out*); Aquarius (dances), Red Butterfly (Marxist-Leninist analysis of gay oppression), International Studies Cell, Guerilla Theater Cell, a Non-Violent Cell, Media Cell, 7 or 8 women's consciousness raising cells, 4 or 5 men's consciousness raising cells, and Gay Youth. "GLF News," *Come Out* 1, no. 4 (June/July 1970): 22. Other cells were the Communications Cell, Political Action Committee, Ad Hoc Committee to Abolish the Sodomy Laws, New People's Cell, and Cocksucker's Tribe. Jerry Hoose, "Gay Liberation News: Gay Liberation Front-New York," *Gay Power* 1, no. 13: 17, 20 and Bob Kohler, "GLFNY," *Gay Power* 1, no.

2. "HX: Listings, Homo Meets, Social," Two Queens, Inc, 2004, http://www.hx.com/listings/index.cfm?page=meets&sub_cat=Social
3. Tony Russomanno, telephone interview by author, October 5, 2006.
4. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
5. Originally from Whipppany, New Jersey, Russomanno had been living in Detroit. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004. Nova, "The Gay Youth group is looking around for help . . ." *GLF News*, no. 15 (1970): 2. Mark Horn recounted his enlistment to Mark Segal, personal communication with author, Philadelphia, June 16, 2004. Tony Russomanno, telephone interview by author, October 6, 2006.
6. Mark Segal, "An Article on Gay Youth from Gay Sunshine," [1970 or 1971?], Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University, Harry Langhorne Papers, Collection 7304, Box 2, Folder 52 Gay Youth; Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004; and Jill Johnston, *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).
7. Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003.
8. Morty Manford, "Coming Out," in *The Universities and the Gay Experience: A Conference Sponsored by the Women and Men of the Gay Academic Union* (Binghamton, New York: Towne and Country Press, 1975), 78–80, see p. 80.

9. "Attendance list 6-14-75," (1975), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75 (tall narrow gray box), Gay Youth folder, Miscellaneous subfolder.
10. Gay Youth, "Gay Youth Rights Platform," [1974?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Memoranda subfolder. The 99 Wooster St. address at the GAA Firehouse is crossed out, with Church of the Beloved Disciple handwritten as the Saturday meeting place. The mailing address is that of the New York Mattachine Society.
11. Ian Edelstein, "Gay Youth Liberation," 17. Also see Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), 214–215.
12. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
13. Ibid.
14. Mark Segal, "Letter from the Chairman," *GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 1 (1970): 8. The Action Group, officially known as the Mattachine Action Committee is discussed by Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants*.
15. Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003. For the contact list, see "CSLDC-1," (1972), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Papers of Arthur Bell, Box 93, GAA, Christopher St. Liberation, and Gay Pride Week folder. CSLDC, "Who Are These Happy People? (upper right CSLDC photo includes Marc Wald, left side shows march route)," (1973), Rudy Grillo Collection 003, Folder 2, National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street, NY, NY 10011.
16. Lynne, "On Being the Youngest Woman in LFL Or I was a Teenage Dyke," *The Lesbian Feminist* 1, no. 1 (1973): 5.
17. Mark Segal, "Letter from the Chairman."
18. Perry Brass, email communication with author, January 2, 2007.
19. Tony Russomanno, telephone interview by author, October 5, 2006.
20. Ibid.
21. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
22. Mark Segal, "An Article on Gay Youth from Gay Sunshine,"
23. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004 and email communication January 30, 2004.
24. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
25. Gay Youth, "Gay Youth (flyer)," [1970?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth Folder, Memoranda Subfolder. Also see Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants*, 214–215.
26. Author Unknown, "What Can You Do If You're 14 and Gay? Organize!" in *Growing Up Gay: A Youth Liberation Pamphlet*, eds. Peggie Autin et al., (Ann Arbor: Youth Liberation Press, Inc, 1976); Reproduced for GAA Committee on Youth and Mature Gays, "The Two Ages of Faggotry, Part 2: Young and Gay with supplement from Lee Robbins," [1974?], Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University, Harry Langhorne Papers, Collection 7304, Box 2, Folder 52 Gay Youth. Originally in *Fag Rag* as Unidentified fourteen-year-old, "The Two Ages of Faggotry, Part 2: Young and Gay," *Fag Rag*, no. four (January, 1973): 7.

27. Author Unknown, “What Can You Do If You’re 14 and Gay? Organize!” 15.
28. Ibid.
29. “The Gay Youth Group is looking . . .” GLF News, LHA, Organization Files, Gay Activists Alliance, NY and NJ folder, no. 15 (1970).
30. Nova, “The Gay Youth group is looking around for help . . .” *GLF News*, no. 15 (1970): 2.
31. Perry Brass, email communication with author, January 8, 2007.
32. Perry Brass, email communication with author, January 7, 2007.
33. “Listings: ‘A Gay Youth Group’, ‘The Red Butterfly Cell,’ ‘The GLF general meeting,’” *GLF News*, no. 13 (1970).
34. Gay Youth, “Coming! (We Hope) This Week,” [1970?], The Gay Rights Movement: Mattachine Society of New York, Inc. From the International Gay Information Center, NYPL, Reel 23, Box 12, Folder 5, microfilm.
35. Ian Edelstein, “Gay Youth Liberation.”
36. John D’Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 243–244.
37. Brass additionally recalls, “Ian also had an interesting birth deformity, a form of giantism that gave him extremely large hands and feet. I think he was very self-conscious about this; most of us in GLF knew about it, and never mentioned it. I saw him often after GLF folded—at Jones Beach, at clubs in the Village.” He later became “involved with the art world, and he and his own partner . . . ran a gallery or an art-dealing partnership together. His partner was slightly older . . . and he was a very cultured, kind of “high queen” guy whom Ian evidently looked up to.” Brass later learned, “Ian and his partner had died, and the families of both men were fighting over their combined estate: one of those horrible, compounded tragedies of the time.” Perry Brass, email communication with author, January 8, 2007.
38. Ian Edelstein, “Gay Youth Liberation.”
39. “Intimacy and Oppression,” *GY: Gay Youth’s Gay Journal* 1, no. 1 (1970).
40. Carl Wittman, “Refugees from Amerika: A Gay Manifesto,” in *The Homosexual Dialectic*, ed. Joseph Anthony McCaffrey (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 157–171, quotes pp. 157, 164, 170.
41. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
42. Larry Adams, “Gay Is Better,” *fps: the Youth Liberation news service*, no. 32 (1973): 9–10, quote p. 10.
43. Mark Masterson email communication to author, 2004; see David Leitao, “The Legend of the Sacred Band,” in *The Sleep of Reason: Erotic Experience and Sexual Ethics in Ancient Greece and Rome*, eds. Martha Craven Nussbaum and Juha Sihvola (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 143–169.
44. Plato. *Five Great Dialogues: Apology, Crito, Phadedo, Symposium, Republic*, Translated by B. Jowett, ed. Louise Ropes Loomis (Walter J. Black, Inc., 1969), 157.
45. Ibid, 167.
46. Ibid, 178–179.

47. Ibid, 180–181. See David M. Halperin, “The First Homosexuality?” in *The Sleep of Reason*, 229–268, wordplay of Aristophanes discussed, 248–252.
48. Reprinted by the Gay Youth National Committee (Philip Janison—Chairperson), “Gay Youth Rights Platform,” (1972), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
49. Gay Youth/NYC-LI, “Motion to the National Coalition of Gay Groups 2nd Meeting, Washington D.C.,” (1972), NYPL, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
50. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004. “Gay Youth Demands Endorsed,” in *fps: Youth Liberation News Service*, 22, eds. John Butler et al. (Ann Arbor: Youth Liberation Press, Inc, 1972), 6–7.
51. Ibid.
52. Gay Youth, “Gay Youth Rights Platform,” [1974?]. GAA Firehouse 99 Wooster St. addressed is crossed out; Church of the Beloved Disciple handwritten as Sat. meeting place. The mailing address is that of the NY Mattachine Society.
53. “Gay Youth,” [1974?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Memoranda sub-folder.
54. Mark Segal, “An Article on Gay Youth from Gay Sunshine.”
55. Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants*, 214.
56. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
57. John J. O’Connor, “TV: Welby Tackles Child Molestation: Student Is Victimized in ‘Outrage’ Segment; Controversial Episode Shown Over Protests (see second bulleted item for GY),” *New York Times*, October 8, 1974, 82.
58. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
59. Ibid.
60. Ibid.
61. Gay Youth, “Gay Youth: The Group and What It Is,” [1970?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder. Also reprinted by The Committee on Youthism and Ageism of Philadelphia for the Northeast Regional Gay Youth Conference, Cornell University, Carl A. Kroch Library, Rare and Manuscript Collections, Harry Langhorne Papers, Collection 7304, Box 2, Folder 52 Gay Youth.
62. Mark Segal, “An Article on Gay Youth from Gay Sunshine.”
63. Ian Edelstein, “Gay Youth Liberation”: 17.
64. GY, “GY Gay Youth Dance flyer,” (1970), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Papers of Arthur Bell, Box 91, Dances.
65. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
66. Ibid.
67. Gay Youth, “Gay Youth: The Group and What It Is.”
68. Ibid.
69. Mark Segal, “An Article on Gay Youth from Gay Sunshine.”
70. Christopher Street Liberation Day (CSLD) was initiated by Craig Rodwell of Homophile Youth Movement (HYMN) and Ellen Broidy, of NYU Stu-

dent Homophile League. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.

GY was represented at the first 1972 CSDC Planning Committee meeting and Mark Segal needed help “posting flyers and stickers.” Foster Gunnison Jr., “CSLDC Bulletin #10, 6–15–72; Eastern Regional Bulletin #7,” (1972), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Papers of Arthur Bell, Box 93, GAA, Christopher St. Liberation, and Gay Pride Week folder.

71. Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants*, 321–322.
72. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
73. Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003.
74. Sylvia Rivera, interview by Duberman, October 14, 1990, Audiotape 02889; Bebe Scarpi, interview by author, NYC, July 24, 2003; Leonard Fink, “Photograph of Marsha P. Johnson at 1970 CSLD,” National History Archive, LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th St, NY, NY 10011, Collection 026, Folder 28.
75. Bob Kohler, interview by author, NYC, July 21, 2003; Bebe Scarpi, interview by author, NYC, July 24, 2003.
76. Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants*, 325–326.
77. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
78. Mark Segal, personal communication, June 16, 2004.
79. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid. Photograph in Mark Segal’s personal collection.
82. Dmitri Belser, telephone conversation with author, April 24, 2004.
83. Dmitri Belser, email communication with author, April 20, 2004.
84. Dmitri Belser, telephone conversations with author, April 21, 2004 and April 24, 2004.
85. Gay Youth members, “A Group of One’s Own: Gay Youth,” [1974–1975?], NYPL, IGIC Collection, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Memoranda subfolder. Interviews with Melvin Joe, Alison, Thomas, Phil, and Owen Wilson (evidently of the Mattachine Society); Also see the five separate personal testimonials by GY participants, one entitled “Gay Youth” and the other four untitled.
86. Dmitri Belser, telephone conversation with author, April 24, 2004.
87. Gay Youth members, “A Group of One’s Own: Gay Youth.”
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
93. Ibid.
94. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
95. Ibid.
96. Tony Russomanno Kiokem Bidge, Mark Segal, “Gay Youth and Its Affiliates Around the Country,” *GY: Gay Youth’s Gay Journal* 1, no. 2 (1970): 8.
97. Mark Segal, “An Article on Gay Youth from Gay Sunshine.”

98. Tony Russomanno, telephone interview by author, October 5, 2006.
99. Ibid.
100. John Powers, "Gay Youth Organizing: Toronto," *The Body Politic* 1, no. 3 (1970): 3.
101. Gay Youth 348 W. 14 Street, "Gay Youth," [1974?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth Folder, Memoranda Subfolder; John Powers, "Gay Youth Organizing: Toronto."
102. "L.A. Gay Youth Grows," *fps: the Youth Liberation news service* (1972): 23.
103. Ibid., 5.
104. Ibid., 5–6.
105. Ibid., 6.
106. Ibid.
107. Called Friends Radio, *An Interview with Washington D.C. Gay Youth Members* (Washington D.C.: 1974?), Rainbow History Project, contact person: James Crutchfield. The names (transcribed and spelled by the author) included Reggie Covington, Jeff Geiss, Steve Greenley, Mike Walter, Dave Horowitz, John Granassani, and Mike Buckman.
108. Ibid.
109. Ibid.
110. Stephan Cohen, "Dances of Identities."
111. Called Friends Radio, *An Interview with Washington D.C. Gay Youth Members*.
112. Ibid.
113. Ibid.
114. Matt (an army of lovers cannot lose), "High School Gays (punctuated with a flower and the number 3)," [1971?], Personal Papers of Mark Segal, Philadelphia. For quote, see Kauffman in the following note.
115. L.A. Kauffman, "Ending a war: Inventing a movement: Mayday 1971," *Radical Society* (December, 2002), http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa4053/is_200212/ai_n9149052/print.
116. Benjie Palmer, "Are You Under 21 and Gay?", flyer; verso Benjie Palmer to Mark Segal, letter," (1971), Personal Papers of Mark Segal.
117. Benjie Palmer, "Benjie Palmer to Mark Segal, letter," (January 11, 1971), Personal Papers of Mark Segal, Philadelphia.
118. Ian Edelstein, "Gay Youth Liberation"; "Gay Youth Demands Endorsed"; Mark Segal, "An Article on Gay Youth from Gay Sunshine"; and Unidentified fourteen-year-old, "The Two Ages of Faggotry, Part 2.
119. Peggie Autin, Al Autin, Keith Hefner, and Sky, eds., *Growing Up Gay (Issue #54 of FPS)*, *FPS: a magazine of young people's liberation* (Youth Liberation Press, Inc., 1976); Mary Anne Deutschmann, "Growing Up Gay," in *High School Women's Liberation (Double Issue #52/53 of FPS)*, eds. Peggie Autin et al., (Youth Liberation Press, Inc., 1976), 28–30; and "Gay Youth Demands Endorsed," 6–7.
120. Jon Schaller to Dear Friends, letter May 21, 1975 and Artie to Jon, letter July 19, 1975, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Correspondence subfolder.

121. Reasonably certain about Kiokem's identity. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004; "By subscription," *GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 1 (1970): 6.
122. Ibid.
123. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004; Mark Segal, "An Article on Gay Youth from Gay Sunshine."
124. One of the strange teeny boppers of Christopher Street, "An Evening on the Promenade: Episode One," *GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 2 (1970): 1.
125. "Gimme Woman's Shelter," *GY Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 3 (1970), Cornell University, Carl A. Kroch Library, Rare and Manuscript Collections, Harry Langhorne Papers, Collection 7304, Box 2, Folder 52 Gay Youth.
126. Leonel Rugama, "Earth Is a Satellite of the Moon," *GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 1 (1970), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Periodicals, Box 52, Gay Youth's Gay Journal folder.
127. Mark Segal Kiokem Bidge, "Alpine County: the promised land," *GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 2 (1970): 1.
128. "GLFD to Split?" *GY: Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 2 (1970).
129. "Bulletin Board," *GY, Gay Youth's Gay Journal* 1, no. 3 (1971): 10.
130. Benjie Palmer, "Are You Under 21 and Gay?", flyer; verso Benjie Palmer to Mark Segal, letter," (1971), Personal Papers of Mark Segal.
131. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
132. Gay Youth, Marc Wald, and Jack Fertig, "For immediate release," (1972), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
133. Randy Wicker, "The Wicker Basket: Gay Youths Get Stoned," *Gay* 1, no. 33 (1970): 7.
134. Randolph Wicker, "Chicago Doctor Tortures Teen-aged Gays: Tied to Hospital Beds for 77 1/2 Hours," *Gay* 2, no. 52 (1971): 1, 3, quote p. 3.
135. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
136. Ibid.
137. "Gay Youth Demands Endorsed."
138. "Girlish Boys," *Time Magazine* (1973), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, Papers of Martin Duberman, Box 78, Gay Liberation Miscellaneous.
139. tommi avicilli mecca, *Remembering a Fighter: WHO WAS SYLVIA Rivera?* sfbg.com, February 1, 2002, http://www.sfbg.com/36/25/x_oped.html; Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
140. Radical Queens Philadelphia [by Tommi Avicilli Mecca and Mark Segal], "Whereas Effeminate Boys," [1972/1973?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
141. Richard A. Rusinow, "'Raider' Hits Mike Douglas Show," *Gay* 4, no. 104 (1973): 1.
142. "Activist Chains Self in Independence Hall," *Gay* 4, no. 97 (1973): 8.
143. GY, "Gay Youth: The school system is oppressive to all those who . . ." [1972?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
144. Ibid.

145. Mark Segal, "Letter to Unnamed School Official," [1971?], Cornell University, Carl A. Kroch Library, Rare and Manuscript Collections, Harry Langhorne Papers, Collection 7304, Box 2, Folder 52 Gay Youth.
146. "Gay Activists Lecture; They 'are not Neurotic,'" Sider Press 38, no. 3 (1970) 1, Oceanside Sr., S. Oceanside, N.Y. In Personal Papers of Mark Segal, publisher of Philadelphia Gay News.
147. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
148. "Untitled handwritten list of key themes (e.g., coming out, prejudices)," [1971–1974?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Memoranda subfolder.
149. Ibid.
150. GY files included William P. Braddock [pseudonym, apparently for Ward Bentley], "When It's Time to Walk Away from a Lie," [1970s?], Cornell University, Carl A. Kroch Library, Rare and Manuscript Collections, Harry Langhorne Papers, Collection 7304, Box 2, Folder 52 Gay Youth; Laud Humphreys, *Out of the Closets: The Sociology of Homosexual Liberation* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972); and Bob Burdick, "untitled article on Greek love," NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Miscellaneous subfolder.
151. C.P., "The Kid Who Wanted Books On Queers," [1972?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid.
154. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
155. Joe Enright, "letter To Whom it May Concern," (August 28, 1974), NYPL, IGIC Collection, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Memoranda subfolder, Identity House; "Background," [1972?], NYPL, IGIC Collection, Ephemera—Organizations, Identity House folder. From June 1973 to August 1974, 32 (7.3%) out of 438 Identity House clients were between ten and nineteen years old. (Peer Counselor) Giancarolo Fedeli, "An Analysis of the Walk-in Center Operation and Service," (September, 1974), also in Identity House folder.
156. "Letter to Joseph Enright, Court Employment Project," (1975), NYPL, IGIC Collection, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Memoranda subfolder.
157. Parents of Gays, "Letter to Dear Parent" (1974), Cornell University, Carl A. Kroch Library, Rare and Manuscript Collections, Harry Langhorne Papers, Collection 7304, Box 2, Folder 52 Gay Youth.
158. Aner Candelario, "Letter from Aner Candelario to the Switchboard," (1/8/1981), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
159. "Gay Youth Renaissance," [1972?], NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
160. Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003. See *Tales of the City* by Armistead Maupin for the "Madrigal" reference.
161. Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003.

162. Gay Youth, “Gay Youth: The Group and What It Is”: 8.
163. Martha Shelley, “The Radical Activist—Martha Shelley,” in *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945–1990: An Oral History*, ed. Eric Marcus (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), 175–186, quote p. 182.
164. Ian Edelstein, “Gay Youth Liberation”: 17.
165. Bob Kohler, interview by author, NYC, July 21, 2003.
166. Gay Youth, “Certified Gay Youth Closet, One of the original Gay Youth leaflets reprinted by The Committee on Youthism and Ageism of Philadelphia,” [1971?], Cornell University, Carl A. Kroch Library, Rare and Manuscript Collections, Collection 7304, Box 2.
167. “An International Directory of Gay Organizations,” in *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*, eds. Karla Jay and Allen Young (New York: Douglas Book Corp., 1972), 375–403.
168. Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003.
169. “Gay Youth Renaissance.” Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003.
170. Laurie Johnston, “Arson Destroys Gay Activist Site,” *New York Times*, October 16, 1974, 19. Minutes show GY received permission to move to the Church of the Beloved Disciple. “Gay Youth—Minutes of meeting of 4/27/74,” NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
171. Michael Shernoff, “Early Gay Activism in Chelsea: Building a Queer Neighborhood” (Originally published in *LGNY* 57, July 6, 1997), <http://www.gaypsychotherapy.com/history.htm>.
172. “Dear Friends,” three page letter dated April 1983 on Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York letterhead, LHA, Organization Files, Gay and Lesbian Youth of New York folder.
173. Miriam Yeung, Coordinator of Education & Training Services, Youth Enrichment Services Program, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Community Center, email communication, 24 February, 2004. Yahoo group email communication, May 9, 2007 from “Homo Ffectional.”
174. “HX: Listings, Homo Meets, Social,” Two Queens, Inc, 2004, http://www.hx.com/listings/index.cfm?page=meets&sub_cat=Social.
175. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
176. Ibid.
177. Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003.
178. Ralph Hall, “Gay Youth, GAA and \$\$\$\$ (Still More Scandal, Or),” *Ain’t It Da Truth*, no. 8 (1974): 3.
179. “Minutes for the meeting of Sept. 28, 1974,” (1974), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Minutes subfolder.
180. Michael Wolcott to President of Gay Activists’ Alliance, November 7, 1974; Gary Comolli to President of Gay Activists’ Alliance, November 7, 1974; Douglas Rodriguez to President of Gay Activists’ Alliance, November 7, 1974; Michael Wolcott to Chairperson Phillip [sic] Janison,

- Gay Youth National Committee, November 7, 1974; Philip Janison to Michael December 6, 1974, NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth, Correspondence folder.
181. Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003.
 182. Ibid.
 183. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.
 184. "Minutes for the meeting of Sept. 28, 1974."
 185. See GY, "Secret Ballot," [1974–1975?], The Gay Rights Movement: Mattachine Society of New York, Inc., NYPL, IGIC, Reel 23, Box 12, Folder 5, microfilm.
 186. "Gay Youth Min 9–21–74," NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Minutes subfolder.
 187. Ibid.
 188. GY members commented on Gay and Young in "Gay Youth Rap," WBAI Audiotape 00471, (1980), NYPL IGIC. Gay and Young practices were discussed with Steve Ashkinazy, interview by author, NYC, July 15, 2003.
 189. "Camp," is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "ostentatious, exaggerated, affected, theatrical."
 190. John J. O'Connor, "TV: Welby Tackles Child Molestation: Student Is Victimized in 'Outrage' Segment; Controversial Episode Shown Over Protests (see second bulleted item for GY)," *New York Times*, October 8, 1974, 82.
 191. "Minutes for the meeting of Sept. 28, 1974," NYPL, IGIC, Box 75, Gay Youth.
 192. "Minutes from the meeting of Oct 26, 1974," NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Minutes subfolder.
 193. Ralph Hall, "Gay Youth, GAA and \$\$\$"; "Minutes for the meeting of Sept. 28, 1974."
 194. "Minutes for the meeting of Nov. 2, 1974," NYPL, IGIC, Box 75, Gay Youth.
 195. "Minutes for the meeting of December 7, 1974" and "Minutes for the meeting of Nov. 2, 1974," NYPL, IGIC, Box 75, Gay Youth.
 196. Executive Secretary Douglas Rodriguez, "Memo To: the general membership of New York Gay Youth," (January 25 1975), 1, NYPL, IGIC, Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Box 75, Gay Youth folder, Correspondence subfolder. John D. Stinson, 4/17/90, notes certain records that "consist of correspondence from individual persons and membership lists have been removed from the records of Gay Youth" and placed in Miscellaneous Organizational Records, Restricted Records: Container 76, G (to be unsealed in 2055).
 197. Ibid.
 198. Mark Segal, interview by author, Philadelphia, January 29, 2004.

199. "The Mark Moffett Jr. Memorial Scholarship Fund," Ohio State Multi-cultural Center, <http://multiculturalcenter.osu.edu/article.asp?id=4§ion=9>(accessed December 26, 2006).
200. Mark Moffett, "Gay Youth of New York Speech for April 29, 1980 Rally," (1980), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
201. Mark Moffett, "Gay Youth of New York Resignation Letter to the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights: May 20, 1980," (1980), NYPL, Manuscripts and Archives, IGIC, Ephemera—Organizations, Box 8, Gay Youth of New York folder.
202. Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants*, 214–215.
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NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

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NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

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