



QUEERING URBANISM

INSURGENT SPACES IN THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

STATHIS G. YEROS

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CULTURAL DISTRICT

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Insurgent Spaces in the Fight for Justice



Stathis G. Yeros



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Introduction

The Queer Politics of Space

The San Francisco LGBT Center, a nonprofit organization that provides employment and financial support, referrals, and youth services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, along with space for cultural events, is housed in a complex of two buildings (fig. 1). The larger, completed in 2002, is a glass box, its interior visible to passersby. The smaller is a renovated 1894 Victorian three-story building painted in bold, saturated purple, decorated with rainbow flags. The dialogue between two styles, one representing modernity and the other tradition, is an architectural compromise. Initially, the center had planned to demolish the Victorian building and build the new center in its stead, but a newly organized gay preservationist group, Friends of 1800, successfully lobbied in 1997 to protect the older building as part of the city's queer architectural history.¹ For almost a century, they argued, it “commanded its site with great dignity,” adding that it was built by two women—members of the Castro family for which Castro Street was named—“who had come to San Francisco to seize their own freedom.” It therefore represented, they pointed out, “a legacy of self-determination and rejection of mainstream oppression.”² The building also symbolized queer contributions to the city's architectural legacy, since for two decades queer residents had been preserving and renovating Victorian buildings in neighborhoods such as the Castro, the Mission, and Haight-Ashbury.

The center is located on Market Street, the city's main thoroughfare, near a busy intersection, and during the evening commute there tends to be a lively sidewalk scene in front of its main entrance. On February 6, 2003, the sidewalk was even more crowded than usual. A group of approximately fifty demonstrators had gathered there in the late afternoon to protest the arrival of then-supervisor Gavin Newsom for a fundraising event at the center. The demonstrators were members of



FIGURE 1. The San Francisco LGBT Center on Market Street in 2022. Architects: Edward D. Goodrich (original, 1894), Jane Cee Architects (addition and remodel, 2002). Photograph by Craig Lee. © Craig Lee/San Francisco Examiner.

Gay Shame, an urban collective of queer and transgender people opposing gay and lesbian assimilationist politics that uphold social hierarchies based on class, race, ethnicity, and ability. Its members, in San Francisco and New York, had begun protesting corporate sponsorship of mainstream LGBTQ+ organizations and events in 1998 by organizing countercelebrations of radical queer cultures annually during Pride. These celebrations led to more political demonstrations, street protests, public space takeovers, and picketing, such that, in less than a decade, Gay Shame had built a robust counterpublic. Now, they were targeting Newsom's support for a proposition that he dubbed "care not cash," which cut welfare support for homeless and economically marginalized people, diverting the money to homeless shelters instead. According to Gay Shame and other critics, the strategy would lead to further marginalization of queer people, women, and people of color, because of histories of discrimination and mistreatment at homeless shelters.³

The fundraiser's organizers had rejected Gay Shame's requests to address event participants, so they were chanting against Newsom's policies outside as attendees went past a small police contingent guarding the entrance. After escorting Newsom and his then-wife Kimberlie Guilfoyle, an assistant attorney general, inside the building, the police accosted the protesters with raised batons, and soon, demonstrators were bleeding.⁴ One left the scene with a broken tooth, and another passed out from a policeman's chokehold. The police arrested four protesters, who were kept in jail for a few hours.

The incident brought fresh attention to ongoing political debates about who benefited from gay and lesbian visibility in San Francisco, and about how queer citizenship itself might be conceived in relation to urban, cultural, and national belonging. Fundraiser organizers, for example, included members of the city's mainstream organizations that understood LGBTQ+ people as an interest group with the capacity to intervene in local politics to secure their rights. They also shared a liberal understanding of citizenship for queer and trans people as a set of rights they had by virtue of their membership in the national community. In this view, queer and trans people have historically expanded the logic of who is considered worthy of inclusion into the community of national citizens by demanding equality with heterosexual citizens.

The success of this position was evident in the attendance of local politicians at the center event, and by the fact that, the following year, in his first months as mayor, Newsom made headlines by establishing San Francisco as the first city in the United States where gays and lesbians were allowed to marry. It was a symbolic move as Newsom knew his order would be struck down in court. Nevertheless, until the California attorney general nulled wedding licenses a few months later, a gay pride festival of sorts took place outside City Hall. Gay and lesbian couples from all over the country arrived to get married in San Francisco, some of them camping out in front of the building.⁵ Such celebratory scenes were repeated eleven years later when the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) gave same-sex couples the right to marry in the United States, concretizing the success of assimilationist visions of LGBTQ+ citizenship.

Gay Shame's politics, on the other hand, are rooted in the radical dismissal of the nation-state's role in conferring rights to its citizens—marriage included. They reject the structural biases and racial and class hierarchies embedded in how membership in the community of national citizens is evaluated, and instead construct an insurgent form of citizenship based on membership in an alternative queer community. This community conceptualizes rights differently from the institutions of the nation-state; for example, they believe in the right to housing but seek to abolish the right to private property. To that end, they seek to create spaces away from mainstream LGBTQ+ institutions, where they can build solidarity through protest, mutual support, and cultural experimentation.

Newsom used Gay Shame's 2003 protest to paint them as a violent group operating from the margins, highlighting instead his reformist message to address homelessness as a social ill, which appealed to pro-business and pro-tourism groups, while simultaneously touting his support for LGBTQ+ liberal causes.⁶ This helped him secure part of the "gay vote" in a mayoral election in which he ran against both an openly gay candidate and a lesbian candidate. San Francisco politics has long operated under the assumption that gays and lesbians, voting as a political bloc, could determine the outcome of local elections, from Harvey Milk's political campaigns in the mid-1970s to Dianne Feinstein's administration, from 1978–88, which often pitted different gay and lesbian groups against each

other to maintain an electoral majority.⁷ As a result of the power of the “gay vote,” any ambitious politician subsequently sought to consolidate the support of the city’s mainstream gay and lesbian organizations.

But as the scenes in front of the LGBT Center in 2003 and City Hall in 2004 remind us, San Francisco’s sexually and gender nonconforming residents are not a monolith.⁸ The queer population includes anarchist trans liberationists and powerbrokers in city government, couples eager to marry and others who see marriage as itself a fundamentally repressive institution. When we turn our gaze to the urban landscape in which they live and work, celebrate and protest—to single-family homes, housing collectives, office buildings, plazas, bathhouses, and sidewalks—we get a sense of the varieties of queer placemaking and the power of queer political demands, including policing reforms, rights to work and housing, the provision of healthcare, and political representation.

In the Bay Area, some of this has been a matter of visibility: as queer people shaped the Bay Area’s physical landscape, they established territories where they expressed their sexuality freely and, as urban residents, established local political power in numbers. Queer territorialization took many forms since 1965, when this book’s narrative begins, including the conversion of existing building types such as cafeterias and bathhouses to spaces for specifically queer socializing and the display of gay erotic imagery in public space, such as on billboards and shop windows. (They also shaped the contemporary vocabulary of queer identity discourse, whereby the term queer denotes nonmainstream sexual and gender embodiments.)⁹ However, visibility, though essential in the pursuit of group rights, is not the only, nor, I will argue, necessarily the most effective way to get those rights. Queer residents across the Bay also engaged with space in collective housing, underground dance clubs, and community gardens, as part of a wider suite of tactics with which residents queered urbanism itself. Conflicts around urban space—including marginalization and dispossession—have prompted queer social collectives to articulate changing demands by way of embodied and emplaced practices. Where urbanism’s administrative logic works to control bodies, subjectivities, and desires, they create insurgent ruptures to this logic that prefigure alternative forms of organizing queer social life.¹⁰

Queering Urbanism examines past spatial struggles through case studies at the scale of buildings, neighborhoods, and cities. I draw on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research to understand how queer spaces emerged and how queer inhabitants of the Bay Area have used various spatial tactics—including occupations, transformations, and reclamations of physical environments—as they articulate specific demands for spaces and services as queer citizenship rights. Critiques have not always happened through the language of citizenship. However, during some critical activist periods in the San Francisco Bay, including gay liberation, the response to AIDS, and antigentrification organizing, activists have indeed invoked citizenship, sometimes as the basis for LGBTQ+ people’s inclusion in urban and national political communities and sometimes to highlight

their rejection of state institutions. When we consider the histories of queer citizenship and queer urban habitation together, we can see how queer cultures have pushed both into and against mainstream US society, using tactics that are both—and sometimes simultaneously—ideological and material.

This is not a linear history of queer people moving from, say, the margins to the center: dispossession of people vulnerable to the Bay's affordability crisis and oppression of radical queer and trans social and cultural expressions continue. But it can show us how, in different ways at different times, queer cultures have worked to fight for their rights to shape the city as a place where they can realize nonmainstream ways to live together, have sex, and build pluralist urban social movements. And as different groups and individuals, with sometimes quite different social experiences and political priorities, live close together, they have learned from and with one another, using that knowledge to advance the horizons of queer politics.

THE POLITICS OF URBAN LIFE

For decades, scholars have scrutinized the motives and tactics of sexually and gender nonconforming people to assert their rights as social subgroups with distinct cultures and politics.¹¹ This scholarship brings together legal and cultural discourses, psychoanalytic theory, philosophy, and politics, as well as investigations into queer cultural production such as performance, visual art, and literature.¹² There has been excellent work, which I build upon here, but it tends to treat the physical environment, and especially buildings, when they appear at all, as a backdrop or container for social life.¹³ That said, architects and sociologists have written enough about certain spaces of urban homosexuality—including bathhouses, public toilets, and domestic interiors—to make clear that queer sociality takes specific, material forms in specific, material places.¹⁴ The aesthetics of these places matters, but not in a stable, taxonomic way that can be fixed in place and time. In fact, attempts to exalt particular, seemingly queer aesthetics—such as specific buildings or symbols—can end up distracting from on-the-ground political struggles.

Consider, for example, the rainbow-washing of the Castro, the most well-known gay area in San Francisco, where, during a recent street renovation, the rainbow flag was literally embedded in the asphalt of a pedestrian crossing at a prominent intersection (fig. 2).¹⁵ For queer people who are priced out of the Castro, and who watch wealthy young heterosexual couples move in, the celebration of the area's queer legacy can appear an empty symbolic gesture.¹⁶ The same goes for the transgender flags painted on street lighting poles in the downtown Tenderloin neighborhood, where Compton's Cafeteria Transgender Cultural District, the first transgender cultural district in the United States, was established in 2017 (fig. 3).¹⁷ The little flags recognize history, but it's not as though they meet the demands for healthcare, employment, and housing reforms that gender nonconforming people have been making in the area and beyond since the mid-1960s.¹⁸

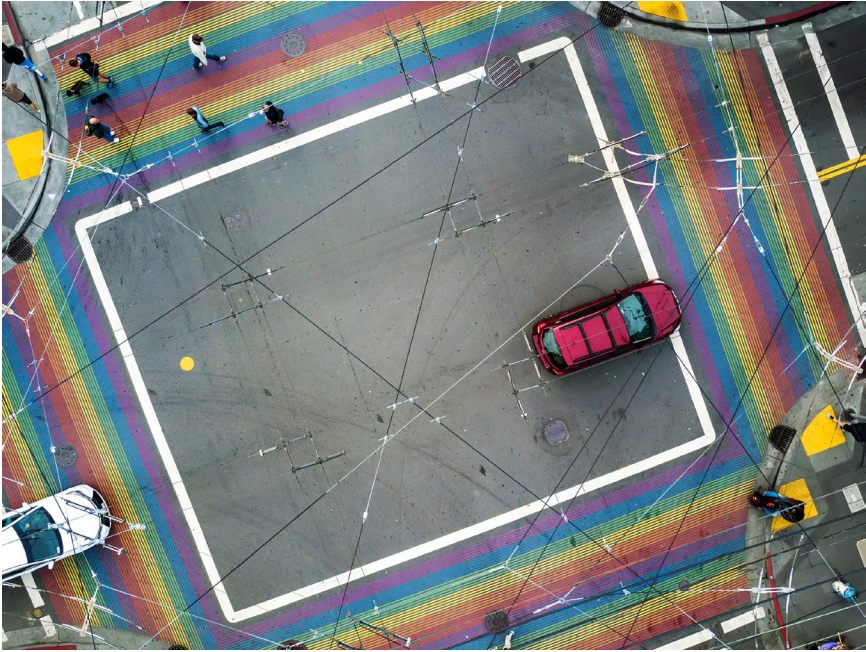


FIGURE 2. The rainbow crosswalk at Castro and Eighteenth Streets in January 2018. Similar crosswalks are installed in queer neighborhoods in cities around the United States and abroad. Photograph by Andriy Bezuglov. © Alamy.



FIGURE 3. Trans flags painted on light poles in San Francisco's Compton's Cafeteria Transgender Cultural District in June 2023. Photograph by Lori Eanes. © Lori Eanes.

The current use of the building that housed Compton's Cafeteria, the site of a 1966 riot memorialized in the cultural district's name, as transitional housing operated by the largest for-profit prison company in the United States is even more problematic, demonstrating the carceral logic of how the state and private capital circumscribe social inclusion.¹⁹

These phenomena are integral to contemporary urbanism. Since the 1970s, scholars and policy makers alike have largely understood urbanism in connection with a political discourse of the right to the city, analyzing how everyday habitation produces urban space.²⁰ *Queering Urbanism* builds on that work to investigate how the environment shapes and is shaped by queer people asserting their own right to the city by creating territories that can be both physical and discursive. Operating at the edges of assimilationist practices, queer territorialization demonstrates that the right to the city as a demand should be conceptualized as a set of various emplaced rights—the right to inhabit, alter, and create new urban spaces—rather than simply, or primarily, as a set of political rights.²¹

Demands for the right to urban spaces advance particular forms of citizenship. These demands shed light on how individuals' rights are used, denied, or conditionally granted to maintain social hierarchies in cities and, in some cases, to undo them. In the most general sense, citizenship refers to a bundle of rights and obligations associated with membership in a particular social group. Historically, governing elites have used citizenship to maintain social hierarchies by excluding “unworthy” subjects from electoral politics at the state level.²² In the United States, national citizenship status was conferred automatically to property-owning white men. Subsequent discussions about citizenship as a set of rights attached to specific obligations were applied predominantly to historically disenfranchised groups, including women, African Americans, Native Americans, ethnic minorities, immigrants, homosexuals, transgender, and disabled people. Those disenfranchised groups used the formal attributes of citizenship discourse to safeguard their inclusion in national institutions, beginning with the right to vote, and to articulate socioeconomic demands, such as the right to inhabit the public sphere.²³ In the 1960s and 1970s, progressive coalitions systematically expanded the normative category of the white, heterosexual, cisgender, national citizen, demonstrating the plurality of subject positions within multiculturalist societies, and asserting the rights of minorities.²⁴

The meteoric rise of LGBTQ+ rights discourse in the social and political arenas of the United States since the 1960s has relied on deliberate exclusions and gradual, carefully mediated expansions of which homosexual subject-positions would be included in the imagined community of national citizens. I want to distinguish between demands for equality and the associated obligations of “good citizenship” that derive from membership in the national political community, and the meaning of queer citizenship in this book.²⁵ From the mid-1960s until the present, the national LGBTQ+ movement in the United States has focused on legal and political equality.²⁶ However, beginning in the 1990s disenfranchised queer people,

especially people of color, began to articulate a new basis for socioeconomic rights predicated on alternative ways of life and nonbinary cultural identities that did not fit within the neoliberal nation-state. Urban queer cultures did not (only) seek accommodation by courts of law and city planners, questioning the mantra of desiring a “seat at the table.” They formed counterpublics with their own ethical structures and cultural codes. Such countercultures have existed throughout the much longer history of queer placemaking, but it has been within the past thirty years that members of these “stranger cultures,” as political theorist Shane Phelan calls them, have advanced distinct visions of queer citizenship.²⁷

Both notions of citizenship engage with the nation-state, the first by seeking to reform its institutions and the second by creating alternative self-governance structures and cultural belonging. These notions have coexisted since the beginning of the narrative that unfolds in *Queering Urbanism*. The genealogy of the debates that the book traces sheds light on the historical conditions that brought each to the forefront of urban activism. Together, they describe how sexuality became intelligible as a legal category in liberal democracies and what that recognition did for homosexual and heterosexual subjects, who suddenly had to consider what it meant to “have” sexuality.²⁸

In a book investigating the politics of everyday queer life, it is important to define at the outset how historically contingent sexually and gender nonconforming identities inform and are informed by urban habitation. The terms queer, transgender, gay, and lesbian have historically specific meanings. In the following chapters, they are situated in the contexts in which they emerged, recognizing the differences in the political project that each invokes. Each term’s historicity reveals that the postwar identity-building project was the product of contestations, deliberate exclusions, and expansions of the institutional construction of sexual difference. I also refer to the terms queer and transgender as they have been mobilized in contemporary critical theory to denote more generally the analytical work that the terms do to disrupt normative ways of signifying sexual and gender differences.²⁹ The two terms are not interchangeable. Instead, each chapter will clarify the meaningful differences between them, as the notions of queering and transing enter the lexicon of spatial analysis.

SITUATING QUEERNESS AND TRANSNESS

The spaces that the people in this book have historically inhabited and their queering tactics range from transgender community formation in the Tenderloin to adaptations of Victorian flats for gay and lesbian cohabitation and from urban activism to address government inaction in the face of AIDS in San Francisco to the establishment of a queer Community Land Trust in Oakland. They span a time frame, from 1964 to the present, in which visions of queer liberation oscillated from focusing on assimilating LGBTQ+ social life in the Bay Area’s cities to organizing insurgent actions, though sometimes both tendencies have been present

at the same time. During the early homophile movement in the 1960s, gay and lesbian organizers' political strategy focused on respectability and workplace anti-discrimination. Homosexuality became intelligible as a social identity during this time, and homosexual minority groups asserted their political power at the local level. This resulted in increased freedoms for gays and lesbians, with the important qualification that individuals who enjoyed those freedoms were predominantly white, cisgender, middle class, and able-bodied.³⁰

The gay liberation movement emerged both within and alongside other late-1960s countercultural movements, especially, in the Bay Area, the New Left. The failure of leftist political uprisings globally (epitomized by the Parisian May of 1968) provoked the critique of Marxist class-based struggles as limited in their capacity to engender broader anticapitalist political coalitions.³¹ New Left organizing sought to build stronger coalitions based on recognizing politically disenfranchised social groups on their own terms without collapsing cultural differences within a universal political identity for those groups. Sociologist Elizabeth Armstrong argues that gay liberation activists represented the most successful strand of New Left politics.³² That was partly because gay liberationists after 1969 instrumentalized homosexual identity to argue for their inclusion on an equal basis in the political community of liberal democratic citizenship.³³ The Bay Area was a hotbed for New Left and gay liberation activities, engendering synergies among countercultural groups in the 1960s that contributed to the politicization of homosexuality. Especially in Berkeley, which had been the epicenter of the free speech movement, radical political ideas circulated through word of mouth, numerous newsletters, and community fora. Within that environment, cohabiting collectives fused hippie counterculture with liberation politics, seeking (but not always succeeding) to build coalitions among anticapitalist collectives, black liberation, and the gay liberation movement.³⁴

LGBTQ+ political rights developed alongside the growing visibility and organizational priorities of queer social life in urban environments. However, political gains achieved through court battles since the 1960s and abetted by nonviolent grassroots activism were not without a significant backlash from a coalition of right-wing and Christian "culture warriors," for whom sexual liberation was the *bête noire*.³⁵ In the 1970s and 1980s, conservatives lamented the diverse cast of nonwhite characters who steadily gained visibility and prominence in popular culture, the media, and entertainment. At the same time, liberals witnessed the selective inclusion of new subjects within the political group of national citizens paired with the privatization of public life and upward redistribution of economic resources.

Citizenship Debates

A significant shift occurred in the 1990s in how disenfranchised groups articulated their rights claims in the context of national citizenship discourse.³⁶ Formerly pluralistic movements that joined together leftist radical groups that rejected the capitalist structure of the economy and liberal activists who advocated economic

and social reforms had already begun to crumble in the previous decade. Cultural critic Lauren Berlant argues that the economic and social reforms of the Reagan administrations in the 1980s privatized national citizenship. Right-wing politicians began constructing an idealized private sphere that permeated US social life through advertising and public discourse. Mass media created a national public whose “survival” depended “on personal acts and identities performed in the intimate domains of the quotidian.”³⁷ Berlant argues that surveillance of this intimate domain was diffused and decentralized in the privatized public sphere of television networks and mass culture more generally. As a result, private citizens internalized the ideals and aspirations of that culture, sidelining earlier liberal demands for economic redistribution through government investment in housing, education, and welfare.³⁸

Identity politics, as a form of minority-group political consciousness within Western liberal democracies that originated during the civil rights movement, led to antagonisms among social groups.³⁹ These groups sought to safeguard their interests, legitimating their demands for recognition and participation in the national body politic achieved in part through equal participation in every aspect of the commodified public sphere. However, within the public sphere in consumer capitalist societies, hierarchical relationships are not incidental and transient but essential for its function. Interest groups operating under this logic flatten internal differences to build minority subjects that can “compete” within this politico-economic system. Existing systems of minority stigmatization and subordination are thus challenged based on demonstrating social and economic contribution. Shane Phelan argues that stigmatization and subordination, which historically give minority groups a common political project, “injure the subjects produced through their operations.” She explains that “the injury is constitutive of the identity” and therefore “identity politics is a response to, a demand for the end of, such injury.”⁴⁰ However, identity politics reinscribes injury within a new register of antagonistic relationships by motivating subordinated groups to reexperience injury without challenging it as such. Advancing a theory that would lead to the queering of normative citizenship, Phelan argues that “without a vision of a desired future, such a politics amounts to a continual picking at the scab of suffering.” Locating this vision in physical spaces, as I do in this book, gives concrete examples, however partial, provisional, and inchoate.

Critics of national citizenship from queer and transgender standpoints have argued that the very language of recognition and legal accommodation leads to the assimilation of dissenting political views within a culture of social homogeneity. Moreover, nonprofit organizations abet assimilation with the false promise of upward mobility aided by carceral removal of those not conforming to its norms.⁴¹ National citizenship becomes the great equalizer, where minority groups such as LGBTQ+ people seek to make their case for political and social rights. This makes individual dissent more difficult. Homonormativity describes how a depoliticized

gay culture centered on domesticity and consumption upholds the dominant structure of heterosexual political institutions.⁴² Homonormative gay and lesbian citizens model their identities on white middle-class normativity, whereby whiteness denotes the aspirational status of full citizen. Their demands already since the 1970s have centered, among others, on developing an expansive national gay commercial sphere catering to their social needs and transferring property ownership to their partners. Institutions of the neoliberal state developed the capacity to accommodate both demands. Those accommodations prompted many gays and lesbians to sideline pluralist democratic politics such as extensive debate and openly engaging dissenting views in the media, because such politics in the 1990s could disrupt the structural underpinnings of their success.⁴³

Aihwa Ong's anthropological approach to understanding claims of national belonging by minority populations in the United States demonstrates that "othering" minorities upholds the exclusionary logic of normative citizenship.⁴⁴ Ong focuses on immigrant citizenship and argues that "racial oppositions are not merely the work of discriminatory laws and outright racists, but the everyday product of people's maintenance of their 'comfort level' of permissible liberal norms against the socially deviant newcomers who disturb that sense of comfort."⁴⁵ Similar discomfort with queer and transgender people's cultures, especially people of color, is at the root of liberal identity politics' framing of "acceptable" homosexuality. Moreover, cultural difference cannot easily be codified in a narrow set of legal accommodations and, as scholars building on Kimberlé Crenshaw's foundational work on intersectional oppression during the last thirty years have shown, individual experiences are shaped by multiple vectors of marginalization that can, but do not always have to, operate simultaneously.⁴⁶ Pursuing the rights of transgender people in courts as the latest frontier in civil rights struggles often does not account for how marginality and criminalization, and not only gender and sexual nonconformity, shape the experiences of transgender people and especially transgender people of color and immigrants.⁴⁷ Following this line of critique, the case studies in this book are evaluated from the perspective of their inhabitants' attitudes toward assimilation and the materialist conditions that informed those attitudes.

For example, top-down placemaking efforts by planners and commercial interests in the Castro recognize queerness without granting rights to queer and transgender people, especially youth and those who are "priced out" of the neighborhood to this space. Moreover, as transgender rights have come to the forefront of debates about equality after 2010, a familiar phenomenon has emerged concerning branding trans space as the space of personal reinvention to fit late capitalist self-help and lifestyle cultures. Architecture, and especially domestic interiors, plays a pivotal role in this branding. The Malibu home of the celebrity former athlete and reality television personality Caitlyn Jenner, for instance, was featured prominently as the backdrop of her coming-out feature as transgender in *Vanity Fair* in 2015. She was photographed there by Annie Leibowitz amidst gowns, earthy

textures, and a cluttered vanity.⁴⁸ The aesthetic dimension of Jenner's transgender coming out is not presented, and certainly not conceived, as part of a transgender counterculture that questions normative aesthetics of who/what constitutes femininity. Moreover, as the cultural revanchism of right-wing media and political rhetoric in the post-Trump era demonstrates, the inclusion of transgender as a category of difference in popular culture and state institutions that purport to restore the "virility" of American society is "at best an addendum waiting to be nullified."⁴⁹ Contrary to Jenner's coming out, the processes of queering space in this book reveal how insurgent place-based demands have historically informed specifically queer articulations of space and citizenship that, during the time of their inception and development, were antithetical to mainstream heterosexual social norms.

According to anthropologist James Holston, insurgency in the context of the historical development of modern citizenship is "an acting counter [process], a counterpolitics, that destabilizes the present and renders it fragile, defamiliarizing the coherence with which it usually presents itself."⁵⁰ In this formulation, insurgent citizenship "erupts" from "historical sites of differentiation."⁵¹ These are physical and discursive sites where difference has historically functioned as a way to legalize inequality by distributing rights based on formalizing racial and class divisions.⁵² In this context, insurgencies appropriate the language of national citizenship to counter the inequalities produced by the legal construction of privileged citizen-subjects.⁵³ This notion of citizenship that is based on recognizing formal difference as the first step toward insurgency must be distinguished from debates about sociopolitical rights through the lens of the politics of difference, which shaped feminist and then gay and lesbian debates about inclusion to national citizenship between 1970 and 2000 and are still prevalent today.⁵⁴ The politics of difference typically refers to the formalization of difference in national political discourse through policy decisions recognizing special rights for minority groups. These policies, such as the right of instruction in a regional language or dialect within nation-states, tend to neutralize universal national citizenship as an equalizing force in society. While these policies question homogeneity as the conceptual foundation of equality by seeking to recognize the needs of particular groups of citizens that comprise the national community, they run the risk of distributing inequality.⁵⁵

If the notion of a multicultural national community is revealed as always already fragmented and incomplete, the analytical lens of insurgent citizenship highlights how these fragments can relate to each other in contingent, uneasy, and constantly shifting alliances. Understanding social stratification as a structural part rather than an aberration of national citizenship helps identify precise moments when insurgencies in physical spaces expand the scope of what it means to belong to the city and the nation. This sense of belonging is the outcome of local attachments that people develop in physical spaces.⁵⁶ Employing a framework of

insurgent queer citizenship, this book examines temporal and material fissures in the production of inequality, such as spatial occupations, appropriations, and physical alterations. Seen through that lens, sexually and gender nonconforming people comprise a heterogeneous minority group that has historically emerged and constantly changes in conjunction with modern urbanity.

Queer Territorialization in San Francisco

The historical narrative that traverses the discussion of this book's case studies begins in 1964. That was the year that a feature in *Life* magazine "exposed homosexuality in America" to a heterosexual audience, as its author proclaimed.⁵⁷ Bill Eppridge's photographs for *Life* included San Francisco bar interiors and some images of public spaces in Los Angeles and New York, which intended to take the pulse of urban homosexual experiences. At the same time, the accompanying essay made a case for the emergence of distinct homosexual identities in the different cities that the reporter visited. In San Francisco gay bars played a central role in constructing a gay cultural identity and ensuing political demands.⁵⁸

José Sarria's controversial performances at the Black Cat bar in North Beach in the late 1950s and early 1960s, before the time of the *Life* photo-essay, are important examples of the bars' role in the emergence of a homosexual citizenship discourse. Sarria was a female impersonator, or drag performer in today's terms, and an openly gay man whose shows at the Black Cat were popular underground attractions.⁵⁹ Those shows propelled him to the center of homosexual life in the city at that time. Sarria's drag performances concluded with his call for all attendees to hold hands and chant with him "God Save the Nelly Queen," a proto-liberation anthem that turned the always crowded bar into a space where gay men could affirm their homosexuality in a semipublic setting.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, public expressions of homosexuality in the 1960s were illegal in San Francisco. This only changed in 1972, while homosexual sex was still illegal statewide until 1975. As a result, the Black Cat was subjected to frequent police raids and received numerous fines on charges of acting as "a hangout for homosexuals" and allowing "lewd behavior."⁶¹

Sarria was also the first openly gay man to run for a seat in the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1961, a defiant act that raised the stakes in the fraught relationship between the police and the nascent gay and lesbian affinity groups in the city. His bid was unsuccessful, but the symbolism raised eyebrows among the city's elites and fueled the gay rights movement.⁶² Sarria's outspokenness and perseverance partly relied on delivering his message with humor. For example, when the police raided gay bars and arrested people on charges of female impersonation, Sarria advised cross-dressing men to attach paper signs on their outfits with text that proclaimed, "I am a man."⁶³ But police raids continued, and eventually the Black Cat succumbed to economic pressures wrought by fines in 1963. Sol Stoumen, the café's heterosexual owner, had led a long battle against police

discrimination based on the right of homosexual men and women to congregate in commercial spaces. In 1951 *Stoumen* had taken the case of police officers' attempts to close the Black Cat on prostitution charges to the California Supreme Court and won. The *Stoumen v. Reilly* decision established an important precedent but did little to fend off the vigorous policing of homosexual acts in the city, which was in no small part due to the desire of the police to reassert their dominance.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, by the time the Black Cat closed, the number of homosexual hangouts in the city had increased notably.⁶⁵ Bars catering to homosexual men were concentrated mainly in Polk Gulch, while women's bars maintained a presence in North Beach throughout the 1960s.⁶⁶ In addition, in 1962 several bar owners established the Tavern Guild, now considered the first gay business association in the United States. The guild's intention was to help gay bar owners to stop "fighting among themselves and [start] fighting the system."⁶⁷ As a new political consciousness developed among people who identified as gay and lesbian in the late 1960s, the guild leadership understood the importance of physical spaces for entertainment and socializing as necessary components in building identity-based affinity groups and organized fundraising events in bars to support a variety of causes. The guild attempted to create a dialogue between gay and lesbian communities and local politicians by, for example, sponsoring "candidate nights" to get to know their political platforms. These types of events, although successful in creating the groundwork for the "gay vote" theory of the 1970s, were criticized by gay liberationists in 1969 as accommodationist.⁶⁸

As the politics of homosexuality unfolded at the municipal level in the 1970s and played out to a national audience, urban homosexualities developed territorial characteristics. Gay neighborhoods such as the Castro and Folsom were marked by overt symbols of sexual nonconformity. They appeared in tourist maps of the city as bounded areas with distinct cultural traits.⁶⁹ The concentration of single-sex households in particular zip codes was another metric to understand the territorialization of homosexuality in the city's landscape. The analysis of demographic information about gay residential concentrations, gay businesses, and gay voting patterns in San Francisco in the 1970s and 1980s demonstrates how gay and lesbian political rights were achieved by linking urban homosexual placemaking with responsible citizenship.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, the material conditions that enabled gay and lesbian appropriations of spaces can complement disaggregated data and reveal these spaces' insurgent potential. Leather bars and sex clubs consolidated their presence on and around Folsom Street, for example, after migrating there from the Embarcadero, the area around the port of San Francisco known to many homosexual men between 1940 and 1970 for clandestine and often outright dangerous encounters with other men.⁷¹ This territorial consolidation was the result of the displacement of working-class people and of gay hangouts from the Embarcadero when the city embarked on a range of "urban rehabilitation" projects beginning in the 1960s. However, the

emergence of the “miracle mile” on Folsom, as queer theorist Gayle Rubin called it, allowed men and women to develop and to a certain extent celebrate new sexual subjectivities through experimentation with the contours of corporeal pleasure.⁷²

With the urban visibility of gay cultures in the 1970s, the openness and publicity of leather and BDSM sexual cultures and practices inspired as varied a set of visitors as Tom of Finland and Michel Foucault.⁷³ As a result, it became more difficult for urban redevelopment projects to uproot their spatial legacy, not for lack of consistent efforts to “rehabilitate” the area.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, planning debates around that time, which pitted social groups against each other, had a lasting effect reflected in current building regulations and planning priorities in the Bay Area.⁷⁵ Some of the few remaining working-class lodgings in the city were demolished in the 1970s as new leisure and tourist-oriented developments encroached the areas around the city center beginning in the 1980s.⁷⁶ These changes ignited a movement for the protection of housing in which queer and transgender groups participated vociferously in subsequent decades, creating new platforms for the intersection of queer and racial justice activism in the present.

Activists on the ground crossed paths with—and often included in their ranks—artists and academics who were chronicling queer life and taking part in queer and transgender cultural critique. The pioneering Lesbian and Gay Studies Department at San Francisco City College, the first academic division in the United States to center LGBTQ+ studies in its curriculum, has been a hub for queer and anticolonial teaching and activism since 1989.⁷⁷ The University of California Berkeley, with its history of student activism in the 1960s, was fertile ground both for the development of queer theory and for a large number of queer student organizations that took ideas from lectures and seminar readings to their meetings and activities, transforming them in the process. Queer theorist Judith Butler, who taught in Berkeley for over thirty years, noted in the preface to the tenth-anniversary edition of her influential 1993 book *Gender Trouble* that her argument “was produced not merely from the academy, but from convergent social movements of which [she had been] a part.”⁷⁸ As Butler put it, the “internal dissension” in these movements provided her with a fertile intellectual terrain to hone her analytical skills and engage in emancipatory and future-oriented political projects.⁷⁹ With the establishment of queer theory as a field of study in 1990, many queer organizers either were educated in this intellectual environment or were in regular contact with those who had been. This created a productive feedback loop with insights from new queer identities entering back into academia via the spaces where researchers lived and socialized.

It also meant that, by the 1980s and 1990s, San Francisco was emerging as a privileged location to study gay and lesbian territorialization. Trans theorist Jack Halberstam has argued that queer studies’ preoccupation with cities risks equating “the physical journey from small town to big city with the psychological journey from closet case to out and proud,” and as other scholars have pointed out,

we should be careful not to project the experiences of queer people in Western metropolises onto those in other contexts, including rural areas and cities and towns across the Global South.⁸⁰ I take these points to heart, but I also believe that we have much to learn from a close focus on particular urban environments.⁸¹ Within cities, specific cultures, demands, and forms of territorialization differ among groups. Therefore, by viewing urban homonormativity through a critical lens, the study of urban queer experience can reveal unanticipated coalitions of the dispossessed in urban and more-than-urban environments. In the San Francisco Bay context, the construction of Chicanx and Latinx homosexualities, for example, demonstrates how physical and discursive spaces, such as community centers in the Mission, and debates about immigration, de-centered whiteness as the defining attribute of urban homosexual identities.⁸² Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Latinx queer and transgender people in the Mission articulated their own parameters of what it means to be an immigrant queer person carrying distinct cultural influences, which they mapped onto existing landscapes of homosexuality in the city.⁸³ These types of queer identity formation give voice and agency to people whose embodied sexual and gender identities may shift over the course of their lives as a consequence, for instance, of an AIDS diagnosis or immigration status.

Each chapter of *Queering Urbanism* historicizes gay, lesbian, transgender, and queer embodiments that emerged in response to specific post-WWII political debates and ways of inhabiting the city. I do so to de-center gay and lesbian spaces that have received considerable scholarly attention by examining how they have historically excluded other people, and why. In this context, the notion of insurgent queer citizenship helps explain the meaningful differences between normative ways of inhabiting the city and subaltern spatial practices, in which public space is both the product of social struggles and the proper demand of these struggles.⁸⁴ To queer urbanism, this book attempts to map out a heterogeneous network of spaces, people, and organizations that blur the boundaries of what is public and what is private along with what counts as institutional and what is considered grassroots, in the realm of the contemporary city.

Chapter 1 examines a network of spaces around the intersection of Turk and Taylor Streets in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, where, between 1964 and 1970, a group of gender and sexually nonconforming young adults fought to inhabit sidewalks, Single Room Occupancy hotels, and cafeterias. In the process, they created shared cultures, articulated political demands, built coalitions with antipoverty activists affiliated with Glide Memorial Methodist Church, and became visible subjects to federal and state agencies. During the process of securing "urban revitalization" federal funds from the War on Poverty, Glide-affiliated activists wrote a series of reports that framed the Tenderloin as a "ghetto," wracked by violence and in need of reform. The reductive, even caricatured view of queer life in these reports frames demands for the recognition of queer people's rights as

the need to assimilate them in mainstream society as “productive citizens,” thereby revealing the limits of assimilationist discourse to achieve social change.

In the 1970s, gay lifestyles across the city were subject to intense politicization and public scrutiny. Much attention went to the Castro, where, as I explore in chapter 2, gay men consolidated territorial claims, moving into the neighborhood’s Victorians, renovating them, and creating a kind of “village life” that made gay culture newly visible. The dominant form of hypermasculine gay embodiment during that time, the “Castro clone,” fits into this popular imagination, demonstrating how everyday habitation influenced gay embodiment, and the reverse, how gay embodiment mapped onto architectural interiors and urban public space. The chapter explores how gay men’s substantive claims to urban space through gay territorialization led to an attendant logic of cultural belonging and ultimately a form of insurgent citizenship as a set of ruptures with traditional representations of the family home, and with expressions of sex and sexuality in public. Between 1969 and 1982, gay men employed notions of self-realization, community-building, and political representation to demand and ultimately win the right to openly display cultural markers of sexual difference and gain recognition of new homosexual relationships outside the nuclear family structure. But as Bay Area residents, popular media, advertising executives, and local government officials scrutinized gay life, gay men risked entering a kind of invisible closet, having to conform to popular gay embodiments to be recognized.

Chapter 3 turns to a series of spaces created by lesbian feminists and analyzes territorialization as a catalyst for lesbian identity formation. This includes the first openly lesbian bar in San Francisco, established in 1966, as well as two feminist bookstores, Information Center Incorporate in Oakland and Old Wives’ Tales in San Francisco, which were founded in the 1970s and functioned as movement-spaces. Lesbian feminist collectives claimed spaces and built prefigurative communities against long odds, but they were not immune to conflicts from within—such as disagreements around how to run these spaces collectively—or to pressure from without. The consolidation of independent bookstores and publishers into corporate entities that squeezed independent bookstores’ profits led to feminist bookstore closures in the late 1980s and 1990s. Meanwhile, five blocks away from Old Wives’ Tales, the Women’s Building of the Bay Area, founded in the Mission in 1979, became a cultural center that provided—and still provides—office space for women’s organizations and is a hub for feminist, including lesbian feminist, cultural activities. In the two decades after its establishment, changes within the women’s movement played out in everyday decisions about room organization, shared maintenance, and architectural symbolism. The Women’s Building story demonstrates how late-1970s feminist activism combined radical demands for rethinking private ownership in favor of collective structures with ideas about women’s cultural exceptionalism and insurgent demands for their right to build women’s spaces and run them independently. The influence of lesbians

within the feminist movement in developing territorial characteristics is noticeable in the organization's engagement with the Mission neighborhood, which was the epicenter of lesbian territorialization—the consolidation of the otherwise dispersed lesbian presence—in the Bay.

Chapter 4 traces broader cultural shifts in queer urban habitation during the 1980s, as the AIDS crisis—and the accompanying rise of homophobia, fear, and the closure of bathhouses—resulted in what I call the desexualization of San Francisco, and in the reversal of many of the previous decade's gains in visibility as well as sexual and social experimentation. By analyzing debates about the bathhouse closures, AIDS treatment in a dedicated hospital ward, and a ten-year-long occupation of a downtown plaza to protest government inaction in the face of AIDS, I trace the growing prominence of a broad human rights discourse during this period. Where queer San Franciscans had primarily made earlier rights-claims based on inhabiting specific sites and participating in economic activities in the city, homosexual citizens in both the Bay and the nation were now demanding the right to healthy urban life. It was a vision that sought to expand insurgent queer citizenship from the right to inhabit specific neighborhoods (the Castro, the Tenderloin) and buildings (the Victorian flat, gay bars and clubs, bathhouses) to the right of coproducing the urban public realm in equal terms with heterosexual citizens. But in practice, it also meant that middle-class, predominantly white gay and lesbian spaces were more quickly enfolded into a late-capitalist, sanitized urbanity because they became intelligible to the heterosexual public, their inhabitants relatable, and their economic contributions measurable. That process was also accelerated by the co-occurring displacement of black, brown, and Latinx residents away from the neighborhoods and the institutions that had previously supported them. The urban landscape's desexualization, then, was part of broader processes of deracination, class disenfranchisement, and gentrification.

Chapter 5 turns to queer and transgender collectively run spaces in San Francisco and Oakland during the last fifteen years to examine the state of queer and transgender urban habitation in the context of advanced gentrification, along with the meaning and tactics of spatial activism. Throughout San Francisco and in some parts of Oakland, such as Fruitvale, where the building at the center of my analysis in this chapter is located, queer and trans people, and especially people of color, have forged arrangements of collective living. This form of territorialization is different from earlier gay and lesbian neighborhood formation: it lacks a physical center and it engenders demands for the right to housing, for citizens' participation in cocreating public space, and to decide about what that public space looks like. Its queer insurgent attributes do not mirror race- and class-based politics; they are part of them. At the center of this activism is fighting dispossession, and as housing costs and rents continue to rise, some collectives have turned to Community Land Trusts (CLT—a form of collective tenure that removes land from the capitalist real estate market) to maintain ownership of the spaces where they

have built their distinct ways of life. In 2017, for example, queer and transgender people of color spearheaded the creation of the self-declared Liberated 23rd Avenue Building in an immigrant neighborhood in Oakland. In addition to owning the property collectively, they built a meaningful shared queer culture through art, intergenerational, and intercultural interactions. Yet as the area gentrifies with the influx of capital for multifamily housing and public investments in transit and other public amenities that change the immigrant neighborhood's physical landscape, the changing class and racial makeup and subdued gentrification aesthetics threaten to render Liberated 23rd a symbolic rather than functional example of queer citizens' insurgent resistance to mainstream pressure to assimilate or perish. The brief epilogue connects the stakes for each of the groups and individuals who have spearheaded place-based insurgencies, working with and against the state to simultaneously reshape American citizenship and urbanism. Rather than affirm a narrative of gradual inclusion into mainstream society and politics, the histories of queer urban social movements and their spaces in this book highlight and harness the creative energies of oppositional urban cultures.

Spaces of Separation, Assimilation, and Citizenship

The Tenderloin comprises thirty blocks in less than half a square mile in downtown San Francisco. Its physical environment is characterized by four- to six-story residential buildings, each occupying about half a block's depth, with commercial storefronts. There is a dearth of open space other than streets and sidewalks, all arranged on a regular urban grid, with longer faces on the east–west axis, as envisioned by Jasper O'Farrell in his 1849 vision for the development of a Gold Rush instant city.¹ By the turn of the twentieth century, it was home to many bars, clubs, and jazz venues, which together with the nearby Barbary Coast made up the center of San Francisco's famously rowdy nightlife.² The popular media has long tended to frame the Tenderloin as an insular vice district, but its public face at the southern edge, Market Street, is also the city's major transit and commercial corridor, with ample sidewalks, shopping, and performance venues catering to socially diverse audiences.³ This physical environment, dense, timeworn, and squeezed between Civic Center in the west and the city's main tourist hotel area around Union Square in the east, shaped the neighborhood's character as a seedy, neon-lit adult playground.

In black-and-white video footage used in the 1970 documentary *Gay San Francisco*, the Tenderloin's sidewalks are illuminated by the lights of shop windows, marquees, and vehicular traffic—a metropolitan look very different from typical representations of San Francisco's quirky residential neighborhoods on rolling hills in the national media.⁴ As the camera traverses the streets of the Tenderloin, the narrator announces: “This is gay San Francisco. An inside look at the life of San Francisco's homosexuals. They work to conceal their sexual orientation by day, and only at night do they show their true colors. The city's downtown Tenderloin district is the home ground of the always-visible segment of the city's homosexuals and transvestites.” Over the course of this film segment, his narration, intended for

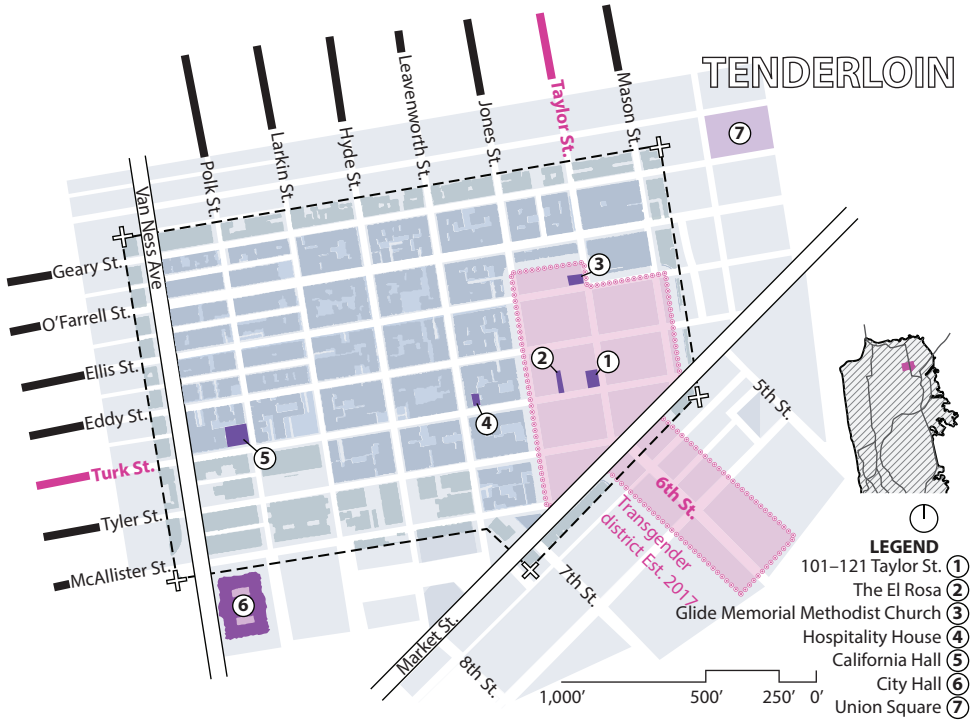
adult theater audiences as the film includes some pornographic content, fluctuates between curious about and critical toward homosexual people in the neighborhood, whom he refers to as “screaming queens.”⁵

Viewers of *Gay San Francisco* could understand that queer residents in the Tenderloin often had minimal resources—interviews on workplace discrimination and the way some individuals had been cut off from familial and social networks made that clear—but it did not mention another key dynamic: the police, in effect, confined queer and gender nonconforming people within a few blocks.⁶ In 1960 the “gayola” scandal—the news that a widespread network of policemen demanded bribes to let gay bars operate in the area—had been big news.⁷ Even if “gayola” led to the ouster of some policemen from the force, it did little to stave off police harassing queer people in the Tenderloin and elsewhere. The other side of police officers’ selective permission was control, and they kept close tabs on activities in the Tenderloin. The most heavily policed spaces were those occupied by the group of people that media coverage called drag queens, who were forced to remain within the boundaries of a small cluster of businesses and residential hotels around Turk and Taylor Streets, between Jones and Mason (map 1).⁸

The term drag queen initially described cross-dressing performers in homosexual subcultures in the United States, but the individuals who came to be grouped under the term often had very different ways of understanding their identities.⁹ In the context of the Tenderloin, the term signified the construction of a cultural identity outside mainstream societal norms that is predicated on gender and sexual nonconformity.¹⁰ In the 1960s some gender-nonconforming people shifted toward a transsexual identity as a form of mobility, entering society as the sex opposite to the one assigned at birth. Social marginalization was an experience that bonded most of those embodying what we now describe as transgender identities, who were obliged to adapt their everyday environments to meet their needs. Many engaged in prostitution because of barriers to formal employment due to their gender presentation or homosexuality, which was still illegal in San Francisco.

Transgender, as an analytical category, includes different ways of expressing gender identity beyond the binary male/female. The term can also enable transhistorical connections among marginalized groups without minimizing meaningful cultural and political differences.¹¹ When I refer to transgender embodiment in this chapter, I do not intend to conflate the experiences of the Tenderloin queens with later embodiments and the politics of transgender visibility in the present. However, to maintain historical accuracy, I use the terms Tenderloin queens and gay youth, acknowledging that these are external characterizations that, nonetheless, some of the individuals populating the spaces discussed in this chapter appropriated and transformed.

Nonprofit organizations in the Tenderloin seeking to address poverty and prostitution described the experiences of Tenderloin “street kids” in harrowing



MAP 1. Map of the Tenderloin showing the sites discussed in this chapter. © Gabriel Gonzalez & Stathis G. Yeros.

language. In reports and civic fora, reformers presented them as legitimate national subjects who had been failed by society¹² but were deserving of rights and assuming responsibilities.¹³ They appealed to the ethos of Johnson’s War on Poverty, with its commitment—however flawed in execution—to equitably distribute wealth and opportunities to all US citizens. But by the late 1960s, the War on Poverty was in its waning years, and beginning with the Nixon administration in 1969, the US entered a period of prolonged government disinvestment from social programs. Nonprofits and members of the queer public published reports and reached out to media by connecting with journalists to fight for recognition and political rights.¹⁴ That involved presenting the “street kids” in terms that fit into binaries of race and gender: a racially diverse group of drag queens and gay male hustlers—including black, Asian American, Latina queens—were essentially whitewashed to create a social category distinct from the predominantly African American neighborhoods in San Francisco that competed with Tenderloin organizations for federal grants.¹⁵

In the Tenderloin, queens and gay youth also occupied, altered, and appropriated the physical environment in forms of queer, insurgent performance that were also “acts of citizenship.”¹⁶ Between 1965 and 1969, residential hotels, bars,

cafeterias, and even sidewalks became spaces of social and political insurgency. The aesthetic dimensions of such acts, which have visual, textural, aural, and performative dimensions, did more than shape nonnormative embodiments through behavior, fashion, and sociocultural discourse—though these effects are important too. The “acts of citizenship” discussed in this chapter also involved physical space, not as a backdrop but as an influence for new embodiments that in some cases remade the city in turn.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF A QUEER NEIGHBORHOOD

Adult entertainment that included sophisticated “female impersonation” performances was typical in San Francisco for a small but well-known part of its rowdy nightlife since the 1920s.¹⁷ The most famous nightclub to offer it was Finocchio’s, located at various spots in North Beach from 1929 to 1999. Finocchio’s had many gay and lesbian regulars, but in the 1950s it was also a stop for tourists seeking the spectacle of gender-transgressive performances and the racialized display of “exotic dancers” on stage.¹⁸ However, most of the venues that employed cross-dressing entertainers did not enjoy Finocchio’s peculiar popularity with tourists; nor were their performances quite so elaborate, or as focused on the shock of seeming “deception” around gender. Other forms of drag took more ironic, and sometimes subversive, forms.¹⁹

The modern gay rights movement, which developed in the 1950s, was sometimes critical of what could be disparaged as frivolous homosexual lifestyles, including socializing in bars and clubs. The Mattachine Society (established in 1950) and the Daughters of Bilitis (DoB, established in 1955), for example, espoused a politics of respectability rooted in assimilationism.²⁰ They fought to end employment discrimination and to safeguard the rights of gays and lesbians to socialize in public.²¹ Society for Individual Rights (or SIR) campaigned for these demands as well, but recognized that gay and lesbian bars were venues with established sexual minority publics, and thus offered an excellent opportunity to develop political consciousness based on shared experiences and demands.²² Founded in 1964, SIR’s magazine, *Vector*, was widely available on city newsstands of the era, thereby putting a face to the newfound confidence in urban homosexual identities. *Vector* reproduced glossy, sexually suggestive imagery along with news reports and political commentary.²³ Nevertheless, as the goals of gay political organizations began to yield results, especially by growing their membership and attracting nonhomosexual support, bar owners were under considerable pressure from City Hall, the police, and gay and lesbian organizations to maintain what they described as “respectable appearances.”²⁴ The majority of early homosexual activists both embodied and performed middle-class identities and generally followed a code of what was considered appropriate public conduct in exchange for tacit protection of their privacy rights by the police.²⁵

People who transgressed gender identities or did not want to conform to the assimilationist tendencies of the homophile movement in the mid- and late 1960s had to operate in a narrower field.²⁶ Many of them congregated in the Tenderloin, which was already known for its boisterous nightlife.²⁷ Several gay bars were located there, as were some dubiously labeled “tranny bars” that catered primarily to transsexual women.²⁸ The proliferation of such venues in the 1960s (though they focused on entertainment for people who did not necessarily live in the neighborhood), and the availability of cheap accommodation in SROs in the area made the Tenderloin the first stop for disenfranchised young gay people arriving in the city.

SRO hotels were a fixture of the downtowns of many cities in the United States from the 1880s to the 1930s. Tenants could stay there from a few days to several years. Although downtown SROs belonged to several categories, ranging from luxury suites for bachelors to rudimentary accommodation in closet-sized rooms, by the mid-1960s Tenderloin SROs housed primarily poor, working-class, and transient people.²⁹ These people had few contacts or work opportunities in San Francisco and many of them engaged in sex work as a means of survival. They made their way in a neighborhood whose art deco architectural elements gave it a feeling of lost grandeur, and they patronized the area’s cheap restaurants, corner stores, and bathhouses—the latter catering both to those who worked in offices during the day and to those who lived in SROs without facilities of their own.

The marginalized residents of the Tenderloin helped usher in a new phase in homosexual politics.³⁰ For the disenfranchised youth, and especially the self-identified drag queens, who rejected the norms of heterosexual society and were confined by poverty to the Tenderloin, everyday concerns were different from those of most SIR, Mattachine, and DoB members. Sex work was, for many of them, a means to raise the money necessary for cosmetic surgeries to enhance their gender presentation and for gender-affirming surgery after 1968, when Stanford physicians could perform the operation. Many Tenderloin queens were eager to learn from each other’s experiences in the residential hotels and the cafeterias where they met.

The neighborhood’s built environment further shaped the priorities of political activism, where SRO tenants did not have access to private kitchens or proper meeting spaces, aside from on-site dining halls, which were seldom available. Consequently, they relied on other parts of the Tenderloin’s urban economy for food and socializing. This circumstance contributed to the domestication of the sidewalks as spaces for socializing and coming out, in the sense of openly performing queer subject positions and creating peer support networks. Casual observers and participants recognized that this was a world not only sexually charged (though that was certainly the case) but also one where friendships enabled ways of life predicated on forms of alternative kinship.³¹ But the exuberance of the nightly scenes on sidewalks belied the devastating violence that was part of the everyday

experience of their queer denizens, who were the target of sexual violence, beatings from clients, and abuse from the police without being able to report any of it.

The groups and individuals who appear in this chapter were at the nexus of intersecting political movements, resulting in the formalization of distinct traits that subsequently described their sexual and gender identities. The performance of these identities in the neighborhood's physical environment between 1966 and 1970 demonstrates how participants of these cultures expressed queer futurity as prefigurative enactments of alternative ways of everyday life and relationship building.³² Studying these spaces and the discourses that developed about them also reveals entanglements between liberalism, national citizenship, and urban insurgencies that have informed the construction of difference within the framework of late capitalism.

SEEKING SHELTER

Young queer people were often running away from oppressive families and discriminating social norms in the places where they grew up.³³ In the Tenderloin, they also had to contend with discrimination by SRO managers, who were reluctant to rent to them based on their youth and sexual "deviance."³⁴ Accounts of residential arrangements that allowed young queer people to remain in the area in the 1960s and 1970s reveal a network of a few spaces where they lived and socialized, which included the all-night cafeterias Compton's and Plush Doggie (demolished for the construction of a transit station in the 1970s), the after-hours coffee-bar Chuckkers, and the after-hours Lettermen Club and Pearls, which reportedly turned a blind eye to underage patrons' fake IDs.³⁵ People also patronized amusement arcades to play at pinball machines and solicit sex.³⁶ Queens, in particular, socialized mainly around the intersection of Turk and Taylor Streets; the El Rosa, an SRO hotel on Turk Street, was a haven for queer newcomers.³⁷ They banded together, bonding, keeping an eye out for violent incidents, and celebrating holidays as a makeshift family.

Sex work had been part of the Tenderloin's urban economy since the turn of the century, and while not all young runaways who found shelter there in the early 1960s were sex workers, many found it one of the only real options for earning money.³⁸ At the time, the area consisted of competing territories organized mainly by the gender presentation of sex workers and the types of sexual services they offered. As a means of survival, gay youth in the Tenderloin had to quickly master a set of rules about each subgroup's reach and conduct, as well as learn the signs of impending danger. Even within the neighborhood, there were clearly defined areas where queens could and could not solicit customers, which they learned from each other. The police unofficially relegated their activities to a small area in the neighborhood's interior, while the streets that marked its edges, including Polk

and Market, which had more foot traffic, were off-limits.³⁹ Cisgender male sex workers seem to have enjoyed a little more mobility in the neighborhood, but also typically had to make do with soliciting on sidewalks since most bars and clubs were off-limits to them because they were underaged. Many bar owners strictly enforced this prohibition because gay bars were often targets of police raids. Queens and gay youth who joined the scene, with already-established categories that described who they were presumed to be, had to negotiate their own terms for how to belong. For many of them, especially those who today identify as transgender, coming together in the Tenderloin and recognizing their own challenges in each other's experiences was empowering. Living together in the El Rosa, one of the few residential hotels that offered accommodation, helped many of them find common cause.⁴⁰

Whereas bigger SROs were operated by impersonal management companies, the El Rosa had an elderly general manager, "Mama" Rosa, who was sympathetic to drag queens.⁴¹ According to Amanda St. Jaymes, who managed day-to-day operations there in the late 1960s, "Mama Rosa"—who might or might not have also owned the building—allowed residents to bring guests into their rooms. Often, they were customers paying for sex.⁴² Yet, St. Jaymes explained, the building was more than a place to sleep and host tricks: "The El Rosa was a wayward home for girls [queens]. There were so many of us there that our families had disowned us." The masculine pronoun "El" for a traditionally female name, "Rosa," was a deliberate nod to the queens who lived there.⁴³

The El Rosa was housed in a white three-story building on 162–166 Turk Street built in 1906 (fig. 4).⁴⁴ Larger SROs in the Tenderloin had ornate art deco facades, but the El Rosa's exterior was adorned only with the required metal fire stairs. The lack of architectural detailing, in keeping with its cheaper lodging, also suggested a lack of historical specificity. The building was neither art deco nor modernist. It was neither a landmark nor so decrepit as to stand out. In this sense, the El Rosa was a kind of aesthetic blank slate for the enactment of alternative queer embodiments and social relationships. If queens were treated as second-class citizens in their everyday lives, the symbolism of the building's architecture further emphasized that point. However, it also offered opportunities for residents to appropriate the physical space, symbolically making it their own.

The building contained an estimated forty tightly packed rooms, arranged in two rows along a central dead-end corridor that received no direct sunlight.⁴⁵ Except for the four rooms overlooking Turk Street, each of which had a large window to the street, all others had a single small window to the outside, most without a street view. Room interiors typically included a bed, a closet, and a wash basin; bathrooms, as was the usual for working-class residential hotels, were communal. Some SROs had a "loung" for socializing, such as a kitchen or dining hall, but the El Rosa did not (according to contemporary accounts there was a bar on the

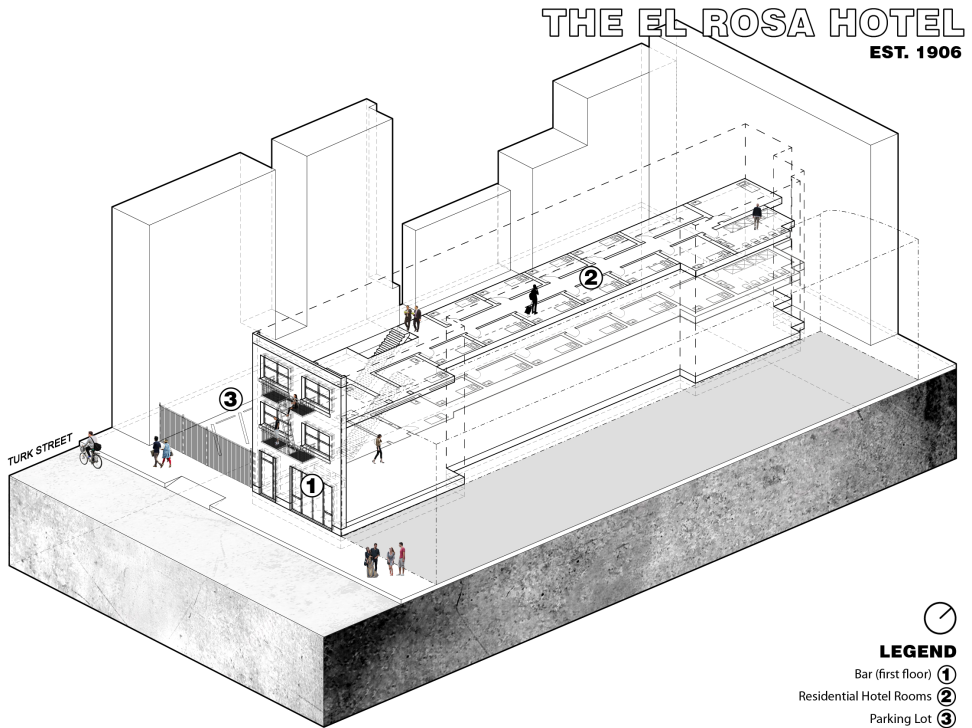


FIGURE 4. The El Rosa Hotel on Turk Street. The unit arrangement and dimensions are based on available planning and other archival material due to inability to access the site and are approximate. © Gabriel Gonzalez & Stathis G. Yeros.

ground floor, but queens who were under twenty-one were not allowed in). As a result, St. Jaymes and the other queens who lived there treated the building's immediate surroundings as their living room, extending queer domesticity to the streets and creating a public queer culture.⁴⁶

The building typologies of SROs like the El Rosa tended to give a communal character to everyday life and had done so since the turn of the twentieth century. People living near each other and sharing class or racial identification created self-sustaining communities of mutual support. Lodging houses served as literal and metaphorical “repair stations for workplace casualties.”⁴⁷ They were the only places where sick and wounded workers—often lacking adequate labor protections, let alone insurance—could recover with the help of other residents, who might at any given moment share their predicament. In the close quarters of the El Rosa and the businesses and streets that surrounded it, Tenderloin queens developed minority-group consciousness by recognizing their shared dangerous

urban conditions. The queens would often do roll calls to ensure everyone in their immediate community was present and accounted for during afternoon check-ins when they dressed and helped each other with makeup, getting ready for the evening.⁴⁸

It was not just the physical conditions of the Tenderloin that cultivated group consciousness. Workplace discrimination, for example, contributed to the confinement of queens and gay youth in the Tenderloin. For those who could pass and live as the gender opposite to their biological sex, finding and maintaining jobs in sectors of the economy other than entertainment and sex work was difficult. They were in constant danger of discovery by their coworkers or managers, especially when they had to show their identification documents as part of the hiring process, or when they had workplace disputes.⁴⁹ Others lacked high school diplomas; some queer runaways from rural areas had work skills not suited for the urban economy; and many did not have a permanent address to put in work applications.⁵⁰

Everyday acts of violence against Tenderloin queens were corporeal, institutional, and psychological. For queens, who were biologically male, wearing women's clothes posed a threat to their safety. Successfully passing as female could result in violent altercations with tricks (potential clients) who sometimes mistook queens for biologically female prostitutes and took the revelation of a queen's biological sex as a license to express their bigotry with violence. The accounts of those who made it through the 1960s and 1970s include stories of many others who did not. Senseless murders were part of the Tenderloin reality.⁵¹ Inhabiting the same sidewalks, the queens exchanged word-of-mouth tips about violent tricks and devised survival tactics that involved sharp heels, heavy custom-designed purses, and weapons made from beer bottles.⁵²

Moreover, dressing in drag was a punishable offense. It was often enough reason for a queen to be arrested, harassed, and brutally beaten by the notorious Tenderloin police patrols. The ad hoc enforcement of the law underlined how the power dynamic between police officers and Tenderloin queens played out: violence was imminent and unpredictable, marking the Tenderloin as a liminal zone that both allowed and denied the queens' rights to existence. Queens bore the brunt of police harassment, and those who were also people of color likely bore the most. It was, and is, hard to uncouple the racist and homophobic/transphobic motivation for police harassment. However, systemic racism in the Bay Area was expressed not only in segregationist practices (which were widespread) but also in repeatedly denying the humanity of people of color and asserting the power to dictate who is allowed to live and who is left to die.⁵³

Police harassment in the Tenderloin was rooted in a display of supremacist power, heteromascularity, and a Catholic morality that condemned homosexuality and gender deviance even as it turned a blind eye to extortion, illegal gambling,

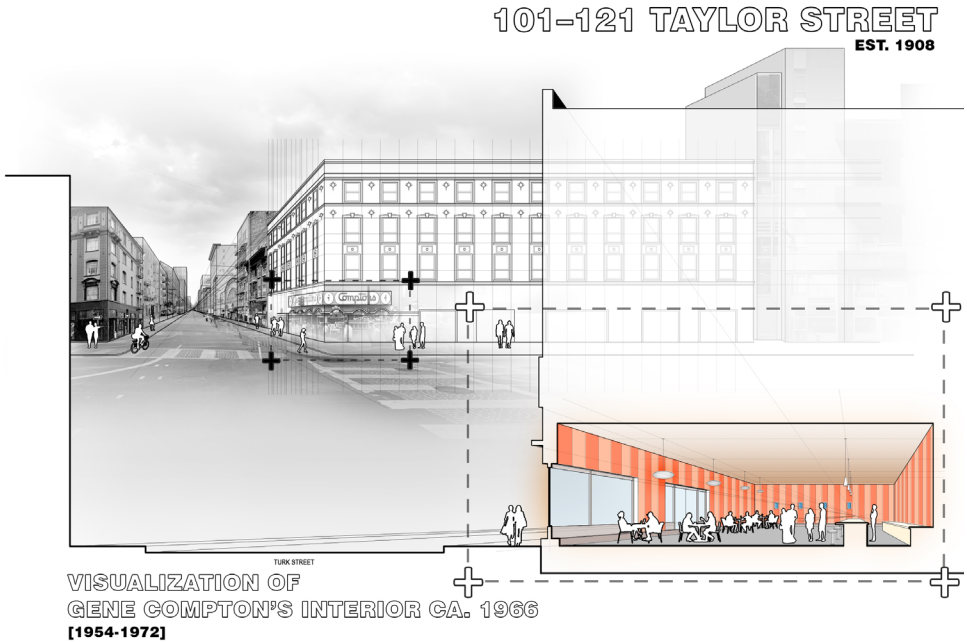


FIGURE 5. The SRO at 101-121 Taylor Street that housed Compton's Cafeteria in the 1960s. The interior visualization is based on available archival material and is approximate. © Gabriel Gonzalez & Stathis G. Yeros.

and other “vices” that were present in the Tenderloin.⁵⁴ In survivors’ accounts, a small number of police officers known to most Tenderloin night denizens perpetrated this harassment—arrests, beatings, and extortion. These officers were deliberately dispatched as a matter of routine, suggesting that both police and city administrators shrugged off the pattern of violence. No wonder, then, that police reform was a key demand for Tenderloin youth and major gay and lesbian organizations such as DoB, Mattachine, and SIR, all of which were, in the 1960s, starting to gain political power at the local level.⁵⁵

A conflict with the police led the block where El Rosa was situated—and more specifically, the corner of Turk and Taylor Streets—to acquire an almost legendary status in transgender studies, thanks largely to historian Susan Stryker’s work on early transgender liberation. This corner was the site of Gene Compton’s Cafeteria (fig. 5), where a riot broke out in August 1966, as detailed in Stryker’s 2005 documentary *Screaming Queens*. The riot’s direct cause was an altercation between the queens who were at Compton’s that evening and a member of the cafeteria staff, which led to the queens’ refusal to cooperate with Compton’s management and the policemen who arrived there ready for the familiar routine of arrests and

intimidation. Street fighting around the cafeteria followed window-smashing until a larger police contingent arrived. But the broader reason for the queens' defiance was anger at the police intrusion in an area where they had just begun to create conditions that gave them a sense of safety, as well as hope for personal and social change.⁵⁶ Safe spaces like the El Rosa offered shelter and a sense of power in numbers, while Compton's and the sidewalks surrounding the intersection functioned as a dining hall and public gathering places, respectively.

The diner, which was part of a local chain, was the center of queer social life in the area. It was close to Woolworth's, where queens shopped for cosmetics and eyelashes, and to a hair salon where they got their hair done. A bathhouse frequented by gay men stood next door. Because Compton's was open twenty-four hours a day, gay and bisexual men went there after the bars were closed, mixing with the queens who were not allowed into bars because they were too young. "You could go to Compton's, and it was its own little fairyland," Tamara Ching recalled. "I remember the waitresses with little doily napkins on their chest. It was beautiful because it was clean."⁵⁷ A typical 1960s diner, Compton's was furnished with modern plastic and metal furniture and was lit with bright fluorescent lights. That was a starkly different environment from the small hotel rooms where the queens lived. Both St. Jaymes and Ching, who frequented Compton's in 1966, evoked *The Wizard of Oz* to explain Compton's aspirational "scene." Referring to it as Oz, the modernity of the cafeteria's physical surroundings appeared to hold the promise of dignity and social transformation, perhaps like the Cowardly Lion finding his/her/their courage on their way to the Emerald City.

Queens went to Compton's to see each other and be seen, in a space that was part living room, part social club, with the relative safety of a clean and well-lit environment. Felicia Elizondo, who also frequented it in the mid-1960s, remembered, "Everybody would die for window seats, just to show off."⁵⁸ Elizondo added that people went to Compton's "to parade their fashions" in front of their peers and onlookers. This was a decade before the first gay bar with clear glass windows opened in the Castro.⁵⁹ Compton's plate-glass storefront mediated the queens' interactions with the neighborhood and symbolized their desire to be seen both as individuals and, as the riot indicated, a distinct social group. The casual camaraderie with other Tenderloin residents, especially young cisgender hustlers, that they had developed through everyday interactions at Compton's created a sense of collectivity that they expressed most dramatically for the first time in August 1966, with the violent response to police intrusion.

The area around the intersection of Turk and Taylor had the characteristics of a proto-queer territory, an urban enclave marked by the open expression of non-normative gender and sexuality in public. The contrast between the relative visibility of queer urban cultures in the neighborhood was markedly different from the social networks queer people had developed around urban parks and public restrooms. Those loose social networks were mainly based on clandestine, often

transactional sex. However, young queer people who inhabited those spaces developed friendships and networks of support that in the Bay Area often led them to the Tenderloin.⁶⁰

THE LIMITS OF ADVOCACY

While much of the support network that queens built in the Tenderloin came from unofficial forms of organizing in SROs, on sidewalks, and at Compton's, there was also formal organizing. Before turning to how institutional actors responded to the conditions of queer marginalization and poverty in the Tenderloin, examining how trans identity was understood at the time sheds light on those responses. A critical development was the publication of Harry Benjamin's *The Transsexual Phenomenon* in 1966. That study was the first systematic attempt to define transsexuality as a phenomenon distinct from homosexuality and transvestism.⁶¹ Benjamin, an endocrinologist and sexologist, coordinated a team of medical professionals to secretly perform the first gender-affirming surgeries at Carnegie Mellon University. He also maintained a part-time practice in San Francisco. *The Transsexual Phenomenon* provided a blueprint for action for Tenderloin queens and other gender-nonconforming Bay Area residents to seek institutional recognition as citizens with rights concerning their bodies.

One year before the book's publication, the San Francisco police department had taken the first step to address the seemingly constant source of conflict with Tenderloin youth by establishing the office of community-police relations.⁶² In 1965 Elliot Blackstone, a white, middle-aged, heterosexual policeman, became the first community-police liaison in the Central City area, which included the Tenderloin.⁶³ Blackstone's encounter with Benjamin's work (the two men eventually became friends, according to Blackstone's account) led to his staunch advocacy for the rights of the queens, with whom he was in regular contact.⁶⁴ Along with lesbian and gay rights activists, he spearheaded a referral program to give them access to doctors who could help them begin the medical transition process.⁶⁵ Blackstone saw dual responsibilities in his role. On the one hand, he sought to help transgender people "fit" in heterosexual society; on the other, he was committed to educating the police department and City Hall to "accept their different lifestyles."⁶⁶ Blackstone's matter-of-fact approach to achieving social change led to significant institutional progress, helping many people in the Tenderloin and elsewhere reach their gender and social transition goals.

For example, the issuance of temporary identification cards in the late 1960s with the name corresponding to the bearer's social gender was a seminal step on the road to institutional recognition of transgender identity. The Center for Special Problems, which had operated out of the city's Public Health Department since 1965, issued these cards, and one of Blackstone's undertakings was to advise transgender people on how to navigate the bureaucracy of government

and medical agencies. A certain amount of negotiation was required between doctors' offices and the center. Medical staff at the latter evaluated transgender people as patients, administered hormones, and eventually referred them to Stanford University Medical School to undergo medical procedures. The procedures themselves, however, were shrouded by a culture of secrecy until at least 1970.⁶⁷

The adoption of medical discourse in social and political advocacy constructed an assimilationist framework for recognizing "reformed" subjects and including them in national citizenship. Blackstone often presented the "transgender problem," as he saw it, as one of clothing and bathroom etiquette. On at least one occasion he facilitated a meeting between a queen and a police officer in order to convince the officer that there would be less distress and fewer public complaints if the queen went to the bathroom that best fit her social gender.⁶⁸ That type of argument was effective in incrementally shifting public policy, but it also naturalized the supervision of queer bodies by the police. The only way that the lives and bodies of queens could be understood by government apparatuses was by conforming to binary gender norms. But not everyone who embodied alternative gender and sexual identities subscribed to that binary. While many Tenderloin queens aspired to sex reassignment, others reveled in the many opportunities for gender expression that their immediate environment afforded.

The Tenderloin's physical and social environment was a vibrant mix of buildings and activities that included cheap housing, cafeterias, bars, some office buildings, and religious, labor, and homosexual organizing. Notably, some Bay Area labor unions had their offices in the Tenderloin, as did several nonprofit organizations.⁶⁹ The Glide Foundation and Glide Memorial Methodist Church under the leadership of Cecil Williams, a charismatic African American pastor, provided a critical link among the heterogeneous actors in that landscape. Class, sexuality, and race-based activism were juxtaposed within a few city blocks, and this proximity contributed to both synergies and antagonisms.⁷⁰ Glide Memorial dominated the intersection of Taylor and Eddy, a few blocks south of Turk and Taylor. Its long-standing social programs facilitated communication and political activism among the groups that were active in the Tenderloin, while their Methodist ethos influenced the tenor and priorities of this activism. In the 1960s, Glide Foundation organized a "night ministry," which reached out to marginalized youth directly in the cafeterias where they were. Glide also provided money and administrative support to shelters and soup kitchens in the Tenderloin.⁷¹ Unlike other institutions in the Tenderloin that relied on government support, the foundation's large operating budget came from San Francisco philanthropist Lizzie Glide's turn-of-the-century endowment. At the time of Glide's bequest, the north part of the Tenderloin housed upper-middle-class residents primarily, and Glide's founding mission to provide "a house of worship for all people" likely did not encompass addressing poverty in its immediate

vicinity. That changed when Williams arrived there in 1963, fresh from civil rights organizing in the South.

But even before Williams, some of the foundation's work had begun addressing the conditions of poverty among gay youth in the Tenderloin and nearby North Beach.⁷² Recognizing the unique challenges that homosexuality posed in how institutions addressed those conditions, a young member of the staff at Glide Foundation, Ted McIlvenna, who previously had been involved in youth outreach, spearheaded the establishment of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH) in 1964. CRH intended "to supplement the work of [homophile] groups . . . and to establish dialogue with many influential segments of San Francisco leadership."⁷³ It brought together representatives from homophile organizations as well as Methodist, Protestant, Episcopal, United Church of Christ, and Lutheran clergy members. CRH sought to expand the social justice missions of progressive religious leaders to include the rights of gays and lesbians, based on the template provided by civil rights activism. One of the CRH members was Del Martin, cofounder of DoB and a strong voice for lesbian and gay rights in the 1960s and 1970s. Martin, who worked as a secretary at the Glide Foundation during the mid-1960s, was instrumental in articulating the common goals of the disparate actors who came together in the service of homophile activism.⁷⁴ For Martin and other homophile organizers, to use the term that they employed at the time, the living conditions of Tenderloin youth reflected the conjunction of homosexual discrimination and poverty writ large.

The objectives of CRH and Glide's mission were aligned in their desire to reform Tenderloin residents by changing their conditions of poverty and "cultural deprivation" (the latter so identified by Glide's Methodist doctrine).⁷⁵ Homophile activists were concerned that the public perception of Tenderloin youth as drug addicts and sex workers, along with their constant battles with the police, would adversely affect public support for the whole movement.⁷⁶ CRH's reformist argument focused on addressing poverty and public health in the Tenderloin while at the same time advocating for the rights of homosexuals as a new social group. This position initiated a broader internal argument about how the support of homosexual causes could be consistent with Methodist doctrine, in full display during a Methodist conference in 1968, where conservative opinions against changing Methodists' treatment of homosexuality prevailed and the Glide delegation expressed a minority position.⁷⁷

In his autobiography, Williams recounts how he reconciled Methodist doctrine with his support for homosexual causes. When he was a young pastor, he had come under the sway of Liberation theology, a South American movement led by nuns and priests who were committed to social justice and worked for bottom-up solutions.⁷⁸ In Williams's interpretation and practice, the clergy had an obligation to augment the voices of grassroots activism. They had to act as intermediaries between social justice advocates and those holding institutional power. Williams's

reformist attitude was manifested not only in how the church addressed the rights of the dispossessed but also in the way he approached the symbolism of the church's physical space. He was less interested in upholding the traditional aspects of churchgoing than in expanding the notion of how people could use a church space. For example, in 1967 he removed the large wooden cross in front of the sanctuary to symbolically remove doctrinal and social barriers to entry.

By that time, Williams had adopted a hippie image to suit his message of personal spiritual quest and sociopolitical change. He grew his hair in the "afro" style, wore an African dashiki instead of the clerical robe, conducted spiritual unions between gay men, and introduced gospel music to the Sunday sermon.⁷⁹ Williams's countercultural image, his reformist attitude toward the church's institutional structure, the format of religious sermons, and the expansion of the building's uses created both a powerful personal brand and an increased following for the church during the 1960s and subsequent decades. However, in some respects, it also authorized a view of moral reform that was still top-down, particularly where CRH political advocacy on behalf of Tenderloin's gay youth was concerned.

In 1966 the Glide Foundation published *The Tenderloin Ghetto: The Young Reject in Our Society*, a report on the conditions of poverty and marginalization of gay youth in the area. The document was influential in urban reformers' advocacy for the designation of the Tenderloin as a zone of "urban blight."⁸⁰ The authors' argument that the area and its queer denizens needed to be reformed echoed the language and argument about the sociocultural roots of racialized poverty in the controversial Moynihan Report on black neighborhoods in American cities published by the US Department of Labor one year earlier. Left intellectual circles criticized Moynihan's analysis of the conditions of poverty in those neighborhoods in terms of pathologies, such as the lack of male-headed households purportedly leading to youth crime and social and psychological stagnation. However, the Moynihan Report still influenced liberal reformers, including members of the Tenderloin Committee, which was founded in 1966 to secure funds from the War on Poverty for social programs in the neighborhood. A significant aspect of the published material about social life in the Tenderloin was its strategic erasure of racial diversity. This material presented the Tenderloin as a "white ghetto" (this was the original title of the Glide Foundation report, though it was later changed). The report highlighted statistics that corroborated that assertion—though only including permanent residents—placing it within the racialized language that urban reformers ordinarily used to describe the social and spatial conditions in African American neighborhoods.

The Tenderloin Ghetto described the neighborhood as "notorious for prostitution, drunkenness, newsstands selling trashy pulp magazines, pimping, pill pushing, robbing and rolling, shoplifting, and other misbehavior."⁸¹ It proposed the establishment of new programs that aimed to utilize community resources—a goal that up to this point was consistent with Liberation theology—in order to

help (in the authors' words) "these outcasts of society, these young people who are unloved and unwanted because they don't seem to fit into society's general idea of productive citizenship."⁸² The invocation of citizenship is notable in this context because it clarified the reformers' intention to assimilate the "wayward Tenderloin youth" into an inclusive community of national subjects. Latent in the report's broader narrative was that inclusion could extend to homosexuals as long as they became "productive," in the sense of contributing to heterosexual society at large. The argument offered no space for the emergence of insurgent citizenship, in the sense of creating, to quote James Holston, "a counterpolitics that destabilizes the present and renders it fragile." Instead, Glide authors effectively endorsed the power of government to shape and control the lives of citizens, contrary to what one might expect from those with a stated commitment to bottom-up liberation.

Glide partnered with Central City, an organization representing the Tenderloin and part of the area South of Market Street (SoMa) that sought official designation by the San Francisco Economic Opportunity Council (SFEOC) as a Target Area for War on Poverty federal funds.⁸³ Toward that end, in their effort to establish the systemic causes of poverty in the Tenderloin, material produced by Glide and Central City, both jointly and as separate entities, presented Tenderloin youth as a categorically distinct group whose identity was based on homosexuality, resulting in marginalization, poverty, and drug affliction. This logic emphasized racial divisions within the newly constructed sociopolitical category of homosexuality. The homophile movement's whiteness was already a subject of debate at that time, and in succeeding decades the racial politics of gay liberation has been a significant source of conflict in queer coalition-building.⁸⁴ Everyday reality did not fully support commentators' overwhelming emphasis on whiteness in the neighborhood.⁸⁵ Still, some programs implemented during that time paved the way for necessary social infrastructures, such as community health clinics and free meal services. Nevertheless, *The Tenderloin Ghetto* framed the problems of poverty and marginalization in the area in a way that left out preexisting networks of support and relationships of kinship among Tenderloin queens and gay youth.

Failure to discuss those networks opened the way to erasing them, together with the physical environment that supported them. "Ghetto removal" efforts had already resulted in the displacement of thousands of San Francisco residents, primarily black and Asian, and their neighborhood cultural institutions.⁸⁶ In this light, the insistence of Central City advocates that their goal was to empower existing residents to develop their own support structures provided fodder for violent urban renewal. If the Tenderloin were a ghetto, what would prevent the wholesale removal of its people, as recent historical precedent suggested? The *San Francisco Chronicle*, which reached an audience far greater than that of the reports produced by Central City initiatives, reported on them and picked up on representations of the Tenderloin's physical environment in dystopian terms, characterizing the

neighborhood as a “dark spot” at the center of the otherwise picturesque city by the bay.⁸⁷

Glide and Central City’s portrayals of the Tenderloin were consistent with how many others viewed the Tenderloin: an area of rampant drug abuse, contributing to anomie and homelessness. In 1967, one year after the publication of *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, the Board of Directors of the Central City Target Area Action group published another report, *Drugs in the Tenderloin*.⁸⁸ It contained almost no verifiable quantitative data; instead, its narrative relied on the editors’ synthesis of what their interviewees said about their drug use and experiences in the neighborhood. Anonymized interviewees’ quotes were printed with little commentary in the body of the report, except for the framing provided by a three-page foreword and some statistical information (though without citations) before listing the informant quotes. The foreword uses metaphors and poetic language that reveal a heavy editorial hand, which also manifested in how quotes that ranged from a few lines to over one page long were edited, ordered, and juxtaposed.⁸⁹

The report’s description of the physical environment dispelled any romantic notions about their living condition from the get-go. The foreword shared the perspective of a “young addict,” who says that “when you cross over to the Tenderloin, it’s like walking into another room,”⁹⁰ a description that suggests a mixing of public and private spaces. And while the report’s editors sometimes expressed radical acceptance of alternative cultures, they also describe the Tenderloin as a troublesome domestic space:

The Boy-Girls shriek at one another up and down and across the street. The not-too-distant roar of motorcycles blends with the falsetto in an amazing harmony. A drunk lies in the gutter waiting for the Paddy wagon to take him home. Look at the 10 × 12 rooms filled with trash, strewn clothes and sleeping bodies. (Sometimes it’s hard to say which is which).⁹¹

The evocative prose—visual, auditory, and olfactory—reads sensorially.

The section titled “Magnitude of the Problem” that follows the foreword estimates that a thousand queer drug users lived in the area, and notes that the authors had presented a draft to “persons involved in the Tenderloin drug market” for them to provide comment before publication, suggesting some vetting and reflection from interlocutors who were also thinking about collective experience.⁹² The report’s main goals were to demonstrate the pain that drugs cause to individuals, thus building the capacity for empathy, and to understand the social and cultural currents that pulled young people into their vortex. On the one hand, drugs were associated with distinct countercultural lifestyles. (This had long been true, though by the late 1960s, there was a more distinct association of this counterculture with hippie communes in Haight-Ashbury and the Summer of Love in 1967.)⁹³ For young runaways arriving in the Tenderloin, selling drugs was one of the few

moneymaking activities available, and using was a shared experience. But drug users were also victimized and, to some extent, vilified. Using became the subject of intense debates about the limits of escapism, social bonding, and assimilation.⁹⁴

Drugs in the Tenderloin revealed varied rationales for drug use. One comment, ostensibly rewritten by the report's editors, described drugs as a form of escapism, noting that "the 'trip' or 'high' period of drug influence distorts reality almost to the point of nonexistence."⁹⁵ Considering the physical and social conditions of poverty and violence described earlier, the appeal of such distortion is easy to understand. Other informants spoke of their curiosity to taste the "forbidden fruit" of drugs as additional motivation. And a personal anecdote described the relationships forged in the hardships of navigating "hustling and scuffling" as "a common bond of destitution." This expressed a broader sociopolitical worldview. "Be a dope fiend and you have a minimal responsibility for what society is," the interviewee explained.⁹⁶ "You look at the people on the street, hating what they are (good citizens) and revel in the secret knowledge that they hate what you are (dope fiend)." Note how the interviewee legitimize his/her/their existence by claiming a political space that was antithetical to the "good citizen" concept put forth by *The Tenderloin Ghetto*. That sentiment was not unlike those of the queens who vied for the window booths at Compton's Cafeteria—a place where they could see and be seen—and protested police attempts to delegitimize their presence. Regardless of the ways different interviewees talked about their experiences, a standard assessment of their accounts in the report was that drug use, in the end, contributed to dire everyday conditions in the Tenderloin.

However, the Tenderloin was not just a set of sounds and images but, for the young people who lived there, a set of enacted relationships that determined their day-to-day survival both as individuals and as a group. The urgency of their needs meant that larger debates about the limits of advocacy had to coexist and often take a back seat to seeking government recognition of their struggles and institutional support. Glide and Central City's advocacy did result in the neighborhood's inclusion as a Target Area for War on Poverty funds, which only lasted for a few years, but were instrumental in the establishment of Hospitality House, a drop-in community center that offered food and activities for homeless youth founded in 1967. Hospitality House, which is still active in the Tenderloin, initially operated from a space above a gay club on Turk Street and later offered more programming, mainly focused on the arts, in other spaces. Glide continued to offer services for homeless youth, such as free meals and drop-in advising, throughout that and subsequent decades. However, as a counterreading of the reports produced during this time reveals, relationships among queer youth forged on the street and in SRO rooms held the promise of reimagining citizenship from a subaltern perspective. This view of citizenship centers countermainstream symbolic and material acts denoting membership to a queer community with its own ethical codes and

community obligations. These obligations were not toward nonprofits, government institutions, nor the broader community of national citizens. Queer grassroots activism between 1966 and 1968 offers some evidence that efforts toward this kind of citizenship coexisted with attempts to reform Tenderloin street life.

VANGUARD ACTS OF CITIZENSHIP

Jean-Paul Marat, a pseudonym inspired by the assassinated French revolutionary, was credited as one of the principal researchers of *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, and many of the report's interviewees shared the ideas and perspectives promoted by Vanguard, a short-lived but influential queer group of which Marat had been president. Founded in 1966, Vanguard was a grassroots organization by and for queer Tenderloin youth, who met in the basement of Glide Memorial Church to organize as a group that opposed their marginalization, victimization, and exploitation by the police, local business owners, and heterosexual society more broadly. At its height in 1966 it had approximately 25–30 members.⁹⁷ Vanguard used impassioned rhetoric to draw attention to social neglect and the pursuit of rights, though its members seem to have had competing priorities as they conceptualized citizenship rights. The group oscillated between assimilation on the one hand and leveraging “dope” friendships, as the report put it, on the other. Such friendships sought to enact alternative social structures inspired by revolutionary movements such as the Black Panthers, who were founded in Oakland also in 1966. Those conflicts showed up in *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, and they also were reflected in articles published in the group's magazine.⁹⁸

There are competing accounts of what the name Vanguard meant. Adrian Ravarour, a former Mormon priest and trained dancer who moved to the El Rosa in his mid-twenties to live with his partner—there, he became a gay organizer—claims that he came up with the name. It referred, he said, to a radical break with traditional movement in modern avant-garde dance.⁹⁹ Based on the literature produced under Vanguard's aegis, however, the name references Leninist political thought: the Bolshevik Party was known as the original vanguard party.¹⁰⁰ The *Vanguard* magazine's first five issues made clear that Vanguard's overarching goal, at least in the beginning, was the development of working-class consciousness. This transcended the categorical boundaries of sexual identity constructed by Central City reformers, without Vanguard members directly antagonizing them in print (though there is some evidence that was the case during public debates). Vanguard's attention to class issues blurred the binary of assimilation-separatism that has been prevalent in the modern homosexual movement.

Marat was especially interested in learning from the ongoing struggles of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, with which he found several affinities, especially

regarding how Black Panther leaders understood class conflict.¹⁰¹ In the first issue of *Vanguard* in 1966, Marat addressed the readers as “citizens of the Central City Area,” whom, he said, were being exploited by “many of the middle-class small businessmen” in the area.¹⁰² Among the exploiters, Marat listed “the slum landlord who charges fantastic rents for one-room hovels,” grocery store owners who charge high prices, “dope pushers,” and “the ‘upstanding middle-class citizen’ who, because of his hypocritical attitude, has caused the hustlers of the meat rack to sell their bodies to him to make a living, because he won’t employ them, for various irrational reasons.”¹⁰³

Marat’s analysis of the conditions of exploitation resonated with 1960s radical Left politics, including national civil rights uprisings and, more locally, in experiments with participatory democracy in Berkeley. Marat identified the city’s “corrupt power structure” as the main target of his pointed critique and ascribed class characteristics to this power structure. “Start Protesting the Middle-Class Bureaucracy That Rules This City,” he urged the readers. His call for political organizing did not end with Tenderloin youth. He concluded that article with an appeal for broader coalitions with “elderly residents” to “make something” of the area where they all lived together.

Marat and other *Vanguard* activists quickly realized the power of local media to help them further their cause. Joel Roberts, a key early *Vanguard* organizer, described how the organization entered public consciousness. They called Channel Seven, a local news station, as well as radio stations to “say, hey, gay kids on Market Street are having a demonstration” and “you’d better get down there.”¹⁰⁴ People were so used to thinking of residents, he said, as “the quiet oppressed minority of mentally ill criminals—the liberals thought we were mentally ill and the conservatives thought we were criminals, so we got busted either way,” so “the shock value alone was worth selling products behind it.” Roberts added that Channel Four reported on their activities and they even had opportunities to be photographed and talk to journalists from out of town. It was not uncommon for the media to cover the counterculture: in 1967 and 1968, for example, much attention was directed at Haight-Ashbury. But where this later movement was often depicted with sensationalizing editorials by outsiders, *Vanguard* was resolved to control the narrative about their own lives and sociopolitical demands.

For example, Marat announced in the first issue of *Vanguard* that he would provide members with a signed letter “on official stationery . . . stating their function(s) as official representatives of the organization,” due to problems that surfaced with misrepresentation of the group’s demands and priorities from people outside the Tenderloin.¹⁰⁵ The group also provided their own interpretation of the meaning and objectives of public demonstrations. For example, in the second issue of *Vanguard* in October 1966, two photographs accompanied the announcement of “Market Street Sweep,” an activist performance that took place sometime

that fall. The text next to the photographs explicitly linked Vanguard's politics to other radical movements of the 1960s while identifying "the street" as their proper political arena:

A "clean sweep" will be made on Market Street, not by the POLICE, but by the street people who are often the object of police harassment. The drug addicts, pill-heads, teenage hustlers, lesbians, and homosexuals who make San Francisco's "Meat Rack" their home, are tired of living in the midst of the filth thrown out onto the sidewalks and into the streets by nearby businessmen . . . This VANGUARD demonstration indicates the willingness of society's outcasts to work openly for an improvement in their own social-economic power. WE HAVE HEARD TO[O] MUCH ABOUT "WHITE POWER" and "BLACK POWER" SO GET READY TO HEAR ABOUT "STREET POWER."¹⁰⁶

The small group of young people, at least one of whom was in drag, protesting with brooms in hand, used the language of cleanliness to legitimize their demands, a language that presumably resonated with the action's intended middle-class audience. The depiction of "street people" as responsible and contributing members of society fell under the working-class citizenship framework that Marat and other *Vanguard* editors used to articulate rights claims. Moreover, transposing a domestic activity into the public laid symbolic and material claims to the neighborhood. The entanglement of the youth's demands for their rights and their attempt to foster a shared urban culture by defining a homosexual working-class identity in opposition to the rest of "bourgeois" society, as Marat put it in *Vanguard*, was an important early indication of the discontinuities and contradictions in the leaps between scales of action and analysis in subsequent homosexual social movements.

Vanguard's activities took place, both materially and symbolically, in the urban sphere, where members cultivated relationships with Glide and other like-minded organizations. To Marat and other *Vanguard* contributors, the street was the space to properly inhabit the Tenderloin. Editorials in the magazine analyzed the conditions of exploitation that their authors identified as root causes of the dire living conditions of Tenderloin youth. At the same time, the first five issues of *Vanguard* (before the magazine moved with its editor, Keith St. Clair, outside the Tenderloin and no longer represented the organization) depicted the physical environment as a grid of aesthetic experiences that enabled a complex set of relationships to emerge. This framing was similar to the performative aesthetics of poverty and drug use in *Drugs in the Tenderloin*. In the period between 1966 and 1970, the way in which homosexual and gender-nonconforming young people envisioned their rights as working-class citizens in the Tenderloin was in concert with representations of the neighborhood's environment by urban reformers associated with Central City antipoverty initiatives. However, the aesthetics of poverty expressed in everyday life that made queer identities legible also foreclosed possibilities for creating spaces outside the norms of urban rehabilitation.

The urban queer aesthetics of Tenderloin street life maintained the promise of insurgent politics and their associated cultures. These cultures came to life in a poetry section of early *Vanguard* issues. Poetic representations of street life revealed, even more strongly than Marat's impassioned rhetoric, the potential of the environment to inform queer struggles. They did so by producing particular queer embodiments based on everyday experiences, mental states of being, and imagined futures. Mark Miller's poem "The City" followed the press release for the Market Street "Clean Sweep." Miller presented the city through a list of active verbs: "Boosing, / Cruising; / Loosing. / Falling into suitcase nightmares / walking, / talking / midnight sun sign / lustre-dent / 'love for a ticket' / but my mon-eys spent."¹⁰⁷ The poem's protagonist is not stationary, waiting for "tomorrow" to come. Instead, their activities are situated in the present. Though seemingly aimless and without a clear direction or destination (the Midnight Sun, likely a gay bar, was too expensive to provide momentary respite), the character's walk recreates the conditions of their existence in the urban environment through alcohol, sex, losing suitcases, and casual conversations. It is the fleeting moments of cross-class socialization and recognition of queer people's shared needs for friendship, companionship, and sex that hold the promise of alternative, queer social structures.¹⁰⁸

For all its visibility during this period of early queer organizing, *Vanguard* was very short-lived, operating as an organization for little more than a year.¹⁰⁹ Still, some of the gay youth who moved out of the Tenderloin by the end of the decade carried ideas of countercultural group consciousness with them. For example, St. Claire, who published *Vanguard*, moved near Haight-Ashbury at the epicenter of hippie counterculture in the end of the 1960s. He continued to publish the magazine, which by 1970 was aligned more with free love and spiritual pursuits than the gay liberation movement. Among other things, later issues presented reports on alternative spiritual practices and psychedelic drugs. Although the Tenderloin still appeared sporadically as the backdrop of some featured stories and interviews, the focus shifted from urban public space toward individual spiritual explorations.

Many *Vanguard* members and the people whose interviews were published in *Drugs in the Tenderloin* described living in the neighborhood as a sequence of emotive aesthetic experiences: drug trips, living in crowded rooms, and having sex, for instance. Although a variety of queer cultures coexisted in the Tenderloin and their characteristics should not be conflated, both individual and group actions emphasized the need to legitimize emergent urban cultures on their own terms and take responsibility for the maintenance of public space. To the extent that *Vanguard*'s project of uniting homosexual and other working-class people in the Tenderloin made successful claims to the spaces where they lived, it called attention to inequalities created by differentiated citizenship based on homosexual marginalization. The queens and *Vanguard* members articulated their claims to the spaces they created in the Tenderloin out of necessity, by invoking the

rhetoric of safety and cleanliness. In this way, they pushed against the entrenched privileges of normative citizen-subjects in the context of contemporary urbanity. This form of urban queer citizenship, the insurgent elements of which were only partially realized, competed with other approaches toward establishing the basis of political rights and cultural identity over the next four decades.

The emergence of shared cultures is indispensable to articulating goals in the sphere of politics. Their characteristics in this chapter's spaces were articulated formally through the aesthetics of urban space, architecture, public performance, and even poetry. The claims that Tenderloin queens and gay youth made to the use of spaces in the Tenderloin reveal that their perceived rights and obligations derived from living in the city.¹¹⁰ These included the right to inhabit the public realm in drag, and receive service in local businesses in return for the obligation to maintain that environment, including the always busy sidewalks. This form of citizenship did not yet construct or depend on fixed sexual and gender identities, as did those spearheaded by urban gay and lesbian political movements in the following decades. However, it did have distinct aesthetic characteristics that informed insurgent "acts of citizenship" like the riot at Compton's. The modernity exuded by the diner—its glass facade, Formica furniture, linoleum flooring—symbolized the modern, respectful image that the queens fashioned within the confines of the intersection.

The characters in this story moved through the dense Tenderloin district, meeting each other there, joined by similar social and material conditions. In the four-year period between 1966 and 1970, they passed through El Rosa, socialized at Compton's, and organized politically at Glide. As everyday hardships in the neighborhood had to be addressed immediately and on an ongoing basis, there was a sense of urgency among queer residents and denizens. The need for structural changes that began during those years did not cease to exist in the following decade. However, as the next chapter will show, the priorities of major gay and lesbian subgroups in San Francisco began to change, moving toward single-issue urban politics and mainstream assimilation of the most visible characteristics of their cultures.

New Victorians in the 1970s

On a bright Saturday in June 1978, thousands of colorful balloons filled the sky above the gleaming, pastel Victorian building facades on Castro Street. A crowd of people, many half-naked, filled fire stairs, sat on windowsills, or watched behind roof parapets. The street itself was closed to vehicular traffic, and information booths for various gay and lesbian organizations, including political action committees, the police-community liaison office, and gay arts nonprofits, lined the sidewalks. Revelers danced and made out at the foot of a stage where DJs and musicians played songs that were popular in San Francisco's gay nightclubs. This scene unfolded during the Castro Street Fair, an annual neighborhood festival inaugurated in 1974 by the local gay business association. The street fair demonstrated the newfound visibility of gay social life—as well as the vibrancy of gay and lesbian cultures, and the size of their constituency—to City Hall, heterosexual residents, and the media. The Castro Street Fair was also part of the eponymous neighborhood's transformation from a working-class Irish neighborhood to a gay territory in the early 1970s. Still, Castro Village, as it became known, with its own institutions and distinct patterns of everyday life, fit the traditional mold of San Francisco's ethnic neighborhoods.

The social, political, and cultural changes that took place in the San Francisco Bay Area, from the first public demonstrations demanding rights for homosexual citizens organized by the Society for Individual Rights in 1966 to the devastation of gay social life that the AIDS pandemic brought in 1982, reveal how particular gay male identities were embodied in interactions within the urban landscape. This chapter shows that a territorial consolidation of political power became a key concern for gay organizers during this period. Meanwhile, spaces such as gay bars and Victorian flats, along with the "Castro clone" as a paradigmatic gay embodiment, became synonymous with homosexuality as a cultural phenomenon. As it

was broadcast in local, national, and international media, this gay culture changed how society at large perceived spaces hitherto associated with heterosexuality. Meanwhile, the people who populated most of the gay urban landscape were middle-class white men, which was the case with Castro Street Fair attendees and neighborhood street life during the rest of the year, along with its Euro-American village iconography. This shaped the forms and symbolism of gay territorialization during the 1970s with important consequences for how governmental institutions viewed gay rights. Gay citizens began to use the capitalist logic of urban economic revitalization to demand equal access to mainstream economic and social institutions in the United States.

By 1970 urban gay cultures were not confined to the dark interiors of bars, sex clubs, and bathhouses but swelled out into plazas, sidewalks, parks, and every kind of business. Gay businesses included bars, clubs, bathhouses, diners, and even a hamburger joint that began acquiring legendary status as gay hangouts nationally and internationally.¹ The concentration of overtly gay businesses in specific neighborhoods created territories where gay men, and to a certain extent women, felt free to express homosexual desire openly. Among these territories the Castro emerged after 1972 as the center of a youthful, self-confident, and sexualized gay social life. Besides bars and other hangouts, the availability of cheap Victorian flats in the Castro allowed predominantly single gay men and some lesbians, many of whom had recently arrived in the city, to experiment with cohabitation.²

The story of how the Castro became gay must be situated within the broader context of San Francisco politics. Relocating industrial port operations from San Francisco to Oakland in the 1960s consolidated City Hall's attention to developing the financial and tourism sectors. Urban renewal projects in the Fillmore, the Embarcadero, and the area south of Market Street targeted working-class residents, primarily African American and Latinx.³ Oakland's poor and working-class neighborhoods struggled to absorb regional migration. At the same time, major infrastructure projects, such as the Bay Area Rapid Transit suburban railway system, provided access to sprawling suburbs and exurbs. This segregated a large swath of the working-class that included residents of black, brown, and new immigrant neighborhoods from the city's wealth, amenities, and white population.⁴ Within that systematic wave of economic and social disenfranchisement, neighborhood activists and labor unions led fights for neighborhood resident rights to address public disinvestment and collectively shape the city's future.⁵ The emergence of the Castro as a gay territory at the beginning of the 1970s followed a similar process of neighborhood empowerment. Local political actions, epitomized by Harvey Milk's work, used similar tactics with labor unions, especially boycotts, to assert their political presence first in the neighborhood and then in the city. This chapter situates the Castro's transformation in the context of the city's neighborhood politics and the building of self-assured gay cultures through the spaces that gay men appropriated during the long 1970s. By cultivating a sense of distinct cultural belonging gay men articulated claims to national citizenship.

These claims had both insurgent and assimilationist characteristics, the results of which are most obvious in the mainstream turn of the LGBTQ+ movement three decades later.

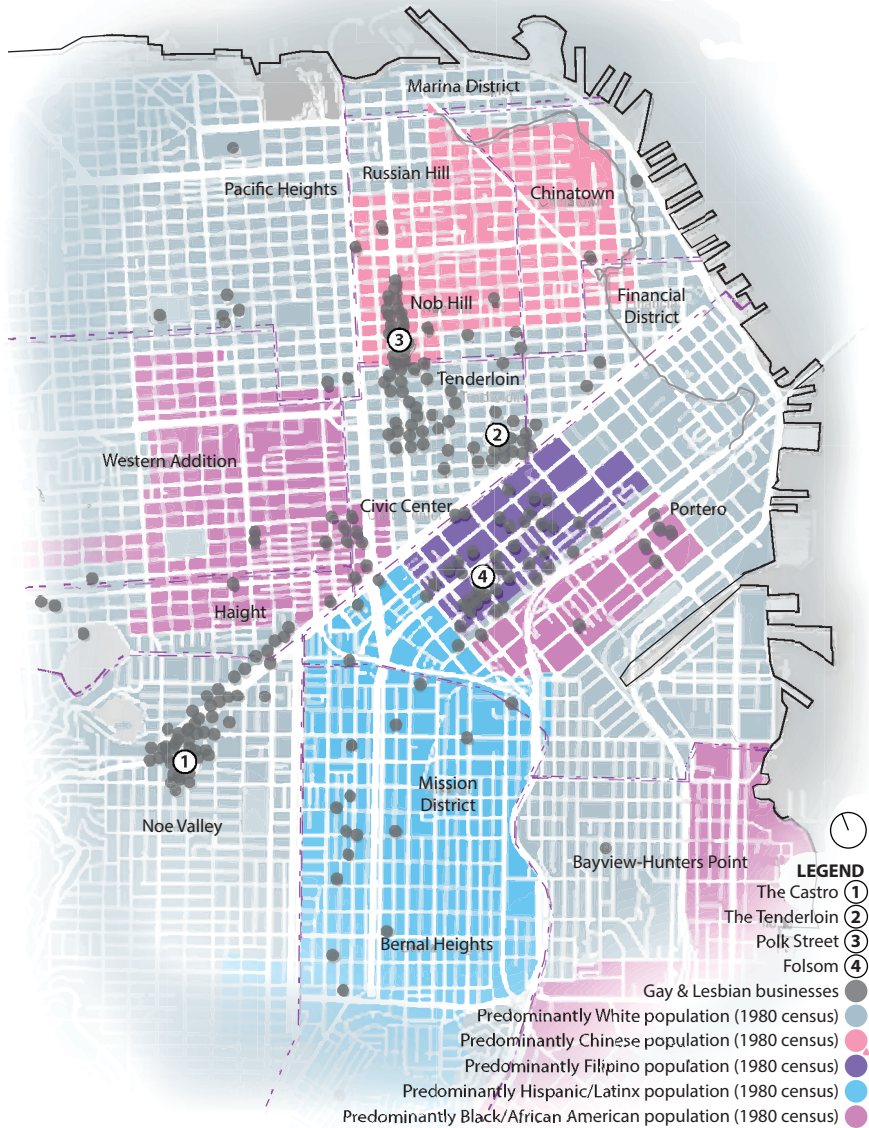
CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

San Francisco's urban morphology is characterized by a densely built downtown that boasted several tall office buildings and luxury hotels as early as 1875.⁶ An industrial district historically occupied the bayfront and the flat areas to the south. The downtown is surrounded by inner-city neighborhoods, mainly comprising mid- and low-rise buildings, originally built in the late nineteenth century.⁷ Each of these neighborhoods, which include Chinatown, North Beach, Russian Hill, and Pacific Heights, among others, has historically had distinct cultural and social characteristics that mapped onto their physical landscapes (map 2). For example, Chinatown residents tended to live in small apartments within three- and four-story buildings with commercial storefronts that often extended their presence onto busy sidewalks with robust street life.⁸ North Beach was the epicenter of Italian immigrant culture in the city, with residential apartment buildings, dotted with bars, and known for its nightlife. More affluent San Franciscans lived in the ornate apartment buildings following European styles in Russian Hill and Pacific Heights, and in the grand mansions of the latter overlooking the bay.

In 1960 San Francisco had a population of 740,316 residents, 18.6 percent of whom were nonwhite.⁹ That diversity was under threat due to the efforts of business and political leaders to redevelop traditionally working-class and immigrant neighborhoods to appeal to new white-collar migrants to the city, who were drawn by the continuing growth of the financial and services sectors. However, the ties that neighborhood residents developed based on the cultural and class experiences they had in common led to a number of successful opposition campaigns to downtown interests throughout the latter half of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Liberal and sometimes radical neighborhood politics and coalitions based on common goals, such as opposing the demolition of existing buildings and having a say in the allocation of public funds for infrastructure projects, were key components of the city's famously fractious municipal politics. It was in this landscape that Eureka Valley transformed from a white, working-class, Irish American neighborhood—dominated by families during the day and dive bar patrons at night—to a white, gay, middle-class mecca: the Castro.

The emergence of a gay residential neighborhood in Eureka Valley followed the countercultural youth movements of the late 1960s. Between 1966 and 1970, free love culture and anticonsumerism attracted many new sexual migrants to the San Francisco Bay Area, who congregated in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood adjacent to Golden Gate Park. Some settled in communal houses in Berkeley and Oakland, but even when the newcomers did not live in Haight-Ashbury, they tended to congregate there.¹¹ An alternative bar scene, including a small gay bar contingent, grew

SAN FRANCISCO NEIGHBORHOODS



MAP 2. San Francisco neighborhoods with historical locations of gay and lesbian businesses. Demographic information based on data from the 1980 census. Sources: Brian J. Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in Transition: The Making of San Francisco's Ethnic and Nonconformist Communities* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1988); Jay Barmann and Mike Stabile, "Behold: A Map of San Francisco's Lost Gay Bars," *SFist*, published online April 11, 2013, accessed March 5, 2023, https://sfist.com/2013/04/11/a_map_of_san_franciscos_lost_gay_ba/. © Gabriel Gonzalez & Stathis G. Yeros.

in the area. (The free love culture, though not explicitly associated with homosexual social and sexual relationships, led some hippies to view homosexuality through the lens of bodily pleasure and included homosexual/bisexual relationships.)

Just over the hill from Haight-Ashbury and southwest of downtown was Eureka Valley, nestled between Corona and Dolores Heights. In 1960 it was packed with rows of two- and three-story flats and single-family homes with narrow front porches reached by sets of stairs from generously sized sidewalks. The center of the neighborhood's social life for the predominantly working-class Irish residents was the Most Holy Redeemer Church on Eighteenth Street. Castro Street runs through Eureka, jutting diagonally off Market Street. The section between Market and Nineteenth Streets, two blocks from Most Holy Redeemer, served as the neighborhood's commercial corridor. Typical for neighborhoods in this part of the city, including adjacent Haight-Ashbury and the Mission, most buildings were built between 1850 and 1915 following one of the styles associated with the Victorian building type. At the time of their construction, modest interiors hid behind ornate facades decorated with wood and stucco details.¹² Many had small backyards adjoining neighboring properties that functioned as extra spaces, augmenting the narrow typical floorplans' footprint. Backyards and front stoops were also spaces for social interaction with neighbors.

By 1970 most buildings in areas west of downtown built in the late 1800s showed signs of aging. These neighborhoods were home to predominantly blue-collar residents. As San Francisco's economy increasingly focused on banking, commerce, and tourism, the lack of well-paid jobs available to these residents forced many to leave the city. The constant fear of housing demolitions in the name of urban renewal added to this exodus. Eureka Valley's white working- and middle-class population was similar to neighboring Haight-Ashbury before 1966.¹³ The arrival of hippies, which attracted much local and national media attention, had changed the patterns of everyday life in that neighborhood. Young people's tools to construct hippie experimental social structures ranged from unconventional androgynous fashion to consciousness-altering drugs like LSD.¹⁴ City administrators, the police, and older residents did not take well to the newcomers and sought to contain them within a few streets, effectively branding them as deviant and their environment as dangerous.¹⁵ The Haight-Ashbury property market went down accordingly. This change became a cautionary tale for Eureka Valley residents, who were warned by news reports of an impending "hippie takeover."¹⁶ Some residents chose to sell their properties at what they considered advantageous prices in the late 1960s and relocate to suburbs and exurbs.¹⁷

The cheap rents that resulted from this out-migration and Eureka Valley's physical environment of Victorian homes and dive bars appealed to some gay hippies, who intended to make a fresh start by fleeing the deteriorating living conditions of Haight-Ashbury and the constant police harassment there.¹⁸ By 1970 a sizable number of businesses catering to gay men had opened in Eureka Valley. Gay men

began to patronize a local bathhouse, much to the dismay of its longtime patrons. The oldest gay bar in the neighborhood, the Missouri Mule, had already been in operation for seven years. The name Castro Village was introduced to differentiate the two blocks of Castro Street, where these businesses were located, from the rest of Eureka Valley.

IMAGINING THE CASTRO

In 1970 three other neighborhoods, Polk Gulch, the Miracle Mile, and the Tenderloin, had already well-established reputations as gay areas. Polk Gulch, on Nob Hill near the Tenderloin, was predominantly associated with middle-class gay sociality, and the neighborhood supported a small commercial strip with businesses catering to gay shoppers.¹⁹ The Miracle Mile on Folsom Street between Fifth and Thirteenth Streets, on the other hand, was associated with leather sexuality and gay and lesbian sexual experimentation.²⁰ Both areas had a metropolitan air. Homosexual men and, to a lesser extent, women went there to socialize and have sex but rarely relocated to these areas.²¹ The Tenderloin, with its diverse gay youth culture and early transgender rights activism, was home to a sizable queer population, but it was still considered a transitional environment. The urban fragmentation of sexual cultures often made gays and lesbians vulnerable to the reactionary response by the police, who regarded their growing public visibility antagonistically. As a result, police arrests on charges of public sex, often on dubious grounds, and extortion increased at the turn of the 1960s. In 1971 San Francisco police arrested an estimated 2,800 gay men, compared to thirty-six such arrests in New York City that year.²²

Compared to the other gay areas, Castro Village developed a decidedly non-metropolitan image as a safe residential neighborhood, referencing village life in its name and in representations of its built environment. An illustration in the *Bay Area Reporter (BAR)* in September 1971 marks the first time that the name Castro Village was used in a local publication to denote a gay neighborhood (fig. 6).²³ *BAR* was a bimonthly gay and lesbian newspaper established in 1971 to cover news and provide cultural, political, and social commentary. It had the broadest distribution of Bay Area gay and lesbian newspapers in the 1970s and 1980s and became a publication of record for the LGBTQ+ movement. The illustration of Castro Village in *BAR* rendered the street as a fairytale scene. It included caricatured depictions of only a handful of buildings, all of them freestanding—not the case in real life—and some of them completely reimagined as embodiments of their namesake. For example, Toad Hall, a well-known gay dive bar, was depicted as a hobbit house in the form of a mushroom, complete with a smiling toad on the roof. These landmarks (some not featured in the illustration) included two more gay bars, the Missouri Mule and Midnight Sun, and several businesses that an outside observer would not associate exclusively with gay sociality: Jaguar Books, Alexander's Framing, Ryderwood Antiques, and Flowers Inc., among others.

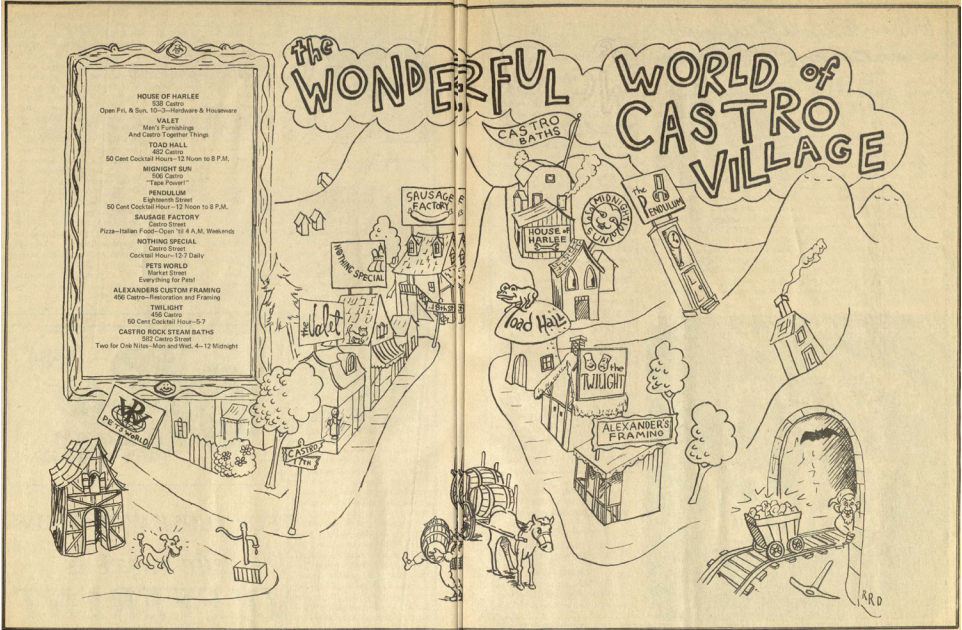


FIGURE 6. “The Wonderful World of Castro Village,” published in the *Bay Area Reporter* in September 1971. © Bay Area Reporter.

The illustration was likely a paid advertisement as it included a side panel with a list of businesses and their addresses. It was an early attempt to market a gay commercial landscape in terms that did not directly reference sex and sexuality. The title, “The Wonderful World of Castro Village,” appeared in a speech bubble at the top of the spread and highlighted the self-contained character of this new gay area. Nothing specifically connected this scene with gay life, except the playful connotations of fairyland and faeries. The latter was a derogatory term for effeminate gay men that would have been broadly resonant at the time. Its invocation in the gay press was a form of reappropriation that ascribed positive meaning to faeries. In a sense, this was a deliberate attempt to disassociate gay life from its depiction as part of an alienating urban lifestyle in popular media, and to link it instead to play or frivolity, drawing from the earlier meaning of the word “gay.”²⁴ The nostalgic association with rurality—the “village”—did not fit gay arrival narratives that were popular at the time. In those narratives, small-town gays and lesbians discovered their sexuality in the big city’s anonymity, and gay publications and cultural production celebrated metropolitan gay cultures. But the emergence of Castro Village included the kinds of close-knit relationships that small-town environments could help shape, and which could happen in metropolitan gay cultures too.²⁵

The association of Castro with village life fits into the long-standing pattern of neighborhood life in San Francisco organized by ethnicity. Everyday life in Irish American, Central American, and Chinese American neighborhoods, among others, was organized around distinct cultural traits expressed, for example, in street life, neighborhood commerce, religious ceremonies, and other festivals.²⁶ In the San Francisco Bay, social bonds forged through shared cultures at the level of neighborhoods influenced local politics and regional planning after World War II, as residents formed neighborhood associations and competed for local development grants.²⁷ The creation of a shared gay culture in the Castro was similar. A distinct form of street life, specialized businesses, and annual festivals, including the Castro Street Fair and Halloween, celebrated this culture. There was also a neighborhood landmark, the Castro Theater, one of the few remaining film palaces in San Francisco, built in 1922, with an ornate facade, a large vertical neon sign, and a prominent marquee on Castro Street. Its grand hall, besides showing a curated lineup of classic and gay-themed films, functioned as a community hall for live events—and eventually became the main location of the San Francisco International LGBTQ+ Film Festival, which started in 1977 as the Gay Film Festival of Super 8 Films.²⁸

Changes in the programming of existing buildings, besides the Castro Theater and bars, extended to the domestic architecture that supported gay and lesbian everyday lives and contributed to a collective reimagination of traditional heterosexual social structures. As gays and lesbians moved into Victorian family homes—their architecture historically associated with compulsive heterosexuality—they appropriated and meaningfully altered the buildings' use and symbolism. Cohabitation in Castro Victorians and their alterations informed expressions of gay culture and urban life in the 1970s. Sexual relationships with many partners were the norm, but there were also social rules about how to navigate intimacy while cohabiting, for example, avoiding romantic relationships among people in the same friend circle, especially when they lived together. Gay men renovated Victorian home interiors, added partitions, and altered their aesthetics to suit new structures of intimate and social life.

Richard Rodriguez's autobiographical essay "Late Victorians," a sensitive account of the loss wrought by the AIDS epidemic published in *Harper's Magazine* in 1990, assesses gay culture's contributions to urban life—particularly in the Castro—from 1970 to 1985. Rodriguez writes about gay identity, cultural Catholicism, bodybuilding, gay-bashing, and the tragic banality of death during the AIDS epidemic in the final years of this period, with architecture playing a significant role. Rodriguez, who had lived in San Francisco since the 1970s, writes early on that he inhabits "a tall Victorian house that has been converted to four apartments; four single men."²⁹ The interior of that apartment appears several times in the essay, a kind of center from which the meandering narrative runs, each time, in a different direction. Victorians, he noted, are associated with domesticity, and

their appropriation by gays and lesbians was a way to subvert traditional notions of the family:

Two decades ago, some of the least expensive sections of San Francisco were wooden Victorian sections. It was thus a coincidence of the market that gay men found themselves living with the architectural metaphor for family. No other American imagination is more evocative of the family than the Victorian house. In those same years—the 1970s—and within those same Victorian houses, homosexuals were living rebellious lives to challenge the foundations of domesticity.³⁰

Rodriguez continued by uncritically reproducing the somewhat reductive view of gay men as purveyors of good taste in interior decoration. He argued that this stereotype has followed gay men since the Renaissance because of their need to subvert the “natural order” of procreational sex, surviving “in plumage, in lampshades, sonnets, musical comedy, culture, syntax, religious ceremony, opera, lacquer, irony.”³¹ For Rodriguez, it followed that reclaiming the family house and the family-oriented neighborhood with or without “plumage” politicized the relationship of gays to physical space and defined their political liberation in San Francisco. He thereby gave new meaning to the old stereotype. His two-room unit at the southern end of a Victorian home was a case in point. More than a sanctuary for the author, whose description emphasized the palimpsestic accumulation of decorative accents that evoked previous uses, the unit was an example of the typology’s built-in capacity to accommodate more than traditional families under one roof.

In a typical Victorian flat like Rodriguez’s, rooms were arranged in a row along a six-foot corridor that occupied one side of the building (fig. 7). The corridor was wide enough to accommodate a narrow staircase, usually near the entrance. Small rooms for the toilet and handwashing station, and closets along the corridor, left about three feet for circulation. Usually, a basement created the need for a short flight of stairs from the sidewalk to the main entrance. The backside of the building often opened to a small backyard. Buildings up to three stories were often divided into single-floor flats. The only difference from Victorian single-family homes was that buildings with flats had up to four entrances to the street with independent access to each flat. The architectural element that defined the design of Victorian homes was the bay window, resulting from early builders’ attempts to maximize the amount of light that went into street-facing rooms. Bay windows also augmented the space of the front room and gave it a more public presence by extending ever so slightly into the street. They were often decorated with ornate motifs and intricate woodwork that offered opportunities for customization.

The typical room layout, though lacking public symbolism, was equally a distinguishing architectural feature of this typology. The layout’s built-in flexibility contributed to reinventing Victorians as exemplary of gay domesticity in the 1970s. The serial layout allowed each room to open into another or be separated with partitions.³² Rodriguez’s room, for example, had an internal window that resulted

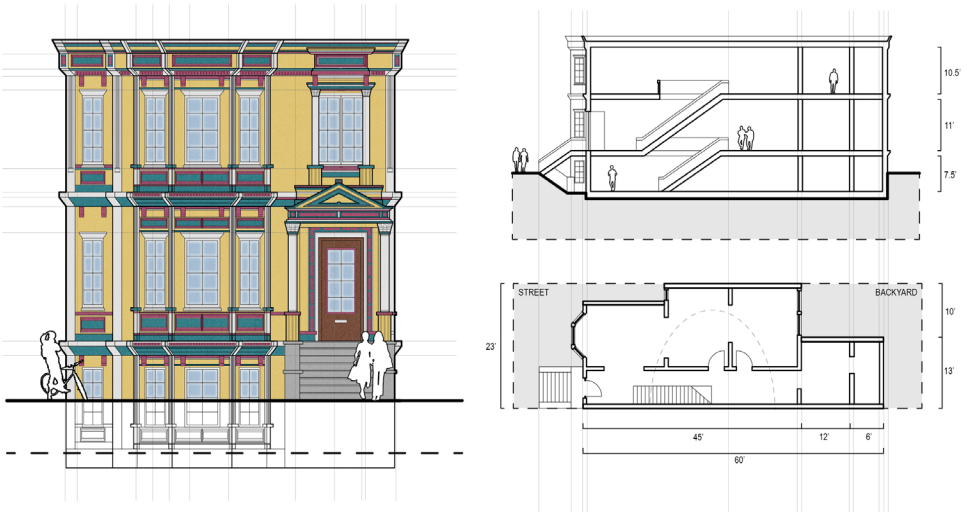


FIGURE 7. Spatial arrangement of rooms and stairs in a typical Victorian home for a narrow San Francisco lot based on Moudon, *Built for Change*. This flat typology, originally devised to house nuclear families, was reimagined for queer use. © Gabriel Gonzalez & Stathis G. Yeros.

from the conversion of a dining room to a bedroom. In addition, the rooms in the middle ordinarily would be considered annexes to the rooms on either end. However, because they received light and ventilation through narrow light wells, they offered a degree of independence and privacy to their occupants. All that allowed residents to adapt Victorian homes for nontraditional forms of communal living. These included mainly groups of friends living together, who usually did not have sexual relationships inside the “household,” or sometimes more traditional arrangements when a committed gay couple who owned or rented a flat offered one or more rooms to gay subletters.

In the context of the Castro’s queered landscape, Victorian adaptations also demonstrate the reciprocity between the public space of the neighborhood and the private space of reimagined domesticity. The rise of the gay neighborhood and the strength of cultural bonds that developed there mapped onto the Victorian flat layout, and the other way around: nontraditional kinship structures informed gay socializing and how sexual cultures moved among the bedroom, the sidewalk, the bar, and the bathhouse. This does not mean that all gay men participated in public sexual cultures, but that the meaning of privacy and individuality must be squared with the publicness of those cultures. The latter were marked by the rejection of mainstream inhibitions with sexual experimentation and social use of recreational drugs, mainly marijuana and methamphetamine. It was not uncommon to design and equip bedrooms with furniture and equipment to enhance sexual pleasure. This culture expanded to sidewalks, where men could socialize shirtless,

to some beaches where naked sunbathing was the norm, and to public parks where one could seek casual encounters with other individuals or groups, without much fear for police retribution after the mid-1970s. The wooded section of Yerba Buena Park, for example, was a well-known site for sex in public and it was the subject of heated debates in conservative media coverage.³³

During this time, the success of Victorian home renovations changed the character of the Castro yet again. In 1970 there were 16,000 Victorians in San Francisco, down from as many as 48,000 in 1915.³⁴ Most of them were not immediately recognizable, because many owners had renovated the aging exteriors using surplus industrial paint and asbestos shingles to cover façade woodwork during World War II. As new renters and a few homeowners began renovating Victorians in Haight-Ashbury around 1967, followed by the Castro, Nob Hill, and the Mission in the next decade, they gradually became desirable places to live and to invest. As a result, a disparity emerged between the actual rent of flats and the potential rent that owners could accrue.³⁵

Although building renovations began as an ad hoc effort often spearheaded by renters with paint buckets but no financial assistance, more organized preservation efforts of Victorian buildings had emerged already in the early 1960s. For example, residents in the neighborhood around Alamo Square, not far from the Castro, organized a neighborhood association during that time to oppose the demolition of old Victorians. San Francisco planning was undertaking a broad urban rehabilitation program that aimed to replace old buildings with modern apartments in poor areas, which had already led to the demolition of entire sections of the predominantly black neighborhood of the Fillmore.³⁶ The Alamo Square Neighborhood Association was spearheaded by a group of gay men who individually renovated a few Victorian buildings around the square and, after organizing with their nongay neighbors, received funding from the Federally Assisted Code Enforcement Program to help improve the neighborhood's physical infrastructure.³⁷ In the 1970s the neighborhood association successfully sought to designate the area an historic district. The campaign was not without pushback. Absentee landlords and building owners who did not want government interference in how they maintained their buildings had to be convinced. The winning argument was usually financial, as historic preservation in the 1970s and 1980s became an engine for what planners called "inner-city revitalization."

At first, most San Franciscans saw the colorful renovation of Victorians as a whimsical New Age fancy reflecting their occupants' nontraditional lifestyles. As the treasurer of the organization for the Alamo Square Historic District designation explained, their fundraising methods were part of the "gay" 1970s: "Holding a porno night at my place was one of the ways we raised funds for the project. One of my neighbors at the time produced quite a lot of still and movie porn, so it was a rousing success."³⁸ However, what started as a symbol of nonconformity became a stylistic trend distanced from its countercultural symbolism. *Painted Ladies*,

a handsomely illustrated architectural guidebook published in 1978, showcased 108 Victorians categorized by style and neighborhood. It documented the transformation of San Franciscans' attitudes toward Victorians and the renovations' centrality in discourses about architectural preservation.³⁹ The book, which led to the publication of three sequels in the span of the next twenty years, gained popularity among residents renovating their homes, but also with nonresidents curious to learn how the social and art movements of the 1960s had changed the famously liberal city's physical environment. Martha Asten, a longtime owner of Cliff's Variety, a Castro hardware store that many residents relied on for building supplies, credited *Painted Ladies* with an increase in paint sales and Victorian plaster and wooden decorative accents that became widely available in San Francisco hardware stores.⁴⁰

One of the latent themes in *Painted Ladies* was that renovations restored a sense of "dignity" and "respectability" to Victorian homes, in the authors' words.⁴¹ A reviewer of the book in the *American Art Journal* put it in even more dramatic terms, exclaiming that "the authors remind us of the many abuses launched against the venerable structures: the systematic destruction of entire blocks of Victorian homes; the rape of the cast iron decorations for scrap in the World Wars; and the tampering with the original surfaces of the building."⁴² Placing the buildings in a moralizing discourse, this reviewer put those involved with their restoration in the position of saviors. In a historical inversion, the Victorian iconography associated with family life for over one hundred years was being "restored" not only by nostalgic heterosexual homeowners but also by many gays and lesbians eager to reimagine ways of inhabiting them by rescripting their interiors. The countercultural origins and methods of achieving this rescripting notwithstanding, developer-led urban renewal capitalized on the desirability of renovated, formerly poor, and often black or immigrant Victorian sections of the city.⁴³ This was true for many San Francisco neighborhoods and was particularly acute in the Castro, where wealthy new homeowners gradually led to the neighborhood's economic and cultural gentrification.⁴⁴ Even Harvey Milk, the Castro activist politician who eventually symbolized gay neighborhood politics, moved from his Castro apartment to another space on Market Street due to rent increases a few months before his assassination in 1978.⁴⁵

THE POLITICS OF URBAN VISIBILITY

The difference between the Castro and other residential neighborhoods where gay people lived was that the latter represented the novel idea that gay visibility within San Francisco could be used as a political tool more effectively when it fit the established life-patterns of traditional ethnic neighborhoods that dominated the city's social and political life. In 1970 the Society for Individual Rights (SIR) was the largest gay and lesbian political organization in the city and the region.

Its magazine, *Vector*, had national distribution. SIR had already identified two main pillars for successful political organizing. Its leadership fostered solidarity among gays and lesbians by highlighting shared experiences of oppression, such as work discrimination and police harassment, and formed coalitions with other organized groups based on specific issues. For example, Jim Foster, SIR's president in the early 1970s, recognized that the increasing number of gays and lesbians in San Francisco gave them significant political leverage as a voting bloc.⁴⁶ SIR used this power to build coalitions with sympathetic heterosexual audiences to achieve their political demands incrementally. At the dawn of the 1970s, after a decade of building the foundations of a single-issue political movement defending the rights of homosexual men and women as US citizens that largely downplayed sexuality in public discourse, the organization began cautiously employing public rhetoric of gay empowerment and pride. This rhetoric de-emphasized sex and the places where it happened to maintain an "image of respectability," geared toward acceptance by heterosexual allies.⁴⁷

The steady stream of homosexual men and women arriving in San Francisco and other Bay Area cities, especially Berkeley and Oakland between 1964 and the mid-1970s, attracted by their national reputation as countercultural hubs, began to erode the façade of the homophile movement's respectability politics.⁴⁸ For many newcomers, going out to gay bars, clubs, and social events and asserting their rights and obligations as homosexual citizens were all essential components of coming out of the proverbial closet. Expressions of gay identity in everyday interactions in the 1970s suggest that coming out was performative rather than deterministic. Coming out did not tend to represent a definitive rupture with an earlier period of the closet. Instead, it was a staging of gay social life in public that continuously rearticulated the logic of the closet in creating admissions criteria for participation in dominant forms of gay public social life. The visibility of this social life invited a great deal of scrutiny. Instrumentalizing the political act of coming out produced contradictory manifestations of public homosexuality that oscillated between asserting cultural differences and advocating mainstream assimilation. Moreover, living in the Bay Area, participating in San Francisco's gay nightlife, and coming out politically as a distinct constituency fed into each other. The arc of political debates in the gay press shows an ideological shift during the 1970s, linking gay rights with openness and visibility. However, in practice, this visibility was selective and overwhelmingly benefited young white men, while transgender people, lesbians, black, Latinx, and Asian/Pacific Islander queers occupied spaces at the margins of public gay cultures. This dynamic has defined Castro politics from 1970 until the present.⁴⁹

By 1970 public homosexuality was more or less defining Castro politics, and Harvey Milk's career seemed to embody that turn. Milk was one of the key proponents of coming out as a political stance. Elected to the Board of Supervisors in 1977, he is considered the first openly gay elected official and, after his assassination

the next year, became a global symbol for gay liberation.⁵⁰ He had moved to the Castro in 1972 with Scott Smith, after living in New York: Milk worked first on Wall Street, with considerable success, and then as a Broadway producer, with less success. They opened a camera store on 575 Castro Street and lived in the apartment above. At the time, Milk was in his early forties and embraced many elements of the Bay Area hippie culture, including its emphasis on communal pooling of resources. The store became a de facto hub for leftist political activities and a place for residents to share resources and information.⁵¹ Milk's talent was his ability to bridge neighborhood politics with the politics of homosexuality and other broad issues, such as environmentalism. He often acted as a kind of grassroots spokesperson for gay men in the Castro and successfully built coalitions with other organized groups. The concentration of gay-owned businesses in the Castro made the political power and demands of gays and lesbians as a social group hard to ignore. Milk rejected SIR's politics of respectability early on: it should not, he believed, be the sole vehicle for gay representation in governmental institutions. Influenced by liberationist rhetoric, Milk invoked parallels with labor unions and black liberation demands, and sometimes directly engaged in union politics.⁵² Meanwhile, he demonstrated that gay and lesbian demands were rooted in distinct social and cultural practices, including nonmainstream ways of living in the city. The Castro was a testing ground for the expression of gay liberation as a set of demands and obligations.

At the turn of the 1970s, Eureka Valley residents considered the opening of gay bars a harbinger of neighborhood change, which the dominant business association, Eureka Valley Merchants Association (EVMA), sought to stave off: they would not accept any openly gay business owners into their ranks.⁵³ This ostracism led to establishing an alternative business group, the Castro Village Association (CVA), as a rival to EVMA. CVA first appeared in a June 1972 list of associations and business groups published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the city's newspaper of record, as the newest Eureka Valley merchant association that promoted "street fairs and joint advertising schemes."⁵⁴ Although there are no further mentions of the association until 1974, it eventually became a vehicle to assert gay merchants as a local economic force. When Milk opened Castro Camera, he approached each of the merchants in the area individually to explain his grievances with EVMA.⁵⁵ He eventually became CVA president in 1974. Castro residents and gay political organizers saw Milk's political acumen in full force as he threw himself into building the reputation of CVA as a model for gay organizing in the commercial sector. According to Randy Shilts, Milk's biographer and a journalist for the *Chronicle*, in 1973 Milk championed the need for political representation by openly gay people, one year later his slogan was that "gays should buy gay."⁵⁶

This did not mean gays and lesbians should only frequent or shop at businesses owned by other gays and lesbians. Instead, CVA sought to leverage the power of

boycotts. For example, Milk brought up the example of African Americans boycotting municipal bus companies to change the practice of segregating them in the back of buses.⁵⁷ He argued that their success resulted from the bus companies' economic losses. He did not think this was morally the right reason to change bus company policies (like most social progressives at the time, Milk considered the rights of all disenfranchised minority populations under a framework of human rights), but he considered boycotts necessary steps toward social change.⁵⁸ CVA played the role of both an agitator by threatening gay boycotts and a partner for businesses. For example, when Milk decided that the association's reputation would benefit from including the local branch of Hibernia Bank in its roster, he sent a letter to the manager inviting the branch to join, enclosing copies of the deposit slips from CVA members' accounts at the bank. This strategy paid off. Soon, even the business owners who rejected gay and lesbian ways of life saw the economic benefits of welcoming their business.

In August 1974 CVA organized the first Castro Street Fair, which proved the reputation of gays and lesbians as "good for business" by bringing twenty-five thousand people to the neighborhood. The two-block section of Castro Street was closed to vehicular traffic for street performances, dancing, and revelry. The following year, attendance climbed to one hundred thousand.⁵⁹ Besides benefiting local businesses, it was also a remarkable annual public demonstration of the city's dominant forms of gay culture. It celebrated the processes of gay and lesbian territorialization, which had resulted in a clearly defined physical area marked by the convergence of businesses, residences, and political organizing. The two blocks of Castro Street between Market and Nineteenth came to symbolize freedom of sexual expression for thousands of residents and visitors. According to novelist Jess Wells, who lived in nearby Duboce Triangle and socialized in the Castro, the entrance to the two-block area was "an imaginary line" that separated the neighborhood where gays and lesbians "were suddenly free to hold hands, confirmed in who [they] were," from the rest of the city.⁶⁰

The crowds at the 1970s street fairs were predominantly young and overwhelmingly white. In fact, throughout the 1970s, Castro residents were approximately 95 percent white: the association with a "village"—as a self-contained, culturally homogeneous social unit—was grounded in reality.⁶¹ Visitors who enlivened Castro's street life throughout the day were more diverse, but it was not uncommon for businesses to exclude potential customers based on race and gender. Bars and clubs often required multiple forms of identification from black and brown people to enter, and some bars were off-limits to women altogether.⁶² And while a few nonwhite cultural and political figures were prominent in San Francisco's gay scene of the 1970s—most notably singer, disco performer, and countercultural star Sylvester, who was black—they were exceptions to the rule: in the many photographs of Castro social life that feature him, he is often a singular person of color amidst predominantly white audiences.⁶³

There were, however, alternative networks for socializing that black Bay Area residents built. These included parties and other social events held mostly in private residences.⁶⁴ Many of these spaces operated under the radar of mainstream gay and lesbian cultures. Moreover, Latinx queers in the Mission faced unique cultural and social obstacles in articulating immigrant homosexual and transgender identities.⁶⁵ They created spaces catering to their needs, such as *Esta Noche*, a Latinx gay bar with drag shows that opened in 1979, and literature circles (and later, during the AIDS crisis, programs that catered specifically to Spanish speakers). But these networks and spaces are sparsely documented, a reminder that both the territorialization of homosexuality and, consequently, the pursuit of citizenship during the formative decades for LGBTQ+ politics in the United States was understood primarily as a white phenomenon. Indeed, the visibility of the Castro's predominantly white, male, middle-class gay population shaped mainstream perceptions of gays as a primarily white, male, urban minority.⁶⁶

For the mainstream press and the broader heterosexual public, homosexual visibility during the 1970s was associated not so much with everyday life as with more overtly political events, the premier of which was the annual Gay Pride parade. The San Francisco parade, which began as the Gay Freedom Day to celebrate the anniversary of the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York, quickly eclipsed all other events in attendance and political symbolism. Its size expanded together with the rise in public visibility of gay and lesbian presence in the city throughout the decade. The first parade took place in Polk Gulch in 1972; in 1975 approximately fifty thousand people marched down Polk Street toward Market with banners and floats, issuing a set of demands to the local and national governments on behalf of gays and lesbians. In 1978 there were over two hundred thousand attendees.⁶⁷ Pride organizers aspired to represent the various constituencies that comprised the gay liberation movement. This aspiration was often the subject of bitter debates. For example, some lesbian groups refused to participate in the first few parades, protesting gay male chauvinism and the exclusion of women from leadership positions in the gay movement, which ultimately led to the proliferation of self-organized events by different queer subgroups in the city, such as the Dyke March and later trans-oriented events. Still, the annual late June parade was the main event, a show of political and cultural might for gays and lesbians, and later transgender people, as a distinct constituency. Heterosexual politicians attended, too, and marched alongside community leaders.

In a speech during the 1978 Pride parade, Harvey Milk, who had just been elected supervisor, explicitly linked gay visibility in American society with recognition of gays and lesbians as a minority with unrealized political rights by the federal government. He started his speech with a direct political call: "My name is Harvey Milk—and I want to recruit you. I want to recruit you for the fight to preserve your democracy."⁶⁸ For Milk, the pursuit of gay rights was undoing a long history of constitutionalized bigotry and extended to conservative politics

in the United States of the 1970s. He also celebrated coming out as a means of political action:

Gay brothers and sisters, what are you going to do about it? You must come out. Come out to your parents. I know that it is hard and that it will hurt them, but think of how they will hurt you in the voting booth! Come out to your relatives. I know that it is hard and will upset them but think of how they will upset you in the voting booth. Come out to your friends. If indeed, they are your friends. Come out to your neighbors, to your co-workers, to the people who work where you eat and shop. Come out only to the people you know, and who know you. Not to anyone else. But once and for all, break down the myths, destroy the lies and distortions. For your sake. For their sake.⁶⁹

Coming out, in Milk's formulation, was not a singular event, but a way of changing perceptions, and it happened not just via the rhetorical crescendos of Pride or the crowds at the Castro Street Fair, but as part of everyday social life.

On November 28, 1978, Supervisor Dan White, an Irish-Catholic former policeman, assassinated Milk and Mayor George Moscone, blaming the two politicians' role in what he perceived as his ouster from the board. The killings' homophobic characteristics were unmistakable. Although White was motivated personally by his ouster and although he did not commit murder in the name of his constituents, he had been elected in a socially conservative district and saw the rise of homosexual urban cultures and their influence in City Hall as a detriment to his priorities.⁷⁰ The double assassination riled up the city. Vigils for the two politicians' death brought people to the streets as a form of quiet anti-hate protest at the killings' direct aftermath. White's light sentence one year later prompted a spontaneous eruption of anger in the streets around City Hall known as the White Night Riots of October 14, 1979, that led to vandalism and the burning of police cars at Civic Center. Dianne Feinstein, who was president of the Board of Supervisors, assumed mayoral responsibilities and spearheaded a moderate, conciliatory political response. In the long run, some of Milk's political mentees, such as Cleve Jones and Anne Kronenberg, worked for the state government, where they were also able to influence pro-gay policies.⁷¹

Public visibility of homosexuality in the city, however, remained a point of contention. The new mayor, who until then had served as supervisor in wealthy, socially conservative Pacific Heights, famously courted the gay vote in the 1979 mayoral race by visiting drag balls and campaigning in the Castro.⁷² Meanwhile, she also sought to appeal to wealthy developers who envisioned the city as a tourist downtown behemoth surrounded by upscale bedroom communities.⁷³ This vision was antithetical to the boisterous and sexually permissive environment of the Castro and the leather strip of Folsom Street, the two principal gay areas in the city at that time. The economic activity in and around the Castro created synergies between local business and development interests, shaping its legacy as a modern entrepreneurial

neighborhood. San Francisco's tourism, commercial, and real estate sectors capitalized on this legacy and the city became a reference point for measuring the degree to which other cities were progressive by having "out" gay cultures.⁷⁴

THE CLOSET AND THE GHETTO

The global resonance of Castro Village as a peculiar gay resort with its business association, permanent and part-time residents, and large numbers of visitors, was far greater than what early gay and lesbian residents envisioned. The visibility of gay life in everyday interactions in the Castro and elsewhere also shaped the contours of dominant gay embodiments in San Francisco. Gay men expressed aspects of their social, cultural, and sexual identity by transforming the physical environment. That environment in turn influenced how they expressed multidimensional gay identities in public through fashion, comportment, and social behavior. Castro denizens represented the main characteristics of gay embodiment in the 1970s. Although there were many other ways to embody gender and sexual nonconformity in the city at the time, men in the Castro—young, mostly under thirty, and openly sexual—were the most visible. What had seemed, in the early 1970s, like a close-knit village gave way, by the decade's end, to images of exuberant and demonstrative gay masculinity.⁷⁵ In mainstream media, sex eclipsed other activities and provided a concrete example of what it meant to socially come out of the gay closet.

Gay men's exuberant masculinity, freewheeling erotic display, and incipient consumerism in the Castro were not wholly distinct from underlying mechanisms of control and surveillance.⁷⁶ Castro denizens were subjected to scrutiny by one another—specifically of their fashion and sexual behavior—and by the media, advertising executives, real estate agents, and eventually governmental institutions. Before this growing audience, the dominant narrative of gay liberation solidified as a story of coming out of the closet and into a legible, homosexual identity. Those who embodied dominant ways of being gay—modeled largely on men in the Castro—were increasingly recognized as deserving national subjects: homosexual citizens. Thereby surveillance was normalized as an invisible power mechanism of the nation-state to control everyday life. This does not mean the structure of society remains the same, as the fights for rights of minorities throughout the twentieth century demonstrate. Rather, the normalization of surveillance shows the state's capacity to absorb those changes while maintaining its ruling legitimacy. Meanwhile, homosexual citizens were subjected to each other's scrutiny about their fashion and sexual behavior. This demonstrates the limitations of breaking out of the closet as a political action.⁷⁷ The closet's inside/outside binary logic prescribed proper ways to articulate homosexual identities openly in order to make them politically legible. Paradoxically, the concurrence of coming out and gay territorialization created "gay ghettos," externally and internally monitored enclaves of homosexuality.⁷⁸

In the late 1970s, gay men in San Francisco used the term ghetto to refer to the Castro but not without some trepidations about reductionism.⁷⁹ Milk and novelist

and local gay celebrity Armistead Maupin considered this conceptualization of a gay enclave as “a stage in gay development” from which men would eventually “graduate,” even though they were personally uneasy with the racist connotations of urban reformers’ use of the term to justify forced displacement.⁸⁰ The dominant model of the urban gay citizen became a type referred to as the gay clone. In San Francisco, the term was associated specifically with the Castro and those who embodied gay hypermasculinity became known as Castro clones. As the name implies, the clone look was a deliberate attempt to reproduce a sociocultural identity through fashion and social behavior as gay embodiment in the laboratory conditions of the Castro. Clone culture, however, was part of urban gay environments around the United States (Greenwich Village in New York offered paradigmatic examples of this culture in the mid- and late 1970s).

Clones were typically young gay men with time to go to the gym and enough money to party. Usually, they were white-collar sexual migrants to the city.⁸¹ The typical clone outfit in the late 1970s consisted of Levi’s blue jeans, leather boots, and a flannel shirt or a simple “muscle” T-shirt for the warmer days. The clothes were tight-fitting to emphasize the wearer’s masculine physique. Jeans were often worn without underwear to better highlight genitals and buttocks, and the top or bottom button was sometimes left undone, signaling sexual availability.⁸² Martin Levine, who conducted an ethnographic study of gay clones as a national phenomenon in the late 1970s, argued that clone embodiment, which included fashion as well as the performance of hypermasculinity in everyday interactions, was an urban phenomenon facilitated by the rise of gay neighborhoods. He found that clones operated within a relatively isolated social environment from heterosexual society. They separated their work life from their socializing, frequenting exclusively gay bars, clubs, even restaurants, and traveled to cities where they “fit right in” with local clone culture.⁸³ This geographic expansiveness demonstrates that cities played a major role in how sexuality became intelligible as a distinct American subculture, with networks that extended beyond a few isolated sites.

Clone embodiment extended beyond fashion and social behavior to how gay men inhabited physical spaces and the aesthetics of those spaces. Many Castro bars and clubs in the 1970s had sexually suggestive names such as Naked Grape (1972–75), Hustle Inn (1976–77), Rear End (1974–76), Purple Pickle (1972–77), Moby Dick (1979–present), and Badlands (1973–2020).⁸⁴ Hypermasculinity extended to typical design choices, such as dark walls and furniture, mood lighting, arrangement of furniture for cruising, and sometimes backrooms for casual sex. In private homes, bedrooms sometimes were created as extensions of this sexual environment: walls and ceilings covered with mirrors to enhance visual pleasure during sex, gay erotica, and strategically placed lubricant, sex toys, and drugs to be within quick reach near the bed.⁸⁵

Gay Semiotics (1977), a photo-essay by Hal Fischer, illustrates how young gay men in the Castro created a world loaded with sexual meaning that was reflected in their appearance and comportment. Fischer participated as both a member

and critical observer of the gay world that he captured in his photographs (fig. 8). The artist's text overlays commented on the gestures, accessories, and fashion of gay masculine archetypes. Fischer organized his subjects in a taxonomy of different gay types that included the "media persona," the "Western look," and "gay street fashion," among others. He also included an annotated guide of the gestures and strategic use of coded artifacts—such as keys and earrings—that served as a nonverbal communication system. A handkerchief in the left-back pocket, for example, signified that the wearer preferred an active role during sex.

Gay Semiotics visualized a gay erotic world predicated on overt masculinity that was conceived precisely as the antithesis of earlier cultural representations of homosexual men as effeminate "dandies" and "pansies."⁸⁶ Seen in the context of the changes in the gay urban landscape, mustachioed white men depicted as gay archetypes in Fischer's photographs created a new closet at the very moment they were coming out to mainstream society as homosexual. Gay clone cultures constructed an inside—those who shared the coded language and "butch" aesthetics—and an outside they labeled anachronistic. Still, the visual and gestural signs associated with that inside reflected the clones' mainstream socialization, where hypermasculinity associated with power and working-class aesthetics represented the "tougher" side of that masculine culture (most clones' middle-class lifestyles notwithstanding). Levine argues that "men enacted a hypermasculine sexuality in a way to challenge their stigmatization as failed men."⁸⁷ However, as clone cultures matured by the early 1980s, the appropriation of hetero-patriarchal tropes lost its playful subversiveness, solidified exclusions based primarily on looks and sexual prowess, and for some became a straitjacket of gay conformity.

The comparison of two representations of urban gay culture a little over a decade apart reveals the historical shift in dominant gay embodiments and their environments in San Francisco, though both instances of gay self-fashioning reveal the ongoing weight of the closet. The first is a photograph published in *Life* magazine in 1964 as part of the first extensive cover story on gay urban environments in mainstream press. It shows a group of men inside The Toolbox, a leather bar on Folsom Street, in front of a mural by Chuck Arnett. The mural's life-size figures share with the men inside the bar not only an austere sense of fashion but also a confrontational, self-consciously masculine attitude (fig. 9).⁸⁸ At the same time, the enactment of this sort of gay scene inside The Toolbox (which was demolished in 1971) projected defiance toward mainstream culture that *Life* readers represented. The gay men in the magazine's pages express their coming out, willing to be publicly identified with spaces that were, themselves, becoming publicly identifiable. Gay spaces now included brick-and-mortar locations that one could search for in the local telephone directory.

The second image, a photograph by Crawford Wayne Barton, shows a group of men crowding a sunny sidewalk during the 1977 Castro Street Fair (fig. 10). Most of them are shirtless, and at least a couple place their hands suggestively on

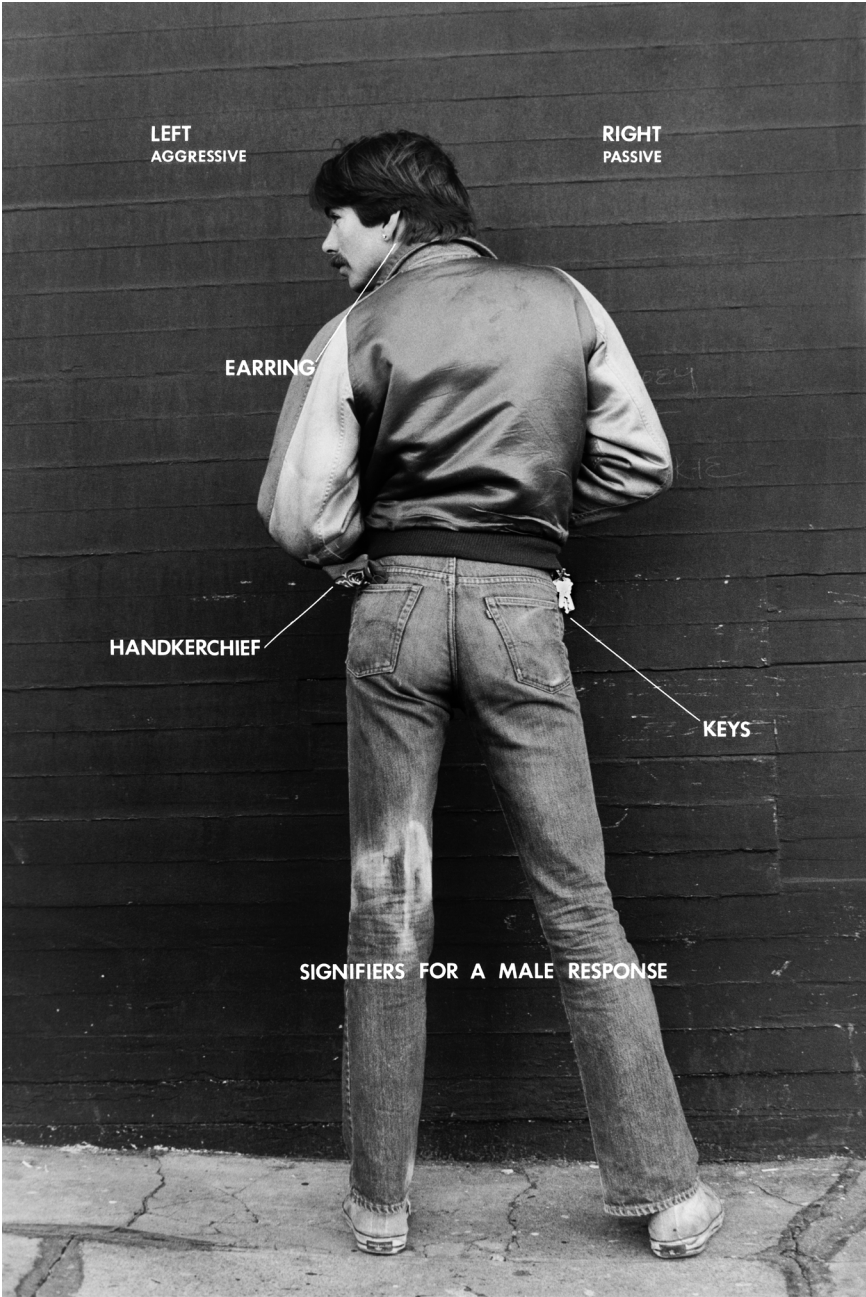


FIGURE 8. Hal Fischer, *Signifiers for a Male Response* from the series *Gay Semiotics*, 1977/2014. Fischer annotated the photograph, explaining the sexual meaning of style elements. Photograph by Hal Fischer. © Hal Fischer.



FIGURE 9. Mural by Chuck Arnett at The Toolbox, a gay bar on Harrison Street, depicting a group of men looking self-assured with upright body postures. The mural appeared in a photograph published in *Life* magazine in June 1964. The bar was demolished in 1971. Photograph by Henri Leleu. Henri Leleu Papers 1997–13. © SF GLBT Historical Society.



FIGURE 10. Crawford Wayne Barton, *Castro Street Fair: Men and Motorcycles*, 1977. Photograph by Crawford Wayne Barton. Crawford Barton Papers, 1993–11. © SF GLBT Historical Society.

the crotches of their jeans and shorts. Few are looking at or talking to each other. Instead, they appear content to be at arm's length from potential sexual exploits, casually posing for onlookers. Compared to the previous image, the men in this photograph were not defensive or confrontational in how they presented themselves as a group but rather self-assured, distant, and aloof. Similar scenes were ubiquitous in photographs and film footage of the neighborhood at the end of the 1970s, working less as disclosure of homosexuality and more as a symbolic break of the distinction between public and private gay cultures. Homosexuality was no longer relegated to cavernous club interiors and private residences.⁸⁹ Men on Castro sidewalks were coming out by symbolically extending the private into the public, thus queering the public realm. Beneath the surface of virility and stable gay embodiments, however, lurked vulnerability and indeterminacy. The sense of control of their environment that gay men lining up Castro Street asserted through their gazes has its corollary, that of being watched.

The cultural context of contemporary liberal democracy afforded the inclusion of gay sexual identity as a minority experience within a multicultural social structure that, decades after these photographs were taken, led to such political turning points as gay marriage and open military service.⁹⁰ At the same time, inclusion was based on accepting the underlying taxonomic logic of the closet. The embodiment of an ultimately fragile gay masculinity, the transformation of Victorian buildings, and the use of gay visibility in the Castro as political currency reveal gay men's aspirations to shape their own environments by appropriating and subverting the uses and meaning of existing urban spaces. These appropriations demonstrate ambivalent relationships to the logic of the closet, which operates at multiple scales simultaneously: the body, the building, and the city. Strategies of disclosure were shaped by, and thereby maintained, binary structures of social and spatial organization.

Despite prefigurative social experiments in how to live in the city that playfully rescripted public space, gentrification began to take hold of Victorian neighborhoods such as the Castro. This, in conjunction with AIDS, changed the characteristics of gay social life in the following decades. The analysis of Castro social life during the 1970s shows that rights-claims based on sexuality and consumption were paradoxically linked through the performance of new gay social identities and embodiments. These changed the meaning of homosexual urban insurgency from demands for government recognition of homosexuals as a persecuted minority, such as those aiming to alleviate queer youth poverty in the Tenderloin in the late 1960s, to a proactive celebration of gay culture as quintessentially masculine and American.

Lesbian Feminism and Women's Spaces

In September 1994 a three-day celebration at the Women's Building of the Bay Area in San Francisco's Mission District marked its fifteenth anniversary. The non-profit had just finished paying off the mortgage for the four-story building and the timing coincided with the completion of a new mural dedicated to the modern women's movement, which covered two of its exterior facades. *Maestrapeace*, collaboratively designed and painted by Mujeres Muralistas, had taken approximately one year from planning to completion. It was an exuberant composition of recognizable figures—including poet Audre Lorde, artist Georgia O'Keefe, and indigenous rights advocate Rigoberta Menchú—along with abstract shapes and scenes from everyday women's lives around the globe. The muralists visualized a field of relationships among cultures, geographies, and social movements, engaging in the world-making project that the building's feminist founders had advanced almost two decades before.¹ The warm and sunny weather matched the joyful atmosphere of the festivities. A lineup of local women's bands played on the main stage, and other performances and exhibitions filled the building. As a journalist for a local lesbian magazine put it: "Woman-energy vibes from the building all weekend nearly floated it off the ground!"²

The Women's Building itself symbolized the resilience of the feminist movement in San Francisco during the preceding two-and-a-half decades and the agency of lesbian feminists within it. A feminist organization had transformed the Norwegian American social club that was housed there until 1969 into a cultural center for women's art and performances, while also providing affordable office space for feminist groups and nonprofits. The continuous operation of the Women's Building as a collective throughout those years also demonstrates how the women who inhabited it navigated ideological changes in the feminist movement

in part through their shared interactions in common, physical space. They were members of different generations, ethnicities, races, and classes, and many of them had participated in contentious debates about the political direction of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the split among radical and cultural feminists at the turn between the two decades, and the role of lesbian sexuality in shaping cultural feminism.

The organization had begun in the midst of the second-wave feminist movement, rooted in the discontent of women in postwar US society, whose roles were largely limited to being wives and mothers. The 1960s was a turning point for the politicization of women who sought equality in the workplace and participation in public life as full citizens. Feminists, especially in major cities, organized consciousness-raising groups where they empowered each other to overcome barriers to entering public life and achieving economic independence. The radical rethinking of traditional social relationships attracted many lesbians, who joined the feminist movement and transformed it by helping to build lasting institutions in cities and rural areas throughout the United States. In San Francisco and Oakland, a network of feminists and lesbians between the mid-1960s and the mid-1990s connected with one another, in part, by occupying and transforming physical spaces. That included private parties at homes and apartments as well as openly lesbian bars, like the ivy-clad Maud's, which opened in 1966 in San Francisco's Haight neighborhood, as well as lesbian bookstores such as the Information Center Incorporate (ICI) in Oakland and others that opened throughout the Bay Area from Berkeley to San Jose. By 1980 the most visible public lesbian social life in the Bay was concentrated in a three-block section of Valencia Street in the Mission, where a network of spaces included a lesbian club, a women-only bathhouse, a feminist bookstore, a women's travel agency, and the Women's Building, among others.³

The role of lesbians in the Bay Area's urban landscape has not been adequately recognized, in part because of the comparative visibility of gay male spaces in the city throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and in part because lesbian feminism has sometimes been misrecognized as indistinguishable from the broader feminist movement. Lesbian bars were few and far apart in the beginning of the 1970s and many lesbians frequented gay bars, some of which had "lesbian nights." Although many lesbians socialized in the Castro as it became the center of queer public life in the Bay in the 1970s, the neighborhood was associated primarily with an exuberant, performative gay masculinity. Lesbian residential concentrations were also less common—a part of downtown Oakland near ICI was one such rare example—at least until after 1978, when a critical mass of lesbian hang-outs opened in San Francisco's Mission and many lesbians moved to the area around Valencia Street between Market and Twenty-Third Streets, giving it the characteristics of a lesbian neighborhood.

Throughout this time lesbian feminist collectives were instrumental in building movement spaces where women debated the intellectual and practical aspects of

how to create a pluralist feminist public. Together, they made decisions about the construction, aesthetics, organization, and use of physical space—decisions that, in turn, shaped the development of feminist identities. And as visions for those identities changed, in response to new ideas about sexuality, intersectional oppression, and gender embodiment, so too did the use of space. Together, the movements for women's and lesbian rights employed various strategies, and asserted philosophical and political justifications, to claim the right to inhabit urban space. They participated in leftist political groups, experimented with anarchism, built urban separatist collectives, and also worked with mainstream organizations and the government to reform their practices toward achieving gender (primarily) and sexual equality. Over three decades since 1970, feminist coalitions built on shared priorities tested feminist theories through insurgent ways of inhabiting the city. These changed over the years along with the assimilation of feminist and lesbian rights into mainstream American citizenship discourse.

PLACELESS IN THEIR STRUGGLES?

The absence of clear lesbian spatial markers in San Francisco in the beginning of the 1980s perhaps explains why urban scholar Manuel Castells argued in 1983 that lesbians in the San Francisco Bay were “placeless” in their struggles.⁴ Castells suggested that women did not have territorial aspirations because they did not concentrate in identifiable areas within the city, establishing instead dispersed interpersonal networks. He described this type of organizing as “more radical” than gay men's territorial presence in urban neighborhoods, presumably because they could subvert heterosexual social life anywhere in the city. At the same time, he argued that the lack of territorial consolidation meant that lesbians were less likely to achieve local power compared to gay men. However, as the story of lesbian social life at bars along with the spaces discussed in the rest of the chapter demonstrates, between 1970 and 1990 lesbians and lesbian feminists did mark their presence in the Bay Area's physical and social landscape, even if their embeddedness within the broader women's movement led them to be misapprehended by outsiders.

Bars frequented by lesbians had been part of San Francisco's bohemian nightlife since the turn of the twentieth century, and some—like Mona's, which operated in various venues from 1933 to 1957—developed reputations as lesbian hangouts.⁵ Many of these venues also became tourist attractions for postwar visitors who wanted to experience a taste of the city's famous counterculture, and were never openly nor exclusively identified as lesbian bars. That changed in 1966, when Rikki Streicher opened Maud's Study on Cole Street in the Haight. Streicher had every intention for Maud's to operate as an openly lesbian bar, and during its twenty-three years of operation, it was, as a journalist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* put it, “an institution—not just a bar but an enchanted meeting ground for a new generation of women.”⁶ Unlike earlier women's bars in the Tenderloin and North

Beach, Maud's was located in the two-block commercial strip of an almost exclusively residential neighborhood.⁷

The space had previously been a dive bar called the Study, with a clear glass window to the street. As Maud's, its façade was covered with a wall of planted ivy that concealed the single large room inside. A long serving bar was decorated with art deco lamps. Round tables occupied part of the floor space, as did a pool table. There was a jukebox, room for dancing, and a small stage for performances and community events. A small back patio provided extra space for quieter socializing. When Maud's opened, it was illegal to employ women behind the bar. As a result, an original crew of sixteen men served the boisterous crowd of women customers until 1971, when the law changed and the first cohort of female bartenders entered Maud's, becoming a staple of lesbian social life throughout the decade.⁸ The bar was primarily a place where women could socialize and find erotic partners, but staff were trained to intervene in the event of any physical or verbal altercation, whether in amorous disputes or when heterosexual men sometimes ventured into the neighborhood bar without knowing it was a lesbian hangout and tried to "pick up" women. Sometimes staff simply had to refuse entry to men.⁹ Like other bars frequented by lesbians and gay men in the city, Maud's operated in a regulatory limbo, being both openly lesbian and having to contend with routine police raids until the early 1970s, when increasing local political power of lesbian and gay organizations put an end to this practice. (A city nondiscrimination ordinance was finally signed into law in 1978.)¹⁰ Until then, the bar had a system: A red light began flashing when police were spotted outside, which warned same-sex dancing partners to split up.

Streicher had moved to San Francisco in 1944. She worked first as an X-ray technician and then managed several restaurants before she came across the available space in the Haight. She decided to pour her energy into transforming it to a social space for lesbians, and gradually built a tight-knit community around it with social gatherings, weekend trips, and athletic events.¹¹ In the 1970s Maud's formed a softball team that competed in the local league. The bar hosted Sunday postgame events and award ceremonies as sports became an important part of Streicher's activities and of socializing at Maud's.¹² While other bars had traditionally gender-conforming dress codes for women, it was important to Streicher that the women who went to Maud's could dress any way they wanted and openly flirt with each other. She kept the bar open every evening throughout the year, a trait she advertised in the gay and lesbian press, so that women who might be excluded from their families and heterosexual circles during holidays always had a place to go. There were annual Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners and New Year parties. Maud's was helping people to connect not only for romantic or sexual purposes but also in service of lesbian public social life.

In the 1980s, however, the success of the gay and lesbian movement in establishing more publicly queer spaces across the city was changing the culture of bars like Maud's. Many younger lesbians were going out to new fashionable clubs in the South of Market area, and a more affluent class of working professionals often

skipped bars altogether in favor of “sober” socializing. By 1989 Maud’s had not made money several years in a row, and Streicher decided to close the bar.¹³ During an anniversary celebration that year, which reminded the women who were once regulars at Maud’s of the bar’s contributions to their own lives and the history of the lesbian movement in San Francisco, Streicher auctioned off bar memorabilia, which found new homes around the Bay.¹⁴ The bar closed soon thereafter.¹⁵ A documentary film, *Last Call at Maud’s*, released in 1993, helped to cement the bar’s place in the history of lesbian spaces in the San Francisco Bay.¹⁶

In December 1978, a full decade before Maud’s closure, Streicher had opened Amelia’s, a dance club on Valencia Street in the Mission, directly across from the neighborhood police station. The location seemed to exemplify how much social and political life had changed: lesbian spaces were no longer hidden from public view. In fact, Valencia Street was becoming for lesbians what the Castro was for gay men. The new lesbian spaces in the Mission did not replace the clubs in the South of Market, but rather demonstrated women’s territorialization at the neighborhood scale. Streicher followed her customers there and Amelia’s became an important site for the open and self-confident lesbian culture that developed in the Mission neighborhood into the 1980s.

Amelia’s (named after aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart, who was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic and, though not lesbian, was a symbol for women’s emancipation) occupied the ground floor of a two-story commercial building, with an additional floor that could be rented for private events. The interior exuded an air of opulence: a chandelier decorated the main space, where booths lined one of the walls; there was also a dance floor. Amelia’s had a resident DJ, regular parties, and openly celebrated lesbian social life, including at least two lesbian weddings in 1979 and 1980.¹⁷ They were, of course, not legally recognized, but they indicate that the ceremony’s symbolism as a declaration of love and dedication to building long-lasting homosexual relationships was part of lesbian social life several decades before same-sex marriage was protected under California law in 2013. Similar ceremonies between men took place in gay bars, and formal demands for marriage equality in the late 1990s built on the legacy of such events.

Besides weddings, Amelia’s also hosted fundraisers benefiting broader women’s causes. Mayor Dianne Feinstein attended an event in 1980 to present an award and is captured in photographs chatting with Streicher and celebrating with the women who filled the space, a reminder that lesbians and gays had consolidated meaningful influence in the political arena.¹⁸ Amelia’s was also a meeting place for other community events. A group of local gay and lesbian organizers, including Streicher, held meetings at the club to plan the first Gay Games in 1982, an event modeled after the Olympic Games intended for openly gay and lesbian athletes to compete and socialize with each other.¹⁹ To give a sense of its scale, the first Games brought 1,350 participants to San Francisco, a number that doubled four years later, creating the foundations for an international sporting event taking

were explicitly lesbian places to socialize, there were also many lesbians shaping broader feminist organizations. The lesbian and feminist movements were very much entangled in the late 1970s and 1980s. Many downplayed homosexuality in favor of reformist feminist politics, while others overstated separatism.²³ However, neither approach represented the full spectrum of lesbian and bisexual experiences as they existed on the ground. Feminist citizenship discourse often highlighted women's roles as mothers and wives within heterosexual couples, advocating for institutional reforms to better accommodate their rights within these roles.²⁴ Lesbian citizenship demands were not concerned with reproduction and marriage (at least until the late 1990s). They focused, rather, on economic opportunities and participation in the urban and national political arenas. In the spaces that constituted the Bay Area's lesbian feminist landscape women debated these differences, trying to reconcile them in everyday interactions.

SPATIALIZING LESBIAN FEMINISM

Even as distinct lesbian social spaces emerged, lesbian political spaces were mixed up with feminist spaces more broadly due to shared priorities. Feminism has historically been concerned with space as women articulated political claims as sets of emplaced rights, for example the right to inhabit cities equally with men and the right to design their own domestic environments.²⁵ The right to inhabit the American city by contesting the patriarchal norms of urban planning and governance was a precursor and in many ways paralleled gay and lesbian urban social movements for visibility and political representation in the 1960s and 1970s. In both histories, groups articulated their right to urban spaces through different combinations of assimilationist demands such as policy reforms, and insurgencies such as building their own self-organized and self-sufficient spaces.

Since at least the 1820s, Western feminists had been thinking critically about gender and space, particularly the association of women with the "separate sphere" of domestic life and labor.²⁶ In the political realm, agitation and vigorous protests during the first phase of the feminist movement in the United States contributed to many women entering American public life (albeit mostly from wealthy families). Most importantly, these struggles led to the constitutional amendment that gave women the right to vote in 1920. After this landmark achievement feminist political organizing slowed down during the interwar period, but women's mobilization on the homefront during World War II, creating urban gardens and taking up jobs vacated by men, prompted another reckoning with their role in society.²⁷ Nevertheless, postwar suburban development in the 1950s highlighted the resurgence of the nuclear family ideal in which the man, who worked outside the house, was the head of the household and the woman was primarily responsible for childrearing, largely confined to domestic spaces. In that context, the nationwide feminist movement that emerged in the following decades fought for women's rights to

enter the public sphere as equal citizens. In the 1960s and 1970s, so-called second-wave feminist arguments emphasized economic independence and control of women's bodies by decoupling female sexuality from male-dominated cultures. Some second-wave feminists called on women to choose lesbianism as a political position that enables women to emancipate themselves from men's control. Feminists also politicized family planning, especially after the first safe and effective oral contraceptive was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1960.

During that period, the public sphere became the proper domain of feminist political activism. Feminists organized public demonstrations and set up innovative consciousness-raising groups that included sharing feelings and discussing how to overcome obstacles to achieving personal independence from patriarchal family structures, whether they took place in private residences, bookstores, or cafes.²⁸ Feminist groups also established women's centers, often located on university campuses. Women who participated in those activities rejected traditional domesticity and the division of labor within heterosexual households. Women, for example, advocated for universal childcare and for men to help with everyday domestic tasks such as cleaning and cooking, which required a significant cultural shift in mainstream perceptions of masculinity.

For many lesbians who joined the feminist movement in the 1960s, debates within dominant second-wave feminist organizations, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW), did not directly address their quest for alternative social structures outside the heterosexual family.²⁹ As gay liberation gained national attention after 1968, debates about the role of lesbians in feminist political activism reached a boiling point. In 1969 Betty Friedan, NOW's president, commented that lesbians presented a "lavender menace" that threatened to derail the gains of the feminist movement by creating a backlash from heterosexual women.³⁰ The vigorous debate that followed, during which lesbian feminists asserted their presence and contributions to the movement, led to a resolution during NOW's 1971 national meeting that acknowledged lesbian rights as part of the organization's political agenda. The prevailing view was that radical social change could only be achieved by addressing all forms of social discrimination, including advocating for lesbian and gay rights.³¹

Meanwhile, radical feminist groups, influenced by the New Left's anti-establishment ethos, its emphasis on participatory democracy, and rejection of liberalism (as it was expressed by NOW's reformist agenda), started to build their own networks and experimented with cohabitation, the publication of zines and newsletters, and the establishment of urban and rural women-only communities.³² In the San Francisco Bay Area, radical feminists created separatist spaces that excluded not only men but also proxies of heteropatriarchy, such as gendered roles in lesbian relationships. Women collectives also established intentional communities in rural areas along the Pacific Coast, where they experimented with building their own homes and communal structures, dividing labor equitably and practicing

subsistence agriculture.³³ A similar ethos of self-organizing and resource sharing was part of how women built urban networks. They met in private homes, such as pioneer feminist organizers Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's San Francisco home (now a protected historical landmark), and in a small network of bookstores run by lesbian feminist collectives.

The first lesbian bookstore in the Bay Area—and the second in the country, after Amazon Bookstore in Minneapolis—was Information Center Incorporated (ICI): A Woman's Place. In January 1972 eight lesbian feminist women opened it as a collectively run bookstore in Oakland.³⁴ ICI collective members were already involved with projects organized by the Oakland Gay Women's Liberation and actively sought to create a multiracial lesbian feminist group, placing the bookstore at the nexus of the anti-establishment political and cultural movements of the early 1970s. The collective adopted a nonhierarchical structure based on anarchist principles for its operation. Unlike at many other collectives, its members were solely coworkers: they did not live together or see each other much outside the bookstore, and often didn't see each other at all for long periods of time because of how work shifts were scheduled.

Oakland had a population of a little over 360,000 people in 1970, 40 percent of whom were nonwhite.³⁵ The Black Panther Party had been founded in the city four years earlier, and a legacy of antiracist activism informed the landscape of anti-establishment organizing. In neighboring Berkeley, the University of California campus had been the epicenter of the free speech movement in the mid-1960s, which affirmed the democratic ideals of a generation that grew up after the end of World War II and breathed new life into progressive politics across the United States. The convergence of anticapitalist, antiracist, disability rights (Berkeley was also home to the influential Center for Independent Living, founded in 1972), feminist, and gay-lesbian activism created synergies among diverse collectives that formed in Oakland and Berkeley. The work of many lesbian feminists who lived there led not only to protests and political canvassing but also to breaking down professional barriers. For example, a group of women with carpentry training founded Seven Sisters Construction Company in the mid-1970s, paving the way for women entering the construction industry and fighting for equal pay through union organizing.³⁶ Amidst this rich world of leftist foment, the ICI collective was intended to serve as a physical center where women could find information and resources to aid their struggles against the patriarchal and heterosexual basis of mainstream social institutions. For women who entered the feminist movement in the early 1970s, there was a national network of feminist conferences where they could find out about the latest feminist publications and debate ideas about theory and political action. But there were few opportunities to exchange ideas outside those events. ICI sought to fill that gap.

The eight women of the founding collective knew each other socially and some of them had worked together for a feminist newspaper. When two of the women,

Alice Molloy and Carol Wilson, came across a vacant corner storefront at the intersection of College and Broadway Avenues in a majority residential area north of downtown Oakland, they decided it was the site they were looking for. As the collective explained in an open letter to feminist organizations, aiming to inspire and help them achieve similar goals: "The area is varied with lots of shops and a small college of arts and crafts right across the street." This refers to California College for Arts and Crafts (later the Oakland campus of the California College of Art—CCA). They continued: "We are located by several bus stops, and foot traffic is moderately heavy. Also, a lot of women live in the neighborhood." Presumably the collective referred to lesbians, since neighborhoods are not typically divided by gender. Molloy and Wilson organized the effort to pull together the initial \$800 to secure the space and buy the first, small batch of books.

During the following ten years ICI became a reference point in a transnational network of more than one hundred feminist bookstores.³⁷ The collective not only built an extensive catalogue of feminist books but also shipped them nationally. They worked with small independent presses to bring back into circulation important texts that were out of print, along with offering platforms for new feminist authors. One of these presses, the Women's Press Collective, was adjacent to ICI, demonstrating the close connection between feminist bookstores and the production of new feminist knowledge.

The bookstore's physical space was an essential part of its movement-building mission. ICI's letter to new and aspiring feminist bookstore collectives highlighted what made a successful movement-space. A large bulletin board taking up one of the walls was a central component. They organized the material that they posted on the board under specific categories that included "living situations," "jobs," "services," "rides," "groups," "political actions," and "events." A separate wall was covered with material that women sent to them by mail, including information about new health collectives, new publications, plays, workshops, and therapy sessions, among other topics. Moreover, two sitting areas with sofas and pillows provided spaces for women to meet in small groups or make new chance encounters. The collective referred to the bookstore as a "liberated territory," emphasizing that it offered women opportunities to express and debate ideas without concern for upholding mainstream societal norms. They went on to explain the importance of how women experienced the space as part of its success: "We probably receive more enthusiastic compliments on our 'atmosphere' than we do on our selection of books."³⁸ Within the first five years, as the book collection increased, the collective introduced movable book stacks that they could reconfigure to facilitate larger community events such as poetry readings, musical performances, and lectures.

During ICI's first four years, collective members volunteered to run the bookstore working in shifts, mindful of accommodating each other's outside work schedules and commutes. They divided tasks, such as cataloguing, ordering,

answering mail, and maintaining the bulletin board, based on each member's skills. Daily operations created conflicts that led to some changes in the collective's membership during those years, but there was a stable core of at least seven members until the end of the decade. In 1976 ICI was able to offer salaries for employees, which streamlined bookstore operations, but new sources of conflict emerged in how to run a feminist business that was accountable to anticapitalist and antiracist principles. As a movement space, ICI actively sought to include diverse viewpoints about everyday operations and maintain multiracial membership. Some complained that labor was distributed inequitably, and as reflections on this turbulent decade for both ICI and the US women's movement reveal, women of color collective members accused other members of "white privilege" in being able to navigate institutions of the state more freely and using that privilege to chart broader feminist strategy.³⁹ However, there was no formal process for resolving disagreements, and by the end of the decade significant tensions mainly along racial lines began to create a rift among collective members.

In 1981 the bookstore moved to a larger nearby storefront on Fortieth Street and Broadway Avenue where it had more space for events and could house a much larger collection of books. Around the same time the rift among members widened and accusations of racism within the group created an openly antagonistic environment. The following year, a public split among collective members, a group of whom locked the rest out of the bookstore protesting a culture of political antagonism, led to a year-long arbitration. This in turn led to the incorporation of ICI as a business and the formal transfer of its ownership to a smaller group of former collective members. The restructured bookstore operated from the same location until 1989, when financial difficulties led to its closure. Meanwhile, three of the women who were expelled from the ICI collective in 1982 established Mama Bears, a small feminist bookshop on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, which was in operation until 2003.

Another important movement-space with roots in the ICI collective was *Old Wives' Tales*, a feminist bookstore that lesbian couple Carol Seejay, a former ICI collective member, and Paula Wallace established in 1976 in San Francisco. *Old Wives' Tales* was located on the Valencia Street corridor in the Mission, where a few years later Streicher would open *Amelia's*. In the mid-1970s the majority of Mission residents were Central and South American immigrants who had built cultural spaces and political organizations that contributed to the establishment of a distinct neighborhood identity.⁴⁰ Organizations fighting for immigrant rights, along with literary and artistic circles in the Mission, opposed dominant white culture and the United States' imperialist engagements in Latin America throughout the 1960s and 1970s.⁴¹ In that context, when lesbian feminists first started moving to the Valencia corridor in the mid-1970s, a shared anti-establishment ethos created synergies between long-standing organizations and new lesbian feminist spaces.

For Seejay, *Old Wives' Tales* filled a gap in the anticapitalist and ethnically diverse network of spaces:

We looked for a storefront in the Mission. The boys were all moving into the Castro, but the Mission was what most dykes could afford. And it was important to us to locate the store in an area that made it easily accessible to women of color, to women traveling by public transit, and to dykes and feminists. The intersection of Valencia and 16th Street was a movement nexus: home to the George Jackson Defense Committee, the Tenants Union, Rainbow Grocery (the newest stepchild in the people's food system), the Roxie Cinema, and the Communist Party Bookstore . . . And, for a bonus prize, there was a laundromat next door. Women could come on a Saturday, do their laundry, buy their groceries, browse the store, and buy their books all in one fell swoop.⁴²

Seejay conceptualized *Old Wives' Tales* as a center for lesbian feminist social and political life. She understood the importance of meeting in physical space. *Old Wives' Tales* organized literary events (especially when it briefly annexed an adjacent space in the late 1970s) and regularly distributed up-to-date lists of lesbian and lesbian feminist events taking place around the Bay Area. Seejay also maintained a comprehensive printed list of affiliated spaces and organizations that women could pick up. In 1976 she began writing *Feminist Bookstore News (FBN)*, which started as a newsletter about the state of feminist publishing that she sent to subscribers across the United States. She also forged connections with other bookstore owners and publishers by attending national conferences, such as the Women in Print gatherings. Social networks, she understood, were powerful. When she eventually transferred the lease and business ownership to a small collective that ran *Old Wives' Tales* from 1982 to 1995, she continued to produce *FBN*. The newsletter became a forum for the development of new directions in feminist publishing, employed a group of dedicated lesbian feminist contributors, and maintained an up-to-date list of feminist bookstores in the United States and abroad. By the 1980s the almost fifty-page-long trade publication's wide circulation was not limited to feminist bookstore owners and publishers, demonstrating its reach to a broader literary audience. *FBN* was published every two months until 2000, when a drop in subscribers led production to cease.

Seejay's departure from *Old Wives' Tales* in 1982 followed activist burnout and internal strife within the collective about how to run a nonhierarchical anticapitalist business while engaging in capitalist structures.⁴³ However, unlike public accusations of racism within the ICI collective around the same time that led to the year-long arbitration and some local press coverage, there were no public reports of criticism of the former *Old Wives' Tales* management. Seejay was aware of debates about the underrepresentation of women of color in feminist publishing, which was skewed toward white lesbian feminist voices. These debates informed not only what titles the *Old Wives' Tales* carried but also how bookshelves were organized. The books were organized thematically,

encouraging racial and class mixing within the bookstore rows. Other feminist bookstores chose to organize books in categories that emphasized racial and class differences, but what they all had in common was an active engagement with the institutional basis of racism and other forms of discrimination and a commitment to addressing them directly.

Historian Kristen Hogan has called the thirty-year period of international feminist organizing around the establishment and collective operation of bookstores and independent presses the “feminist bookstore movement.”⁴⁴ This movement was spearheaded by lesbian feminists and lasted from the mid-1970s to the mid-2000s when chain bookstores and online retailers drove most of them out of business. During this period, feminists created networks of mutual support by carving out movement-spaces where they prefigured antiracist and anticapitalist social structures, with all the contradictions that such projects entailed. These ideas were not limited to bookstores. ICI, Old Wives’ Tales, and other individual bookstores functioned as meeting places and feminist resource centers that were integrated within larger urban landscapes of women’s spaces and organizations (though in some smaller cities they were more isolated). In the context of lesbian feminism, the handful of feminist bookstores in the Bay Area played a significant role in how lesbians inhabited the urban public sphere, placing homosexuality within a larger matrix of social oppressions that could not be addressed through single-issue political campaigns.

PLANNING FOR THE WOMEN’S BUILDING

In 1970 a group of five feminists who had met at the First Coalition Women’s Conference the previous year established San Francisco Women’s Centers (SFWC), a nonprofit aiming to provide organizational support to other feminist groups.⁴⁵ The founders, who had previous fundraising experience, realized that the large number of newly formed women’s organizations, affinity groups, and collectivities at the turn of the 1960s often lacked the experience and access to resources that a nonprofit dedicated to those goals could provide. But although SFWC was incorporated as a nonprofit from the beginning, they were not able to raise any funds during the first three years and therefore did not sponsor any projects during that time. This was in part because many activists within the women’s movement and other radical organizations in the early 1970s mistrusted the corporate structure and government oversight of nonprofits. Government investigations—alleged and verified—into the actions of feminist leaders and activist Gloria Steinem’s ties to the CIA that was a subject of much debate in feminist circles fueled this culture of mistrust.⁴⁶

In 1973 Barbara Harwood and Jody Safier, a lesbian couple active in the women’s movement who were not part of the original collective, decided to take over the organization’s empty corporate structure with the founders’ support and attempted to revive it. During the first year they worked from an office in their living room. The plural, “Centers,” deliberately invoked a decentralized network

of women's spaces in the city and, according to Harwood and Safier, foregrounded their priority in building coalitions among women's groups.⁴⁷ The organization intended to operate explicitly behind the scenes, enabling activists to pursue their own goals.⁴⁸ In 1974 they moved to a small office on Brady Street, near Market, where they employed a single intern. SFWC began sponsoring consciousness-raising meetings and information sessions about achieving economic independence, among other initiatives. In 1975 they became a fiscal sponsor for the short-lived Feminist Federal Credit Union of the Bay Area, which provided loans to women's organizations who did not have access to other financial institutions.⁴⁹ SFWC also sponsored the Women's Switchboard, a volunteer-run service providing information about resources for women and local events to callers in English and Spanish. By 1978 SFWC counted almost a thousand contributing members.

The need to move to a larger space that could house more staff was crucial for the organization to grow further. Moreover, two years earlier, SFWC's involvement with planning the national Conference on Women and Violence in San Francisco demonstrated the difficulties with hosting events about women's rights and their sexuality in spaces rented from other nonprofits.⁵⁰ The organizations that SFWC approached to host talks in their spaces had strict rules against political advocacy and were reluctant to open themselves up to regulatory scrutiny. This would ultimately constrain what the women could talk about during conference events. As a result, a group of SFWC members started a campaign to find a space large enough to house offices and host women's events and cultural activities.

The building campaign, which lasted approximately three years, illuminates different views among SFWC members about the political project of feminism and the role of lesbian feminists within it. The idea of establishing a single building as a central convergence point for the feminist movement raised concerns about fixing a particular view of what it meant to be a feminist, thereby formalizing entry criteria and providing grounds for exclusion. Because many of the key organizers were lesbians, one of the concerns was how heterosexual women would view the endeavor and if they would support it. Some SFWC members also worried about allocating the organization's limited funds to a speculative project with uncertain outcomes.⁵¹ Mercilee M. Jenkins, who conducted oral histories with key organizers of the building campaign, dramatized this process in her play *She Rises Like a Building to the Sky*, which demonstrates the fundamental dilemma about claiming physical space that was at the core of these debates:

ANNA: We'll form a Building Collective.

LOUISE: Just what we need, another collective.

ANNA: Tell me why you still don't think it's a good idea.

LOUISE: I just want you to realize the risk we're taking. This is 1979. The 60's are over. Milk and Moscone are dead. Ronald Reagan'll probably be our next President.

ANNA: So what does that mean we should do?

LOUISE: Conserve our resources. Be aware we're not going to have the support we once did. People are already saying the Women's Movement is dead.

ANNA: Is that what you think?

LOUISE: No I don't, but I don't like being declared dead and I know that means something. They wish we were dead and they think they can make us go away.

ANNA: That's why we need a building, so they can't make us go away.⁵²

The building campaign went forward, assisted by a combination of the need for a self-governed space to host feminist events, a broad interest in establishing a symbolic presence for women in the city, and the dedication of a few key organizers with grant-writing and fundraising experience to the project.⁵³ A building committee examined the options of renting or purchasing a space.

In 1978 the idea of women operating a building that would house activist organizations, art, and performances for other women was not altogether new. A group of artists and art teachers, spearheaded by Judy Chicago, had established the Woman's Building in Los Angeles in 1973.⁵⁴ Its name paid tribute to a structure designed by Sophia Hayden for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago to exhibit work by female artists from around the globe, thereby positioning the building and the art in a lineage of feminist spaces and artistic production in the modern era, retrieving them from obscurity within traditional art and architectural histories. The SFWC building campaign organizers looked at the Los Angeles example as a guide, but their own endeavors differed in ownership and operating structure. SFWC's eventual decision to purchase a building was in part responding to the limitations of the operating model of the Los Angeles Woman's Building, which did not own its space and went through several costly moves.⁵⁵

The SFWC building committee came across Dove Hall, a four-story building on Eighteenth Street near Valencia in the Mission, in 1978. Completed in 1910, it had originally housed spaces for gymnastic demonstrations and sports training for members of the Turn Verein, a German American cultural and sporting association. The local German American architect Reinhold Denke designed it, employing characteristic features of the Mission Revival style popular in hotels and other spaces in turn-of-the-century California, such as heavy massing, plain stucco walls, and ornate tile trim. He also introduced Teutonic design elements, such as arched windows, balconies, and a Bavarian door canopy over the main entrance.⁵⁶

In 1935 the Sons and Daughters of Norway purchased the building to use it as a center for the Norwegian immigrant community, but since the 1960s, there was no need for its services any longer, and they started renting out the space to other groups for events. The building had a monumental presence among mid-rise residential apartment buildings on Eighteenth Street. Its interior included a

double-height auditorium with a proscenium stage, a smaller performance space, a commercial kitchen, and a few smaller rooms on the third and fourth floors. The old elevator, electrical fixtures, and other interior details needed repair, but the overall design and interior organization appealed to the women of the SFWC building committee. Mounting a robust fundraising effort, they raised the down payment within six months.⁵⁷ Dovre Hall's purchase was finalized in 1979.

The hall's complete transformation to the Women's Building of the Bay Area took much longer. With ownership, the responsibility for maintenance and improvements fell to SFWC, which began to cultivate a base of private donors that included individual subscribers, institutional support from foundations, and government grants.⁵⁸ They formed a building council that oversaw preparations to welcome the first tenants to the building in May 1979. A core group of fewer than ten women who comprised the space committee organized targeted fundraising for specific, building-related tasks and took on some of the renovations themselves. They organized volunteers to install new carpets, paint rooms, create a space dedicated to childcare, and demolish a wall to bring in natural light to one of the performance spaces. The volunteers worked alongside professionals, who were all women and were hired for specific projects. For example, Seven Sisters Construction Company oversaw the wall demolition. Wonder Women, an electricians' collective, gave electrical advice and extended electrical lines to the basement storage space. The building council also hired a construction specialist to help make the first-floor bathroom wheelchair accessible and advise on the installation of braille signs throughout the building.⁵⁹ The space committee approached Linda Rhodes, an openly lesbian architect and activist, to draft blueprints for the renovations necessary to conform to the city's building code. She also helped to devise ways to house as many women's organizations as possible in the building's 20,000 square feet of usable space.⁶⁰

The costly building campaign put significant pressure on SFWC's finances during the first few years of the building's operation. For a few months in 1979, SFWC could not pay its staff, and relied exclusively on volunteer labor. A combination of cutting operational costs, increased institutional funding, and new revenue from the groups that rented space in the building allowed the organization to balance its budget in 1980.⁶¹ SFWC owned the Women's Building, which was one of its sponsored projects, but did not run day-to-day operations during the first year. Those were the responsibility of building staff. Based on an early pledge by the Women's Building planning committee, at least 50 percent of the building staff were women of color. Because the majority of SFWC staff, who were responsible for strategic planning, were white middle-class women, concerns about institutional racism underlying the relationship between the two entities surfaced during committee meetings. This led the SFWC and the Women's Building to merge in May 1980, creating a more diverse combined staff that shared long-term planning, financial, and operational responsibilities.⁶²

The building council, which included Women's Building staff and tenant representatives, made decisions about rental policies, building improvements, and organized community outreach events collectively. The council's work during the first three years was marked by turning the building into a hub for feminist activities, while addressing broader concerns about racism and class hierarchies within the women's movement (familiar from women's organizing in feminist bookstores during the previous decade). For example, they organized events about unchecked white privilege in feminist organizations, one of which, in 1979, led to actionable items such as planning outreach activities to Latina women in the Mission, learning to speak Spanish, organizing a lecture about African women's heritage, and "using involvement in the Mission as a beginning to involvement in other third world communities and cultures."⁶³ One of the challenges that they faced in day-to-day operations was how to enact pluralism in selecting tenants and allocating space for activities in the building. The list of tenants during the first year included the Coalition for the Medical Rights of Women, the Feminist Media Network, Options for Women over Forty, the SF School of Self-Defense, SF Women Against Rape, Women Library Workers, Wages Due Lesbians, Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media, and Lilith Theater, among others.⁶⁴ Conscious of potential conflicts among tenants with different views about feminist politics, the council organized tenant meetings and informal opportunities, such as potlucks, to socialize with each other and build a culture-in-common within the building.

Allocating space to tenants was a significant part of the building council's role as a political and cultural instigator. Before a substantial renovation in the early 1990s, most of the usable space consisted of conference rooms and event spaces that were designed to meet the needs of the athletic and social club predating the Women's Building. These had to be subdivided into smaller office spaces, often separated only with movable partitions. The council sought to put tenants with perceived affinities in mission near one another to foster opportunities for collaborations (fig. 12).

In the Women's Building's first two years, it was a target of multiple, politically motivated physical attacks. An act of arson on the evening of February 14, 1980, for example, injured a security guard on the first floor, and firefighters had to evacuate a woman from a fourth-floor office window.⁶⁵ The fire destroyed several offices on the third and fourth floors, including the childcare room, which had to be entirely refurbished. It also caused extensive damage to windows, carpets, and lighting fixtures. Only a few months later, bomb threats led the building to implement heightened security measures during events. Nevertheless, an improvised explosive device detonated in front of the main entrance in the early morning of October 8, 1980, when the building was empty.⁶⁶ It destroyed two glass doors and damaged the decorative tile finishes. More bomb threats followed in November and December of the same year.

PRELIMINARY PLANS FOR INITIAL TENANTS

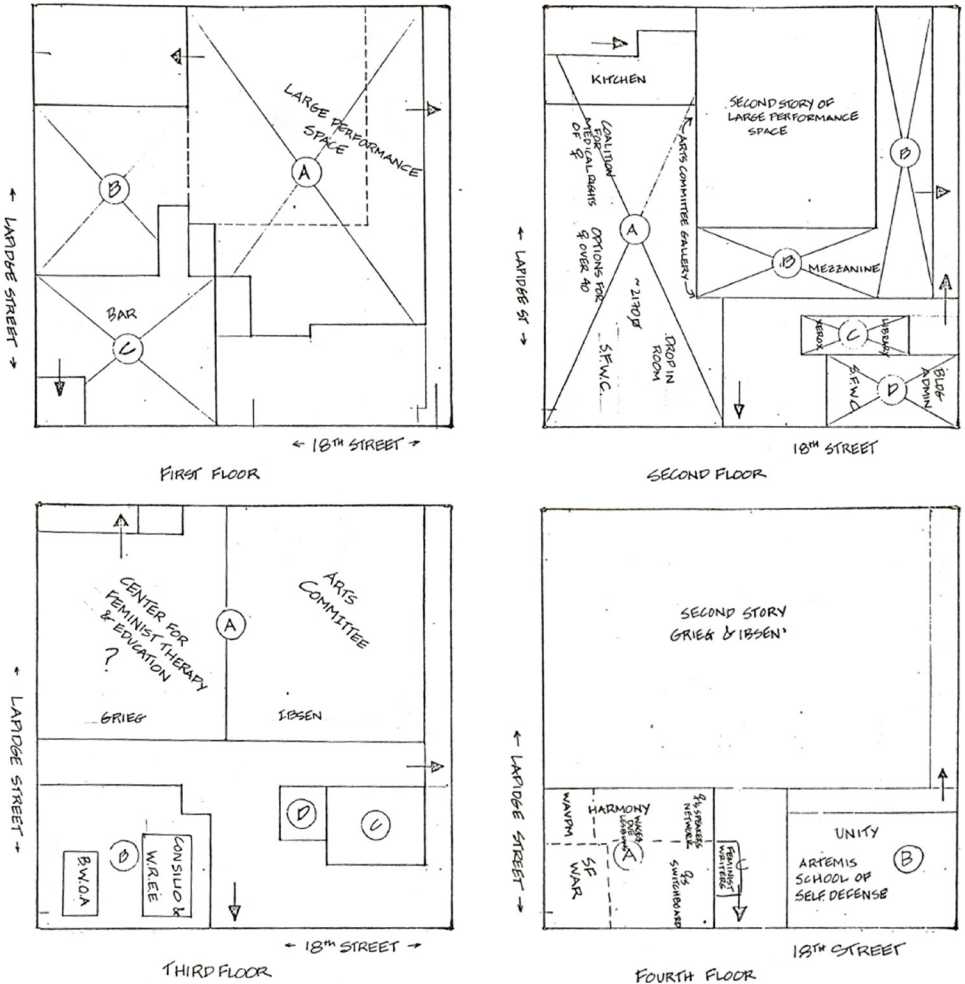


FIGURE 12. Space-allocation diagrams for the initial tenants on the second, third, and fourth floors of the Women's Building, ca. 1979. Women's Building Records 2014-126. © SF GLBT Historical Society.

The building council organized a series of community meetings and attributed the attacks to fringe vigilantes empowered by the rightward shift in national politics.⁶⁷ To address it, they reached out to neighborhood residents and local organizations to form coalitions that would operate on two fronts. They would fight right-wing violence while also addressing police harassment of youth in the streets of the Mission. A brief takeover of the building by Mission youth

in 1979 had tested the organization's relationship to the local community, and the building council sought to demonstrate—and enact—a long-term commitment to the neighborhood.

The Mission had been the core of the city's sizeable Latinx population since the 1960s, politically, culturally, and demographically.⁶⁸ Initially it was home to mostly working-class residents of Central American descent who relocated to the area from other parts of the city and the Bay Area after World War II, as some of the white population who lived there (who were mainly Irish-Americans) left for the city's outer neighborhoods and suburbs. It also became the first stop for Latin American immigrants to the city, many of whom were not documented and therefore do not appear on official population counts. In 1966 Mission residents organized politically to achieve representation and a degree of neighborhood community control over the distribution of War on Poverty funds for the redevelopment of public infrastructure.⁶⁹ Debates about community control over decisions about the Mission's future galvanized a generation of Latinx residents to demand their right to shape the neighborhood based on their own priorities. These included support for renters (who made up most residents), provisions for families, and representation of their diverse cultures in the physical environment.

Early discussions about gentrification—the displacement of working-class residents as wealthier “gentry” moved in—were already underway during city-level debates in the late 1960s about the projected economic activity from the construction of two transit stops in the neighborhood for the planned Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) suburban railway system. Resident activists argued that the example of the redevelopment of other neighborhoods with concentrated racial and ethnic minority populations, such as the Western Addition and South of Market, demonstrated how driving out old residents through housing demolitions, and providing amenities that catered to wealthier new residents, skewed their demographic makeup toward whites.⁷⁰ And they were not wrong in some of their predictions, demonstrated in landlords' attempts to capitalize on redevelopment spurred by the BART stations—despite community control safeguards. During the first three years from 16th Street BART Station's operation in 1972, over 130 fires were reported within a three-block radius, leading to the displacement of hundreds of residents.⁷¹ This was only the beginning of antigentrification fights in the Mission and elsewhere in San Francisco that have lasted until the present.⁷²

In the 1960s and 1970s, tenant rights activism animated a strong grassroots movement with important victories including rent control (capping the percentage a landlord can raise the rent year-to-year) and local government commitments to increase the number of public housing units.⁷³ Except for the construction of some new public housing—a relatively small number compared to those that were demolished in the 1950s and early 1960s—efforts to boost the supply of affordable housing have been thwarted by the new reality of fewer funds for public construction in the 1970s and 1980s. The passing of California Proposition 13 in 1978,

which limited municipal tax revenue from property ownership in the state, further limited the options for city planners to enact social building policies.⁷⁴ Instead, local governments sought to attract tax revenue from a crop of wealthier residents moving in and seeking private funding for neighborhood public infrastructure improvements, which accelerated gentrification.

By the time of the Women's Building opening in 1979, Latinx residents' struggles for their right to inhabit the Mission had resulted in the creation of an oppositional political and cultural consciousness to new white residents and institutions without local community ties. However, this was hardly a homogeneous community, and divisions along national lines pitted immigrants from different Central and South American countries against each other (and led to some gang violence). To address these divisions, Mission community organizers highlighted "La Raza" as a Pan-American cultural identity with roots in Chicano culture that transcended national borders.⁷⁵ Gay and lesbian inclusion in this community was also a controversial subject, though the efforts of GALA (Gay Latino Alliance), the first Latinx gay and lesbian organization in the city that was active from 1975 until 1983, attempted to change that. GALA sought to establish a distinct gay/lesbian Raza identity through political organizing and fundraising. Regular dance parties raised funds not only for gay and lesbian causes but also for broader issues affecting the Latinx community. Notably, although GALA organized at least one fundraiser at Amelia's in the late 1970s, there is no record of any events taking place in the Women's Building.⁷⁶ Instead, they mostly used the American Indian Center on Valencia Street at the opposite end from the Women's Building for fundraisers.

If at first the Women's Building council focused mostly on feminist and lesbian politics, it was clear during the building's first few years of operation that it had to address Mission neighborhood politics. The council led an effort to create programs for Spanish-speaking women and, beginning in January 1982, it was publishing a bilingual edition of its newsletter, and local residents were involved in, and beginning to shape, the building's mission views.

BUILDING IDENTITY

The building's physical presence in the city and its organizational priorities changed over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, reflecting broader changes within the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements. Nonprofits professionalized rapidly in part due to the need to fundraise in the absence of government support. To that end they streamlined their message about equality and increasingly focused on mainstream assimilation, for example by foregrounding demands for women's and LGBTQ+ citizens' rights as American citizens. This assimilationist turn brought to the fore contradictions and inequalities within the two movements. Throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, lesbian feminist organizations and women's groups creating intentional communities often excluded transgender women.⁷⁷ In the

Bay Area, transgender rights had been actively debated as part of gay liberation since the mid-1960s. There is no evidence in meeting notes and newsletters from 1978 to 1980, two years of heightened organizing activity and changes in the Bay Area women's movement, indicating how Women's Building founders and women involved in the feminist bookstore movement addressed transgender people's presence in these spaces.

Transgender participation in the women's movement and within lesbian feminist organizations was a contentious subject already since the early 1970s, and Women's Building founding organizers, who were active in the lesbian feminist movement, were aware of it despite the lack of written evidence. Nationally, divisions among feminist organizations had formed around the participation of transgender women in the movement already since 1973, when the subject was hotly debated at the West Coast Lesbian Feminist Conference in Los Angeles (the largest gathering of lesbian feminists to date, attended by more than twelve hundred women).⁷⁸ Transgender women's exclusion was linked to the broader exclusion of heteropatriarchal proxies from women's spaces, as some considered transgender women proxies by virtue of having lived part of their lives as men. The exclusion of transgender men, many of whom until then presented as butch lesbians, and of their partners and lovers from environments where they had found community until then, also challenged essentialist conceptualizations of "woman" as a natural, prediscursive identity.⁷⁹ There was hardly a unified view on this matter, nor on the a priori exclusion of all men from feminist public events. Some political separatists, lesbian feminists among them, constructed visions of women's spaces and territories with ethnocentric characteristics.⁸⁰ Jill Johnston's influential book *Lesbian Nation*, published in 1973, offered theoretical justification for such visions.⁸¹ This often led to cultural insularity, with women's spaces either forming "liberated spaces," such as the ICI collective, or rejecting urban life altogether in favor of forming rural experimental communities. The Women's Building entered those debates and was shaped by them.

During planning for the Women's Building, the first major decision that the building council had to make collectively was about the presence of men. The majority favored excluding men as a symbolic prerequisite for operating a building for and by women. However, some countered that the organization would have more support for their demands, including more fundraising potential, if they had an open-door policy for allies.⁸² The decision to let men attend events in the building but to rent space only to women's organizations was a compromise. Building proposals and reports sent to donors streamlined the narrative and presented the organization as a group of women seeking cultural representation, social inclusion, and opportunities to become "equal, productive citizens."⁸³

A 1979 building proposal that was likely used for fundraising highlighted the building's central location and accessibility by public transit to argue that it would provide a space for women from all over the Bay Area to "build skills to become

economically and emotionally self-supporting and responsible.”⁸⁴ A core part of the mission was to enable dialogues among organizations that provided practical support, advice, and training. Another goal was to assist women artists to create and show their work in the building. The confluence of uses would enable women to “develop a distinct woman’s identity.”⁸⁵ The authors presented women as an interest group to make their demands legible to government and institutional funders that included the Hewlett and Cowell foundations. The merits of interest group pluralism within multicultural democracies such as the United States were actively debated in the political arena of the 1970s and presenting the organization’s work within that framework would have resonated with a broad political base.⁸⁶

The political success of interest groups relies on the processes and outcomes of collective decision-making to uphold the principles of participatory democracy. The situated politics expressed in debates in and about the Women’s Building reveals how everyday life and decisions about physical space complicate the abstract vision of an egalitarian society that celebrates social and cultural differences. If the campaign for the building is understood as a form of insurgency at the scale of the city, this insurgency is already historically embedded within inegalitarian logics of interest group pluralism. For example, the historical marginalization of minorities due to race, class, or ability led to their underrepresentation in political discourse and public space. Rather than supplanting these logics by declaring the Women’s Building a liberated territory, the building council acknowledged their social effects and asked how everyday habitation by a diverse group of people could create opportunities for coalition-building.

The 1979 building proposal asserted that equality would be achieved by establishing a space for women to be with each other while recognizing that it operated within the constraints of mainstream society and urbanity:

An essential step in moving into the mainstream and becoming a productive member of society is by participating in activities that enhance one’s self-concept of identity. Women must gain a sense of their identity as women before becoming contributing community members. As immigrants coming to this country needed a neighborhood base for ethnic and personal support, and as Black Americans needed to establish a feeling of pride, self-respect, and identity as part of a Black community, so too do women need such opportunities.⁸⁷

The authors of the building proposal sketched out the central tenets of building a collective woman’s identity. They described community as a social subgroup that required active contributions rather than mere passive membership. They also argued that women’s cultural identity was analogous to the experiences of immigrants and people of color (an analogy that seems, unfortunately, to flatten ethnic, class, and racial differences within the category of women). Finally, they implicitly suggested that place can shape a person’s identity.

This understanding of a universal woman's identity collapsed meaningful differences among women and certainly did not reflect the view of everyone involved with the building campaign. In fact, universalism's blind spots were intensely debated in newsletters and building council meetings in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Nevertheless, the emphasis on a universal woman's identity in early planning documents explains the curious absence of any mention of homosexuality as one of the types of women's oppression, given that many SFWC members, and certainly many of the women involved with the building campaign, identified as lesbian or bisexual (the planning committee even included a few couples).⁸⁸ When event attendees and women's organizations, who started moving into the building in 1979, brought their own views to the feminist cultures that were forming in and around the building, any monolithic understanding of woman's identity quickly disappeared. In 1980 the building council drafted a new mission statement collectively, acknowledging the need "to provide a women's center where all oppressed people can freely express themselves and work to create a free and non-oppressive society."⁸⁹ The council took over the publication of SFWC's newsletter, which became a forum for the discussion of topics such as indigenous women's rights, black feminism, and disability rights. The newsletter addressed these topics by reporting on the work of the organizations housed in the building. In that sense, the newsletter became an extension of the building as a site of intellectual and political debate.

Over the years, divergent theoretical positions about the feminist movement and women's roles in intimate relationships led to public arguments about what constituted proper uses of the building. In 1980 the building council took a controversial decision to prohibit women police officers from renting space in the building.⁹⁰ Council members debated the topic over two days and decided that the presence of policewomen in uniform in the building violated the organization's purpose to engage women in dialogue and open cultural expression toward the goal of nonoppressive society. They cited police violence in the Mission and against gays and lesbians as reasons to exclude policewomen from the building. Another public controversy concerned the use of space in the building by Samois, a lesbian feminist S/M group. Samois, which was founded in San Francisco in 1978, had approximately ninety members in North America and Europe and intended to host an informational session about the organization during the 1981 Gay Freedom Day for locals and visitors. After a series of meetings with building council members to explain their mission of sexual liberation, Samois rented a space in the Women's Building. However, they were blindsided by a last-minute demand from building staff to provide guarantees that they would not demonstrate violent sexual acts during the event, to which they objected on principle.⁹¹ In the end, the event took place in the building's kitchen, with minimal privacy and frequent interruptions.

Samois communicated their discontent with their treatment at the Women's Building with letters to feminist organizations and contributions to public fora.⁹²

This ignited a larger discussion about lesbian sexuality. Their view of sexual play as a field of possibilities that did not preclude consensual violence was at odds with the antipornography movement at the forefront of feminist activism at the time.⁹³ When Samois applied again the same year to host an event at the building without constraints to the free expression of their ideas, their application was rejected right away. A council member affiliated with Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media threatened to resign if the space was used to “celebrate lesbian sadomasochism,” as she put it.⁹⁴ The Samois controversy raised important questions about how the building council’s decisions shaped a feminist public. By establishing a formal process for access, the council controlled what forms social and cultural expressions feminism could take.

The building’s architectural symbolism—and its subversion—further shaped how feminist cultures were expressed in urban space. Paradoxically, even though the symbolism of converting what was primarily known as the Sons of Norway social club to the Women’s Building can be viewed metaphorically as a gender-transgressive process (by virtue of changing the building’s perceived gender), the building’s new identity followed mainstream logics of binary gender and of what traditionally constitutes architectural merit.⁹⁵ A building proposal drafted at the planning stage stated that preserving the building’s Mission Revival style would provide “a valued service to the neighborhood and the city.”⁹⁶ This framing belies an attempt to legitimize the building’s civic function through a traditional patriarchal framework whereby the intrinsic value of its architecture depended on a style with colonial underpinnings. Moreover, in the early 1980s, council members advocated for the building’s inclusion in the register of the city’s historic landmarks. Their pragmatic argument was that historic landmark designation could result in attracting more funds for renovations, but the designation also created a narrow framework for valuing its historical significance, and in the 1984 affirmative decision there was very little mention of the building’s use for women’s organizations. The landmark designation protected only the building’s exterior features associated with its hybrid Mission Revival style, which were considered permanent and worthy of preservation.⁹⁷ Importantly, this did not extend to what was painted on the exterior walls, which enabled the transformation of the building with feminist iconography in the following decade.

The treatment of the historic facade as a blank canvas created an opening for rescripting the building’s cultural identity with murals. Mission muralism flourished from the late 1960s well into the 1980s as a place-based form of artistic production that allowed Mission residents and new immigrants from Latin America to embed their cultures within the neighborhood’s built environment through a shared representational style associated with “latinidad” that transcends regional differences.⁹⁸ With roots in Chicano culture and references to Pan-American iconography, the artists associated with Mission muralism, under the cultural leadership of La Galería de la Raza, also expressed political critiques

of US engagement in Central America, anti-immigrant policing, and, a little later, gentrification.⁹⁹

The idea of creating a mural that would celebrate the legacy of women political organizers and cultural producers that fit within that tradition was included in a 1980 list of objectives that aimed to “enhance the cultural and aesthetic appeal of the building” toward reaching the goal of cultural and economic self-sufficiency.¹⁰⁰ The transformation of the building’s exterior began in 1983 with Patricia Rodriguez’s *Women’s Contributions* painted on the second floor of the Eighteenth Street façade. The mural depicted Katherine Smith, a Native American activist; Dolores Huerta, a leader in the movement for the rights of farmworkers; Louise Nevelson, a sculptor; Marva Collins, a celebrated African American elementary school teacher; and Polly Bemis, a Chinese American immigrant and homesteader. Although this iconography put the building in dialogue with the international women’s movement, it did not do much to embed it within the cultural traditions of its immediate neighborhood.

The question of how event programming could better represent the cultural traditions of women in the Mission remained part of ongoing outreach efforts. These included, among other efforts, distributing questionnaires to better understand the needs of local women and offering services specifically for immigrants and mothers, whose needs could be different from those of the white middle-class lesbians who made up most of the collective’s early members. By 1990 the neighborhood and the building had meaningfully influenced each other. The 1994 painting of *Maestrapeace*, which replaced *Women’s Contributions*, prefigured new ways to conceptualize the politics of gender and sexuality for a new generation of feminists (figs. 13 and fig. 14).¹⁰¹ While *Women’s Contributions* had reflected the feminist consciousness of the early 1980s, celebrating individual women’s accomplishments, *Maestrapeace* constructed a broader frame for feminist politics celebrating women representing multiple social, cultural, and political movements, especially movements of the Global South. As such, it can be seen as a form of public protest that inserts the building into the Mission’s political muralist tradition. Its creators, *Mujeres Muralistas*, had already demonstrated their commitment to Pan-American cultural ideals, feminist consciousness (they were an all-women group that rejected women artists’ subordination to men in older, traditional artist collectives), and had honed their iconographic references in other Mission murals throughout the 1970s.¹⁰²

The majority of the individual figures depicted were women of color and the geographical scope of women’s accomplishments was global. Over time the organization itself developed stronger ties with the Mission’s Latinx community and the Bay’s lesbian community. This continued after 1996, when the new executive director, Esperanza Macias, who belonged to a younger generation from the original founders and identified as “an out Latina lesbian from Oakland,” spearheaded a new lesbian community center in the building and programming for the “les/bi/trans/dyke community.”

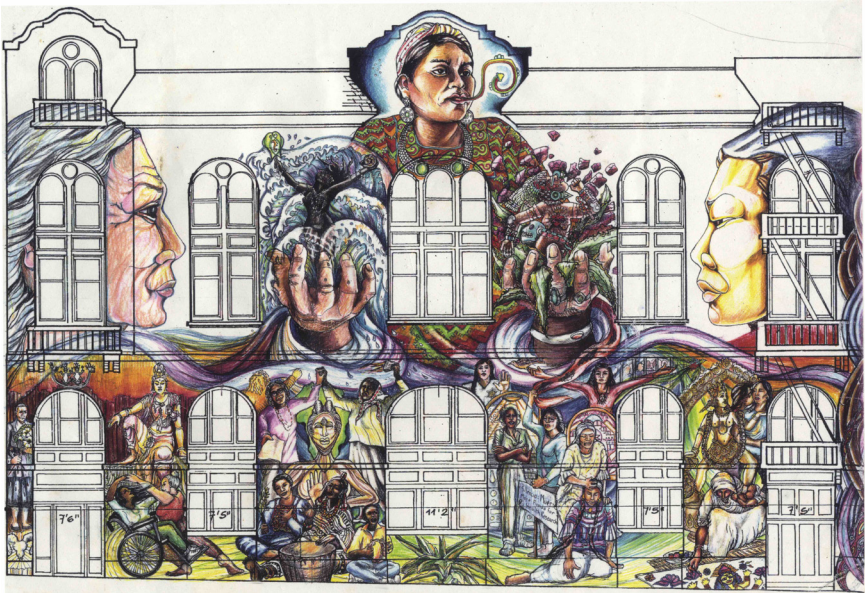


FIGURE 13. *Mujeres Muralistas*, *Maestrapeace*, sketch for the Women's Building mural, Eighteenth Street façade, ca. 1993. *Maestrapeace* Artworks Records 2008–50. © SF GLBT Historical Society.

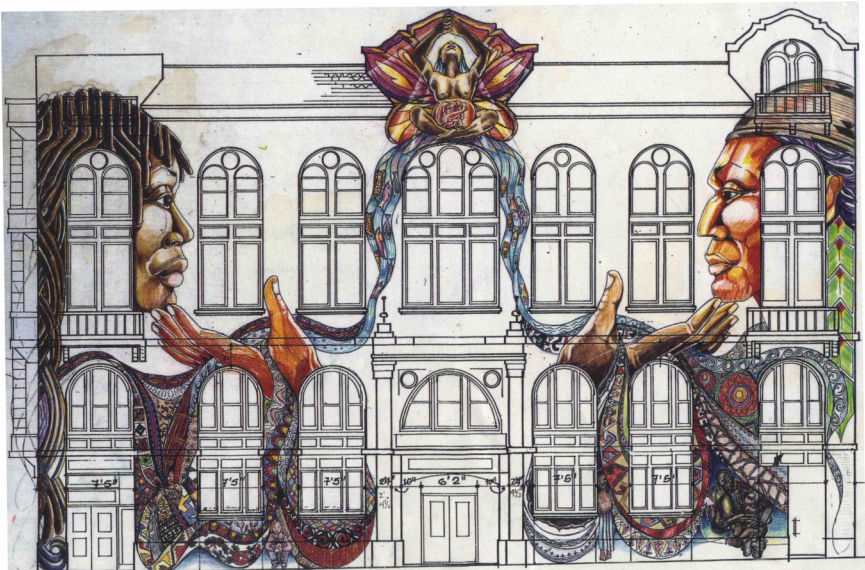


FIGURE 14. *Mujeres Muralistas*, *Maestrapeace*, sketch for the Women's Building mural, Lapidge Street façade, ca. 1993. *Maestrapeace* Artworks Records 2008–50. © SF GLBT Historical Society.

On the mural, *Mujeres Muralistas* collapsed “abstract space”—the high-level conceptualization of feminist space as a social and political category beyond any single building—into a continuous field of feminist relationships across temporal and geographical boundaries.¹⁰³ In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre argued that the body, with its attendant physicality, sensuality, and sexuality, “can take revenge” on the homogeneity and indoctrination of abstract space.¹⁰⁴ The feminist field that the mural constructed anticipated the intersectional analysis of oppression that transformed feminist and queer thought during the two decades after its completion.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, “lived space,” defined as enacted relationships in physical space among women in this case, is bounded by the contingencies of everyday habitation. Representations of feminist space on the mural created opportunities for interpretation, suggesting the possibilities of unexpected kinship among women of different races, classes, and sexual identities. These opportunities were realized (or not) in everyday interactions.

Over decades of active engagement with the needs of Bay Area women to inhabit the urban public sphere as full citizens, economically independent and culturally self-assured, the Women’s Building, along with feminist bookstores in the 1970s, helped to create a particular feminist public. Located in the Mission, where an earlier lesbian public had transformed a three-block portion of Valencia Street into a lesbian territory, the Women’s Building absorbed and was shaped by institutions of lesbian social life in San Francisco. Some of the lesbian feminists who were active in strategic planning and everyday operations at the building had also experienced the successes and failures of the feminist bookstore movement in the 1970s. By testing out theories of sexuality and feminism in everyday interactions and collective decision-making about the meaning and uses of feminist space, women’s spaces built the foundations of coalitions for the right to urban space that have animated queer social movements from the 1990s to the present.

AIDS and the City

Gay and bisexual San Franciscans entered the 1980s with an optimism inspired by the public visibility of homosexual cultures and the proliferation of spaces for socializing, sex, and consumption. These cultures marked gay and lesbian territories that included the Castro, the Mission, the Tenderloin, Polk Gulch, and Folsom, not only on gay tourist maps printed at the time but also through alterations of the urban physical landscape through everyday habitation.¹ Within that landscape, gay bathhouses and sex clubs were sites of sexual experimentation and became some of the most publicly recognizable urban representations of homosexuality, especially the urban hypermasculine gay cultures of the 1970s. They dotted the entire gay urban landscape, with a larger concentration in the area around Folsom Street, known for “leather” and BDSM sexual cultures. Cumulatively, the availability of resources, and expansion of knowledge regimes and of the horizon of possibilities for gender and sexually nonconforming people by 1982, resonated far beyond the city itself. But this was about to change, as the AIDS epidemic began to devastate gay social circles.

The public perception of AIDS as a gay disease and the medicalization of the gay male body along with its physical and discursive spaces dominated early debates that were epitomized in San Francisco by controversies around gay bathhouse closures in 1983–84. For gay men, AIDS posed more than a health threat; it also signified an identity crisis.² Throughout the 1970s, many gay and bisexual San Francisco residents expressed their sexual identities through open participation in sexual activities in and out of the city’s bars and clubs with the safeguard of free and readily available treatment of sexually transmitted diseases.³ Debates about gay bathhouse closures that took place in the local press and among gay and lesbian organizations and government agencies shaped public discourse about

gay sexual practices. After protracted legal battles, all of San Francisco's gay bathhouses closed by the end of 1987. However, the changes in San Francisco's gay erotic landscape that occurred during this period have less to do with the absence of sex or the lack of discourse on gay sexual practices. Instead, they draw attention to the systematic assimilation of gay culture and political discourses within dominant thinking about late-capitalist urbanity. The devastating toll of AIDS, especially, but not exclusively, among gay and bisexual men changed existing political, social, and cultural dynamics in the city where the size of the politically active, self-organized homosexual population was a significant force in local electoral calculations since 1970.⁴ That population suddenly began to shrink. Coupled with the loss of many community leaders, political organizations such as the Harvey Milk Democratic Club began to present homosexual people as an at-risk constituency seeking political support to overcome the disease.

Meanwhile, Reaganite institutional reforms since 1981 began to change public debates about social welfare. They reversed earlier reformist attempts that had shaped transgender recognition in the Tenderloin in the 1960s and set back insurgent political demands for the recognition of gays and lesbians in the 1970s as a distinct minority with unique needs. Applying neoliberal ideas in society and the national economy led to the professionalization of nonprofit organizations that had to hire finance teams and communicate their work in terms that appealed to mainstream society to fundraise.⁵ Mayor Dianne Feinstein was at the helm of pro-development administrations from 1978 to 1988 that transformed downtown San Francisco.⁶ The mayoral political machine prioritized the construction of a new convention center and spaces of commerce and leisure close to the downtown.⁷ Feinstein's support for neighborhood regeneration projects sought to "tame" non-mainstream and politically radical urban expressions of sexual, class, and racial differences and violently uprooted minority groups from the spaces that they historically inhabited.⁸ Moscone Center opened in the Yerba Buena area, south of Market Street in 1981, and a decade later, the Embarcadero elevated freeway that ran along the waterfront (and harbored a storied cruising landscape) was demolished. Plans were already underway to redevelop the area between Fifth and Twelfth Streets, where most gay sex clubs were located.⁹

The focus on urban entrepreneurialism and the neoliberal economic reforms espoused by City Hall contributed to a crisis in affordability that came to a head in the following decades. It also contributed to the dispossession of working- and middle-class homosexual residents from the spaces they had appropriated and renovated in the 1970s.¹⁰ The urban landscape's broader desexualization, then, coincided with the deracination of economically vulnerable San Franciscans, with each phenomenon feeding into the other. Quality-of-life campaigns and community policing reinforced white middle-class social and political priorities, as they were expressed by city planners and especially the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR).¹¹ Some of these campaigns were supported by gay and lesbian groups, and broadly speaking, public gay cultures were moving from

their countercultural origins to better integrate into the mainstream urban landscape.¹² By 1983, for example, the Golden Gate Business Association had established the Gay Tourism and Visitor's Bureau, which was aligned with downtown business interests in promoting gay tourism as an economic driver for the entire city.¹³

Within this changing landscape the ravages of AIDS were also changing how people understood medical care and what activists were prioritizing. The consolidation of a new framework for urban representations of homosexuality in popular culture focused on homosexual and heterosexual residents' shared humanity rather than divergent sexuality. This new focus informed much gay and lesbian activism in metropolitan environments.¹⁴ One such example was the development of the "San Francisco model of care," spearheaded by doctors, nurses, and volunteers at San Francisco General Hospital and based on empathetic care provision with the participation of multiple nongovernmental organizations. The "San Francisco model" gained considerable national and international media attention and began to shift the popular narrative that AIDS patients fell victim to their "debaucherous" lifestyles.¹⁵ It put human faces on their struggles. Moreover, in the aftermath of public debates about bathhouse closures and the development of new empathetic types of treatment, another type of affective activism centered around public spaces in the city. The ARC/AIDS Vigil, an occupation of a plaza in downtown San Francisco between 1985 and 1990, demonstrates the kind of emplaced empathy associated with this activism. Through their information campaigns and the encampment's thoughtfully organized physical components, Vigil activists emphasized the shared humanity between homosexual and heterosexual urban residents represented by the familiar iconographies of domesticity and death.

During this period of devastating loss in gay social circles, insurgent queer citizenship changed from fighting for the right to inhabit specific neighborhoods and buildings to the right of coproducing the urban public realm on equal terms with heterosexual citizens. The human rights framework that some activists employed to secure this right often led to the cultural assimilation of gay life within mainstream American society, even if that was not their explicit goal. Government recognitions of gay and lesbian citizens' rights was an essential step in the development of new medication, effective treatment, and welfare support as they navigated the unchartered waters of the disease. In this context sex, whether in bathhouses or cruising in the Castro, became less central to homosexual cultural identities. Instead, it became more heavily controlled and mediated.

BATHHOUSES AND GAY IDENTITY

Public baths have always been homosocial environments by virtue of the separation of men and women and the cultures of male and female bonding, respectively, that they facilitated.¹⁶ At the beginning of the twentieth century, bathhouses in the United States were used for sanitation mainly by urban dwellers who did not have adequate facilities in their homes. Urban reformers in the mid-1890s had linked

the construction of bathhouses to public health and the development of “clean” citizenry—corporally and ethically.¹⁷ Besides baths for the urban poor, which were rudimentary facilities that did not encourage lingering, two other types of baths completed the landscape of public bathing in urban environments. Some were associated with religious rituals, such as Jewish baths, and others were more upscale, operating as private clubs oriented toward leisure.¹⁸ Those featured swimming pools, comfortable changing rooms, and other social areas. The latter began adapting to the needs of gay patrons already around 1900.¹⁹

The emergence of exclusively gay baths as private social clubs in cities in the United States was also a modern development. In San Francisco, in particular, accounts of sexual activities in public baths before 1960 reveal the coexistence of the more traditional functions of bathing and relaxation with the facilitation of homosexual encounters that could take place in the sauna or steam room and other semiprivate locations.²⁰ Those encounters were aided by the anonymity afforded by the dimly lit interiors and the temporary suspension of markers of social status in the absence of clothes.²¹ When the first gay bathhouses emerged in San Francisco in the 1920s and 1930s, they provided an unprecedented degree of security: rather than “servicing straight men” anonymously in public cruising areas such as Union Square and Golden Gate Park, homosexual men could meet each other and express their sexuality in semiprivate environments.²² Bathhouses gained popularity with male military service members stationed in San Francisco during World War II who sought sex with other men—and for whom gay bars, unlike baths, were “off limits” because they were too public. After the war, more baths opened specifically to attract gay and bisexual men.²³ In the 1960s, attempts by the city to close gay bathhouses on moral grounds, which ultimately failed, galvanized the increasingly politicized gay residents. Bathhouses had contributed to the formation of gay men as a distinct social group based on shared sexual practice, and by the 1970s, gay baths were celebrated as community institutions that demonstrated gay pride.²⁴

Renovations kept pace with the political gains and visibility of the gay and lesbian movement. As more and more gay men moved to the Castro, for example, one local bathhouse converted its massage rooms to private cubicles for sex (much to the dismay of old heterosexual residents, some of whom had been patronizing it and now stopped).²⁵ It was of a piece with other changes at bathhouses across the city, some of which included similar cubicles as well as “orgy rooms” for group sex. Some bathhouses created fantasy environments, such as prisons, public restrooms, or truck stops that functioned as elaborate stage sets for erotic role play. After the Consenting Adult Sex Bill went into effect in California in 1976, sex in bathhouses became legal. (The bill was spearheaded by State Representative Willie Brown, who later became San Francisco’s mayor.) Bathhouse owners capitalized on this by installing video rooms where patrons could masturbate solo or in groups. The bill also made sex



FIGURE 15. Advertisement for Club San Francisco, a gay bathhouse, on a public billboard, ca. 1980. Unknown photographer. Henri Leleu Papers 1997–13. © SF GLBT Historical Society.

clubs—previously clandestine spaces that functioned exclusively to facilitate sexual encounters—legal. Other innovations in bathhouses included the addition of stages for cabaret-style entertainment, dance floors, snack bars, cafes, and—when bodybuilding became popular at the turn of the 1980s—workout rooms.²⁶ Bathhouse dance floors were typically open to women, and during occasional coed events, men and women mixed in some of the public spaces such as hot tubs.²⁷

For many of their visitors, bathhouses and sex clubs were adult playgrounds where they celebrated not only sex but also the new possibilities that these environments offered for the development of gay and lesbian urban cultures based on the celebration of bodily physicality and eroticism. Representations of gay bathhouses in advertising in the 1970s and early 1980s—including ads on public billboards (fig. 15)—were a far cry from earlier understandings of them as dingy, dirty, and dangerous spaces on the fringes of gay male urban culture and subject to systematic police raids. Now, bathhouses and sex clubs were profitable businesses with loyal customers. The new and renovated buildings that housed them competed for the latest attractions in amenities, opulence, and “bathhouse entertainment.” They had become marketable.

The casual eroticism of gay bathhouses became a source of public fascination—both romantic and vilifying—in photographs, film, literature, and various forms of political speech. Right-wing critics and religious leaders, for example, cited gay

baths when castigating modern, sexually permissive ways of life.²⁸ That fascination led to more moderate, if controversial, discussions of their role in American society. *Saturday Night at the Baths* (David Buckley, 1975) was the first nationally distributed film to center its narrative on a gay bathhouse. At the beginning of the film, the male protagonist, who is in a romantic relationship with a woman, arrives in New York City from Montana and finds work as a pianist at Continental Baths, the most well-known gay bathhouse in the city. Gradually, he becomes engrossed in the bath's sexual environment and starts a sexual relationship with another male employee there. The film presents the dimly lit, maze-like interior of Continental Baths as the antithesis of the domestic space the protagonist shares with his girlfriend. The protagonist's first sexual experience with another man comes at the end of a hasty passage through the sexually charged interior spaces to a private outdoor balcony. The film's representation of the bathhouse environment as part of the route that led to the protagonist's first same-sex encounter reproduced the stereotype that bathhouses were environments of gay conversion. At the same time, the character's journey also fit the classic American narrative of personal reinvention on the path to self-actualization. Needless to say, the film was sensationalistic and reductive, but it did reflect an expanding cultural understanding of bathhouses as paradigmatic gay spaces, associated with the booming of metropolitan homosexual cultures.

That boom helped prompt the renovation of a Tenderloin bathhouse that had long been an important site for masculine gay sex culture from its operation as Club Turkish Baths from the early 1930s until 1979, when it was renamed Bulldog Baths, promoted as "the largest bath in the USA" and "the talk of gay America."²⁹ The building was located on 130–132 Turk Street, a stone's throw from Compton's Cafeteria, in a neighborhood that had been an important site for the convergence of gay underground socializing (from before World War II) and vibrant queer and trans street cultures (in the 1960s). The proximity among important sites for the gay, lesbian, and trans political consciousness-building in the Tenderloin facilitated interactions among queer groups and their cultures. The bathhouse had been at the center of socializing around sex not only in the neighborhood but also the city.

The building was purchased in 1979, and after a comprehensive renovation, a limited partnership operated it as Bulldog Baths until the mid-1980s. Past its entrance on Turk Street, visitors equipped with special metal badges entered a fantasy landscape akin to a sexual theme park, where people could perform elaborate sexual fantasies. Many stopped first at a full-size truck, taking up the bulk of the ground floor's footprint. Across the building's two stories (a delicatessen occupied the first floor), there were also a few prison cells, a "slave auction room," a model of public restrooms with glory holes—circular openings on the wall surface in different sizes for the insertion of one's sexual organ that were features of clandestine

gay meeting places for anonymous sex—an “orgy room,” and “douche room” for scatological sex acts. The more typical amenities of gay bathhouses were present, too: a sauna, steam room, and private cubicles.³⁰ The labyrinthine interiors’ best remembered feature, though, is a series of murals throughout the building painted by a young artist, Brooks Jones. In the orgy room, a mural depicted sexual scenes, many with larger-than-life figures engaged in different sexual acts among stylized depictions of semitrucks (a full-size semitruck installed on the second floor was another trademark interior feature).³¹ Some of the male bodies in the mural were bent and turned, their faces contorted in ecstasy and perhaps in associated pain. The figures floated in an abstract blue background, suggesting a transcendental dimension that resonated with the use of consciousness-altering recreational drugs like LSD that were part not only of the hippie but also the homosexual experience of Bay Area countercultures in the late 1960s.³² They reflect, in other words, a period of intense experimentation concerned with, among other things, corporeal sensation.³³

With its infrastructural and aesthetic innovations, Bulldog was also representative of a new profitable building and business typology in San Francisco’s commercial landscape, with gay owners reaping financial benefit. Bathhouse owners and patrons represented gay and bisexual men from different social classes with collective political influence. The bath and, to a lesser extent, sex club visibility and integration in San Francisco’s urban landscape ensured that they became a core part of the everyday lives of a significant part of the gay population. Moreover, local gay business associations promoted them as tourist attractions that brought revenue into the city, even if “official” channels promoted gay San Francisco by focusing on the Castro and gay resorts in Sonoma, right outside the city, rather than its explicitly erotic offerings. Although underground gay guides have existed since the 1950s, extensive new maps and guides have been professionally produced and updated regularly with special sections on bathhouses since the mid-1970s.³⁴

With the prominence of sex as an expression of local gay culture, accounts of friendships and intimate relationships formed during bathhouse visits abound. Gay men explored aspects of their sexuality by testing the limits of what constituted sexual experiences, expanding the repertory of gay intimacy. Bathhouse and sex club interiors offered opportunities to explore voyeurism, masturbation, and domination-submission with multiple partners as options in an expanded field of sexual techniques. Another aspect of this open sexual culture was the social use of recreational drugs such as marijuana and LSD as part of the sexual experience. The association of gay sex with drug use was a factor in subsequent efforts to regulate these environments at the beginning of the AIDS epidemic.

Until 1982 free medical care in municipal health clinics that treated sexually transmitted diseases also contributed to the flourishing of new sexual cultures. According to Cleve Jones, who was later a key community organizer in the

response to AIDS, a quick trip to the City Clinic was a monthly routine for sexually active gay men in the city:

The only diseases we had to worry about were easily treated with a shot or a handful of pills, and it was a point of pride for all of us to go down to the City Clinic at 4th and Mission to get tested every month . . . Everyone saved their City Clinic exam tickets, and you'd see them on refrigerators and bathroom mirrors, taped up as proof of responsible behavior and reminders for one's next visit.³⁵

Taking care of one's body—whether at the bathhouse, the gym, or the clinic—was central to everyday homosexual life in the city. Likewise, dedicated clinics that met gay men's healthcare needs were significant infrastructure components that supported their lives. But over the course of the 1980s, as the AIDS epidemic ravaged San Francisco's gay population, the significance of these spaces changed dramatically.

BATHHOUSE DEBATES

When the first reports of a rare form of “gay cancer” began to circulate in spring 1981, the social and spatial networks that gay men had built began to shake. Between 1981 and 1984, over a thousand people lost their lives to AIDS in San Francisco.³⁶ However, the viral nature of the disease was little understood, and the exact ways it spread were unknown. Medical professionals based their recommendations on available epidemiological data and emphasized precautionary measures that mainly considered sex practices.³⁷ The early epicenters for the disease were San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles, where local efforts mainly driven by grassroots mobilizations raised awareness among the gay population and enlisted the help of sympathetic physicians. The national public opinion, however, downplayed it as a “gay disease.” During the first four years of the Reagan administration (1981–89), the president did not mention AIDS in any public speech or interview until September 1985, and it was only after his reelection that he commissioned the surgeon general to prepare a report on it.³⁸ In San Francisco, the dramatic increase of opportunistic infections—mainly Kaposi's sarcoma and rare forms of pneumonia that we now associate with HIV—and of deaths led to early discussions among medical professionals, gay activists, and the local government about how to best respond. City-wide efforts to halt the disease's spread included the San Francisco health department issuing its first brochure on AIDS in May 1983 and Feinstein declaring the first week in May as AIDS Awareness Week.³⁹ Around the same time calls for a more aggressive response that included the closure of bathhouses and sex clubs ignited a vigorous public debate. The “bathhouse debates,” as they came to be known, played out in the decisions of local officials, the pages of the *San Francisco Chronicle* (the city's newspaper of record), and in the gay press.⁴⁰

Mervyn Silverman, the director of public health for San Francisco, sought the consultation of gay and lesbian political leaders about regulating sex in bathhouses

already in 1983.⁴¹ He understood that because bathhouses were perceived as symbols of gay liberation, any decision to regulate them further or even close some of them would be a political one:

The pervasive argument that turned around even the strongest gay backers I had for closing the bathhouses was if government closes the bathhouses in San Francisco, which is seen as this bastion of gay liberation, what message does that send to less liberal states and communities? And then the next step is, well, obviously people get picked up in gay bars, so you close the gay bars. And then the sodomy laws would either be enforced or reinstated, depending on what the status was in any given state.⁴²

Just over a decade prior, bar patrons perceived as homosexual were routinely harassed and persecuted in San Francisco.⁴³ And after the rapid gains of the 1970s, emotions ran high due to fear of rollbacks on gay and lesbian civil rights. If Silverman did decide to close gay bathhouses, he knew he would have to prove that they were places where unsafe sex between men took place. In the meantime, prominent San Francisco gay activist and *Chronicle* reporter Randy Shilts and other gay politicians sided with bathhouse closures to slow the spread and demonstrate that the gay community was a responsible, well-organized constituency and therefore “deserving” of government support.⁴⁴

In the early summer of 1984, the openly gay journalists Michael Helquist and Rick Osmon had visited six gay bathhouses and published their own investigation, “Sex and the Baths,” in *Coming Up!*, a gay newspaper.⁴⁵ Helquist and Osmon interacted with bathhouse patrons to whom they routinely revealed that they were studying the baths and intended to publish their work. One of their objectives was to investigate the policies for safe sex that the owners had instituted in the baths to assess how effective existing policies were and how patrons perceived their responsibility to educate themselves and each other about AIDS. The famous fantasy environments for group sex, Helquist and Osmon wrote, were either closed or defunct, with at least one bathhouse removing mattresses to discourage sexual activities. These changes were partly in response to public health mandates, and partly the result of voluntary changes the owners instituted to help create a sense of safety among their patrons. All of the establishments provided free literature about safe sex distributed by the city and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. Moreover, the public health department mandated the posting of signs describing safe-sex protocols and recommendations, which Helquist and Osmon observed prominently displayed in well-lit locations inside bathhouses.⁴⁶ In general, they observed, bathhouse interiors were brighter than they used to be, except for private rooms where individuals could control lighting. They found very few men engaging in group sex. Instead, they wrote, gay men had learned about safe sexual practices and were exploring how to communicate personal boundaries for intimacy.

Helquist and Osmon's community reports were published in the gay press, so they had limited reach to a heterosexual audience, but they provided ammunition for bathhouse advocates in public debates and helped to counter sensationalizing depictions in official reports and mainstream press coverage. The authors described periods of boredom walking through corridors, coupled with "a sense of wasting time, a frustration over lack of sexual contacts, and an uneasiness over compulsive feelings."⁴⁷ However, the authors also described several sexual encounters mostly taking place in open cubicles (most bathhouses had removed the locks and sometimes the doors of those cubicles to discourage noncompliant sexual activities based on public health recommendations). Helquist and Osmon explained that bathhouse visitors developed new languages of intimacy through one-on-one enactments of sexual fantasies that avoided riskier sex. In the authors' accounts, individuals negotiated the types of erotic activities they desired and their personal boundaries verbally and with their bodies.⁴⁸ This was a form of emplaced empathy that gay men developed in bathhouses during the period of their forced obsolescence, as they navigated and enacted their responsibilities toward one another.⁴⁹ However, unlike the previous decade, sexual environments such as bathhouses and sex clubs favored privacy. Sex often took place in semiprivate cubicles, thereby reducing opportunities for a more publicly shared experience. And although experimental sexual cultures never ceased to exist in San Francisco, they were no longer symbolic markers of homosexuality in the urban landscape.

Just a few months later, however, Silverman ordered a number of baths to close on the grounds of posing a threat to public health as sites of disease contagion. The police had previously sent in undercover investigators, a decision so controversial that Mayor Feinstein blocked the publication from being made public. However, the findings of a set of four reports conducted in October 1984 by private investigators contracted by the public health department factored heavily in Silverman's decision.⁵⁰ The reports' critics pointed out that many conclusions relied on presuming what activities could be taking place behind closed doors and asserting the circulation of drugs based on overheard discussions rather than firsthand observations.⁵¹ But their conclusions were enough to prompt Silverman to take action. Fourteen bathhouses and sex clubs were ordered to close out of thirty businesses that were investigated.⁵² The remaining had to follow the ban on sex in bathhouses that the board had adopted in April 1984 strictly.⁵³

But the epilogue to the "sex palaces of yesteryear," as queer theorist and anthropologist Gayle Rubin has called them, was not written by the health department's decision to close some of them based on public health violations. Many bathhouse owners fought those and won some concessions, such as operating albeit with modified amenities. But they could not fight diminishing attendance and increased operating costs.⁵⁴ Owners had to comply with new building and sanitation codes that were often hard to implement and enforce. And as thousands of gay men died of AIDS, fewer and fewer went to the baths. The last gay bathhouse

of this period to operate in the city, Twenty-First Street Baths, closed in 1987.⁵⁵ Its owner had been cited with public health violations that could further the transmission of HIV, but attendance was already diminished. Twenty-First Street Baths closed unceremoniously, settling with the city's attorney general to avoid further persecution for violations recorded by undercover city inspectors.

Nevertheless, even before AIDS prompted heightened scrutiny of gay sexual practices, the period of sexual experimentation in the city's baths and sex clubs was already vulnerable to growing gentrification in the area below Market Street, where most were concentrated.⁵⁶ Spaces around Folsom Street, which supported light industrial uses during the day and vibrant sexual cultures at night, had to compete with chain stores, loft conversions, and the encroachment of the new museum district that had already displaced low-income residents from the area immediately to the east. The mainstream urban entrepreneurialism championed by City Hall, as well as gentrification in San Francisco more broadly, led to a kind of urban desexualization—the assimilation of gay culture in mainstream urban life. And the ravages of AIDS on gay bodies helped shape a new public discourse of empathy, highlighting everyday suffering in hospital wards, apartments, and even public spaces.

NEW FORMS OF PUBLIC HEALTH ACTIVISM

In July 1983 the first inpatient AIDS unit in the country opened in San Francisco General under the supervision of Clifford Morrison. A resident nurse, Morrison saw the need for a dedicated space for AIDS patients in the hospital, advocated for it, and helped create it. Those patients were predominantly gay, and many had lost their social networks of support. Ward 5B was often in the media spotlight, attention that Morrison used to counter the fear of AIDS patients by encouraging nurses to be filmed by television crews providing care.⁵⁷ Human touch especially communicated the message of acceptance. The ward had twelve beds, and its spatial organization emphasized casual interactions between medical personnel and patients, who often discussed treatment methods over morning coffee and donuts in the hallway rather than in the clinical setting of offices associated with medical exams. Curtains were preferred over hard partitions that tended to magnify feelings of isolation. As a journalist who toured the ward put it, walls were painted a “cheerful orange,” and the ward was filled with plants and flowers donated by local businesses and organizations.⁵⁸

Nurses in Ward 5B created an environment not only of physical but also of psychological support. Despite official policy prohibiting visits by anyone other than biological family and spouses, the nurses allowed visits from patients' friends and partners—and even, in some cases, pets. Singers and drag performers also visited, organizing impromptu performances that broke everyday medical routines and—amidst the fluorescent lights and medical equipment—brought

back memories of gay dance venues.⁵⁹ Still, the devastation was massive. Diane Jones, a resident nurse at Ward 5B, reminded those who toured the AIDS inpatient unit at San Francisco General in the 1990s: “We’ve cared for 5,000 men and women who died of AIDS. That’s [only] the beginning of the epidemic at San Francisco General.”⁶⁰

In the sociopolitical context of the early 1980s, existing organizations in San Francisco mobilized available resources at the municipal level and the knowledge from grassroots politics of the previous decade. They mounted a fast and systematic response with the support of doctors, nurses, and volunteers that made vital contributions to the fight against AIDS. This response reverberated nationally and internationally and is now known as the “San Francisco model of care.” A dedicated group of medical practitioners at San Francisco General spearheaded it. It was based on demonstrating empathy during all stages of treatment by understanding the specific needs and concerns of gay patients. It also involved local governmental and nonprofit organizations in the care of patients from the beginning.⁶¹

During diagnosis, medical doctors took the lead, followed by nurses who handled inpatient care. Social workers were engaged when the need for practical advice and psychological support became most acute. Community-based organizations helped navigate housing and living with HIV. Visiting nurses were engaged when homecare was required, and hospices assisted during the final stages of a patient’s life.⁶² The widespread hysteria about AIDS, fueled by media reports that systematically stigmatized AIDS patients, redoubled the commitment of the people and organizations that cooperated in setting up the “San Francisco model” to counter stigma by emphasizing the patients’ humanity and right to respectful treatment.⁶³

It is hard to overestimate the degree of devastation that AIDS brought to the San Francisco metropolitan area. Between 1982 and 1990, more than 26,900 people, most of them gay and bisexual men, died of AIDS in the Bay Area (notably, within the same period, over 400,000 people died cumulatively in the United States).⁶⁴ AIDS patients were not solely gay men, but at least in the first decade of the pandemic, this social group represented most of the deaths. The social networks that they had in many cases spent years building traced the spread of the disease in real-time as friends and lovers died. This led many patients to conceal their diagnosis, or to be actively neglected by friends, family, and society at large. Others were with one another to the end.

As the number of patients kept rising, groups of people were differentially affected by the disease along racial and gender lines. During 1984–87 there was growing discontent among black and Latinx gay and lesbian activists and organizations with what they perceived as white-centered response at the level of the city, including the “San Francisco model.” Participants in a 1989 meeting of members from fifty Bay Area community AIDS organizations characterized the model as having emerged from “the gay white male community” and was “supported by contributions from relatively affluent individuals, and well-networked

through personal networks to obtain needed professional resources.”⁶⁵ They considered “the monolithic nature of the model (that is unresponsive to ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity)” as its “greatest source of weakness.” This criticism cannot be seen outside broader critiques of racism within the gay and lesbian movement and in gay social life in the 1970s and 1980s.⁶⁶ This eventually led to the establishment of new groups and organizations with roots within those communities, such as the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays, the gay Latinx agency CURAS, and Mission-based Proyecto ContraSIDA por Vida, among others, that could better respond to their culturally specific needs. These mobilizations led to government agencies taking the concerns of marginalized persons with AIDS (PWAs) seriously—albeit with tragic delays—as government and nonprofit funding specifically for nonwhite PWAs as well as homeless and intravenous drug users increased in the 1990s. Another outcome of those early critiques were deliberate attempts among new AIDS advocacy organizations to include racial and gender diversity in their membership and programming (with varying success).⁶⁷

During the prolonged battle with AIDS, the fragmentation of activist priorities can be described as falling within two main camps. On the one hand, grassroots organizers sought to coerce the federal government and pharmaceutical companies to develop effective medication for the disease by mobilizing civil rights discourse. On the other, some groups retreated from civil society.⁶⁸ They rejected the logic of assimilating the characteristics of their sexual cultures within mainstream society by pursuing rights at the national level. In the second group, many espoused anarchist ideologies, and some sought to create intentional communities of self-care, most of which were in rural environments.⁶⁹

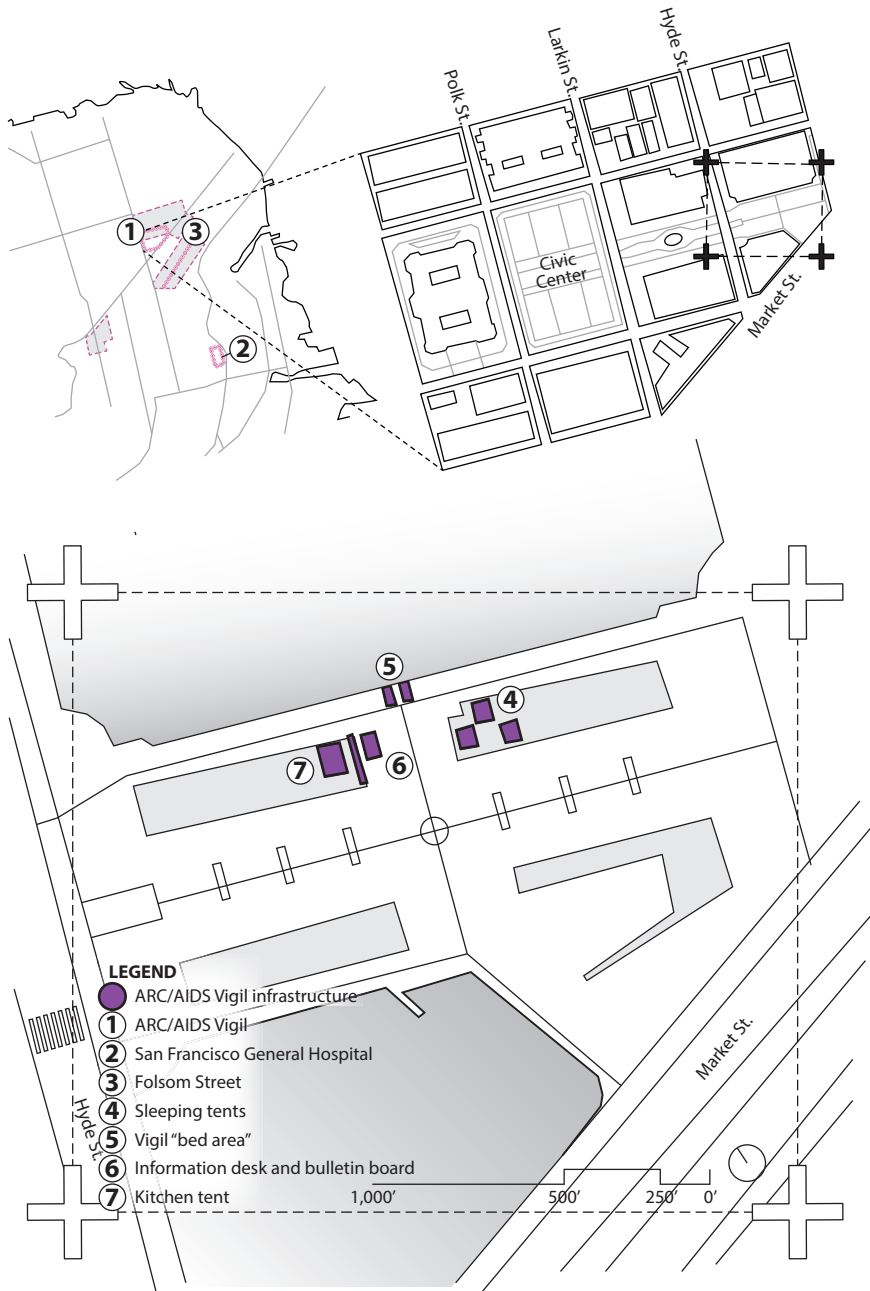
The “San Francisco model,” which focused on innovative treatment protocols and referral services since 1983, and the proliferation of community-based AIDS organizations reflect a grassroots focus on empathetic treatments, disease awareness, and prevention. By 1985 it was clear that there was also a need for more public-facing actions addressing the stigma associated with the disease. AIDS was a global medical emergency and could not be addressed solely locally. As a result, raising public awareness of the physical and mental toll from AIDS became a political goal as essential support from the federal government depended on public pressure on elected officials, bureaucrats, and private companies.⁷⁰ Public protests included rallies, demonstrations, and candle-lit marches. These were eventually epitomized by direct actions and media campaigns organized by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) that was established in New York in 1987 with loosely organized chapters in many cities worldwide (there were two ACT UP chapters in San Francisco, due to disagreements among activists about their tactics).⁷¹ One of ACT UP’s defining characteristics and perhaps its biggest strength was how it helped build coalitions through direct action. These coalitions did not transcend class and racial differences but enabled people to connect their struggles to larger social groups and political goals, such as pharmaceutical reform.⁷²

EMPLACED EMPATHY AT THE ARC/AIDS VIGIL

In 1985, two years before the founding of ACT UP, a spontaneous protest took place in front of a building that housed federal offices in San Francisco's Civic Center.⁷³ It developed into a ten-year occupation on part of the adjacent public plaza.⁷⁴ The occupation began on October 27, 1985, when a small number of AIDS activists came to United Nations Plaza, off Market Street, to support two HIV-positive gay men arrested for chaining themselves to one of the entrances of a building housing federal government offices. Steve Russell and Frank Bert had been protesting the lack of funding for AIDS research and the inaction of the Reagan administration. Activists brought beds, which they lay in front of the building's side entrance as a form of protest, drawing attention to AIDS patients who died neglected in hospital beds. Other activists set up tents on the site to support the protesters in the beds, keeping watch by their sides overnight in what they called the ARC/AIDS Vigil (map 3). (ARC stands for AIDS-Related Conditions, a term no longer used, that referred to opportunistic infections that were not debilitating and thereby often did not qualify for AIDS support but nonetheless took a toll on patients' everyday lives.)

The encampment had begun spontaneously, as an act of civil disobedience. However, the initial group of activists, numbering no more than ten to fifteen core participants, laid the foundations of a robust organizational structure that endured a host of challenges from early negative press, hostile passersby, and dissenting voices among the participants. Over the first five years, its symbolic and material contributions to fighting AIDS changed along with the priorities of the rotating cast of volunteer organizers and the organization's entanglements with municipal and state agencies. In 1990 the name changed to HIV Vigil, and organizational priorities shifted somewhat, but activists continuously occupied the site until 1995.

Vigil activists used the language of service provision to legitimize their protest, employing domestic iconography to highlight the shared humanity between homosexual and heterosexual residents and to foster emplaced empathy. Emplaced empathy was also strategically employed to raise awareness of the need for public acknowledgment of the disease, grassroots support, and government funds in the fight against AIDS. The name of the vigil site—United Nations Plaza—was in tune with activists' framing of healthcare as a human right, and of the government's neglect as a criminal persecution of a minority population. As soon as the tents went up, the Vigil issued four "moral appeals" that centered on demanding federal funds for healthcare.⁷⁵ Activists also worked to shift the public conversation around homosexuality from a focus on gay sexual practice to a focus on empathy for those suffering in isolated hospital wards and private bedrooms. They fought the stigma associated with both AIDS and homosexuality, fostering empathy in a way that resembled the practitioners of the "San Francisco model." In fact, some participants of the early meetings also volunteered for Shanti, an organization that was part of



MAP 3. Map of the sites discussed in this chapter. The bottom callout shows how physical elements were arranged at the ARC/AIDS Vigil site, ca. 1986. © Gabriel Gonzalez & Stathis G. Yeros.

the “San Francisco model” as a provider of counseling and referrals. This indicates that besides overlapping demands, there was some knowledge transfer between the work coordinated by San Francisco General and Vigil activists. Vigil organizers, without rejecting the role of hospitals and medical practitioners in the fight against AIDS, extended the model of community care to the scale of the city.

Vigil members recognized the importance of citizen interventions in political processes, an idea that extended to their broader political activities. For example, a flier distributed on the Vigil site in 1986 announced “a series of group discussions on the workings of the California Legislature” to “discuss several pieces of legislation” that were then in Senate and Assembly committees.⁷⁶ It concluded: “This legislation affects your future. Come and join us!” Moreover, organizers set up an information booth, which became the Vigil’s headquarters and the main area for interactions with the public (fig. 16). The logo was a somber composition of classical elements: a torch flanked by two pieces of fabric, hanging from chains attached to a pair of eyes, referencing the peoples’ omniscience and moral fortitude, presented in such a way that it resembles the memorial bas-relief of Roman funerary iconography.⁷⁷ Though not explicitly stated, these choices reveal that the organizers saw themselves as inheritors of a moderate republican tradition. This republicanism was based on safeguarding the legitimacy of the political institutions of representative democracy and formal deliberation processes. They did not see themselves as provocateurs.

Another concern of early organizers was the lack of housing for persons with AIDS (PWAs). Over the first five years, housing became more and more central to Vigil activism. This focus emerged organically from debates about PWA needs during meetings and the Vigil’s de facto establishment of an encampment where tents housed protesters and occasionally served as emergency housing for PWAs. The site’s proximity to the Tenderloin, which was only one block to the north, may also have contributed to the shift of the organization’s focus. (Other organizations took up this cause too, including the pioneering AIDS hospice that Hank Wilson ran in the nearby Ambassador Hotel, a Tenderloin SRO, after 1987.) Tenderloin residents in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels—some of whom were gay and PWAs—faced housing precarity, and by 1990 homelessness was becoming more visible.⁷⁸ The Vigil’s founding organizers recognized housing issues as a central concern for PWAs. However, they also strategically sought to control the image of the encampment as an orderly, clean, and safe site to cultivate the public perception of urban occupation as a legitimate form of protest. They set up strict rules for engagement with the public and for the use of tents very early on to make their appeals effective.

That included clearly articulated responsibilities for members, who had to complete a specific number of “service hours” per week to participate in the Vigil. There were also rules governing a person’s expulsion from the site. For example, the night shift volunteer who had to be there from midnight to eight o’clock in the morning had to “walk around the site frequently,” and “if people [were] sleeping near tents [to] ask them politely to move ten feet [away].”⁷⁹ This marked territory



FIGURE 16. ARC/AIDS Vigil's information desk with a mailbox displaying its symbolic address, 50½ UN Plaza, ca. 1986–88. Photograph by Sheila Tully. AIDS/ARC Vigil Records 1991–05. © SF GLBT Historical Society.

for the encampment that they communicated visually and verbally, but without requiring a physical barrier. Security was another critical concern, especially because of the overnight operations. Initially, a green tent was designated for the needs of those responsible for security. Eventually, Vigil members developed a system of alternating shifts and used whistles to get attention during emergencies. The security question was not a theoretical one, as meeting minutes described frequent homophobic attacks due to the site's centrality and public visibility.⁸⁰ Four months after its establishment, ARC/AIDS Vigil adopted bylaws that paint a complete picture of the robust organizational structure which allowed the site to remain active for years, despite the loss of many of its early members to AIDS.⁸¹

The adoption of bylaws also marked the beginning of a period of rapid professionalization. The main decision-making body was known as the Vigil Family. It set general guidelines, discussed subcommittees' recommendations, and resolved conflicts. Individuals had to follow specific steps that included training and twenty hours of service within two weeks to join the Family. Moreover, they had to be voted as a member of the Family by the majority during a Family meeting. Those who had demonstrated their commitment to the Vigil's mission and operations could join the Service Committee, which consisted of twelve elected members who oversaw operations, addressed interpersonal issues through

conflict resolution, and provided recommendations to the Family about decisions on proposed actions that they had to make collectively. The bylaws also formalized the participants' code of conduct and use of the physical site. For example, the document stipulated that only three chairs were allowed at the information table at any time, and no eating or playing cards or games were permitted from seven o'clock in the morning to ten o'clock in the evening in order to dedicate the volunteers' attention to the public. Moreover, alcohol was prohibited, a decision that was the subject of an early controversy about the extent to which strict rules established too narrow terms for what constituted "respectable" behavior and, as a result, perpetuated cultures of rejection and stigma. The prevailing view was that activists had to establish the Vigil's legitimacy by going above and beyond the expectations of what constituted an orderly encampment.

Sala Burton, who represented San Francisco in Congress, expressly referred to the Vigil as an organization raising awareness about ARC in a letter to the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention seeking public support for patients diagnosed with the condition.⁸² After Burton's death in 1987, Nancy Pelosi, who eventually became Speaker of the US House of Representatives, ran for the vacated congressional seat with an agenda that included the Vigil's "four moral appeals." Pelosi sometimes held events at the site with a megaphone in hand, which Vigil organizers announced as "Breakfast[s] with Nancy."⁸³ In an overwhelmingly Democratic city, criticism of Reagan's and later George Bush Sr.'s governments was essential for any local political campaign. At the Vigil site, politicians' and AIDS activists' goals aligned.

The Vigil's symbolic core were the two beds that remained on-site in front of the federal building's doors. They symbolized not only the urgency of the protesters' demands for healthcare but also the everyday hardships of living with the disease for thousands of people who suffered in private. This gave the beds affective qualities that were particularly evident during the holiday season when the site was decorated to resemble a family living room (fig. 17). By alluding to a domestic setting, family celebrations, and the exchange of presents, that iconography expanded the traditional meaning of family to include gays and lesbians. It was a curated image of gay domesticity derived from the beds' performative dimension.

Though not inherently political, affective associations make abject bodies—in this case, by and large, homosexual men with AIDS—familiar and relatable. This was a very different display of the physicality of dying than, for example, hunger strikes: Death due to AIDS was involuntary, not defiant. Its performance on the UN Plaza as a symbolic reenactment was intended to elicit empathy, as the Vigil's motto adopted in 1985 made clear: "We rely on love."⁸⁴ To rely on love is different from asking to be loved. Asking for love presupposes that one can manage without it, but relying on it does not offer the possibility of existing without it. Many patients' age and youthful appearance created a stark contrast with their physical incapacitation (fig. 18). The virility that was synonymous with public gay



FIGURE 17. The bed area at the ARC/AIDS Vigil site during the holiday season, ca. 1986–88. Unknown photographer. AIDS/ARC Vigil Records 1991–05. © SF GLBT Historical Society.



FIGURE 18. Responding to a medical emergency at the ARC/AIDS Vigil site, ca. 1986–88. Unknown photographer. AIDS/ARC Vigil Records 1991–05. © SF GLBT Historical Society.

sexual cultures during the previous decade was replaced by infirmity that made the homosexual body not only an object of medical observation but also of intervention and surveillance. The Vigil site became a living memorial for AIDS deaths and helped shape the ongoing narrative about the disease as a human and not an exclusively gay experience. A book, meant never to be removed from the site, recorded the names of every Vigil member who died of AIDS.

Besides Vigil members, people who passed by the site going about their everyday lives had to engage, even if subconsciously, with this quasi-domestic scene. The unfolding dramas of the slow and painful deaths due to AIDS were communicated in associative terms. Passersby could imagine themselves in bed on Christmas morning, decorating a fireplace, and receiving presents from family. These associations “domesticated” homosexuality and made gay men familiar because of their suffering, which was both tragic and unremarkable in the banality of the Vigil’s iconography. Inviting public scrutiny of gay domestic environments blurred the line between privacy and publicity. However, this publicity concealed sex itself and paradoxically led to the increasingly prominent arguments for institutional recognition of gay intimacy and gay marriage in the following two decades based on the right of American citizens to privacy. In less than a decade, affective activism in the face of AIDS transformed the politics of LGBTQ+ visibility. The aesthetics of emplaced empathy at the Vigil site, for example, were dramatically different from affective activism around bathhouse closures at the beginning of the decade, which focused on building intimacy within sexual environments. While empathy in the context of bathhouses sought to disrupt heterosexual constructions of intimacy, at the Vigil it was predicated on highlighting familiar structures of nonsexual kinship and domesticity.⁸⁵

Although the Vigil initially had widespread support from City Hall and San Francisco, that support began to wane by the end of the decade.⁸⁶ In 1989 the encampment managed to survive an attempt by the police to clear the site and, following that, in 1990, a group of Vigil organizers sought to formalize its non-profit status further. That led to a disagreement among organizers, who split into two groups, with those who remained in the plaza changing the encampment’s name to HIV Vigil. In March of that year, HIV Vigil formally contracted with the city, which issued a revocable use agreement for the use of the site for “essential public services.”⁸⁷ These included informing the public about AIDS and providing emergency housing “during those hours that proper housing referrals [could not] be made.” The residential component thus became part of the site’s official designation. In addition, the agreement specified that five four-person tents were allowed on the plaza as sleeping compartments, and their location was precisely designated in relation to the adjacent building.

Harvey Maurer, a Vigil founder, explained that Vigil members gradually “developed an outreach program to the people within the plaza and . . . a reputation within the community as a place where a person could come to talk about

AIDS or ARC issues in a non-judgmental and unstructured environment.”⁸⁸ An undated pamphlet printed around the turn of the 1990s states that the Vigil redirected its focus from political activism to “meeting the educational needs of the community and providing free bleach [for syringe disinfection], condoms and dental dams on a twenty-four-hour basis.”⁸⁹ Moreover, its outdoor location “[gave] the client receiving services a feeling of trust.” Finally, the language of client services to describe the Vigil’s contribution to the fight against AIDS is a striking example of how by 1990, the civil disobedience action had adapted its language to the managerial tone of professionalized nonprofit reports and acquired institutional characteristics.

In 1990 two leading Vigil organizers, John Belskus and Maurer, died of AIDS.⁹⁰ The following year, the HIV Vigil attempted to revive its earlier focus on advocacy by issuing a new set of moral appeals to the federal government that coincided with the celebration of World AIDS Day, but in 1992 activist fatigue settled in, and few programs were still active.⁹¹ During the following three years, only a handful of dedicated Vigil members maintained three tents and an information booth on the site, having to fend off frequent attempts by the city to end the encampment. The Vigil’s symbolism drove those members to remind the public that AIDS was far from being over, criticizing the lack of sustained media attention. However, by 1995 the institutional landscape of AIDS care had changed with the introduction of more effective treatments and broader public discourse about AIDS that met some of the protesters’ early demands. Then, in December 1995, a heavy storm destroyed the three remaining tents and all but erased the memory of the Vigil on UN Plaza.⁹² Jim McAfee, one of the three Vigil members who maintained the encampment until the end, explained that the storm was “godsent” as they were trying to find a way to “gracefully close out a chapter in San Francisco activism.”⁹³

Over the course of a decade, the Vigil’s political meaning changed, as did the aesthetics of empathy that the protesters embodied and enacted at the protest site. They shifted the kind of empathetic discourse that I described vis-à-vis bathhouse closures by focusing on family, domesticity, and death as so-called universal human conditions. This aesthetics paved the way for the transformation of the Vigil from direct-action protest to caretaking. The new form of emplaced empathy both reflected and contributed to the phenomenon of urban desexualization. However, it is important to emphasize that discussion of sexual practices and depictions of sex in gay magazines and advertising campaigns did not disappear: For example, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation launched a controversial campaign to promote the use of condoms with sexually explicit photographs. Still, from 1983 to 1990—during a period when Reaganite institutional reforms accelerated public disinvestment from social welfare, and when applying neoliberal ideas in society and the national economy led to the professionalization of nonprofit organizations that had to adapt to survive—the discourse was changing. This was

reflected in the way some activists assumed nonpolitical positions and employed medical terminology to discuss sex between men.⁹⁴

At the beginning of the decade, sexually charged environments and their iconography had been profitable and publicly visible in San Francisco's urban landscape. The prominence of bathhouses and sex clubs that had become symbols of the consolidation of a modern gay identity with cultural and political dimensions best represents that visibility. Debates about their closure between 1983 and 1985 raised essential questions about the city's public health response to AIDS that had killed over a thousand residents—predominantly gay men—by the middle of the decade. As a result, bathhouse supporters developed a discourse of empathy based on turning them into laboratories of new forms of intimacy, such as mutual masturbation and verbal stimulation.

Meanwhile, in 1983 and 1984 doctors and nurses at San Francisco General Hospital developed protocols for AIDS treatment that shaped subsequent discourse about the disease at the level of the medical and government establishments. The "San Francisco model of healthcare" shifted the focus of AIDS activism toward caretaking, and activists began to frame gay rights as human rights. To be sure, multiple forms of AIDS activism coexisted in San Francisco. ARC/AIDS Vigil, which started as an activist encampment active from 1985 to 1990 and institutionalized as a site mainly focused on caretaking between 1990 and 1993, shows how spaces of advocacy changed because of pressures to formalize their organizational structure, de-emphasize erotics, and privilege shared humanity. The Vigil's spatial, organizational, and aesthetic characteristics are paradigmatic of the broader operations leading to the desexualization of San Francisco's landscape. These include representations, performances, and material articulations of homosexuality in the built environment between 1983 and 1990. Sex became less central to gay culture and politics; it became more heavily controlled and was no longer an organizing logic of gay public life.

The period of AIDS activism during its height, approximately from 1984 to 1995, centered on US metropolitan environments, especially in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York, three cities where gays and lesbians had developed broad cultural presence and territorial enclaves by the end of the 1970s. This was a time of political realignment for the national LGBTQ+ movement, which professionalized and shifted its focus from gays' and lesbians' local claims to neighborhoods and specific buildings to arguments calling on government institutions to safeguard homosexual citizens' rights to adequate healthcare and to respect individual choices with regard to sex and social life. The corollary of this queer citizenship formulation was its emphasis on "proper" queer embodiments, and the surveillance of queer bodies and public life that excluded those who diverged or did not conform to its narrow contours.

By 1990, in the old dominion of bathhouses and sex clubs, there were shops, museums, an extensive convention center, and a Costco Wholesale market.⁹⁵

Businesses that catered to affluent gay residents and tourists realigned their goals and directed their customers toward shopping trips downtown and excursions to the wine country.⁹⁶ Sex clubs with strict members-only policies never entirely disappeared, but they were marginalized and faced legal challenges frequently.⁹⁷ Even Folsom Street Fair, a yearly celebration of the area's leather and BDSM cultures that started as a neighborhood fair supporting local businesses in 1984, was affected by the changing tide. As a single-day event, the fair became more of a nostalgic throwback to the publicness of nonmainstream sexual cultures of the 1970s, a museum exhibition of sorts. It no longer sustained the subversive potential of non-normative sexual expression to reimagine urban life and erotic cultures.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, the rapid transformation of the urban landscape extended beyond leisure and entertainment landscapes. Changes in the city fractured some of the already fragile 1970s coalitions around incremental civil rights pursuits by participating in established political processes (such as Harvey Milk's famous pursuit of a "seat at the political table"). This fracturing gave rise to new nonprofit organizations emphasizing human rights discourse that developed in parallel to the work of activist political groups.

Living in Queer Times

By the end of the 1990s, the double crises of AIDS and affordability in the San Francisco Bay Area made gay, lesbian, and transgender/gender nonconforming social groups vulnerable to regional economic and cultural changes. Silicon Valley's economic boom in the late 1990s driven by dotcom companies in software, telecom, and networking saw a rapid growth in venture capital funding and new jobs that brought many young, relatively affluent tech-workers to the Bay Area. In San Francisco, the median income increased by 303 percent from 1989 to 2020, compared to a national increase of 133 percent.¹ During the same period, rents in the federal statistical area that includes San Francisco and Oakland rose by 215 percent.² Coupled with urban planning priorities that have historically directed redevelopment funds to neighborhoods around the city center since the 1960s, gentrification changed not only the demographic makeup of old neighborhoods but also their social structure and the cultural sphere.³ The wider Bay Area was not immune to gentrification pressures. Rents in traditionally working-class Oakland began to rise in the new millennium, as people who could not afford San Francisco rents started searching for more affordable places to move, displacing working-class residents, especially those living in majority black and immigrant neighborhoods.⁴

Economic and demographic statistics cannot fully account for how these changes affected LGBTQ+ people in the Bay. As homosexuality became more accepted in the urban public sphere, there were fewer constraints on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people who could afford to move outside the traditional territorial concentrations.⁵ Meanwhile, those most adversely affected by the affordability crisis were further marginalized. Already since 1990 the restructuring of the Bay's urban economies resulted in a diverse landscape of

physical spaces and LGBTQ+ organizations with sometimes competing priorities and tactics for achieving them. Nonprofit organizations that received public funding had to establish formal governing boards and produce detailed impact and spending reports.⁶ The San Francisco AIDS Foundation, for example, which began as a grassroots mobilization of gay rights activists in 1982 to address the immediate needs of people affected by the health crisis in the city, quickly professionalized its operations to secure the support of nongay public and private funders. Foundation support was instrumental for a wide network of health clinics, resource centers, and for several other actions, such as a syringe exchange program to reduce infection risk among intravenous drug users and a safe-sex public information campaign.⁷ Through intense debates and persuasive advocacy, these actions expanded the scope of what was understood to constitute appropriate uses of public funds and improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

The foundation's mission to respond to the AIDS crisis aligned with single-issue state and national political organizing by the Human Rights Campaign (established in 1980) and Equality California (established in 1998), among other gay and lesbian nonprofit organizations. By the end of the 1990s, activists organizing with these nonprofits prioritized achieving full assimilation of homosexual citizens within all aspects of social life in the United States. The 2003 Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas* that struck down sodomy laws in the United States buoyed demands for social and political assimilation. These demands included gay, lesbian, and transgender access to the traditional heterosexual institutions of marriage and military service that historically fostered patriarchal stereotypes.

Meanwhile, other queer and trans groups criticized single-issue campaigns. They highlighted the multiple forces of oppression that marginalized gay, lesbian, and transgender people, who were disproportionately poor and people of color, faced in their everyday lives. Those oppressions included, for example, the criminalization of countercultural queer street life, institutional barriers to accessing welfare support, and lack of affordable housing. For them, assimilation was inadequate, and in certain cases counterproductive, to developing forms of mutual aid that could prefigure alternative social politics away from capitalist structures. Access to housing has been a central demand for marginalized queer groups' ongoing struggles to create fulfilling lives that transgress traditional social norms and expectations in the Bay at least since the 1990s.⁸ This chapter examines how more-than-urban queer and transgender kinship networks have animated "right to the city" spatial activism in the last twenty years.⁹ These activists often operate under the radar of mainstream gay and lesbian politics and tend to take a more insurgent position toward heterosexual society and urbanism.

Within environments of communal residential living in San Francisco and Oakland, residents have created mutual aid structures predicated on shared

nonmainstream cultures. Moreover, challenges to queer communal living in the context of advanced gentrification that characterizes the San Francisco Bay Area's regional landscape offer insights into how gentrification perpetuates economic inequality. The transformation of urban neighborhoods already by 1990 attracted property speculators who, over the next two decades, bought up available buildings in poorer, underinvested areas near those that had gentrified (such as the Castro, parts of the Mission and SoMa, Hayes Valley) speculating on future gentrification. The resulting scarcity of available units, whether real or manufactured to stimulate demand, led to even higher rents. Together with the lack of tenancy protections, these conditions pushed old residents out of gentrifying neighborhoods.¹⁰ Another characteristic of advanced gentrification in the last twenty years has been cultural homogenization: As more expensive cafes, bars, restaurants, and grocery stores have opened in previously mixed and low-income neighborhoods, lower-cost options to inhabit the increasingly privatized urban environment diminish.¹¹ This chapter presents evidence from changing design aesthetics in the physical environment of neighborhoods where queer and transgender people live and socialize, and the discourses surrounding them.

The relationship between gay and lesbian territorialization and gentrification has been a subject of debate in urban planning and policy since the first gayborhoods emerged in the United States in the 1970s.¹² Gays and lesbians have sometimes been viewed, especially by planners influenced by Richard Florida's "creative class thesis" in the early 2010s, as "settlers" who improve the "livability" of formerly low-income neighborhoods and thus become agents of urban regeneration—even if that means their eventual displacement.¹³ However, broader gentrification trends show that working-class neighborhoods gentrify due to a variety of factors and, in any case, established community institutions in gayborhoods, such as local merchants' associations, networks of bars, and other spaces that cater to specific LGBTQ+ needs, can present obstacles to development-driven gentrification.¹⁴ The historical development of LGBTQ+ territorialization in the Bay Area, including the assimilation of the most insurgent aspects of queer socialization and rights-discourse into mainstream society, demonstrates that the suggested causal relationship between territorialization and gentrification is at best circumstantial.

The social politics of the generation of people identifying as queer, transgender, or nonbinary in this chapter, many of whom came to the San Francisco Bay in the early 2000s or later, align their priorities with broader anticapitalist, antiracist, and anticolonial movements. Many express queer and transgender embodiments in nonbinary, anti-essentialist comportment, fashion, and sexual relationships that destabilize normative assumptions about gender and sexuality. Moreover, their spaces oppose racist and classist logics of urban development. Their distinct forms of placemaking include appropriations of spaces that are

dispersed across the regional landscape rather than geographically concentrated.¹⁵ They also involve aesthetic alterations to the physical environment through art that expresses nonmainstream cultures. Finally, this form of placemaking, which has some of the characteristics of more traditional gay and lesbian territorialization in the 1970s and 1980s but is not marked as solely queer, depends on fostering relationships through everyday interactions with other marginalized groups, especially immigrant communities and people of color. Sometimes that happens, as with the work of Gay Shame, in outright protests; sometimes, with Radical Faeries and other collectives, in collaborative forms of cohabitation and spiritual practice; and sometimes by way of formal structures like Community Land Trusts (CLTs).

The CLT model, which has existed since the 1960s in the United States, received renewed attention in the Bay Area due to the economic crisis of the early 2010s, when many residents facing evictions searched for innovative ways to keep their houses.¹⁶ CLTs pool together community resources, private financing, and government support in the form of grants to purchase land that individual homeowners can then rent, usually with ninety-nine-year leases. The terms of these rental contracts regulate the resale price of properties built on CLT land, if they reenter the market, to ensure long-term affordability. Extending CLTs as a form of queer collective ownership builds on the model's foundational principles, while expanding it to prioritize the cultural dimensions of intergenerational queer placemaking.

The story of how a group of queer and trans people of color took partial ownership of a building where they lived and worked in a gentrifying Oakland neighborhood through a CLT demonstrates contemporary entanglements among cultural expressions of queer-and-transness, nonmainstream embodiments, coalition-building, and real estate. When the group of building occupants faced the specter of eviction in 2017, they self-organized to purchase it with the help of Oakland CLT, which has operated in the city since 2009. The residents' campaign to collectively purchase and operate the Liberated 23rd Avenue Building, as it is now known, demonstrates how a group of queer and transgender people of color carved out a territory of exception from the dominant economic and cultural forces that are transforming the neighborhood. The interpretive framework for studying this and other physical sites in this chapter offers an example of a materialist analysis of queer collective living. This analysis highlights the affective and political subtleties at each site. Together, they constitute the landscape of contemporary insurgent queer habitation and citizenship that extends far beyond the Bay. During the three decades since 1990, queer and transgender territorialization in San Francisco and Oakland is characterized by experimentation and fluidity. The analysis of these spaces before they acquire more stable forms helps us imagine new ways of living that enable queer placemaking. These queer pockets create insurgent ruptures in

contemporary mainstream urbanism and offer potential openings for more systematic disruptions of the broader social, political, and cultural systems that they are embedded within.

GENTRIFICATION AND CULTURAL CHANGE

Gay Shame was formed in 1998 as a small, tight-knit collective of queer and transgender activists who, through street protests and an annual event that celebrated insurgent urban queer cultures, created alternative spaces that opposed the participation of large corporations such as banks and national retailers that sponsored Pride parades and gay and lesbian causes in New York and San Francisco.¹⁷ They argued that some of these companies engaged in real estate speculation and exploitation of cheap labor that continued to dispossess marginalized queer people while cynically using Pride to strengthen their liberal credentials.¹⁸ Besides pursuing broader political goals that included fighting economic disenfranchisement, resisting gentrification, and more recently advocating for prison abolition, Gay Shame activists also rejected cultural assimilation in their everyday lives.¹⁹ There was a gender-transgressive and anti-institutional cultural ethos, conscious of its historical emergence as an alternative legacy to the teleological post-Stonewall liberation narrative.

Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, a transgender novelist and activist who was a central figure in the group, explains that in the early 2000s Gay Shame did not have an official membership roster.²⁰ The key organizers were friends and lovers whose anti-establishment attitudes extended to casual cohabitation, recreational drug use, and disregard for bourgeois commodity fetishism. Gay Shame events, which besides protests included parties in squatted public land, were communicated through word of mouth, and attendance could be anywhere between ten and a hundred people. But, Bernstein Sycamore writes in her memoir, more intimate meetings that took place in residential homes were essential in strengthening bonds of friendship and camaraderie among collective members. These meetings affirmed their collective efforts to resist mainstream gay assimilation in their everyday lives.

Members bonded in a variety of ways, including processing narratives of violence collectively and noninjuriously and sharing a countercultural aesthetic in the music they listened to, the clothes they bought from thrift stores around the city, and the literature they shared with each other. Bernstein Sycamore's memoir also reveals the difficulties in prefiguring an alternative queer world while still living within the constraints of mainstream society and urbanism. During the period of about five years that the novelist lived in San Francisco, she describes how personal aspirations, passionate affairs that sometimes turned violent, and personality clashes eroded the foundations of her queer world. Bernstein Sycamore eventually relocated to Seattle.²¹ But though she and some other early collective members left

the San Francisco Bay in the 2000s, others continued the work of enacting nontraditional kinship structures that re-signified physical and psychological injury as a shared collective condition and the basis of political activism.²²

Changes to the city and its urban cultures are symptomatic of a broader shift in how new urban residents imagine and plan for the city. The valorization of private property and urban order over communal space leads to what novelist and cultural critic Sarah Schulman calls “the quashing of public life.”²³ Schulman explains that gentrification “enforces itself through the repression of diverse expression.” For example, special permits are required “for performing, for demonstrating, for dancing in bars, for playing musical instruments on the street, for selling food, for painting murals, selling art, drinking beer on the stoop, or smoking pot or cigarettes.”²⁴ Writing about New York’s East Village, Schulman also describes what she calls the “gentrification of the mind,” a cultural phenomenon that began in the 1980s when a radical queer culture was diminished due to the AIDS pandemic, the privatization of public spaces, and an influx of new residents without ties to the neighborhood or each other.²⁵ Unlike an earlier wave of artists and Bohemians who moved to East Village in the 1970s, many of whom were gay and lesbian, the new crop of white-collar residents in the 1990s did not share more than a superficial interest in local urban cultures and tended to foster no solidarities with the older residents who customarily organized to demand tenant protections.

In San Francisco, in the aftermath of the AIDS crisis, a comparable phenomenon unfolded in traditionally gay and lesbian neighborhoods. Heterosexual couples, for instance, rediscovered the beauty of Castro’s Victorian architecture and started moving there, filling the sidewalks with baby strollers, which critics of the Castro’s bourgeois transformation lamented.²⁶ The colorist movement of exuberantly painted façades with daring color combinations that transformed the Castro and other neighborhoods between 1968 and 1980 had helped to protect Victorian homes from demolition. But most of their renovated colorful façades were repainted by the turn of the century with gray, white, ochre, and light blue, for a more subdued, stately urban presence. Moreover, a 2012 ban on public nudity targeting the intersection of Castro and Eighteenth Streets, where longtime Castro residents socialized in the nude outside Harvey Milk Café, was sponsored by the area’s gay elected supervisor.²⁷ Meanwhile, elected officials, planners, and mainstream gay groups celebrated the intersection’s queer legacy in 2014 with the inauguration of a rainbow crossing, an abstract rendition of artist Gilbert Baker’s rainbow flag embedded in the asphalt. The vibrancy and occasional irreverence of queer life was notably absent from the crossing’s restrained, abstract aesthetic.

Similarly, the architects of Strut, a new health clinic and community center on Castro Street for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation that was inaugurated in 2016, employed abstract architectural symbolism paired with nondescript modernist aesthetics. According to one of Strut’s architects, who worked for Gensler, the largest company offering architectural services in the world at the time, the

building's glass façade signified "transparency, openness, and lack of shame."²⁸ The architect contrasted the symbolism of glass with the Victorian buildings along Castro Street, which, in the design team's view, were oriented inward for privacy. These are misleading generalizations. The Twin Peaks Tavern, the first gay bar with clear glass windows at the intersection of Castro and Seventeenth Streets, had strict "no-contact" rules in the 1960s to avoid police harassment, whereas adaptations of Victorian flats for gay and lesbian cohabitation in the 1970s turned the logic of the nuclear family on its head.²⁹ During the day, when exterior light renders Strut's glass façade semi-opaque, it reflects street life in front of it, at best. At worst, it establishes a barrier between the institutional realm of the nonprofit that it houses and the world outside. The building's design, confused and cold, reveals how architectural imagination is both limited by the "gentrification of the mind" and can unknowingly perpetuate it.

FAERIE URBANISM

Eric, who self-identifies as a queer man, lived in a San Francisco apartment for at least a decade until the early 2010s, when a rent increase forced him to leave the city.³⁰ However, Eric's experience with gentrification in the Bay Area, which increased the cost of living as it exiled queer social and cultural activities, had prepared him, albeit not without a sense of dread, for the course of actions that followed. The first thing he did was search a crime map of the entire Bay Area, on which a part of the far East Bay was deeply in the red, indicating a high crime rate. After filtering the neighborhood data to avoid specific areas with violent crime, he decided to rent a house there. Eric's new home in a Bay Area exurb was over an hour away by car and public transit from San Francisco. The location, he jokingly explained, fit his two main criteria: It was far enough away that it would take a few years for property prices to catch up and make him move again, and the high nonviolent crime rate suggested light police presence.³¹

Eric was a member of the Radical Faeries, a national, loosely organized intergenerational group of queer people who share a quest for alternative spiritual practices, seek to build alternative relationships based on empathy, and view the police as a manifestation of sociocultural oppression. They build nonhierarchical relationships of queer kinship outside heteronormative and patriarchal societal boundaries. Even though Radical Faeries first met in rural spiritual retreats beginning in 1979, one way in which they try to achieve their goals now is by operating a network of faerie houses and a handful of rural retreats around the United States, in France, and in Australia.³² Faerie houses are usually urban residential units where faeries home in the parameters of communal living and perform their spiritual practices.³³ They are also places where faeries who are new to an area and without many resources can find temporary shelter.

Eric set up his new home as a new faerie house. He was motivated, in part, by the Radical Faeries' history of building decentralized collectives that operated as loosely affiliated chapters responding to the needs of their members. He would respond to his own displacement by establishing a new queer nucleus in an exurban neighborhood. Eric's new faerie house highlights the inherent capacity of this kind of queer environment to insert itself in a new social and physical body and thereby begin a process of queering its surroundings.

The history of Radical Faerie spaces offers insights into current experimentations with collective property ownership that animate debates about queer and transgender resistance to displacement. Harry Hay organized the first Radical Faerie gathering in rural Arizona in 1979. (Hay had cofounded Mattachine Society, the first homophile organization in the United States, in 1950.) Despite Hay's effort to extend the call for participation to queer people living in rural areas, most participants of that and subsequent gatherings lived in cities.³⁴ For them, the natural setting signified a retreat from the constraints that urban environments posed for the development of queer spirituality. The Radical Faeries' world-making project in rural gatherings was rooted in the anticapitalist, antiracist, and anti-colonial work and rhetoric of gay liberation that the mainstream gay and lesbian movement in the 1980s had sidelined.³⁵

Radical Faerie spirituality was inspired by Indigenous, pagan, and other religious and cultural traditions. It prompted gathering participants to subvert capitalist notions of ownership and commodity fetishism by building relationships with the land based on animating the physical world through ritual. Radical Faerie culture was built on earlier prefigurative experiments with rural separatist gay and lesbian communities in the 1970s that rejected the urban gayborhood model of urban gay liberation.³⁶ Faeries' attitude toward land occupation, nonetheless, signified an ambivalent relationship with the legacy of settler colonialism. They acknowledged that they gathered on Indigenous land and studied two-spirit embodiment, a term that came into the English language in 1990 to describe people who traditionally fulfill a third-gender ceremonial role in Pan-American Indigenous cultures, to guide them in their quest for expressing queer sexuality and spirituality.³⁷ However, most of them were white gay men of relative privilege, who could move in and out of the rural and urban enclaves that constituted the faerie landscape.³⁸ Their rural gatherings were not spaces of exception, since they did not operate completely outside sociocultural norms and constraints, nor did they intend to. Rather, they gave their participants the conceptual tools and practical skills to build queer homes back in the urban environments where most of them lived.³⁹

The transfer of knowledge between these rural environments or queer spiritual bonding and urban spaces of everyday life continued in the subsequent decades. It was particularly meaningful in the 1980s and 1990s as AIDS devastated gay networks of peer support. Seeking a more permanent space to continue their spiritual

pursuit that included sexual experimentation as a form of social bonding, in 1987 a group of West Coast Radical Faeries established *Nomenus*, a nonprofit incorporated as a religious organization in California. *Nomenus*, which was based in San Francisco, purchased land in rural southern Oregon with members' donations, where they established a permanent retreat they described as a "religious sanctuary."⁴⁰ Meanwhile, back in San Francisco, the organization used a warehouse space on Folsom Street to hold monthly members' meetings and social events. These events often took the form of urban Radical Faerie gatherings where participants experimented with "innovative spiritual and sexual explorations."⁴¹ These events were meaningful ways for many faeries to cope with the psychological effect of AIDS. According to Buzz Bense, who was a registered sex educator and ran the Folsom space, events advertised as "mutual masturbation parties" helped curb the spread of the disease by promoting what medical experts considered safer ways to achieve sexual pleasure.⁴²

In 1989 the Folsom Street space was the target of two police raids that prompted its closure for significant periods at a time and the issuance, by organizers, of extensive rules for how event participants should engage with the space and each other. The rules included such detailed instructions as how to perform specific sex acts and how to clean up after group sex.⁴³ Public scrutiny of Radical Faerie events was antithetical to their ideas of self-determination and sociosexual experimentation, and the Folsom space was ultimately short-lived: it appears to have ceased holding urban faerie gatherings by 1995. Its existence revealed a conundrum with institutionalizing Radical Faerie culture through public visibility, which in this case was a consequence of its nonprofit status as nonprofit activities were state regulated.⁴⁴

Faerie houses are not regulated the same way because they are private residences. They constitute an alternative spatial network in cities across the United States where Radical Faeries live. There is no list of faerie houses and no official designation.⁴⁵ They could be anywhere, and faeries learn about them through word of mouth. Radical Faeries build intergenerational relationships and networks of peer support by creating a shared culture rather than a political movement *per se*. They continue to develop new ways to articulate and perform queer kinship by responding to the historical changes that have occurred in urbanism in the United States for over four decades. But, as the establishment and operating structure of *Nomenus* indicates, if Radical Faeries embrace fluidity and experimentation in their spiritual pursuits, those traits become difficult to translate into formal spatial configurations.

One such formal response, nonetheless, was at the center of a debate in 2017 about the future of Grand Central, a faerie house in the Castro. There, a collective of queer people organized social events, offered weekly community meals, and provided temporary shelter and support to homeless and newly arrived queer people in San Francisco, many of them artists. Oliver Sanford, one of the residents, explained in the local press that the space is "equal parts Love Shack and forested

pagan temple in the heart of the city,” and that some tenants had lived there for over fifteen years.⁴⁶ The “earthy” aesthetics of its domestic interior, with a mantle-piece filled with pottery, living room furniture surrounded by potted plants, rugs covering the floor, and soft lighting, were the antithesis of the institutional modernism of new and renovated buildings in the Castro. The apartment unit, which was located above The Sausage Factory, a popular old-time Italian restaurant on Castro Street, was rent-controlled. This meant that the owner could only increase the rent in low annual increments that kept it affordable for the tenants, some of whom worked in hospitality in addition to performing in drag shows in the city. Rent affordability enabled them to maintain a pluralist queer culture in the heart of a gentrifying neighborhood.⁴⁷

When Grand Central tenants learned that the impending sale of the building could lead to their eviction, they organized to create a plan for action. After consulting with tenant rights groups, they decided to establish a CLT, which would allow them to buy the building (provided the nonprofit organization they formed could qualify for a loan) and hold it in trust for future queer tenants. CLTs are a rare form of collective land ownership in the United States, mainly used in rural areas. The economic crisis that followed the bursting of the housing bubble between 2006 and 2012 began to popularize this model in cities in the United States and the United Kingdom.⁴⁸ An urban CLT successfully had been operating in San Francisco’s Chinatown already since 2000, and another in Oakland was established in 2009.⁴⁹ A group of Grand Central tenants sought assistance from the more established San Francisco CLT in their bid for building ownership. They set up an advisory board that included notable housing activists and advocates and created an online petition for individual donations, while also pursuing larger government grants.⁵⁰

Since the CLT model’s emergence in the late 1960s, it has been applied and theorized primarily as a mechanism to achieve affordable housing. A CLT typically purchases property through a variety of financing structures, which have recently included municipal and state grants, and holds it in trust for perpetuity. The model effectively separates land ownership from the land’s uses.⁵¹ The property may include buildings, but that is not a requirement for CLT establishment. The purchase effectively takes the land off the real estate market and decisions about its development, either by the CLT itself or, more often, by third parties that are usually nonprofits, rest on a governing structure.

CLT governance must include members of the organization, residents, if the land includes housing, and representatives from the community.⁵² This final provision can be the source of conflicts because the definition of community is rarely formalized among the groups and individuals who live in CLT properties. As the authors of a 1972 guide to “a new model for land tenure in America” put it, community generally refers to people who have or may have a stake in the entity in the future as residents or active supporters of the trust.⁵³ As a result of this loose definition that

anticipates future stakes, CLTs are sometimes controlled by professionalized boards that take the role of affordable housing developers with only tangential relationships to the people who live in the properties that the boards manage.⁵⁴

Still, CLTs include crucial provisions that prohibit rent increases beyond a pre-determined nominal percentage. It is common, moreover, for CLTs to purchase foreclosed properties to return them to local communities at affordable rates, as the one in Oakland routinely did in the 2010s. These practices institute a type of rent control that meets one of the ownership model's core goals of achieving inter-generational justice. The radical potential of CLTs to change capitalist relationships of property ownership to a form of postcapitalist commons requires changes in the way individual and collective responsibilities are distributed and performed, for example regarding the allocation of funds and maintenance. For collectively run properties, whether residences, businesses, cultural spaces, or community gardens, day-to-day operations become the real test for enacting alternative social structures. Their longevity depends on the material and emotional attachments that participants develop with the physical environment and each other because those attachments sustain the hard work of following through with long-term goals in spite of any group conflicts and institutional setbacks.⁵⁵ The queer CLT that was established in response to the threat of Grand Central's displacement sought to employ the model in the context of an existing tight-knit social group with a shared culture. According to its founders, it was better positioned than ad hoc housing coalitions to succeed. Although eventually the building housing Grand Central was purchased by a member of the former owner's family in 2018 and rent control remained in place, the idea of a queer CLT had already inspired a new way of understanding queer land ownership, and at that time the collective shifted its focus to creating a decentralized CLT network of queer urban spaces.⁵⁶

LIBERATING OURSELVES LOCALLY

A collective in Oakland followed a path similar to that of the Grand Central tenants when they faced eviction the same year due to the sale of the building where they lived, worked, and socialized. The building was located on Twenty-Third Avenue, in an immigrant neighborhood, and provided affordable housing for over twenty-five residents, many of whom were transgender and queer people of color. The Oakland collective, like the Radical Faeries and Gay Shame members before them, highlighted intentionality as an operative term, in their social media posts and in private communications, to explain their claims to physical space and how they built a queer culture around it. Intentionality is expressed as a combination of several factors. Politically and philosophically, collective members had to define the meaning of equality vis-à-vis property ownership claims. Culturally, they had to situate queer and transgender embodiments within existing cultures in the neighborhood where they were located. And finally, they had to grapple with

queer futurity—how queer social structures defy heterosexual society’s notion of reproductive time—in how they conceptualized intergenerational justice.⁵⁷

The two-story building where the collective operates, with commercial spaces on the ground floor and apartments on the first, is a few hundred feet north of the Nimitz freeway that traverses East Oakland, and near an elevated Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) rail track. The nearest BART station is Fruitvale, about a twenty-minute walk. Fruitvale was the center of the Bay Area Chicana movement in the 1960s and 1970s and its population is predominantly Latinx. That has been changing in the wake of the rapid gentrification of East Oakland since 2010.⁵⁸ The neighborhood where the building is located is host to a long-standing dynamic community organization, the EastSide Arts Alliance, which has helped give voice to disenfranchised Latinx, Indigenous, and black cultural producers and has fostered a sense of community among them since it was founded in 1999. Located on International Boulevard, EastSide Arts Alliance had a bookshop and cultural center with a small black-box theater that hosted performances, poetry readings, and dance events. It also supported a vibrant muralist art scene. Eastside also spearheaded youth arts programs including innovative efforts to achieve restorative justice through the arts, highlighting street art and Native American rituals as legitimate forms of public cultural expression.

Thanks to EastSide, the intersection of Twenty-Third Avenue and International Boulevard was already a neighborhood epicenter for radical cultural activities when a group of artists and activists who comprised Peacock Rebellion, an art collective, began to use space on the ground floor of the Twenty-Third Avenue building—just a few steps from EastSide’s headquarters—for their meetings and rehearsals after its founding in fall 2012. Peacock Rebellion considered performance a social justice tool, and its members described themselves as “a queer and trans people of color crew of artist-activist-healers.”⁵⁹ One of the art collective’s founding members was Samm, who had come to the Bay Area for graduate school in the early 2010s after a brief period working in Washington, DC, as a community organizer. They were attracted by the Bay Area’s political legacies and diverse queer cultures and intended to learn from activist experience and eventually transfer this knowledge to other parts of the country. But Samm realized that they were more effective with a microphone on stage than a megaphone in the streets. As a performer they “drew knowledge and inspiration from sixteen generations of storytellers” before them.⁶⁰ On Twenty-Third Avenue, they found an existing cultural and physical infrastructure that provided the appropriate stage for their work.

Practicing healing justice through performance and the visual arts is a key component of both Peacock Rebellion’s and EastSide Arts Alliance’s work. Healing justice refers to a set of principles for empowering people of color, disabled people, and survivors of physical and psychological trauma to seek appropriate ways to care for themselves and each other. For Peacock Rebellion, healing justice refers primarily to listening and prioritizing knowledge that comes from the interactions

of nonnormative bodies with the environment. This form of embodied knowledge describes physical bodies as intersection points between identity discourse and actions that take place in the physical environment.⁶¹ The healing justice process acknowledges the wisdom of practices by disabled and chronically ill individuals and groups, who reject normative healthcare models based on what they characterize as a mantra of “cure or be useless.”⁶² In this sense they re-signify disability as an opening to think about habitation differently, as a process of invention rather than a set of accommodations.

Peacock Rebellion established a board of elders composed of longtime activists in queer cultural resistance and the anti-eviction movement who helped the collective define its principles and guided their work. Board members also helped Peacock Rebellion navigate the complex world of funding sources and Bay Area nonprofits. This knowledge was vital for the collective to continue its work, as its members were keenly aware of the organizational hurdles and red tape they faced in their efforts to maintain flexible, grassroots-oriented programming.⁶³ To that end, they developed—among other initiatives—monthly listening circles for East Oakland residents to participate in what they called “rapid feedback loops.” Attendees gathered in Peacock Rebellion’s rehearsal space in the Twenty-Third Avenue building to engage in unstructured conversations on subjects of locals’ concern. During these events, collective members listened to the needs of neighborhood residents and empowered them to drive the kinds of initiatives the collective would work on. The events functioned as grassroots fora for recognizing queer of color experiences that had eluded larger organizations. For example, they provided opportunities for transgender femmes of color in East Oakland to talk about their needs and experiences, which were often misrecognized by other transgender and queer people elsewhere.⁶⁴

Besides Peacock Rebellion, the Twenty-Third Avenue building housed two other nonprofit organizations, a martial arts studio, and the residents of eight three-bedroom residential units. The Bikery, which occupied one of the storefronts, was a shop for bicycle repairs affiliated with Cycles of Change, a nonprofit organization that had been doing bike safety education events across Alameda County (which spans from Berkeley to Fremont in the East Bay) for over twenty years. Cycles of Change and the Bikery served and empowered disenfranchised youth in the area by providing them with means of transportation. Sustaining Ourselves Locally (SOL) was another group that occupied a storefront in the building since 2013. SOL was founded by Twenty-Third Avenue residents in 2003 to turn the back lot into “a full production organic garden, orchard, and space for building community.”⁶⁵ In 2018 it formally incorporated as a nonprofit, a process spearheaded by “queer and femme artists holding space for black creativity, sustainability, joy, grief, and imagination,” as they described it, with the mission to share sustainable practices and promote “social justice through education and community building.”⁶⁶ The group envisioned Oakland “as a hub for radical reparations,” its politics

of black liberation thus complementing Peacock Rebellion's vision for queer and trans emancipation.

Maven, who identifies as a gender nonconforming person with Indigenous Hawaiian roots, explains that when they discovered the Twenty-Third Avenue building by word of mouth upon arrival in the Bay Area in the 2000s, it gave them not only a place to stay but also the opportunity to "work with the land."⁶⁷ Maven found a group of like-minded queer people of color in the building and immersed themselves in political activism. In 2013 they joined other housemates in antiracist direct actions. That was when the Black Lives Matter movement was gaining national attention, as the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter in social media ignited widespread anger about the lack of accountability for the killing of seventeen-year-old black teenager Trayvon Martin in 2012 by George Zimmerman, who was acquitted in July 2023.⁶⁸ Black Lives Matter started as a spontaneous reaction to pent-up anger from systematic antiblack institutional violence, but as a movement it was guided by three Bay Area-based black queer women, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, who created the digital and institutional infrastructure for collective actions based on their knowledge from long-term community organizing for social justice. As protests took place in cities throughout the United States, in Oakland, their home base, thousands of activists including Maven and other Twenty-Third Avenue tenants occupied freeways and sought to disrupt business as usual as much as they could. The intensity of political activism in Oakland in 2013 and in 2014, when antiblack police brutality was at center of public protests following the death of Eric Garner, a black man, in the hands of policemen in New York City, offered a sense of hope and the promise for a broader "coalition of the dispossessed" based on insights from black liberationist struggles. However, different groups experienced the material conditions of oppression, which include housing scarcity, rising rents, work discrimination, and police brutality, differently. As a result, frictions developed along the line of identity politics, divergent goals, and activist tactics.

Mobility constraints were important factors in how disenfranchisement operated in the San Francisco Bay Area. As evictions in Oakland and around the Bay remained rampant, homelessness increased, especially for those who did not have the means or opportunities to move either within or outside the Bay Area.⁶⁹ Resisting dispossession included urgent pleas for material and moral support for homeless encampments and other actions that included takeovers of physical spaces in Oakland. Maven explained that the trauma induced by a police arrest for their political activity prompted them "to get creative" about how they fought, and to cultivate a closer relationship to the land by tending the garden, both as therapeutic and political action.⁷⁰

Maven turned their attention to the Bikery, helped people at a nearby homeless encampment, and volunteered in the garden that SOL maintained in the rear lot of the Twenty-Third Avenue building. With mature trees lining the perimeter,

SOL had been maintaining an edible garden and a chicken coop, installed a small playground, and managed neighborhood after-school programs for sixteen years before Maven arrived. Urban agriculture was especially meaningful to Maven because it established a different temporality from street protests. What's more, the intergenerational transfer of environmental resources and knowledge was central to what they described as a "queer family." They explained that a sense of intergenerational kinship anchored their subsequent housing activism in the physical environment: "The people who started SOL had this grand garden idea; they did soil testing to make sure which areas are appropriate for growing food. I think there is a way that this place has held a lot of dreams and now we are seeing a lot of the fruits, literally, of other people's dreams."⁷¹ This sentiment is echoed in the claims that other queer groups have made regarding their right to remain in the places where intergenerational kinship networks were formed. Radical Faeries living at Grand Central, for example, also grounded their right to the space in precisely those terms.

In January 2017 Twenty-Third Avenue building tenants received a letter from the building owner, who announced her intention to sell the building. She was sympathetic to the causes spearheaded by the organizations housed there (her daughter had lived in the building for a short period in the past) and gave the tenants "first right of refusal," effectively encouraging them to buy the building.⁷² "First right of refusal" gives tenants the right to purchase the property where they live at the estimated market value before it enters the real estate market. Although not required in Oakland by law, other American cities such as Washington, DC, have included this tenancy protection right in local housing legislation.⁷³ In the Bay Area the absence of "first right of refusal" along with weakening of rent control provisions has contributed to the acceleration of gentrification, as properties that enter the market go to the highest bidders, who are often corporate real estate firms without local ties and operate on a bottom line to maximize company profit.⁷⁴ Maven and Samm explained that after the shock of receiving the news, the fear of displacement that was all too familiar to collectives and nonprofits in the Bay Area propelled them to organize a group of tenants to take immediate action.⁷⁵

If the tenant collective could come up with a down payment of \$75,000 (part of the \$1.5 million asking price) by May of that year, they would secure rights to the property.⁷⁶ At that time they did not have a collective decision-making body, but synergies had developed over the years with local nonprofit organizations, Peacock Rebellion's cultural activism, and EastSide Arts Alliance's outreach to local institutions, among others. The tenant collective was immediately set up an online call to solicit individual donations for a crowdfunding campaign to "liberate the 23rd Avenue building" from the real estate market, as they put it. Simultaneously, they searched for institutional partners from the world of housing nonprofits to help them better understand what collective ownership would entail. Within a few months, the crowdfunding campaign raised more than enough money for the

down payment, thanks to over six hundred individual donors.⁷⁷ Even the organizers were surprised by their success. They realized within a few weeks that collective ownership of the building was not a far-flung possibility but rather an imminent reality that they had the responsibility to manage as best they could. A member of the tenant collective, reflecting on the small donors' response, speculated that the particular moment when the call to liberate the Twenty-Third Avenue building went out was especially meaningful because it offered a concrete way to fight gentrification that was both symbolic and a potential model for future actions.⁷⁸

The campaign's symbolism was augmented by the ongoing discussion about the loss of Oakland's underground art scene, especially after a fire at Ghost Ship, an artist-run warehouse, killed thirty-six people in December 2016. This prompted a reckoning with the lack of appropriate affordable buildings for experimental cultural events, artists' housing, and workspaces. The causes of the Ghost Ship tragedy were the subject of a protracted legal battle that brought to the fore potentially criminal negligence during Fire Department inspections that failed to report dangerous architectural additions to the building.⁷⁹ Though reports about the causes took years to complete, the tragedy precipitated evictions from collectively run artist spaces all around the Bay Area.⁸⁰ The displacement and victimization of artists echoed the victimization of black residents and Chicanos and the erasure of neighborhood cultures that had marked Oakland's postwar history and had given rise to important grassroots political movements.⁸¹ The spatial politics of dispossession, again unfolding at a rapid pace, created an opening for the implementation of a reformist agenda. "I think our community desperately needed a win," an organizer, Eri Oura, explained.⁸² The key attribute of what bonded together the community, broadly construed, that Oura referenced is a shared queer culture, even if the particular paths to action were up for debate.

As they were fundraising, the group of tenant organizers also consulted several Bay Area housing justice nonprofits and eventually partnered with Oakland CLT, which had the resources and legal expertise to coordinate the process of buying the property. Oakland CLT had been established amid the foreclosure crisis in 2009 to buy single-family homes and help low-income residents to effectively buy them back with ninety-nine-year leases at prices that were significantly below market rate. (After the economic boom that followed the crisis, property prices in Oakland rose dramatically.)⁸³ Part of Oakland CLT's mission was to educate homeowners about sustainable financing and property management.⁸⁴ When the Twenty-Third Avenue building collective approached Oakland CLT, its board realized that the sense of intentional community, defined as a shift from individual to collective interest through sharing a common culture, which they sought to instigate in other Oakland sites, already underlay their efforts.⁸⁵ Oakland CLT enthusiastically backed the project and combined a loan from the Northern California Community Loan Fund, municipal assistance in the form of a grant, and money from the aforementioned crowdfunding campaign to buy the building.

The “Liberated 23rd Avenue Building,” as it was listed when the property title was transferred to Oakland CLT in November 2017, was the first multi-unit property that the trust purchased.⁸⁶ Managing the storefronts was outside the scope of the trust’s activities at the time, but the fact that three of them housed long-standing nonprofits with ties to the neighborhood demonstrated to CLT representatives and outside lenders that tenants had already established forms of deliberation to make collective decisions. According to Oakland CLT’s executive director, the collectively run spaces aligned with the organization’s goal to lay the foundations of a systematic transfer of tenancy rights to those most in danger of displacement as East Oakland was gentrifying.⁸⁷ Moreover, developing an intentional model for queer and transgender people of color to create and own their spaces would help reverse the narrative that, as a building collective member put it, in affordable housing work, communities of color only get to be clients or consumers instead of service providers. After the purchase, Oakland CLT and the tenant collective began the difficult process of deciding how to manage the residences, storefronts, and garden.

The slow process of establishing two cooperatives to run the building, one for the residents and another for the ground-floor commercial spaces, with administrative support from Oakland CLT, brought to the surface many unanticipated challenges. The building needed a costly structural retrofit. Applying for government grants required a considerable amount of work by tenant-volunteers, who also had to undertake regular maintenance and garden upkeep. In the summer of 2019, the small greenhouse in the rear lot, for example, was not in use, partly due to a disagreement between tenants and nonresident SOL members about how to manage the garden. Nevertheless, Maven stressed the importance of celebrating small victories, such as a completion of a wheelchair-accessible bathroom in the garden that they built with assistance from a community fundraiser.⁸⁸ In the context of transformative queer politics, these types of partial but complementary projects reveal the tools and labor required to sustain everyday acts of cultural resistance. The spatial tactics of the groups housed at Twenty-Third Avenue, as they relate to their members’ cultural bonds and insurgent politics, demonstrate how forms of queer territorialization can resist pressures to “assimilate or perish” that characterize cultural gentrification in US cities during the last twenty years.⁸⁹

SAFE SPACE

After the ownership transfer in 2017, Peacock Rebellion changed the name of their space on the ground floor of the Liberated 23rd Avenue Building to Liberating Ourselves Locally (LOL). It houses a maker space, a lending library, and it operates as a community center. LOL offers computers for building tenants and neighborhood residents, rents out DJ equipment, and offers an industrial sewing machine and two 3D printers for community members’ projects. Samm, who participates

in the collective that is responsible for LOL programming, highlights the centrality of enacting queer and transgender alliances in physical space through “making objects” that prefigure the members’ shared culture.⁹⁰ According to its description in social media, LOL is “a social justice-focused maker space led by a crew of hackers, healers, artists, and activists who are queer and trans people of color.”⁹¹ Their mission is to provide tools “for self-determination and community power” by “working on projects they love.”

In 2019 LOL organized monthly “maker days,” which offered workshops on sewing, printmaking, and other creative activities. These events also had what their organizers called a “radical tech” component. People employed in technology companies in the Bay Area went in to teach coding and apply their skills toward activist projects. According to Samm, they were people who did not want “to lose their soul in big tech.”⁹² The projects they undertook at LOL ranged from building technological capacity for social justice organizations, such as dedicated digital applications and websites, to art installations. In one of the workshops, participants learned to mount LED lights on placards that they could use during evening protests. Self-proclaimed “movement technologists” are part of a broader social movement whose mission is to use technology as a tool of liberation, especially for women and people of color.⁹³ In this sense, “movement technologists” in the Bay Area operate under the radar of Silicon Valley technology companies that dominate the local economy (and whose global influence certainly extends far beyond the region). They create digital spaces of dissent manifested in the physical environment through activist-run spaces such as LOL.

Another LOL event in 2019 was described as “a rapid-response slow-down day.”⁹⁴ Its objectives included making “a QTPOC [queer and trans people of color] rapid response health and wellness resource guide” that members of the community could use to navigate the landscape of nonprofit and governmental services. They gathered information about support services for healthcare, food insecurity, and legal representation. The event also sought to create a separate housing resource guide and participate in more practical tasks such as sewing curtains and tending to plants. Another activity planned for that day was to set up a studio to record podcasts. Participants who did not want to partake in any of these activities and faced a lot of stress in their everyday lives were still invited to “ask a Peacock to lead a guided meditation.” The breadth of activities planned reveals that the “rapid-response slow-down” event was primarily intended as an opportunity for queer and transgender people of color to share a physical space and build cultural affinity with each other.

The way the event organizers created an inclusive environment for each individual participant provides a glimpse into how the collective conceptualizes accessibility and safety. There was no economic barrier to participate as the event was free and Peacock Rebellion provided all the supplies required for the activities. Organizers welcomed attendees to bring their children, and provided toys,

coloring books, and other opportunities for children's activities, as lack of affordable childcare poses another barrier to participants with children who often feel marginalized even within community-oriented events. Moreover, the organizers emphasized that the LOL space was accessible to wheelchair and scooter users. A member of a designated safety team was stationed at the front door during the event to help wheelchair users enter, which was a thoughtful workaround due to the lack of a pushbutton to open the door automatically. To break barriers of entry for immunocompromised event participants, organizers ran air purifiers and asked attendees to arrive without wearing any fragrances. They emphasized that the paint, floors, and cleaning products that they used were fragrance-free and did not emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs), known endocrine-disrupting chemicals. This practice called attention to how environmental degradation creates inequalities directly affecting human bodies and offered a concrete example of practicing environmental justice. Finally, the organizers offered a separate room for those who needed a quieter, lower-stimulant environment, recognizing the different ways that individuals experience social interaction and the need for practical strategies to address potential trauma that is prevalent among queer and transgender people of color who are exposed to physical and psychological violence in their everyday lives.

Regarding LOL event attendees in 2019, Samm explained that although some programming was open to everyone, the collective specifically wanted to create a space centered around the needs of transgender femmes of color. According to Samm, during events that were open to everyone before then, "white folks often disrupted the space, taking up attention."⁹⁵ Non-queer-of-color identified participants sometimes also performed microaggressions, often due to ignorance of the appropriate code of conduct among people who have experienced trauma. Interestingly, the 3D printers that LOL offered free of charge and were expensive to rent elsewhere were often the object of conflicts, because they were particularly popular among some nonqueer visitors to the space, who vied for their use for their own projects. Creating community rules for sharing the space, which developed through its use, was an essential component of fostering psychological safety by shaping the space's distinctly queer public.

The large clear glass windows on the Twenty-Third Avenue façade ensure that activities inside the space are visible to passersby. LOL uses the windows to display the outcomes of "maker" events that represent the kinds of socially engaged art that people make there. In 2018 and 2019 much of this work centered around immigrant rights advocacy and transgender liberation. Although symbolizing the kinds of coalitions that the collective seeks to build in the neighborhood, which makes the LOL space itself a public manifestation of a defiant culture of dissent in a gentrifying environment, the collective's unambiguous politics that are on display at the windows can make its members targets of hate crimes. A collective member



FIGURE 19. *Culture Is a Weapon* mural on the south wall of the Liberated 23rd Avenue building in June 2023. Photograph by Lori Eanes. © Lori Eanes & Stathis G. Yeros.

interviewed for a local magazine described an encounter with an intruder in 2017. The intruder, who was walking on Twenty-Third Avenue, walked inside LOL's open front door to threaten the collective member, holding a sharp object against their neck.⁹⁶ They were able to talk the intruder out of harming them and he eventually left the space, but following the attack the collective formed safety teams to secure activities in the building. The procedural aspects of securing the space became a meaningful performance of collaboration and neighborhood solidarity.

The public visibility of cultural dissent to gentrification in the neighborhood is part of how the building functions as a creative artistic hub. A mural painted by a team of artists associated with EastSide Arts Alliance covers its southwest façade (fig. 19). At its center, a clenched fist breaks out of a stylized flower, flanked by six sections differentiated by color, that bleed into each other. The top section, which is also the most prominent when viewed from afar, contains the title "Culture is a Weapon," written with square letters that take up about a third of the mural's length. Their shadows are painted on the wall, giving them volume, visually, and symbolically adding weight to the phrase. On either side of the text, the portraits of two activists, a black male and a Native American female, complete the top section.

The other five sections depict different elements of Oakland's black, Asian, Latinx, and Indigenous cultural and political communities. From top right, these include the Black Panthers, traditional representations of Asian warriors, Indigenous ritual performances honoring the land, a jazz musician, female agricultural

workers, a filmmaker, a biker carrying a boombox, and finally, two portraits of Indigenous people, one of them in what looks like royal garb, in front of what appears to be Mesoamerican architecture. The Black Panther section, which includes three figures with clenched fists in the style of Emory Douglas's art, and a panther's silhouette that appears to leap out of the wall's surface, contains the only other prominent text besides the title: "ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE."

The mural was the product of a collective design and painting process organized by EastSide Arts Alliance in 2014. Rosa, one of the muralists, explained that the artists' goal was to represent the unity of marginalized and dispossessed communities in the San Francisco Bay Area.⁹⁷ The muralists shared sketches with each other that helped them make collective decisions about the different iconographic elements to be included and arranged them in themes. Each color represented a different theme. The themes included "knowledge of the self," which examined how different cultures were represented on the mural; "roots," which established continuity among cultures of political dissent in the Bay Area; and "weapons," which pointed to the tools of dissent that included protests, labor organizing, media, and music, among others.

For Rosa, self-empowerment through art was not only symbolic. Her biographical information reveals how investment by nonprofit organizations in communities can shape the forms that struggles for social justice can take. As a young woman growing up in the Bay Area, Rosa came to muralism after being arrested by the police and charged with "tagging," which led her to complete mandatory community service at EastSide Arts Alliance. There, she gained both technical knowledge in painting and learned about the political history of California's Chicano muralist movement. While continuing to paint, she also teaches graffiti and mural arts at a local youth center. As Rosa pointed out, graffiti is a way for people, especially disenfranchised young people, to "find a common vision for the stories they want to tell."⁹⁸ In this sense, communicating through graffiti is both a dialogic process and an aesthetic language. This is similar to how LOL's maker space was conceived as a laboratory of ideas for a queer future.

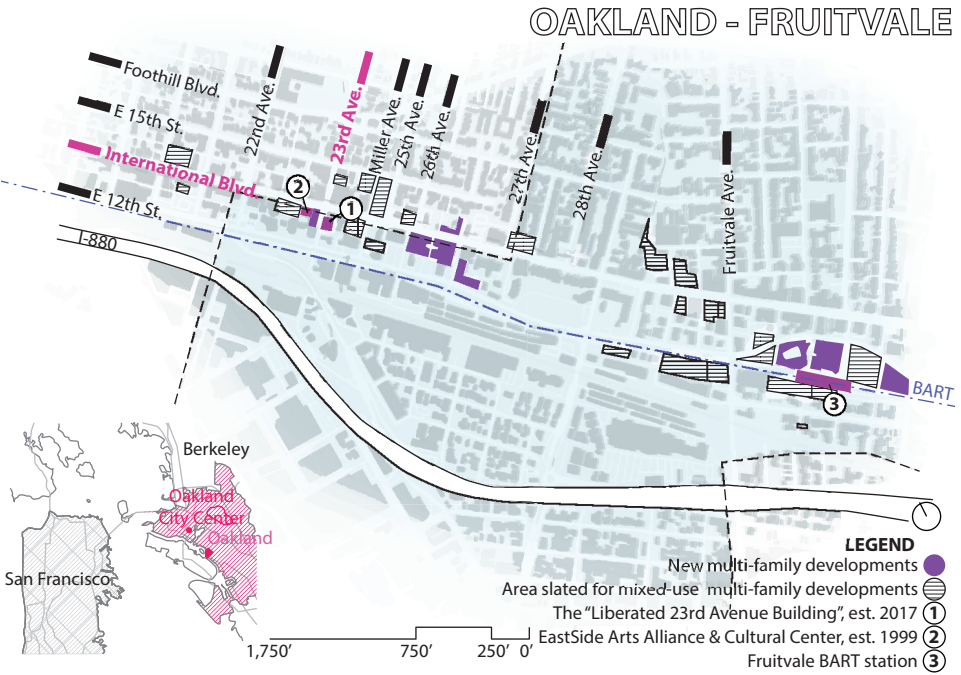
Grffiti and muralism can also be tools to achieve restorative justice, an approach to conflict resolution that seeks to bring opposing sides of a dispute in dialogue with each other. EastSide Arts Alliance spearheaded restorative justice as a form of cultural activism. During the two decades of its presence in the neighborhood, EastSide reached out to victimized young people, local business owners, and victims of police violence to engage them in the creative process. The organization's programs continue San Francisco Bay's legacy of political muralism with strong roots in East Oakland and San Francisco's Mission.⁹⁹ It is important to highlight that through these murals, new ideas, subjectivities, and political figures are incorporated into the historical fold of American liberation movements by borrowing elements from the visual language, techniques, and references of

previous generations of artists, thereby establishing the intergenerational transfer of knowledge that is at the core of the queer sociocultural quests described in this chapter so far.¹⁰⁰

Culture is a Weapon did not directly include queer and transgender-of-color iconography that could have been achieved, for example, by depicting a local figure that represents these groups. According to Rosa, the iconographic references were chosen by a group of nonresident artists. Nevertheless, the colors of the mural's six sections—red, yellow, blue, orange, green, and purple—are those of the pride flag ribbons designed by Gilbert Baker that has become a global symbol of the contemporary gay rights movement.¹⁰¹ In Rosa's account the colors of the six sections also symbolized two-spirit gender variance, referencing the traditional third-gender ceremonial role of people in Pan-American and Indigenous cultures.¹⁰² Rosa's reference to two-spirit gender to explain decisions about color choices (though it is not entirely clear how the colors chosen represent two-spirit cultural identity other than the association with the Pride flag) indicates that conversations among the artists during the mural's creation considered the representation of queerness and transness on the mural through the lens of indigeneity rather than as distinct identity categories. Indeed, indigenous Pan-American cultures are represented in more than one section of the mural. Viewed from the BART trains approaching or departing Fruitvale station, the mural's references to Oakland's radical political legacies and to queer culture through the color scheme are immediately recognizable.

In that sense the mural announces the neighborhood's cultural identity and anchors Liberated 23rd as a differential space within East Oakland's changing urban landscape, the term used by Henri Lefebvre to denote rifts in abstract space (which refers to space as it is construed and visualized by planners in capitalist societies).¹⁰³ These rifts disrupt the totalizing logic of abstract space and allow for the emergence of alternative ways of producing antihegemonic social spaces through everyday interactions. Representations of countercultural embodiment on the mural in addition to everyday uses of the physical environment in and around the building highlight how neighborhood organizations are able to create a rift in the abstract space of neighborhood planning.

Conceptualized as differential space, queering and transing processes in the context of contemporary urbanism demonstrate how people who share a common culture can employ their labor to shape the formal attributes of their spaces. These formal attributes, which include collective ownership and the visual aesthetics of queer-and-transness, develop in response to the local urban environment's material, symbolic, and aesthetic conditions. The transformation of the area bounded by Fifteenth Street, International Boulevard, Twenty-Ninth Street, and the Nimitz freeway (map 4) demonstrates the gradual encroachment of gentrification aesthetics in the area where the Liberated 23rd Avenue Building is located. This aesthetics



MAP 4. Map of East Oakland showing the location of the Liberated 23rd Avenue building in Fruitvale. The building’s surroundings are rapidly being transformed by multifamily housing.
 © Gabriel Gonzalez & Stathis G. Yeros.

is marked by the design of new residential buildings that are transforming the neighborhood. These buildings have similar massing, which is determined primarily by building code, and their exterior elevations use similar uniform colors and materials.

A brand new eight-story residential building with affordable units managed by a Bay Area housing nonprofit on Twenty-Third Avenue provides a striking contrast to the mural-clad Twenty-Third Avenue building across the street. The brown panels that cover its exterior, and the heavy, uniform windows with matching vents, are manufactured by the same companies that provide cost-effective cladding solutions replicated by architecture firms all around the San Francisco Bay and lend their aesthetics to the new housing landscape of mid-rise conformity. Similar four-to-eight-story buildings all the way to Fruitvale BART station have laid the foundations for building what can be described as a continuous housing wall along the elevated train tracks and the Nimitz freeway, symbolically fencing the neighborhood in. In 2019 the city installed a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line

along International Boulevard that can shuttle residents faster and more efficiently to BART and the downtown entertainment district. Historical patterns and current data indicate that these changes are signs of accelerating gentrification, if no further protections for existing tenants and homeowners are implemented.

The remaining sections of the area's dense low-rise residential landscape represent the particularities and cultural specificity of everyday life in the Bay's ethnic neighborhoods.¹⁰⁴ The confluence of cultures, ethnic, and racial differences were still visible in 2019 in the aesthetic landscape of International Boulevard, which was lined with commercial spaces catering to Latinx and Asian American residents. Many storefronts retained their signs in Spanish and Chinese. The cultural influence of EastSide Arts Alliance was visible in the murals painted on street façades. For Santiago, the coordinator of EastSide Arts Alliance's Visual Elements apprenticeship program, muralism conveys that the neighborhood "is not dead."¹⁰⁵ Santiago considered the murals as a form of speech that allowed residents to assert their presence and claim their right to stay in the neighborhood. But south of International Boulevard, the new multi-unit residential buildings that stand out from their surroundings for their uniformity already replaced old warehouses, discount retailers, auto-body, and construction supplies stores that marked the edge of the neighborhood on the side of the freeway.

These changes are driven in part by planning policy. The International Boulevard corridor was one of two Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas identified in Oakland's 2015–2020 Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development as investment areas where the city, through grants from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and public-private partnerships, aimed to improve transportation, "remove blight," and change zoning laws to stimulate new housing.¹⁰⁶ The Consolidated Plan included some language that acknowledged concerns for the displacement of existing residents, but it did not include any concrete plan to stop it.¹⁰⁷ The plan explicitly did seek to address housing scarcity in Oakland, arguing that the densification of the International Boulevard corridor, investments in public transit, and other urban services to existing residents could spark new economic activity. Provisions for affordable housing units within the plan were also codified into building policies for housing developers. As of 2020, Oakland had made some inroads into the construction of new low-income housing by adding approximately 190 new units since 2015.¹⁰⁸ Municipal programs also helped low- and moderate-income residents stay in their homes by receiving financial support for emergency hardships. Municipal efforts to address homelessness and housing precarity continue with HUD's support.¹⁰⁹

Recent evidence, however, shows that affordable housing requirements do not always succeed in keeping old residents in the neighborhood.¹¹⁰ Existing low-income residents often do not have access to new affordable units due to the way tenancies are allocated via lottery. This destabilizes social and cultural bonds

among longtime residents. And sociocultural destabilization along the International Boulevard corridor was already evident in the decrease of black and Latinx residents by 66 and 51 percent, respectively, during the thirty-year period between 1980 and 2010, and the concomitant increase of the white population.¹¹¹

In 2019 the Twenty-Third Avenue building's southwest façade, where *Culture is a Weapon* was painted, bordered a lot occupied by an abandoned gas station. Seen from the BART train, the front lot created a visual opening that framed the mural. But that view was contingent upon future development plans. As the neighborhood changes, the new buildings register how cultural gentrification shapes the urban environment and muffles, when it does not altogether erase, the political messages embedded in it. Maven, the Twenty-Third Avenue tenant-organizer, gave a concrete example of how "gentrification of the mind" operates in the neighborhood. In 2018 the board of EastSide Arts Alliance asked Maven to advocate for the needs of residents to a local council member. When Maven explained the residents' priorities regarding the council's plans to renovate International Boulevard, they recall being confronted with the question, "Is this how you want your neighborhood to look?"¹¹² Maven's interlocutor, a council member's representative, was referring to the older buildings at the intersection of International Boulevard and Twenty-Third Avenue, which represented the colorful, heterogeneous character of the ethnic neighborhood. The offhanded denigration of the neighborhood's cultural aesthetics took Maven by surprise. They realized that in their new role as a tenant-organizer with the Liberated 23rd Avenue collective, they were placed in the middle of what they described as a broader "push and pull" between institutional stakeholders and had to defend the intersectional queer culture that they had built in the neighborhood and its aesthetic manifestations.

Self-determination based on shared cultures demonstrates how the queer and transgender groups and individuals who populate the spaces discussed in this chapter spatialized claims to the right to housing and urban life. The formal attributes of these cultures were articulated through processes that have historically included Radical Faerie spiritual explorations, communal living, collective ownership, and carving out maker spaces in gentrifying neighborhoods. These spaces are neither outright separatist nor aim to assimilate within mainstream entertainment and urban planning networks. Like other case studies in this book, they exist in an in-between state in more ways than one. A common characteristic among their inhabitants is how they conceptualize sexuality and gender identity as fields of possibility expressed in particular sets of practices. A generational difference that is evident in the queering and transing practices in this chapter is an explicit attempt to create alliances from below, based on housing activism, and recognizing shared vulnerabilities with victims of racist violence, segregation, and dispossession. The physical manifestations of these coalitions in the broader landscape of the San Francisco Bay expand the notion of queer citizenship explored in this

book. In this context, queer and transgender inhabitants of faerie houses and of spaces that continue to resist gentrification in East Oakland, along with their allies, mobilize their rights and responsibilities as queer citizens to develop novel forms of land tenure that fight dispossession and cultural erasure. The study of these spaces highlights a set of insurgent practices, legal frameworks, and forms of cultural production that animate current debates about queer urban social life. They also constitute a history in the making that has the potential to shape the future of urbanism.

Epilogue

This book has explored the historical queering of the Bay Area's landscape to understand how this process shaped contemporary urbanism in the United States and how queering urbanism, in turn, informed insurgent rifts to later twentieth-century understandings of the national political community that queer citizens had helped create. Urbanism refers to the production of the physical environment over time through decisions in everyday life that assign symbolism and political meaning to the urban landscape. In this sense, urbanism reflects and is a product of broader cultural dynamics in American society. Queering urbanism focuses on how queer people have historically shaped this landscape by occupying, appropriating, and altering physical spaces. Queering processes are as old as cities themselves. Historically, people who did not conform to social norms about gender and sexuality carved spaces out of mainstream urbanity where they could have sex and socialize. These spaces usually operated in secrecy and under the threat of violence. Since the country's founding, homosexuality in the United States was criminalized as social malaise, and periodic sweeps of homosexual hangouts in cities coincided with political campaigns about safeguarding morality. In San Francisco, the political persecution of homosexuality persisted well into the twentieth century. Yet in the last sixty years, the queering of the city has been publicly celebrated.

Queer cultures and LGBTQ+ politics in the Bay Area have received considerable attention from political theorists, sociologists, historians, and critics. This work has demonstrated that gay, lesbian, and transgender communities organized politically to pursue their rights to open participation in urban public life. To do so, they formed coalitions with other disenfranchised groups and leveraged their local political power to establish lasting institutions that gradually became embedded within the Bay's social life. Nevertheless, in these accounts, physical space

often appears as a container for social relationships or as a passive entity shaped by the forces playing out within the political sphere. In this book, I have foregrounded how different queer groups engaged with physical space to demonstrate that queer cultures emerged from spaces with distinct aesthetic and organizational characteristics, which led to articulating specific political demands. The uses and symbolism of physical spaces reveal how queer politics are enacted in everyday life. Exploring the Bay Area's landscape of queer habitation reveals meaningful differences among queer groups with divergent political projects that are essential to understanding why queering urbanism must always seek new tactics and different ways of living in the city that unsettle earlier assumptions, never reaching a telos.

The queering processes described in this book are chiefly expressed through modes of territorialization. During the period between 1965 and 2020, queer territorialization included public space occupations, building alterations, and neighborhood transformations. For example, a group of young gay and gender nonconforming people in the Tenderloin in the late 1960s, many of whom self-identified as drag queens, built a distinct material culture around a few residential hotels, public sidewalks, and the local branch of Compton's Cafeteria, which functioned as a public living room of sorts. Within the area of a few urban blocks where the police largely confined them, they developed queer group consciousness. One of the demonstrations of this new political consciousness was a riot that broke out in August 1966 at Compton's when police attempted to expel some of the queens who defended their territory.

As the public visibility of urban gay cultures increased during the following decade, new forms of territorialization emerged. Gay men in the Castro created a distinctly gay residential neighborhood following the model of San Francisco's traditional ethnic neighborhoods. The local merchant association was instrumental in building "soft" gay power, demonstrating the economic benefits of gay presence in the city. Castro's village iconography and its insular gay culture produced the "Castro clone" as the dominant gay embodiment in the late 1970s. Clones were mustachioed, muscled gay men in jeans and tight T-shirts who were part of the open public cruising culture during that time. They were typically white, middle class, with enough time to go to the gym regularly. Many of those who did not fit this image, and especially people of color, were often refused entry to bars and clubs in the neighborhood.

Another form of queer territorialization in the 1970s developed along Folsom Street, where leather bars, gay bathhouses, and sex clubs became laboratories for new forms of sexual intimacy. This sexual landscape changed dramatically during the AIDS crisis. Still, a decentralized network of leather spaces exists today, demonstrating the reach of urban queering across time and space.¹ During the AIDS crisis, queering the city took new political meanings as gay men responded to pernicious homophobia disguised as medical concern, and the devastation of their social circles. The San Francisco AIDS Foundation, which was founded in

the early days of the crisis, was instrumental in coordinating access to individual healthcare providers, clinics, and nonprofit organizations throughout the Bay Area and transferring knowledge among them. Its activities offer an example of territorialization as infrastructure building.

The spaces that lesbian feminist groups built all around the Bay Area in the 1970s and 1980s were less geographically concentrated than gay urban life before AIDS. Feminist bookstores spearheaded by lesbian feminists who were active in the women's movement represented nodes within a network of women's spaces that included women's theater groups, art classes, and education centers, among others. Still, a small lesbian territory had formed in the Mission by the mid-1980s that, unlike the Castro in the 1970s, was characterized by an active engagement with the politics of gender, race, and ethnicity.

The most consequential forms of queer territorialization for contemporary urbanism, however, are not tethered to geographically bounded gay and lesbian neighborhoods. Queer cultures may concentrate on a single building in an immigrant neighborhood, an urban garden, or a network of parties—ephemeral queer spaces that take over existing clubs and are advertised through social media. This notion of territorialization is a spatial counterpart to nonbinary embodiment. As embodiment can entail acts of transformation, such as changing one's gender or removing binary gender markers, territorialization can call into question seemingly stable spatial constructs. Acts of transformation can denote new uses but can also refer to changing aesthetics of surfaces, for example, through murals. I discussed two murals in this book, *Maestrapeace* at the Women's Building in the Mission and *Culture is a Weapon* at the Liberated 23rd building in Oakland, which employ symbolism to visualize the worlds their inhabitants seek to create. These acts of transformation affect how people and objects interact to create meaning.²

Some of the spaces I analyzed—bathhouses, sex clubs, bookstores—were ephemeral and acquired the specific meanings their inhabitants ascribed to them only within the historical conditions I identified. Others, such as Victorian homes, plazas, and clinics, have maintained their physical presence in the Bay Area. Still, their cultural and political meanings changed because of the generational and economic shifts that have reshaped the urban landscape in the last fifty years. These spaces carry queer embodied knowledge that informs ways of inhabiting the city and articulating political demands. In the San Francisco Bay, the sedimented histories of queer habitation reveal the plurality of political projects that inform contemporary struggles for urban space.

Some queer people choose not to engage with normative institutions of the state and mainstream urbanity, such as planning commissions, diversity initiatives, and urban regeneration projects that shape and perpetuate sociocultural norms.³ In this view, oppression is dispersed within asymmetrical relationships that have historically reproduced inequality, even when government agencies, for instance, employ the language of diversity. Others used territorialization to

stake claims to physical space and occupy a seat at the table of urban decision-making. This book has contextualized both of these political attitudes toward the urban as insurgent articulations of queer citizenship. Queer citizens work with and against the nation-state to produce intelligible subjects with rights and obligations. Within the heterogeneous terrain of contemporary urbanism, demands based on queer citizenship coexist with other insurgent appropriations of space and forms of urban governance. The violent erasure of queer cultures from contemporary urbanity and the dispossession of queer, transgender, and gender nonconforming people of color from the spaces where they have created networks of support are ongoing. These conditions underline the urgency to communicate historical research findings on how queering operates to subvert mainstream urbanism in ways that inform on-the-ground activism.

. . .

On a sunny Saturday in May 2022, almost a year after completing the first draft of this book and a few days before I moved away from the Bay Area after living there for sixteen years, I biked from my home near the Castro to the National AIDS Memorial Grove in Golden Gate Park. I was there to talk to volunteers during a “workday” when they collectively maintained the ten-acre secluded park area where the Grove is located.⁴ The monthly events had taken place on and off for over thirty years. They provided opportunities for people touched by the disease to come together, maintain the landscape, and participate in a commemoration ritual. The events, which had an important community-building component, had just resumed after COVID-19 upended social life in San Francisco for almost two years, taking on additional meaning after the long period of social distancing had triggered memories of loss and loneliness.

When I arrived at the park, I followed the blue dots on Google Maps to the pin that dropped on a small meadow between the tennis courts and the California Academy of Sciences. The meadow is recessed in a shallow valley surrounded by mature trees, accessible through a carefully maintained path that traverses it on the north-south axis. The first thing I saw when I approached the tree hedge from the north was a granite boulder that marked one of the memorial’s entrances. A volunteer was cleaning an accessible map of the Grove engraved on a stone plaque near the entrance. He welcomed me and explained the day’s schedule, which had started with an early breakfast in the meadow, after which volunteers worked solo or in small groups, pruning the vegetation and maintaining the Grove’s infrastructure.

When I arrived, the day’s work was almost complete, and the “workday” volunteer who was my guide to this peculiar memorial service told me to relax and take everything in. That day, approximately 100–150 people volunteered their time to work in the Grove. They included people living with HIV, family members and friends of those who had died, LGBTQ+ activists, and younger queer people. Children ran around the meadow, contributing to the lively atmosphere. Sometime in



FIGURE 20. The Circle of Friends at the AIDS Grove–National AIDS Memorial in 2023. Names of people who died of AIDS are carved into the stone circle, where remembrance rituals take place. Photograph by the author. © Stathis G. Yeros.

the late afternoon, a bell rang to summon everyone to form a circle, hold hands, and debrief about the day's work. That was an opportunity for the volunteers to renew their commitment to maintaining the Grove collectively and to the lives memorialized there. A smaller group gathered at the Circle of Friends, an open-air gathering space that functions as the memorial's centerpiece. Hundreds of names of people who died of AIDS and their loved ones are engraved on the Circle's flagstone paving (fig. 20). There, volunteers performed an intimate ritual reading of the names of those they had lost to AIDS over the last forty years.

A small group of people affected by the disease, which included architects and landscape architects, began planning the Grove in 1987. They envisioned a space where they could process collective grief and remember the lives of those they had lost. After the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department identified a seven-and-a-half-acre section of Golden Gate Park (which later grew to ten acres), group members volunteered to design a memorial garden. The volunteers slowly combed through the overgrown vegetation, as the selected section had fallen into disuse because of budget cuts earlier in the decade. They drained the stagnant water and built paths, including an accessible entrance with a ramp. They reintroduced native plant species, making sure that there were at least a few plants in bloom every season throughout the year. Benches were placed throughout, some of which were in secluded areas for visitors who needed privacy to reflect

and remember. Over the years, family members, friends, and life partners sponsored the placement of granite stones engraved with the names of those they had lost to AIDS.⁵ In 1996 the Grove was designated as the first and only National AIDS Memorial through an initiative led by San Francisco congresswoman and later House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and signed by President Clinton. Even after the memorial designation, volunteers guided by landscape professionals continued to perform its upkeep. “Workdays” remained an important part of the commemoration practices spearheaded by the initial group of volunteers, most of whom were themselves lost to the disease.

Between 1982 and 1999 more than 18,000 people, the majority of them gay and bisexual men, died of AIDS in San Francisco.⁶ The degree of social devastation is hard to overestimate. Before effective drugs were developed in the mid-1990s, receiving an HIV diagnosis meant almost certainly an agonizing death. This added to the urgency to form new activist groups and organizations. The network of spaces that addressed the needs of people living with HIV included the dedicated inpatient area at San Francisco General Hospital, where the “San Francisco model of healthcare” was pioneered, individual clinics, hospices, homeless shelters, and other forms of housing. Their day-to-day operation required the mobilization of a large part of the city’s heterosexual population as well, and the support of elected representatives.

During the first two decades of the crisis, government inaction in the face of AIDS and the stigmatization of homosexuality sparked public protests that included marches and picketing, familiar from an earlier phase of the gay liberation movement. A new form of urban protest emerged in the mid-1980s intended to humanize gay men’s plights to cultivate empathy for their cause. These protests deliberately sidelined erotic representations of homosexuality. During the previous decade, homosexual iconography and discussions of gay sexual practices in bathhouses and public parks were visible manifestations of gay public cultures in the city. The desexualization of this landscape does not mean that gay people stopped having sex or that gay sexual practices were no longer a subject in national public discourse. Rather, by focusing on other aspects of gay social life, such as political organizing and, to a certain extent, gay domesticity, urban AIDS activism reshaped the meaning of queer citizenship in the United States.⁷

Public art about AIDS also operated through empathy at the intersection of protest and movement building. One of this period’s most well-known community artworks is the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Cleve Jones, a political activist in San Francisco who had worked for Harvey Milk in the late 1970s, conceived the Quilt in 1985 as a participatory project to memorialize the lives of people who died of AIDS and advocate for government support to fight the disease. The Quilt consists of individual fabric panels measuring three by six feet, the typical size of a human grave, stitched together in groups of eight. As the Quilt grew, the construction of panels took on a communal character. Stitching workshops took place first at the

Women's Building of the Bay Area and later in a dedicated space on Market Street. The workshops at the Women's Building, the feminist organization in the Mission spearheaded by lesbians in the late 1970s, demonstrate the broader coalitions that San Franciscans formed in the face of the medical emergency. Over the years, individual panels became more and more elaborate with embroidered images, messages, ribbons, teddy bears, and, on a few occasions, fabric pouches with the deceased person's ashes.⁸ Besides family members and friends constructing panels for their loved ones, some AIDS patients created their own panels to be included in the Quilt after their passing.

The NAMES Project, the organization that coordinated the Quilt's construction and its public showings, organized installations, usually paired with quilt-making workshops in cities all around the United States. The Quilt is perhaps best remembered today through its monumental installations on the National Mall in Washington, DC. The first occurred on October 11, 1987, when volunteers unfolded almost two thousand panels and then took turns reading the names of the people represented on the Quilt aloud. Since then, the Quilt has traveled to Washington several times and has been displayed in dozens of other cities around the country. As the focus on community outreach about awareness and prevention shifted from the urban epicenters of early activism to underserved communities, especially in the southern United States, the NAMES Project moved its headquarters to Atlanta in 2000, where the Quilt was stored for twenty years. With more than fifty thousand panels to date, the Quilt is the largest community art project in the world. As it is made primarily out of fabric, it is also a fragile artifact, requiring frequent repairs, which can be costly. In 2020 the National AIDS Memorial took over the NAMES Project and relocated the physical panels to San Francisco to perform storing, maintenance, and community outreach tasks. The remaining collection of objects associated with the project, such as cards, letters, and personal mementos, is part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. The Quilt has been fully digitized, and its panels are searchable on a dedicated website through the National AIDS Memorial.⁹

In June 2022 the Memorial organized the largest installation of the Quilt outside Washington, DC, in Golden Gate Park (fig. 21). The event provided an opportunity for friends and relatives of people whose lives are interwoven as part of the Quilt—who are not only gay and include many women, transgender/gender nonconforming, and heterosexual men who died of AIDS—to remember and celebrate them together. It was also an occasion to reflect on the project's legacy and to look into the future. During the last two decades, most of the Quilt's criticism has focused on its overreliance on empathy that can mute the radical political message of institutional reforms to address structural inequalities in accessing healthcare and other resources.¹⁰ Critics have also pointed out that it is predominantly associated with white cisgender gay men, and its memorial function has not been equally adopted in communities of color.¹¹ As political speech in the



FIGURE 21. Installation of the NAMES Project–AIDS Memorial Quilt at Golden Gate Park in June 2022. Photograph by Terry Schmitt. © Alamy.

national arena, the Quilt has achieved broad consensus about addressing AIDS as a national emergency, leading millions of people to see AIDS patients as children, parents, siblings, friends, and lovers and not just numbers in grim statistics. To do so, Quilt-makers have also tended to sanitize some of the raunchier aspects of gay erotic cultures, focusing instead on sentimental images and messaging (with some exceptions).¹²

Evidenced by the three thousand Quilt panels during the installation, the signs and symbols of the vibrant queer cultures that have shaped the Bay Area's queer landscape during the last fifty years are striking. The memorialization of individuals is part of the Quilt's power to elicit emotional responses from its viewers. Meanwhile, the memorialization of a collective queer culture demonstrates its value as a historical document. As a form of political activism, the Quilt has embedded queer lives and collective cultures within the late twentieth-century historical construction of a community of national citizens. Undoubtedly, some of the people commemorated on the Quilt, many of whom were only referenced by their first name due to the social stigmatization of homosexuality, were not United States citizens. However, they became part of the national story through the queer cultures they participated in.

The Quilt and the Grove, the National AIDS Memorial's two projects, both operate at the intersection of remembrance and advocacy. The Memorial's program of events, online resources, and fellowships address ongoing medical and

social challenges and focus on overlooked histories of the crisis. For example, a recent oral history video project highlighted the effect of AIDS among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and another focused on transgender people living with HIV. Importantly, the Memorial is also an organization with a physical site and is the steward of a physical artifact. The Grove is part of a public park with a history as a site for gay public sex and as a countercultural movement nexus due to its association with 1960s hippie gatherings. The Memorial's function adds another layer of meaning to the park as part of the city's queer urban landscape. The Memorial's physical and discursive spaces demonstrate how queer people, urban cultures, and politics have left an indelible imprint on American society, urbanism, and national citizenship.

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION: THE QUEER POLITICS OF SPACE

1. See San Francisco GLBT Historical Society Archives (SF GLBTHSA), Dennis Richards Papers, 2005–27.
2. “What Makes the Fallon Building So Important?,” undated flyer, SF GLBTHSA, Dennis Richards Papers, 2005–27.
3. Zak Szymanski, “Gay Shame Takes Newsom and the LGBT Center to Task,” *Bay Area Reporter*, February 13, 2003, SF GLBTHSA, *Bay Area Reporter* Archive.
4. Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, “Gay Shame: From Queer Autonomous Space to Direct Action Extravaganza,” in *That’s Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation*, ed. Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2004), 268–95; Szymanski, “Gay Shame Takes Newsom and the LGBT Center to Task.”
5. Joe Dignan and Rene Sanchez, “San Francisco Opens Marriage to Gay Couples,” *Washington Post*, February 13, 2004; Mark Morford, “San Francisco’s Winter of Love,” *Mother Jones*, March 1, 2004.
6. Szymanski, “Gay Shame Takes Newsom and the LGBT Center to Task.”
7. Elizabeth A. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950–1994* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 124–27.
8. The San Francisco Bay Area comprises the cities of San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Berkeley, and suburban and rural counties, such as Marin to the north. For a recent examination of the Bay Area’s political geography, see Richard Walker, *Pictures of a Gone City: Tech and the Dark Side of Prosperity in the San Francisco Bay Area* (Oakland: PM Press, 2018).
9. Recent scholarship in transgender studies has questioned the efficacy of the term queer in challenging normative constructions of gender. Susan Stryker framed this debate in “Transgender Studies: Queer Theory’s Evil Twin,” *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2004): 212–15. This book’s argument takes these critiques into account.

However, I still refer to queer identity as an umbrella term while being attuned to its historical and cultural specificity in the everyday life of cities.

10. On Michel Foucault's theorization of this logic, which he and others subsequently call "governmentality," see Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2009).

11. My argument builds on the foundational work of Lauren Berlant, Shane Phelan, and Lisa Duggan, among others: Lauren Gail Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Shane Phelan, *Sexual Strangers: Gays, Lesbians, and Dilemmas of Citizenship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

12. I am referring here primarily to the work of Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, José Muñoz, and Jack Halberstam: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006 [1990]); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Judith [Jack] Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Jack Halberstam, *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020). An important subgenre is work on the "queer and trans archive" as a discursive space rife with archival "ghosts," as Muñoz puts it, that can animate contemporary queer life. See especially Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

13. A robust and variegated debate about queer spaces in geography and urban sociology attends to this question to various degrees. For a review of representative arguments, see Natalie Oswin, "Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space," *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 1 (2008): 89–103; David Bell and Jon Binnie, "Authenticating Queer Space: Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance," *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (2004): 1807–20.

14. In architectural scholarship, see Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire* (New York: William Morrow, 1997); Joel Sanders, ed., *Stud: Architectures of Masculinity* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), and the work included in the exhibition *Queer Space* curated by Beatriz Colomina, Dennis Dollens, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Cindi Patton, Henry Urbach, and Mark Wigley at the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York in 1994. For a critical view of Betsky's conceptualization of queer space, see Dianne Chisholm, *Queer Constellations: Subcultural Space in the Wake of the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

15. I discuss the spatial politics of the Castro neighborhood in the 1970s extensively in chapters 2 and 5. On rainbow-washing, see Angela Watercutter, Justice Namaste, Emma Grey Ellis, Jason Kehe, Josie Colt, and Ahalya Srikant, "The Problem with the 'Rainbow-Washing' of LGBTQ+ Pride," *Wired*, June 21, 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/lgbtq-pride-consumerism/>.

16. Concealing the need for systemic change, sometimes literally through coats of paint, has conceptual affinities to pinkwashing. Dean Spade defines the latter as nonprofits' and

philanthropists' efforts to improve the conditions of transgender people in the military and those incarcerated in order to redeem the image of the army and the prison system as liberal institutions within multiculturalist forms of governance: Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, revised and expanded ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). Using the term here, I do not intend to create a false equivalent or dilute the radical antiwar, prison, and border abolition demands that groups and individuals have made by invoking resistance to pinkwashing.

17. Compton's Transgender District, "About the District," accessed January 5, 2021, <https://www.transgenderdistrictsf.com/about>.

18. Chapter 1 situates these demands in the history of a proto-transgender neighborhood in the Tenderloin.

19. Nuala Bishari, "Demonstrators for Trans Rights 'Say Their Names,'" *SF Weekly*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.sfweekly.com/news/demonstrators-for-trans-rights-say-their-names/>; Susan Stryker, "At the Crossroads of Turk and Taylor," *Places Journal*, October 2021, <https://placesjournal.org/article/transgender-resistance-and-prison-abolitionism-san-francisco-tenderloin/#0>.

20. The first theoretical formulation of urbanism discussed how urban ways of life bore on urban governance: Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (1938): 1–24. Since the 1970s, Henri Lefebvre's work has been foundational for scholarship on the "right to the city." For Lefebvre this right can be realized within political movements that create "differential space": space defined by contrasts and juxtapositions of social practices rather than spatial and temporal separation. See Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. Robert Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Mark Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and Its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant," *GeoJournal* 58, no. 2/3 (2002): 99–108.

21. As scholars engaging with Lefebvre's work have demonstrated, affluent and governing classes have been more successful in securing rights to the city than insurgent movements. Examples include the privatization of urban spaces and security infrastructures. This does not negate the importance of insurgent movements in articulating political demands and sometimes achieving them. See Andy Merrifield, "The Right to the City and Beyond: Notes on a Lefebvrian Re-Conceptualization," *City* 15, no. 3/4 (2011): 473–81; Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guilford Press, 2003).

22. Michael Walzer, "Citizenship," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terence Ball, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 211–19.

23. James Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). There is a varied and extensive literature in each of the social groups I identify in this section, some of which is referenced in the remainder of this chapter.

24. Berlant provides a thorough review of the politics of heteronormative national citizenship in *Queen of America*, 1–24.

25. Queer and trans studies scholars have explored several angles of queer citizenship on which my argument in this book builds. See Phelan, *Sexual Strangers*; Berlant, *Queen of America*; Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*

(Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Arnaldo Cruz and Martin F. Manalansan, eds., *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism* (New York: New York University Press, 2002). On transgender citizenship, which has conceptual affinities to the notion of queer citizenship advanced by these authors, see Isaac West, *Transforming Citizenships: Transgender Articulations of the Law* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Dean Spade, *Normal Life*.

26. I do not mean to imply here that there has been a single political movement, at least until the 1990s. Rather, there were many groups, some of which had national membership, that pursued similar political goals.

27. Phelan argues that “sexual minorities are better understood as strangers, not enemies but not friends of ‘natives’ either.” She explains that “the stranger’s strangeness may be formally denied in liberal regimes, but her distance from cultural membership makes her continually prey to renewed exclusion, scapegoating, and violence.” Phelan, *Sexual Strangers*, 5.

28. Margot Canaday has argued that the US government introduced the idea that the state had to define homosexuality as an (anti)social identity during the Great Depression. This negative identity was further established after World War II in debates about welfare and war veteran privileges through the GI Bill. Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 137–42.

29. In recent scholarship, the term *trans* refers to multiple and variegated nonmainstream embodiments. Some scholars have opted for using the term *trans**—the asterisk calling attention to the limits of stable identity formations. See Jack Halberstam, “Unbuilding Gender: Trans* Anarchitectures in and beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark,” *Places Journal*, October 3, 2018, <https://placesjournal.org/article/unbuilding-gender/>.

30. John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998 [1983]).

31. See Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), for a broad overview of New Left politics.

32. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 58–61. See also Emily K. Hobson, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016).

33. The year 1969 is considered the symbolic beginning of the gay liberation movement with the Stonewall Riots in New York City that summer. However, political activities that eventually became part of gay liberation were already underway around the country, including in the Bay Area, an epicenter of radical leftist and gay activism throughout the 1960s. Note also that inclusion in the national body politic was not the only nor the primary concern for many early liberationists who protested the carceral state and oppressive mainstream gender and sexual norms.

34. On the free speech movement, see David Lance Goines, *The Free Speech Movement: Coming of Age in the 1960’s* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2003); Robert Cohen and Reginald E. Zelnik, eds., *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

35. Berlant, *Queen of America*, 7–9.

36. Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, xix–xx.

37. Berlant, *Queen of America*, 4.
38. Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, 62–66. See also David Harvey, *The Condition of Post-modernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).
39. I derive my definition of identity politics from Wendy Brown, “Wounded Attachments,” *Political Theory* 21, no. 3 (1993): 396.
40. Phelan, *Sexual Strangers*, 58.
41. On critiques of the carceral state from a trans activist perspective, see Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith, eds., *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* (Oakland: AK Press, 2011).
42. Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, 50.
43. Duggan, *Twilight of Equality?*, 65–66.
44. Ainhwa Ong et al., “Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making: Immigrants Negotiate Racial and Cultural Boundaries in the United States,” *Current Anthropology* 37, no. 5 (1996): 737–62.
45. Ong et al., “Cultural Citizenship as Subject-Making,” 740.
46. Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989).
47. Spade, *Normal Life*, 8–12.
48. Buzz Bissinger, “Caitlyn Jenner: The Full Story,” photographs by Annie Leibovitz, *Vanity Fair*, June 25, 2015, <https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2015/06/caitlyn-jenner-bruce-cover-annie-leibovitz>.
49. This quote from Phelan’s *Sexual Strangers*, published in 2001, is still prescient today. See, for example, the national coverage of Florida’s “Parental Rights in Education” bill in 2022 (dubbed “Don’t Say Gay”) and contemporary assaults on drag shows, LGBTQ+ education, and transgender bathrooms in several US states.
50. Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*, 34.
51. Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*, 9.
52. Holston uses the term differential citizenship to conceptualize citizenship as “a mechanism to distribute inequality.” Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*, 7. In this sense, it is not the opposite of universal citizenship. Instead, it explains historically situated exclusions that are part of how modern notions of universal citizenship construct privileged subjects through the distribution of rights.
53. It is essential to point out that insurgencies are not a priori concerned with fighting inequality, as right wing-movements employ similar language in their pursuits. Nevertheless, in particular, Holston explored the notion of “legalizing the illegal” as a way that insurgent citizenship operates to counter differentiated citizenship.
54. On the “politics of difference,” see Iris Marion Young and Danielle S. Allen, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,” *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6–23.
55. See Iris Marion Young’s influential analysis of the politics of difference in “Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship,” *Ethics* 99, no. 2 (1989): 250–74. Here, Young advocates group autonomy that does not, however, account for the multiple overlapping demands on spaces of queer urban life and their short life-span.

56. On local attachments, see Steven Epstein and Héctor Carrillo, “Immigrant Sexual Citizenship: Intersectional Templates among Mexican Gay Immigrants to the USA,” *Citizenship Studies* 18, no. 3/4 (2014): 259–76.

57. Paul Welch and Bill Eppridge, “Homosexuality in America,” *Life* 56, no. 26 (June 26, 1964).

58. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 89–90.

59. José Sarria interviewed by Nan Alamilla Boyd, tape recording, San Francisco, April 15, 1992, SF GLBTHSA, Wide Open Town Records (WOTR), 2003–05.

60. Sarria interviewed by Boyd, SF GLBTHSA, WOTR, 2003–05. Other gay bars were also loci for the expression of political sentiments from the communities of their attendees, most famously the Stonewall Inn in New York. See Martin B. Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993).

61. Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 57–58.

62. John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 188. Sarria also founded the Imperial Court System, a drag organization with chapters on the west coast of the United States, Mexico, and Canada organizing social events for over fifty years. SF GLBTHSA, José Sarria Papers (JSP), 1996–01, “Coronation Booklets,” Imperial Court System.

63. Sarria, interviewed by Boyd, SF GLBTHSA, WOTR, 2003–05.

64. *Stoumen v. Reilly*, 37 Cal.2d 713 (1951). For a detailed account of the relationship between San Francisco police and gay/lesbian bars, see Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

65. I refer to homosexual hangouts because bars were not openly described as gay or lesbian at the time. Note, however, that the term often appeared in the press with an antigay tenor.

66. The first openly lesbian bar, Maud’s Study, opened in the Haight in 1966. Chapter 4 explains Maud’s importance for lesbian social life in San Francisco.

67. Bill Plath, Tavern Guild president, quoted in D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 189. For a brief history of the Tavern Guild’s founding and early activities, see Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 223–26. The association disbanded in 1993. By that time its scope and objectives had changed significantly. For an organizational overview, see “Guide to the Tavern Guild of San Francisco Records, 1961–1993,” Online Archive of California, accessed November 3, 2018, <https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt509nb9d7/>.

68. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 122–30.

69. Larry Knopp and Michael Brown, “Travel Guides, Urban Spatial Imaginaries and LGBTQ+ Activism: The Case of Damron Guides,” *Urban Studies* 58, no. 7 (2021): 1380–96.

70. Sociologist Manuel Castells was the first to link gay political rights with urban visibility and electoral behavior. However, his argument relied on a great deal of abstraction that is a consequence of measuring gay and lesbian presence through available government data. The lack of empirical analysis led Castells, for example, to omit a detailed discussion of lesbian spaces, erroneously describing lesbians as “placeless in their struggles.” Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). For an overview of critical views of *The City and the Grassroots*, see Kevin Ward and Eugene J. McCann, “‘The New Path to a New City’? Introduction to a Debate on Urban Politics, Social Movements and the Legacies of Manuel

Castells' *The City and the Grassroots*," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 30, no. 1 (2006): 189–93.

71. Aaron Shurin, "In the Bars of Heaven and Hell," in *Love, Castro Street: Reflections of San Francisco*, ed. Katherine V. Forrest and Jim Van Buskirk (New York: Alyson Books, 2007). Bars and cruising areas in the Embarcadero were often associated with a hyper-masculine culture structured around relationships of domination and submission that fetishized race and class differences.

72. Gayle Rubin, "The Valley of the Kings: Leathermen in San Francisco, 1960–1990" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1994); Gayle Rubin, "Elegy for the Valley of the Kings: AIDS and the Leather Community in San Francisco, 1981–1996," in *In Changing Times: Gay Men and Lesbians Encounter HIV/AIDS*, ed. Martin P. Levine, Peter M. Nardi, and John H. Gagnon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). See also Gayle Rubin, "Studying Sexual Subcultures: Excavating the Ethnography of Gay Communities in Urban North America," in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader*, ed. Gayle Rubin (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 310–46.

73. BDSM stands for bondage, discipline, sadism, masochism and can be understood as a form of subversion of how these terms operate in mainstream society, re-signified as a form of sexual recognition and care. See Margot Danielle Weiss, *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

74. Weiss, *Techniques of Pleasure*, 36–43. See also Jim Stewart, *Folsom Street Blues: A Memoir of 1970s SoMa and Leatherfolk in Gay San Francisco* (San Francisco: Palm Drive, 2011).

75. Chester W. Hartman and Sarah Carnochan, *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 227–34.

76. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 44–75.

77. John D'Emilio, "Inaugurating the First Lesbian and Gay Studies Department," in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University*, ed. John D'Emilio (London: Routledge, 1992), 155–59.

78. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xvii.

79. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xviii. Butler references her involvement with the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

80. Quote from Halberstam; Judith [Jack] Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 36–37. On postcolonial critique and queer studies, see Donna McCormack, *Queer Postcolonial Narratives and the Ethics of Witnessing* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014); John C. Hawley, ed., *Postcolonial, Queer: Theoretical Intersections* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). On Southern queer studies and rurality, see Scott Herring, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

81. Julie A. Podmore, "Disaggregating Sexual Metronormativities: Looking Back at 'Lesbian' Urbanisms," in *The Routledge Research Companion to Geographies of Sex and Sexualities*, ed. Gavin Brown and Kath Browne (London: Routledge, 2016), 21–28.

82. Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, "'That's My Place!': Negotiating Racial, Sexual, and Gender Politics in San Francisco's Gay Latino Alliance, 1975–1983," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (2003): 226.

83. Juana Maria Rodriguez, *Queer Latinidad: Identity Practices, Discursive Spaces* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 34.

84. Mitchell, *Right to the City*. See also Jeffrey Hou, "(Not) Your Everyday Public Space," in *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities*, ed. Jeffrey Hou (London: Routledge, 2010), 7. In this sense, the project has conceptual affinities with "everyday urbanism" as a set of ideas and practices that emerge from the study of everyday life and not from designers' expert imagination. See Margaret Crawford, "Introduction," in *Everyday Urbanism*, ed. John Chase, Margaret Crawford, and John Kaliski (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), 8–15.

1. SPACES OF SEPARATION, ASSIMILATION, AND CITIZENSHIP

1. San Francisco Planning Department, *Centennial Celebration Brochure*, December 2017, accessed February 10, 2022, <https://sfplanning.org/resource/planning-commission-centennial>.

2. Josh Sides, *Erotic City: Sexual Revolutions and the Making of Modern San Francisco* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 18–20.

3. Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 4; Sides, *Erotic City*, 6.

4. Video footage from *Gay San Francisco* (Jonathan Raymond, USA, 1970). The footage was shot between 1965 and 1969 and the film had a brief run at midnight theaters in 1970. After being considered lost, it was rediscovered by Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman during research for their documentary *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria* (USA, 2005).

5. The narrator's turn of phrase quoted here gave the title to *Screaming Queens*, which subverted its meaning.

6. Suzan Cooke interviewed in *Screaming Queens*. See also Joseph Plaster, *Kids on the Street: Queer Kinship and Religion in San Francisco's Tenderloin* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2023), 119. Plaster explains that the police arrested "street kids," terrorized them into agreeing to return to their families, but ultimately had no place to send them. Usually, "street kids" returned to the Tenderloin.

7. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 192–93.

8. Cooke interviewed in *Screaming Queens*. See also Stryker, "At the Crossroads of Turk and Taylor."

9. For a discussion of the origins of the term *queens* in the context of homosexual subcultures in the US, see Plaster, *Kids on the Street*, 54.

10. For a definition of subcultural terms that denoted queer identities, see Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2017), 23.

11. Leah DeVun and Zeb Tortorici argue that "when we train our eyes toward the past, we find that 'trans' might operate not just as a marker of gender but also as a collider or extender of time." Leah DeVun and Zeb Tortorici, "Trans, Time, and History," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (2018): 532.

12. In his investigation of queer street life in US inner-city tenderloins, Plaster defines *street kids* as "those, regardless of their chronological age, who perform 'youth' to stimulate desire in potential clients and are cared for, materially and emotionally, by people who identify as mothers, fathers, aunts, and uncles." Plaster, *Kids on the Street*, 10.

13. Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 48–52.

14. We can understand reformers' work here as a process of subjectivation, which Butler explains as a process of "becoming" a subject within complex networks of power and subjection. See Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 14.

15. Martin Meeker, "The Queerly Disadvantaged and the Making of San Francisco's War on Poverty, 1964–1967," *Pacific Historical Review* 81, no. 1 (2012): 24–25; Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 76–78; Stryker, *Transgender History*, 68–69.

16. For a discussion of the linguistic and political meanings of "acts of citizenship," see Engin F. Isin, "Theorizing Acts of Citizenship," in *Acts of Citizenship*, ed. Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen (London: Zen Books, 2008), 18–19.

17. Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 25–29; Sides, *Erotic City*, 32–34.

18. Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 52–56.

19. In the book's introduction I discuss José Sarria's famous drag performances at the Black Cat that fueled his 1961 run for city supervisor as an openly gay man on a platform focused in part on ending police harassment of gay bar owners and patrons.

20. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 31–40. The Mattachine Society is considered the first gay political organization, founded in Los Angeles in 1950. The society began publishing *The Mattachine Review* in 1955 and moved its national headquarters to San Francisco in 1957. Daughters of Bilitis is the first lesbian rights group in the US, founded in San Francisco in 1955. It began publishing *The Ladder*, the first nationally distributed lesbian periodical, the following year.

21. On homophile organizing in San Francisco, see D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbians Communications and Community, 1940s–1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

22. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 49–55; Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 55–56.

23. Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 219–20.

24. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 205.

25. This attitude changed dramatically in the following decade when gay liberation and the proliferation of gay and lesbian organizations ushered in a new period in gay and lesbian politics with aggressive actions. For an analysis of this transition, see Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 56–80.

26. It is important to note that the categorization of this early phase of the homophile movement as assimilationist has been the subject of scholarly debate. See Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, 151–90.

27. Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 44. For a vivid account of Tenderloin's centrality in queer/trans cultures of the 1960s, see interview with Felicia Elizondo conducted by anonymous Archive 408 interviewer, San Francisco, October 17, 2019, San Jose Trans Oral History Project, <https://archive408.com/2020/04/01/san-jose-trans-oral-history-project-an-interview-with-felicia-elizondo/>.

28. Veronica Klaus interviewed in *Transgender Tuesdays: A Clinic in the Tenderloin* (Mark Freeman and Nathaniel Walker-Koh, USA, 2012).

29. Paul Erling Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), x.

30. Notably, they organized in the Tenderloin half a decade before the Stonewall Riots in the summer of 1969 that symbolize a turning point in LGBTQ+ rights discourse in the

United States. Hanhardt argues that movement-building among liberal reformers and gay youth in the Tenderloin was shaped by the experiences of marginalization and associated rights-claims of Tenderloin denizens. See Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 79.

31. On queer friendship, see Michel Foucault “Friendship as a Way of Life,” in *Essential Works of Foucault: 1954–1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 135–40. Plaster also examines how affective relationships and mutual aid structures informed kinship structures in San Francisco queer neighborhoods. See *Kids on the Street*, 14–19.

32. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.

33. See interviews with former Tenderloin residents in *Screaming Queens* and *Transgender Tuesdays*.

34. Amanda St. Jaymes interviewed in *Screaming Queens*.

35. For a list and descriptions of those establishments, see Plaster, *Kids on the Street*, 50–51.

36. Joel Roberts quoted in Plaster, *Kids on the Street*, 51.

37. Stryker, “At the Intersection of Turk and Taylor.” The oral histories quoted in this chapter reference these residential arrangements repeatedly.

38. Sex work is a central theme in oral histories, and that view is supported by data gathered by questionnaires in James Patrick Driscoll, “The Transsexuals” (MA thesis, San Francisco State College, 1969), 83. However, some accounts of life in the Tenderloin in the magazine *Vanguard*, which is a key source of information about this period, show that some of the runaway youth who lived in the Tenderloin found other ways to make money (mainly working at the SROs and other local businesses, or selling drugs). SFGLBTHSA, Periodical Collections, *Vanguard* 1, 1–10 (ca. 1966).

39. Tamara Ching interviewed in *Screaming Queens*.

40. According to one of Plaster’s informants, another SRO where gay youth found shelter in the 1960s was South Side Hotel. See *Kids on the Street*, 122.

41. It is unclear whether the SRO’s name (“El,” and not “La,” Rosa) symbolized gender nonconformity.

42. St. Jaymes interviewed in *Screaming Queens*.

43. James Driscoll, who conducted an ethnographic study and lived at El Rosa for one month in 1967, refers to the hotel as La Toro (following research protocols, he did not identify El Rosa by name), and commented on the deliberately “ungrammatical” use of the pronoun. Driscoll, “The Transsexuals,” 21.

44. The building was still extant in 2020, when I visited, though it was closed after operating under a different name for decades.

45. This is an estimate based on the building layout, similar SROs, and available data, since access to the interior was not possible. Driscoll only provides information about how many rooms were occupied by his informants in 1967.

46. My argument is informed by oral history interviews with the El Rosa residents conducted in the late 2010s and 2020s as parts of larger queer/trans oral history projects. See interview with Felicia Elizondo conducted by anonymous Archive 408 interviewer; interview with Adrian Ravarour conducted by Jason Lin, July 26, 2018, Stanford Pride Oral History Project (SC1424), Department of Special Collections & University Archives, Stanford Libraries, Stanford, California.

47. Groth, *Living Downtown*, 138.

48. Driscoll, “The Transsexuals,” 10. See also interview with Elizondo conducted by anonymous Archive 408 interviewer.

49. Veronica Klaus interviewed in *Transgender Tuesdays*. See also Stryker, *Transgender History*, 75.

50. Interview with Ravarour conducted by Lin.

51. Felicia Elizondo, Tamara Ching, and Ed Hansen, interviewed in *Screaming Queens*.

52. Ching interviewed in *Screaming Queens*.

53. See Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 66. It is important to point out here that Robert O. Self has argued that African American communities in Oakland, specifically, did not experience the kind of direct violence that other communities faced in the Northeast and Midwest, which resulted in a more diverse—though still segregated—urban environment. See Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 164–65.

54. Elliot Blackstone mentions Irish Catholic morality as one of the reasons some policemen harassed people they perceived as crossdressers. Susan Stryker, “Interview with Elliott Blackstone,” oral history transcript, San Francisco, 1996, SFGLBTHSA, Oral History Collection (OHC), 32–33. (Blackstone’s first name records spell it with one and two *t*-s.)

55. Nan Alamilla Boyd, “Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon interview,” oral history transcript, San Francisco, December 2, 1992, SF GLBTHSA, OHC, 06–001.

56. Ardian Ravarour argues that an event shortly preceding the riot empowered the queens to fight for their rights to inhabit the space. A few days before the riot at Compton’s Dixie Russo, a drag queen and political activist in the Tenderloin, protested her mistreatment at Doggy Diner. In Ravarour’s account seventeen policemen arrived at the diner to address the incident but they made no arrests after the intervention of Blackstone, a community-police liaison and social justice activist associated with Glide Memorial Methodist Church. News of the incident spread among the Tenderloin’s gay youth community, and a sense of empowerment from that change in police attitude contributed to the protest that led to Compton’s riot. Notably, Ravarour explains that the absence of media coverage about the riot, which was uncharacteristic, further highlights the change in how the city leaders and the police addressed the “Tenderloin question.” See interview with Ravarour conducted by Lin.

57. Ching interviewed in *Screaming Queens*.

58. Elizondo interviewed in *Screaming Queens*.

59. The first gay bar with clear glass windows to the street (though not under less scrutiny from the police) was Twin Peaks Tavern, a designated local landmark.

60. Interview with Elizondo conducted by anonymous Archive 408 interviewer.

61. Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York: Ace Books, 1966).

62. According to Elliot Blackstone, this office was in part a consequence of the Johnson administration’s Great Society programs. Stryker, “Interview with Elliott Blackstone.”

63. Blackstone’s time in the office of community-police relations was consequential but cut short. He was targeted by other police officers who planted drugs in his desk. He avoided being fired but was subsequently demoted to foot patrol in the Castro until he retired in 1975.

64. Elliot Blackstone interviewed by Susan Stryker, SF GLBTHSA, OHP, GLBT-OH.

65. Blackstone interviewed in *Screaming Queens*.

66. Blackstone interviewed by Stryker.
67. Stryker, *Transgender History*, 75–76.
68. Blackstone interviewed by Stryker.
69. The janitors' and hotel workers' unions, SEIU Local 87 and Local 2, still maintain offices on Golden Gate Ave. The California Labor School was also located in the Tenderloin until 1957, when it closed shortly after the end of McCarthyism due to anticommunist campaigns and diminished funding. See Chris Carlsson, "California Labor School," *Found SF*, accessed April 20, 2021, https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=California_Labor_School.
70. Boyd, "Interview with Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon."
71. Donovan Bess, "Tenderloin's Exiles of Sin," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 24, 1966, SF GLBTHSA, Ed Hansen Papers, 1998–37.
72. John Oppedahl, "Glide Church, A Bold Path to the Fringes of Society," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 10, 1967.
73. "Special Report: C.R.H. Needs Donations," *Vector*, March 1965, 2. Quoted in Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 47.
74. Del Martin, in particular, observed the challenges of gay youth daily, as the officers of the Daughters of Bilitis were in the Tenderloin. Boyd, "Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon interview."
75. Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 53–54.
76. Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 49–53. See also Betty Luther Hillman, "The Most Profoundly Revolutionary Act a Homosexual Can Engage In: Drag and the Politics of Gender Presentation in the San Francisco Gay Liberation Movement, 1964–1972," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 1 (2011): 153–81.
77. Paul Gabriel, "Lewis Durham interview," oral history transcript, San Francisco, July 18, 1998, SF GLBTHSA, OHP, 98–028.
78. Cecil Williams and Janice Mirikitani, *Beyond the Possible: Fifty Years of Creating Radical Change in a Community Called Glide* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 65.
79. Williams and Mirikitani, *Beyond the Possible*, 86–87.
80. My analysis of the report in the context of urban and homosexual politics in 1960s San Francisco builds on the work of Christina Hanhardt and Martin Meeker, who have produced detailed accounts of its role in Tenderloin antipoverty liberal activism. Hanhardt focuses on the report's use of racialized, moralizing discourse to link class disenfranchisement to poverty and advocate for its elimination by reforming the physical environment and its "deviant" but "hopeless" denizens. Meeker highlights the political process in which *Drugs in the Tenderloin* was entangled to explain how homosexuality became a minority category worthy of inclusion to the national body politic, not least because reformist activists secured War on Poverty funds. Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 53; Meeker, "Queerly Disadvantaged," 39–41. In this chapter, I focus primarily on the construction of different notions of gay/queer citizenship in this report and *Drugs in the Tenderloin* (see note 88).
81. Edward Hansen, Mark Forrester, and Fred Bird, *The Tenderloin Ghetto: The Young Reject in Our Society*, San Francisco: Glide Urban Center, 1966, San Francisco Public Library (SFPL), SF History Stacks, 362.7097 H1983t.
82. Hansen et al., *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, 2–3.
83. For a detailed account of the founding and activities of SFEOC, see Meeker, "Queerly Disadvantaged," 23–29.

84. On the gay movement's whiteness and countering this perception, see Ramírez, "'That's My Place!'"

85. Meeker explains that Central City reformers used statistics from the 1960 census that "proved" the Tenderloin's whiteness. However, these statistics did not account for an influx of people to the Tenderloin in the mid-1960s and street life, which was more racially diverse than the official account. See "Queerly Disadvantaged," 39.

86. Rebecca Solnit and Susan Schwarzenberg, *Hollow City: The Siege of San Francisco and the Crisis of American Urbanism* (London: Verso, 2001). These efforts were part of a national effort to reform social life in urban "ghettos" in order to address social unrest. The federal Kerner Commission is a key report that supported this mission. Kerner Commission, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

87. Donovan Bess, "Stories of 'Boys for Sale,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 2, 1966; Bess, "Tenderloin's Exiles of Sin."

88. Marat, Jean-Paul, James, John Colvin, Elizabeth Finn, and Larry Littlejohn, *Drugs in the Tenderloin* (San Francisco: Central City Target Area Action Board of Directors, 1967), SFPL, Gov Info, 362.293 D842.

89. In *Kids on the Street*, Plaster quotes excerpts from *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, but does not examine the document itself at length. I consider the report's literary character an opening to the editors' view of life in the Tenderloin that contributes to our understanding of how built environment aesthetics informed queer embodiments and how these embodiments hold the potential for insurgent fissures in mainstream/reformist understandings of citizenship.

90. Marat et al., *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, introduction, unpaginated.

91. Marat et al., *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, introduction, unpaginated.

92. Marat et al., *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, 1.

93. Anthony Ashbolt, *A Cultural History of the Radical Sixties in the San Francisco Bay Area* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 86–95; Joan Didion, *Slouching towards Bethlehem: Essays* (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2008), 84–129.

94. Marat et al., *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, introduction, unpaginated.

95. Marat et al., *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, 8.

96. Marat et al., *Drugs in the Tenderloin*, 10. Parentheses in the original.

97. There are different estimates about Vanguard's membership. This number is Adrian Ravarour's estimate, who was a Vanguard cofounder.

98. Jean-Paul Marat, "Exploitation," *Vanguard* 1 (1966), SF GLBTHSA, Periodicals Collection.

99. Interview with Ravarour conducted by Lin. The founding of Vanguard is a hotly contested topic. See Plaster, *Kids on the Street*, 153.

100. Joel Roberts obliquely referred to the Marxist-Leninist implications of the organization's name. Interview with Joel Roberts conducted by Daniel Bao, San Francisco, December 28, 1989, Gay Student Union, Stanford University and Peninsula Gay Switchboard, SF GLBTHSA, OHP, 05–017. A reader of the later issues of *Vanguard*, published after the organization disbanded in 1967 that list an address in Haight-Ashbury and embraced hippie countercultural aesthetics, might have assumed the connection to avant-garde art, but those issues are not good sources of the priorities during the organization's brief presence in the Tenderloin.

101. Another similarity with the Black Panther Party was the development of a mutual aid structure to support grassroots activism. Plaster, *Kids on the Street*, 134–135.

102. Marat, “Exploitation,” 3.

103. Marat, “Exploitation,” 3.

104. Interview with Roberts conducted by Bao.

105. Jean-Paul Marat, “Attention, Attention,” *Vanguard* 1 (August 1966), 1, SF GLBTHSA, Periodicals Collection.

106. Vanguard members, “From the Press Release,” *Vanguard* 2 (October 1966), 4, SF GLBTHSA, Periodicals Collection.

107. Mark Miller, “The City,” *Vanguard* 2 (October 1966), SF GLBTHSA, Periodicals Collection.

108. Samuel Delany makes this point in relationship to the queer worlds of Times Square in Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

109. For Vanguard’s dissolution and assessment of its accomplishments, see Plaster, *Kids on the Street*, 152.

110. This is the definition of urban citizenship, which derives from James Holston and Arjun Appadurai, “Cities and Citizenship,” in *Cities and Citizenship*, ed. James Holston (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 1–20.

2. NEW VICTORIANS IN THE 1970S

1. Many first-person accounts of gay life in San Francisco in the 1970s reference Hamburger Mary’s in SoMa and Grubstake Diner in Polk Gulch as important sites of the late-night gay social scene.

2. As the following chapter demonstrates, lesbian life in the Bay Area in the 1970s concentrated in San Francisco’s Mission, in Oakland, and in Berkeley.

3. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 16, 24–32.

4. Self, *American Babylon*, 135–37; Walker, *Pictures of a Gone City*, 241–44.

5. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 76–90.

6. Brian J. Godfrey, “Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco,” *Geographical Review* 87, no. 3 (1997): 312.

7. The erection of high-rise buildings in residential areas has animated local public debates since the late 1950s. More recently, the development of residential towers south of downtown as an extension of the business district marked an important shift in planning policy. See Alison Isenberg, *Designing San Francisco: Art, Land, and Urban Renewal in the City by the Bay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 18–20; Walker, *Pictures of a Gone City*, 153–220.

8. Note that the physical landscape of San Francisco’s Chinatown was also characterized by dilapidated buildings and lack of amenities that were directly connected to racist California policies against Chinese immigrants in the nineteenth century. See, for example, Anthony W. Lee, *Picturing Chinatown: Art and Orientalism in San Francisco* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Chuo Li, “Postwar Urban Redevelopment and the Politics of Exclusion: The Case of San Francisco’s Chinatown,” *Journal of Planning History* 18, no. 1 (2019): 27–43.

9. Bay Area Census, accessed August 20, 2022, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/counties/SanFranciscoCounty50.htm>.
10. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 65–71, 293–311.
11. Damon Scott, “Before the Creative Class: Blight, Gay Movies, and Family Values in the Haight-Ashbury Neighborhood, 1964,” *Journal of Planning History* 14, no. 2 (2015): 149–73; Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life & Times of Harvey Milk* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2008), 195; Cleve Jones, *When We Rise: My Life in the Movement* (New York: Hachette, 2017), 27.
12. Morley Baer, Elizabeth Pomada, and Michael Larsen, *Painted Ladies: San Francisco’s Resplendent Victorians* (New York: Dutton, 1978), 9.
13. US Department of Labor, *Urban Atlas, Tract Data for Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas: San Francisco–Oakland, California* (Washington, DC: Bureau of the Census, 1970), 18.
14. Joan Didion, “Slouching towards Bethlehem,” in *Slouching towards Bethlehem: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008 [1968]), 84–130.
15. Charles Perry, *The Haight-Ashbury: A History* (New York: Wenner Books, 2005), 271.
16. Timothy Stewart-Winter, “The Castro: Origins to the Age of Milk,” *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* 16, no. 1 (2009).
17. Jason Allen, “Martha Asten Interview,” March 12, 1995, SF GLBTHSA, OHS, 97–02; Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2008), 186–88.
18. Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 226.
19. On Polk Street’s gay life in the 1960s and early 1970s, see Jim Van Buskirk, “Beach Blanket Babylon and Me,” in *Love, Castro Street: Reflections of San Francisco*, ed. Katherine V. Forrest and Jim Van Buskirk (New York: Alyson Books, 2007), 262–63. On gay neighborhoods in San Francisco during that time more generally, see Susan Stryker and Jim Van Buskirk, *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996). Polk Street remained a reference point, especially in later queer youth street cultures. See Plaster, *Kids on the Street*, 258–68.
20. Gayle S. Rubin, “The Miracle Mile: South of Market and Gay Male Leather, 1962–1997,” In *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture*, ed. James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy J. Peters, 247–72 (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998).
21. This general observation was not without exceptions, as first-person accounts of gay men living in San Francisco between 1950 and 1970 reveal. See, for example, Stewart, *Folsom Street Blues*; Jones, *When We Rise*.
22. Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 119. Most of these charges did not stand up in court, which routinely dropped them. Shilts also explains that many arrests are not part of the official number because of the widespread practice of bribing police officers on the site of the arrests.
23. “The Wonderful World of Castro Village,” *Bay Area Reporter* 1, no. 10 (September 15, 1971).
24. *Life* magazine published a report about underground gay spaces in June 1964. Around that time, national press began to cover urban homosexuality. Bill Eppridge, “Homosexuality in America,” *Life*, June 26, 1964, 66–80; Robert C. Doty, “Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1963.

25. The association of gay public life with urban villages, which was not limited to San Francisco, was a far cry from the view that urban gay life was an unequivocal sign of failed planning, most notably expressed by Jane Jacobs in her advocacy for vibrant street life. For example, discussing the “antisocial” redesign of one of Philadelphia’s historic squares into a “pervert” site, Jacobs employed antigay rhetoric. Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1961]).

26. See Brian Godfrey, *Neighborhoods in Transition: The Making of San Francisco’s Ethnic and Nonconformist Communities* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1988).

27. See Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*; Godfrey, “Urban Development and Redevelopment in San Francisco.”

28. Jim Tushinski, “Adventures in the Celluloid Cathedral,” 127–28, and F. Allen Sawyer, “Castro Theatre,” 117–25, both in Forrest and Van Buskirk, *Love, Castro Street*.

29. Richard Rodriguez, “Late Victorians: San Francisco AIDS and the Homosexual Stereotype,” *Harper’s*, October 1990, 58.

30. Rodriguez, “Late Victorians,” 58.

31. Rodriguez, “Late Victorians,” 59.

32. Anne Vernez Moudon, *Built for Change: Neighborhood Architecture in San Francisco* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), 157–88.

33. George Crile, “CBS Reports: Gay Power, Gay Politics,” television documentary, April 26, 1980, SF GLBTHSA, Randall Alfred collection of “Gay Power, Gay Politics” records. The documentary instigated a lively debate about the representation of homosexuality in mainstream media. Journalist Randall Alfred offered a powerful rebuttal of the documentary’s exaggerated claims about gay promiscuity. See SF GLBTHSA, Randall Alfred collection, “Gay Power, Gay Politics” records, 2013–16.

34. Baer, Pomada, and Larsen, *Painted Ladies*, 9.

35. Neil Smith, “Gentrification and the Rent Gap,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 77, no. 3 (1987): 462–65.

36. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 25.

37. FACE funding could only go to neighborhoods, not individual buildings, which required a broader organizing effort.

38. Quoted in Will Fellows, *A Passion to Preserve: Gay Men as Keepers of Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 144

39. Baer, Pomada, and Larsen, *Painted Ladies*.

40. Allen, “Interview with Martha Asten.”

41. Baer, Pomada, and Larsen, *Painted Ladies*.

42. Jane Van Norman Turano, “Review of *Painted Ladies: San Francisco’s Resplendent Victorians*,” *American Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1978), 110.

43. Neil Smith’s theorization of this phenomenon as the “rent gap” has been influential in gentrification scholarship of the last four decades. See Neil Smith, “Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45, no. 4 (1979): 538–48.

44. On similarities and differences between economic and cultural gentrification, see Japonica Brown-Saracino, “Overview: The Gentrification Debates,” in *The Gentrification Debates Reader*, ed. J. Brown-Saracino, 1–18 (London: Routledge, 2010). On gentrification of San Francisco neighborhoods, see Solnit and Schwartzberg, *Hollow City*, 13–37. Chapter 5

in this book gives a more extensive account of gentrification's effects on countercultural queer social life in San Francisco and Oakland.

45. Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 416–18.
46. Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 149–53.
47. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 124–25.
48. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 121. Armstrong explained that it would be impossible to estimate the size of gay migration. However, journalistic accounts of the gay population in San Francisco in 1978 were between 75,000 and 150,000 in a city of 700,000 people.
49. For an analysis of Castro politics in the present, see Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).
50. Milk's status as the first openly gay elected official is the subject of some debate.
51. Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 199.
52. For example, Milk was instrumental in gay politics' embrace of the Coors Brewing Company boycott in 1977 due to its discriminatory practices against Latinx and African American workers.
53. Allen, "Interview with Martha Asten."
54. Gerald Adams, "Neighborhood Power Guide," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 4, 1974.
55. Allen, "Interview with Martha Asten."
56. Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 173.
57. Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 203.
58. Harvey Milk, "The Hope Speech," in Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 764–72.
59. Harvey Milk, "The First Castro Street Fair Took Place Last Sunday," *Bay Area Reporter*, August 22, 1974.
60. Jess Wells, "Uneasy Street," in Forrest and Van Buskirk, *Love, Castro Street*, 204.
61. US Department of Labor, *Urban Atlas, Tract Data*, 19.
62. Greggor Mattson, "Style and the Value of Gay Nightlife: Homonormative Placemaking in San Francisco," *Urban Studies* 52, no. 16 (2015): 3144–59.
63. Martin Levine, who conducted fieldwork in New York's Greenwich Village, which had many similarities to Castro during this decade, explains that in hypermasculine cultures of gay neighborhoods, black gay men "had some visibility and currency, but it was often because of the association with danger, and a rougher masculinity." Martin P. Levine, *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 11. On how race shaped gay couture and rights discourse in the long 1970s, see also Ramírez, "'That's My Place!'"
64. SF GLBTHSA, Collection of Slides of Black Gay Events 1970–1977, 1197–39.
65. Tom Ramirez interviewed by Martin Meeker, April 22, 1998, SF GLBTHSA, OHC.
66. Although political organizers such as Milk often borrowed the language and tactics of civil rights and black liberation efforts, the subculture's latent whiteness paired with the Castro businesses' commercial success aligned it with entrepreneurial urban reforms favored by city elites since the 1950s.
67. The 1972 Pride was the first such event organized jointly by several gay and lesbian organizations from all over the Bay Area. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 118–19.
68. Harvey Milk, "That's What America Is: Speech at Gay Freedom Day Rally," June 25, 1978, in Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 364.
69. Milk, "That's What America Is."

70. “Dan White for Supervisor,” 1977, political leaflet, SF GLBTHSA, Randy Alfred papers, 2018–23.

71. Jones, *When We Rise*, 187. See also Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016 [1999]), 455–546.

72. Frances FitzGerald, “II-The Castro,” *New Yorker*, July 28, 1986.

73. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 246–48.

74. On Castro boosterism, see Nan Alamilla Boyd, “San Francisco’s Castro District: From Gay Liberation to Tourist Destination,” *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 9, no. 3 (2011): 237–48.

75. On this change, see Frances FitzGerald, “The Castro,” *New Yorker*, July 21, 1986. FitzGerald visited San Francisco for extensive periods of time in the 1970s, prior to writing two essays about the city’s gay life for the *New Yorker* in 1986.

76. My argument here follows closely Michel Foucault’s theorization of power as dispersed within a field of relationships. Power does not operate exclusively in a top-down manner. Rather, individual actors internalize and enact power relationships through the ways they engage with each other and with sociopolitical institutions, such as the state, in their everyday life. Modern sovereign states since the 1800s have historically asserted their power in organizing social relationships by controlling institutions of knowledge, such as universities, and collecting data about their citizens, for example through census and land surveying. Meanwhile, individuals internalize ostensibly scientific data, which feeds back into their behavior in their everyday interactions. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1975]), 10–24.

77. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 4–13.

78. On the origin of the term urban ghetto in sociological literature and especially Louis Wirth’s work and its application to gay neighborhoods, see Levine, *Gay Macho*, 31–32.

79. FitzGerald, “The Castro.”

80. FitzGerald, “The Castro”; Shilts, *Mayor of Castro Street*, 259.

81. On the clone’s whiteness and the uneasiness of a part of San Francisco’s gay population with that characteristic, see Craig Richmond, interviewed by Paul Gabriel, oral history (1998), 36, SF GLBTHSA, OHC 98–029.

82. Levine, *Gay Macho*, 65.

83. Levine, *Gay Macho*, 40–41.

84. “Castro,” SF Gay History, accessed May 12, 2023, <https://www.sfgayhistory.com/neighborhoods/castro/>.

85. Levine, *Gay Macho*, 67. See also Stewart, *Folsom Street Blues*.

86. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 15–17.

87. Levine, *Gay Macho*, 5.

88. For a discussion of the men depicted on Arnett’s mural, see Rubin, “The Miracle Mile,” 258. The *Life* spread can be viewed in San Francisco GLBT Historical Society online, “1964: The Year San Francisco Came Out,” accessed July 26, 2023, <https://www.glbthistory.org/1964>.

89. On the relationship between domesticity and homosexual identities, see Stephen Vider, *The Queerness of Home: Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Domesticity after World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

90. On multiculturalism in liberal democracies, see Charles Taylor and Amy Gutman, eds., *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Robert J. Holton, "Multicultural Citizenship: The Politics and Poetics of Public Space," in *Democracy, Citizenship, and the Global City*, ed. Engin F. Isin (London: Routledge, 2000), 494–533.

3. LESBIAN FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S SPACES

1. Angela Davis made this point in the preface to a book that commemorated the mural's twentieth anniversary. Juana Alicia et al., *Maestrapeace: San Francisco's Monumental Feminist Mural* (Berkeley: Heyday, 2019). Alice Echols argues that the radicalism of the feminist movement in the 1960s was committed to building prefigurative counterinstitutions rather than seeking social reform. Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967–1975*, 30th anniversary ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019 [1989]), 16.

2. "15 Years and a Mural at the Women's Building / Edificio de Mujeres," *Dykespeak*, October 1994, San Francisco Public Library (SFPL), Dykespeak Collection, b148543x.

3. Geographer Jen Jack Giesecking in their study of how lesbians have produced "liberated" space in New York City since the 1980s argues that "territorial thinking," such that I have identified in the Valencia corridor, can lead queer spaces to "succumb to liberation-through-property ownership." Giesecking employs the term "constellations" to theorize how lesbians have historically created counterinstitutional trajectories to navigate the hostile urban landscape, wherein lesbian spaces are more like stars helping them to navigate that landscape, rather than fixed territories. While I agree with Giesecking that understanding the movement of lesbian and queer bodies more broadly in space and time as navigating individual constellations that include "material, social, virtual, imagined, and physical elements" allows us to appreciate the contingencies and contradictory politics of their experiences, the material that I am analyzing in this chapter demonstrates that territorial thinking was, if not the dominant, at least a key way of politicizing lesbian presence in the San Francisco Bay Area. See Jen Jack Giesecking, *A Queer New York: Geographies of Lesbians, Dykes, and Queers* (New York: New York University Press, 2020).

4. Castells, *City and the Grassroots*, 140.

5. Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 68–70.

6. Edward Guthmann, "Maud's Recounts Lesbian Bar History," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 5, 1993.

7. On lesbian spaces in the Tenderloin and North Beach, see Nan Alamilla Boyd, "Homos Invade S.F.!", in *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories*, ed. Brett Bremen (New York: Routledge, 1997), 80–82.

8. Mary Richards, "The End of the Lesbian 'Cheers,'" *Bay Area Reporter*, June 15, 1989; "Maud's Very Special Women & Men," undated leaflet, SFPL, Last Call at Maud's Records, GLC 145.

9. Interviews with former Maud's staff and customers in Paris Poirier, *Last Call at Maud's* (documentary video, USA, 1993).

10. Although state sodomy laws were repealed later in the decade, in 1975, and the first city homosexual nondiscrimination ordinance was signed by Mayor Moscone in 1978. On police raids and San Francisco politics, see Christopher Agee, "Gayola: Police

Professionalization and the Politics of San Francisco's Gay Bars, 1950–1968,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15, no. 3 (2006): 462–89.

11. Rikki Streicher interviewed in Poirier, *Last Call at Maud's*.
12. Nancy Boutilier, “Rikki Streicher Talks about a ‘Lifetime of Distinguished Service,’” *Bay Area Reporter*, February 24, 1994.
13. Richards, “End of the Lesbian ‘Cheers.’”
14. “Maud’s: The First Twenty Years,” printed booklet, SFPL, Last Call at Maud’s Records, GLC 145. See also Poirier, *Last Call at Maud's*.
15. Mary Richards, “And Then There Was Maud’s,” *Bay Area Reporter*, September 14, 1989.
16. Director Paris Poirier’s narration presented antilesbian violence in the 1960s frankly, but also expressed nostalgia for the casual camaraderie among the women in those spaces in the 1960s and 1970s who invented, in a way, how to be openly lesbian in the city and what responsibilities they had toward each other as they navigated what it meant to break the rules of heterosexual society and traditional romantic relationships. See Nancy Boutilier, “Where Laughter Tinkles among the Teacups,” *Bay Area Reporter*, February 25, 1993; Guthmann, “‘Maud’s’ Recounts Lesbian Bar History”; Sylvia Rubin, “The End of the Lesbian Cheers,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 24, 1989. Indicative of Streicher’s role as organizer in the lesbian and gay movements is the outpouring of sympathy and support for Streicher’s partner, Mary Sager, after her death in 1994, most notably by President Bill Clinton. William J. Clinton, letter to Mary Sager, August 31, 1994, SFPL, Last Call at Maud’s Records, GLC 145.
17. “Invitation for the Wedding of Danielle Donovan and Lydia Sechtman” and “Invitation for the Wedding of Sandra K. Nuckols and Barbara J. Muzio,” SFPL, Rikki Streicher and Mary Sager Photograph Albums, vol. 1, GLC 131; Allen White, “Amelia’s Marks 10th Anniversary,” *Bay Area Reporter*, November 24, 1988.
18. Undated photo album, SFPL, Rikki Streicher and Mary Sager Photograph Albums, vol. 1, GLC 131. The album does not include information about what event it was, but it was likely an awards ceremony for women leaders, if the absence of men is an indicator.
19. Susan Fahey, “Letter to San Francisco Planning Commission,” June 10, 2017, SF GLBTHSA, Collection of 645–647 Valencia Street Letters, 2018–48.
20. Federation of Gay Games, “History of the Gay Games,” Gay Games online, accessed September 20, 2022, <https://gaygames.org/History>.
21. “The Woman’s Guide to Valencia Street,” 1987, SFPL, Rikki Streicher and Mary Sager Photograph Albums, vol. 1, GLC 131.
22. Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 238–39.
23. Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 212.
24. See Zillah R. Eisenstein, *The Female Body and the Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018 [1990]).
25. Daphne Spain, *Constructive Feminism: Women’s Spaces and Women’s Rights in the American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016); Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).
26. Hayden, *Grand Domestic Revolution*, 6–11, 299–300. See also Spain, *Constructive Feminism*, 32–34.

27. Melissa A. McEuen, *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941–1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).
28. Karla Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
29. With some notable exceptions. See Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, 33–40.
30. Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, “Lesbian Existence and the Women’s Movement: Researching the ‘Lavender Herring,’” in *Feminism and Social Change: Bridging Theory and Practice*, ed. Heidi Gottfried (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 143–58.
31. Stephanie Gilmore and Elizabeth Kaminski, “A Part and Apart: Lesbian and Straight Feminist Activists Negotiate Identity in a Second-Wave Organization,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 1 (2007): 95–113.
32. Radical feminism represents a brief period in the feminist movement, roughly from 1967 to 1975. See Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*. Echols argues that radical feminists were discontent with mainstream Left organizations because they marginalized women’s voices and concerns, but their ideologies shared similar principles. On rural lesbian separatist communities, see Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, “Lesbian Separatists and the Experience of Nature” and Nancy C. Unger, “From Jooks to Joints to Sisterspace: The Role of Nature in Lesbian Alternative Environments in the United States,” in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, ed. Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 173–97. It is important to highlight that the separatist movement in lesbian feminism had significant blind spots, the most critical of which was excluding transgender women from these spaces. See Stryker, *Transgender History*, 91–111.
33. Kristen Hogan, *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 1–13; Kathy Rudy, “Radical Feminism, Lesbian Separatism, and Queer Theory,” *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2001): 191–222.
34. Discussions about establishing ICI began in 1970, the same year Amazon opened in Minneapolis, but operations did not formally begin until 1972. On the history of Amazon, see Hogan, *Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 170. For a timeline of ICI’s founding, see “Chronology: ICI—A Woman’s Place,” SF GLBTHSA, A Woman’s Place Bookstore Records, 1999–07.
35. City of Oakland, 1970 census, accessed November 3, 2022, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/Oakland70.htm>.
36. Françoise Flamant and Veronica Selver, *Raising the Roof*, documentary video (2005), <https://vimeo.com/692374457/35ae34c458>
37. Hogan, *Feminist Bookstore Movement*, 37–38.
38. “ICI—A Woman’s Place History,” SF GLBTHSA, A Woman’s Place Bookstore Records, 1999–07.
39. Carol Wilson and Alice Molloy, “Letter to the Collective,” September 12, 1982, SF GLBTHSA, A Woman’s Place Bookstore Records, 1999–07; Darlene Pagano, Elizabeth Summers, Jesse Meredith, Keiko Kubo, “Press Release: How Does the Majority of the Collective Get Locked Out?,” September 12, 1982, SF GLBTHSA, A Woman’s Place Bookstore Records, 1999–07.
40. I discuss San Francisco’s ethnic neighborhood identities in the context of municipal politics in chapter 2.

41. Cary Cordova, *The Heart of the Mission: Latino Art and Politics in San Francisco* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).
42. Carol Seejay, "An Old Wives' Tale," in Forrest and Van Buskirk, *Love, Castro Street*, 85.
43. Seejay described her difficult relationship with the women who took over Old Wives' Tales in a letter addressed to "Gloria" on July 13, 1983, SFPL, Feminist Bookstore News Collection, GLC 105, box 7.
44. Hogan, *Feminist Bookstore Movement*.
45. The organization's founders were Brenda Brush, Pat Condry, Jean Crosby, Jennifer Gardner, and the leading lesbian organizer Del Martin. In 1973 Barbara Harwood and Jody Safier, who were a couple, took over SFWC operations, setting up an office in their house. "SF Women's Centers Celebrated 10th Anniversary," San Francisco Women's Centers Newsletter, December 1980, SFPL, SF Women's Centers Newsletters Collection.
46. Echols, *Daring to Be Bad*, 8, 263.
47. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, San Francisco Women's Centers Collection, BANC MSS 2003/179 c, "SFWC Newsletter," 1972.
48. "SFWC Women's Building Meeting Minutes at Full Moon Coffeehouse," December 6, 1977, SF GLBTHSA, Women's Building Records (WBR), 1996–15; Sushawn Robb and Mercilee M. Jenkins, *Mothering the Movement: The Story of the San Francisco Women's Building* (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2012), loc. 619, Kindle.
49. The Feminist Federal Credit Union, which was cosponsored by SFWC and Black Women Organized for Action, went into liquidation due to the high delinquency rate of loans in September 1979. "The Bay Area Feminist Credit Union Goes into Liquidation," San Francisco Women's Centers Newsletter, October 1979, SFPL, SF Women's Centers Newsletters Collection.
50. Robb and Jenkins, *Mothering the Movement*, loc. 803, Kindle.
51. On a debate about these issues, see SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15, "SFWC Women's Building Meeting Minutes at Full Moon Coffeehouse," December 6, 1977.
52. Jenkins conducted the oral histories on which she based the plan between 1994 and 1996. Mercilee M. Jenkins, "She Rises Like a Building to the Sky," in Robb and Jenkins, *Mothering the Movement*, loc. 1750, Kindle. For Jenkins's description of the process of writing the play, see Mercilee M. Jenkins, "The Personal Is the Political: Capturing a Social Movement on Stage," *International Review of Qualitative Research* 3, no. 1 (2010): 125–48.
53. Robb and Jenkins, *Mothering the Movement*, loc. 1991–2024, Kindle.
54. Laura Mayer, "The Los Angeles Woman's Building and the Feminist Art Community, 1973–1991," in *Sons and Daughters of Los: Culture and Community in L.A.*, ed. David E. James (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 39–62.
55. "Women's Building of the Bay Area: A Proposal," 1979, 5, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15.
56. Letter from Jonathan H. Malone, secretary of San Francisco Landmarks Preservation Board, to Janice E. Toohey, executive director of San Francisco Women's Centers, February 21, 1985, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15, box 8.
57. "What Do You Think of the Idea?" San Francisco Women's Centers Newsletter, April 1980, SFPL, Women's Building of the Bay Area.
58. Letter from the Women's Building Collective to Stephanie Spivey, May 3, 1980, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15. One of the main institutional donors for the purchase and renovation of the Women's Building was the Hewlett Foundation.

59. "Minutes of the Building Council Meeting," March 26, 1979, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996-15, box 8.
60. "Minutes of the Women's Building Coordinating Committee," March 1, 1979, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996-15, box 8.
61. "Financial Report of SFWC, 1978-1979," San Francisco Women's Centers Newsletter, December 1979, SFPL, SF Women's Centers Newsletters Collection.
62. "SF Women's Centers and Women's Building Unite," San Francisco Women's Centers Newsletter, July 1980, SFPL, Women's Building of the Bay Area.
63. "Notes from Final Racism Meeting," May 30, 1979, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996-15, box 35.
64. "Organizations Housed in the Women's Building," San Francisco Women's Centers Newsletter, October 1979, SFPL, Women's Building of the Bay Area.
65. "Women's Building Hit by Arson," press release, February 25, 1980, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996-15, box 20.
66. Press release, October 8, 1980, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996-15, box 20.
67. "Right Wing Violence and Terrorism in the Bay Area," press release, December 8, 1980, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996-15, box 20; Mireya Navarro, "Women's Groups Unfazed by Bomb," news clipping, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996-15, box 20.
68. In 1960 the district's population was 25 percent Latinx, growing to 45 percent by 1970: Eduardo Contreras, "Voice and Property: Latinos, White Conservatives, and Urban Renewal in 1960s San Francisco," *Western Historical Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2014): 258. Contreras cites statistics published in Mission Coalition Organization and Stanford University, "Summary of Trends in Housing and Population in the Mission Model Neighborhood, 1940-1970" (Palo Alto: Stanford, 1972). The San Francisco Planning Department's 1970 records quote lower percentages, but in any case, difficulties with including undocumented immigrants and race self-reporting make an accurate statistic hard to determine. See San Francisco City Planning, "San Francisco 1970: Population by Ethnic Groups" (March 1970), quoted in Tomás F. Summers Sandoval Jr., *Latinos at the Golden Gate: Creating Community and Identity in San Francisco* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 122.
69. Contreras, "Voice and Property," 262-66.
70. Contreras, "Voice and Property," 257.
71. Cary Cordova, "Hombres y Mujeres Muralistas on a Mission: Painting Latino Identities in 1970s San Francisco," *Latino Studies* 4, no. 4 (2006): 360.
72. For key concepts and discourse around gentrification, see Brown-Saracino, ed., *Gentrification Debates Reader*.
73. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 80-85.
74. Proposition 13 mandates a property tax rate of 1 percent, requires that properties be assessed at market value at the time of sale, and allows assessments to rise by no more than 2 percent per year until the next sale. See National Bureau of Economic Research, "The Lock-in Effect of California's Proposition 13," April 2004, accessed May 12, 2022, <https://www.nber.org/digest/apr05/lock-effect-californias-proposition-13>.
75. Marjorie Heins, *Strictly Ghetto Property: The Story of Los Siete de la Raza* (Berkeley: Ramparts Press, 1972), 18. On La Raza identity and cosmology, see José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race / La Raza Cosmica*, trans. Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997 [1925]).
76. Flier for a GALA event at Amelia's in Ramirez, "'That's My Place!'" 243.

77. For an overview of transgender exclusions within feminism, see Sally Hines, "The Feminism Frontier: On Trans and Feminism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Feminism*, ed. Tasha Oren and Andrea Press (London: Routledge, 2019), 94–110.
78. Stryker, *Transgender History*, 115–18.
79. Stryker, *Transgender History*, 111.
80. Jane M. Jacobs and Catherine Nash, "Too Little, Too Much: Cultural Feminist Geographies," *Gender, Place & Culture* 10, no. 3 (2003): 265–79; Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, "Women's Culture and Lesbian Feminist Activism: A Reconsideration of Cultural Feminism," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19, no. 1 (1993): 32–61.
81. Jill Johnston, *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973).
82. "SFWC Women's Building Meeting Minutes at Full Moon Coffeehouse," December 6, 1977, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15.
83. References to "productive citizenship" were included in the introduction to the 1979 building proposal.
84. "Women's Building of the Bay Area: A Proposal," 1.
85. "Women's Building of the Bay Area: A Proposal," 1.
86. On multiculturalism, see Taylor et al., *Multiculturalism*. On critiques of interest group pluralism, see Iris Marion Young, "Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship," *Ethics* 99, no. 2 (1989): 250–74; Eisenstein, *Female Body and the Law*.
87. "Women's Building of the Bay Area: A Proposal," 1.
88. Robb and Jenkins, *Mothering the Movement*, loc. 1925, Kindle.
89. "Statement of Purpose," undated, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15, box 8.
90. "On the Presence of the Police in the Women's Building," San Francisco Women's Centers Newsletter, January 1981, SFPL, SF Women's Centers Newsletters Collection.
91. Letter from Samois to the Community Advisory Board of the Women's Building, December 1, 1981, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15, box 20.
92. Letter from Samois to Plexus, undated, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15, box 20.
93. Samois, "Samois Corrects," *Off Our Backs* 12, no. 10 (1982): 26.
94. Robb and Jenkins, *Mothering the Movement*, loc. 2427, Kindle. Over the course of the decade, many feminist thinkers participated in this debate, including author and civil rights activist Audre Lorde, who took a stance against BDSM sexual practices.
95. The metaphorical idea of the building changing gender is also present in the title of Jenkin's play *She Rises Like a Building to the Sky*.
96. "Women's Building of the Bay Area: A Proposal," 4.
97. San Francisco Board of Supervisors, "San Francisco City Planning Commission Resolution No. 10131," October 18, 1984.
98. Lori A. Flores, "Seeing through Murals: The Future of Latino San Francisco," *Boom* 6, no. 4 (2016): 16–27.
99. Cordova, "Hombres y Mujeres Muralistas," in *Heart of the Mission*, 126–50.
100. "Women's Building Proposal," July 1980, SF GLBTHSA, WBR, 1996–15.
101. Angela Y. Davis, "Foreword," in Alicia et al., *Maestrapeace*, 17.
102. Cordova, "Hombres y Mujeres Muralistas," 364–66.
103. The analysis of abstract and lived space in this paragraph uses Henri Lefebvre's terms in Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Malden: Blackwell, 1991).

104. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 384. Lefebvre used the example of leisure spaces to illustrate how people interact with each other in unanticipated ways, driven in part by their desire to actively shape those spaces by inhabiting them “differently” from normative standards. His conceptualization of the human body as a homogeneous entity and a unified system that can engage in counterappropriation of particular environments does not account for the situated experiences of multiple queer and trans embodiments. But his theorization of “differential space” highlights the procedural aspect of counterappropriation, attributes that he elsewhere ascribed to the “right to the city.” See also Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, 125–29.

105. See in particular Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989). Crenshaw’s work laid the foundations of contemporary theories of intersectionality.

4. AIDS AND THE CITY

1. On the role of gay maps in shaping the national gay imaginary, see Knopp and Brown, “Travel Guides, Urban Spatial Imaginaries and LGBTQ+ Activism.”

2. Douglas Crimp edited an important early collection of essays on the subject, “AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism,” *October* 43 (1987).

3. Jones, *When We Rise*; Ira Tattelman, “The Meaning at the Wall: Tracing the Gay Bathhouse,” in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 391–406.

4. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 128–33.

5. See Miranda Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). The organizational history of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF) offers another excellent example of the process of nonprofit professionalization that this book does not have the space to unpack.

6. Much literature on the San Francisco Bay Area in the postwar period has focused on the politics of urban planning. See Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*; Rubin, “The Miracle Mile,” in Carlsson et al., *Reclaiming San Francisco*; Alison Isenberg, “‘Culture-a-Go-Go’: The Ghirardelli Square Sculpture Controversy and the Liberation of Civic Design in the 1960s,” *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 2 (2010): 379–412; Walker, *Pictures of a Gone City*.

7. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 103–226.

8. For an overview of this dynamic, see Lawrence Knopp, “Sexuality and the Spatial Dynamics of Capitalism,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10, no. 6 (1992): 651–69. For a comparable case that focuses on New York, see Sarah Schulman, *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2012).

9. Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*, 213–26.

10. Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 115–16. On community effects of nonmainstream gay sexual cultural displacement through urban regeneration, see also Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*.

11. Richard Edward DeLeon, *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975–1991* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), 41–43. See also Hartman and Carnochan, *City for Sale*.

12. On gay and lesbian support of neoliberal urban reforms, see Hanhardt, *Safe Space*, 82–110.

13. Boyd, “San Francisco’s Castro District,” 245.

14. This framework coexisted with other ways of understanding homosexual identities. For example, see Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities*, 154–56.

15. News coverage of the disease in the early 1980s in local and national press alluded to it as punishment for overly sexual gay lifestyles.

16. G. W. W. Hanger, *Public Baths in the United States* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor, 1904), 1287–88. This is also evident in representations of baths in various cultures since antiquity. For an overview, see Fikret K. Yegül, *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (Boston: MIT Press, 1996). On YMCA athletic facilities functioning as gay bathhouses, see John Donald Gustav-Wrathall, *Take the Young Stranger by the Hand: Same-Sex Relations and the YMCA* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 158–79.

17. David Glassberg, “The Design of Reform: The Public Bath Movement in America,” *American Studies* 20, no. 2 (1979), 6.

18. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 208–9; Glassberg, “Design of Reform,” 19.

19. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 209–11.

20. SF GLBTHSA, Voices of the Oral History Project (OHP) 95/108, J. Breeden’s interview with G. Fabian, undated; Chuck Forester, “The Hothouse,” in Forrest and Van Buskirk, *Love, Castro Street*, 178.

21. John Potvin, *Material and Visual Cultures beyond Male Bonding, 1870–1914: Bodies, Boundaries, and Intimacy* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 81–111.

22. Allan Bérubé, “The History of Gay Bathhouses,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 44, no. 3/4 (2003): 36–38. Initially published in *Coming Up!* (December 1984).

23. Bérubé, “History of Gay Bathhouses,” 38.

24. Sides, *Erotic City*, 104–7. This argument is echoed by Chauncey in *Gay New York* and Tattelman in “The Meaning at the Wall.”

25. SF GLBTHSA, OHP, 95/108, Breeden’s interview with Fabian, undated.

26. Martin S. Weinberg and Colin J. Williams, “Gay Baths and the Social Organization of Impersonal Sex,” *Social Problems* 23, no. 2 (1975): 126.

27. Gayle Rubin has written that gay bathhouses had coed or exclusively “lesbian nights,” which were few and far between. Gayle Rubin, “The Catacombs: A Temple of the Butthole,” in Rubin, ed., *Deviations*, 224–40.

28. Because of their visibility as gay spaces and their association with sex, they were an easy target for right-wing critics and religious leaders who based their antihomosexual arguments on traditional religious, moral grounds. On this subject see, for example, Fred Fejes, *Gay Rights and Moral Panic: The Origins of America’s Debate on Homosexuality* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 50–51.

29. Spartacus Gay Guide (1976), quoted in Donna J. Graves and Shayne E. Watson, *Citywide Historic Content Statement for LGBTQ History in San Francisco* (San Francisco: City and County of San Francisco, 2016), 88; SF GLBTHSA, “Sex Clubs,” General Subjects Ephemera Collection, SUB EPH. For more information about Bulldog Baths, see SF GLBTHSA, Bulldog Bathhouse Records and Memorabilia, 1986–03. Restrictions on research access to this collection exist until 2052.

30. Walkthrough Bulldog Baths during the week of its closure, undated, unedited digital video footage, SF GLBTHSA, Digital Video Collection.

31. Some sections of the original murals are in the collection of the SF GLBTHSA.
32. Anthony Ashbolt, *A Cultural History of the Radical Sixties in the San Francisco Bay Area* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 94–98; Joan Didion, *Slouching towards Bethlehem: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008 [1961]), 84–129.
33. The murals were removed from the Bulldog's walls and are now held in the SF GLBTHSA.
34. SF GLBTHSA, Poster Collection, "1982 Gay Guide." See also issues of *Gay Times*, SF GLBTHSA Periodicals Collection. See also Knopp and Brown, "Travel Guides, Urban Spatial Imaginaries and LGBTQ+ Activism."
35. Jones, *When We Rise*, 57.
36. Data from San Francisco Department of Public Health presented in Erin Allday, "Last Men Standing," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 2016, <https://projects.sfchronicle.com/2016/living-with-aids/story/>.
37. S. K. Dritz, oral history conducted in 1992 by S. S. Hughes, in Sally S. Hughes, *The AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco: The Medical Response, 1981–1984, Vol. I* (Berkeley: Bancroft Library, 1995); James W. Curran, W. Meade Morgan, Ann M. Hardy, Harold W. Jaffe, William W. Darrow, and Walter R. Dowdle, "The Epidemiology of AIDS: Current Status and Future Prospects," *Science* 229, no. 7420 (1985): 1352–57.
38. Kenneth MacKinnon, *The Politics of Popular Representation: Reagan, Thatcher, AIDS, and the Movies* (London: American University Presses, 1992), 158–63.
39. Sally Smith Hughes, "Appendix A: AIDS Chronology," in *AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco, Vol. I*, 272–80.
40. Most notably in the *Bay Area Reporter* (BAR), the LGBTQ+ publication with the highest circulation at the time.
41. Mervyn F. Silverman, oral history conducted in 1992 by Sally S. Hughes, in Hughes, *AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco, Vol. I*, 119–23.
42. Silverman, interviewed by Hughes, 148.
43. Boyd, *Wide-Open Town*, 204–31.
44. Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic*, 20th anniversary ed. (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2007), 413–17. For the opposite view, see Douglas Crimp, "How to Have Promiscuity in an Epidemic," *October* 43 (1987): 237–71.
45. Michael Helquist and Rick Osmon, "Sex and the Baths: A Not-So-Secret Report," *Journal of Homosexuality* 44, no. 3/4 (2003): 153–75. Initially published in *Coming Up!* (July 1984).
46. Their findings are consistent with a study conducted by the Center for AIDS Research at the University of California, San Francisco, eighteen years later (2004–5) in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The bright lighting, availability of safe-sex material, and safe-sex guidelines posted on the walls have been consistent features of these spaces since 1984. William J. Woods, Nicholas Sheon, Joseph A. Morris, and Diane Binson, "Gay Bathhouse HIV Prevention: The Use of Staff Monitoring of Patron Sexual Behavior," *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 10, no. 2 (2013): 77–86.
47. Helquist and Osmon, "Sex and the Baths," 156.
48. Helquist and Osmon, "Sex and the Baths," 155–59. See also Rubin, "The Catacombs."
49. Priscilla Alexander, "Bathhouses and Brothels: Symbolic Sites in Discourse and Practice," in *Policing Public Sex: Queer Politics and the Future of AIDS Activism*, ed. Ephen Glenn Colter and Dangerous Bedfellows, 221–50 (Boston: South End Press, 1996).

50. Christopher Disman, "The San Francisco Bathhouse Battles of 1984: Civil Liberties, AIDS Risk, and Shifts in Health Policy," *Journal of Homosexuality* 44, no. 3/4 (2003): 106.
51. Disman, "San Francisco Bathhouse Battles of 1984," 107–8.
52. "14 San Francisco Sex Clubs Told to Close to Curb AIDS," *New York Times*, October 10, 1984.
53. Smith Hughes, "Appendix A: AIDS Chronology." Hughes's chronology highlights Mayor Feinstein's pressure on Silverman to close the baths.
54. Disman, "San Francisco Bathhouse Battles of 1984," 108–9; Ralph Bolton, John Vincke, and Rudolf Mak, "Gay Baths Revisited: An Empirical Analysis," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 3 (1994): 255–73.
55. Ilana Debare, "Last Gay Bathhouse in S.F. Agrees to Close Its Doors," *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1987.
56. Gayle Rubin, "Elegy for the Valley of Kings: AIDS and the Leather Community in San Francisco, 1981–1996," in *In Changing Times: Gay Men and Lesbians Encounter HIV/AIDS*, ed. John H. Gagnon, Martin P. Levine, and Peter M. Nardi, 101–44 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).
57. Clifford Morrison, interviewed by Hughes, in *AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco, Vol. III*, 98–99.
58. Jane M. Adams, "Life and Death on Ward 5-A," *Washington Post*, December 12, 1989. Note that by 1989 the AIDS inpatient unit had moved to Ward 5A.
59. Dan Krauss and Paul Haggis, 5B, documentary video (SFFILM, 2018).
60. Diane Jones interviewed by Hughes, in *AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco, Vol. III*, 36.
61. J. W. Dilley, "Implications for the San Francisco Model of Care," *AIDS Care* 2, no. 4 (1990): 349–52.
62. Catherine B. Wofsy, oral history conducted in 1992 by Hughes, *AIDS Epidemic in San Francisco, Vol. III*, 325.
63. See interviews with "S.F. model" participants in Krauss and Haggis, 5B.
64. William Walker, Wendel Brunner, Francie Wise, and Christine Leivermann, *HIV/AIDS Epidemiology Report* (Contra Costa Health Services, November 2000), 2. For further data on AIDS deaths and the continuing toll of the disease, particularly in underserved communities, see Sarah Schulman, *Let the Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP New York, 1987–1993* (New York: Macmillan, 2021), 36–37.
65. AIDS Service Providers Association of the Bay Area, "Meeting Notes: Assessing the San Francisco Model," June 14, 1989. Quoted in Ramirez, "Communities of Desire: Queer Latina/Latino History and Memory, San Francisco Bay Area, 1960s–1990s," PhD diss. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 352–53.
66. Gil Gerald, "Speech to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference Women's Conference on AIDS," in *Speaking for Our Lives: Historic Speeches and Rhetoric for Gay and Lesbian Rights (1892–2000)*, ed. Robert B. Marks Ridinger (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2004), 515–18. For an examination of those rifts among Latinx and mainstream gay/lesbian organizations, see Ramirez, "'That's My Place!'"
67. Schulman, *Let the Record Show*, 29–30.
68. There is extensive literature on AIDS activism. For example, see Douglas Crimp and Adam Rolston, *AIDS Demo Graphics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1990).
69. For a first-person account of the debates among gay groups and individuals during that early period of the pandemic, see Randy Shilts, *And the Band Played On*.

70. Extensive scholarship about the social justice component and coalitional politics that were part of AIDS grassroots mobilizations has highlighted how AIDS activism affected substantively the expressions, representations, and politics of homosexuality. Representative studies include Schulman, *Let the Record Show*; Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); John-Manuel Andriote, *Victory Deferred: How AIDS Changed Gay Life in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Michael P. Brown, *Re-Placing Citizenship: AIDS Activism and Radical Democracy* (New York: Guildford Press, 1997); Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). One must also distinguish AIDS activism from gay and lesbian rights activism, as each represented gay identity differently and employed divergent political tactics. National AIDS activism, for example, turned its emphasis away from homosexuality and civil rights, focusing instead on service provision and healthcare. See Stephen Vider, "Picture a Coalition: Community Caregiving and the Politics of HIV/AIDS at Home," in Vider, *Queerness of Home*, 179–213.

71. Schulman, *Let the Record Show*; Gould, *Moving Politics*.

72. Schulman, *Let the Record Show*, 65.

73. A comparative analysis with ACT UP—which would be a valuable study in its own right—is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, it is helpful to point out that, unlike ACT UP activists who were loosely organized and did not seek institutional recognition in the form of nonprofit status, the San Francisco activists quickly sought that status to fend off accusations of squatting on public property.

74. This was also the site of other protests of the federal government. Most notably, a twenty-six-day occupation of the building in 1977 by disability activists was a catalyst for the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) into law. See James Lebrecht and Nicole Newnham, *Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution* (Netflix, 2020), documentary video.

75. SF GLBTHSA, Biography Ephemera Collection, 1848, "The Four Moral Appeals," flier, May 1986.

76. SF GLBTHSA, "The Four Moral Appeals."

77. Discussions of legitimate uses of the logo and its copyright protection among early organizers leave no question that the iconographic choice was intentional. SF GLBTHSA, ARC/AIDS Vigil Records, 1/2, "Service Team Meeting Minutes," November 30, 1985.

78. Teresa Gowan, *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 63–69.

79. SF GLBTHSA, ARC/AIDS Vigil Records, 1/2, "In Order to Live on Site," printed document, 1985.

80. SFGLBTHSA, ARC/AIDS Vigil Records, 1/2, "Service Team Meeting Minutes," November 30, 1985.

81. SF GLBTHSA, ARC/AIDS Vigil Records, 1/1, "Consensus Draft of the Bylaws and Procedures for ARC/AIDS Vigil," February 8, 1986.

82. SFGLBTHSA, ARC/AIDS Vigil Records, 1/2, S. Burton's letter to J. O. Mason, December 11, 1985.

83. Matthew S. Bajko, "Effort Under Way to Commemorate AIDS Vigil," *Bay Area Reporter*, April 27, 2011.

84. SF GLBTHSA, ARC/AIDS Vigil Records, 1/1, ARC AIDS Vigil Overview, undated.

85. On changing conceptions of queer domesticity, see Vider, *Queerness of Home*, 4–7.
86. *Bay Area Reporter*, “Editorial: The Attack on the Vigil,” *Bay Area Reporter*, June 15, 1989.
87. SF GLBTHSA, ARC/AIDS Vigil Records, 1/3, “Revocable Use Agreement between the City of San Francisco and ARC/AIDS Vigil,” March 28, 1990.
88. SF GLBTHSA, ARC/AIDS Vigil Records, 1/1, ARC AIDS Vigil Overview, undated.
89. SF GLBTHSA, BIO EPH, 1848, Vigil pamphlet, undated.
90. Allen White, “AIDS/ARC Vigil Founder, John Belskus, Dies,” *Bay Area Reporter*, February 1, 1990; Dennis Conkin, “ARC/AIDS Vigil Founder Dies,” *Bay Area Reporter*, October 25, 1990.
91. Ben Carlson, “HIV Vigil to Observe 6th Year in Ceremony,” *Bay Area Reporter*, October 24, 1991; Dennis Conkin, “Two HIV, AIDS, ARC Vigils Planned for October 27,” *Bay Area Reporter*, October 22, 1992.
92. Phillip Matier and Andrew Ross, “AIDS Vigil at U.N. Plaza Folds Its Tent,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 18, 1995.
93. Matier and Ross, “AIDS Vigil at U.N. Plaza Folds Its Tent.”
94. Brown, *Replacing Citizenship*, 86. See also Paul Pierson, *Dismantling the Welfare State? Reagan, Thatcher and the Politics of Retrenchment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*.
95. Rubin, “Elegy for the Valley of Kings,” 140–44.
96. Randy Shilts, “Age of AIDS influencing Gay Tourists,” newspaper clipping (likely from *San Francisco Chronicle*), SF GLBTHSA, Ephemera Collection, box 1851. On the subject, see Katherine Sender, *Business, Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
97. One such example is the space maintained by Nomenus in SoMa. Nomenus was an organization affiliated with the Radical Faeries incorporated as a religious organization in California and organized sex parties that aimed to explore the “spiritual dimension” of sex. SF GLBTHSA, Robin White Papers, 1993–26.
98. For a critique of Folsom Street Fair, see Weiss, *Techniques of Pleasure*.

5. LIVING IN QUEER TIMES

1. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, “Estimate of Median Household Income for San Francisco County/City, CA,” accessed May 20, 2023, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MHICA06075A052NCEN>; Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, “Median Household Income in the United States,” accessed May 20, 2023, <https://data.nasdaq.com/data/FRED/MEHOINUSA646N-median-household-income-in-the-united-states>.
2. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, “Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: Rent of Primary Residence in San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA (CBSA),” accessed May 20, 2023, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/CUURA422SEHA>.
3. For a concise history of the Bay Area’s economy boom-and-bust cycles since the 1990s, see Richard Walker, “The Boom and the Bombshell: The New Economy Bubble and the San Francisco Bay Area,” in *The Changing Economic Geography of Globalization*, ed. Giovanna Vertova, 121–47 (New York: Routledge, 2006).
4. Between 2006 and 2015, the median rent in Oakland rose by 17 percent. City of Oakland Department of Housing and Community Development, *First Substantial*

Amendment to the Five-Year Consolidated Plan for Fiscal Years 2020/21—2024/25 (Oakland, 2021), 88.

5. See Petra L. Doan and Harrison Higgins, “The Demise of Queer Space? Resurgent Gentrification and the Assimilation of LGBT Neighborhoods,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 31, no. 1 (2011): 6–25; Michael Brown, “Gender and Sexuality II: There Goes the Gayborhood?,” *Progress in Human Geography* 38, no. 3 (2014): 457–65; Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*

6. One such example, among many, is the Women’s Building of the Bay Area examined in chapter 3.

7. SF GLBTHSA, San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF) Records, MSS 94–60.

8. For first-person perspectives on the struggles of marginalized queer and transgender groups and individuals in the Bay Area from the 1990s to the early 2000s, see Sycamore, ed., *That’s Revolting!*

9. On “right to the city” discourse that this chapter engages, see Mitchell, *Right to the City*.

10. For tenancy protections in San Francisco, see Brock Keeling, “Thanks to Rent Control I Finally Get to Live Alone,” *Curbed SF*, February 27, 2020, <https://sf.curbed.com/2020/2/27/21155302/san-francisco-rent-controlled-apartments-story>.

11. Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996), esp. “Chapter Nine: Mapping the Gentrification Frontier,” 186–205.

12. For an overview of this debate, see Amin Ghaziani, “Gay Enclaves Face Prospect of Being Passé: How Assimilation Affects the Spatial Expressions of Sexuality in the United States,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, no. 4 (2015): 756–71.

13. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class, Revisited* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

14. Geographer Lawrence Knopp has studied this phenomenon since the 1980s and some early work in this area still offers important insights. See Lawrence Knopp, “Some Theoretical Implications of Gay Involvement in an Urban Land Market,” *Political Geography Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (1990): 337–52.

15. I have analyzed this elsewhere as trans territorialization. Stathis G. Yeros and Leonardo Chiesi, “Trans Territorialization: Building Empowerment beyond Identity Politics” *Social Science* 11, no. 10 (2022): 429.

16. For an overview on the historical emergence and structure of CLTs, see John Emmeus Davis, ed., *The Community Land Trust Reader* (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010).

17. Gay Shame was established in New York; when some of its members moved to San Francisco, a new Gay Shame group formed there. The group protested Gavin Newsom’s attendance at a fundraising event at the San Francisco LGBT Center in 2003 discussed in the book’s introduction.

18. Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, “Gay Shame: From Queer Autonomous Space to Direct Action Extravaganza,” in Sycamore, *That’s Revolting!*, 481–527.

19. Sycamore, “Gay Shame,” 495.

20. Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, *The End of San Francisco* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2013).

21. Che Gossett and Eva Hayward, “Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore: An Interview,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (2020): 633–34.

22. Gay Shame is still active in the Bay Area and elsewhere. See “Gay Shame: A Virus in the System,” accessed January 6, 2021, <https://gayshame.net/index.php/about/>.

23. Schulman, *Gentrification of the Mind*, 28.

24. Schulman, *Gentrification of the Mind*, 28.

25. Schulman explains that a massive change in tenancies in the East Village was prompted by the death of primary lease holders, which meant that their partners, who may not have been on the lease, had to move out. Schulman, *Gentrification of the Mind*, 37–39.

26. Wyatt Buchanan, “S.F.’s Castro District Faces an Identity Crisis,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 25, 2007, <https://www.sfgate.com/news/article/S-F-s-Castro-district-faces-an-identity-crisis-2615423.php>. See also Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*

27. Heather Knight, “Legislations Seeks to Clothe Castro’s Naked Guys,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2, 2012, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Legislation-seeks-to-clothe-Castro-s-naked-guys-3914295.php>.

28. Lisa Bottom, architect with Gensler who worked on the project, referred to the building design’s symbolism, quoted in Win Mixer, “An In-Depth Look at Strut, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation’s New Castro Center,” *Hoodline*, September 16, 2015, <https://hoodline.com/2015/09/an-in-depth-look-at-san-francisco-aids-foundation-s-new-castro-strut-center/>.

29. On Castro’s public gay culture and Victorian transformations, see chapter 2.

30. Interview with Eric, March 17, 2016. Eric is a pseudonym to protect the identity of my informant. I have used pseudonyms where appropriate. I did not use pseudonyms when the informant also played a public role via their statements for the press within the context of the debates in which they are quoted.

31. Interview with Eric.

32. Don Kilhefner, “The Radical Faeries at 40: Rainbow Capitalism or Queer Liberation?” *WEHOville*, April 7, 2020, <https://www.wehoville.com/2020/04/07/the-radical-faeries-at-40-rainbow-capitalism-or-queer-liberation/>.

33. Jesse Oliver Sanford, “Gathering Kinds: Radical Faerie Practices of Sexuality and Kinship” (PhD diss., University of California Berkeley, 2013).

34. Herring, *Another Country*, 253–55; Peter Hennen, *Faeries, Bears, and Leathermen: Men in Community Queering the Masculine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 61–62.

35. Scott Lauria Morgensen, “Radical Faerie Configurations of Sexuality and Space,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 15, no. 1 (2009): 76.

36. Jason Ezell has explored the history of these communities in the US Southeast, including their spiritual component as precursors to the Radical Faeries, especially regarding their emphasis on rural gathering sites as spaces where they could access an alternative queer consciousness. Some of the Radial Faerie precursor communities developed their particular spatial politics from radical lesbian separatist ideologies. Jason Ezell, “Returning Forest Darlings’: Gay Liberationist Sanctuary in the Southeastern Network, 1973–80,” *Radical History Review* 135 (2019): 71–94. On Radical Faerie queer spirituality, see also Will Roscoe, *Queer Spirits: A Gay Men’s Myth Book* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

37. Brian Joseph Gilley, *Becoming Two-Spirit: Gay Identity and Social Acceptance in Indian Country* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 7–15.

38. Radical Faerie retreats occasionally welcomed women and bisexual men, and provided shelter to “itinerant” queer people, as Scott Morgensen explained in “Radical Faerie Configurations,” 69.

39. Morgensen explained that the notion of creating a “queer home” as a form of emplaced queer spiritual practice was key to Radical Faerie culture. Morgensen, “Radical Faerie Configurations,” 71.

40. “Statement from the Directors of Nomenus,” August 10, 1989, SF GLBTHSA, Buzz Bense Records of the 890 Folsom Clubhouse (BBR), 1991–26. Collective ownership tested Nomenus’s cohesion as a group at various stages in its almost forty-year history. However, the social and cultural bonds that Radical Faeries reaffirm regularly through shared experiences have helped them resolve conflicts over time. According to Scott Morgensen, AIDS memorials on the Nomenus camp are also integral to the intergenerational experience of queer kinship. Morgensen, “Radical Faerie Configurations,” 83–84.

41. “Statement from the Directors of Nomenus.”

42. “Statement from the Directors of Nomenus.” See also Morgensen, “Radical Faerie Configurations,” 90.

43. “Memo from Buzz Bense to All Presidents/Managers of Clubs Using 8890 Folsom,” September 20, 1988, SF GLBTHSA, BBR, 1991–26.

44. Nomenus continued to own and operate the retreat in Oregon and is still active as an organization with dues-paying members. “About Nomenus,” Nomenus, accessed December 10, 2020, <https://nomenus.org/information/>.

45. Interview with Eric, March 17, 2016.

46. Jesse Oliver Sanford, “We Shall Not Be Moved,” *Bay Area Reporter*, July 12, 2017, https://www.ebar.com/opinion/guest_opinion/236177.

47. For an overview of rent control policies in the United States and their social effect, see W. Dennis Keating, Michael B. Teitz, and Andrejs Skaburskis, *Rent Control: Regulation and the Rental Housing Market* (New Brunswick: Center for Urban Policy Research, 1998).

48. Tom Moore and Kim McKee, “Empowering Local Communities? An International Review of Community Land Trusts,” *Housing Studies* 27, no. 2 (2012): 280–90.

49. Leslie Gordon, Mashaal Majid, Tony Roshan Samara, Fernando Echeverria, and Seema Rupani, *Rooted in Home: Community-Based Alternatives to the Bay Area Housing Crisis* (Oakland: Urban Habitat and East Bay Community Law Center, 2018).

50. Queer Land Trust, “Save the Grand Central Faerie House,” accessed January 10, 2021, <https://www.pinkstart.me/en/projects/413>.

51. James DeFilippis, Olivia R. Williams, Joseph Pierce, Deborah G. Martin, Rich Kruger, and Azadeh Hadizadeh Esfahani, “On the Transformative Potential of Community Land Trusts in the United States,” *Antipode* 51, no. 3 (2019): 796.

52. James DeFilippis, “The Potential and Limits of Community Land Trusts in Efforts for Housing Justice,” in *Housing Justice in Unequal Cities*, edited by Ananya Roy and Hilary Manson (Los Angeles: Institute on Inequality and Democracy at UCLA, 2016), 95–96.

53. International Independence Institute, “Community Land Trusts: A New Model for Land Tenure in America,” in Davis, *Community Land Trust Reader*, 222.

54. DeFilippis et al., “Transformative Potential,” 804–7. For a critique of the CLT model, see Olivia R. Williams, “The Problem with Community Land Trusts,” *Jacobin*, July 7, 2019, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/07/community-land-trusts-clts-problems>.

55. For a systematic analysis of economic activities that operate within and against capitalism, see J. K. Gibson-Graham, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

56. As of this writing the Queer Land Trust has not purchased any land and its online presence has dimmed. However, other CLTs have intensified their activities in the San Francisco Bay Area, most prominently those organized by Native American groups. See Beth R. Middleton Manning, Corrina Gould, Johnella LaRose, Melissa K. Nelson, Joanne Barker, Darcie L. Houck, and Michelle G. Steinberg, "A Place to Belong: Creating an Urban, Indian, Women-Led Land Trust in the San Francisco Bay Area," *Ecology and Society* 28, no. 1 (2023): 8.

57. I refer to queer futurity here as the way queer people conceptualize their personal and collective future, as well as the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and practices. Queer futurity has been a core part of queer theoretical debates in the last twenty years. For representative arguments, see Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Leo Bersani, *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

58. Kalima Rose and Margaretta Lin, *A Roadmap toward Equity: Housing Solutions for Oakland, California* (Oakland: Department of Housing & Community Development and Policy Link, 2015).

59. Peacock Rebellion, "About Peacock Rebellion," accessed May 20, 2019, <https://www.peacockrebellion.org/about/>.

60. Interview with Samm (pseudonym), June 25, 2019.

61. Catherine J. Nash, "Trans Geographies, Embodiment and Experience," *Gender, Place & Culture* 17, no. 5 (2010): 579–95; Katrina Roen, "Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalisation," *Journal of Gender Studies* 10, no. 3 (2001): 253–63.

62. "Healing Justice Principles: Some of What We Believe," Badass Visionary Healers, accessed August 19, 2019, <https://badassvisionaryhealers.wordpress.com/healing-justice-principles/>. My interlocutors in East Oakland also mentioned the principles of healing justice.

63. Nastia Voynovskaya, "Bay Brilliant: Peacock Rebellion," *KQED Arts*, August 24, 2018, <https://www.kqed.org/arts/13839611/bay-brilliant-peacock-rebellion>.

64. That internal exclusion within what are treated as monolithic groups, such as queer and trans people of color, is itself an often-neglected type of psychological violence.

65. "History," Sustaining Ourselves Locally, accessed May 20, 2021, <http://oaklandsol.weebly.com/history.html>.

66. "About Us," Sustaining Ourselves Locally, accessed May 2021, <http://oaklandsol.weebly.com/about-sol.html>.

67. Interview with Maven (pseudonym), August 7, 2019.

68. Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *Feminist Wire*, October 7, 2014, <https://thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>.

69. "Alameda County Eviction Report," Anti-Eviction Mapping Project and Tenants Together (2016), accessed May 10, 2020, <http://antievictionmapd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=53bb2678ff2d41ff8f287cb7e84a6f4d>.

70. Interview with Maven.

71. Interview with Maven.

72. Nastia Voynovskaya, "Oakland Grassroots Groups Unite to Purchase 23rd Avenue Building," *KQED ARTS*, April 6, 2017, <https://www.kqed.org/arts/13003192/oakland-grassroots-groups-unite-to-purchase-23rd-avenue-building>.

73. Benny L. Kass, “How D.C.’s Revised Tenant Law Affects Renters in Single-Family Homes,” *Washington Post*, August 13, 2018.

74. Aimee Inglis and Erin McElroy, *California Wall Street Landlords in 2019*, online report, accessed May 10, 2020, <https://www.tenantstogether.org/sites/tenantstogether.org/files/California%20Wall%20St%20Landlords%20in%202019.pdf>.

75. Interview with Samm.

76. Voynovskaya, “Oakland Grassroots Groups Unite.”

77. Neesha Powell-Twagirumukiza, “Here’s How Queer and Trans People of Color Are Resisting Gentrification and Displacement,” *Autostraddle*, May 16, 2017, <https://www.autostraddle.com/queering-the-land-how-queer-and-trans-people-of-color-are-resisting-gentrification-and-displacement-379320/>.

78. Muna Danish, “23rd Avenue Art Space Members Rally to Buy Their Own Building,” *Oakland North*, April 23, 2018, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2018/04/23/23rd-avenue-art-space-members-rally-to-buy-their-own-building/>.

79. Michael Williams, “Oakland Agrees to \$399,000 Settlement for Ghost Ship Tenants, Resolving Last Lawsuit from 2016 Fire Disaster,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 10, 2020, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/crime/article/Oakland-agrees-to-399-000-settlement-for-ghost-15718044.php>.

80. See, for example: Sam Lefebvre, “Evictions after Ghost Ship,” *East Bay Express*, November 29, 2017, <https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/evictions-after-ghost-ship/>; Michael Bodley, “Oakland Fire Prompts Nationwide Crackdown on Artists’ Spaces,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 9, 2016, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Oakland-fire-prompts-nationwide-crackdown-on-10787227.php>.

81. Self, *American Babylon*, 138–49.

82. Eri Oura quoted in Danish, “23rd Avenue Art Space Members Rally.”

83. Jarrid Green and Thomas M. Hana, *Community Control of Land and Housing: Exploring Strategies for Combatting Displacement Expanding Ownership and Building Community Wealth* (Washington, DC: Democracy Collaborative, 2018), 69–71.

84. This practice resonated with the CLT founding principles as potentially “transformative” with regard to political subjectivation, in the sense that Nancy Fraser has theorized the term. As Fraser argues, the difference between “affirmative” and “transformative” responses to social injustice lies in the tendency of affirmative politics to maintain extant categories and social structures, whereas transformative responses can destabilize them. Nancy Fraser, “From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a ‘Post-Socialist’ Age,” *New Left Review* 1, no. 212 (1995), quoted in DeFilippis et al., “Transformative Potential,” 800–801.

85. The term *community* was used both by OakCLT and Liberated 23rd tenants but does not have a commonly accepted definition among them. I sought to give a broad definition here based on how the term was employed in the context of OakCLT’s purchase of the building. For an important discussion of the political uses of the term, see Joseph, *Against the Romance of Community*.

86. Since then, OakCLT has purchased other buildings that house commercial and nonprofit activities in the neighborhood. A report by Urban Habitat and the East Bay Community Law Center includes the Liberated 23rd Avenue Building as an exemplary case study for contemporary community land trusts. Gordon et al., *Rooted in Home*.

87. Steve King quoted in Sarah Trent, “In Oakland, Community-Owned Real Estate Is Bucking Gentrification Trend,” *Locavesting*, March 12, 2018, <https://www.locavesting.com/spotlight/oakland-community-owned-real-estate-bucking-gentrification-trend/>.

88. Interview with Samm.

89. Mattson, “Style and the Value of Gay Nightlife.”

90. The collective used the acronym QTPOC (queer and trans people of color).

91. “About Us,” Liberating Ourselves Locally, accessed April 3, 2018, <https://oaklandmakerspace.wordpress.com/about/>. The LOL collective merged in 2017 with Peacock Rebellion, which has the organizational structure to take on the considerable fundraising efforts needed to maintain regular programming. Its fiscal sponsor is the local Social Good Fund, located in Richmond, CA.

92. Interview with Samm.

93. “Movement Technologist Statement,” May First Movement Technology, accessed August 20, 2019, <https://outreach.mayfirst.org/techstatement>.

94. “Get Centered: Rapid-Response Slow-Down Day,” Peacock Rebellion, accessed June 5, 2019, <https://www.peacockrebellion.org/get-centered-rapid-response-slow-down-day/>.

95. Interview with Samm.

96. Voynovskaya, “Bay Brilliant: Peacock Rebellion.”

97. Interview with Rosa (pseudonym), August 14, 2019.

98. Interview with Rosa.

99. See discussion of *Maestrapeace* in chapter 3.

100. On California muralism, see Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

101. It is important to point out here that by the time the mural was painted, a separate version of the flag with light blue, pink, and white ribbons represented specifically the trans rights movement, and other versions of Baker’s flag have been introduced in response to what groups have described as the “homogenizing” processes behind the use of the rainbow flag.

102. Interview with Rosa.

103. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 52–53.

104. On the “mapping” of race in the Bay Area’s landscape, see Willow S. Lung-Amam, *Trespassers? Asian Americans and the Battle for Suburbia* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

105. Allison Santiago in conversation with Angela Scott, quoted in Angela Scott, “Sights and Sounds of East Oakland: Creating a Lineage of Artists at Eastside Arts Alliance,” *KALW Local Public Radio*, April 13, 2016, <https://www.kalw.org/post/sights-sounds-east-oakland-creating-lineage-artists-eastside-arts-alliance#stream/0>.

106. *Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development, 2015–2020*, Housing and Community Development Department, City of Oakland, accessed January 10, 2022, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/read-the-2015-2020-consolidated-plan>.

107. Rose and Lin, “Roadmap toward Equity.”

108. City of Oakland Housing and Community Development Office, “Annual Reports,” accessed May 20, 2023, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/read-past-consolidated-plans>. The exact number of new affordable housing units is difficult to determine because of different forms of reporting data per yearly report.

109. City of Oakland Department of Housing and Community Development, *First Substantial Amendment to the Five Year Consolidated Plan*.

110. Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, ed., *Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement and Resistance* (Oakland: PM Press, 2021).

111. According to US census data, the percentages of population change between 1980 and 2010 in the tract of East Oakland that I discuss here were among the highest in Oakland: up to 66 percent decrease of black and up to 51 percent of Latinx population. The increase in the percentage of white population was approximately 50 percent. Data visualizations of the Longitudinal Tract Database, Brown University, are included in Rose and Lin, “Roadmap toward Equity,” 69–71.

112. Interview with Maven.

EPILOGUE

1. For a contemporary ethnographic account of this network, see Margot Danielle Weiss, *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

2. I have explored this notion elsewhere. See Stathis G. Yeros and Leonardo Chiesi, “Trans Territorialization: Building Empowerment beyond Identity Politics,” *Social Sciences* 11, 10 (2022): 429.

3. I refer here to the critique of “pinkwashing” and antigentrification activism that has informed my analysis in this book, specifically in the introduction and chapter 5. A key book-length study that helped frame this discussion is Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, revised and expanded ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

4. Many thanks to Annie Wilson, John Cunningham, and Roddy Williams for inviting me to the workday and their generous sharing of information and visual material about the AIDS Memorial.

5. Corporations, such as Wells Fargo Bank and Chevron, also sponsored memorial infrastructure. This reveals the late-capitalist nonprofit industrial complex, which complicates the narrative that grassroots group “carve out” spaces from mainstream urbanity to address their needs. This book has attempted to contextualize those entanglements in their historical context, remaining close to the analysis of specific sites. For a broader discussion of the nonprofit industrial complex, among many others, see David Harvey, “Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610 (2007): 22–44; INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “AIDS Public Use Results,” accessed August 5, 2022, <https://wonder.cdc.gov/controller/datarequest/D12j;sessionId=636F14755882361792E1844A6AF2>.

7. Other forms of protest, such as ACT UP direct action campaigns, coexisted with the forms of empathetic activism. For further discussion of this topic, see chapter 4.

8. Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Fray: Art + Textile Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 194.

9. National AIDS Memorial, "Search the AID Memorial Quilt," accessed July 20, 2022, <https://www.aidsmemorial.org/interactive-aids-quilt>.
10. Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 200–201.
11. Bryan-Wilson, *Fray*, 227.
12. Sturken, *Tangled Memories*, 207–8.

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