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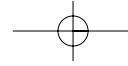
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JOSÉ SARRIA COURT

SYLVIA RIVERA



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Eliding trans Latino/a queer experience in U.S. LGBT history: José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera reexamine

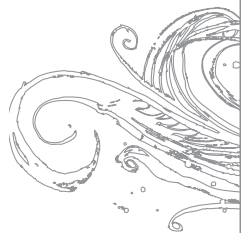
TIM RETZLOFF

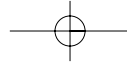
VIA RIVERA WAY

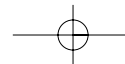


ABSTRACT

This essay examines the place of trans Latino/a queer pioneers José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera in U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender historiography over the past two decades, specifically how their Latino/a identities have been conveyed and elided in professional and popular historical texts, in documentary films, in cinematic fictions, and on newly-erected street signs. It further explores how such scholarly developments as transgender history, new accounts of queer Latino/a San Francisco and New York, and diaspora studies, particularly with regard to Rivera's Puerto Rican heritage in the context of 1960s New York City, have provided new vantage points from which to assess their significance to the always tentative project of queer history. [Keywords: José Sarria; Sylvia Rivera; historiography; Latino/a; queer; transgender; identity; diaspora]





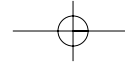


On May 25, 2006, San Francisco formally renamed a one-block segment of 16th Street as José Sarria Court. Six months earlier, on November 14, 2005, the City of New York rechristened the corner of Christopher and Hudson Streets as Sylvia Rivera Way. Sarria, the first openly gay candidate for public office in the United States, and Rivera, a participant in the famed 1969 Stonewall rebellion seen as launching the modern gay liberation movement, will thus become familiar to the passersby and perhaps future users of MapQuest. On opposite coasts in separate queer “meccas,” city officials exerted their power to consecrate public space and honor pioneers of the U.S. LGBT movement. The governmental marking of Sarria Court and Silvia Rivera Way signified moments of reclamation and affirmation, not only at the municipal level; the renamed streets are fitting tributes to these iconic figures and to all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals who have been casually stricken from mainstream history texts and public memory.

At the same time, such symbolic endorsements also served as acts of elision. In appropriately honoring the inspirational contributions of José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera, these local governments chose to recognize perhaps the two most significant Latino/a individuals in what has come to be framed as U.S. LGBT history. Yet their Latino/a status—Sarria’s Colombian and Nicaraguan ancestry and Rivera’s Puerto Rican and Venezuelan ancestry—remained largely sublimated in press coverage of their respective events and in the very locations of the roadways that will now bear their Latino/a names. Both commemorations, unveiled in festive acts of gay boosterism, favored the honorees’ ties to their gay and queer communities, and to some extent their divergent forms of transgender identity and activism, in lieu of their ethnic heritage. Whether queer politicians usurped or simply utilized Sarria and Rivera, the prevailing version of gay, queer, and transgender history propagated on the streets of San Francisco and New York appeared white—perhaps even, to borrow the phrase William Deverell applies to early booster efforts to erase Mexicans from Los Angeles history, “whitewashed.”²

While the commemorative street signs indeed reflect competing historical narratives, as epicenters of queer consumption, boosters alone do not write history. History is written by multiple practitioners and varied purveyors, including professional historians, journalists, and filmmakers. For more than two decades, historians, journalists, and filmmakers have commemorated José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera in their own particular genres, incorporating these extraordinary trans Latino/a queer individuals into a unified and unifying LGBT national narrative shaped by the LGBT movement. Both, for instance, appear in *Out For Good*, a sweeping survey of post-Stonewall gay rights activism by *New York Times* reporters Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney. Alas, such histories often tend to take a somewhat conservative approach, normalizing sexuality, glossing its complexities.³

As a formal academic discipline, history can be notoriously conservative. It favors the meticulous analysis of documentary evidence culled from archival research, methodology that traces its origins to the professionalization of history and virile crafting of national histories in the nineteenth century. From its start history has been implicated in manhood and the nation-state. Yet even history itself and histories themselves have a history. The discipline has proven



to new insights from social history, women's history, cultural history, and the history of sexuality. Although certain historiographic hegemonies do remain entrenched, they face constant challenge as new questions arise and new questioners arrive. History is inevitably framed by new concerns of the present day, suggesting the potential for, if not the promise of, expansive, fluid, and complicated queer histories.⁴

The particular roles that José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera have played in the national narrative raise several questions. To what extent did their Latino/a expression and ethnic identity on opposite coasts survive or get subsumed by dominant Anglo conceptions of gender and sexuality? While both have been foundational and celebrated as heroes in a progression of white LGBT political culture, how have they each also been marginalized in different but important ways? And what can they tell us about the impact of more recent transgender and Latino/a histories? In effect, how have they been Latino/a queers or queer Latinos? As a white, gay, working-class Midwesterner striving to traverse the path from independent scholar to professional historian, I am drawn to this discussion. I am committed to fuller understandings of how gender, ethnicity, and sexuality have been complexly intertwined and constructed over time. I seek expansive, fluid, and complicated queer histories.

This essay examines the place of José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera in U.S. LGBT history and discourse as produced inside and outside the academy, historiography both formal and informal. Beginning with brief biographical accounts of each, I then map their representations in written professional and popular histories, in documentary film, and in cinematic fictions. From there, I explore how scholarly developments in transgender and queer Latino/a local and diaspora studies provide new vantage points from which to assess the significance of Sarria and Rivera. I close with some reflections on the role of street naming in the mediation of queer historical meaning.

José Sarria

José Sarria was born December 22, 1923 to an unwed mother who had fled from a torn Colombia and settled in San Francisco. Journalist and writer Michael Gorman gives José Sarria a breezy, informal biography in *The Empress is a Man*, published in 2003. The book provides anecdotal accounts of Sarria's life, including his youthful arrival in San Francisco as a Mexican dancer, how he slept his way into the Army in World War II, and how he attended college on the GI Bill while working as a part-time waiter at the Black Cat, San Francisco's famed bohemian establishment on Montgomery Street. In the 1950s, vice cops apprehended Sarria on a morals charge in the men's room of the Francis Hotel bar, ruining his pursuit of teaching credentials. The arrest propelled him further into the semi-clandestine gay world of mid-century San Francisco, where he worked at the Black Cat, where he soon launched his career as an influential cross-dresser and entertainer performing what he termed "parody drag," attracting an audience with his comedic renderings of *Carmen*. "I didn't start performing to be famous," Sarria told Gorman. "I just did it because people were going to support me in the manner I wanted to live and that I was used to. That's why I insist on the butter dish, and I insist on the silver. I was brought up to live that way and until the day I die I will live that way."

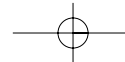


Emperor I Marcus Hernandez escorts Empress I Jose to her 80th birthday party, San Francisco (12 February 2002). Photograph by Rick Gerbarter. Reprinted, by permission, from Rick Gerbarter.

had to work together, that we were responsible for our lives. We could change if we weren't always hiding. God save us nelly queens, that's what you are, be p it and get off your butt and do something about it. It was a silly song, but serio

Particularly germane to the project of tracing the history of LGBT rights U.S., in 1961 Sarria daringly campaigned for a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, in symbolic opposition to the mayor's efforts to close the Black Cat, an openly gay bar that had been unlawfully serving alcohol to homosexuals. He became the first openly gay man in the country to run for elective office, garnering 5,600 votes and demonstrating the potential power of a gay voting bloc. In 1963, while the Black Cat was in the process of losing its liquor license, he took part in founding the Society for Individual Rights. A year later, he formed the Imperial Court System of female impersonators, with himself crowned as Empress José I, the Widow Norton, the surviving partner of Joshua Norton, an eccentric nineteenth-century San Franciscan who declared himself Emperor of All North America.

Sarria settled into a modest, middle-class life. In the mid-1960s, he worked as a restaurateur at the World's Fairs in New York and Montreal. During the 1970s, he revived his camp operas, fittingly at the Royal Palace. Over the years, his numerous Imperial Courts engaged in charitable and community service for untold LGBTQ and AIDS causes. In 1994, Sarria participated at the Stonewall 25 celebration, and with the publication of Michael Gorman's biography of him, he returned to the public eye full-force, acclaimed for his status as a pre-Stonewall pioneer. In 2005, he was named a San Francisco City Hero. Sarria garnered unflattering press attention for his performance as a juror in a 2006 trial involving a gay clergyman, with defense lawyers alleging an appeal that he strengthened on



Sylvia Rivera

Born Ray Rivera July 2, 1951 to an unmarried Bronx mother who committed suicide when he was three, Rivera and his Puerto Rican half-sister were raised by his immigrant Venezuelan grandmother, who had been deserted by her Mexican husband. As outlined in the 1993 book *Stonewall* by historian Martin Duberman, Rivera hit the streets of New York at age eleven, joining the transvestite precinct of the early 1960s along the seedy, bustling sexual marketplace of 42nd Street. Other street queens christened him Sylvia Lee. In the blur of the 1960s, Rivera, living with a hustler boyfriend, began popping Benzedrine, spent time jail on Riker's Island, and showed up in full drag at the military induction center where he was being drafted during the Vietnam War.⁹

Much of Rivera's fame rests on her presence at the Stonewall Inn on the fatal night in 1969, when a police raid turned into the violent riot that many have come to see as the world-changing spark to gay liberation. She may, or may not, have thrown the first brick. Months after the riot, Rivera became active in the Gay Activists Alliance, which supplanted homophile activism in its militant quest for gay rights, circulating petitions demanding that the city enact a non-discrimination ordinance. Duberman records the white, largely middle-class activists who used the Stonewall uprising to mobilize a mass political movement in ensuing years rejected the Latino/a transvestites like Rivera, who played a pivotal role in the melee. The GAA simply dropped transvestites from its agenda. Outcast from the gay community by people she had thought were her brothers and sisters, Rivera went on to organize with her friend Marsha P. Johnson and the group STAR, Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, providing shelter for homeless transvestites and forging a vehicle for transvestite militancy. She devoted her efforts to a revolutionary politics battling all oppressions, becoming involved for a time with the Young Lords and the Black Panthers. Rivera's rift with the mainstream movement culminated at the 1973 Gay Pride Rally when feminists, outraged because they viewed cross-dressing as sexist, sought to keep Rivera from the podium.

Over the next couple of decades, Rivera lived a blue-collar existence in Times Square, New York, working several food service jobs, somehow surviving economic deprivation, substance abuse, and much social ostracism. Despite being geographically removed from the center of queer action, she returned to Manhattan nearly every June to take part in the annual pride march and held an honored place among Stonewall veterans in the celebration marking the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots in 1994. A year later, *Village Voice* columnist Michael Musto found Rivera living homeless in a park in Yonkers. By the late 1990s, she had returned to New York, defending queer teenagers uprooted from their shelter beneath the city's abandoned piers and advocating for what had come to be framed as transgender rights. Several years before her death, Rivera found a new home in Transylvania, becoming a mother figure for poor transgender youth and volunteering in the food pantry for the Metropolitan Community Church of New York. Sylvia Rivera died from liver cancer at age fifty on February 19, 2002.¹⁰

"I'm glad I was in the Stonewall Riot," Rivera told transgender activist and scholar Leslie Feinberg in 1998. "I remember when someone threw a Molotov cocktail. I thought, 'My god, the revolution is here. The revolution is finally



photo E Bedoz

**S.T.A.R.****STREET TRANSVESTITE ACTION REVOLUTIONARIES**

Sylvia Rivera (center) with other Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (S.T.A.R.). [From *Come Out* (No. 7, p. 5)] Photo by E. Bedoz. Reprinted, by permission, from National History Archives of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center.

Historical Representations

Onto the history page

Sarria made his debut as the subject of gay history in the secondhand reminiscences of George Mendenhall about the Black Cat in the 1977 documentary *Word is Out* and a companion book of the same title. The story was taken up in *Sexual Politics and Communities*, the formative monograph of the U.S. LGBT narrative published in 1989. Here path-breaking historian John D'Emilio draws from *Word is Out* to include Sarria as part of the converging beatnik milieu and a coalescing consciousness of homosexuals as a minority group. "Unlike the later Stonewall Riot in New York City in 1969, Sarria's symbolic candidacy did not spark nationwide organizing and protest, but it did help set in motion developments that fed a steadily growing stream of political activity in San Francisco throughout the 1960s," D'Emilio writes. Nonetheless, D'Emilio argues that Sarria contributed to the incremental consciousness and awareness seen to be prerequisite for the revolt of 1969.¹²

In historian Nan Alamilla Boyd's 2003 monograph *Wide Open Town*, a narrative of San Francisco, and U.S., queer history, Sarria has a more extensive role. According to Boyd, throughout the 1950s and 1960s, when homophile activists attempted to distance themselves from working-class and transgender history,



liberation, Sarria daringly challenged the establishment, but he did so as part of a broader quest for middle-class respectability, through peaceful resistance, both in and for office and helping to found organizations. Through D'Emilio and Boyd, Sarria further demonstrated by his inclusion in two recent biographical reference works that Sarria has secured a revered place in pre-Stonewall gay and lesbian history. I have made, however, of his being Latino/a.¹³

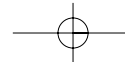
Sylvia Rivera's entry into U.S. LGBT historiography coincided with heightened attention on Stonewall as the major turning point in the LGBT national narrative. The trans Latino/a queer life of Rivera, as reflected in history texts, contrasts sharply with the trans Latino/a queer life of José Sarria. Rivera is one of only two trans subjects and the sole trans perspective included in the 1992 collection of trans, lesbian and gay oral testimonies *Making History* by Eric Marcus. No reverence for Rivera seems to include Rivera in his book (as "Rey" not "Sylvia") only grudgingly titling the section "The Drag Queen":

Rey Rivera scares lots of people—straight and gay. He fulfills almost every negative gay-male stereotype. He is profoundly effeminate. He dresses in drag. He spent years selling his body on New York City's streets. And he has been involved with drugs and alcohol. If anyone is to be pointed to as an example of why gay people should not be given equal rights, it's Rey.

Marcus all but ignores ethnicity. The edited transcription of Rivera's words about her Puerto Rican and Venezuelan parentage simply in passing. Rivera functions in the book as an outrage and an outlier.

Martin Duberman's rendition of Rivera, published a year later, is far more sympathetic. Duberman features Rivera's life as one of six personal narratives, archetypes of New York and U.S. queer history, prominent and representative. Duberman reclaims and resignifies Rivera, previously cast out of the gay liberation movement, restoring her to her rightful place in the movement's birth at Stonewall and articulating the riot as multicultural, rendered real rather than mythic. Compared to Marcus, who refers to Rivera strictly by masculine name, Duberman respects Rivera's gender identification, shifting to the use of her name after the rechristening of Ray as Sylvia. The historian is likewise highly conscious of ethnic identity, giving close attention to Rivera's Puerto Rican background and her place within the racialized and sexualized hierarchies of late-1960s and early-1970s New York:

A Hispanic street queen's transgressive being produced automatically as an alarm: Sylvia was from the wrong ethnic group, from the wrong neighborhood, on the wrong tracks, wearing the wrong clothes—managing single-handedly to do so simultaneously to embody several frightening, overlapping categories of Otherness. By her mere presence, she was likely to trespass against some encoded middle-class white script, and could count on being



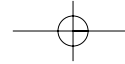
While a central player in the Duberman version of events, Rivera's place in history remains contentious for others. Rivera is utterly absent from the supposed historical "corrective" by David Carter, a 2004 book that purports to set the record straight. Carter barely acknowledges a trans Latino/a queer presence, claiming that what few African Americans and Puerto Ricans were there remained segregated within the bar and were less engaged in resisting police harassment than other participants. Without mentioning names, he boasts of excising accounts that "do not withstand careful scrutiny." Unlike a professional scholar who might present multiple sides of a controversy to demonstrate how history is inevitably an amalgam, Carter expunges Rivera by fiat. "This false testimony has naturally made the informed public quite skeptical of most if not all accounts of the riots," he writes, "and therefore I have not referred to these inaccurate accounts."¹⁶

Benjamin Shepard confronts Carter's omission of Rivera in the *Lambda Report*, recounting a 2004 Stonewall symposium moderated by Eric Marcus at the New York Historical Society, at which attendees conferred a more heartfelt attention to the detective in charge of the famed police raid than to rioters themselves. Shepard rightly challenges Carter's interpretation, noting how Carter refuses to accept, or even directly reckon with Rivera, while fully trusting the largely discredited accounts of a cross-dressing J. Edgar Hoover. Carter told Shepard he could find no reliable witnesses, other than Rivera's friends, to place her at Stonewall. Yet, as Marc Stein suggests in showing how lesbians in Philadelphia remembered the riots while gay men tended not to recall lesbians, it may be that Carter's predominantly white sources are the less reliable. Carter cannot prove that Sylvia Rivera was at Stonewall. In omitting Rivera, he can prove only that he is unwilling to connect his LGBT narrative with the allegedly untrustworthy testimony of one unruly Puerto Rican street queen.¹⁷

Onto the small screen

Two queer history documentaries geared to the PBS audience, *Before Stonewall* and *Out Rage '69*, maintain Stonewall in the vaunted position it has held since the Christopher Street Liberation Day march and rally in 1970. They likewise provide additional, visually mediated understandings of both Sarria and Rivera and their respective parts in the LGBT quest for equality.

Before Stonewall, directed by filmmaker Greta Schiller and released in 1987, contains a vintage audio recording of Sarria performing at the Black Cat, four clips recounting the political scandal over bar payoffs to the police, the founding of the Tavern Guild to counter official harassment, and Sarria's courageous but unsuccessful campaign for city council. In the original version of the film, Sarria himself appears only at a Black Cat reunion, appearing in pants and a windbreaker, out of drag. Aside from leading the gathered crowd in a chorus of his trademark song "God Save Us Nelly Queens," his principal line of dialog is: "I've always told you, especially young ones, 'There's nothing *wrong* in being gay, absolutely nothing.' It's getting caught where you pay the price." Piano accompaniment, as returning bar patrons sing to the tune of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," echoes the grade-school patriotism of reciting the pledges of allegiance.¹⁸



knew what I looked like,” he says. The drag was an act, a performance, not a lifestyle. Comic relief. Sarria does not appear in feminine attire, and the film makes no mention of his dubbing himself Empress José I, the Widow Noriega, or of his founding the Imperial Court. In fact, none of the on-screen narrators appears in full drag, though a gay male southern belle is shown putting on makeup, in the guise of make-believe. Transvestites and cross-dressers are appropriate to this gay and lesbian reflection. Furthermore, whereas African American narrators Mabel Hampton, Bruce Nugent, and Audre Lorde address their experiences as racial others in the film, Sarria’s Latino/a background is not addressed. He has assimilated into white U.S. society. The audience witnesses what appears to be the genuine joy of those in Sarria’s company, former customers who used to pay to see him. The message conveyed by Sarria’s appropriation of drag is that the collective lesbian and gay “We” are one big happy, middle-class, normative gay family.¹⁹

In *Out Rage '69*, a 1995 documentary directed by filmmaker Arthur Dong as part of *The Question of Equality* series, Sylvia Rivera appears in gown and makeup against a brick wall backdrop that accentuates her combined ethnicity and class status. Speaking with the authority afforded by a camera close-up, she recounts her participation at the Stonewall the first night of the riot. Later in the film, she testifies to how she was treated by the Gay Activists Alliance: “The more meetings I went to, I noticed that I wasn’t part of them, and I would never be of ‘em.” There is then a quick jump cut in the film, indicating that a portion

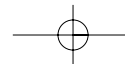
“ Watching the hostile reaction to Rivera’s outburst is to experience the immediacy of both her anger and her alienation. ”

edited out. “And I started hanging out again on the streets and I became a street person and a hustler, and I started organizing my people. And I wasn’t there to give a helping hand.” Later we see black-and-white

archival footage of the 1973 Gay Pride Rally in Washington Square Park where Rivera reacted to disparaging remarks about drag queens by rally speaker Jean O’Leary. Rivera’s hoarse, spontaneous profanity and fury is contrasted in the film minutes later with crisp color footage of O’Leary speaking on a television talk show, her presentation articulate and rehearsed. Watching the hostile reaction to Rivera’s outburst is to experience the immediacy of both her anger and her alienation. This contrasts with the warm, nostalgic reception the audience is invited to witness in *Before Stonewall* while viewing Sarria at the Black Cat reunion and during his trip down memory lane on somebody’s living room couch.²⁰

To a greater extent than in *Before Stonewall*, race and ethnicity are directly showcased in *Out Rage '69*. The film contains a broader racial and ethnic diversity with Candice Boyce and Ronald Ballard, both African Americans, accompanied in testimony by Kiyoski Kuromiya, of Japanese heritage, and Sylvia Rivera. More to the point, each of these narrators speaks to the distinct exclusions experienced from the white lesbian and gay community. The underlying message here is that “our” gay genealogy is more complicated than we’ve previously





Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York in 1995, it drew divergent, heated response from a range of experts. Arthur Dong characterized creating the film as “kind of personal,” implying that his own Asian identity helped inform the film’s vision. On the other hand, GAA activists Arnie Kantrowitz and Ron Gold both faulted the film for not touting their organization’s achievements, while artist and poet Fran Wilder suggested that the film’s explanation was not complete enough. Independent scholar Allan Bérubé, who worked as a consultant to the documentary, saw the portrayal as reflecting conflicts still present twenty-five years later. He saw the challenge of shaping *Out Rage ‘69* in terms of how to root the history “as an American story.”²¹

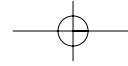
Onto the silver screen
Following the release of *Before Stonewall* and *Out Rage ‘69*,
the visible reach of José Sarria and
Sylvia Rivera moved beyond the
Public Television eyes of “Viewers
Like You” to movie theater
audiences around the world.
A sort of immortalizing of Sarria
on the big screen came in the 1995
motion picture *To Wong Foo*,
Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar,
part of a veritable drag craze in the
mid-1990s and described by
Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes as
“a fake, feel-good *Priscilla*, *Queen
of the Desert* Hollywood remake.”
In this film, Sarria, in costume as
the Widow Norton, has a mere
fleeting cameo—shown along with
Quentin Crisp, Flotilla DeBarge,
and the Lady Bunny—as one of
the judges of the fictional New
York Drag Queen pageant.

These historical cameos, for those
in the audience that might spot
them, are a nod of sorts to the world *To Wong Foo* exploits with all the sensibility
of a minstrel show. Sarria is used perhaps to legitimize the rosy and other
inauthentic portrayals throughout the rest of the film.²²

Rivera, in turn, was fictionalized as La Miranda in the 1996 film *Stonewall*,
completed by British director Nigel Finch shortly before his death from AIDS.
Played by the comely Guillermo Díaz, La Miranda is a highly sympathetic
character in a movie that refashions the Stonewall riot as the climactic



Jose Sarria as the Widow Norton, San Francisco (29 February 1995).
Photographer © Rick Gerbarter. Reprinted, by permission,
from Rick Gerbarter.



something kinda realer. We deal in dreams. We're American as apple pie.

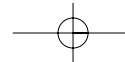
In praising the film's depiction of gay history, scholarly reviewer Scott Brown offers a useful critique:

Throughout the film, the drag queens evoke a particular kind of gender trouble that has continued to suffuse gay politics and culture, including significant tensions over looks, "real" manhood, and femininity. This gender trouble is particularly evident in the queens' lover relationships with nonqueen men, whether Vinnie the mafia owner of the Stonewall, or Matty Dean, a recent arrival to New York City who "really believed it would be different" there. Interestingly, however, even though those relationships are also structured around racial difference (Vinnie and Matty Dean are white, their respective love interests Bostonia and La Miranda are African American and Puerto Rican), the tensions within them never indicate how or if race matters.²⁴

As a British film, Finch's *Stonewall* accentuates the riot as a moment of U.S. exceptionalism. For the United Kingdom and the rest of the world, this myth of American rebellion, like the revolution of 1775, gets reified as a beacon of hope for the city on the hill. Never mind the founding of Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Germany in 1897, the revival of the Amsterdam Homosexuality en-Ontspannings Centrum in 1946, the formation of Arcadie in Paris in 1951, the Wolfenden Committee in Great Britain during the late 1950s, or the launch of the Ottawa Council on Religion and the Homosexual in 1965. Might as well be Hollywood. Much like the Duberman book, upon which it is loosely based, the cinematic *Stonewall* celebrates the multicultural possibility of the *American* Dream, however much the Duberman book, material on race and ethnicity is not fully articulated.²⁵

Historical contexts and new historiographic hegemonies

However stripped of or accentuated by their Latino/a ethnicity, multiple textual and filmic representations of José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera have incorporated them squarely into the LGBT national narrative. Still, the actual trans Latino/a queerness of Sarria and Rivera ought to be understood in numerous historical contexts, not least because both homosexuals and Spanish-speaking immigrants were simultaneously reviled in the mid-twentieth century. Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, propagators of scandal in the 1950s, savaged both queer and Latino/a targets in the popular print. Of San Francisco, circa 1952, they wrote: "The sad conclusion of a trip through Frisco is that the ginmills doing the best business are those who cater to the intermediate sex" and "Heroin, morphine and reefers are sold in colorful Mexican neighborhoods." Of the "fairy contingent" of New York, they said, "They mince around Times Square and as far east as Bryant Park bars, where known as Tiny, is a front man for the lush workers." Stereotyping the city's poor Latino/a population, they lamented, "Puerto Rico is now a suburb of Manhattan."



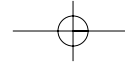
communities, discernable Latino/a queer communities in these queer capital
concurrently forged themselves into a co-existent, and (at least partially) inte
place among white queers. Scholars have recently begun to uncover the histo
Latino/a queer geographies against which Sarria and Rivera might be measur

Queer Latino/a cityscapes

Horacio Roque Ramírez, who interviewed a cross-section of forty Latino/a
for his historical study of San Francisco's queer Latino/a communities of des
places Sarria, so amiably accepted by the white gay world, solidly within the
framework of the white LGBT movement. "Although some may argue José'
in the city also extends Latino history back to the 1950s, none of the narrat
interviewed for this study connected José Sarria directly to gay Latino histo
Francisco." The reasons for this might stem partly from Sarria himself. *The*
Is a Man implies considerable separation between Sarria and other queer La
Early on, the book mentions that his mother chose to immigrate to San Fra
because, as Gorman quotes his subject, "New York was too big with too ma
Ricans." Furthermore, Gorman details how Sarria distinguished himself: "Jo
Hispanic and he is not Mexican; he is 'of Spanish Colombian descent.'" Sarri
identification as a Spaniard by ancestry echoes the stance of elite Hispanos
emphasized their Spanish roots to construct themselves as white in order to
and maintain privilege and citizenship in early twentieth-century New Mex
As an assimilated Colombian, he perhaps also felt little commonality with t
large Mexican population, which was cast as alien by persistent occupation
territorial, and linguistic barriers.²⁷

For Roque Ramírez, it was prominent trans Latino/a performers such as
and Teresita La Campesina that figured prominently, not marginally, in the c
of a queer Latino/a world of desire, not identity. His dissertation—mapping
currents of desire based on gender expression and desire based on biological
the first full-fledged historical examination of a queer ethnic enclave. Roque
chronicles how transgender sex workers, the pioneering Gay Latino Allianc
"travesti" stage shows, the Esta Noche bar, and Proyecto ContraSIDA Por V
helped create a social world both queer *and* Latino/a, a world that ultimately
contributed to increased visibility of all Latinos and Latinas in the Bay Area
Recounting the vital commercial strip *la dieciséis* along 16th Street in the Mi
District, he remarks, "Since its beginning, the strip of dieciséis has been an
community formation of genders, sexualities, and desires, challenging an es
understanding of queer Latina and Latino San Francisco." Sarria's career on
Montgomery Street set him far apart culturally and spatially from the Latin
queer communities described by Roque Ramírez.²⁸

Sylvia Rivera, in comparison, was very much *of* the predominant queer La
communities of the Big Apple. While no full-length historical study has yet
done on queer Latino/a New York, urban planner Luis Aponte-Parés, solo a
together with the artist Jorge Merced, has begun to fill the void. Aponte-Pa
observes that the gay movement of the 1970s corresponded with a renaissar
local Chicago, Puerto Rican, and other Latino/a consciousness, a conscious

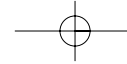


within the Latino/a neighborhoods of Woodside, Washington Heights, the Bronx, and Jackson Heights. As Aponte-Parés notes, rising militancy gave rise to groups as Comité Homosexual Latino Americano, Latinos y Latinas de Amor, the Colombian Lesbian and Gay Organization, and Mano a Mano. From the Latino/a queerscapes in New York, queers from Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Central America, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere in Latin America have intended to make their presence known. Aponte-Parés asserts, “Latino queers have begun to challenge queer institutions. They also aim to be coproducers of a queer imagination and appropriate places of queer culture, thus Latinizing queer culture. They claim a role in the coproduction of a Latino imaginary.”²⁹

In contrast to how Sarria has been excluded from the Latino/a queer memory of San Francisco while wrapped into the white LGBT narrative, Aponte-Parés and Merced herald Sylvia Rivera, rejected by some white gay activists, as an important Latino/a forebear. Rivera’s expulsion from the white LGBT movement and resultant narrative is seen as emblematic of queer Latino/a exclusion perpetuated by white gay racism and sexism. “Puerto Ricans remained out-siders, observed and denied a place at the gay table, and thus they were excluded from full participation in the institutional development of the lesbian and gay movement,” Aponte-Parés and Merced write. Not only that, they see much of the U.S. LGBT movement, constructed upon “privileged status,” as aimed at simple reform of the system such that white LGBT privilege would be maintained—at the expense of transgender queers, impoverished queers, and queers of color. Rivera’s life and the oppositional struggle in New York between militant Latino/a queer activism and a whitebread LGBT politics seeking status within mainstream American society

Queer Latino/a immigration and diaspora

José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera, both native-born citizens of the United States and children of Spanish-speaking immigrants, share nominal trans Latino/a queer status. Yet their historical stature within their respective Latino/a queer communities is contingent on the extent to which each assimilated into U.S. society—in other words, the extent to which they each became white. Here, the histories of Latino/a immigration and diaspora become relevant. As an imperialist power, the United States has opened and closed its borders based on asserted economic imperatives and national self-interest. Upon entering the U.S., some immigrants have undergone an uneven process of assimilation and forced Americanization, coaxed and compelled to adopt white consciousness to secure home and job. Others arriving or brought to the U.S.—Asian Americans, Latino/as—have been systematically excluded, their working classes remaining on the lowest rungs of the political, economic, and legal hierarchies against which whiteness has been measured. At times sexuality has been deeply bound to such barriers. As Eithne Luibhéid argues, “the narrative of the United States as a land of freedom and opportunity, which often implicitly guides writings about queer migrations, represses the long history of how freedom and opportunity for so many has generally been purchased at the expense of the many.” Privilege in the United States has been inextricably tied to race. People of privilege, socially constructed as white, have blatantly and subtly exploited those socially constructed as non-white, on



sexual, ethnic, gender, national borders. With respect to the LGBT national narrative, Sarria and Rivera may thus be seen as differing in their relationship to U.S. culture. Sarria, of Spanish lineage, is in many ways implicated with the colonizer, while Rivera, ever cognizant of being, and being marked as, Puerto Rican, resisted the colonizer. Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes reminds us that Puerto Rico has held a unique position with relation to the U.S. since conquest of the island in 1898. From the criminalization of sodomy in 1902 to the imposition of an egalitarianism of gay pairing, U.S. cultural norms have been adapted by some and opposed by others. Its past century fused with that of the U.S., Puerto Rico has served as a crucible of origin and vector of migrational exchange. Here, Frances Negrón-Muntaner is helpful, describing Puerto Rican entry into mid-twentieth-century gay New York:

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, New York City experienced a massive influx of queer boricuas, who ‘electrified’ the local gay scene the way working class Italians had done in the 1920s. Unlike white middle-class gay men, boricuas seemed more comfortable with performing and enjoying their sexuality, both as drag and trade, and inhabited public space in highly visible ways.

Rivera’s mode of being threatened white normative homophile respectability. Her darker skin, her feminine performance, her sheer destitution were read to be shunned or fetishized but not assimilated. While a touch New York-centric in his framing of the LGBT national narrative, La Fountain-Stokes demands that Puerto Ricans—and Sylvia Rivera—not be written out of queer history: “There is nothing as ‘the American gay model’ or queer American history independent of the contributions of Puerto Ricans in the United States.”³²

Transgender history

The rise of a new transgender history since the mid-1990s offers additional significant and innovative ways of revisioning the queer past. Transgender studies reflected in such popular and academic works as *Transgender Warriors* by Leslie Feinberg, *How Sex Changed* by Joanne Meyerowitz, and *The Transgender Studies Reader* emerged out of the Transgender movement much as gay history emerged out of the gay liberation. New transgender analyses have served to destabilize the category of gay and help complicate the trans Latino/a queer lives of Sarria and Rivera. Meyerowitz, for example, notes that Rivera preferred drag to transformative surgeries not available in the 1960s. In fact, both Sarria and Rivera were emphatic about being what they considered biologically male. “Well, my dear, I dress in drag professionally. I don’t just dress in women’s clothes to go to a party,” Sarria stressed to Michael Gorman, “unless you tell me not to.” Rivera’s path proved more fluid. Martin Duberman provides a snapshot of her thinking prior to her involvement in the transgender movement. “Sylvia didn’t care much about definitions, which was precisely why she would emerge as a radical figure. She disliked any attempt to categorize her random, sometimes contradictory impulses, to make them



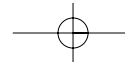
As transgender history has intersected with ethnic studies and queer studies, new articulations of Latino/a cross-dressing sheds additional light on Sarria and Rivera. Frances Negrón-Muntaner frames trans Latino/a queer drag as part of assimilation: “Drag—and the new identity that it founds—does not then reify racially engendered roles. Instead, it recognizes how cross-dressing and make-up can offset gendered ethnicity by offering a way out of the queer male body of the ‘no body’ of America.” Martin Manalansan posits a seemingly contradictory view, seeing drag as resisting assimilation, as part of racial/ethnic solidarity. “Cross-dressing,” he writes, “has provided a kind of anchor for the creation of affinities with other men, Latinos, and African Americans. One informant suggested that cross-dressing among ‘minorities’ or ‘people of color’ contrasts sharply with ‘white’ notions of masculinity.”

In regard to Sarria and Rivera, perhaps both theorists are correct, or at least partially correct. Taking into account Esther Newton’s seminal formulations of Midwestern impersonators in the 1960s, it is possible that class might be key in determining the extent to which Sarria and Rivera may have wanted and were able to assimilate. Sarria was a “stage” impersonator, of a higher social status from the start. “He is not a drag queen; he is a female impersonator,” Gorman makes clear. “He is not a male impersonator; he is the Grand Empress.” Rivera, on the other hand, was a “street” impersonator. Whether she aspired to assimilate or not, she lacked the necessary economic resources and she steadfastly refused to compromise herself to the extent obligated in the 1970s for acceptance into the gay fold. In turn, the gay fold, precursor to today’s transgender movement, rejected her flesh and blood, if not her historical legacy.³⁵

As the Transgender movement became incorporated into the LGBT movement—including but categorically different—understandings shifted. Among educated, middle-class scholars and activists. Even Jean O’Leary expressed apologies for her onetime treatment of Rivera. “Looking back I find this embarrassing because my views have changed so much,” she told Duberman. “I would never pick on a transvestite now.” Newly understood by some, the transgender issue remained controversial for others, as particularly evident within certain LGBT communities that have continued to restrict themselves to “womyn-born-womyn” or “men-born-men.”³⁶

Historic inscription

In the push to honor José Sarria with a street name, Nicole Murray Ramirez, a San Diego female impersonator poised to assume the mantle of the Imperial Court System, called Sarria the “Rosa Parks of the LGBT rights movement.” Similarly, broadcaster David Isay once dubbed Sylvia Rivera “something of a Rosa Parks figure of the gay rights movement.” Can both be Rosa Parks? Bearing in mind the need to respect the real differences between racism and homophobia and between African American and queer struggles for equality, we must take care not to misappropriate Parks’ legacy. We ought to grasp, as well, how her image has been co-opted as part of a mythical, increasingly conservative interpretation of the whitewashing of the civil rights movement. Parks, too, has become the name for streets and boulevards across the country. Commemoration by street sign is a rather ineffectual means of conveying history.³⁷

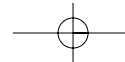


Their names, painted on metal slabs posted atop tall poles, symbolize acts of courage, acts of historical agency that resonated within the LGBT national narrative. The signs mutually reflect a type of patriotism that historian John Bodnar sees evident in both official and vernacular commemoration where monuments and historic sites serve to reinforce group unity and loyalty. Commemoration by street sign becomes a process of community building.

The contemporary LGBT movement recognizes Sarria and Rivera as the first openly gay candidate for public office, the first brick thrown at Stonewall. Each bears a direct relationship to competing versions of the movement beginnings. As a pre-Stonewall pioneer, Sarria fits well into recent efforts to dislodge Stonewall as the birthing moment of the LGBT movement. Efforts that tout instead respectable pickets at Independence Hall begun in 1965. The low-class African American, Puerto Rican, and white trash transgenders at Stonewall rioters have presumably become unsavory models for those appalled by the multiethnic furor of Stonewall have reframed a 1966 riot at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco. Briefly mentioned by Duberman as "battle between gays and police" and discussed at some length by David Carter as involving "gay youths, hustlers, and transvestites," the Compton's riot has been reinterpreted by filmmakers Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman as pivotal to Transgender activism. Which is to be heralded, the emergence of gay and lesbian electoral clout or the launch of militant sexual and gender defiance?³⁹

While José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera have both been seen as foundational figures, celebrated as heroes in a narrative of white LGBT politics and culture, they are not much alike. Sarria stood barely five feet; Rivera was six foot. Their lives spanned the chasm between baby boomers and their parents, most evident in Sarria's military service in World War II and Rivera evading the draft during Vietnam, an urban queer generational discord suggested by the work of Allan Bérubé and Ian Baucom. Their differences in generation, class, style, and ethnic origin imply a clash between war veteran versus the draft evader, the reformer versus the radical, the entertainer versus the provocateur, the female impersonator versus the street queen. Yet their common enemy was the police, agents of the U.S. state, into whose LGBT national narrative they have both been woven.⁴⁰

Within this narrative, Sarria and Rivera have each been marginalized in different but important ways. Sarria's Latino/a heritage has been downplayed, unmentionable or irrelevant even as he has been embraced as part of a tale that continues to be primarily racialized as white. When she herself hasn't been, Rivera's Latino/a heritage has been resiliently foregrounded, but again as part of an American LGBT success story. Meanwhile, the entry of scholars like José Roque Ramírez and Luis Aponte-Parés into the academy has cast needed questions and reclamation on histories that are at once Latino/a and queer. Such questions intervene not only within LGBT and queer scholarship, but also within Latin American studies. Yet Sarria's rejection from a specifically Latino/a queer history narrative is unfortunate as Rivera's excision from some white LGBT histories. Sarria and Rivera jointly help us appreciate the multiple structural reasons why many



The narrative of LGBT narratives recounted in this article poses the danger of adopting a positivist arc, with histories becoming better, fuller, and more inclusive as they open to new voices and fresh insights, as they provide correctives. Historiography itself is not necessarily a progressive narrative. Commemorating a street sign could well be a story of declension. The sponsors of the street name change were San Francisco Supervisor Bevan Dufty, a fifty-one-year-old out gay man, and Board of City Council President Christine Quinn, a forty-year-old out lesbian—perhaps deserving of honoring two elder queer heroes. But are such civic recognitions more than gestures to an LGBT political constituency or symbolic assertions of LGBT citizenship? It is worth noting that José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera are remembered with street signs in San Francisco's Castro and the West Village, not in the Mission or El Barrio. By privileging the identity over ethnic identity, do city officials simply reify gay enclaves and encourage gentrified real estate markets? Ironically, and sadly, the trans Latino/a queer names of Sarria and Rivera have become fixtures in neighborhoods that would have prior to their deaths. Indeed, five years before her death, Rivera fought near that very turf for the right of impoverished queer youth to share public space.⁴¹

Street signs can inscribe a static, grossly abbreviated version of the past onto the city boulevard. As pedestrians and practitioners who glean history from signposts, maps, and books, we must be wary of unquestioned LGBT national narratives. José Sarria and Sylvia Rivera, José Sarria Court and Sylvia Rivera Way—the trans Latino/a pioneers and the sites honoring them—can be targets of destruction or loci of mobilization. Their meanings remain always tentative, contingent, awaiting the questions and actions of the present. Depending on one's perspective, we can ignore or we can highlight broader gender subjugation, broader class subjugation, and broader Latino/a subjugation. We can continue to elide portions of our past, or we can begin to complicate the signs, pages, and screens of history. The point to employing the past is to ask about it. Remembering our queer humanity, rather than merely the LGBT nation, could be around the next corner.⁴²

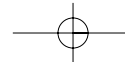
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

¹ "Castro Block Renamed to Honor Gay Pioneer," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 November 2006; James Withers, "Remembering Sylvia Rivera: Though a Divisive Figure, Trans Activist and Stonewall Rioter Gets Honored with Street Sign," *New York Blade*, 26 November 2005. To date neither MapQuest nor Google Maps recognizes either the street name. The zip code search interface of the U.S. Postal Service, however, does provide the zip code for José Sarria Court (94114), though not yet for Sylvia Rivera Way.

² William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Making of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). On the political and



La Fountain-Stokes's conception of "trans Latino/a drag" as "trans Latino/a queer" to describe Sarria and Rivera throughout this essay in order to accentuate their interconnected transgender, Latino/a, and queer identities.

⁴ Bonnie G. Smith, "Gender and the Practice of Scientific History: The Sense of the Past in Archival Research in the Nineteenth Century," *American Historical Review* 100 (October 1995), 1150–76; Thomas Bender, "Historians, the Nation, and the Pleasures of Narrative," in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, edited by Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 1–21. The discipline's conservatism was reflected in the continued marginalization of history Ph.D. recipients who have written dissertations on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer topics. Recent graduates have been routinely shut out from history departments, typically securing tenure-track positions only within women and gender studies, American culture, and literature departments, often having to find employment outside the academy; see Marc Stein, "Committee on the History and Gay History Survey on LGBTQ History Careers," *Perspectives*, May 2001.

⁵ Michael R. Gorman, *The Empress Is a Man: Stories from the Life of José Sarria* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), quote at 141.

⁶ Gorman, 162.

⁷ Jaxon Van Derbeken, "Death Row Juror Alleged to Have Secret Vendetta: Man Who Was Gay Rights Activist Questioned 14 Years After Trial," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 July 2006.

⁸ Anthony Baldman, "Imperial Court System Founder Jose Sarria Steps Down," *Gay & Lesbian Times*, 2 November 2006.

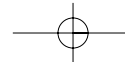
⁹ Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993).

¹⁰ Michael Musto, "Lost in Yonkers: Sylvia Rivera May Be the Rosa Parks of Queer Community, but on the Streets, She's Just Another Homeless Queen," *Village Voice*, 30 May 1997; Richard Goldstein, "Attack of the Pier Sluts: In the Midst of a Sex Crackdown, Queer Resistance Rears Its Head," *Village Voice*, 16 September 1997; David W. Dunlap, "Sylvia Rivera, 50, Figure in Birth of the Gay Liberation Movement," *New York Times*, 2 February 2002; Riki Wilchins, "A Woman for Her Time: In Memory of Stonewall's Sylvia Rivera," *Village Voice*, 5 March 2002.

¹¹ Leslie Feinberg, "Leslie Feinberg Interviews Sylvia Rivera," *Workers World*, 2002.

¹² *Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives*, directed by Robert Epstein (New York: Video, 1977), VHS, 130 minutes; Casey and Nancy Adair, *Word Is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives* (San Francisco: New Glide Publications, 1978), 73–4; John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics: Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1969* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), quote at 188.

¹³ Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A Queer History of San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), quote at 59. See also *Who's Who in Contemporary Gay & Lesbian History: From World War II to the Present Day*, Robert G. Osofsky and Garry Wotherspoon (London: Routledge, 2001), s.v. "José Sarria" by Martin Duberman and Vern L. Bullough, "José Sarria," in *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context*, edited by Bullough (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2000). For a discussion of how an emphasis on homophile respectability has obscured the progressive social service function of one key organization, see Martin Meeker, "Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Homosexual Practice, 1950s and 1960s," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10.1 (2003), 1–24.



¹⁶ David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 269.

¹⁷ Benjamin Shepard, "History or Myth?: Writing Stonewall," *Lambda Book Review*, August-September 2004, 12-4; Marc Stein, *The City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 10.

¹⁸ *Before Stonewall*, directed by Greta Schiller (First Run Features, c1985, 2004), 87 minutes.

¹⁹ Special Features track, *Before Stonewall*, DVD.

²⁰ *The Question of Equality, Part 1: Out Rage '69*, directed by Arthur Dong (KQED, 1995), VHS, 55 minutes.

²¹ Queer Film Premiere "Out Rage '69" panel, Lesbian and Gay History: Definition and Field Conference, City University of New York, October 6-7, 1995. As I recall, many people expressed strong reactions to the film, but I regret that I did not jot them down. Stryker recounts a volatile exchange over transgender inclusion during a separate session of the same conference; see Stryker, "(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies," in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-17.

²² *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*, directed by Beeban Kidron (Universal Pictures, 1995), 109 minutes; Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, "Adoring Catrina: Consumption, Expenditure, and Puerto Rican Trans Performance in New York," paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association International Congress, Las Vegas, Nevada, October 7-9, 2004.

²³ *Stonewall*, directed by Nigel Finch, (BMG Independent, 1996), 99 minutes.

²⁴ Scott Bravmann, "Stonewall, Silver Screen: Cinematic Representation and the Queer Past," *American Quarterly* 48:3 (September 1996), 491-9.

²⁵ Barry D. Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, revised edition (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995).

²⁶ Jack Lait and Lee Mortimer, *U.S.A. Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1964), 314, 382.

²⁷ Horacio Nelson Roque Ramírez, "'Communities of Desire: Queer Latina/Latino History and Memory, San Francisco Bay Area, 1960s-1990s,'" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2001), 130-1; Gorman, 24. See also Pablo Mitelman, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

²⁸ Roque Ramírez, 453.

²⁹ Aponte-Parés and Merced, "Páginas Omitidas: The Gay and Lesbian Presence in Puerto Rico," in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, edited by Andrés Torres and Velázquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 296-315. See also Luis Aponte-Parés, "Outside/In: Crossing Queer and Latino Boundaries," in *Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York*, edited by Agustín La6-Montes and Arlene Dávila (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 363-85, quote at 364.

³⁰ Luis Aponte-Parés and Jorge B. Merced, "Páginas Omitidas," 299.

³¹ David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White; The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 10. Eithne Luibhíid, "Queering Migration and Citizenship," in *Queer Migrations*



³² Pete Sigal, "To Cross the Sexual Borderlands: The History of Sexuality in the Americas," *Radical History Review* no. 82 (Winter 2002), 171–185; Lawrence La F. Stokes, "1898 and the History of a Queer Puerto Rican Century: Gay Lives, Island Debates, and Diasporic Experience," *CENTRO: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 11:1 (Fall 1999): 91–110; Frances Negrón-Muntaner, "From Puerto Rico with Trash: Holly Woodlawn's *A Low Life in High Heels*," in *Boricua Pop: Puerto Ricans and the Latinization of American Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 8; quote at 107. She is citing the work-in-progress of historian George Chauncey.

³³ Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); *The Transgender Studies Reader*; Gorman, 191; Duberman, 126.

³⁴ Negrón-Muntaner, 92; Martin F. Manalansan IV, "In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diaspora Dilemma," *The Politics of Race in the Shadow of Capital* edited by Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 485–505, quote at 500.

³⁵ Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America*, revised edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Gorman, 24.

³⁶ Duberman, 236. See also Riki Anne Wilchins, "The Menace in Michigan: For the First Time in History The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival Admits Transsexuals," *Village Voice*, 6 September 1994; Zak Szymanski, "Leather Community Debates Exclusion at Upcoming Contest," *Bay Area Reporter*, 19 January 2006.

³⁷ Matthew S. Bajko, "Supes Set to Vote on Street Name for Drag Queen," *Bay Area Reporter*, 26 Jan. 2006; Michael Musto, "Lost in Yonkers;" Dennis Carlson, "Troy Heroes: Of Rosa Parks, Multicultural Education, and Critical Pedagogy," *Cultural Critique* 3:1 (2003): 44–61. See also Richard Goldstein, "Racism ≠ Homophobia," *The Advocate*, 28 February 2006, 64. Evelyn Hooker, William Jernegan, and Barbara Gittings have also each been called "the Rosa Parks of Gay Rights."

³⁸ John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

³⁹ *Gay Pioneers*, directed by Glenn Holsten, (Equality Forum, 2004), DVD, 30 minutes. The co-producers of the film sponsored a 40th-anniversary commemoration of the picketing of Independence Hall, May 25–30, 2005; see <http://www.equalityforum.com/2005>. See also Duberman, 111; Carter, 109; *Scream Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria*, directed by Victor Silverman and Susan S. Finkelstein (Frameline, 2005), DVD, 57 minutes. On efforts to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Compton's riot as a launching point of the Transgender movement, see <http://www.comptonscafeteriariot.org/main.html>.

⁴⁰ Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: The Free Press, 1990); Ian Keith Lekus, "Queer and Present Day: Homosexuality and American Antiwar Activism During the Vietnam Era," (Ph.D. dissertation: Duke University, 2003). Sarria's height was noted in Gorman, 78; R. Gorman's height was noted in Clendinen and Nagourney, 54.

⁴¹ Benjamin Shepard, "Sylvia and Sylvia's Children: A Battle for Queer Public Space in *That's Revolting: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation*," edited by Mattilda