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Stonewall on the Potomac: Gay political activism in Washington, DC, 1961-1973

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Stonewall on the Potomac: Gay Political Activism in Washington, DC, 1961-1973

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract..... | iv |
| Introduction: A City of Firsts: Washington’s Place in the Gay Rights Movement 1961-1973..... | 1 |
| Chapter One: The Mattachine Society and the Beginnings of Gay Political Activism in Washington DC..... | 10 |
| Chapter Two: Gay Liberation Arrives in Washington, DC..... | 36 |
| Chapter Three: “Gay is Good” on the Campaign Trail: Frank Kameny’s Historic Run for Congress..... | 61 |
| Chapter Four: The Gay Activists Alliance and the Transformation of Gay Political Activism in Washington..... | 85 |
| Epilogue: A Capital of Gay Rights..... | 113 |
| Bibliography..... | 118 |

Abstract

The first organized demonstration on behalf of gay rights in the United States occurred in front of the White House on April 16, 1965. Six years later, Dr. Franklin E. Kameny became the first openly gay American to run for a seat in the United States Congress when he launched his campaign to become Washington's delegate to the House of Representatives in February 1971. The following year, Washington's school board voted to include sexual orientation, alongside gender and race, as a protected category in its non-discrimination employment policy. This victory was expanded on in 1973, when Washington's city council passed a monumental piece of legislation, called Title 34, which made it illegal to discriminate against gay men, lesbians, and transgender people in the areas of employment, housing, education, and public accommodations. Washington was the first major city in the United States to enact such a law.

Far too often, New York and San Francisco are believed to be the epicenters of the gay rights movement in the United States. The Stonewall Riots, which occurred in June 1969 in Greenwich Village, are often credited with launching a gay rights movement in America. This thesis explores how gay Washingtonians engaged with the political process both conventionally and unconventionally during the years before and after the Stonewall Riots. Although it was home to some of the earliest and most important events in the gay rights movement in America, Washington, DC is under-researched and under-represented in the historiography of gay rights in the United States. The goal of this thesis is to elevate Washington's place within that history, and to prove that a gay rights movement was well underway in the nation's capital long before the first bricks and bottles were thrown in front of the Stonewall Inn.

Introduction: A City of “Firsts”: Washington’s Place in the Gay Rights Movement, 1961-1973.

Anyone who picked up a copy of the November 1970 edition of the *Gay Blade*, Washington’s nascent gay newspaper, would have noticed something unusual about it. Stapled to the upper left hand corner of each copy was an index card meant for readers to detach and then store in their wallets. Printed in bold letters at the top of each card were the words: “How to Handle Blackmail.”¹

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, in the capital city of the United States of America, becoming a victim of blackmail was just one of many real, and quotidian concerns for gay men. Since October 1969 the *Blade* had been reporting intermittently on the activities of a criminal identified only as “The DuPont Circle Blackmailer.” From the driver’s seat of a parked car in Northwest Washington’s DuPont Circle, the blackmailer watched as single men exited their cars and entered one of several bars, or cruised around the park, perhaps seeking out a sexual partner. The blackmailer recorded the license plate numbers of his victims’ automobiles, and then used DMV records to establish their identities. After a few days had passed he would call his victims in the middle of the night, and sounding both “convincing” and “authoritative,” claim to be an officer working for Washington’s Metropolitan Police Department.² The blackmailer would then accurately describe where his victim had been, what he had been seen doing, and then claim that the department was preparing to file criminal charges against him for engaging in homosexual conduct, but that for a bribe, the man posing as a police officer could make the charges disappear.

¹ Mattachine Society of Washington, “How to Handle Blackmail.” Flyer, November, 1970. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Collection.

² “The DuPont Circle Blackmailer Is With Us Again” *Gay Blade*, November 1970, 1.

The DuPont Circle Blackmailer was clearly successful in plying his criminal trade because it continued for well over a year. Although he began by demanding bribes of \$100 or \$200, by February 1970 he felt emboldened enough to demand as much as \$1,000 from his victims. When he was finally arrested in July 1971, after one of his many victims came forward, the 48-year-old resident of suburban Maryland was in the act of collecting three envelopes from a post office box, each filled with \$1,000.³

One reason for DuPont Circle Blackmailer's criminal success was his understanding of the reality that gay Washingtonians were less likely to report this sort of a crime to the police than other victims, because doing so would force them to answer awkward, and potentially incriminating questions regarding their whereabouts and activities. The same issue of the *Gay Blade* that carried the advisory card about blackmail, also contained a story alerting readers to several reports of an armed, "gay-oriented thief" in Georgetown who targeted gay men in the neighborhood's popular cruising areas.⁴ Again, it is unlikely that gay men whom this thief robbed would be eager to explain to the police what they had been doing at the time of the robbery because in the capital of the United States in 1970, gay sex, or even making a sexual invitation to someone of the same gender, was a criminal offense. As a result, gay Washingtonians did not only have to worry about becoming victims of crime, they also had to worry about becoming targets of the police.

³ All of the information here regarding the DuPont Circle Blackmailer comes from the *Gay Blade's* coverage of him and a flyer produced by the Mattachine Society of Washington. "Warning to DuPont Circle People," *Gay Blade*, October 1969, 1; "Return of the Blackmailer," *Gay Blade*, March 1970, 1; "The DuPont Circle Blackmailer is with us Again," *Gay Blade*, November 1970, 1; "Blackmailer Caught, Still up to Old Tricks," *Gay Blade*, August 1971. The Mattachine Society of Washington, Flyer, "Blackmailer at Work in DuPont Circle Area," 4 November 1969, Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project, Digital Collections, <http://rainbowhistory.omeka.net/items/show/4937891> (Accessed February 1, 2016).

⁴ "More Uglies in Georgetown," *Gay Blade*, November 1970, 2.

In 1961, when this study begins, the Morals Division of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) made just over 500 arrests on various “homosexual” charges ranging from misdemeanors like solicitation and indecent exposure, to felonies like sodomy, or attempted sodomy. Throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s it was not an uncommon practice for the Morals Division to station undercover, plainclothes officers in popular cruising areas in order to wait for gay men to make a sexual invitation that would lead to an arrest.⁵ Undercover officers working for MPD’s Morals Division were, in fact, responsible for the arrest that resulted in one of the most sensational sex scandals of the era, when in 1965 Walter Jenkins, a top aide to President Lyndon B. Johnson was arrested in a Washington men’s room after soliciting sex from another man. DC police officers watched the encounter from a peephole they had carved into the wall of the men’s room.⁶

While criminals and undercover vice squad officers provided gay Washingtonians with enough to worry about, they also found themselves in a more precarious situation than gay people in other cities due to the policies of the city’s dominant employer, the US Federal Government. Since the era of J. Edgar Hoover and Joseph McCarthy, the federal government had become keenly interested in the sex lives of its employees, and in 1950 homosexuality officially became a disqualifying factor for federal employment. For the next quarter century, the US Civil Service Commission made it a priority to eliminate homosexuals from the federal workforce. The federal government feared that homosexual employees posed a significant security risk, deeming them more likely than any other type of person to divulge top-secret, classified government information in order to avoid

⁵ Claudia Levy, “District Homosexuals Note Decrease in Arrest Totals,” *Washington Post*, 2 July 1971, B1.

⁶ Al Weisel, “LBJ’s Gay Sex Scandal,” *Out*, December 1990, 76-83.

being exposed as gay. Additionally, the Civil Service Commission justified its firing of gay employees by proclaiming that their “immoral lifestyle” was disgraceful, criminal in most states and cities, and brought ill repute to their employer, the United States of America.⁷

Gay Washingtonians who did not work for the federal government were not immune to the negative effects of the government’s efforts to root out homosexuality in its workforce. Until a slow shift toward limited home-rule began in the 1960s, the United States Congress exercised almost complete control over the governance of the District of Columbia.⁸ As a result, every resident of the district, regardless of employer, was subject to city laws written by representatives and senators from other parts of the country, many of whom seemed eager to use Washington as a sort of social petri dish. Washingtonians who could not elect a mayor, city council, or school board, and who had no representation in Congress or in the Electoral College, had no recourse and little input as Congress made the laws, and set law enforcement priorities for the District of Columbia.⁹ When Congress demanded, for example, that the MPD significantly increase its policing of homosexuality in the capital city, and that it begin reporting the names of any federal employees arrested on morals charges, the police department had no choice but to follow orders.

⁷ In 1950, a senate committee issued a report titled “Sex Perverts in Government” which recommended that any employee who engaged in homosexual acts be fired. For a detailed discussion of this report, see: David Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 108-112.

⁸ District of Columbia Board of Elections, “A History of Voting Rights in the District of Columbia” https://www.dcboee.org/voter_info/gen_info/voting_history.asp (Accessed December 1, 2015).

⁹ Congress created the post of non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives from the District of Columbia in 1970, and granted Washington three votes in the Electoral College in 1961. 1964 marked the first time Washington participated in a presidential election.

Although the challenges faced by gay Washingtonians during the 1960s and early 1970s were tremendous, they were not insurmountable. In fact, these challenges spurred many gay Washingtonians into political action for the first time. Between 1961 and 1973, gay Washingtonians established three different gay-oriented political organizations in order to protest police harassment, anti-gay city laws, anti-gay federal hiring practices, as well as a public perception that gay people were immoral, sexual deviants. This political activity and the victories it engendered are the central focus of this study.

By the early 1970s the nation's capital had become the site of some of the most significant achievements and milestones for gay rights in the history of the United States. The first-ever public demonstration on behalf of gay rights in the history of the country occurred in Washington on April 16, 1965. In 1971, the first ever openly gay candidate for a seat in the United States Congress launched his campaign to become Washington's first non-voting delegate in the House of Representatives. The following year, Washington's newly created School Board passed a resolution making the city's school district the first in the country to include sexual orientation as a protected status in its non-discrimination hiring policy. In 1973, when this study ends, the city went one step further, becoming the first major city in the country to pass a law banning discrimination based on sexual orientation in the areas of employment, education, housing, and public accommodations.¹⁰

This work has three major goals, the first and most important of which is to shed some light on what it was like to be gay in the capital of the United States of America during the 1960s and early 1970s. Because so much progress has been made on behalf of

¹⁰ David R. Boldt, "Homosexual Files Delegate Papers" *Washington Post*, 23 February 1971, A17; Inna Moore, "School Board Ends Bias to Homosexuals" *Washington Post*, 24 May 1972, B3; Kirk Scharfenberg, "City Council Passes Bias Ban" *Washington Post* 8 August 1973.

gay rights in the United States in the recent past, it is easy to forget that less than fifty years ago gay Americans and gay Washingtonians faced a radically different day to day reality. While being gay was never actually a crime in Washington, a gay person acting on his or her sexual desire certainly was. The federal government refused to hire homosexuals, and actively worked to expose and then expel them from its workforce. In Washington, as in the rest of the country during this period, being gay also made one mentally ill. It was not until 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders that could be cured with proper treatment. In a 1963 article, the *Washington Post* extolled the work of a local psychiatrist at Howard University who, through hypnosis, was developing a treatment to cure homosexuality in men by, “creating in his patients’ minds an aversion or revulsion to the male body, and an attraction to the female’s.” This Washington doctor also claimed to have successfully treated a lesbian who after his course of treatment became, “passionately attracted to men.”¹¹ Today, when Washington, DC boasts openly gay elected officials, and the Metropolitan Police Department no longer views gay citizens as criminals but instead has an LGBTQ Liaison Unit, focusing on the safety of the district’s LGBTQ residents, stories like many of those included in this work are far too easy to forget or to disbelieve.

The second major purpose of this work is to help fill a glaring gap in the field of gay history: the lack of scholarship concerning gay men and women in the nation’s capital. What has been written about Washington is slim when compared to what has been written about other large American cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles. Considering that Washington was home to so many significant “firsts” in gay

¹¹ Nate Haseltine, “Hypnosis Reported Successful in Treatment of Sex Deviants,” *Washington Post*, 4 August 1963, E3.

history, the city deserves a more prominent place in the historiography. Genny Beemyn's recent book, *A Queer Capital*, is an excellent start in remedying this deficit. Because Beemyn's book begins in the late nineteenth century, and examines the history of gay Washington through the 1990s, however, it necessarily leaves out many details regarding the three gay political organizations around which this work is organized: The Mattachine Society of Washington, the Gay Liberation Front, and the Gay Activists Alliance. Beemyn also does not discuss in detail the historic campaign of Frank Kameny for the US House of Representatives. This work offers what is perhaps the most detailed account and analysis of that campaign.¹²

By no means is this work meant to provide a comprehensive look at gay life in Washington during the period it covers. In fact the term "Gay Washingtonians" is somewhat of a misnomer, because it is simply not possible to talk about gay Washingtonians as a cohesive group of people. Washington's gay community during the period covered here was, as it is now, incredibly diverse. The characters in this work tend to be men, and tend to be white because these were generally the people who became involved with the three political organizations that are at the center of this study. Washington was home to a large and vibrant lesbian community, as well as to many gay African American men and women during the same period, but it is beyond the scope of this work to examine all aspects of gay life in Washington, DC. Instead, this study focuses on gay Washingtonians' engagement with politics and the law between 1961 and 1973.

¹² Genny Beemyn, *A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington, D.C.* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

Finally, while this work is not directly about the Stonewall Riots, it intends to make some points about these momentous events that are too often understood to mark the beginning of a gay rights movement in America. This study aims to provide a larger context in which to place the Stonewall Riots by examining what was occurring in the years both before and after Stonewall 225 miles to the south in Washington, DC. While many works of gay history use the Stonewall Riots as either a beginning point or as an endpoint, this work situates Stonewall directly in the middle. This approach allows us to better understand the real significance of the riots, and to reach a more nuanced conclusion about their impact. That gay Washingtonians had been organizing and demonstrating on behalf of better treatment since 1961, helps to dispel the notion that the Stonewall Riots were responsible for the birth of the gay rights movement in the United States. Instead of beginning a revolution, as David Carter, a historian of Stonewall suggests in his book, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution*, the case of Washington shows us that there was already a burgeoning movement dedicated to improving the lives of gay Americans, but that this existing movement was emboldened and strengthened by the events of June 1969 in Greenwich Village. Stonewall, therefore, did not begin a revolution, but instead provided much needed confidence and encouragement to a nascent movement in other parts of the country, including its capital city.¹³

After a series of victories for the gay rights movement in Washington, that included the school board's decision to protect gay men and women from discrimination on the job, and a DC Superior Court Judge's ruling that the city's sodomy law was

¹³ David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010).

unconstitutional, the June 1972 edition of the *Gay Blade* proudly declared that, “San Francisco’s claim to be the Gay Mecca may soon fall.” Washingtonians in 1972 were well aware of the fact that their city was quickly becoming one of the most gay-friendly in the country, and the site of some of the movement’s most important milestones. Today, forty-five years after the *Blade’s* pronouncement, it is time for historians to reach a similar conclusion.¹⁴

¹⁴ Untitled Article, *Gay Blade*, June 1972, 1; Bart Barnes, “D.C. Will No Longer Prosecute Private, Adult Homosexual Acts,” *Washington Post*, 31 May 1972, A1.

Chapter One: The Mattachine Society and the Beginnings of Gay Political Activism in Washington, DC.

As a boy growing up in Brooklyn, Franklin Kameny was fascinated by outer space. At the age of six he had already committed himself to becoming an astronomer. His fascination with, and the passion that he developed for science earned him admission to Queens College in New York in 1940 at the age of just 15. World War Two interrupted his education when he enlisted in the army and served as a mortar crewman for two years, seeing combat in Germany and in Czechoslovakia. Upon returning to the United States, Kameny picked up where he had left off, and by 1956 he had earned a PhD in astronomy from Harvard University. At a time when the United States and the Soviet Union were transfixed by the possibilities of outer space and the US would soon find itself panicking over its arch rival's launch of Sputnik, Frank Kameny possessed a specialized knowledge and skill set that would be of tremendous benefit to his country. Shortly after graduating from Harvard, the Department of Defense eagerly hired Kameny to work in its Army Map Service in Washington, DC.

It was only a few months into his employment when Kameny received an urgent phone call summoning him back to Washington from Hawaii where he was on assignment for the army. Harboring an uncomfortable suspicion about what awaited him, he returned to Washington and found two investigators from the United States Civil Service Commission, the agency responsible for all personnel matters within the federal government, waiting for him. These investigators demanded to know whether or not Kameny was a homosexual, and they peppered him with questions about an event that took place in August 1956 when Kameny was arrested in the men's room of the San

Francisco bus terminal. That summer Kameny had been in San Francisco for an astronomy conference and on his way out of town he was standing at a urinal when another man approached him and made a sexual advance. Kameny rebuffed the other man, but undercover San Francisco police officers who were stationed inside of the restroom quickly arrested Kameny and took him to the police station. Although Kameny was a gay man, he had not committed any crime, and there was little evidence with which to charge him. Knowing this, and seeing that Kameny was in a hurry to leave San Francisco as quickly as possible, the officers told him that if he would just plead guilty to the misdemeanor charge of “lewd conduct,” he could pay a \$50 fine and promptly be on his way.¹ At the time Kameny was unaware of the possibility that US Civil Service investigators conducting routine background checks on federal employees would one day discover this arrest record and understand the guilty plea to be an affirmation of Kameny’s homosexuality.

Although Kameny refused to answer the questions that the Civil Service investigators asked him in July 1957, claiming that his personal life had no bearing on his ability to perform his job, it was only a matter of weeks before he received a curt letter informing him that he had been fired from the Army Map Service. The federal government had labeled Kameny a homosexual, and his dream of a career in astronomy was over. Regardless of his demonstrated brilliance in his field, and the acute need for his specialized knowledge during the Cold War, the fact that he was gay made him

¹ Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution: The Story of the Struggle* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 127-129. David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 178-182; Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: 1940-1996*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 138-140; Genny Beemyn, *A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington, D.C.* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 183.

completely unemployable in the eyes of the federal government. Making matters worse for Kameny was the fact that nearly every company in the private sector that could have benefitted from his expertise held contracts with the federal government, and these contracts required employees to obtain security clearances. As a known homosexual, Kameny was ineligible for any level of government security clearance. Thus, at age 32, Franklin Kameny found himself unemployable in the field in which he had planned to spend his professional life. Not only had he been robbed of a job, but also of his passion. He would need to look outside of science for some other vocation where he could put his keen intellect and ambition to work.²

The difficult situation in which Kameny found himself was not so unusual for a gay man in Washington in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Homosexuality within the federal workforce had been a public concern for years. During the early years of the Cold War, fears that homosexuals in government posed a security risk were prevalent in the nation's capital.³ In 1950 homosexuality was officially classified as a disqualifying factor for federal employment after a Senate subcommittee chaired by North Carolina Senator Clyde Hoey issued a report titled, "Employment of Homosexuals and other Sex Perverts in Government." The major finding of this report was that: "Those who engage in overt acts of sexual perversion lack the emotional stability of normal persons...indulgence in acts of sex perversion weakens the moral fiber of an individual to a degree that he is not suitable for a position of responsibility." The report also concluded that a homosexual employee would have a profoundly corrosive impact on the workplace and on his fellow employees: "These perverts will frequently attempt to entice normal individuals to

² Faderman, *The Gay Revolution*, 129-133; Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 179-181; Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis*, 138-139.

³ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 2-14.

engage in perverted practices. This is particularly true in the case of young and impressionable people who come under the influence of a pervert,” the report read.⁴

Above all other concerns, the federal government believed that homosexuals posed a security risk to the country and were unsuited for federal employment because they were particularly susceptible to blackmail in a way that no other type of person could be. Because gay sex was such a revolting idea, the committee’s logic went, anyone who could be blackmailed for having engaged in it would surely be willing to disclose even the most classified state secrets in order to save his reputation. Although the report provided very little evidence to support this assertion, it concluded that: “The pervert is easy prey to the blackmailer. It follows that if blackmailers can extort money from a homosexual under the threat of disclosure, espionage agents can use the same type of pressure to extort confidential information.”⁵ The report justified its claims about homosexuals, perversion, and blackmail by citing the testimony of numerous “eminent physicians and psychiatrists” but it failed to mention the name of any doctor who had actually proved a link between homosexuals and blackmail. Instead, the report stated that these “eminent physicians” had testified in closed hearings of the committee, and therefore their testimony had to remain sealed.⁶ This link between homosexuals and blackmail was based mainly on rumors and stereotypes.⁷ The public would just have to

⁴ Senate Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Expenditures in the Federal Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 81st Congress, S. Res 280 (1950).

⁵ Senate Subcommittee on Investigation of the Committee on Expenditures in the Federal Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 4

⁶ Senate Subcommittee on Investigation of the Committee on Expenditures in the Federal Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 2.

⁷ According to Johnson, the committee never was able to cite a single instance of a government employee being blackmailed for homosexual acts. Additionally, not a single homosexual testified in front of the committee. The main justification for the committee’s conclusion was testimony

take the committee at its word that its conclusions about homosexuals were valid. For the next twenty years the Hoey Report's findings went largely unchallenged, and the document provided the foundation upon which the federal government's policy toward homosexual employees rested.

The Hoey Report was significant not only for federal employees like Frank Kameny, but for all gay Washingtonians, regardless of who their employer was, or whether they even worked at all. One of the major findings of the report, was that laws discouraging homosexuality in Washington, DC were far too weak and that the penalties associated with arrests for crimes like indecent exposure or disorderly conduct needed to be made more severe. The Hoey Report, therefore, insisted on a new and unprecedented role for Washington's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), one that it would enthusiastically fill. Hoey's committee urged that the MPD be made a partner in the federal government's effort to find, investigate and punish homosexual members of the federal workforce. The report suggested that any arrest falling under the category of "sex perversion" in the capital city needed to be reported as quickly as possible to the United States Civil Service so that the agency could ensure that the person arrested was not also a government employee.⁸

Out of the 1,209 arrests made in Washington for crimes that fell into the category of "sexual perversion" in the four years prior to the Hoey Report's issuance, 457 of those arrested reported to the Metropolitan Police Department that they worked for the federal government. In each instance MPD took no further action. Senator Hoey and his fellow

from the CIA director, Roscoe Hillenkoetter regarding a homosexual Austrian intelligence official who had been blackmailed into revealing classified information to the Russians during World War One in order to keep his sex life private, see: Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 108.

⁸ Senate Subcommittee on Investigation of the Committee on Expenditures in the Federal Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 18.

committee members were outraged that of these 457 people, no information about their arrests had ever made its way to the Civil Service Commission; surely some of them had to have been federal employees. Hoey accused MPD of handling sex crimes in a “slipshod manner.” Following the publication of the report, MPD began to forward all fingerprints of those arrested on sex perversion charges in Washington directly to the Civil Service Commission so that they could be cross-referenced against a database of federal employees.⁹

The report also demanded that the district increase the penalties for “perversion” in order to discourage homosexuals from ever moving to Washington and from working for the federal government. For example, one of the charges that was most often brought against gay men when they were suspected of cruising was disorderly conduct. There was a very low threshold for an officer to determine that disorderly conduct was occurring, and it was an easy arrest to make. The maximum fine for this offense had been \$25, an amount that was established in 1802. Hoey’s subcommittee demanded that the penalty be adjusted upward to a maximum of \$500 and or a six-month jail sentence. Whether they worked for the federal government or not, this statutory change impacted all gay Washingtonians.¹⁰ Before the report was even printed, MPD took actions to assuage the concerns of Senator Hoey about homosexuals in Washington, promising him that additional officers would immediately be assigned to the department’s morals division

⁹ Senate Subcommittee on Investigation of the Committee on Expenditures in the Federal Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 20.

¹⁰ “The present criminal statutes of the District of Columbia on sex perversion and related matters were found to be inadequate and proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of the District of Columbia have been drawn up by this subcommittee.” Senate Subcommittee on Investigation of the Committee on Expenditures in the Federal Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 15.

and that further personnel additions would continue to be made in the foreseeable future.¹¹

Unlike gay people in any other American city, gay Washingtonians found themselves in a uniquely unenviable position. Not only was the federal government, by far the city's largest employer, keenly interested in the sex lives of its employees, but now the municipal government and its police force had been co-opted into the federal government's campaign to ferret out homosexual employees. Gay Washingtonians, like all Washingtonians, also differed from other Americans because they had almost no input in selecting their Mayor or City Council. Until 1973 the United States Congress assumed almost complete responsibility for governing the District of Columbia. As a result, gay Washingtonians were often subject to the dictates of conservative representatives and senators, like Clyde Hoey, who were eager to use Washington, DC as a laboratory in which to enact conservative policies that would put their conservative credentials on display to constituents back home.

Clyde Hoey was certainly not the first congressman, nor would he be the last, to use his power over Washington's residents in order to legislate against homosexuality. Just two years earlier a physician turned congressman, Arthur Miller of Nebraska, wrote the Sexual Psychopath Law for the District of Columbia. The Miller Act, as it came to be known, sailed through Congress and President Truman signed it in 1948. As a doctor in Nebraska, Miller had theorized that homosexuals operated on cycles of sexual depravity, and that during 3 to 4 days each month their sexual appetites became uncontrollable. Once elected to the House, Miller had the power to do something about this perceived

¹¹ Senate Subcommittee on Investigation of the Committee on Expenditures in the Federal Departments, *Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government*, 19.

public health problem, not in his home state of Nebraska, but in the nation's capital. His law increased the maximum punishment for sodomy committed in Washington to 20 years in jail, and stipulated that anyone arrested on sodomy charges in the district could be forced to undergo an examination by a team of psychiatrists at the city-run St. Elizabeth's hospital. If the psychiatrists deemed the individual to be a "sexual psychopath" then he could be held at St. Elizabeth's indefinitely until the threat was neutralized.¹²

This was the backdrop against which Franklin Kameny found himself desperately trying to save his career. Almost immediately after his termination Kameny filed a lawsuit in federal court against the Civil Service Commission alleging that it had no right to link his sexuality to his job performance, but after four long years of litigation and appeals, the Supreme Court refused to take up the case, and his legal options were exhausted. Although unsuccessful, he became one of the first Americans to challenge the legal basis for the federal government's anti-gay hiring practices. At the time he filed his lawsuit, Kameny was unable to hold down steady work. While he could string together work as a physicist in various labs during this four-year stretch, the only firms that could hire Kameny were firms holding no government contracts, and firms in the DC area that were not awarded government contracts tended to fail. During most of 1959 Kameny was so poor and had lost so much weight that he recalls not being able to comfortably sleep on his side because his knees were too bony to rest comfortably on top of each other.¹³ Finally, Frank Kameny came to the conclusion that his life would have to take on a new focus, and as of 1960 he would never again work as a scientist. Instead, he would spend

¹² Faderman, *The Gay Revolution*, 4-5.

¹³ Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis*, 139.

the rest of his life as a gay rights activist committed to overturning discriminatory federal hiring practices and municipal laws that criminalized homosexual conduct, and challenging the widely held perception that gay people were immoral, perverted, and mentally ill.

Dr. Kameny began this second act of his life in 1961 when he founded the Mattachine Society of Washington, (MSW) the first significant gay rights organization to ever exist in the nation's capital.¹⁴ Just one block from the White House, at the Hay Adams Hotel on the evening of August 16th, 1961, 16 men met for the first organizational meeting of this new group. Kameny knew some of the attendees personally, and he had contacted others who lived in the DC area and were on the mailing list of the New York Mattachine Society. Although the groups shared a name and a purpose they were not affiliated. One of the men in attendance was a very unwelcome guest, however: Louis Fochett, a lieutenant in the Metropolitan Police Department's Morals Division. One of the other attendees at the meeting instantly recognized Fochett, because he often made arrests in parks or in movie theatres of men whom he suspected to be seeking out gay sex. When confronted by Kameny, Fochett immediately scurried out of the Hay Adams Hotel. The fact that he was there at all, however, reveals just how closely gay Washingtonians were being monitored by the city's police department. The FBI also learned about this

¹⁴ The first Mattachine Society in the United States was established in 1951 by Harry Hay in Los Angeles. Another chapter of that Mattachine Society was established shortly thereafter in New York City. For barely a year in 1958-1959, a chapter of that same Mattachine Society operated in Washington, but it never got off the ground. Kameny's organization was independent of these other groups but he chose to use the same name. The national Mattachine Society had disbanded completely in 1959. A Mattachine was a court jester in medieval France who often delivered uncomfortable truths about society to the king from behind a mask. The name was sufficiently vague so that anyone who came across the group in passing would have no idea what issue the group was involved with.

meeting, probably from Fochett, and the bureau sent agents to the Hay Adams the next day to question hotel staff about what had taken place.¹⁵

In the face of this scrutiny Kameny continued his efforts to build the Mattachine Society of Washington and one year after that first meeting in the Hay Adams Hotel, he distributed a press release announcing the formation of his new group and sent it to every member of Congress, as well as to all of the city's media outlets. In this press release Kameny established the messaging strategy that the Mattachine Society would adopt and rely on for the next ten years. His main point was that homosexual Americans constituted a discernable minority group in the same way that African-Americans did. Homosexuals were not individuals who suffered from a mental disorder, he argued, but a cohesive minority group.

In the second paragraph of the press release Kameny wrote: "The homosexual today is where the Negro was in the 1920's, except that the Negro has had, at worst, the mere indifference of his government, and at best, its active assistance, whereas the homosexual has always had to contend with the active hostility of his government." Establishing that homosexuals were an oppressed minority group rather than individual people who were sexually deranged would be an essential prerequisite for homosexuals to achieve social gains. The second theme present in Kameny's message was patriotism, and loyalty to the United States. The press release embraced a patriotic tone and argued that Mattachine's mission was directly in line with the ideals set forward in the Declaration of Independence and in the Bill of Rights. Homosexuals, he announced, were only trying to realize the American ideals of freedom and equality, and to enjoy their right to pursue happiness as the Founding Fathers envisioned. The goal of the Mattachine

¹⁵ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 183.

Society of Washington, he wrote, would be to ensure that gay people, “be allowed to make their maximum contribution to the society in which they live- a right which federal policy and practice now deny them.”¹⁶ Congressman Charles Chamberlain, who represented Michigan’s seventh district, was one of the very few members of Congress who responded to the press release that his office had received in the mail: “May I state unequivocally that in all my six years of service in the United States Congress, I have not received such a revolting communication,” he wrote.¹⁷ Congressman Paul Jones of Missouri returned Kameny’s letter with a note scribbled in red ink, “Please do not contaminate my mail with such filthy trash.”¹⁸

Aware that the congressmen who governed Washington did not view his new organization favorably, and that the city’s police department was keeping a close eye on its activities, the Mattachine Society kept a low profile, and operated in a highly secretive manner during its first few years. The group’s membership never exceeded twenty-five. Franklin Kameny was the only member who used his real name on the group’s mailing list or in its newsletters. The members themselves often did not know each other’s real names, “We were all so deathly afraid of the FBI that we used pseudonyms” remembers Otto Ulrich, an early member of the group; his pseudonym was O.H. Crain. Lilli Vincenz, another early Mattachine member used the name Lilli Hansen, and Paul Kuntzler, who joined in 1962, went by the name David LeMay. The constitution of the

¹⁶ The Mattachine Society of Washington, Untitled Press Release, 28 August 1962. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

¹⁷ Charles E. Chamberlain to Franklin E. Kameny, 30 August 1962. The Frank Kameny Papers, Digital Collection, <http://www.kamenypapers.org/correspondence/charleschamberlain-083062.jpg> (Accessed 1 October 2015).

¹⁸ Paul C. Jones to Franklin E. Kameny, 28 August 1962, The Frank Kameny Papers, Digital Collection, <http://www.kamenypapers.org/correspondence/paulcjones-082862.jpg> (Accessed 1 October 2015).

Mattachine Society reveals the degree of confidentiality that Kameny strived to maintain. It was forbidden for last names to ever be recorded in meeting minutes; membership applications had to be destroyed immediately upon a member's acceptance into the group, and no more than two copies of the membership roster could ever exist at the same time. Although not clearly stated in the document, it is safe to assume these procedures existed in order to protect the privacy of the group's members from the prying eyes of the federal and municipal governments.¹⁹

It was not long before the Mattachine Society came under the scrutiny of certain members of the US House of Representatives who were always keeping a close eye on what was happening within their fiefdom of Washington. In the summer of 1963 a conservative Texas Democrat named John Dowdy was so disgusted by the prospect of a group defending homosexuality operating in Washington that he drafted a bill to amend Washington DC's Charitable Solicitation Law aimed at legislating Mattachine out of existence. Under district law, any group that engaged in fundraising was required to apply for a permit and pay a \$25 application fee. This was not a particularly onerous requirement, and Kameny had easily succeeded in obtaining one of these permits for Mattachine in 1962. Representative Dowdy sought to eliminate the Mattachine Society, and any groups that might resemble it in the future, by re-writing this city law in such a way that only groups determined to be beneficial to the "health, welfare, and morals of the District of Columbia" would be eligible for a permit. It would be up to the District Commissioners (a 3 member board whose members were appointed by the President of the United States) to determine which groups met this standard. The second part of

¹⁹ Recorded interviews with Lilli Vincenz and Otto Ulrich, The Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project; The Mattachine Society of Washington, The Constitution of the Mattachine Society, 1961, The Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

Dowdy's bill singled out Mattachine and called for its permit to be immediately revoked. Geography once again posed a major challenge for Frank Kameny and the Mattachine Society. In Washington, where representatives and senators from other parts of the country seemed to have their hands in all sorts of local matters, the right of the Mattachine Society to even exist was contested.²⁰

Despite his contempt for homosexuals and the idea that they should be allowed to form a tax-exempt organization in order to advocate on their own behalf, Representative John Dowdy probably did more to publicize the Mattachine Society than anyone other than Frank Kameny during 1963. In August of that year Dowdy scheduled two days of hearings to discuss his proposed amendment to the DC Charitable Solicitation Law. Prior to these hearings, the Mattachine Society had received very little coverage in the local media. In fact, it was because of these hearings that Mattachine earned its first ever mention in the *Washington Post*. On August 8, 1963 Frank Kameny was called to testify before the committee. Immediately its members demanded to know whether or not he was homosexual, and he simply refused to answer. Frustrated, Dowdy banged his gavel after just a few minutes and adjourned the hearings until the following day, "If these people are a charitable organization promoting homosexuality then I've grown up in the wrong age," he growled from the dais.²¹

When Kameny testified again on August 9th, Dowdy was eager to attack him and his organization. Frequently referring to homosexuals as "perverts" Dowdy announced that he was "shocked speechless" that anyone would oppose his bill. He argued that

²⁰ John M. Goshko, "Morality Talk Slows Hearing" *Washington Post* 9 August 1963, C2; For a detailed description of Kameny's battle to earn tax-exempt status for the Mattachine Society, see Johnson *The Lavender Scare*, 185-192.

²¹ Goshko, "Morality Talk Slows Hearing," C2.

Mattachine was a secret society whose real goal was to advocate for the decriminalization of sodomy in the district and to undermine sodomy laws that had been “designed for the public good.” Maintaining his composure, Kameny countered that it did not matter what the Mattachine Society stood for, at issue was the freedom of expression and assembly, protected by the first amendment. “What kind of expression are you talking about? Are you talking about sexual expression?” interrupted an irate Dowdy. When Kameny suggested that gay people also live in Texas, Dowdy replied, “Maybe, but I never heard anyone brag about it.” He went on to demand the names of every single member of the Mattachine Society and argued that because Kameny would not divulge the names of each member, that the group was clearly a nefarious organization.²²

The Dowdy hearings put *The Washington Post's* editorial board in an awkward position. The paper was not eager to defend or endorse the cause for which the Mattachine Society was established. On the other hand, Dowdy's bill was blatantly unconstitutional in its violations of first amendment protections, and it was certainly a bill of attainder for its singling out of one organization in particular. From a more pragmatic standpoint, the bill would be a financial and administrative burden to Washington's city government, because it would have required a hearing and a vote on every single organization applying for a permit to raise money. The *Post*, therefore, published an editorial supporting the Mattachine Society's right to exist on first amendment grounds. “The First Amendment was added to the Constitution to protect the advocacy of unpopular and unorthodox ideas,” the editorial read. It went on to state that Mattachine's

²² John. M. Goshko, “House Group Continues Homosexuality Hearing” *Washington Post*, 10 August 1963, C2.

cause was highly “unconventional,” and that the editorial should in no way be construed as a defense of homosexuals or an endorsement of the Mattachine Society’s work.²³

Although the House District Committee passed Dowdy’s Bill, it never made it onto the legislative calendar, and it was never voted on by the full House of Representatives. The opposition of the District Commissioners, who worried about the strain on the city’s bureaucracy that the bill would create, used their influence to make sure that Dowdy’s Bill never made it to a floor vote. The bill’s ultimate failure was in no way an indication of a level of tolerance or support for the Mattachine Society among members of Congress.²⁴ Although Mattachine could declare victory in its first major battle, having simply affirmed its right to exist, the Dowdy Bill shows just how hostile American attitudes toward homosexuality were in the early and mid 1960s. Another event that took place in Washington, DC shortly after the Dowdy hearings makes this reality even more clear, and illustrates the public attitudes that Kameny and his nascent Mattachine Society would have to confront.

In the fall of 1964 Americans learned that Walter Jenkins, President Johnson’s most trusted adviser for nearly three decades, had been arrested in the basement men’s room of the Washington YMCA located on G Street, only a few blocks away from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. After drinking heavily at the opening party for the new Washington, DC office of *Newsweek* magazine, Jenkins headed to one of the city’s most well-known gay cruising spots. In 1959 he had been arrested in the very same men’s room for soliciting an undercover police officer, but he was never charged. On October 7, 1964 Jenkins was again under the surveillance of the Metropolitan Police Department

²³ “Unpopular Causes,” *Washington Post*, 8 August 1963, A3.

²⁴ Elise Carper, “House Action Put Off on Fund Soliciting Bill,” *Washington Post*, 28 July 1964, B2.

as two of its undercover officers were stationed in that restroom that night. After entering a toilet stall with a stranger, the two officers quickly arrested both men. At the police station, Jenkins did not ask for a lawyer but instead paid a \$50 fine and headed back to the White House to work late into the night. Within a week, however, the story of his arrest was on the front pages of all of the country's major newspapers forcing Americans to confront the issue of homosexuality.²⁵

With only a few weeks to go before the presidential election of 1964, Walter Jenkins had seemingly become the most famous homosexual in America. A Harris Poll released shortly after the story broke showed that 87% of those surveyed knew about Walter Jenkins and his arrest. As a result, President Johnson who had spent the summer confident that he would prevail over his Republican challenger Barry Goldwater suddenly began to panic, believing that his bid for a full term in the White House could be derailed by the public's hostile attitude toward homosexuality and its newly revealed link to the inner circle of his administration. Johnson immediately demanded Jenkins' resignation and his campaign sought to control the damage. President Johnson believed that the political implications of the scandal could be severe telling his trusted adviser Abe Fortas that Jenkins' arrest, "could mean the ballgame....every farmer in the country is upset about it!" The Republican National Committee immediately tried to politicize the issue by establishing a new organization called "Mothers for a Moral America" meant to imply that the Johnson administration was immoral, as evidenced by the Jenkins arrest. LBJ was supremely annoyed with his wife Lady Bird when she uncharacteristically issued her own statement of support for Jenkins. Although the President probably felt the

²⁵ United Press International, "Walter Jenkins, LBJ Aide, Arrested on Disorderly Charge, Hospitalized," 15 October 1964, *Washington Post*, A1.

same way as the First Lady, the fact that she was in any way publically sympathetic to Jenkins was a political liability in his eyes. Luckily for Johnson, the Jenkins sex scandal was abruptly swept out of the headlines by news from the Soviet Union that Khrushchev had been deposed, and that China had successfully tested its first atomic bomb.

Nevertheless, the fact that President Johnson believed that the homosexual conduct of one of his advisors could have easily toppled his administration, makes it soberingly clear just how enormous the struggle that Kameny and his Mattachine Society faced as they sought to convince Washingtonians and all Americans that homosexuals were not perverts or deviants, and that they were perfectly capable of occupying important positions in the federal government.²⁶

1965 was a pivotal year for the Mattachine Society and for all gay Washingtonians. Probably because of the combination of the Jenkins scandal, the Dowdy Bill, and the newly created Mattachine Society, *The Washington Post* began 1965 by commissioning a five-part investigative series on homosexuality in the District of Columbia, putting an unprecedented spotlight on the subject. In some ways this series of articles challenged popularly held notions about homosexuals, declaring for example that, “the homosexual is found in all types of jobs and professions, truck drivers, doctors, actors, salesmen, ditch-diggers, athletes, and psychoanalysts.” At the same time, however, the articles confirmed many of the stereotypes about homosexuals, such as the idea that homosexuals were hyper-sexual: “One thing psychiatrists have discovered is that the homosexual is likely to be far more preoccupied and obsessed with the topic of sex than most people” one article said. Like the *Post*’s editorial about the Dowdy Bill, the

²⁶ Robert David Johnson, *All the Way with LBJ: The 1964 Presidential Election*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 248-260; Al Weisel, “LBJ’s Gay Sex Scandal,” *Out*, December 1990, 76-83.

paper was in no way suggesting that homosexuality was a healthy, normal lifestyle, but that the subject was being covered at all by the city's paper of record is significant. Regardless of any inaccuracies, this investigative series provided increased visibility for the Mattachine Society of Washington as Kameny was interviewed and quoted as a representative of the society several times. The articles also gave Kameny a platform from which to advance the narrative that homosexuals constituted a cohesive and oppressed minority group similar to African Americans. When asked why homosexuals would want to live openly in the face of such hostility he compared living as a sexual minority to living as a religious minority, "Why should society ask us to change? You wouldn't ask a Jew to change because there is anti-Semitism in the world," he said.²⁷ The last article in the five part series remarked on the fact that some homosexuals in Washington seemed to be increasingly impatient with the slow pace of change in their social status, and with the federal government's continuing employment ban. The article presaged a new chapter in Mattachine's public advocacy in which the group would become significantly more active.²⁸

Just a few months later, MSW was preparing to take on a much more public and activist role. The society's Vice-President, Jack Nichols, was the member who first advocated for a more visible and militant Mattachine Society when he suggested that the group adopt the tactic of picketing. There was certainly plenty of it going on in Washington during early 1965 as anti-Vietnam war protests had become commonplace,

²⁷ Jean M. White, "Homosexuals Are in All Kinds of Jobs, Find Place in Many Levels of Society," *Washington Post*, 2 February 1965, A1.

²⁸ Jean M. White, "Homosexuals' Militancy Reflected in Attacks in Ouster from US Jobs," *Washington Post*, 4 February 1965, A1.

particularly in front of the White House and on Capitol Hill.²⁹ Kameny initially pushed back against Nichols' idea; he was not convinced that picketing would be an effective strategy for Mattachine. By the spring of 1965, however, Kameny was growing increasingly frustrated because MSW was being totally ignored by the Civil Service Commission. For years Kameny had been trying to schedule a meeting between his organization and John W. Macy, the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission, and for years Macy rebuffed every single one of Mattachine's requests. In a terse letter from Macy to the Mattachine Society written in September 1962 the Commissioner stated: "It is the established policy of the Civil Service Commission that homosexuals are not suitable for appointment to or retention in positions in the Federal service. There would be no useful purpose served in meeting with a representative of your Society."³⁰ By 1965 Macy still had not changed his mind, and as a result Kameny was willing to entertain the idea of staging a picket.

While it was Nichols who first proposed a picket, the Mattachine Society was Frank Kameny's organization, and although he was a late convert to the idea of picketing, if it was going to happen at all then he would be the one to direct it. Nichols had no problem delegating responsibility for the planning and executing of the pickets to Kameny, so long as the picketing would actually happen. Obsessed with order, Kameny established a new Committee on Picketing within the Mattachine Society and appointed himself the chairman. In this role Kameny quickly produced a lengthy document about the rules for Mattachine pickets that he commanded all his members to abide by. What is most striking about this document is the sheer number of rules that Kameny came up with

²⁹ "White House Picketed on Viet Policy," *Washington Post*, 21 February 1965. A26.

³⁰ John W. Macy to Bruce Schuyler, 28 September 1962, Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

for picketing, all of them meant to keep the picketers on their best behavior: “Picketing is not an occasion for an assertion of personality, individuality, age, rebellion, generalized non-conformity or anti-conformity” the document began. Kameny believed that the picketers should draw no attention to themselves so that the focus would be purely on the messages printed on their signs. Kameny also implemented a strict dress code for picketing, ordering that, “dress and appearance will be conservative and conventional.” Men were required to wear suits, white shirts, and ties; women were to wear dresses. The men were required to have clean haircuts and to be freshly shaven; beards were strictly prohibited. One Mattachine member, Lilli Vincenz, recalls that the dress code was required because, “In order to make an impression on heterosexuals in power, particularly here in the nation’s capital, we had to look normal, we had to be rational... we couldn’t be flaky or we would be dismissed and lose credibility.” As for the picket signs, the wording of each would have to be approved in advance by Kameny and he would also determine the order in which the picketers would march. His rules also stipulated that picketers were forbidden from talking to any spectator or journalist; only he was authorized to make statements on behalf of the demonstrators.³¹

The first organized demonstration on behalf of gay rights in the history of the United States of America was organized rather haphazardly. While Mattachine had planned to make the Civil Service Commission Headquarters the site of its first picket, a headline on April 16th, 1965 so infuriated Nichols and Kameny that they changed plans. The *New York Times* had recently reported on the creation of labor camps in Cuba for

³¹Genny Beemyn’s recorded interview with Jack Nichols, Historical Society of Washington, Genny Beemyn/A Queer Capital Collection, the Rainbow History Project; Mattachine Society of Washington, “Regulations for Picketing” 1965, Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project; Recorded interview with Lilli Vincenz, 2001, Washington Historical Society, Rainbow History Project.

homosexuals. Nichols convinced Kameny that this story presented an excellent rationale for staging a picket because Mattachine could argue that the United States, Cuba, and the Soviet Union were all united on the issue of treating homosexuals unfairly. Since Mattachine would be picketing against a Cuban policy, the group could not be accused of being anti-American. Quickly the two drew up signs, Nichols's sign said "15 million American Homosexuals Protest Federal Treatment!" Another one said "Russia, Cuba, and the United States Unite to Persecute Homosexuals." The theme uniting all of the signs that day was that homosexuals are patriotic American citizens being denied fundamental rights. Nichols had wanted to stage the picket in front of the Cuban Embassy, but when he learned that Cuba did not have an embassy in Washington, he decided to stage the demonstration in front of the White House. Ten members of the Mattachine Society, three women and seven men showed up to picket for one hour on that Saturday afternoon. Lilli Vincenz one of the three women on the picket line, remembers that it was one of the most exciting days of her life, and that some passers-by thought that she and the other picketers must have been actors shooting a film because there was no way that such normal looking people could possibly be homosexuals!³²

Because this first picket was put together at the last minute it received almost no press coverage except for a brief mention in city's African American newspaper, the *Washington Afro-American*.³³ The ten members who participated deemed it a success, however, and were eager to picket again. Having done it once the picketers now felt, in

³² Beemyn interview with Jack Nichols; Recorded interview with Lilli Vincenz, 2001; Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 199-202.

³³ The city's African America press had a long history of covering protests that charged the government with discrimination, see: Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 200.

the words of Jack Nichols, “immunized against fear.”³⁴ Mattachine decided to make picketing a monthly event, and on May 29th the group returned to the White House to picket again. On June 26th they picketed in front of the Civil Service Commission, and then at the Pentagon on July 31st. Otto Ulrich recalls that by the time the group picketed in front of the Pentagon he felt so confident that when a general came out of the building to tell him that he could not protest in the parking lot he yelled back, “Go fuck yourself, we are taxpayers and we are demonstrating here!”³⁵ Although the pickets did not lead to any immediate changes in the lives of gay Washingtonians, they greatly increased Mattachine’s visibility and instilled a new degree of confidence in its membership. While Civil Service Commissioner John Macy was still unwilling to back down from the federal ban on gay employees, the pickets at least caused him to schedule a meeting with Frank Kameny and four other Mattachine members in the summer of 1965. When Secretary of State Dean Rusk’s office was picketed, he was forced to defend the State Department’s ban on gay employees at a televised press conference when a reporter asked him about the demonstration taking place outside.³⁶

Mid-way through the decade the Mattachine Society of Washington had a short list of accomplishments to which it could proudly point. Kameny’s efforts since being fired from the Army Map Service had greatly improved the visibility of gay people in Washington, DC, and his organization was responsible for the first public demonstrations on behalf of gay rights in the history of the country. Perhaps his most significant contribution to the gay rights movement during this time was his continued articulation of

³⁴ Genny Beemyn’s recorded interview with Jack Nichols.

³⁵ Beemyn, *A Queer Capital*, 185-188; Recorded interview with Otto Ulrich, Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

³⁶ Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 205.

a message that homosexuality was not an illness. In interviews, press releases, picket signs, lawsuits, letters to the editor, and congressional testimony, Kamney spent the 1960s advancing a narrative that American homosexuals were a distinct minority group entitled to exactly the same rights as other American minority group. In 1968 and inspired by the “Black is Beautiful” campaign, Kameny coined the slogan “Gay is Good” and adopted it as his rallying cry. He knew that if gay people internalized society’s views of them as mentally ill, that they would never feel as though they deserved equal treatment under the law.

The 1965 pickets were arguably the high water mark of Mattachine’s existence. As early as 1966 some of the limitations of the Mattachine Society were becoming evident, and the group started to lose momentum. The May 1966 issue of MSW’s monthly newsletter, *Insider*, indicates the onset of this malaise. The entire front page was a lengthy commentary lamenting the fact that after the pickets, the group had become, “all talk and no action lately,” and that its members wasted too much time with navel-gazing, and infighting: “Members have been too engaged in internal politics for their own amusement. When they don’t like the way their friends are treated, they resign from their important function in the group,” the commentary said.³⁷ Paul Kuntzler, one of the men on the picket line at the White House in April 1965 quit MSW to spend more time volunteering for anti-war organizations that he felt were actually getting things done.³⁸ While large-scale public actions in Washington, like the pickets, would not continue into the second half of the decade, it is important to note that the Mattachine Society of Washington did not fold entirely. In 1966 the *Post* published a lengthy story on the

³⁷ Untitled Article. *The Insider*, May 1966, Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

³⁸ Author’s interview with Paul Kuntzler, 15 August 2015.

group's efforts to distribute informational pamphlets about venereal disease throughout the city's gay bars.³⁹ Additionally, members of MSW would join members of New York's Mattachine Society every July 4th between 1965 and 1969 at Independence Hall in Philadelphia to stage small demonstrations on behalf of gay rights there.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for Mattachine by the late 1960s was its size. Gay Washingtonians never flocked to become members of the Mattachine Society. The group always remained small and it was completely dominated by its leader Franklin Kameny who had a penchant for micromanaging. Kameny's czar-like, dictatorial personality turned some members off. In 1965 the group's membership briefly ousted him from the presidency. They quickly reinstated him, however, once they realized that there was no one else willing to dedicate the hours of work required to keep the organization running: "No one could match the stamina of Kameny" said Lilli Vincenz. By the end of the decade, the group's members seem to have acquiesced to Kameny's dominance over the organization as evidenced by MSW's 1969 leadership elections in which less than one half of the group's members bothered to cast a vote at all, showing a high level of disengagement. Additionally, MSW was not at all representative of the diversity within Washington's gay community; the majority of its membership was male and white. Lesbians, African-Americans, and transgender people were never a significant part of the organization. Years later, Otto Ulrich, MSW's long-time treasurer, would account for the lack of diversity in Mattachine by explaining that during the 1960s Frank Kameny was waging a battle against the morals of mainstream, middle-class America, and that in order to win such a battle he believed that he had to convince middle-class America that homosexuals could be counted among its ranks. Since Mattachine was fighting the

³⁹ "Homosexual VD Rate Alarms Officials Here" *Washington Post*, 24 March 1966, F8.

middle class Kameny believed that its members should look like the middle class.⁴⁰ Some female members of Mattchine found the group to be too narrowly focused on the concerns of gay men rather than on issues that concerned both men and women. Eva Freund joined the group in the early 1960s because it was the only gay rights group that existed in Washington. While she agreed that police entrapment was wrong, it seemed to her as though the men in Mattachine wanted to establish a “constitutional right to nameless sex at the public toilets,” and she disliked that police entrapment seemed to be a more important focus for the group than educating the larger community about homosexuality. She also found many of the gay men in Mattachine to be sexist. She recalls that she and other women in the group were expected to do things like take the notes and make the coffee at the group’s meetings.⁴¹

Some of Mattachine’s members were growing increasingly frustrated with the slow pace of change in Washington and beyond. There simply had not been a revolution in American attitudes toward homosexuality during the 1960s. Washington’s laws targeting homosexuals had not changed, nor had the federal government’s official position on gay employees. As a result, some members were ready to see Mattachine become a louder, more confrontational, and more militant organization. Only four months before the Stonewall Riots would occur in New York City, the February 1969 edition of the *Insider* cited “a new militancy on the part of some members of the Board” as one of the challenges facing the organization in the new year. The very same newsletter went on

⁴⁰ Recorded interviews with Otto Ulrich and Lilli Vincenz; On Kameny’s dictatorial personality, see: Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 194-195, as well as Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York: Touchstone, 1999), 113. They call him “George Patton as a gay activist.”

⁴¹ Eva Freund, “A Lesbian in the Early Gay Movement,” Washington Historical Society, Rainbow History Project.

to inform MSW members that the group no longer had enough funds to maintain an office and that Kameny needed volunteers to help pack up files and equipment from the current space. Donations had simply dried up and membership dues were going unpaid. All of the editions of the *Insider* from the first half of 1969 show that Mattachine was in no way an organization that was in a position to seriously advocate a radical re-shaping of American culture. The group's top priority during the winter of 1969 seems to have been finding a way to raise enough money so that it could make and distribute matchbooks with the initials MSW printed on them and then place them in the city's gay bars in hopes of increasing MSW's visibility and its membership.⁴²

Despite being responsible for the first gay rights demonstrations in the US, and having forced Congress and the *Washington Post* into a discussion of the rights of homosexual Americans, the Mattachine Society of Washington was a tired organization by 1969. No matter how hard he worked, it would take more than just Franklin Kameny to advance the cause of gay rights in the District of Columbia. Something major would be required to reinvigorate the fledgling gay rights movement in the nation's capital and to expand its ranks. Fortuitously, on the night of June 28th, 1969 that something occurred when 225 miles away, at a bar in Greenwich Village, New York, patrons of a bar called the Stonewall Inn became so fed up with rampant police harassment and arbitrary arrests that they decided to fight back. Gay Washington was about to feel the aftershocks of Stonewall.

⁴² *The Insider*, February 1969, Historical Society of Washington. Rainbow History Project.

Chapter Two: Gay Liberation Arrives in Washington, DC.

Standing in the shadow of Philadelphia's Independence Hall in the suffocating heat of a July afternoon, Franklin Kameny could not believe what he was seeing. Two of the women on *his* picket line were holding each other's hands! Never at a loss for words, Kameny rushed up to the demonstrators, slapped their hands apart, and in his nasal Brooklyn accent barked, "You can't do that!" Hand-holding, or any form of touching among the demonstrators, was strictly prohibited under Kameny's rules for picketing that he had written four years earlier, in 1965, in preparation for the Mattachine Society's first picket of the White House in April of that year.¹

Since entering politics in 1961 Kameny had argued that homosexual Americans needed to embrace the politics of respectability. He firmly believed that in order for homosexuals to ever realize their full civil rights they would need to demonstrate to their fellow Americans that they were not deviant or mentally ill, but rather that they were just like any other American in all aspects of life, except for sexual preference. It was for this reason that in the early protests staged by Kameny's organization, The Mattachine Society of Washington (MSW), he required male demonstrators to wear crisp, white shirts and ties, and to be clean shaven, and it was why he ordered female demonstrators to wear conservative dresses, or long skirts with blouses. Kameny wanted to insure that no onlooker could dismiss the seriousness of his demonstrations based merely on the personal appearance of the demonstrators. Additionally, Kamey had to approve each of the picket signs on display, and he alone determined in which order the picketers would march. He demanded that all of the writing on the picket signs be in large block, stencil-

¹ Marc Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia 1945-1972*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 291-292.

traced letters. Hand-written signs were too frivolous and disorganized. Public displays of affection between protestors were absolutely forbidden, as the sight might repulse heterosexual passers-by and cause them to reject the narrative of respectability that Kameny had been working tirelessly to construct for nine years.²

Franklin Kameny had never marched on a picket line that he could not control until July 4th, 1969, when for the very first time his voluminous rules on picketing were being flagrantly ignored. Only one week after the Stonewall Riots in New York City had occurred, a tectonic shift in gay political activism was underway. A new, more aggressive, even militant spirit had taken root in the minds of many younger gay activists and it was on full display on this Fourth of July in Philadelphia on this picket line; not even the indomitable Frank Kameny could suppress it.

July 4th 1969 was not the first time that Kameny and members of his Mattachine Society of Washington had spent the holiday picketing in front of Independence Hall. For each of the last four years Kameny joined with gay activists from Philadelphia and New York to stage an event that they called “The Annual Reminder” in front of the historic building so closely associated with the Declaration of Independence and its famous pronouncement that, “All men are created equal.” The goal of the yearly event was to remind Americans that on the day when they celebrated freedom and independence, that one group among them was still subject to unfair treatment and discrimination, unable to engage in the pursuit of happiness that Jefferson had described almost 200 years earlier. Historian Marc Stein accurately called the underlying strategy behind these early pickets in Washington and Philadelphia, “homophile patriotism” as the demonstrations sought to

² Mattachine Society of Washington, “Regulations for Picketing” 1965, Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

project a narrative that homosexuals were loyal and patriotic Americans, committed to the nation's founding ideals. Independence Hall provided the perfect background to make this point. The pamphlet that demonstrators were handing out to passers-by on this July 4th declared that, "The homosexual American citizen finds himself denied many of the unique and special features of American life that are guaranteed by the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and its Bill of Rights."³

Like the Mattachine Society's pickets of the White House, the Civil Service Commission, and the State Department in Washington, DC, the Independence Hall pickets were conducted in an orderly and disciplined manner between 1965 and 1968. Demonstrators wore conservative attire, some carried American flags, and the picket signs bore direct, but not overtly provocative messages: "Homosexual Americans Still Don't Have Our Sacred American Freedoms and Rights" read one sign at the inaugural 1965 picket; "Private Sexual Conduct is Irrelevant to Employment," read another.⁴ The demonstrators included members of the Mattachine Society of Washington as well as members of the Mattachine Societies of Philadelphia and New York. The Daughters of Bilitis, a lesbian organization in Philadelphia also played a key role in organizing the Annual Reminders and in recruiting picketers. Kameny was always in charge, however. Until 1969 that is. The Annual Reminder of 1969, marked a radical break with past versions of the event, as the martinet-like Kameny was totally unable to maintain discipline among his troops. The protestors in Philadelphia that day were energized by the news of the previous week's events in Greenwich Village, and they were far too busy

³ Eastern Regional Homophile Conference, "Fifth Annual Reminder Day," *Rainbow History Project Digital Collections*, <http://rainbowhistory.omeka.net/items/show/4937907> (Accessed 5 November 2015).

⁴ Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves*. 253-254.

trading information about what they knew to march quietly and in orderly lines. Six nights before this demonstration, the New York City Police Department had conducted one of its periodic crackdowns on known gay bars, but had been met with an unprecedented response. Fed-up with these routine “cleanup” campaigns, and with continual, arbitrary police harassment and arrest, hundreds of gay men, lesbians, drag queens, and transgender people spontaneously fought back against the NYPD. For two nights Greenwich Village was rocked by unrest and angry mobs were met with teargas and police batons on Christopher Street and in Sheridan Square, directly in front of the Stonewall Inn.

While the Stonewall Inn was by no means the first gay bar to be raided in New York City and to see its patrons herded into paddy wagons, it was the first gay bar whose clientele decided to fight back so forcefully. Perhaps it is because the Stonewall Inn tended to attract the most marginalized members of the gay community, like homeless gay teens and drag queens that the riots broke out at all. These extra marginalized people felt like they had little to lose. On the second night of the riots, approximately 2,000 protestors battled 400 police officers. Demonstrators threw bricks, rocks, and beer bottles at police. A concrete block was launched from a window onto the hood of a police car. Parking meters were uprooted and used as battering rams against police cruisers, and cries of “Gay Power” echoed from the mob as hundreds were arrested. When it was all over there could be no mistaking that a new style of gay activism had emerged. The Stonewall Riots were violent and leaderless, and many of the rioters were in their teens or twenties. Unlike much of Kameny’s membership, the Stonewall Rioters were not middle-class professionals, nor were they closeted federal employees fearful that engaging in a

demonstration might cost them their careers. The Stonewall Rioters had no interest in “homophile patriotism” or in displaying their normativity for middle-class America. These riots were the opposite of the public demonstrations that Kamney had been staging over the previous four years.⁵

Only one week after Stonewall, as Kameny marched in front of Independence Hall, he could not help but notice that his regiment of picketers was rowdier and more animated than ever before. Many of them seemed seized by a new and unprecedented energy, particularly the protestors who had come down from New York. The spirit of Stonewall had followed them to Independence Hall and the once stern and sedate Annual Reminder was turning into a boisterous party right before Kameny’s eyes. Lilli Vincenz one of the members of the Mattachine Society of Washington who was there with Kameny that day remembers: “It was clear that things were changing. People who had felt oppressed suddenly felt empowered.”⁶

Kameny’s tactic of picketing suddenly appeared antiquated to the New Yorkers who had just experienced the Stonewall Riots. According to Nancy Tucker, another MSW member who was present that day, the contingent of New Yorkers caused Frank Kameny to, “Nearly have a heart attack on the spot. He was apoplectic.” Besides the two young women who insisted on holding hands, Kameny was also angered by a young man in his early twenties carrying an American flag who, instead of marching, chose to “mince around” and swing his hips from side to side in an exaggerated manner. The

⁵ Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 21-32; David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2004) 256-260; John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 231-232.

⁶ Carter, *Stonewall* 216-217. Recorded interview with Lilli Vincenz, 2001. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

whole idea behind picketing was to showcase the ordinariness of gay people, not to draw attention to their difference; but after Stonewall, some gay activists, particularly younger ones, were fed up with Kameny's philosophy, and the politics of respectability underlying it.⁷

After about 30 minutes of the traditional silent marching in a circle, Craig Rodwell had had enough. Rodwell, the 28-year-old president of the Mattachine Society of New York convinced the 10 couples who had come with him from New York to abandon the picket line and to hold each others hands. One of the men from New York City scrawled the slogan "Smash Sexual Fascism" on a sign and held it up for onlookers to see. Kameny who had declared himself to be the only representative of the group who was authorized to speak to the media was surely irritated when Rodwell rushed up to a journalist and talked about the last week's events in New York City. As he spoke to the reporter Rodwell made sure to add that, "We are tired of not being able to hold hands in public; the leadership of our demonstration has to change!" Unsurprisingly, this would be the last of the Annual Reminders.⁸

The *Washington Post* did not cover 1969's Annual Reminder in Philadelphia, and it barely covered the Stonewall Riots at all. On July 1st, 1969, buried deep in the paper's E Section, was an AP wire story of just 61 words containing the headline, "N.Y. Homosexuals Protest Raids."⁹ Were it not for the riots, Washington, DC might still be remembered as the most important site for the gay rights movement in the summer of 1969. While the capital city witnessed no riots, Washington had its own "Stonewall

⁷ Nancy Tucker speaking at the Rainbow History Project's GLF Panel Discussion, 2014. Washington Historical Society, Rainbow History Project.

⁸ Carter, *Stonewall*, 216-217.

⁹ Associated Press, "N.Y. Homosexuals Protest Raids." *Washington Post*, July 1, 1969. E2.

Moment” in July of 1969 but it did not play out in the streets, instead it happened in the courts. Although the *Post* barely mentioned Stonewall, it devoted a significant amount of space to the decision in the case of *Norton v. Macy*, which had been argued in front of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia on January 13th, 1969 with the verdict finally announced on July 1. The plaintiff in the case, Clifford Norton, began his lengthy journey through the legal process around 2:00AM on October 22, 1963. Norton, who then worked as a budget analyst at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), had parked his car at Lafayette Park, across from the White House, and invited another man to get in with him. The two men circled the park one time before Norton let his guest out to get into his own car. In separate cars the two men proceeded to drive back to Norton’s apartment in Southwest Washington. Lafayette Park was one of, if not the most popular cruising area for gay men at the time, and had been since at least 1895. On this night, as on many others, officers from the Morals Division of the Metropolitan Police Department were also there conducting undercover surveillance.¹⁰ Two officers trailed Norton’s car back to his apartment and arrested him and the other man in the building’s parking lot, charging each man with minor traffic violations. The real reason behind the arrest became clear, however, when at the police station officers questioned Norton for over two hours about his sexual history, and why he had been in Lafayette Park at all that evening.

After learning that Norton worked for the federal government the police called the head of security for NASA who arrived at the station around 3:00AM. This arrest took place just two months after Congressman Dowdy had publicly berated the Metropolitan Police Department for its failure to report the arrests of suspected homosexuals to the

¹⁰ For a history of Lafayette Park as a cruising area, see: Beemyn, *A Queer Capital*, 21-23.

Civil Service Commission, and it is quite possible that on this evening, MPD's officers were trying to please their Congressional supervisors who oversaw their department's budget. Around 6:00AM Norton was brought to NASA headquarters and interrogated. At this point, exhausted and distraught, he disclosed the fact that he had engaged in homosexual acts in high school and in college, and that he sometimes "blacked out" when drinking causing him to have sex with men. He claimed that on the night in question he had experienced one of these blackouts. Norton flatly denied that he was a homosexual, however. A few days later Norton was fired for "immoral, indecent, and disgraceful conduct" and for possessing, "traits of personality which render [Norton] unsuitable for further Government employment"¹¹

When Frank Kameny learned about Norton's situation, he believed he had found the ideal test case with which to challenge the Civil Service Commission's ban on employing homosexuals. Norton, a military veteran who routinely received excellent performance reviews from his supervisors at NASA was a sympathetic figure. Additionally, Kameny knew he had a friend in Judge David L. Bazelon who was one of the three judges on the DC Circuit Court of Appeals. A few years earlier Bazelon penned the decision in *Scott v. Macy*, a similar case which did not set any precedents, but had forced the US Civil Service to rehire a man named Bruce Scott who had been also been terminated for being gay. Kameny believed that Clifford Norton's case had the potential to substantially build upon the *Scott* decision, and set a more sweeping precedent that homosexuals could not automatically be excluded from government employment. Two days after Stonewall, as Kamney read Bazelon's opinion, he could not have been happier.

¹¹ *Norton v. Macy*, no. 21625 (United States Court of Appeals District of Columbia Circuit, 1969); Thomas W. Lippman, "Appeals Court Overturns Dismissal of U.S. Employee as Homosexual." *Washington Post*, 2 July 1969, A10.

Judge Bazelon found that Norton's dismissal was not in line with the employment guidelines passed by Congress. Specifically, the law stated that civil servants could only be dismissed if doing so would "promote the efficiency of the service." The Civil Service Commission, the ruling stated, had completely failed to make the case that a workforce free of homosexuals would automatically be a better, more efficient one. Bazelon also called into question the agency's right to wade into matters of morality among its employees, stating forcefully that:

A pronouncement of 'immorality' tends to discourage careful analysis because it unavoidably connotes a violation of divine, Olympian, or otherwise universal standards of rectitude. However, the Civil Service Commission has neither the expertise nor the requisite anointment to make or enforce absolute moral judgments, and we do not understand that it purports to do so.¹²

Interestingly, in supporting his decision, Judge Bazelon cited the much-discussed findings of Dr. Alfred Kinsey's landmark study on sexuality in the American male, which had been published in 1948. In it, Kinsey reported that as many as 38% of American men had engaged in a homosexual act at some point in their lives, and that as many as 15 million American men could be classified as homosexuals. The *Norton* decision was not a unanimous one. Bazelon's colleague, Judge Edward Tamm in his dissent upbraided the court for stepping into an area over which he believed it had no jurisdiction: the subtleties of federal hiring practices. To him, the ban on homosexuals in government service appeared to be a common sense regulation aimed at guarding against blackmail, the same risk that Congressman Hoey and his commission had invoked in their report. Echoing the Hoey report, Tamm wrote, "Homosexuals, sadly enough, do not leave their emotions at Lafayette Square, and regardless of their spiritual destinies they still present targets for

¹² *Norton v. Macy*, no. 21625 (United States Court of Appeals District of Columbia Circuit, 1969).

public reproach and private extortion.” Nevertheless, the precedent established by *Norton v. Macy* was clear. Several months after the decision, the Catholic University Law Review featured an article that succinctly stated the tremendous significance of *Norton*:

After *Norton*, the Commission may not justify the exclusion of homosexuals on the ground that such conduct is contrary to the dominant conventional norms. Instead, there must be a showing that the individual's conduct has an ascertainable deleterious effect on the efficiency of the service. If *Norton* stands, the following seems clear: (1) the Commission may not sustain the removal of a federal employee who confines his homosexual conduct to off-duty hours, unless he occupies a particularly sensitive position, and (2) the Commission may not exclude every homosexual application from all federal positions.¹³

The decision was the subject of a lengthy article in the July 2nd *Washington Post*, and a few days later, in an editorial on July 5th. Just one day after the rowdy picket at Independence Hall, the *Post* heralded Bazelon’s opinion for finally, “establishing a rational policy devoid of the emotionalism that is usually associated with this issue.”¹⁴ It was not the Stonewall Riots that forced the capital city’s paper of record to opine on rights for homosexual Americans, but rather, the decision in Clifford Norton’s case.

Meanwhile, in New York’s West Village, the young men and women who had participated in, or been inspired by the Stonewall Riots, were spending their July evenings meeting in Washington Square Park, trying to determine the best means by which to harness the energy unleashed at Stonewall, and turn it into a potent and sustainable movement. These New Yorkers were much more interested in taking their movement into the streets than into courtrooms. In the weeks following Stonewall, a

¹³ Catholic University Law Review, *Federal Employment of Homosexuals: Narrowing the Efficiency Standard*, 19 Cath. U. L. Rev. 267 (1970).

¹⁴ “Curbing the CSC’s Moral Judgments” *Washington Post*, 5 July 1969. A16.

brand new organization was established in New York City, The Gay Liberation Front (GLF).

Beyond the fact that the members of both groups were gay, the Gay Liberation Front seemed to have very little in common with the Mattachine Society. Unlike Mattachine, GLF viewed itself as inextricably linked to the politics of the New Left; groups like the Black Panthers and Students for a Democratic Society were its ideological compatriots. Also, unlike Mattachine, this new organization deliberately used the word “Gay” in its name. Older gay rights groups like the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, or the Society for Individual Rights in San Francisco, had chosen vague names so that someone who stumbled upon the group would not be able to immediately discern its purpose. Those groups also did not use the word “gay” because they preferred instead the more technical term, “homophile.” GLF’s use of the word “Front” was meant to indicate the group’s radical leftist platform, as it echoed the National Liberation Front battling the South Vietnamese and American Governments at the time. More than just an organization or society, the word “Front” sounded more applicable to the revolution that the founders of GLF believed themselves to be leading. The founding document of GLF announced: “We are a revolutionary homosexual group of men and women formed with the realization that complete sexual liberation for all people cannot come about unless existing social institutions are abolished.” The same document also made clear GLF’s belief that it was a constituent member of a platoon of leftist groups: “We identify ourselves with all of the oppressed: the Vietnamese struggle, the third world, the blacks,

the workers....all those oppressed by this rotten, dirty, vile, fucked-up capitalist conspiracy.”¹⁵

It was not long before this new, more aggressive spirit migrated south from New York to Washington. In October 1969, the *Washington Post* ran a story about the newfound militancy of homosexuals in New York and Los Angeles, but remarked on the absence of a similar movement in Washington: “There is as yet no militancy here of the New York or Los Angeles ilk...Homosexuality in the nation’s capital remains largely underground” the *Post* declared.¹⁶ This would change drastically in a matter of months, however. The first public mention of establishing an outpost of the Gay Liberation Front in Washington, DC appeared on June 9, 1970, in a letter to the editor in a small, underground newspaper called the *Quicksilver Times*, that catered to the city’s radical left. A young man named Mike Yarr had written to the paper in order to protest its use of the term “Sucks” in a headline that it published denouncing the future Indonesian military dictator Suharto. “Sucks,” when used as a pejorative, Yarr proclaimed, was a homophobic and misogynistic word that people on the radical left should discard from their vocabulary. “What was so inherently bad about sucking?” Yarr demanded to know. He went on to praise the newly formed Gay Liberation Front in New York because it was dedicated to eliminating the negative self-perceptions that many gay people had adopted. He concluded his letter by writing that anyone interested in establishing this sort of a group in Washington should call him at his home phone number, which he listed.¹⁷

¹⁵ Carter, *Stonewall*, 217-221; D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, 233-234

¹⁶ Nancy L. Ross, “Homosexual Revolution” *Washington Post*, 25 October 1969. C1.

¹⁷ Mike Yarr, “Letter to the Editor Re: Use of Term ‘Sucks’” *Quicksilver Times*, 9-19 June, 1970, 7.

Many people did get in touch with Mike Yarr, and only a few weeks after his letter appeared, 40 to 50 people attended the inaugural meeting of The Gay Liberation Front of Washington, DC (GLF-DC) at Grace Episcopal Church on Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown. David Aiken, who had been one of the first people to contact Yarr, and who had helped to organize this first meeting, took it upon himself to write a sort of manifesto for the new group that he published in the *Quicksilver Times* the week before the meeting. Above all else, Aiken declared that Washington's Gay Liberation Front would be committed to liberating gay people from the negative views of themselves that they had internalized because mainstream society had forced them to do so. Gay people often lived in a "mental ghetto," Aiken wrote, where they would always conceive of themselves as outsiders to society. Nothing could be more important than developing "self-respect," he said.¹⁸ Although he probably would have liked to imagine himself as much more of a radical than the coat and tie wearing, 44 year old, Dr. Franklin Kameny, the two men were essentially advancing the same idea: that gay people should not be ashamed of themselves, nor of their sexual desires. Kameny had coined the slogan "Gay is Good" in 1968, and began using Mattachine Society funds to print the phrase on buttons. In 1970, Aiken and GLF-DC with their calls for "liberation" had essentially committed themselves to advancing a similar idea.

While the mainstream press paid no attention to this first gathering of GLF-DC, a brand new publication, the *Gay Blade* was there to cover it. As the Mattachine Society withered, some of its members established the *Gay Blade* in late 1969 to replace MSW's monthly publication, the *Insider*. The *Gay Blade* published a story about the inaugural meeting of GLF-DC, noting that for three hours those assembled discussed many topics

¹⁸ David Aiken, "Gay Liberation comes to DC" *Quicksilver Times*, June 23-July 3, 1970, 4.

but accomplished very little. One of the major debates at the meeting had been whether or not GLF-DC should participate with other radical leftist groups in a marijuana smoke-in being organized for July 4, 1970 in front of the Washington Monument; quite a different way to spend July 4th than the somber pickets Kameny had arranged over the last four years.¹⁹

Existing only as a one sided 8.5x11 mimeograph, the *Blade* could barely call itself a newspaper. Washington lagged behind New York and Los Angeles in this regard, as each one of those cities had a fairly substantial gay newspaper at this point; *The Advocate* in Los Angeles and *Come Out!* in New York City.²⁰ In its first two years of existence the *Gay Blade* functioned mainly as a sort of message board for Washington's gay community. Nancy Tucker, who had been a member of Mattachine Washington and later joined GLF-DC, became its volunteer editor. Like the arrival of GLF-DC the advent of the *Blade* represented a significant change for the gay rights movement in Washington because it was one more thing that was beyond the direct control of Franklin Kameny. While the *Blade's* coverage hinted at the dysfunctional nature of GLF-DC, it had only scratched the surface. Organizationally, GLF-DC was the antithesis of Kameny's Mattachine Society which required membership dues, adhered strictly to the Roberts Rules of Parliamentary Order at its meetings, and had a constitution with a clearly defined leadership structure, including committees and sub-committees. GLF-DC made a conscious effort to be an "anti-organization." One of its early members, Brian Miller, recalls that almost nothing was ever decided in meetings. The three words that he most

¹⁹ "Gay Liberation Front Organized in DC" *Gay Blade*, July 1970.

²⁰ Nancy L. Ross, "Homosexual Revolution," *Washington Post*, 25 October 1969. This article compared the gay rights movement in Washington to those in New York and Los Angeles the differing quality of gay newspapers in the three cities is discussed.

closely associated with GLF-DC meetings were, “madness, chaos, and anarchy.” Nancy Tucker, also a member, remembers that the meetings were filled with “lots declamations of intent or desire, but nothing got done. I was very frustrated.”²¹ GLF-DC did not even want to use the vocabulary associated with a more traditional organization like Mattachine. While GLF-DC did have bodies that most people would call committees, the group rejected that word and instead called these groups “Glonks.” The taxonomy of political action like “protest” or “demonstration” was also discarded by GLF-DC probably because it was not sufficiently revolutionary. Instead, they called any kind of public action by the group a “Zap.”²²

Although the concept of the zap was not invented in Washington, DC, zaps became the primary means by which GLF-DC would draw attention to itself not only in the *Gay Blade* but also in the *Washington Post*. In fact, it is likely that GLF-DC members read about other gay activists conducting zaps in other parts of the country. Just three days before GLF-DC’s first zap, the *Post* carried an AP Wire story with the headline “Gay Front Halts Church Meeting.” The article described how the annual convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, which had been meeting in Detroit, was forced to adjourn its session after an “outburst” by 20 members of the Gay Liberation Front.²³ Three days later, GLF-DC orchestrated the first of two major zaps in November 1970.

²¹ Brian Miller and Nancy Tucker speaking at GLF Panel Discussion hosted by the Rainbow History Project, 2014.

²² *Ibid.*,

²³ The Associated Press, “Gay Front Halts Church Meeting,” *Washington Post*, 9 November 1970, C7.; Brian Miller, GLF Panel Discussion, 2014.

Interestingly, each of these actions would receive more coverage from the *Washington Post* than Kameny's unprecedented picket of the White House had in 1965.²⁴

Shortly after 2PM on November 11, 1970, Dr. John Cavanaugh, a professor of psychology, walked on to the stage of the auditorium at the School of Sacred Theology at Catholic University in Northeast Washington. Cavanaugh had spent his career arguing that homosexuals were doubly stricken. Not only were they sinners, but they were also mentally ill. He had been invited to Catholic University in order to deliver the keynote address at a conference on homosexuality and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Just as Cavanaugh started to speak, however, someone in the auditorium yelled "Bullshit!" and then more shouting began to echo from the back of the auditorium. In a matter of seconds 30 young men, joined by five women, were marching toward the podium which surprised Dr. Cavanaugh stood clutching dearly with both hands. The stunned audience of about 50 priests and nuns from all around the country looked on in shock as the demonstrators unfurled a large pink flag in front of the podium, crumpled up Dr. Cavanaugh's notes, threw them on the floor, and began shouting obscenities at him. Some of the demonstrators on the stage began to kiss each other. The apparent leader of this mob took the podium and read a prepared statement to the audience: "It is precisely such institutions as the Catholic Church and psychiatry which have created and perpetuated the immorality, myths, and stereotypes of homosexuality which we as homosexuals have internalized and from which we now intend to liberate ourselves!"²⁵ It is hard to imagine that the 13 men and women who picketed the White House in 1965

²⁴ The *Post* published articles about the two GLF zaps in November 1970, but ran no articles about the Mattachine Society's historic first picket of the White House in 1965.

²⁵ Ivan G. Goldman, "Gay Front Invades CU Conference," *Washington Post*, 12 November 1970, B5.

could have ever envisioned a gay rights protest in their city looking like this one, and only five years later.

Several of the demonstrators who forced Dr. Cavanaguh off the stage that day were residents of the brand new GLF-DC Commune. Located just a short walk from DuPont Circle, at 1620 S Street, seven GLF-DC members had decided to rent a large, four-story house and make it the unofficial headquarters for the new organization. This was not such an unusual thing for young leftists to do; within only a few blocks there was a Catholic anti-war house and a Quaker anti-war commune. In 1970 the DuPont Circle neighborhood was Washington's bohemian area, resembling a much smaller version of Greenwich Village in New York.²⁶

The 1970 Washington phonebook included an entry for "Gay Liberation Front," and the number listed was that of the GLF-DC house. The phone rang day and night at the newly established commune. Sometimes on the other line was a young person who had been kicked out of his parents' home for being gay and had nowhere to go, sometimes it was a person with questions about venereal disease who had no one else to ask, and occasionally it was someone who had been arrested on morals charges, and was trying to locate Frank Kameny. Brian Miller, who did not live at the house, but was a frequent guest, remembers that dozens of young gay people lived at the commune temporarily in 1970 and 1971 because they had been kicked out of their homes and needed a place to stay.²⁷

In the fall of 1970, Sean Roach, a sophomore at Georgetown University called the house. To be gay on the conservative, Catholic campus of Georgetown was not so simple

²⁶ Brian Miller, GLF Panel Discussion 2014.

²⁷ Brian Miller, GLF Panel Discussion 2014.

in 1970, and Sean was hoping to find some people like him. He was quickly invited to party on the night that he called and it was there that he would meet his first serious boyfriend. For the next year Roach spent almost all of his free time with members of GLF-DC, often at the commune. At any given moment he estimated that there were between 10 and 20 people in the house, and there were generally an even number of black and white people. Those who worked and paid the rent slept in the house's bedrooms, while everyone else slept wherever they could find space. Roach remembers that very few of the commune's residents worked at all; most of the people there seemed to be "full time revolutionaries who were also on food stamps."²⁸

One of the common pastimes for the commune's residents, and for those who hung out around the commune, was to dress up in what was called "Skag-Drag." This was a sort of irreverent and intentionally sloppy form of cross-dressing; the intent was to use one's personal appearance in order to make a political statement. Instead of actually trying to appear as women, men in Skag-Drag wore women's clothing but wanted it to be obvious that they were men. Facial hair was almost a required component of Skag-Drag. Those who chose to dress in Skag-Drag believed that when they did so, they were challenging society's strict notions regarding gender roles. In 1970 it was not so uncommon to see men with long hair and beards, who were also wearing makeup and a dress, strolling through DuPont Circle.²⁹

Only two weeks after disrupting the conference at Catholic University, GLF-DC grabbed headlines again for trashing a bar in Northwest DC's Tenleytown neighborhood.

Late on the evening of November 28, 1970, four members of GLF-DC entered the

²⁸ Recorded Interview with Sean Roach, 5 August 2014. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project, Oral History Collection.

²⁹ Brian Miller, GLF Panel Discussion, 2014; Interview with Sean Roach, 2014.

Zephyr Restaurant and Lounge on Wisconsin Avenue, a popular hangout for American University students. After waiting for quite some time to be served, they asked the manager if they were being refused service because one of them was black, or if it was because they were gay. Two of the men had been holding hands at the table. The manager ignored the men's questions and walked away. Indignant, the four left the restaurant, but soon returned with 40 other people who entered the crowded dining room and began chanting "Gay is good!" and "Gay power to gay people!" Some of them started dancing with each other. Bruce Pennington, one of the GLF-DC members who was there, and who takes credit for starting the riot, remembers passing out salt and pepper shakers as well as sugar bowls to all of his friends, "If any shit starts, let 'em have it" he said, "make sure you aim for the bar!" Surely enough, in only a matter of minutes, one of the Zephyr's staff and a GLF-DC member started shoving each other and Pennington yelled, "Alright Queens, time for target practice!" Beer mugs began to fly, as did the salt and paper shakers Pennington had distributed. Tables and chairs were smashed, and so were the two front windows of the restaurant that faced Wisconsin Avenue. When the police finally arrived, 12 of the rioters were arrested and taken to jail where they were charged with assault, illegal entry, and destruction of property.³⁰

It was not a coincidence that a large crowd of young gay activists had been in such a combative mood that evening, and not all of the 12 men who were arrested at the Zephyr were GLF-DC members. Several of those arrested were from out of town, but were in Washington to participate in the Radical People's Constitutional Convention, a

³⁰ "Gay Brothers Unite in Rage" *Quicksilver Times*, 8 December 1970, 8; Recorded interviews with Bruce Pennington and Tim Corbett, "Tim Corbett on the Gay Liberation Front House," Rainbow History Project Digital Collections, accessed 13 November 2015, <http://rainbowhistory.omeka.net/items/show/75331>; Interview with Bruce Pennington, Historical Society of Washington, Oral History Collection, Rainbow History Project.

Black Panther sponsored meeting with the goal of drafting a new constitution for the United States of America. Huey Newton, the leader of the Black Panthers, explained that the goal of the convention was to create the foundation for, “World government with proportional representation based on a socialist framework.” Approximately 5,000 delegates from an array of radical leftist organizations from across the country descended on Washington to help write this new constitution.³¹ At the convention members of different Gay Liberation groups from across the country demanded that the proposed constitution include a clause calling for “the abolition of the bourgeoisie institution of the nuclear family,” as well as for, “a free public education system that presents the whole range of human sexuality without advocating any one form or style.”³² While Kameny and his Mattachine Society had spent the 1960s advocating for a re-writing of federal hiring guidelines, GLF-DC was now joining with the Black Panthers in an attempt to scrap the United States Constitution and replace it with an entirely new document.

As evidenced by its participation in the Revolutionary People’s Constitutional Convention, GLF-DC viewed the Black Panthers as a likeminded group. Unlike the Mattachine Society, one of GLF-DC’s major concerns was how to bring more African-Americans into the overwhelmingly white world of gay activism. Washington DC was, after all, a majority black city. According to the 1970 census African Americans accounted for 71% of the district’s population, while whites made up just 27%.³³ Despite these demographics, the public face of gay activism in the 1960s and early 1970s was overwhelmingly white. One way that GLF-DC attempted to attract more African

³¹ Ivan Brandon and Jim Mann, “Panthers end DC Convention” *Washington Post*, 30 November 1970, C1.

³² “GLF Presents Program despite RPCC Chaos” *Quicksilver Times*, 8 December 1970, 15.

³³US Census 1970,

<http://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Chapter%25202.pdf>

American members was by moving its meeting location from Northwest DC, where the city's white population was concentrated, to Southeast, where the population was overwhelmingly African American. The group began meeting at Saint James Episcopal Church in the Capitol Hill neighborhood in Southeast.³⁴

In order to show that it was serious about eliminating racism in Washington's gay community, one of GLF-DC's major projects in early 1971 was a picket of a popular gay bar called Plus One. Plus One's door policy was undeniably discriminatory toward a number of groups. African Americans were often asked to show two forms of identification in order to enter, and the bar would sometimes place "reserved" signs on all of its tables in order to turn certain patrons away, claiming that the place was full. Men wearing women's clothing were also regularly denied entrance to Plus One; the restaurant claimed that wearing drag was illegal in DC, when in fact it was not. GLF-DC correctly suspected that Plus One merely wanted to keep out African Americans and drag queens in order to appeal to a whiter, wealthier clientele that lived in the suburbs and that would spend more money in the bar. For eight nights in January 1971 members of GLF-DC picketed in front of Plus One with signs protesting the bar's discriminatory admission policies. Probably because many of the bar's regular clientele did not wish to draw attention to themselves as they entered a gay bar, the tactic worked, and Plus One's bottom line suffered. As a result, the management of Plus One agreed to meet with GLF-DC protestors, and agreed to change the establishment's admission policies. In 1965 Kameny had used picketing as a tactic to draw attention to society's mistreatment of

³⁴ Interview with Brian Miller, GLF Panel, 2014.

homosexuals, but now in 1971, GLF-DC was using the same tactic in order to draw attention to the gay community's mistreatment of its own members.³⁵

While GLF-DC succeed in bringing attention to the lack of African Americans in Washington's gay organizations, the Gay Liberation Front did very little to ensure that gay men and lesbians were equally represented and heard in the new organization. While GLF-DC certainly never set out to alienate women, it did so spectacularly. The author of the group's manifesto, David Aiken, wrote that, "It's especially important that gay women get together as well as gay men. There's already enough male chauvinism among heterosexuals; a gay movement shouldn't contribute to it."³⁶ At the very first meeting of GLF-DC, Nancy Tucker remembers that women made up a significant percentage of the audience, at least one third in her estimation. She was hopeful that men and women would be equals in the new, radical group. From that initial meeting onward, however, women's membership in GLF-DC would deteriorate precipitously until Tucker became the very last woman affiliated with the group before she too quit in the winter of 1970.³⁷

Washington's Gay Liberation Front was always dominated by men and was arguably quite sexist; "GLF was really a male experience," remembers Michael Ferri, a member from the very beginning. Unlike the disciplined Mattachine Society meetings, which proceeded according to Roberts Rules of Order, giving every member a turn to speak, GLF-DC meetings were conducted with no rules. There were no leaders to acknowledge a speaker; whoever shouted the loudest and most persistently had control of the floor, and GLF-DC meetings regularly devolved into shouting matches. The women

³⁵ "Gay Liberation has been picketing the Plus One" *Gay Blade*, February 1971, 1.

³⁶ David Aiken, "Gay Liberation comes to Washington DC," *Quicksilver Times*, 23 June 1970, 4.

³⁷ Interview with Nancy Tucker, GLF Panel Discussion, 2014.

at these meetings were often unable and unwilling to out-scream the men and therefore did not have equal speaking time.

Some aspects of gay male culture, as practiced by GLF-DC members, were also off-putting to women. For example, male members of GLF-DC frequently referred to each other diminutively with the use of feminine pronouns like “girl,” “sweetie,” or “queen.” Nancy Tucker remembers wondering why it should be so funny to refer to someone as “girl;” what was funny about being a girl or a woman? Tucker also found Skag Drag to be disrespectful to women. What was so hilarious about wearing women’s clothing? Instead of challenging gender roles, as male GLF-DC members claimed they were doing, Tucker and other women believed it was just a way for the men to have a laugh at the expense of women.³⁸

In the brief period during which Tucker attended GLF-DC meetings, she considered her primary contribution to have been reminding the men to refer to the women in GLF-DC as women, and not as girls. “It was always ‘men and girls,’” she recalls, “To be over the age of 18 and referred to as a girl was offensive.” Tucker’s theory was that GLF-DC members were obsessed with sex, and because they had no interest in women as sexual partners, they had no use for women whatsoever. Whereas most women simply grew fed up with the immature antics of the men in GLF-DC and stopped attending the meetings, Nancy Tucker decided that she did not want to “slink out the back door.”³⁹ Instead, she wrote a piece called “Fuck You, ‘Brothers’” and brought it with her to read, and copies to distribute, at the final meeting of GLF-DC that she ever attended:

³⁸ Nancy Tucker, “Fuck You, ‘Brothers:’ Yet Another Woman Leaves the Gay Liberation Movement” 1970. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project; Interview with Nancy Tucker, GLF Panel Discussion, 2014.

³⁹ Interview with Nancy Tucker, GLF Panel Discussion, 2014.

I'm sick of watching skag drags parade up and down, prancing and dancing in their 'finery' and mocking me and my sex with every step. I'm tired of hearing somebody referred to as 'Miss' when he's done a no-no: 'Miss Terry, well she's always late.' 'Miss Chuck, she just can't seem to get herself together.' 'Hush your mouth, Ms. Cade'....Every time you put down a woman, you drive the knife just that much deeper into your own gut. You are committing suicide by your deprecation of the opposite sex...Gay Liberation will never succeed until Women's Liberation succeeds. Your fate hinges on that of women, like it or not. Male homosexuals will not be equal until women are equal.⁴⁰

Nancy Tucker's declaration correctly predicted the impending doom of GLF-DC.

Barely a year after it was established, Washington's Gay Liberation Front began to crumble. The group had alienated women, proven itself incapable of conducting a productive meeting, and its members were growing increasingly frustrated with one another. There was no real leadership, and no agreement between the members about what the group's goals and tactics should be. Michael Ferri, one of the initial residents of the DuPont Circle commune, was so fed up by the end of 1970 that he decided to move out. The house had turned into a circus because of its permanent open door policy. For Ferri the final straw was returning home one day to find four naked men, all high on acid, running up and down the stairs shouting "We're free, we're free!"⁴¹ For men and women like Ferri and Tucker, who wanted to create tangible and beneficial change for gay people in the district and in the country, it was becoming increasingly clear that GLF-DC was not the vehicle capable of delivering that change.

The Gay Liberation Front of Washington continued to exist for another two years, and in that time, alongside new gay rights groups, its members would participate in several notable activities, for example the massive anti-Vietnam War "May Day" protest

⁴⁰ Nancy Tucker "Fuck You, 'Brothers:' Yet Another Woman Leaves the Gay Liberation Movement."

⁴¹ Recorded Interview with Michael Ferri, 9 January 2008. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project, Oral History Collection.

of 1971, and the city's first gay pride celebration in 1972. But by the winter of 1971 no one could possibly mistake GLF-DC as the leading force behind gay political activism in the nation's capital. Instead, it was Dr. Franklin Kameny who re-emerged to become, once again, the epicenter of gay political activity in Washington when he announced his campaign for a seat in the United States House of Representatives on February 3, 1971, becoming the first openly gay American to seek election to Congress.

Chapter Three: “Gay is Good” on the Campaign Trail: Franklin Kameny’s Historic Run for Congress.

Just before 11AM on Wednesday, February 3, 1971, a small crowd gathered on the front steps of the District Building on Pennsylvania Avenue in Downtown Washington. Fourteen years after the federal government had branded him unemployable because he was a homosexual, Franklin Kameny, now 45 years old, was about to announce that he was once again seeking federal employment. This time, however, he would not be launching another legal challenge to his firing from the Department of Defense; instead he had called a press conference to announce his intention to win an elected position as the District of Columbia’s non-voting delegate to the United States House of Representatives. From the top of the steps, in his booming, stentorian voice, he declared, “Homosexuals have been shoved around for time immemorial. We are fed up with it. We are starting to shove back and we’re going to keep shoving back until we are guaranteed our rights!”¹ Kameny had just jumped wholeheartedly into a completely new frontier for Washington’s gay rights movement: electoral politics.

Kameny was throwing his hat into a historic race. It had been nearly 100 years since Washingtonians were last permitted to elect a delegate to the House of Representatives. The job had been eliminated in 1875, but in September 1970 congress voted to reinstate it with the passage of the District of Columbia Election Act, one of a series of laws intended to give Washington increased home-rule. Granting increased political rights to the residents of a city that was two thirds black was an important part of President Johnson’s civil rights agenda. It was only in 1964 that Washingtonians became

¹ Statement of Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, Candidate for Congress, District of Columbia, 1971. 3 February 1971. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow Historical Project.

eligible to participate in presidential elections, and it was not until 1968 that they were permitted to elect the members of the city's school board. When President Nixon signed the District of Columbia Election Act into law in the fall of 1970 he surely had no intention of paving the way for a gay rights milestone, but Nixon's signature made it possible for Frank Kameny to become the first ever openly gay candidate to run for federal office in the history of the United States.²

Surprisingly, the idea to run for Congress had not been Kameny's own. The domineering leader of the Mattachine Society of Washington had to be persuaded by friends that a congressional campaign was worth pursuing at all. The idea of running an openly gay candidate for the newly created delegate position was first proposed, almost as a joke, by a young man named Alan Hoffard, who worked as a press officer at the Department of Agriculture. On a Saturday night in January, Hoffard rushed into the Parish Hall of St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill, the same liberal Episcopal Church where Kameny had been presiding over the secretive and disciplined Mattachine Society meetings for a decade. On this Saturday, however, the crowd of gay men and women at St. Mark's was much larger than it had ever been at any Mattachine meeting. The Gay Liberation Front and the Mattachine Society had joined forces to host a monthly dance at St. Mark's in the hopes of drawing larger crowds than either group ever could to their respective meetings. These dances were tremendously successful and Hoffard found himself pushing through a large crowd that night, armed with a memo on a green piece of paper, searching for his friend and fellow political junkie, Paul Kuntzler.

² District of Columbia Board of Elections, "A History of Voting Rights in the District of Columbia" https://www.dcboee.org/voter_info/gen_info/voting_history.asp (Accessed December 1, 2015).

Over the blaring psychedelic music, Kuntzler read Hoffard's memo. It proposed that the gay community run one of its own as an independent candidate in the race for non-voting delegate. This candidate would not win, the memo said, but where else in the country could a gay candidate run a campaign that would be taken seriously? The press would have to cover all of the candidates; and a gay candidate speaking at candidate forums and debates would be invaluable and unprecedented exposure. The national media might even say something about this race because of its historic nature. All that was required, according to Hoffman's research, were 5,000 signatures from registered voters, a filing fee of \$100, and a candidate.³

Kuntzler, who had been one of the youngest and earliest members of the Mattachine Society, and who had been present at the group's first White House picket in 1965, was intrigued by the idea of running a gay candidate for the post. By 1971, like most Mattachine members, Kuntzler was not particularly involved with the moribund group. Recently, he had been expending his political energy volunteering for candidates who opposed the Vietnam War, including one of the Democratic candidates who was already running for the non-voting delegate post. Kuntzler had been finding himself dismayed, however, that the anti-war left seemed to ignore the problems faced by homosexuals. Here was an opportunity to put the concerns of Washington's homosexual community on display. The only real question was who would be willing to undertake the rigors of a congressional campaign? No one from the radical Gay Liberation Front would make a viable candidate; that group was far too radical and disorganized. Kuntzler and Hoffard could not do it, because acknowledging their homosexuality would cost them

³ Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 110-112: Interview with Paul Kuntzler, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/glaa-of-washington-dc/personal-histories/paul-kuntzler> (Accessed December 1, 2015).

their jobs.⁴ Kuntzler found the answer to his initial question at the bottom of Hoffard's memo, and it suddenly became obvious to him that there was a perfect candidate waiting to be recruited. Only one man in the movement, the memo said, had the necessary ego and work ethic, and had little to lose by seeking the office: Franklin Kameny.

About a week later, on January 19th, 1971 Frank Kameny found himself in Paul Kuntzler's living room in a sort of "Draft Kameny" meeting where he was urged by Kuntzler and other Mattachine members to run. He had spent the week prior to this meeting fielding phone calls from friends and members of Washington's gay community also imploring him to enter the race.⁵ This was probably the first time in his life that other people were lecturing him about the direction that Washington's gay rights movement should take. Although Kameny saw that he had almost no chance of winning, the group assembled in Kuntzler's apartment succeeded in convincing him that a decent showing at the polls would demonstrate that a discernable "gay vote" existed in the district, and would have to be courted in future municipal elections. They also told him that a congressional campaign presented a tremendous opportunity to more widely publicize the ideas that he had been espousing for a decade, and that Kameny as a congressional candidate would receive far more media attention than Kameny as President of the Mattachine Society. This prediction turned out to be exactly right, as during the course of his brief six-week campaign in 1971, Franklin Kameny, and the issues he cared so deeply about, received more coverage in the *Washington Post* than all

⁴ Kuntzler worked as a purchaser for a mattress store owned by conservative Jews, and Hoffard worked for the Department of Agriculture.

⁵ Bart Barnes, "The Candidates: Kameny Stresses Personal Freedom" *Washington Post*, 13 March 1971, B1.

of his Mattachine Society related activities had garnered in the ten previous years combined.⁶

Shortly after committing to run, the Mattachine Society voted to donate \$125 to the campaign, as well as to allow the use of its telephone. Kuntzler became the campaign manager, Hoffard the press secretary, and 31 other individuals (31 men and 2 women) signed up as “Campaign Coordinators.” One of the initial challenges was simply getting Kameny to look like a plausible member of the United States Congress. Despite his PhD from Harvard, Kameny had not held a steady job for over a decade. He was poor. His shabby wardrobe made that fact painfully obvious. The campaign’s first expenditure was a new suit for the candidate. It was in that crisp, navy blue suit that two and a half weeks later Kameny stood on the steps of the District Building to announce his candidacy.⁷

In his February 3 announcement speech Kameny clearly outlined the themes and goals of his campaign. He made no attempt to minimize the fact that he was an openly gay man. In fact, the central purpose of the campaign would be to address the discriminatory treatment of gay men and women at the hands of the federal government. In his professorial tone he began his speech with references to Alexis de Tocqueville and to John Stuart Mill, both of whom had criticized political systems in which the majority could easily oppress the minority. This tyranny of the majority was alive and well in 1971, Kameny declared, as he explained that he was running in order to give a voice to all minority groups, but particularly to sexual minorities who had no interest in being

⁶ Based on a full text search for “Mattachine Society” in the ProQuest database of the *Washington Post*, the Mattachine Society was mentioned in 15 *Post* articles between 1961 and 1969. Kameny’s six-week campaign for Congress on the other hand was prominently featured in at least 18 *Washington Post* articles in February and March 1971.

⁷ Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 116-117; Interview with Paul Kuntzler, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/glaa-of-washington-dc/personal-histories/paul-kuntzler> (Accessed December 1, 2015); Author’s interview with Paul Kuntzler, 20 August 2015.

forced to conform to a set of sexual norms dictated to them by “white, heterosexual, middle-class, suburbanite, married, white-collar men.” Gay people, Kameny went on to say, could not afford to simply sit on the sidelines and hope that the city’s and the country’s politicians would someday take up their cause, or benevolently look after their interests. Instead, he contended that gay people would have to begin to participate more directly in the political process, and this was his rationale for entering the race: “In this election...the homosexual community has a candidate of its own, who will put the gay interests first. We hope that this will serve as a spur to solidarity, activism, and a sense of brother and sisterhood among homosexuals” he declared.⁸

While Kameny’s central purpose in running was to draw attention to the problems faced by homosexuals in the district and in the country, he did not want to be a single-issue candidate. From the very beginning of the campaign he sought to project the message that he was capable of representing all of Washington’s minority groups. He connected the discrimination that he had faced as a gay man to the discrimination that African Americans and women faced on a daily basis. In doing so, he attempted to construct a narrative that among all of the candidates in the race, his life experiences made him uniquely qualified, and the most committed to defending personal freedoms and civil liberties. “Although I am a homosexual, and the focus of my campaign will be sexual oppression, I appeal to all minority groups and all individuals who differ from the contrived convention of the majority, whether by desire or by circumstance, by race or by gender or by lifestyle,” he said.⁹

⁸ Statement of Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, Candidate for Congress, District of Columbia, 1971, 3 February 1971.

⁹ Ibid.,

The *Washington Post* was rather generous in characterizing Kameny's odds of winning as a long shot. Long shot was a significant understatement, because there really was no conceivable path to victory for Kameny. The Democratic Party's nominee Walter E. Fauntroy was a veteran of city politics and of the civil rights movement. By winning the Democratic Party's primary election in January he had essentially guaranteed himself a general election victory in a city where Democrats outnumbered Republicans 6-1. In addition to Walter Fauntroy and the Republican Party nominee, a white attorney named John Nevius, more than 20 other Washingtonians had already announced that they too would run as independent candidates for the position of delegate by the time that Kameny held his first press conference. In order for Kameny to appear on the March 23rd general election ballot he would first have to secure 5,000 signatures from registered voters in Washington, DC and submit them for verification by February 16th, a mere three weeks away.¹⁰

There was even some question as to whether the election would happen at all. Julius Hobson who was running for the position on a platform of statehood for Washington, DC had filed a lawsuit in federal court arguing that the position of non-voting delegate was unconstitutional, and that the residents of the district were entitled to a voting member. Hobson's lawsuit also sought to overturn the Hatch Act, a law that prevented federal employees from donating or volunteering for campaigns for federal office. There were so many federal employees living in Washington, he argued, that this act would impose an undue burden on the campaigns.¹¹

¹⁰ "Mattachine Figure Runs for Delegate" *Washington Post*, 4 February 1971, B2.

¹¹ David R. Boldt, "Homosexual Files Delegate Papers" *Washington Post*, 23 February 1971, A17.

Nevertheless, now that Kameny looked the part of congressman in his new suit, had assembled an enthusiastic volunteer staff, and had officially thrown his hat into the ring, the most pressing issue confronting the campaign was the burdensome requirement that it produce the signatures and addresses of 5,000 registered DC voters who supported the idea of Kameny's name appearing on the ballot. No one believed this would be easy. The effort required to round up 5,000 signatures in just three weeks would be substantial and some of the campaign's volunteers wondered if they could even find 5,000 people willing to affix their names to a petition on behalf of an openly homosexual candidate for federal office. That gay Washingtonians themselves would sign the petition was even in question, as much of the city's gay community was characterized by its secrecy and by a reticence to reveal its existence.¹² The *Gay Blade* devoted nearly its entire February 1971 issue to exhorting Washington's gay men and women to sign the petition. It explained to gay Washingtonians that they should not fear for their jobs should they choose to sign the petition. On the front page, in all capital letters the *Blade* reassured its readers that, "IF YOU ARE APPROACHED FOR YOUR SIGNATURE, DON'T FEEL AS IF YOU ARE ADMITTING YOU ARE GAY...STRAIGHTS ARE SIGNING IT TOO. ALL YOU ARE DOING IS GIVING YOUR CONSENT TO THE FACT THAT KAMENY HAS THE RIGHT TO HAVE HIS NAME LISTED."¹³

The campaign wasted no time in printing thousands of leaflets emblazoned with the headline "Let Another Good Man Be Heard!" for its volunteers to distribute to potential signers. Perhaps because the campaign committee believed that it desperately

¹² Nancy L. Ross, "Homosexual Revolution" *Washington Post*, 25 October 1969. C1. This article compares Washington's gay community to New York's and Los Angeles's and remarks on the secrecy that characterizes Washington in comparison because of the number of federal employees.

¹³ *Gay Blade*, February 1971, 1.

needed the signatures of heterosexual registered voters, the candidate's biography on this early leaflet omitted any mention of his homosexuality. Instead it highlighted Kameny's experience as a combat veteran, his PhD from Harvard, and called him a "Champion of Human Rights." It did mention that he was the President of the Mattachine Society of Washington, but it is unlikely that many petition signers knew what that was. Campaign volunteers did not have time to engage in debates or in long discussions; they just needed signatures, to the tune of more than 200 a day.¹⁴

Two years after Stonewall, New Yorkers once again played a significant role in advancing the cause of gay rights in the nation's capital. Over the two weekends between Kameny's announcement and the deadline for signatures, busloads of volunteers from New York City, responding to a request from the campaign manager Paul Kuntzler, arrived in Washington to fan out across malls, shopping centers, and neighborhoods to collect signatures. The contingent of New York volunteers had been organized by a brand new gay rights organization in that city called the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA-NY), which in the aftermath of Stonewall had supplanted the Mattachine Society of New York and the Gay Liberation Front as the largest and most active gay rights organization in New York. GAA-NY's membership dwarfed that of the dwindling Mattachine Society of Washington, and compared to Washington's chaotic and disorganized Gay Liberation Front, GAA ran like a well-oiled machine. These New Yorkers provided the personnel that the Kameny campaign so desperately needed in its first weeks. They were not shy

¹⁴ Kameny for Congress Committee, "Let Another Good Man Be Heard." Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

about approaching strangers in the DuPont Circle, Adams Morgan, and Capitol Hill neighborhoods, and they succeeded in procuring thousands of signatures.¹⁵

Also drawn to Washington because of Kameny's historic run was Reverend Troy D. Perry, who in 1968 founded the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in Los Angeles to serve gay men and women. Washington had a nascent congregation of the church led by Pastor Paul Breton, who was one of the 33 members of the Kameny for Congress Committee. In the four months since its founding, Washington's MCC had been holding its meetings in All Souls Unitarian Church. Predicting a much larger attendance for Reverend Perry's visit, however, Breton arranged to hold the Sunday, February 14th service at the much larger St. Stephen and the Incarnation Episcopal Church on 16th Street in the Columbia Heights neighborhood. Although the priest at St. Stephen's had authorized MCC's use of its church, when Washington's Episcopal Bishop, William Creighton, learned that Reverend Perry planned to marry a gay couple in the church during his visit, he quickly moved to prohibit Perry and MCC from gathering at St. Stephen's. Bishop Creighton locked them out.

Unwilling to be defeated by Bishop Creighton, Breton and Perry refused to cancel the service, and instead chose to hold it outside, on the front steps of St. Stephen and the Incarnation. This conflagration between Creighton and Washington's Metropolitan Community Church turned out to be a boon for the Kameny campaign which was relying heavily on free media coverage to promote its message and its very existence. When the *Post* learned about the dispute, it sent a reporter to the outdoor service, which had turned into one part religious meeting, and one part Frank Kameny campaign rally: "Even though Bishop Creighton has locked us out of this church," Perry sermonized, "God has

¹⁵ Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 119.

not locked us out of his heart.” He went on to tell those assembled that he had come to Washington on behalf of Frank Kameny’s campaign for DC delegate: “Kameny is not the gay candidate, he is the people’s candidate...Get on board, children!” Following the outdoor service on the steps, Perry and Breton led a crowd of worshipers to the Washington Cathedral in order to stage a “pray-in” protesting the decision of Bishop Creighton to bar MCC from using one of the Episcopal Dioceses’ churches. Surely this event and its subsequent press coverage only motivated Kameny supporters to work even harder and brought more volunteers into the fold.¹⁶

By February 16th the campaign had amassed a collection of signatures that far exceeded the 5,000-signature threshold. In a press release the campaign announced that it had secured approximately 7,500 signatures from registered Washington voters, and that Kameny would therefore become, “the first individual in American history to run for a major public office as an acknowledged homosexual.”¹⁷ Although twenty other Washingtonians had announced their intention to run as independent candidates at the beginning of the race, only Kameny and three others had succeed in gathering the 5,000 required signatures by the deadline.¹⁸

On February 22nd Kameny entered the District Building to officially file the necessary paperwork to appear on the March 23rd ballot. That afternoon, Paul Kuntzler turned on his radio to hear the announcement that a new candidate had come “swishing”

¹⁶ “Homosexual-Oriented Worship Service Is Held” *Washington Post*, 15 February 1971, A26.

¹⁷ Kameny for Congress Committee, “Kameny Files Nominating Petition for D.C. Delegate” Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

¹⁸ “Mattachine Figure Runs for Delegate” *Washington Post*, 4 February 1971, B2.

into the race for DC Delegate.¹⁹ While the headline was certainly condescending in tone, it was indicative of the invaluable media coverage that the campaign would receive over the next month. As a candidate for Congress, Kameny had finally ascended to a platform from which he could reach a much larger portion of Washington's population than he had ever been able to in his role as President of the Mattachine Society.

After securing his place on the ballot Kameny hit the campaign trail relentlessly. He was the only candidate in the race who accepted every single invitation he received to attend various candidate forums across the city, and over the course of these many appearances he honed a message and campaign narrative that was not so different from the one he had been espousing for a decade.²⁰ Even though it had been two years since the Stonewall Riots and the advent of the Gay Liberation movement, Kameny's fundamental belief in respectability politics was largely unshaken, and it characterized his campaign. Like his pickets in front of the White House and Independence Hall in 1965, Kameny used his political campaign to display to mainstream America that gay people were perfectly normal, patriotic citizens, who just wanted to be treated like any other Americans. An analysis of his campaign literature, fundraising appeals, press releases, and speeches reveals a pattern of references to an idea that he often called "Americanism." In his view, "Americanism" meant that each citizen should be free to live the lifestyles that they chose; doing so was the ideological foundation upon which the country was created. Therefore, the government's denial of rights to homosexuals was

¹⁹ Interview with Paul Kuntzler, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/glaa-of-washington-dc/personal-histories/paul-kuntzler> (Accessed December 1, 2015); Author's interview with Paul Kuntzler, 15 August 2015.

²⁰ Bart Barnes, "The Candidates: Kameny Stresses Personal Freedom" *Washington Post*, 13 March 1971, B1.

inherently un-American and at odds with the very ideas that made the country exceptional.

Much of the campaign's literature sought to establish a narrative explicitly linking the Kameny platform to the ideas of the country's "Founding Fathers" and to the Declaration of Independence. Considering his previous public demonstrations, speeches, and letters, this comes as no surprise. The only real difference between his message in the mid-1960s and his message in 1971 was that the audience for this historically grounded message was significantly larger. Almost every day his campaign volunteers distributed thousands of leaflets throughout Washington, and the city's television stations and newspapers covered his campaign. In his very first campaign speech, Kameny declared that, "Our goals were expressed almost 200 years ago in our country's birth certificate, the Declaration of Independence, with its guarantee of inalienable rights- not only to life and liberty but also to the pursuit of happiness."²¹

At his first press conference after submitting the required 5,000 signatures, Kameny again, through his language, wrapped himself in the flag and in the ideals of America when he declared that the goal of his campaign was, "To remind a government and a country, which seems in many ways to have forgotten, exactly what Americanism means- that this is a country of personal freedom and individual diversity; that Queen Victoria is dead and the pilgrims are long gone!"²² This quote was plastered across the front page of the March 1971 edition of the *Gay Blade*. Two weeks later, when he opened his campaign office on March 6th, patriotic rhetoric again characterized his speech:

²¹ Statement of Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, Candidate for Congress, District of Columbia, 1971. 3 February 1971.

²² David R. Boldt, "Homosexual Files Delegate Papers" *Washington Post*, 23 February 1971, A17.

A vote for Kameny is a vote for [Washingtonians'] right to be themselves, to live truly rewarding and satisfying lives, and to contribute to society, and to their city without artificial, needless barriers and obstacles- for the real freedom for which this country was founded, for which it still stands, and which is its glory.²³

By the middle of March, Washingtonians could not miss the ubiquitous orange signs with black letters that had sprouted up around the city saying, "Defend Your Right To Be Different. Vote Kameny. March 23rd. Personal Freedom Candidate."

In addition to his appeals to patriotism, another revealing example of what some might call Kameny's conservatism, or his unwavering commitment to respectability politics, was on display at a campaign fundraiser on the evening of March 21. After the success of the joint Mattachine/GLF dances earlier in the year, the campaign decided to sponsor a dance of its own with an entry fee of \$1.25. The crowd of more than 200 included at least two-dozen members of the Gay Activists Alliance of New York who had again come down to volunteer for the weekend. To the *Post* reporter covering the event, it was easy to tell the New Yorkers apart from the Washingtonians because the New Yorkers generally appeared to be "less inhibited than their Washington brothers and sisters." One Washingtonian at the event, who insisted on anonymity, told the reporter that he knew many gay federal employees who supported Kameny's campaign but who would never vote for him because they feared that the government would somehow discover how they had voted and fire them.²⁴

The candidate himself was not expected to arrive until much later in the evening. The loud rock music and strobe lights surely did not appeal to Kameny who lived a rather

²³ Kameny for Congress Committee, "Statement by Dr. Franklin E. Kameny at the Opening of the Kameny for Congress Campaign Headquarters" 6 March 1971. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow Historical Project.

²⁴ Robert Williams, "Gay Party" *Washington Post*, 22 March 1971, B1.

austere life himself. He drank little, rarely went to the gay bars, and tended to enjoy evenings at home with his treasured collection of polka and waltz records.²⁵ The *Post* reporter at the dance attempted to find out how raucous the evening was destined to become, but quickly discovered that the campaign had sent a clear message through its ranks that the dance was not to become overly boisterous, and that drag queens, a late night staple in the city's gay bars, were not welcome: "The evening would not be likely to roar because a gentle admonition had filtered down through the campaign workers to the effect that 'high drag' would not be appreciated at this dance" the *Post* reported. Nevertheless, the drag queens would not be kept away from this party and around midnight three of them arrived. They were met by "a look of betrayal" from campaign workers, according to the *Post*, but the trio was ultimately admitted because, "this is, after all, a free society."²⁶

Perhaps the eschewing of the drag queens from his fundraiser was due to the obvious fact that if he wanted to perform even reasonably well on election day, he would need to broaden his support beyond just the gay community. Photographs, or accounts of the candidate socializing with drag queens in the *Washington Post* might be too much for some potential voters to stomach, or might cause some to take the candidate and his campaign less seriously. The votes of heterosexuals would simply have to materialize for Kameny to achieve a respectable showing. Eleven days before the election, he told a *Post* reporter that even if he did not win, he would consider a vote total between 5,000 and 10,000 to be a victory. In his effort to reach this goal, Kameny worked hard to demonstrate that he was far more than just a single-issue candidate. One of the most

²⁵ Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 116.

²⁶ Robert Williams, "Gay Party" *Washington Post*, 22 March 1971, B1.

striking aspects of Kameny's campaign literature is the breadth of issues addressed. One of the fliers that his volunteers handed out across the city listed Kameny's positions on 14 different issues. From an immediate end to the war in Vietnam, to consumer protection, to halting freeway construction in Washington, Kameny had articulated detailed positions on a variety of issues that were on the minds of many voters, not just homosexuals. Had he only been interested in turning out gay voters, such platform details might not have been necessary. When the *Post* ran its candidate profiles just days before the election, it remarked, in a tone of slight astonishment, that Kameny had proven himself to be well versed on a wide variety of issues, and that at some of his campaign appearances he barely discussed the issues of importance to homosexuals at all, focusing instead on things like the "Indochina war, welfare, consumer protection, and crime."²⁷

Female voters were one constituency from which Kameny believed that he could win votes and expand his appeal beyond the gay community. By talking about his own experiences as a homosexual who had been discriminated against in the workplace, Kameny hoped that he might establish a connection with women, particularly those employed by the federal government, who were likely accustomed to the condescending attitudes of male bosses. Out of the six candidates in the race, Kameny argued that he was the only one who really understood and could empathize with the gender-based discrimination that women routinely faced in the workplace in 1971.

At a candidate forum hosted by the group Federally Employed Women Inc., Kameny told the 50 members in the audience that they must fight to achieve equality for women the same way that he had spent the last ten years fighting for equality for homosexuals. He was far more outspoken than the other candidates at the forum, and the

²⁷ "City Set for Tuesday Vote on Delegate" *Washington Post*, 21 March 1971, A18.

first quote in the *Post* article covering it came from Kameny who bluntly stated that, “A lot of women are discriminated against purely because of their sex, but I think the formation of your body and your genital equipment is completely irrelevant. You should be considered as a human being first and a woman second.”²⁸ Two days earlier at a candidate’s forum at Howard University, Kameny addressed a mostly black audience with a similar message, that they were human beings first, and African Americans second.²⁹ For the rest of the campaign, Kameny would gleefully tell potential voters that after the forum held by Federally Employed Women Inc., an audience member had approached him to say that he had been the “most militant feminist” at the event, including the audience full of women.³⁰

In another attempt to gain some traction among female voters, Kameny was the only candidate in the race who made an issue of discrimination in the tax code against unmarried people. This was an issue of importance to gay men and women, who, of course, could not marry, but also to unmarried, heterosexual women and men. With less than one month until the April 15 tax deadline, Kameny’s campaign issued a press release lambasting the “outrageous” and “shocking” discrimination against single taxpayers. To illustrate his point he cited the example of an unmarried person making \$12,000 a year. This person, according to tax rate schedules published by the IRS would be required to pay \$2,240 in income taxes; a married couple with the same income would only have to pay \$1,145.³¹

²⁸ Joseph Whitaker, “Candidates Aim Talks at Women,” *Washington Post*, 14 March 1971, B1.

²⁹ Bart Barnes, “The Candidates: Kameny Stresses Personal Freedom” *Washington Post*, 13 March 1971, B1.

³⁰ “Hopefuls allege Civil Service Bias” *Washington Post*, 17 March 1971, B2

³¹ Kameny for Congress Committee, “Kameny Denounces Discrimination against Single Taxpayers” Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

Press releases like this one about single taxpayer discrimination were hit or miss, however. Sometimes the press ran with the candidate's statements, but other times they fell on deaf ears. Therefore, the primary means by which Kameny sought to increase his profile during the campaign was the time-tested art of the political publicity stunt intended to earn free press coverage. On March 16th, trailed by a flock of television cameras and reporters, Kameny marched into the Pentagon and demanded to meet with the Secretary of the Army, Stanley Resor. Startled by the presence of the cameras and by the authoritarian tone of a man who had just told her that he was a homosexual running for Congress, Resor's receptionist fled to the interior of the office suite to retrieve Resor's assistant Lt. Col. Charles Bagnal who informed Kameny that the Army Secretary was not available for a meeting. "Give me your name and telephone number and I'll see to it that the proper person gets in touch with you" Bagnal said, after also informing Kameny that there was absolutely no one in the Pentagon available to meet with him that day.

Undeterred, Kameny staged what the *Post* called "an occasionally tumultuous corridor press conference." With Pentagon guards paying close attention to him, Kameny stood in one of the endless Pentagon hallways and in some of his most strident language of the campaign announced that it was time for homosexuals all across the United States to "declare war" on the discriminatory practices of the federal government, particularly within the armed forces, and not to give up this fight until "our government comes to its senses on this question of homosexuality." He described to the assembled press and to some curious onlookers his firing from the Army Map Service, and how he was subsequently unable to obtain private employment with any company holding

government contracts simply because he “prefers close affectional and sexual relationships with men instead of women.”³²

While his hallway press conference probably did not change any minds among the military brass at the Pentagon, it was nevertheless successful in garnering free media coverage. The *Post* sent a journalist to cover the stunt and the resulting article appeared on the front page of the next day’s Metro section with the opening line, “A proclaimed homosexual candidate for D.C. delegate confronted the Army at the Pentagon yesterday.”³³ The very next morning Kameny executed a similar stunt by marching to the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police Department and demanding a meeting with the police chief, Jerry Wilson. As expected, Chief Wilson refused to meet Kameny. Therefore, on the front steps of the police department, Kameny read a speech about unfair police targeting of homosexuals in Washington to a small crowd of journalists and supporters. With this appearance he again tried to broaden his appeal beyond gay voters by explaining that the draconian sodomy laws in the District of Columbia applied also to straight, married couples. To support his point he noted that if a married couple in DC followed the advice published in the popular 1969 sex manual for women called, “The Sensuous Woman” that they were subjecting themselves to criminal charges carrying a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$1,000 fine: “Because most people incorrectly believe that [this law] applies to homosexuals only, it creates an aura of criminality around homosexuality” he declared.³⁴

³² William L. Claiborne, “Candidate Seeks to End Homosexual Ban” *Washington Post*, 10 March 1971, C1.

³³ *Ibid.*,

³⁴ Kameny for Congress Committee, “The Law, The Police, and the Homosexual in Washington” 16 March 1971. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

Eleven days later, on the Saturday before voters headed to the polls, the campaign orchestrated its most successful publicity stunt. In an effort to re-focus to the narrative on the campaign's central purpose, a March 13th press release from the campaign declared that the candidate was unilaterally designating Saturday, March 20th as "Personal Freedom Day" in the District of Columbia. The press release went on to announce that no issue was more important in the campaign for delegate than that of "Personal Freedom," and that this "Personal Freedom Day" would mark the climax of the campaign and simultaneously convince multitudes of DC voters that Kameny was the candidate best suited for the job.³⁵

At noon on Saturday, March 20th Kameny appeared at his campaign headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue and delivered some brief remarks to a crowd of approximately 50 supporters. He informed the crowd that he had written a letter to President Nixon about the mistreatment of homosexuals by their government, and he invited them to accompany him as he went to personally deliver the letter to the President. Parading down Pennsylvania Avenue toward the White House, carrying dozens of "Kameny for Congress" placards, the crowd shouted: "Two, four, six, eight, gay is just as good as straight," followed by chants of, "Three, five, seven, nine, lesbians are mighty fine." When they finally reached 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue they stopped in front of the gates, continuing to chant, and hoping to capture the attention of the President or catch him as he entered or exited the building. Nixon never emerged from the White House to meet Kameny, but a guard genially accepted Kameny's letter and promised that he would

³⁵ Kameny for Congress Committee, "Saturday March 20 Designated as 'Personal Freedom Day' in Washington." 13 March 1971. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow Historical Project.

direct it toward the president.³⁶ That night the campaign hosted a “Personal Freedom Day Dance” at campaign headquarters that attracted 350 guests and lasted until 5 in the morning.³⁷

Just like his visit to the Pentagon, Kameny was once again successful in garnering significant attention from the *Washington Post*. On the front page of the March 21st Metro section, the *Post* ran a lengthy article covering the activities of all five campaigns over the final weekend before the election; the only image accompanying the article, however, was a prominent photo of Kameny standing behind a White House gate with the extended arm of a security guard reaching for the letter Kameny had written to President Nixon.³⁸ On the afternoon of Personal Freedom Day volunteers for the Kameny campaign blanketed the city with more than 10,000 brochures promoting their candidate. Three days later, on Election Day, Kameny spent the morning greeting workers as they entered the Department of Agriculture, and the afternoon riding through the city in a convoy of cars festooned with campaign signs, and stopping to greet voters at various polling places.³⁹

While Personal Freedom Day may very well have marked the climax of the campaign, the subsequent increase in support that the campaign envisioned never materialized. The biggest question on election day had nothing to do with Kameny but concerned whether or not Walter Fauntroy would lose support due to a barrage of attacks unleashed by the other two African American candidates in the race who had both

³⁶ Bart Barnes, “Candidates Enter Stretch Drive in District Delegate Race” *Washington Post* 21 March 1971, D1.

³⁷ William L. Claiborne, “Candidates Ending Race in Low Key” *Washington Post* 22 March 1971, C1.

³⁸ Barnes, “Candidates Enter Stretch Drive in District Delegate Race” *Washington Post*, 21 March 1971, D1.

³⁹ “City Votes Today” *Washington Post*, 23 March 1971, A1.

accused Fauntroy of exaggerating his record in the civil rights movement.⁴⁰ Aided by the endorsements and appearances of Jesse Jackson, Representative John Conyers, and Coretta Scott King in the days prior to the election, however, Fauntroy won in a landslide. When the votes were all counted, the favorite of the city's Democratic establishment had won 65,905 votes. His Republican challenger was a distant second with 28,349 votes, and Frank Kameny finished in fourth place with 1,888 votes, or 1.6% of the total. Kameny did manage to place ahead of the Black Nationalist candidate Rev. Douglas Moore, and ahead of James Harris of the Socialist Workers Party.⁴¹

Kameny came nowhere close to winning. He did not even achieve half of the 5,000 vote total that he had earlier declared would mark a successful showing. Regardless of the vote total, however, the campaign can only be considered a tremendous success, and a milestone in gay history not only for Washington DC, but for the United States. The positive press coverage that Kameny earned over the course of his campaign was unprecedented. The *Washington Post* in particular portrayed Kameny as a serious, intelligent, and competent candidate who voiced legitimate concerns about the civil liberties and treatment of a long derided minority group. In its Election Day editorial the *Post* declared:

Dr. Franklin E. Kameny has put special emphasis on personal freedoms, running as an avowed homosexual pledged to represent all the people of the community. His contribution to discussions of civil liberties has been eloquent and erudite, and in this sense he has already filled his basic campaign objective.⁴²

⁴⁰ David R. Boldt and Joseph D. Whitaker, "Fauntroy Criticized by Three Candidates" *Washington Post*, 18 March 1971, A1.

⁴¹ "Fauntroy Election Certified" *Washington Post*, 6 April 1971, C6.

⁴² "Tuesday's Vote" *Washington Post* 21 March 1971, B6.

Perhaps most significantly, the Kameny campaign was the first indication to Washington's mainstream politicians that there existed a discernable "gay vote" in the district. While his city-wide vote total was low, in the precincts known for their concentration of gay residents Kameny's numbers were noteworthy. In the DuPont Circle precinct, for example, he won 5% of the vote; in the Foggy Bottom precinct he won 8%, and in the Capitol Hill precinct, where Mattachine had held its meetings and there existed a small cluster of gay bars, he won 11%. Kameny had been wrong to assume that it would take at least 5,000 votes for the Washington political establishment to take note of gay voters. By the decade's end, district politicians locked in close Democratic primary battles would begin to court the city's gay voters as they looked to gain even the narrowest of advantages over their opponents.

It was only in Washington, DC that in 1971 an openly gay candidate's campaign for Congress could have been as successful as it was. Because of the city's compact size and it being a single media market, every voter who was paying attention to the race would have at least heard about the "avowed homosexual" Franklin Kameny, as the *Washington Post* almost always referred to him in its campaign coverage. Additionally, the historic nature of this race, the first of its kind in nearly 100 years, certainly resulted in increased attention from the public and the press. This was reflected by the comparatively large Election Day turnout of 44%, significantly higher than the turnout had been in the January primary elections. In his concession speech and congratulatory message to Fauntroy, Kameny declared that, "The homosexual community now must be freer because of my candidacy" and went on to urge Fauntroy to hire an aide in his congressional office who would be responsible for handling the problems faced by gay

Washingtonians.⁴³ Despite capturing less than 2% of the vote Kameny had been correct when he said that his campaign for office would ensure that politics in Washington would “not be same again.”⁴⁴

⁴³ David R. Boldt, “Fauntroy Sweeps Delegate Race: Wins in 7 of City’s 8 Wards,” *Washington Post*, 24 March 1971, A1.

⁴⁴ Statement of Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, Candidate for Congress, District of Columbia, 1971. 3 February 1971.

Chapter Four: The Gay Activists Alliance and the Transformation of Gay Politics in Washington

During his brief run for a seat in the House of Representatives Frank Kameny exceeded his modest campaign fundraising goals, raising slightly over \$7,000. Much of this haul was received in the final days of the campaign and as a result, the campaign committee was left with a sizeable amount of cash on hand after all of the votes had all been counted. Over the final weekend of the campaign, Tony Jackubosky, the campaign's volunteer treasurer, was astonished to open an envelope from California that contained a check for \$500, by far the largest single contribution that the campaign received. Even more startling than the amount of the check, were the two names that appeared in its upper left-hand corner: those of the movie star couple Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward.¹

Just a few days later, Paul Kuntzler, the campaign manager, and Tony Jackubosky found themselves faced with a decision about how to spend the leftover campaign funds, which totaled just over \$500. It did not take them long to find an answer, however, as they decided to spend the money on a trip for themselves and some of the other senior campaign staff to New York City, and then on to Fire Island, where they would spend time meeting with the leaders of New York's Gay Activists Alliance (GAA-NY).² For the last two months, GAA-NY had been invaluable to the Kameny campaign. During February 1971, the group provided many of the volunteers who collected the signatures needed to secure Kameny's spot on the ballot. In March, GAA-NY sent busloads of

¹ Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 123.

² Although Frank Kameny was the candidate, he did not control how the campaign's money was spent. Financial decisions were made by the Kameny for Congress Committee which Paul Kuntzler had established and remained firmly in charge.

volunteers to help turn out the vote on Election Day. Kuntzler and the other campaign staffers had been thoroughly impressed by the organization and by the passion of the GAA-NY volunteers who had traveled to DC, and they had no doubt that the next step forward for the gay rights movement in Washington was to establish a branch of the Gay Activists Alliance in the nation's capital that would be modeled after the New York group.³

After Kuntzler and Jakubosky decided how to spend the leftover money, they were faced with a much more difficult decision: would they invite Franklin Kameny with them to New York? There was no question, particularly after the campaign, that Kameny was the patriarch, and the most significant individual in Washington's gay rights movement. There was a growing feeling, however, particularly among younger gay activists that their movement needed to emerge from under the shadow of Frank Kameny, and that the city's gay rights movement had to evolve into something beyond the one man show it had been for over a decade. Thus, the decision was made not to invite Kameny to New York. He would not play a major role in establishing the Washington chapter of the Gay Activists Alliance, and he would never again be at the center of gay political activism in Washington. He did not like the decision, Kuntzler recalls, but he understood it and accepted it.⁴

By the time that Kuntzler and the other Kameny campaign veterans made their trip to Manhattan and then to Fire Island in the early spring of 1971, the Gay Activists Alliance had already become the dominant gay political organization in New York City.

³ Interview with Paul Kuntzler. Out History. <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/glaa-of-washington-dc/personal-histories/paul-kuntzler> (Accessed February 1, 2016).

⁴ Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 123; Author's email correspondence with Paul Kuntzler, 10 March 2016.

Led by a younger core of activists, GAA sought to harness the energy unleashed by the Stonewall Riots, and preferred a much more confrontational and public style of activism than the city's older and more secretive Mattachine Society. Unlike the radical Gay Liberation Front, however, GAA-NY believed in focusing on pragmatic and achievable goals; the group rejected any form of violent protest, and was committed to working through the existing political process. After its establishment in the summer of 1969, GAA-NY's top priority became protesting police harassment and entrapment of homosexuals, as well as the city's unrelenting police raids on gay bars. It was not long after its establishment that GAA-NY began grabbing headlines for its pursuit of these goals.⁵

On the afternoon of Saturday March 7th, 1970, only nine months after the Stonewall Riots, GAA-NY staged a demonstration in front of City Hall to protest police entrapment and a recent crackdown on gay bars and bathhouses. At least four local television stations and a handful of newspapers covered the event, and featured photographs of a crowd of approximately 30 GAA-NY members standing in front of a line of police officers and barricades that had been set up to prevent the demonstrators from entering City Hall. That evening, filled with a sense of accomplishment, the GAA demonstrators returned to the group's office to discuss how to keep up the pressure on city authorities, and to discuss whether demonstrations in front of City Hall should be scheduled on a more regular basis. In just a few hours, however, the mood of self-congratulation turned into one of fury as the result of yet another, and particularly aggressive, police raid on a New York gay bar.

⁵ Carter, *Stonewall*, 233-235.

Early on Sunday morning, March 8, news of a raid at the Snake Pit, a popular after-hours bar in the West Village, began to spread among GAA-NY members. One hundred and sixty seven patrons of the bar had been rounded up and arrested, each charged with a count of disorderly conduct. The bar's four employees were charged with illegally operating a bar after hours, and with multiple violations of the state's alcohol laws. All of those arrested were taken to the city's sixth precinct to be booked, but one 23-year-old man, unwilling to face a criminal record, instead tried to escape by jumping out of one of the precinct's second story windows. On his way down, he was violently impaled by five, 14-inch prongs sitting atop the metal fence separating the precinct grounds from the street. The young man would live, but the fire department had to be called to saw off the section of the fence on which he was still impaled; trying to remove the spikes at the scene was too risky. With the iron spikes still in his pelvis and thigh, the man arrived at St. Vincent's Hospital for emergency surgery. While recovering afterward the police arrived in his hospital room, this time to charge him with evading arrest.⁶

Infuriated by the news that another seemingly arbitrary raid had resulted in a young gay man's near death-by-impalement, GAA-NY's leaders acted swiftly and called an emergency meeting to discuss the group's response. A story began to spread that police officers had intentionally pushed the man out of the window. Whether or not he had been pushed, or had jumped, it was clear to those assembled that the real culprits for his near death condition were the oppressive laws and law enforcement practices which targeted homosexuals. In only a matter of hours, GAA-NY succeeded in planning a demonstration for that evening to take place in front of the Sixth Precinct Headquarters.

⁶ "Homosexuals Hold Protest in 'Village' after Raid Nets 167" *New York Times*, 9 March 1970, A29.

Three thousand fliers were quickly printed and distributed throughout Greenwich Village announcing the demonstration, and that evening more than 500 people gathered in front of the police station chanting, “Stop the Killings” and “Gay Power.” From the police station they marched to St. Vincent’s Hospital to hold a vigil for the victim and then on to Sheridan Square, directly across from the Stonewall Inn.⁷

While the circumstances were horrific, GAA-NY’s swift and efficient response to the Snake Pit raid put on clear display the group’s organizational skill and its ability to quickly turn people out, thereby forcing the city’s government, media, and citizens to pay attention. In addition to its political activities, GAA-NY was also dedicated to community building and staged just as many social events as it did demonstrations. In 1970 GAA-NY purchased an abandoned 4-story fire station in SoHo and turned it into a headquarters. Every Friday night GAA-NY hosted dances in the firehouse that attracted gay men and women from all five boroughs and beyond. This was exactly the type of organization that Kuntzler, and the others who had made the trip to New York, hoped to build in the nation’s capital.⁸

Founding the Gay Activists Alliance of Washington, DC (GAA) proved to be fairly simple. In many aspects it was a reincarnation of the Kameny campaign. Although he did not play a major role in establishing the group, and instead focused on continuing to operate his increasingly obsolete Mattachine Society of Washington, Frank Kameny accepted an invitation to sit on GAA’s board of directors. Campaign veterans made up the majority of the group’s initial membership, and the campaign committee possessed and turned over a lengthy list of volunteers and supporters for GAA to contact.

⁷ Leo Louis Martello, “Raid Victim Impaled on Fence” *The Advocate Reports on Gay and Lesbian Politics 1967-1999*. Ed. Chris Bull, (New York: Alyson Books, 1999).

⁸ Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 118.

Unsurprisingly, as a sort of reconstituted Kameny campaign, GAA set its sights on carrying out some of the candidate's unfinished business, and following the lead of the New York City group, made its first target Washington's Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). Police harassment in Washington was an issue that Kameny had addressed frequently on the campaign trail. But the issue was purposefully not the central focus of the campaign, however, as Kameny had sought to present himself not only as a "gay candidate," but also as one who could discuss a wide variety of issues concerning Washingtonians.

When he did talk about the Metropolitan Police Department over the course of the campaign, Kameny was blunt in his criticisms and forceful in his demand that its Morals Division be abolished. While massive police raids, like those that occurred at the Stonewall Inn or at the Snake Pit in New York City were unknown in Washington, police tactics that gay Washingtonians believed amounted to entrapment were not uncommon in the nation's capital. Plainclothes MPD officers regularly made arrests by loitering in parks or on streets where gay men were known to congregate, and by then approaching them in order to make a sexual invitation. If the officer's target responded affirmatively to the sexual overture, he could be arrested and charged with violating the city's solicitation law.⁹

Two months before Kameny launched his campaign, the *Gay Blade* issued a front-page warning to its readers urging them to be aware that police entrapment had become "rampant" throughout the city. The paper advised its readers to never, "talk to strangers about 'what we'll do when we get home,' (no matter how cute or curious he is)"

⁹ The *Gay Blade* regularly covered police entrapment. For a particularly good example of the kind of scenario described in this paragraph, see: "Entrapment is Rampant" *Gay Blade*, December 1970.

because the risk had simply become too great that a prospective sexual partner could turn out to be an undercover vice squad officer.¹⁰ In November 1970 the *Gay Blade* had advised readers to avoid the popular cruising areas in Georgetown altogether because, “Police activity around Dumbarton Street is way, way up. There are at least 3 plainclothesmen regularly working the area.” According to the *Blade’s* report, the MPD selected some of its most attractive male officers to work undercover and their most common tactic was to invite men into their unmarked patrol cars, where even the discussion of a sexual act resulted in arrest. One anonymous man provided the *Blade* with an account that was never corroborated, of having been beaten and then having his wallet stolen by an undercover police officer in Georgetown.¹¹

In a campaign speech about the relationship between law enforcement and gay Washingtonians, Kameny had assailed the motives of the detectives on the 14 man vice squad whom he named one by one and then accused of targeting gays simply to meet arbitrary arrest quotas, or in order to fill certain “perverted or sadistic drives.” Kameny also used the speech as an opportunity to voice the extreme frustration held by many gay Washingtonians when he declared, “We are tired of being hunted down as the prey of perverted, corrupt, lying policemen who should get psychotherapy and then be assigned to units which will help reduce the rate of crimes *with* victims.”¹²

Despite the litany of complaints he leveled against the MPD, Kameny usually made sure to note that the Metropolitan Police Department was not always the enemy of Washington’s gay community. In his campaign speech about the police, he commended

¹⁰ “Entrapment is Rampant” *Gay Blade*, December 1970.

¹¹ “Uglies in Georgetown” *Gay Blade*, November 1970.

¹² Kameny for Congress Committee, “Speech by Dr. Franklin E. Kameny: The Law, The Police, and the Homosexual in Washington” 16 March 1971. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

the department for its willingness to help gay Washingtonians in several instances of blackmail, in which criminals threatened to disclose their victim's sexuality to his family and employer unless a bribe was paid. Additionally, Kameny credited the MPD for not being nearly as aggressive in its policing of gay bars as the police departments of other large cities like New York, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and Chicago, where it was not uncommon for undercover officers to enter gay bars posing as customers and to then make arrests inside of the bars. No such operation was ever conducted by the MPD.¹³

While the reasons are not entirely clear, the "rampant entrapment" that the *Gay Blade* described during the fall of 1970 had relaxed significantly by the spring and summer of 1971. The May 1971 issue of the *Gay Blade* that announced the formation of the Gay Activists Alliance of Washington, uncharacteristically did not contain a single mention of any police activity. Perhaps the drop in police surveillance of popular cruising areas, and the ensuing decline in arrests over this brief period, is attributable in part, to the prominence of the Kameny campaign during the same time. The candidate's frequent and public criticisms of the police department that he aired in candidate forums, and that were sometimes quoted in the *Post's* campaign coverage, may have caused MPD to moderate its policing of homosexual activity.

In July 1971 even the *Washington Post* took note of this phenomenon when it ran a story with the headline, "District Homosexuals Note Decrease in Arrest Totals" which explained that arrests for "major homosexual offenses" like sodomy or attempted sodomy

¹³ One reason why police departments in Philadelphia and New York were eager to police gay bars and clubs, according to historians Mark Stein and Charles Kaiser, was that in those cities the Catholic Church wielded a large amount of political influence, and policing homosexuality was a priority. In Washington, DC during the same period the Catholic Church was not as politically influential. On the political involvement of the Catholic Church in Philadelphia and New York, respectively, see: Stein, *City of Brotherly and Sisterly Loves*, 139-144; and Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis*, 143-144.

had recently declined to approximately 70 per year, down from nearly 500 in 1961. By 1971 the department was much more likely to arrest gay men on significantly lesser, misdemeanor charges like “making obscene gestures” or solicitation, rather than charge them with breaking the district’s sodomy law which was still punishable by up to ten years in prison. “Perversion,” according to Walter Bishop, the head of MPD’s Morals Division, had become the department’s lowest priority in 1971, particularly as the District’s drug problem was growing. Kameny even told the *Post* that despite recurring instances of unjustified arrests, and probable entrapment, that he considered Washington’s police force to be one of the most tolerant toward homosexuals in the nation.¹⁴

It is not possible to know the degree to which the Kameny campaign and a slowly increasing social acceptance of homosexuality resulted in this decrease in arrests and prosecutions.¹⁵ One factor that undoubtedly contributed to the decline, however, was the increasing unwillingness of Washington judges and juries to accept at face value the evidence in some of the cases that the city was bringing against men accused of certain “homosexual offenses.” Often, these cases relied heavily on the sworn testimony of undercover vice-officers. Perhaps some of these city judges had taken note of the decision in *Norton v. Macy* at the federal level, in which Judge Bazelon found the Civil Service’s ban on homosexuals to be unconstitutionally broad, and then began to apply similar reasoning to the municipal statutes aimed at policing homosexuality. Additionally,

¹⁴ Claudia Levy, “District Homosexuals Note Decrease in Arrest Totals” *Washington Post*, 2 July 1971, B1.; Kameny for Congress Committee, “Speech by Dr. Franklin E. Kameny: The Law, The Police, and the Homosexual in Washington.” 16 March 1971.

¹⁵ A growing social acceptance of homosexuality in Washington was noted by *Post* journalist Claudia Levy in her article, “District Homosexuals Note Decrease in Arrest Totals” as one of the potential reasons why arrests had declined.

gay men charged with these crimes were becoming less likely to simply plead guilty, but were increasingly choosing to have their cases heard in a courtroom.

In March 1971, the MPD sent undercover officers to conduct an extensive investigation of the Regency Health Club, a gay bathhouse in Northwest Washington. Over the course of three weeks the officers repeatedly entered the club posing as patrons, until they had gathered enough evidence to secure a warrant. Wearing paper bags over their heads to conceal their identities, vice officers raided the club in April and arrested four employees, including the club's owner, all were charged with "Operating a Disorderly House" punishable by a \$500 fine and a year in prison.¹⁶ When the case finally went to trial, a jury made up of six men and six women unanimously found two of the employees innocent due to a lack of evidence. The presiding Superior Court Judge, Fred McIntyre, happily accepted the jury's decision. He had already made his displeasure with the case evident when he dismissed the charges against one of the defendants. The jury could not reach a verdict in the case of the club's owner, David Harris, who would be retried in September and found guilty by a different jury.¹⁷ This case was an early example of a new confluence of factors in the city's criminal justice system: a judge skeptical of the city's vice officers, defendants who were not willing to plead guilty and settle the case, and a jury that was sympathetic to the accused.

Around the same time, another DC Superior Court Judge, Charles Halleck became an enemy of city prosecutors when he began to apply heightened scrutiny to the wording of the laws which enabled many of these prosecutions in the first place. In

¹⁶ Despite the raid on the club, the fact that none of its patrons were arrested supports Kameny's assertion that the MPD was less aggressive in its policing of homosexuality than police departments in other large cities.

¹⁷ Claudia Levy, "District Homosexuals Note Decrease in Arrest Totals" *Washington Post*, 2 July 1971, B1.

October 1972 he dismissed the charges filed against nine men who were arrested in a gay bookstore in Northwest DC by undercover MPD vice-squad officers. The men had been charged with violating the city's statute prohibiting "lewd, objectionable, and indecent acts." During the course of the trial, Judge Halleck pressed the police witnesses on the question of whether this law was applied almost exclusively to homosexuals, to which the officers were forced to answer in the affirmative. Additionally, when Judge Halleck asked the officers to concisely define what conduct amounted to "lewd or objectionable" they were entirely unable to produce a satisfactory answer, saying only that they knew it when they saw it. As a result, Halleck ruled that the statute the men had been accused of violating was "unconstitutionally vague" and he threw out the charges against all nine of them.¹⁸

Another colleague of Judges McIntyre and Halleck on the DC Superior Court, Judge David L. Norman, was also at this time developing a reputation as an outspoken champion of civil liberties and as a friend to criminal defendants. The *Post* reported that many Washingtonians charged with misdemeanors, including quite a few gay men facing solicitation or lewd behavior charges, were eager to land themselves in Judge Norman's courtroom, where an unusually large number of cases were dismissed, and guilty pleas were regularly met with miniscule fines. On several occasions, Norman sentenced defendants only to the number of hours that he felt they had already served by "wasting" time in the city's criminal justice system. While judge shopping was difficult to do on the 48-member DC Superior Court, it was not impossible, as lawyers and defendants could select which judge they wished to appear before from a list of available judges. When Norman was available, defense lawyers urged their clients toward his courtroom. The

¹⁸ "Judge Frees 9 Men in Sex Case" *Washington Post*, 13 October 1972, C5.

Post reported that, “He has become known around the courthouse as a ‘light-hitter’ who invariably refuses to send the convicted to jail, a judge defense lawyers seek out when their client wants to plead guilty.” As a result, by 1973 fully one third of misdemeanor sex crimes were heard by Judge Norman. Of the pleas he heard that year, he found only two defendants guilty, and 28 not guilty; he granted ten acquittal motions, and gladly accepted 24 government dismissals of cases related to prostitution or solicitation. He also won the ire of prosecutors for refusing to convict defendants charged with possessing small amounts of marijuana, because he believed that doing so violated their eighth amendment protection against cruel and unusual punishment.¹⁹

While rulings by Judges McIntyre, Halleck, and Norman between 1971 and 1973 were all helpful to the cause of the Gay Activists Alliance, none of them were precedent setting. Because of the way Washington’s courts operated at the time, Superior Court Judges could interpret city statutes however they saw fit, but these interpretations applied only to the cases tried before them. For example, Judge Halleck’s ruling that the law concerning lewd, obscene, and objectionable acts was unconstitutional, applied only to the cases in his courtroom. No Superior Court Judge, therefore, had the power to strike down the city’s laws against solicitation or sodomy, or to issue an injunction against their enforcement. For as long as these laws remained on the books, MPD made it clear that it would continue to enforce them even as the judicial branch became less cooperative.

The brief, post-Kameny campaign period of détente between gay Washingtonians and the MPD did not last very long. By the fall of 1971 the relationship was fraying again as gay Washingtonians began to notice an uptick in police surveillance and arrests in

¹⁹ Eugene L. Meyer, “D.C. Judge’s Rulings Stir Controversy: ‘Not Afraid to Bite the Bullet’” *Washington Post*, 24 June 1974, A1.

popular cruising areas. The front page of the September 1971 issue of the *Gay Blade* was almost entirely devoted to a story concerning a recent increase in undercover police activity. The article alerted readers to four unmarked Ford sedans being used by MPD's undercover vice-officers and it went on to provide the license plate number of each car. According to the *Blade's* report, there had been at least two instances of "unprovoked police brutality against innocent and unsuspecting homosexuals" over the previous few weeks. The first alleged assault occurred in Northwest Washington when four undercover policemen, described as "hip-looking men" leapt out of a car and beat an un-named gay man so badly that he had to be hospitalized for ten days. Two weeks later, in Georgetown, the *Blade* reported that a similar attack took place when, again, four undercover policemen jumped out of a car to beat and then arrest a man. The *Blade* even went so far as to identify the officers it believed to be responsible for this second beating, naming officers Rockey, Keyes, Glick, and York, all of whom were known vice squad officers.²⁰

The names Glick and York might have been familiar to some *Blade* readers who would have recognized them as two of the officers involved in arresting the "DC 12," the group of Gay Liberation Front members who destroyed the interior of the Zephyr Restaurant and Lounge on Wisconsin Avenue in December 1970. It was in part due to conflicting testimony from these officers, and an accusation that they had pressured witnesses into providing false testimony, that the case against the "DC-12" had been dismissed. The possibility that the accounts of police brutality described in the September 1971 *Blade* are exaggerated should not be ignored. There are no corroborating accounts

²⁰ "There May be a Ford in Your Future!" *Gay Blade*, September 1970, 1.

of these incidents, and the paper did not name the witnesses who claimed to have seen the beatings. Nevertheless, the significance of such a story being printed in the *Blade* is clear, as gay Washingtonians would certainly have become more vigilant about undercover police activity.²¹

As 1971 came to an end it was not only the MPD that gay Washingtonians had to worry about. A different law enforcement agency, The United States Park Police, perhaps following MPD's lead, began 1972 by initiating its own crackdown on homosexual activity that was taking place within its jurisdictions. One of the interesting developments in the geography of gay Washington during this time was the increasing popularity of the Marine Corps War Memorial as a destination for men who were seeking out anonymous sexual encounters. Located just across the Potomac River in Arlington, Virginia, the iconic memorial depicting six marines raising the American flag over Mt. Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima during World War Two became a popular cruising destination because of the large, wooded, and poorly lit park surrounding the monument. Lafayette Park, across from the White House, where Frank Kameny had once been arrested, was no longer popular because it had become so well known to the police. DuPont Circle was becoming a very busy neighborhood, increasingly identified with the gay community, and a man who was seeking out anonymous sex might not want to be seen there, particularly if he had a family or a high profile government job. Commonly referred to as the Iwo Jima Memorial, the giant statue and surrounding park that was filled with camera-laden tourists during the day, had by night become host to a very different clientele.

²¹ "There May be a Ford in Your Future!" *Gay Blade*, September 1970, 1.

In December 1971, the commander of the US Park Police Criminal Investigations Brigade, Captain Paul Burgus, received an order from the US District Attorney's Office in Alexandria to increase surveillance in the park, and to "clean the place up," because an increasing number of robberies were being reported. It is quite possible that the increase in robberies was connected to the park's growing popularity as a cruising area. Criminals continued to understand that gay victims were much less likely to report crimes to the police because doing so would force them to answer uncomfortable questions about where they had been and why. While this clean up operation was intended to address the problem of theft in the park, the Park Police did not go looking for thieves, but instead targeted the gay men who were in the park at night. Over the course of about two weeks, the park police arrested a total of 60 men, and charged each of them with solicitation or with committing lewd or obscene acts. Not one was charged with robbery or attempted robbery. Almost every one of these men pled guilty, and agreed to pay a \$50 fine and to stay away from the memorial for one year. Another arrest, they were warned, would earn them the maximum sentence of a \$500 fine and six months in jail.²²

So many arrests in one place over such a short period of time was unprecedented in the Washington area. The Metropolitan Police Department had never engaged in such a sustained and large-scale crackdown on cruising. How had this many arrests been possible? The answer was that the US Park Police resorted to the time-tested and surefire tactic of entrapment. The arrests in early January were not made by uniformed police officers, but instead by undercover, twenty-something male officers. According to the *Washington Post's* coverage of the operation, the undercover officers were always

²² Jay Matthews, "Homosexual Haunt Probed: 60 Are Arrested Near Iwo Jima Memorial" *Washington Post* 3 January 1972, B1.

“dressed as dandies.” Captain Burgus, while denying that his officers entrapped anybody, did admit that they were instructed to dress in the, “mod, hippy-type clothes that the young people wear these days.” Franklin Kameny was quoted in the same *Post* article, saying that he had received a number of complaints that, “police officers [in the park] wearing long hair, mustaches, colorful shirts, and tight bell bottom pants have made sexual advances to individuals before arresting them.” On December 26th 1971, a man who lived in one of the large apartment buildings overlooking the park filed a formal complaint against the Park Police. In it, he stated that he had witnessed an undercover officer savagely beating a man whom he had just arrested in the park.²³

The crackdown by the US Park Police provided the Gay Activists Alliance with its first opportunity to make a show of force, and to put its organizational capacity on display. As reports of Park Police brutality and entrapment made their way around Washington’s gay community, members of the Gay Activists Alliance began planning a response. The president of GAA, Bob Jonson, wondered out loud to the *Post* why the US Park Police could not simply station regular, uniformed officers in the park in order to deter both crime and cruising. He was infuriated by the fact that all of the undercover officers stationed at the memorial appeared to be in their twenties and were all dressed like men who might be there looking for sex. Jonson and GAA wasted no time in drafting a press release that was accompanied by a list of demands for the Park Police. On January 5th GAA issued a statement demanding that: “Enticement, beatings, and all undercover police practices in the Iwo Jima area cease immediately.”²⁴ In addition to the press

²³ Matthews, “Homosexual Haunt Probed: 60 Are Arrested Near Iwo Jima Memorial.”

²⁴ Gay Activists Alliance of Washington, D.C., “GAA Demands End to Police Entrapment: Press Release,” Rainbow History Project Digital Collections. <http://rainbowhistory.omeka.net/items/show/4938202> (Accessed 8 February 2016).

release, GAA organized a demonstration at the monument for the following day, January 6th, 1972. When 25 protestors arrived, a Park Police Lieutenant ordered them to disperse, informing them that it was illegal to protest on federal property without having first secured a permit. Jonson, and the other protestors, chose to ignore the officers' orders and staged their protest anyway. The six protestors who were carrying signs were arrested and taken to jail. Despite the arrests, the protest succeeded in earning coverage from the *Washington Post*; its article covering the protest quoted Jonson saying, "Hundreds of thousands of homosexual American women and men served honorably throughout World War II... What the hell are Americans now doing subjecting their homosexual American brothers to the underhanded, undercover tactics of a police state?"²⁵

This protest and Jonson's quote are significant because they offer insight into the new strategy that GAA was pursuing. Whereas a radical group like the Gay Liberation Front might have protested the actions of the US Park Police by asserting the right of homosexuals to solicit sex wherever and whenever they pleased, GAA instead sought to train attention on invasive police practices that many Americans might find objectionable. Jonson and GAA were pragmatic enough to understand that the general public would not rush to defend the rights of homosexuals, particularly those who were looking for anonymous sexual encounters at the Marine Corps War Memorial. The way in which GAA framed the issue of policing at the Iwo Jima Memorial should come as no surprise, however, because the language was quite similar to that which Kameny and his staff had used to frame his candidacy for Congress the year before. When Kameny's volunteers went out into the city in order to secure enough signatures to get their candidate on the ballot, they were directed to talk about his support for home-rule for DC,

²⁵ Jay Matthews, "6 Arrested in Protest at Monument" *Washington Post*, 6 January 1972, D2.

civil rights for African Americans, and his opposition to the war in Vietnam before they mentioned his support for gay rights and his own homosexuality. In their showdown with the Park Police, GAA acted similarly, directing the attention of the “straight world” to the issue of police brutality and entrapment, rather than asserting the right of the homosexual to seek out sex in parks. Jonson summed up his group’s argument well when he said, “We recommend our brother homosexuals do not seek romantic partners in a public place...but we also assert that this activity is the un-harmful activity of consenting adults.”²⁶ Since the start of the Cold War, homosexuals had been portrayed as anti-American, and as a menace to traditional American values, but now, in its protest of the US Park Police, GAA wrapped itself in the flag and in its press releases presented the US Park Police and MPD vice squad officers as un-American agents of a dangerous and oppressive totalitarian state:

Why the undercover hocus-pocus? Why the juvenile infiltration tactics? Knowing how shy and wary the average homosexual has been made by his social oppression, we categorically assert that the bulk of these arrests could not have been made without duplicity, suggestiveness, and enticement on the part of the police officers...Hundreds of thousands of homosexual women and men served honorably throughout World War II, as they have served honorably in every war this country has fought- as they have worked side by side with their brother Americans in every American endeavor since the founding of this country.²⁷

In addition to accusing the Park Police of employing deceitful and un-American tactics, the Gay Activists Alliance sought to win support for their cause by crafting a message meant to appeal to Washington’s taxpayers. A flyer that GAA began to post around the city in 1972 demanded that the Metropolitan Police Department abolish its vice-squad. Above all else, GAA highlighted the fact that each arrest made by the MPD

²⁶ Matthews, “6 Arrested in Protest at Monument.”

²⁷ Gay Activists Alliance of Washington, D.C., “GAA demands End to Police Entrapment”

on charges of lewd behavior or solicitation wound up ultimately costing taxpayers around \$18,000. This claim was based solely on one estimate made by one DC Superior Court judge, but whether or not it was accurate is not so important. What is significant is that GAA was now framing the issue of police harassment, and the arrests which resulted from entrapment, in a way that might cause straight Washingtonians to pay attention. GAA was not really defending the right of gay men to seek out sex in public, Instead, the group focused attention on the amount of tax dollars that were being spent processing these arrests through the criminal justice system each year; “The police could spend time and money to better advantage by protecting us all from rapists, muggers, pushers [drug dealers] and thieves” Jonson told a *Post* reporter.²⁸

These confrontations with law enforcement solidified GAA’s status as the most active and important gay rights group in Washington. They also highlighted the major difference between GAA and the older gay political organizations in the city: the Mattachine Society and the Gay Liberation Front. Unlike Mattachine, GAA leaders and protestors were not so concerned with “respectability,” as evidenced by their willingness to defy police orders, and be arrested and thrown in jail for a night. Kameny and the picketers dressed in business attire never would have disobeyed police orders in their early demonstrations. Aggressive protest tactics did not cause GAA to resemble the Gay Liberation Front, however, because GAA was identifying specific targets, like the US Park Police, to confront, rather than believing that they could overthrow and reorder American society in the way GLF had envisioned.

²⁸ Gay Activists Alliance of Washington, D.C., “D.C. Plainclothes Police Are Still Entrapping Homosexuals Senselessly. It Is Time To Stop,” Rainbow History Project Digital Collections. Accessed 21 February 2016, <http://rainbowhistory.omeka.net/items/show/4938191>; Matthews, “6 Arrested in Protest at Monument.”

The front page of the October 1971, edition of the *Gay Blade* made clear the rapidly changing landscape of the city's gay political organizations. One of the paper's headlines announced that the chaotic and increasingly insignificant Gay Liberation Front would be holding a meeting at its DuPont Circle headquarters to discuss the complete overhaul and reorganization of the group. Another headline announced that the moribund Mattachine Society would continue to exist, but that it would no longer hold any regular meetings. By 1971 the Mattachine Society was little more than Frank Kameny's one-man show that refused to be canceled. The newly formed Gay Activists Alliance, however, was not contracting but expanding.²⁹

Perhaps the largest difference between the Gay Activists Alliance and the older organizations was that it could operate on two fronts at once. While GAA was busy protesting police harassment, it was also beginning its first of many forays into electoral politics by establishing a committee to try and influence the upcoming school board elections. The *Blade* ran an article on this new wing of GAA called The Gay Committee for an Enlightened School Board, whose principal goal was to establish where the candidates stood on the issues that gay Washingtonians cared about. For example, did they support a hiring policy that protected gay employees from discrimination, and how did they feel about gay teachers in the classroom; would they be willing to educate students that homosexuality was not an immoral lifestyle choice?³⁰

That the DC branch of GAA made its first foray into electoral politics on the school board level again reveals the pragmatic nature of the organization. Instead of attempting to mount another campaign for the House of Representatives, GAA focused

²⁹ *Gay Blade*, October 1971, 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*,

on the much smaller, but more realistic goal, of electing school board members who were not virulently homophobic. The 1971 school board elections were not as historic as the delegate race had been sixth months earlier, but they were just as chaotic. 1971 marked only the second time that Washingtonians would go to the polls to elect school board members, and 31 candidates had announced that they would compete for just 6 open seats.

On October 26, 1971 The Gay Committee for an Enlightened School Board hosted the first ever candidate forum in Washington sponsored by a gay group, and focused on gay issues. Perhaps because there were so many candidates in the race who were eager to gain attention, or because they were aware of the nearly 2,000 votes that Frank Kameny had won just six months earlier, 15 candidates participated in GAA's forum. Approximately 50 voters showed up to ask questions, but hundreds more surely read about the forum in the *Gay Blade* which reported that nearly all of the candidates who attended were responsive to gay issues and concerns, including all of the candidates running in Ward 6 which included Capitol Hill, and had been the best performing ward for Frank Kameny. The incumbent president of the school board, Anita Allen, and her challenger, an up-and-coming 35-year-old politician named Marion Barry, were the only two candidates whom the *Blade* did not find entirely satisfactory, calling them both "wishy-washy."³¹

³¹ "DC School Board Election Forum" *Gay Blade*, November 1971, 1. Allen and Barry were running for an at-large seat on the school board rather than to represent one of the city's eight wards. In some wards a clear pro-gay rights stance may have been a liability. This may explain why the *Blade* found their answers to be non-committal and vague. Unfortunately, this article, which seems to be the only coverage of the event, does not provide any of the quotations that resulted in Barry and Allen earning the label "wishy-washy".

While the *Blade* did not give Barry a ringing endorsement, the fact that he chose to be at the forum at all is highly significant. Barry would undoubtedly go on to become Washington's most important politician of the twentieth century, and from the beginning of his career he understood that gay voters were an important constituency to be ignored at his own peril. Barry's razor thin margin of victory in the Democratic primary election for mayor in 1978 reflected his willingness to campaign in all parts of the city, and to ask for votes wherever he could find them. During his 1978 campaign for mayor he found receptive audiences at GAA candidate forums because he was not a stranger. He even campaigned in gay bars in the weeks running up to his victory in the 1978 mayoral election.³²

Once the new school board was seated, GAA initiated a letter writing campaign demanding that the board take up the issue of a non-discrimination policy for school employees that would for the first time include sexual orientation as a protected category. On May 23rd, 1972, the newly elected School Board President, Marion Barry brought the proposal up for a vote insisting that adding sexual orientation to the district's policy posed no risk, and that doing so would demonstrate the board's "commitment to non-discrimination." The Vice-President of the School Board, Mattie Taylor, opposed the change, however, arguing that such a policy would open the door to homosexual advocacy in the classroom, "This raises the question," she stated, "of whether or not a teacher has the right to stand up in front of a class wearing a button saying 'Gay 1972, Try It You'll Like It.'" School Superintendent Hugh Scott, echoing a refrain of the Kameny campaign endorsed the change saying that his district would "go to any lengths

³² Thomas Morgan, "Gays Hope to Cast Deciding Votes for Barry" *Washington Post*, 4 September 1978, B3.

to defend the right of anyone to be different.” By a vote of 4-2 the school board affirmed that, “personal sexual orientation must not be considered in the school system,” and that, “sexual orientation in and of itself does not relate to ability in job performance or service.” The 12 GAA members who were in attendance the night that the vote took place leapt to their feet to applaud the first major advancement on behalf of gay rights in the district to be achieved through the machinery of municipal government and electoral politics.³³

After the school board victory, some GAA members wondered if they could succeed in getting similar legislation enacted on a citywide level. If Washington’s teachers could be protected from employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, then why not all Washingtonians? This question presented itself at an opportune time, because the city council was just beginning to investigate updating the city’s arcane set of anti-discrimination laws, many of which were written in the aftermath of the Civil War and had not been revised or seriously enforced since. The city’s Office of Human Rights received a grant from the federal government to draft an updated human rights law for the city, and to streamline the office’s procedures for handling and acting on discrimination complaints; in the fall of 1972 the office’s deputy director, Franklin Anderson, began working on this overhaul. From the very beginning he was cognizant of the idea that homosexuals could potentially be included as a protected class within the new human rights law. Just a few months earlier East Lansing, Michigan, became the first municipality in the country to enact such a provision on behalf of homosexuals.³⁴

³³ Irna Moore, “School Board Ends Bias to Homosexuals” *Washington Post*, 24 May 1972, B3.

³⁴ Cynthia Gorney, “District’s Gays Gain Power after Shedding Secrecy” *Washington Post*, 23 May 1977, C1.

Anderson had no idea how word spread so quickly, but all of a sudden his office was inundated with calls and letters from members of the Gay Activists Alliance of Washington who were demanding that the city's new law ban discrimination against homosexuals in employment, education, and public housing. Paul Kuntzler would later attribute the success of this word of mouth lobbying campaign to the strong "grapevine" that existed within the gay community, which he said, "had been built over a generation...as long as there's been a gay community there's been a grapevine."³⁵ Lynn Scholz a legislative aide in City Hall who was working with Anderson on drafting the bill, recalls that GAA "flooded the City Council with material."³⁶

While Paul Kuntzler was probably right in giving some of the credit for this lobbying campaign simply to word of mouth, GAA was waging a concerted campaign to influence the city council to adopt language into the law that would bar certain types of discrimination against homosexuals. GAA members descended upon the District Building to meet face to face with staffers in every city council member's office and explain the kinds of day-to-day discrimination that gay Washingtonians faced when they tried to rent an apartment, or were fired when their employer learned that they were gay.

GAA also made a wise decision to build a larger coalition to lobby the city council for an updated Human Rights Law. Eva Freund, who was involved with both GAA and the Washington chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW-DC), persuaded NOW-DC to add its support to the passage of an updated human rights law. NOW-DC succeeded in lobbying for the inclusion of a clause that would make it illegal for banks and credit unions to deny credit to unmarried women. At the monthly meetings

³⁵ Milton Coleman, "Washington's Gay Vote: Homosexuals a Force in May Election" *Washington Post*, 21 April 1979, A1.

³⁶ Gorney, "District's Gays Gain Power after Shedding Secrecy."

of NOW-DC between October 1971 and November 1972 Freund distributed thousands of postcards for members to sign and then mail to city council members. Before long hundreds of these postcards urging the passage of the new human rights law were overwhelming mailboxes in City Hall every day.³⁷

In May 1972 the city council began to hold hearings on what came to be known as Title 34, the proposed anti-discrimination law that the city's Office of Human Rights had drafted. Three members of GAA testified in support of the bill, as did an openly gay city employee in the Public Works Administration, who voiced his concerns about being arbitrarily fired by a homophobic supervisor. Among other things, this law would make it illegal to discriminate in the areas of education, employment, public accommodations, and housing based on fifteen protected categories that included, but were not limited to: race, gender, sexual preference, personal appearance, marital status, and immigration status.³⁸

After sailing easily through committee, the bill went before the entire city council in August 1973 where it was approved by a vote of 5-0. Councilman John Nevius, a Republican, celebrated the bill's passage, telling the *Post* that, "I am not aware of any federal or local act as far reaching as this in protecting the rights of the individual." Unfortunately for GAA, it was still too early to celebrate. The August 7th vote did not guarantee Title 34's implementation because in Washington at the time, in order for a bill to become a law, the city council had to vote in favor of it twice. The next vote was

³⁷ Eva Freund speaking at a panel discussion on the legacy of Title 34, Sponsored by the Rainbow History Project. 14 April 2014. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

³⁸ "City Council Hearings" *Gay Blade*, May 1973, 1.

scheduled for November 6th, and there was one constituency in the city that was mobilizing quickly to oppose it.³⁹

At the last minute, in October 1973, Washington's Board of Trade, a pro-business lobbying organization, began an effort to amend Title 34 in such a way that might minimize any potential risks to its constituency of business owners. While lobbyists from the Board of Trade never spoke at any of the hearings on the bill, they began calling the offices of the city council members to request that the bill be amended in such a manner that would allow a business to ignore the anti-discrimination statute if a business owner believed that complying with it would result in a loss of profit. This change would have entirely gutted the law, essentially making compliance with it voluntary. The change that the Board of Trade demanded was never inserted into the law, but one minor amendment to Title 34 was included in order to appease the organization, the "Business Necessity Clause." This clause exempted a business from compliance with Title 34 if the business could definitively prove that its following of the law would force it to close. The amendment was not enough to concern Frank Kameny, "The Council threw the Board of Trade a bone with no meat on it. We still have a strong bill," he said.⁴⁰

On November 6th the city council again approved the bill and sent it to Mayor Walter Washington's desk. At the time of the first vote, Mayor Washington had indicated that he would sign the bill if it were to be passed by the city council. While GAA requested that the mayor hold a public signing ceremony in order to send a message to the rest of the country about what was happening in its capital city, Mayor Washington instead signed the bill in private with no fanfare. Craig Howell, GAA's president at the

³⁹ Kirk Scharfenberg, "City Council Passes Bias Ban" *Washington Post* 8 August 1973.

⁴⁰ "Title 34 Survives Onslaught" *Gay Blade*, October 1973, 3.

time speculated that Mayor Washington did this because some of the conservative ministers in the city disliked his support for the law due to its inclusion of sexual preference as a protected category.⁴¹

Despite the lack of a signing ceremony, Title 34 became city law on November 16, 1973, and Washington, DC became the first major city in the United States to legislate against discrimination toward gay men and women. Neither New York nor San Francisco could boast a law as expansive as Washington's. New York's version of a similar law had twice been defeated in committee, and was again stalled due to strong opposition from many city councilors as well as the city's police and fire departments who disliked the idea of employing homosexuals.⁴² In a letter to the editor of the *Washington Post* shortly after the law's passage, Frank Kameny once again referencing his theory of "Americanism" opined:

It is altogether proper and fitting that Washington, as our nation's capital, should lead the way for the remainder of the country in showing that we know what America stands for and what Americanism is all about. Let us hope that the remainder of the nation- including our notoriously unenlightened and unprogressive federal government, will quickly follow the example so admirably set here.⁴³

The passage of Title 34, while important in its own right, was even more significant because of what it presaged for the future. By the end of the decade gay Washingtonians had established themselves as one of the city's key voting blocs and a

⁴¹ Craig Howell speaking at a panel discussion of the legacy of Title 34 sponsored by the Rainbow History Project, 14 April 2004. Historical Society of Washington, Rainbow History Project.

⁴² Edward Ranzal, "Gay Alliance seeks to Revive Rights Bill in Council" *New York Times* 15 January 1973, A26.

⁴³ Franklin Kameny, "Civil Rights in Washington D.C." *Washington Post* 13 November 1973, A15.

politically potent constituency. After twelve years of organizing and engaging with the political process through a variety of means, politicians were finally paying attention. After the passage of Title 34, the political influence of gay Washingtonians only grew. By the late 1970s the “gay vote” was being courted by city politicians just like any other traditional voting bloc. In 1979 the *Post* reported that “[Gay voters] are now ranked by city politicians with such traditional power blocs as organized labor, the black church, and the business community.”⁴⁴ Not even ten years after twelve picketers marched in front of the White House to stage the first pro-gay rights demonstration in Washington and in the country, the capital city of the United States of America had endorsed the idea that to discriminate against someone because of their sexual orientation was not only wrong, but illegal.

⁴⁴ Coleman, “Washington’s Gay Vote: Homosexuals a Force in May Election.”

Epilogue: A Capital of Gay Rights

The passage of Title 34 was by no means the climax in the long struggle for equal treatment for Washington's gay men and women. As the 1970s progressed an entirely new set of challenges arose to face gay Washingtonians. While the law had tremendous symbolic value, it could not be expected to root out all forms of discrimination toward gay men and women in the city. The DC chapter of the volunteer organization, Big Brothers of America, for example, continued to prohibit gay volunteers, arguing that because the group's funding came from the federal government, it only had to follow federal anti-discrimination laws. Washington's police department would make a similar argument, claiming that the department was also subject only to federal hiring guidelines. Georgetown University, another major employer in the city, flatly refused to comply with Title 34's protections for gay Washingtonians. It is doubtful that Title 34 resulted in any kind of massive "coming out" of employees to their bosses, or of tenants to their landlords, as a law by itself is not enough to change long-standing social attitudes and prejudices. Additionally, the Office of Human Rights, which was supposed to investigate all alleged violations of Title 34, was chronically underfunded throughout the 1970s, and at any given time had a prolific backlog of cases.¹

Although the enforcement of Title 34 was weak, the law must be considered a milestone in the history of gay rights in Washington, DC, and in the United States. For the very first time, a major American city endorsed the idea that Frank Kameny had been espousing for years: that gay people were not a threat to society and therefore did not

¹ Craig Howell, "DC Human Rights Act and the Gay Community." Transcript of speech, 10 December 2003, <http://outhistory.org/exhibits/show/glaa-of-washington-dc/personal-histories/craig-howell>. (Accessed 1 March 2106).

deserve to be treated as such. Title 34's passage set a benchmark for gay activists in other American cities of what could be achieved when gay people chose to engage with the political process.

Shortly after Washington, cities like San Francisco, New York, Seattle, and Miami all passed similar legislation protecting their gay residents from various forms of discrimination. The advances that gay Americans achieved through politics over such a short period of time were so remarkable that they resulted in a major conservative backlash that began sweeping through the country in the late 1970s. Shortly after Dade County Florida, home to Miami, approved a law similar to Washington's Title 34, a conservative-led campaign to place the law on the ballot in order to subject it to a popular referendum was launched. With b-list country singer Anita Bryant as its public face, the Save Our Children campaign successfully persuaded South Florida voters that legal protections for gay Americans were, in Bryant's words, "an insidious attack on God and his laws, and on parents and their rights to protect their children." In 1978, 70% of the voters in Dade County cast ballots to repeal the ordinance banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. Shortly thereafter, voters in St. Paul, Wichita, and Eugene, Oregon repealed each city's gay rights ordinance by substantial margins, and it appeared that Bryant and the Save Our Children Campaign were building momentum in their mission to overturn every local ordinance that protected gays throughout the country.²

While some cities yielded to the pressure that Bryant and her campaign brought to bear, Washington, DC did not; the capital city stood firm in its commitment to protecting its gay residents from discrimination. In May 1978 city council member Marion Barry introduced legislation, which would eventually become law, forbidding the city's human

² Clendinen and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 291-293; 308-309.

rights law from ever being subject to a popular referendum. That fall as Marion Barry waged an insurgent campaign to unseat the incumbent mayor, Walter Washington, who enjoyed the support of the city's Democratic political establishment, Barry could count on support from many of the city's gay voters. A newly established gay political organization, the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, which Paul Kuntzler helped to found, donated \$7,500 to Barry's campaign and provided thousands of volunteer hours of phone-banking and knocking on doors in the precincts where many gay people were known to live. When Barry shocked the political establishment by winning just 1,356 more votes than Washington in September 1978, he understood that he owed his victory in part to his enthusiastic gay supporters. On his inauguration day Barry declared, "I don't care if 2,000 or 10,000 gays voted for me. My commitment to gays is one of basic human rights."³ Had it not been for the Kameny campaign of 1971, the infrastructure that helped propel Barry into office may not have been as effective in 1978.

There remains much research to be done regarding the political activity of gay men and women in the nation's capital. The most glaring topic waiting to be tackled is that of race. Surely, as a majority black city, the majority of gay Washingtonians during this period were black. Gay political organizations like the Mattachine Society, the Gay Liberation Front, and the Gay Activists Alliance, however, always had more white members than black members. While fully explaining the racial divide in gay political activity in Washington is beyond the scope of this work, it is one that warrants further pursuit. What we can conclude from this study, however, is that major victories on behalf of gay rights in the nation's capital started to occur once gay Washingtonians established themselves as a significant voting bloc in the city. Because of Frank Kameny's work

³ Larry Bush, "Barry Takes Office, New Council Set," *The Blade*, 4 January 1979, 1.

during the 1960s, and his run for congress in 1971, this happened in Washington earlier than it did in other cities.

Although the Stonewall Riots are often understood to be the defining event of this period in the history of gay rights, when we look at what was happening in the nation's capital in the years both before and after the riots, we arrive at a more nuanced understanding of their significance. In and of themselves, the Stonewall Riots were not responsible for major changes, at least in the nation's capital. Instead, the riots helped create a new, more emboldened spirit, particularly among younger gay people. This spirit quickly spread to Washington, but as evidenced by the inefficacy of the city's Gay Liberation Front, it alone was not responsible for significant victories. The case of Washington, DC suggests that only when this energy was harnessed and applied to more traditional political activity like volunteering for a congressional campaign, attending a school board meeting, or even just voting, that significant change started to occur. To what degree Stonewall impacted nascent gay rights movements in other parts of the country also warrants further study.

Washington remains at the center of the gay rights movement in the United States. It was only two blocks away from the church basement in which Kameny called to order the first meeting of the Mattachine Society of Washington in 1962, that in 2015 the United States Supreme Court affirmed the right of same sex couples to marry. Although Frank Kameny was not alive to celebrate this victory, he undoubtedly played a role in it. Although gay Washingtonians live in a far more tolerant city than that in which Kameny resided, it is once again gay rights victories in Washington that are fueling a conservative backlash in other parts of the country. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's marriage

ruling, some cities and states across the country have become embroiled in arguments about whether certain forms of religiously based discrimination toward gay, lesbian, and transgender people should be legally sanctioned. Sixty-six years after Senator Clyde Hoey issued his report, “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government,” his home state of North Carolina passed a law forbidding municipalities there to enact Title 34 style laws that guarantee legal protections for gay, lesbian, and transgender people.⁴

The vast majority of gay Americans today probably do not know who Frank Kameny was. It is doubtful that his name will start to appear in US history textbooks any time soon, or that his life story will become the subject of a major film, or that his face will appear on a postage stamp. The stories of Frank Kameny and other gay Washingtonians are still under-examined and are waiting to be brought to light. Whether they know it or not, gay Americans continue to reap the benefits of Kameny’s work, and the subsequent work of other gay Washingtonians. They are increasingly able to live their lives free from many of the injustices that Kameny worked to erase, and know that, as Kameny so often said, “Gay is Good.”

⁴ Emily Bazelon, “Can North Carolina Get Away With Rolling Back LGBT Rights?” *New York Times Magazine*, 25 March 2016, 7.

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