'I IDENTIFY WITH FIGHTERS': THE SOUTH AND SOUTHERN IDENTITY IN LESBIAN FEMINIST ACTIVISM IN THE 1970S

A Dissertation

by

HILLARY RAE ANDERSON

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Chair of Committee,
Committee Members,
Albert Broussard
Angela P. Hudson
Julia Erin Wood
Cynthia Bouton

Joseph Jewell

Head of Department, David Vaught

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a historical examination of the development of 1970s Southern lesbian feminism in the United States. It uses archival research, lesbian feminist periodicals and publications, and Southern lesbian feminist artistic production from the late 1960s to the early 1980s. The theory of intersectionality, Critical Race Theory, and elements of social movement theory informed the analysis. The timing of the 1970s brought together a particular political climate that nurtured Southern lesbian feminism. The 1970s were *after* major legislative victories in the civil rights movement, *during* a period of growth for American feminism when feminist and lesbian feminist print culture were at their height, and the decade was *after* the gay rights movement became militant, but *before* the AIDS crisis of the 1980s.

This dissertation argues that Southern lesbian feminism's development in the 1970s made the American South a new site for political agitation among self-identified lesbians; it proved the importance of Southernness – Southern identity – in lesbian feminist praxis. Southern culture shaped and tied together social constructions of race, gender, and sexuality, which caused Southern lesbian feminists to adopt a revolutionary political philosophy that uniquely combined elements of Black Power, radical feminism, and gay liberation, seeking to end multiple oppressions by transforming society.

Manifestation of Southern identity in their activism is evident in the cultural production of Southern lesbian feminists. The activism of Southern lesbian feminists often differed from the activism of Southern gay, especially white, men during the decade. Even though Southern lesbians and gay men formed some political alliances and coalitions, Southern lesbian feminist theory and practice were sometimes at odds with the activist agendas of many Southern gay men.

Southern identity also distinguished lesbian feminist activism among self-identified Southern lesbians from that of lesbians in other regions of the United States. The 1970 Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention, the mid-decade growth of gay rights organizations in the South, Anita Bryant's 1977 Save Our Children (from Homosexuals) crusade, and the 1979 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, evince these differences.

DEDICATION

For Lily, Christian, and Lyndon,

so you know and understand the past, because you are the future

With love

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Producing a dissertation in the discipline of history was an endeavor I undertook with a wealth of support, both professional and personal. The existence of that support in this process has made my work possible; I recognize how very fortunate I am to have so many people to thank. My academic pursuits seemed attainable because I was lucky enough to learn from and be encouraged by wonderful teachers and mentors from a young age: Carol Houston, my piano teacher; Kay Jensen, my art teacher; and Judy Rudoff, my Spanish teacher; and in my undergraduate career, Dr. Ricky Dobbs and Dr. Polly Detels. When I became a teacher myself, I was so privileged to work with (and learn from) Liz McQuitter. Liz often quoted Maya Angelou, "people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Because of these teachers, I felt supported and confident in my abilities throughout my life.

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strengthened my dissertation. Lastly, Dr. Joseph Jewell's membership on my committee has helped me use theory in historical inquiry. Over the course of my Ph.D., my committee members have been my fiercest advocates and had the utmost faith in me and my work. It was my gift to be able to count on their guidance and support in this journey.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In late summer 1978, former Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Freedom Singer Bernice Johnson Reagon performed with her new band, Sweet Honey in the Rock, at a concert sponsored by the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA). Lesbians from around Georgia and North Carolina came for the show. At the ALFA house the next morning, Sweet Honey in the Rock sat down for a discussion about identity, the personal, and the political with members of ALFA. After a lengthy exchange about the importance of black history to Sweet Honey's music and politics, the relationship between racism, sexism, and classism, the links between the civil rights movement and the women's movement, and how white women might attract black women to lesbian feminist activism, ALFA member, Jamie spoke. She told Johnson that she wanted to be a part of a broad movement tied to black history that linked black liberation to women's liberation, but "[a]s a black lesbian I tried to get involved in the civil rights [movement], but it was so male dominated, they kept asking me to get coffee and stuff. In the women's movement, I am always the only black woman in the group."² Jamie expressed confusion and frustration about where she, as a person of intersecting identities in the South – black, female, and lesbian – should put her activist energies in a time when identity politics were seemingly isolated.

¹ Susan W., "Sweet Honey in the Rock: An Interview," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 18 − 25, 24. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis. In Susan W.'s article, she does not provide the last names for the women she writes about, except members of Sweet Honey in the Rock.

² Susan W., "Sweet Honey in the Rock: An Interview," Feminary 10, No. 1 (1979): 18 – 25, 24.

By 1978, Johnson was a veteran activist who clearly saw the connection between racism, classism, sexism, and imperialism, and viewed the political struggle in which she was engaged as one that sought to end all those oppressions. Jamie's identity as a black lesbian peaked my historical curiosity when I read this conversation between ALFA members and Sweet Honey in the Rock. I wondered where a black lesbian, especially in the South, would align herself during a period when three distinct movements, black freedom (both nonviolent civil rights and more militant Black Power), women's liberation, and gay rights, each addressing only one part of her identity, functioned often independently of one another. Johnson's response to Jamie, in many ways, sustained me through the research process that my original question inspired. Johnson said, "[h]old onto your confusion and let it help you grow. It gives you something to push against." The elusiveness of Southern black lesbian identity gave me a starting point, something to push against; it led me to the development and evolution of Southern lesbian feminism in the 1970s.

Poet and self-identified black lesbian feminist Cheryl Clarke pointed out that "[t]he black lesbian is not only absent from the pages of black political analysis, [but] her image as a character in literature and her role as a writer are blotted out from or trivialized in literary criticism written by black women." I make a similar argument about the presence, or lack, of black lesbians as historical subjects. Black lesbians in the United States (US) are a prime example of intersecting oppressions, but social histories of US liberation movements written in the last forty years largely overlooked these women. Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins

³ Susan W., "Sweet Honey in the Rock: An Interview," Feminary 10, No. 1 (1979): 18 – 25, 24.

⁴ Cheryl Clarke, "The Failure to Transform: Homophobia in the Black Community," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Blacks & Gays and the Struggle for Equality*, Eric Brandt, ed., (New York: The New Press, 1999), 39.

stated, "[a]s a specific site of intersectionality, Black lesbian relationships constitute relationships among the ultimate Other. Black lesbians are not White, male, or heterosexual and generally not affluent." Reflecting on the 1970s, writer and activist Gloria Anzaldúa noticed this phenomenon and asked, "where does the Black Puerto Rican sister stake out her alliance in this country...?" Such a question fuels the research of my dissertation because other scholarship has not sufficiently answered it.

Since the 1980s more and more scholars have placed African American women at the center of their narratives, thus following black women through American history. While these authors do not shy away from the topic of sexuality, they tend to focus on the sexual exploitation black women faced from men in their own communities, or at the hands of white men. A plethora of histories exist that described the social climate of the 1960s and 1970s and the wide array of social and political movements that climate produced. Only the more recent scholars have paid increased attention to African American women in civil rights struggles. Such works tended to provide us with a setting for activists with layered identities but were incomplete in their inquiries about intersecting identities. Other titles charted the histories of civil rights, or

⁵ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Rev. 10th anniversary ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 168.

⁶ Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color* (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981), 105.

Paula Giddings, When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America. (New York: Bantam Books, 1984); Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson, A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America. (New York: Broadway Books, 1999, 1998); Darlene Clark Hine, Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Jacqueline Jones. Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family, from Slavery to the Present. (New York: Basic Books, 2010, 1985).

⁸ Bruce A. Glasrud and Merline Pitre, eds. *Southern Black Women in the Modern Civil Rights Movement*. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013); Bettye Collier-Thomas, and V P. Franklin, eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*. (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, eds. *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*. (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

the women's movement, and even the emergence of a lesbian identity. Black lesbians, if they appeared, served only as secondary characters flashing in and out of the main story, though never central to the narrative. In works interested in a regional, specifically Southern perspective, scholars focused on individual identity formation or only managed some partial combinations of identity in activism: white lesbian feminists, black heterosexual feminists, gay men in the South, or interracial heterosexual relationships in the South. My dissertation seeks to fill this void in the scholarship by examining collective identity formation in identity politics in the American South during the 1970s. This will put the South in the context of the national narratives of 1970s liberation movements as a place where race, gender, and sexuality come uniquely together, but also argues that Southernness, or Southern identity, is an understudied aspect of intersectionality that affected collective identity formation.

My dissertation analyzes the development of Southern lesbian feminism in the 1970s. Its development made the South a new site for political agitation, which affected the national movement for gay rights, and it proved the importance of Southernness in lesbian feminist praxis. The activism of Southern lesbian feminists, because of their Southern identity, uniquely combined political theory from the Black Power movement, radical feminism, and gay liberation. By South, I refer to states in which the legacy of slavery, white supremacy, and racial

⁹ Peniel E. Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America. (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2007); Nancie Caraway, Segregated Sisterhood: Racism and the Politics of American Feminism. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991); Benita Roth, Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Winifred D. Wandersee, On the Move: American Women in the 1970s. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988); Ruth Rosen, The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America, revised ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2000); Lillian Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America. (New York: Penguin, 1991).

¹⁰ James T. Sears, *Growing Up Gay in the South: Race, Gender, and Journeys of the Spirit.* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1991). John Howard, ed. *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South.* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

segregation was especially pronounced in the latter half of the twentieth century. ¹¹ The period from the late sixties to the early 1980s is significant to my research because those years witnessed the "radicalization" of the civil rights movement, the feminist movement, and the emergence of a movement for gay rights *after* major legislative "landmarks" (Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, Fair Housing Act of 1968) for civil rights had been achieved, at least de jure. It was also *during* the period of "victories" for American feminism such as Title IX and the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision that the US also witnessed the rise of a conservative right.

Using black lesbian ALFA member Jamie's conversation with Sweet Honey in the Rock as a point of departure, my dissertation asks how Southern lesbians, black and white, articulated an inclusive feminist theory and participated in its practice at a time when the black freedom movement was noticeably militant, the women's liberation movement bloomed, and the gay rights movement established itself nationally. How did Southern identity affect the way lesbians built a collective political identity focused on ending various oppressions? How was it different from the activism of gay men in the South? Judith Butler's conception of identity as performative aids the investigation of these questions since black lesbian activists intentionally noted their intersecting identities; but also, other white lesbian activists employed the "black lesbian" as an identity in their own rhetoric. 12 Butler showed that gender is a social construction

¹¹ I also argue that "borderland" areas of the South, such as Texas and Florida should be included as the part of the "South," even a global South, that is unique to the rest of the country, and increasingly active in gay liberation in the 1970s.

Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives, third ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013): 462-472; Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. (New York: Routledge, 2006); Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives, eds. Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim. (New York/London: Routledge, 2013), 117; Del Martin, "Sexism & Lesbians,"

with defined parameters of femininity. Proof of a woman's identity requires her to perform those feminine characteristics. ¹³ By initially exploring the presence of, participation of, and dialogue about race, gender, and sexuality in Black Power, radical feminism, and gay liberation, my dissertation seeks to contextualize those movements in the South within the national narrative of civil rights in the 1970s. This investigation is specifically informed by Critical Race Theory and the concept of intersectionality. ¹⁴ Southern lesbian feminists I discuss here understood that institutionalized white supremacy maintained the power of whites and that anti-black racism set other oppressions – sexism, heterosexism, classism, and imperialism – in motion. As women, as lesbians, as middle class, or as working class, they are an example of the interconnected nature of social categorizations. I argue that their Southernness is another social categorization, one that guided their activism in theory and practice because of the way Southernness interacted with their other identities.

Historiography

One reason that black lesbians, and individuals with intersecting identities generally, remain elusive as historical subjects is because they potentially fit in a variety of subfields. Are the stories of such individuals part of civil rights and Black Power history, women's history,

VECTOR, Vol. 7, No. 1, (January 1971), 28-29, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture [unprocessed], Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

¹³ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 462-472; Butler. *Gender Trouble*.

¹⁴ Derrick Bell. Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism. (New York: Basic Books, 1992); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Race, Reform and Retrenchment," in Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement, edited by Kimberle Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, Kendall Thomas, (New York: The New Press, 1995); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," Stanford Law Review 43 (1991): 1241-1299; Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," in Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 276-291; Cheryl Harris, "Critical Race Studies: An Introduction," UCLA Law Review 49 (2002): 1215-1239; Gary Peller, Critical Race Consciousness: Reconsidering American Ideologies of Racial Justice. (Boulder/London: Paradigm Publishers, 2012).

[black] feminist history, or Queer Studies? These activists with intersecting identities have participated in and led various freedom and liberation movements that were part of the social movements of the second half of the twentieth century. Despite that, African American lesbians, much less Southern black lesbians, do not appear in the early historiography of any of these subfields. Black lesbians were speaking for themselves about their place and their contributions, but not included in early "central" works on civil rights or the feminist movement. Within the last twenty years, scholars have noted the uniqueness of the black female activist in the civil rights and Black Power struggles, but they have not extensively examined the presence of black lesbians or included a contemporary discussion of lesbianism. Other works on the civil rights movement have included more analysis of sexuality, but focused on male activists. For example, by the early 2000s, a series of monographs illuminated the activism of Bayard Rustin, a gay black man, pacifist, and organizer who worked alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. These authors

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¹⁵ Toni Cade Bambara, ed. *The Black Woman: An Anthology*. (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970); Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*. (New York: Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1981); Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*. (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1982). *The Black Woman: An Anthology* includes work by Audre Lorde. Barbara and Beverly Smith both contributed to *This Bridge Called My Back*; August Meier and Elliot Rudwick, *Black Protest in the Sixties*. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970). Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

¹⁶ Belinda Robnett, How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds., Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement; Shannon Frystak, Our Minds on Freedom: Women and the Struggle for Black Equality in Louisiana, 1924-1967. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodward, eds., Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle; Danielle L. McGuire, At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – a New History of the Civil Right Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power. (New York: Vintage Books, 2010). Robnett's work represents an example of subfield overlap. It discusses the interracial sexual tension of Freedom Summer and analyzes the manifestation of heterosexual stereotypes of blacks (mostly men) and whites (mostly women). Such analysis is now common in African American history and women's histories and illustrates the influence of early Black Feminist theory. Although Robnett mentions June Jordan (a bisexual woman of color) and Barbara Smith (an African American lesbian), she does not discuss their sexual orientations or their significance within the scope of her book.

clearly acknowledged Rustin's sexuality and even focused on it.¹⁷ Gay/Lesbian/Queer Studies has grown since the 1990s and shed light on sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, sexuality, masculinity, and femininity within the civil rights and Black Power movements.¹⁸ Histories of identity politics, often written separately from one another, have only just begun to find and analyze the presence of individuals with intersecting identities and those histories did not consider Southernness a facet of identity.

Early foundational texts on black feminism did not include black lesbians or the South either. Originally published in 1978, Michele Wallace's *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, is perhaps the premiere document for black feminist theory. Patricia Collins, bell hooks, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Audre Lorde, and Barbara Smith all cited *Black Macho* in their work. Seething with rage, Wallace laid out the underpinnings of black feminist theory. The 1965 release of Daniel Patrick Moynihan's *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (known as the *Moynihan Report*) severely damaged the status of the black woman in the black family, blaming dysfunction in the African American community on black mothers. Wallace argued that then black men internalized Moynihan's "black matriarch." Feeling emasculated after centuries of slavery and racism, they took out their anger and asserted their masculinity against the African American woman and expected her to take it – supporting the black man at her expense would, they believed, propel the Black Power movement. The "Myth of the Superwoman" portion, traced the roots of the strong, uncomplaining, black woman, the heroine

¹⁷ Jervis Anderson, *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen.* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997); Daniel Levine, *Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement.* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000); John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004);

¹⁸ Peter J. Ling and Sharon Montieth, eds., *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University press, 2004); Steve Estes, *I Am a Man! Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

and victim rolled into one because she convinced herself never to rely on a man, and lived a life sacrificing her real dreams to survive her circumstances.¹⁹

Despite the fact that several self-identified black lesbian feminists, including Audre Lorde, Anita Cornwell, Barbara Smith, and Pat Parker, were producing literature and involved in activism by the late 1970s, Wallace never mentioned them.²⁰ She did express the frustration that black women within the Black Power movement felt over African American men taking white women as lovers.²¹ Her only mention of homophobia pertained to Eldridge Cleaver's view of gay black men as warped, desiring to somehow become white by "being fucked" by a white man.²² She made this point only as evidence of the hyper-masculine perspective held by African American men within the Black Power movement, not to criticize their homophobia, or make a larger point on the absurdity of sexual stereotypes.

In 1981, bell hooks followed *Black Macho*, with *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, another early classic of black feminist theory. The foundation of hooks's interpretation was the devaluation of black womanhood throughout history and the way that affected contemporary black women. She was especially thorough in her explanation of how patriarchy within slavery stripped enslaved women of their femininity. While hooks indicted

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¹⁹ Michele Wallace, Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman (New York: Dial Press, 1979).

Bambara, *The Black Woman*, 15-18; Ann Allen Shockley, *Loving Her: A Novel* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974); Combahee River Collective. "A Black Feminist Statement," 116-123; Pat Parker, *Movement in Black: The Collected Poems of Pat Parker*, 1961-1978 (Oakland, California: Diana Press, 1978); Anita Cornwell, *Black Lesbian in White America*, (Tallahassee, Florida: Naiad Press, Inc., 1983). Audre Lorde had multiple entries in the 1970 anthology edited by Toni Cade Bambara and Lorde was working with *Amazon Quarterly* in 1974. Anita Cornwell had been writing for several media outlets, including *The Ladder*, publication of the lesbian organization Daughters of Bilitis, since the early 1970s. Many of those pieces were published together in 1983 in *Black Lesbian in White America*. Through the 1970s Cornwell conducted interviews with other black lesbians, including Pat Parker

²¹ Wallace, 48-49. These are the two aspects of sexuality Wallace discusses: the sexual exploitation of black women by white men in the slaveholding South which led to detrimental stereotypes about black women, and relationships between black men and white women after the civil rights movement began.

²² Wallace, 67-68.

white feminism for its racism and delivered a scathing critique of the sexism within the Black Power movement, she failed to address homophobia or the existence of lesbians of color, much less what they had added to black feminist theory.²³ *Black Macho* and *Ain't I a Woman* represent examples of the way the black lesbian identity remained absent in early work.

If early black feminist literature failed to include them, African American lesbians spoke on their own terms. As early as 1980, black lesbians began writing and publishing for themselves, thus creating their own space. Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith, both members of the Combahee River Collective (to be discussed later), founded Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press to publish predominantly the work of feminist women of color and support a network for lesbians and feminists of color.²⁴ In 1983, Barbara Smith published *Home Girls*, which included the work of Pat Parker and Cheryl Clarke, among other lesbians of color.²⁵ Clarke also wrote "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance" during this period when the 1970s labors of black lesbians came to fruition in the early 1980s.²⁶ Neither work, however, was included in black feminist literature nor gay/lesbian/Queer Studies until the 1990s. The contributions of black lesbians only emerged in black feminist theory of the 1990s. By the turn of the millennium, feminist literature came to routinely include at least some contributions from women, and lesbians of color.²⁷

Historians of civil rights and gay rights movements have continued to grapple with the social implications of sexuality and civil rights for people of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and

²³ bell hooks, Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1999, 1981).

²⁴ Beverly Guy-Sheftall, ed., *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought.* (New York: The New Press, 1995): 18.

²⁵ Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1983).

²⁶ Guy-Sheftall ed., Words of Fire. 241-242.

²⁷ Collins, *Black Feminist Thought:*; Guy-Sheftall, *Words of Fire*; Linda Nicholson, ed., *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory.* (New York/London: Routledge, 1997); Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim, eds., *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives.* (New York/London: Routledge, 2002).

transgender (LGBT) individuals. Some have skirted around homosexuality in their discussions of Black Power. Although Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar briefly mentioned Black Panther co-founder, Huey Newton's moral confrontation over the question of homosexuality (that resulted from his interaction with French writer Jean Genet in the late 1960s), Ogbar's work, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*, tended to emphasize the issue of sexism among male activists in the Black Power movement. Ogbar, however, argued that the misogyny demonstrated by Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, and other members of the Black Panthers, was no more extreme than the general patriarchal beliefs held in mainstream American society at that time. The overarching, and convincing argument Ogbar made was that Black Power had a deep cultural impact in the United States and on the way African Americans, and Americans in general, internalized their identities.²⁸

Peniel Joseph's synthesis, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America, treated sexuality and sexism much the same way Ogbar had: male leaders of the Black Power movement were products of their time, influenced by contemporary and prevalent sexism. He discussed sexuality most in his explanation of Eldridge Cleaver's character and Cleaver's discussion of rape in Soul on Ice. Joseph did use some of his narrative to explore the lives and work of other African American women in the Black Power movement: Elaine Brown, Angela Davis, and Kathleen Cleaver, among others. Yet these were stories of sexism that revolved around heterosexuality. I argue that they also prove useful for identifying the implications of intersecting identities because they indicate instances when Black Power as a

²⁸ Jeffrey Ogbonna Green Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 102-106.

²⁹ Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour, 212-213, 231-268, 271-299.

movement addressed intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, albeit heterosexuality in the case of Ogbar and Joseph.

Joseph's work was part of a historiographical trend from the last twenty years that is valuable for an analysis of gay liberation, radical feminism, and the intersection of race and sexuality in the 1970s. Joseph identifies the continuity of the black freedom struggle. In his evaluation, Black Power should be legitimized as a movement on its own and worthy of study since it was a movement by activists who were responding to complex social problems. It was not merely the sad closing act of the civil rights movement.³⁰

Danielle McGuire's 2010 trailblazing book, At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power, brought together the questions of periodizing civil rights in the US and sexuality in the movement. Sexual violence against African American women from white men and women, going back to enslavement, was rampant, and one of the motivating factors for the formation of the modern civil rights movement. This movement was, in part, supposed to bring dignity and justice to black women because sexual violence towards them was ritualized and systemic. McGuire argued that this sexual violence was a key method whites employed to repress the black community. African American women publicly politicized sexual violence before other non-black, or male activists accepted and understood as a technique of social control. McGuire highlighted the dangerous implications of purported interracial sexual

³⁰ Other works with similar themes include: Vincent Harding, There Is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981); Timothy B. Tyson, Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power. (Chapel Hill/London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Barbara Ransby, Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision. (Chapel Hill/London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

relationships with her discussion of activist Viola Liuzzo, a white woman from Detroit murdered by the Alabama Ku Klux Klan in 1965 while she supported civil rights activism. Then McGuire took civil rights into the mid-seventies and back into the South with the case of Joan Little.³¹ I combine the arguments of Ogbar, Joseph, and McGuire to understand Southern lesbian feminists in the 1970s and how their identities mapped onto the radical movement for black rights specifically in relation to sexuality.

Early chroniclers of LGBT history stated what Ogbar later contented, that Black Power had wide-ranging cultural influence on Americans, especially activists for lesbian and gay rights. One of the earliest works on the gay liberation movement was Donn Teal's *The Gay Militants:*How Gay Liberation Began in America 1969-1971. Despite being written just two years after the Stonewall Riots, and perhaps lacking some historical perspective, Teal offered insight into how activists involved understood race and sex: of the sources Teal presented, the multi-cultural nature of the Gay Liberation Front was salient, though his protagonists were still men. Teal did discuss, in a rather disorganized way, the participation of lesbians in the movement, but he did not find it necessary to acknowledge their race or examine the consequences of it.³²

In his study on gay rights in Houston, Bruce Donald Remmington subsequently argued that the civil rights movement for African Americans gave gays and lesbians their own "sense of direction and purpose...[t]he charismatic combination [of Martin Luther King Jr.'s nonviolence and Stokely Carmichael's "Black Power"] blended together to provoke a national atmosphere

³¹ McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street*. Joan Little was an African American woman in North Carolina on trial for murdering a white prison guard who attempted to sexually assault her. I will discuss the significance of her case to Southern lesbian feminism in chapter 3.

³² Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants: How Gay Liberation Began in America, 1969-1971.* (New York: St. Martin's Press), 1995, the Stonewall Riots were at the end of June 1969. The first edition of Teal's book came out in 1971.

sympathetic to social reform which, in turn, supplied homosexuals with a growing number of liberal allies." Remmington went on to point out the parallels between "black is beautiful" and "gay is good."³³

The work of LGBT historian, James T. Sears, did much to establish the South as a space for queer identities and queer activism. His publication of *Growing Up Gay in the South* in 1991, examined how racial and gender constructions in the South affected identity formation among LGBT individuals on a personal level.³⁴ *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life, 1948-1968*, continued Sears's efforts to prove Southerners had their own stories to tell, even if that meant employing other historical methodologies to find them. Gay life existed in the South, but regional differences with the North meant more queer Southerners lived closeted lives as a way to survive Southern customs and expectations.³⁵ This bolsters my argument that Southern culture affected the way Southern lesbian feminists understood various forms of oppression and the way they chose to practice their lesbian feminist politics.

In 2001, Sears followed up his Lonely Hunters work with Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South. This book, because it discussed Southern LGBT life and activism after the 1969 Stonewall Riot, is most relevant to my research. Although Sears noted Southern racial customs, he omitted deep explanations of why, gay communities in the South were segregated or how that affected the activism of LGBT white Southerners and LGBT Southerners of color. For example, Sears pointed out that it was

³³ Bruce Donald Remmington, "Twelve Years Fighting: Homosexuals in Houston, 1969-1981," (M.A. Thesis, University of Houston, August 1983).

³⁴ James T. Sears, *Growing up Gay in the South*.

³⁵ James T. Sears, *Lonely Hunters: An Oral History of Lesbian and Gay Southern Life*, 1948-1968 (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 1.

common for Southern cities such as Houston and Memphis to have separate gay black bars.³⁶ He also included a handful of gay men of color who participated in political agitation with gay white men, but said "nonwhites were generally absent from southern corridors of gay power." While there were many famous and popular drag queens of color in the South, they were entertainment for predominantly white male audiences, rather than integrated into those Southern gay communities.³⁸ Perhaps because Sears had previously done so much work on the impact of race and gender on identity formation in Growing Up Gay in the South, he chose to change his focus in Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones. While Sears purposefully showed the diversity of Southern LGBT activists – lesbians, men and women of color, transgender individuals, as well as gay white men – and argued that they "were [all] vital in building communities of queer southerners that emerged during the seventies," he admitted that "men and women set different cornerstones, attracted unequal publicity, and received disparate historical treatment."³⁹ This admission is significant to my own arguments, but it was not the heart of Sears's work. Instead, he emphasized points of unity when Southern LGBT activists cooperated across racial lines and gender boundaries. His narrative serves as a good chronicling of Southern gay activism in the 70s, but tended toward the triumphant, rather than examining tension or disagreement. 40 However, Sears's contribution to LGBT historiography – that the South is important and dynamic in the story of LGBT individuals and the gay movement – cannot be understated. His

³⁶ James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey/London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 386, n. 1.

³⁷ James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 285.

³⁸ James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 285.

³⁹ James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 168.

⁴⁰ James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 169, 353 n. 12, 278-280, 300-301.

groundbreaking work showed ties between radical politics and Southern lesbian feminist communities and clearly provided a springboard for my own investigation here.⁴¹

Histories of feminism since 2000 have tended to include a broader discussion of lesbianism and the role of black lesbians as well. They illustrated the degree to which black feminist theory of the nineties has been embraced as integral to the history of feminism. Also, they confirmed the inherently intertwined nature of feminism, black feminism, and lesbian feminism, even as they neglected geographical analysis by asserting national trends or conflate heterosexual feminists and lesbian feminists.

Benita Roth's contribution to the historiography of feminism, Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave, consciously analyzed the effects of race, class, and, to a certain extent, sexuality on feminist ideologies. No single feminism constituted the second wave, Roth claimed; instead there were different and discernible, though not ever completely separated, feminisms that developed, informed by inequalities women experienced because of their race, class, and sex. The development of these distinct feminisms took place in milieu of many social movements that competed against and worked with each other. Roth disputed the narrative that white feminists failed to attract women of color and the argument that women of color had less interest in feminist issues. On one hand, women of color were interested in a feminist agenda, but they envisioned a different kind of social change. White women, on the other hand, as evidenced by their consumption of feminist literature by women of color, desired a movement that addressed

⁴¹ James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 187 - 196. Sears discusses Southern lesbian feminist, Vicki Gabriner's involvement in the Weathermen, the Susan Saxe case, and lesbians in Kentucky helping to harbor women radicals on the run from the federal government.

not only sexism, but racism, homophobia, and class-based oppression.⁴² My dissertation is concerned with how Southern identity influenced the kind of movement Southern lesbian feminists envisioned.

Although the intersection of race and feminism was most noticeable in her work, Roth demonstrated more consideration for the experience of lesbians of color in multiple liberation movements. She described how Chicana lesbian feminists and black lesbian feminists came under attack in their respective communities because of the perceived threat they posed to the family. "Black lesbian feminists...saw no place for themselves in the largely homophobic Black movement...[I]esbianism (along with male homosexuality) was considered counterrevolutionary, a view shared by many Black militant women as well as men; lesbianism was envisioned as coming from outside the black community, much like an infection or contagious disease caught from white women." However, the feminism of some black women within the masculine and homophobic black liberation movement did not send them running to organize with white feminists. The mention of lesbians of color in her work showed greater sensitivity to layered identities than earlier scholarship that post-1990s feminist history exemplified. She also acknowledged the interconnecting motivations of participants in the feminist movement, but lack of deep exploration left the gap in scholarship open.

In *The Trouble Between Us*, Winifred Breines also showed how feminist histories within the last ten years grew to encompass the role of white and black feminists, as well as lesbian feminists, both white women and women of color. She argued that much overlap occurred

⁴² Roth, Separate Roads to Feminism, xi-xii.

⁴³ Roth, Separate Roads to Feminism, 155, 98.

among the social movements that scholars once studied in much more isolation. Her interpretation of social movements in the twentieth century, however, was fairly traditional: the 1960s and 1970s were an explosion of liberation movements that opened society, broke down racism, sexism, heard the youth consciousness against the war, and relaxed sexual norms. Breines claimed that the idealism that existed among feminists to form one inclusive sisterhood of solidarity had to give way to a more pragmatic approach by the late 1970s; achieving such goals meant examining the racial animosity between African American and white feminists and working to understand all forms of oppression, not just sexism. He in Breines analyzed why a racially integrated women's liberation movement' did not initially emerge in second-wave feminism; she saw racism within the women's movement as a microcosm of race playing out in the United States. By the end of the 1970s, Breines concluded, the socialist feminists, white and black, surfaced as activists who could work together for a variety of issues that would lead to a more liberated society in general.

Breines called simplistic the "accepted historical narrative of youthful second wave feminism" as a "white movement due to its racism." Instead, Breines contended that the civil rights movement and Black Power movement must be studied in order to trace the emergence of a feminist consciousness, a consciousness that manifested differently in black women and white women and with lesbians of both races. Breines's analysis of SNCC as it transitioned into a Black Power organization in 1965 and 1966 showed that the organization was democratic with female leadership; she emphasized the activism of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, particularly.

⁴⁴ Winifred Breines, *The Trouble between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2006), 4-5.

⁴⁵ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 6-7.

⁴⁶ Breines, The Trouble Between Us, 8.

However, she argued that Robinson's frustration with a growing white feminist consciousness within SNCC was representative of black women's experience in the movement, thus restricting her discussion without allowing for variation based on lesbian identities in SNCC.⁴⁷ Just as black feminist theory concentrated on the heterosexual tension across racial lines throughout history, Breines recalled the interracial romances of the civil rights movement and the sexism and homophobia within the Black Power movement as a way for black men to reclaim their manhood.⁴⁸ Breines also accepted the negative impact the *Moynihan Report* had on African American women, a central feature of black feminist theory. ⁴⁹ By Breines assessment, the debate over woman's role in black nationalist movements was detrimental to feminism. Women split over the issue of deferring to black masculinity and men and women split over the issue as well. While it is true that women took on leadership roles in the Black Power movement, particularly inside the Black Panther Party, Breines made clear that their numbers in leadership positions rose only after 1973, when the Party, nation-wide, had been severely weakened, membership was down, and male leaders were either dead or jailed. Female leaders, such as Assata Shakur did not become prominent until the late 1970s when African American men in the movement "slowly abandoned their most chauvinist positions." 50

While Breines effectively illustrated her argument that feminists of color and white feminists needed to organize separately before they could work together, her analysis of

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⁴⁷ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 36 – 40.

⁴⁸ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 9.

⁴⁹ Breines, The Trouble Between Us, 59.

⁵⁰ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 60-71; Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, "'The Most Qualified Person to Handle the Job': Black Panther Party Women, 1966-1982" in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 305 – 336. LeBlanc-Ernest disagreed with the argument that Panther women were only active and important after the role of Panther men declined. Instead, LeBlanc-Ernest argued that women in the Black Panther Party actively recruited membership and contributed to its revolutionary activism from the organization's inception in 1966 and through the 1970s.

geography and sexuality are both limited. Breines anchored her discussion of 1960s tension between black and white women in familiar territory – Freedom Summer in Mississippi. There, she included how Southern social mores affected interracial heterosexual relationships among activists. That experience was jarring to women activists, especially white women, who idealized an interracial movement. Their shaken idealism led to a separation of movements in the early 1970s. This analysis only focused on heterosexuality, to the neglect of gay or lesbian activists who took part in Freedom Summer. Breines finally discussed the South as important to notions of sexuality, but only did so in terms of heterosexuality. Then, in later chapters, that include lesbian subjects, Breines concentrated on Northern locales.

The Trouble Between Us provided needed nuance to feminist history, though sometimes Breines's analysis neglected certain aspects of identity, particularly homosexuality. She articulated a variety of feminists: liberal feminists as opposed to radical and socialist feminists. Her list of terms implied that radical/socialist feminists were necessarily embracing of lesbian identity without expounding on that.⁵³ Breines's discussion of sexuality remained uneven in her chapter about women in the Black Power movement, because she continued to omit queer identities. Breines consciously described her subjects as "[h]eterosexual black women" without acknowledging the existence of black lesbians, or even gay men in the Black Power movement.⁵⁴ Breines pushed her thesis without accounting for where activists with intersecting identities went once identity politics became isolated. Then, as she moved into her discussion about women

⁵¹ Breines, The Trouble Between Us, 41.

⁵² Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 16-17, 19-50.

⁵³ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 79-81.

⁵⁴ Breines, The Trouble Between Us. 60.

within black nationalism, she effectively removed Black Power from the South, arguing that "the real base and power of the black nationalist movement was in the cities of the North." I argue that Southern lesbian feminists in and outside of the South continued strains of radical Black Power ideologies in the 1970s; their Southernness manifested in their expression of such ideologies as well.

Breines relocated her analysis to Boston to discuss how white and black socialist feminists cast off their nostalgia and idealism of interracial unity and worked to overcome their separation to find a new basis for political connection. This was, she contended difficult since a younger generation of activists emerged without much knowledge or understanding about racial differences.⁵⁶ As a former member of Bread and Roses, a white socialist feminist organization in Boston, Breines situated her analysis there, comparing the activism and theory of Bread and Roses with that of the Combahee River Collective, also in Boston.⁵⁷ Bread and Roses, formed in 1969, Breines argued, was representative of "numerous such groups [that] appeared around the same time throughout the country, primarily in urban areas and college towns."58 Consciousness-raising groups within Bread and Roses allowed these middle-class white women to examine their own class and race privilege and reject the sexism of the New Left, but they were a safe space for only middle-class white women. Although Bread and Roses made overtures to women of color and made a point to support Black Power causes, they were sometimes paralyzed with their own guilt to mobilize effectively or actually work with black women. As Breines put it, they had to learn about racism apart from socialist feminists of

⁵⁵ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 52.

⁵⁶ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 17.

⁵⁷ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 79-150.

⁵⁸ Breines, The Trouble Between Us. 81.

color.⁵⁹ In her discussion of the Combahee River Collective as a shining example of black socialist feminism, Breines kept her geography small and minimized the significance of lesbian identity among Combahee founders and members.⁶⁰ The Women's Safety Coalition that formed in Boston in the late 1970s was, Breines said, an example of feminists of all ethnicities reconnecting politically in a more mature form of activism, sometimes uncomfortable, but having learned something about racial differences over the decade.⁶¹ My dissertation shows how an examination of feminist development and practice is possible and necessary in the South and must use the concept of intersectionality to evaluate the impacts of lesbian and Southern identities.

Anne Valk's *Radical Sisters* put the history of Black Power in conversation with the history of feminism when she discussed radical feminism and black liberation in the nation's capital. Second-wave feminism in Washington, D.C., according to Valk, sought to find gender solidarity among women even though tension among various radical and reformist groups existed. Grassroots organizing that took place in the capital influenced national organizations headquartered there. The District of Columbia, as the seat of national government, was unique for several reasons. Valk also argued that demographics played a major role in the social change in Washington; in 1970, 70 percent of the capital's population was African American, many of them women and many of them poor. The specific characteristics of Washington, D.C. Valk found so unique, were not something her study expounded upon to elucidate something new about the role of black lesbians or Southern lesbians, black or white.

⁵⁹ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 79-116.

⁶⁰ Breines, The Trouble Between Us, 117-150.

⁶¹ Breines, The Trouble Between Us. 166-168.

Valk's addition to the scholarship was her argument that activity and extremism of some radical feminist groups in Washington, D.C. created an edge for the women's movement in general, making it possible for more "reformist," liberal feminist goals to be met. Also, women activists in D.C. worked for welfare reform, anti-poverty initiatives, and they organized a rape crisis center in response to sexual violence. ⁶² Valk gave due representation to lesbian activists in Washington with her discussion of the Furies, a short-lived radical lesbian organization that proposed lesbianism as the ultimate form of feminism – a political statement. However, despite the high number of African Americans in D.C.'s population, the Furies were a de facto white organization. Although they gave a cursory acknowledgment of racial oppression, Valk does not mention, and perhaps cannot find, evidence that this radical group included any black lesbians. The ill-fated 1970 Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia was the height of conversation for black liberation and radical feminism. It was, Valk noted, disappointingly anti-climactic since it resulted in more bickering than solutions toward liberation. Radical Sisters included the Black Power movement, black and white feminist history and lesbian (but white) feminist history, and though black feminists made an appearance, black lesbians' invisibility persisted.⁶³

Scholarship within the last five years has continued, successfully, to push historiography on civil rights beyond a study of identity formation that takes place in individual vacuums so as to demonstrate connections across racial, or gender lines in social organizing. Lorrin Thomas's *Puerto Rican Citizen* (2010) pulled apart many ways Puerto Ricans in New York City in the

⁶² Valk, *Radical Sisters*, 4-5.

⁶³ Valk, Radical Sisters, 126-131, 140.

twentieth century experienced discrimination. The Nuyorican (Puerto Ricans in New York) movement of the late 1960s, Thomas explained, shows a struggle for the "politics of recognition."⁶⁴

In 2014, Sonia Song-Ha Lee added to this broader civil rights historiography in *Building* a Latino Civil Rights Movement: Puerto Ricans, African Americans and the Pursuit of Racial Justice in New York City. Central to her historiographical argument was that earlier histories of Puerto Rican civil rights focused only on relationships between whites and Puerto Ricans, or showed parallels between African American movements and the Puerto Rican struggle for rights. She emphasized that these groups were working in conjunction with each other, not merely agitating for change at the same time. 65

Valk's, Thomas's, and Lee's strategy of putting these movements in conversation with one another, is useful and should be applied to other locales outside of Washington, D.C. and New York City. Even with these newer, more inclusive histories, no comprehensive or even regional study exists which features black lesbians or Southern lesbians as the primary historical subjects. Historians may take lessons from many of these titles, though. They suggest a more fruitful direction of study to reveal the motivations and actions of black lesbian activists of the 1970s. Each of these scholars decentered familiar narratives of 1960s and 1970s activism that serve to interpret Black Power as mostly male, feminism as predominantly white, or gay liberation as white and male, and all three in isolation. Their approaches are useful for my dissertation as it aims to uncover identities that these narrow interpretations have kept hidden.

⁶⁴ Lorrin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen: History and Political Identity in Twentieth-Century New York City*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

⁶⁵ Sonia Song-Ha Lee, Building a Latino Civil Rights Movement: Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and the Pursuit of Racial Justice in New York City. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

A reformulation of traditional periodization of civil rights and black feminism in the US is fundamental to locating lesbian activists as historical subjects in the South. Peniel Joseph argued that Black Power is a unique period and not the sunset of civil rights; while it had deep roots, its cultural impact flourished in the late 1960s and early 1970s, according to Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, however, illustrated this with predominantly male organizations located in Northern cities such as the Young Lords and the Young Patriots. 66 Sherie M. Randolph used the life of the African American lawyer and activist, Florynce Kennedy, to make similar arguments about the older roots of black feminism. Randolph argued that Kennedy's politics and activism in the late 1940s through the early 1960s, which combined elements of Black Power and antisexism, prove the existence of black feminist thought prior to second-wave feminism, which often receives the credit for growing black feminism. Kennedy's prominence as a feminist activist, however, blossomed in the late 1960s, through the 1970s, coinciding with the height of Black Power. 67 Evidence of nascent Black Power, [black] feminist ideology, and a movement for gay rights prior to the 1970s, make that decade a particular time with a special backdrop. Each movement must be interpreted in the context of one another, as they had evolved and increasingly engaged one another.

While rejecting traditional periodization though, we must not overlook the fact that these social movements, by the 1970s, had a longer history and included newer participants. Winifred Breines and civil rights historian Shannon Frystak agreed that certain generational differences distinguished female activists who agitated in the early 1960s from their younger counterparts

⁶⁶ Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour, xiii-xiv, 1-8; Ogbar, Black Power, 159-190.

⁶⁷ Sherie M. Randolph, *Florynce "Flo" Kennedy: The Life of a Black Feminist Radical.* (The University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2015), 1-47, 98-136, 186-213.

who participated in later struggles. Breines illuminated the variety of feminists along generational lines; early "liberal feminists" of the *Feminine Mystique* era were easier to identify as singly focused in their activism, while the younger "radical feminists" and "socialist feminists" participated in multiple New Left agendas. The former, chose mostly to exclude men and pursue their own goals in all-female groups. The latter, Breines explained, rose from the women's liberation movement, not necessarily agreeing on all issues, including lesbianism, but were energetic and ready for action. Frystak asserted that African American women activists who organized in the 1960s, and before, differed from younger women in the movement who would go on to participate in black liberation struggles. The latter, argued Frystak, were more likely to develop their own feminist consciousness and more likely to pursue it than the former. Although Frystak's work, *Our Minds on Freedom*, ends in 1967, her argument and Breines's are relevant to the 1970s and the overlapping social movements that continued to grow in that decade. These historical inquiries touched on similar questions to my own, but are limited by geography in Breines's case, and geography and scope in Frystak's case.

The Combahee River Collective, a 1970s socialist feminist group comprised mostly of African American lesbians, was, according to Breines, the best example of feminists dedicated to a wide range of issues and determined to be inclusive. Founded in 1974 as an offshoot of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), the Combahee River Collective was, Breines argued, functioning as a reaction to both white feminism and black nationalism, with its own

⁶⁸ Breines, The Trouble Between Us. 80.

⁶⁹ Frystak, Our Minds on Freedom, 197-233.

contributions to make about sexuality. Was there a similar phenomenon in the South? Did it manifest differently there?

Jeffrey Ogbar's thesis about the cultural impact of Black Power complimented Breines's study of the Combahee River Collective. In a larger sense, his argument should be applied to the feminist movement and the push for gay rights in the 1970s. Doing so puts Black Power, radical feminism, and gay liberation in conversation with one another, as Valk did on a smaller scale. This provides a method for untangling intersecting identities in the history of social movements: Southern lesbians, white and of color, are exceptional and singular, but not easily pigeon-holed, their participation is wide-ranging, but their experiences cannot be casually lumped in with one specific subfield as "identity history."

This dissertation argues that we need to go beyond naming gay activists of the 1960s and 1970s social movements who fought for civil rights for African Americans or showing that feminist literature included minimal references to lesbians of color in order to discern the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in movements of liberation. Where did activists with intersecting identities, like Jamie in ALFA, turn for a place of acceptance and complete political expression? This research searches for the cracks between seemingly separate social movements rooted in identity politics to understand *where* an inclusive movement was, *who* was participating in it, and *why* its participants embraced a politics of one movement for multiple causes. I submit that study of Southern lesbian identities during the 1970s provides a necessary intersectional approach to a complex period of identity politics when the revolutionary nature of Black Power was not on the decline, but instead changing forms and locations as Southern

⁷⁰ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 117.

lesbian feminists began agitating. They were shaped by Southern culture and connected to, though not tied to the political tactics of Southern feminists of the 1950s and 1960s, the latter much less influenced by the rise of a militant gay rights movement.

My concern with the importance of the South and Southernness continues and expands on other scholarship since 2000 that argued for closer examination of radical politics and feminism in the South. Gregg L. Michel's 2004 *Struggle for a Better South* is an organizational history of the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC).⁷¹ It pointed out that Northerners did not have a monopoly on radical politics; some white Southerners of the baby boom generation were interested in social change, against the Vietnam War, pro-labor, and sympathetic, even actively supportive of feminism.⁷² Although Michel focused on the SSOC in Tennessee, there were other successful chapters in South Carolina, Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas.⁷³

This dissertation builds upon Michel's scholarship by questioning the significance of Southern identity among Southern activists; though I go further to determine how Southern identity mapped onto activists' identities as women and as lesbians and shaped their activism. How did white students, Michel wondered, reconcile the South's racist history with a potentially progressive future in the middle of the civil rights movement? Existence of the SSOC, according to Michel, proved that white Southern identity in the 1960s was not monolithic.⁷⁴ Michel argued that the SSOC prioritized activism over analysis.⁷⁵ This practical approach was similar, but not

⁷¹ Gregg L. Michel, *Struggle for a Better South: The Southern Student Organizing Committee, 1964-1969* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

⁷² Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 7-8.

⁷³ Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 33-62.

⁷⁴ Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 1-9.

⁷⁵ Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 7-8.

identical to Southern lesbian-feminist organizations in the 1970s, which I investigate. He also explained the significance and success of music as a tool of Southern progressive activism when he described how the SSOC organized the Southern Folk Festival in 1966. However, Michel's work must serve as a springboard for my own research because of its limits as an organizational history. Its scope is restricted to the existence of the SSOC – only 1964 to 1969 – and Michel drew few connections into the next decade. This timeline also precluded much examination of identity politics for gay rights or gay liberation since most of it takes place prior to the Stonewall Riot, and there was very little organized homophile movement activism in the South then, either. Nonetheless, Michel's work was step toward understanding how Southern identity affected Southern activists, which is one layer of my own research.

Just as Michel reasoned that progressive politics had a place in the South, Janet Allured, in her 2016 *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism: The Long Women's Rights Movement in Louisiana, 1950-1997*, argued that feminism was not *just* a Northern phenomenon. Allured looked specifically at Louisiana as a site of radical feminism, but applied her thesis to the South more generally. Northern feminists, Allured explained, sometimes condescended to Southern feminists, expecting the latter to be backward about feminist politics. This generated "Anti-Yankee sentiment" among Southern feminists and Southern African Americans in the civil rights movement. Such condescension was, ironically, a form of internal colonization, Allured pointed out.⁷⁷ Significantly, this geographical tension, intensified feelings of Southern uniqueness among Southern feminists and lesbian feminists.⁷⁸ While feminism in the South was real,

⁷⁶ Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 114-119.

⁷⁷ Janet Allured, *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism: The Long Women's Rights Movement in Louisiana*, 1950-1977 (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2016), 2.

⁷⁸ Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 2.

profound, and sometimes originated there, Allured argued that Northern feminists have dominated the feminist historical narrative because of Southern cultural, particularly religious differences. Historians have overlooked Southern feminists because they acted differently than "the stereotype that dominated the popular imagination." Their activism in opposition to racism and sexism, Allured showed, was "unique to the South" because it was done largely "within their faith traditions," an aspect of culture that "northern-oriented scholars neglected to study." St

In highlighting the prominence of religion in Southern culture as it relates to feminist activism, Allured revealed an important gap in feminist histories. For her, the element of religion made Southern feminist organizing unique. Allured's analysis acknowledged that religion was a double-edged sword for feminists in the South: some liberal denominations promoted racial equality and fostered civil rights and feminist activism, but other conservative denominations clung to white supremacy, which repelled would-be activists. For Allured, the former was more often true, especially for African American women.⁸² Like Frystak, Allured emphasized a longer periodization of feminist organizing that, at least in its early years, spoke to issues of racism and sexism, but not homophobia. Inclusion of this religious analysis textualizes my argument about the impact of Southern folkways on Southern women's political activism but lacks a specific analysis about how lesbian identity fit with Southern religious traditions.⁸³ The

⁷⁹ Allured, *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism*, 5.

⁸⁰ Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 5.

⁸¹ Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 19.

⁸² Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 19, 57-89.

⁸³ Carolyn Renée Dupont, Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945 – 1975 (New York/London: New York University Press, 2013); David L. Chapell, A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow (Chapel Hill/London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004). Allured brought together the scholarly debate about religion's influence on civil rights activism in the South and applies it to Southern feminists. Dupont argued that white Christianity worked in tandem with white supremacy, at least in

periodization Allured used, beginning in 1950, reinforced her argument about religion in the 1950s and 1960s and is applicable to Southern feminists generally, but not specifically lesbian feminists. While religion was a facet of Southern culture and Southern political organizing to distinguish it from Northern political organizing, Southern lesbian feminists did not necessarily organize out of Judeo-Christian religious convictions. It was practical for Southern lesbian feminists to utilize existing religious infrastructure in the South for political and social organizing. Southern religious infrastructure was part of slavery's legacy and a significant feature of civil rights organizing, but by the 1970s, other radical political forces were also at work in the South. Those forces came from within and from outside of the South.

Allured's work, in a similar vein as Shannon Frystak's, discussed issues of sexuality more than Michel's did; however, her analysis was oversimplified at times. She contended that patriarchal Southern culture caused heterosexual, married feminists to practice their politics quietly without bucking traditional social conventions. It also accounted for the lesbians that constituted a large percentage of Southern feminists. Lesbians were not worried that their feminist politics would cause economic recrimination against their husbands. Allured also argued that white heterosexual Southern feminists, or "stealth feminists" effectively formed bonds with African American women and carried out their own kind of activism that was not ostentatious.⁸⁴ This characterization of Southern difference in feminist strategy was convincing

Mississippi. This contrasted with Chapell's contention that white supremacists were unable to gain a critical mass of support for their cause among Southern churches and instead, Southern religion was a major factor in the decline of Jim Crow. Allured's argument relied heavily on the "politics of respectability" as foundational to Louisiana feminists' tactics, which was convincing for documenting the interracial cooperation and activism among women in the 1950s and 1960s. Given the shift toward militancy in the black freedom struggle and the rise of a militant gay liberation movement after Stonewall, such strategies were much less relevant to lesbian feminists in the South by the early 1970s.

⁸⁴ Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 6.

and linked Southern identity to interracial coalitions that did not always exist in feminist activism in the North, as Winifred Breines showed, but it also flattens lesbian identity in Southern "radical socialist" consciousness. This brand of Southern feminism Allured asserted, occurred in Louisiana; it was a radical movement accepting of lesbianism and, she was clear to point out, was "a small cadre of young feminists, predominantly lesbian" distinct from the "liberal variety" of feminists, more common in Louisiana. While the racial dynamics of Southern feminism she described was convincing, her discussion of how Southern culture influenced lesbian feminist activism in particular, requires fleshing out to explain how Southern constructs of race shaped Southern constructs of femininity and sexuality as well. Nonetheless, this dissertation is in line with the work of Michel and Allured: Southerners generated liberal, progressive, and radical activism, and their Southernness molded how they engaged in identity politicking.

I situate my research within this scholarship by arguing that Southernness as an identity and the South as a location are important to understanding identity politics in the 1970s. The cultural influence of the Black Power movement extended beyond 1975 and outside of northern cities. Increased Southern participation in the growing women's movement during the 1970s occurred at the same time that the movement for gay rights became a national one. These ongoing political currents met in the South, in the activism of Southern lesbians who were uniquely familiar with how constructs of race, gender, and sexuality functioned together. This familiarity shaped Southern lesbian feminism – a movement to end multiple oppressions in a period when identity politics were increasingly separate.

⁸⁵ Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 6.

⁸⁶ Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 6.

Sources

The four texts whose scholarship I most engage, combined archival research, often in the organizational papers of various groups, analysis of contemporary published sources, and oral history. Much of James T. Sears's early work combined the use of contemporary sociological and medical studies about homosexuality with qualitative interviews he conducted with LGBT individuals who grew up in the South. To make the case for a new geography of Second Wave feminism, Janet Allured took a feminist approach, arguing that her subjects' gender and personalities were products of cultural and social influence rather than biology. Such a perspective meant that Allured used biography, the individual stories of women, to support her arguments. Allured also conducted a number of interviews with the subjects she wrote about. This was, she said, to "fill the gaps" in documentation of Louisiana feminists' work because in 2005 Hurricane Katrina destroyed so much of the paper sources of individual women and feminist organizations. Like Breines, Allured sometimes used published contemporary sources as a starting point for her analysis. Engage of the contemporary sources as a starting point for her analysis. So

As a trained Sociologist and Women's and Gender Studies scholar, Winifred Breines's monograph was replete with secondary citations of scholarship on Second Wave feminism, the history of African American women, the civil rights movement, and Black Power. Most of the primary sources Breines used were published sources. To prove her argument that feminist historiography has misinterpreted Sara Evans's pivotal work, *Personal Politics*, Breines often

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⁸⁷ James T. Sears, "The Impact of Gender and Race on Growing Up Lesbian and Gay in the South," *NWSA Journal* 1, No. 3. (Spring 1989): 422-457; James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 350 – 385.

⁸⁸ Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 20, 271-272, 275-338.

⁸⁹ Breines, The Trouble Between Us, 203 – 256.

cited it. ⁹⁰ For supporting evidence of her own analysis of Evans, Breines drew from contemporary feminist journals and Black Power media outlets, and especially the memoirs of activists such as Mary King and Casey Hayden. In her later discussion of the Combahee River Collective and Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press published works from black feminists, Barbara Smith and Audre Lorde, for instance, were useful. Given her personal connection to Bread and Roses, Breines also made use of their organizational papers; and she interviewed former Bread and Roses members. ⁹¹

Just as Breines used the organizational papers of Bread and Roses and Allured the organizational papers of multiple women's groups in Louisiana, respectively, Gregg Michel took advantage of the organizational papers of SSOC and of SNCC. He mined the Southern Student Organizing Committee's papers within the personal papers of various SSOC members. In the mid-1990s, Michel also conducted interviews and utilized an existing oral history collection from Columbia University that contained interviews from the mid-1980s. Research in contemporary newspapers in proximity to the activities of SSOC allowed Michel to contextualize the organization's work.⁹²

The source base for my dissertation is similar to those used by Sears, Allured, Breines, and especially Michel, though I did not rely as heavily on oral histories and interviews. While the work of Arden Eversmeyer and Margaret Purcell and their Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project inspired some of my research questions, archival investigation, took me into the realm of

⁹⁰ Breines, The Trouble Between Us, 27-37, 44-48, 80-83, 94, 154.

⁹¹ Breines, The Trouble Between Us, 8, 16, 97-106, 203-256.

⁹² Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 297-314.

organizational papers and personal collections. My research, however, owes much to the foundational work Sears did to document the lived experiences of LGBT individuals in the South. While Sears and I both found a wealth of information in Duke University's extensive holdings of ALFA, Pointblank Times, and Feminary members' personal papers, it was his scholarship that shined a light on LGBT identities in the South and influenced my research. Unlike Breines, I have no personal connection to any organizations about which I wrote. However, this gave me the freedom to follow the connections I found between various organizations, such as ALFA and Feminary, as I examined their organizational collections or the personal papers of individual members such as Minnie Bruce Pratt and Mab Segrest.

Acknowledging the similarities of our source bases, I must also point out differences. I dove into newer archival collections and used music as an important primary source. Texas A&M University's 2013 acquisition of the Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture was fortuitous for me. It is one of the largest LGBT archival collections in the country and is still growing. My almost immediate access to the Kelly Collection propelled my research by providing me names of certain activists and organizations, their writings and organizational publications. I was able to look at the organizational papers and personal collections I did because they had not been destroyed by a natural disaster. Like Allured, though, I value biography. Florynce Kennedy's papers, which I use, have only been open for research within the last few years. Sherie Randolph's biography of Kennedy drew from that collection before it was

⁹³ Arden Eversmeyer and Margaret Purcell, A Gift of Age: Old Lesbian Life Stories (Houston, Texas: Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project, 2009); Arden Eversmeyer and Margaret Purcell, Without Apology: The Second Collection of Life Stories Based on Interview Transcripts in the Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project (Houston, Texas: Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project, 2012).

public.⁹⁴ Pat Parker is a central figure in my dissertation, so I am glad to make use of her recently processed collection of personal papers. Her diaries and letters were especially helpful in providing a biographical narrative thread to follow as I discuss links between Black Power and Southern Lesbian Feminism.

As Women's and Gender Studies scholar, Agatha Beins pointed out, the wealth of feminist periodicals from the 1970s fuels research of the period. Secretainly, I took advantage of such sources to find the voices of Southern lesbian feminists and to provide the national context that so many publications offered. But Southern lesbian feminists also spoke through the music they produced. Based on the some of the music I found in various archival collections, I was able to find connections to other artists and Southern lesbian organizations that supported those artists through the vast array of LGBT music heritage that LGBT activist and radio producer J.D. Doyle has made available online. Whereas Michel's discussion of the Southern Folk Festival focuses more on the organization of this musical event as an example of Southern activism, my research uses original music, written and produced by Southern lesbian feminists, as an important source to examine how their identities shaped their politics. Music as cultural expression is a prominent aspect of Southern identity, one Southern lesbian feminists used as

⁹⁴ Randolph, Florynce "Flo" Kennedy, 1-47.

⁹⁵ Agatha Beins, *Liberation in Print: Feminist Periodicals and Social Movement Identity* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2017), 2-4.

⁹⁶ http://www.jddoylearchives.org/ accessed 21 December, 2017. Doyle was born in Ohio, but moved to Virginia in the late 1970s. He participated in the March on Washington in October 1979 and moved to Houston in 1981. He worked on and co-hosted several radio shows, including *Queer Voices* and *Queer Music Heritage*, that broadcast out of Houston and focused on queer music. The primary documents and recordings he has digitized and made available online helped me track down links between lesbian musicians, lesbian production collectives, and Southern lesbian feminist groups, especially those in Texas.

⁹⁷ Michel, 114-119.

part of their revolutionary politics, and a source that other scholars have yet to significantly employ.

Outline

My original research questions about intersecting identities and locating Southern black lesbian activists led me to an intricate web of people, organizations, and ideas in a handful of Southern places that connected at different times and in different places through the 1970s. This exploration uncovered the development of Southern lesbian feminism, which is admittedly dense because of these interconnections. In order to follow these Southern interconnections through time and across the country from the rise of Black Power in the late 1960s and concluding with Southern lesbian feminist literary production in the 1980s and 1990s, I trace several individual activists and organizations throughout the dissertation. First, I use Pat Parker, a black lesbian from Houston, as a link between the South, to Black Power, and to early radical feminism. Then I track the early political activism of Rita Mae Brown, a white lesbian from Florida, as she goes North, works in Washington, D.C., participating in the founding of the lesbian feminist organization, the Furies. Charlotte Bunch, Meg Christian, and Ginny Berson, all Furies, continued their activism in different ways through the decade, the latter two forming the Olivia Records Collective, which produced womyn's music. 98 Besides the Furies and Olivia Records, I

Anita Cornwell, *Black Lesbian in White America*, (Naiad Press, Inc.: United States of America, 1983), 14-19; Kathie D. Williams, "Louisville's Lesbian Feminist Union: A Study in Community Building," in *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South*, ed. John Howard. (New York/London: New York University Press, 1997), 230-232. I use this spelling of "womyn" to denote the music, contemporary to the period, produced specifically *for* women and *by* women. Multiple spellings of "women" and "woman" (womin, wimmin, womon, womyn), emerged from the women's movement as a political statement, a way to show that women were distinct from men, more than "man" with "wo" as a prefix. Use of a different spelling of the word "women" was more widespread in the musical parts of the women's movement. For example, the lesbian feminist band out of Louisville, Kentucky was called the River City Womin. The prominence of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, begun in the 1970s, solidified the spelling I employ.

follow other organizations: the Feminary Collective in the Triangle Area of North Carolina that included Minnie Bruce Pratt and Mab Segrest, the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) in Georgia, and the Austin [Texas] Lesbian Organization (ALO) and the Pointblank Times Collective (PBT) in Houston, Texas. Elizabeth Knowlton was involved with the Feminary Collective and ALFA; Pokey Anderson of Houston was a member of ALFA, and helped found the Pointblank Times Collective. Teresa Trull, a lesbian feminist musician from North Carolina became an active force in Olivia Records. Following these women - Pat Parker, Rita Mae Brown, Charlotte Bunch, Meg Christian, Teresa Trull, Mab Segrest, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Pokey Anderson - and these organizations - the Furies, Olivia Records, Feminary Collective, ALFA, and the ALO – we can navigate networks of Southern lesbian feminism. They serve as signposts through the chapters.

In a study like this, terminology is important. As I explained, my use of "South" refers to former slaveholding regions, not necessarily Confederate, where racial segregation was a significant feature of postbellum history. This definition includes former Confederate states, but also places like Maryland, Kentucky, and Washington, D.C. When Sweet Honey in the Rock sat down for that breakfast with ALFA members, Bernice Johnson Reagon said, "I was born in Albany, Georgia. I was born in the South. I live in Washington, D.C. and that's the South." Southern identity is important as well. Some of the women I discuss identified as Southern even though they did not always live in the South. The South's impact on their identity was profound, a touchstone in their activism regardless of their physical location. As black lesbian activist and

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⁹⁹ Susan W., "Sweet Honey in the Rock: An Interview," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 20. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

writer, Anita Cornwell, explained, she "was born in the Deep South [South Carolina]" and lived there until she was sixteen, "[v]et, once I was eventually settled in the North, I still felt rootless and insecure." Despite her efforts, Cornwell was unable to "blot out" her Southern past which she "carried around like a second skin." Southernness, in this way, is the sense of culture that the South, as a place, created. Race relations in the South were part of slavery's legacy that spelled out elements of Southernness. But to be Southern also meant that folkways such as music, literature, religion, and food shaped identity. The culture was part of these women whether they loved it, hated it, sought to redefine it, or all of the above. Their reaction to it, rejection of it, pride in it, and ownership of it inspired their activism. The long shadow of racism in the South affected social constructions of blackness, whiteness, and femininity, which directly defined sexuality. When Southern lesbian feminists asserted their lesbian identities, their activism necessarily engaged social constructions of race and gender that Southern culture dictated. Their radical politics were, in part, a rejection of those constructions; and they used other Southern folkways to challenge them. Meg Christian and Pat Parker, for instance, both eventually left the South, but they held on to their Southernness and continued to wrestle with what it meant to be Southern. Their Southern identity gave them a way to attack particular forms of oppression that Southern culture had created. Southernness was, simultaneously, their weapon and their battle.

As previously mentioned scholars have done, I must also identify certain types of feminism. Liberal feminism refers to predominantly white, middle-class feminism focused on economic and political equality and legal protections for women. Reference to radical feminism

100 Cornwell, 18.

includes feminist practices that entertain notions of separatism or employ socialist analysis.

Radical feminists and socialist feminists were not all practicing Southern lesbian feminism, though. While Southern lesbian feminists rejected homophobia, that was not their only, or even main target. They celebrated all-women spaces, worked to build coalitions, and included class and racial analysis akin to black feminism.

To explore the development of Southern lesbian feminism in the 1970s, my dissertation uses an organization that is both chronological and topical. It examines the state of Black Power, radical feminism, and gay liberation as the decade dawned, then follows Southern lesbian feminist engagement with each movement over the next ten years. What connected Southern lesbian feminists to Black Power philosophies? How were they involved with early radical feminism? How did Southern lesbian feminist activism differ from the political agenda of Southern gay men? In the South, race influenced conceptions of gender and sexuality differently than other parts of the country, so how did those differences manifest when Southern involvement in the gay liberation movement increased? How did that Southern involvement change the national movement for gay rights as the 1970s progressed? This juxtaposition of Southern activism within the national movement allows for the evaluation of Southern difference, but also how the South contributed to civil rights activism more generally in ways that spoke to collective identity formation in identity politics.

The first chapter establishes the background for 1970s militant identity politicking. It discusses the intensification of Black Power in the South in 1966 and how that affected the dynamics of national organizations such as SNCC. Radical feminism also grew quickly in the late 1960s, concurrent to the Black Power movement, particularly the influence of the Black Panther Party. The homophile movement transformed into gay liberation after the June 1969

Stonewall Riot. While activists within those movements were talking *like* each other, they were not necessarily talking *to* or *with* each other. The political foment of the late 1960s precipitated the Black Panthers' organization of the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in 1970, a convention meant to jumpstart a broad liberation movement to eliminate *all* oppressions. Southern gay and lesbian feminist activists were only just beginning to organize, but bringing isolated movements together necessitated Southern involvement.

The second chapter explores the maturation of radical Southern lesbian feminism from roughly 1970 to 1976, beginning with the political odyssey of Floridian Rita Mae Brown. She ties the Redstockings to the Radicalesbians to the Furies in Washington, D.C. North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas are the main sites of examination where what becomes the Feminary Collective, ALFA, and the Pointblank Times Collective emerge respectively. Black feminist Florynce Kennedy played an important part by bringing her coalition message to Southern women. Her work supports my argument for considering a new periodization for black feminism. Southern identity influenced how Southern lesbians established their own feminist theory and Kennedy's vision of a broad movement resonated with them. The Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference in 1975 exemplifies the influences of Black Power and radical feminism on Southern lesbian feminism. The simultaneous growth of Southern lesbian feminism and feminist print culture fed one another and facilitated a strong network that connected lesbians from North Carolina to those in Georgia and Texas and across the South.

Chapter 3 uses 1970s Texas as a microcosm to explain how Southern lesbian feminist activism developed with, and at times, in opposition to gay rights organizing in the South. Texas gay liberation activism that was inclusive showed promise in the early part of the decade, but by the mid-70s, more conservative, predominantly white and male organizations were having an

impact on the national gay rights movement. The social and political culture that Southern lesbian feminists cultivated was drastically different than the political agenda white Southern gay men pursued. An ongoing debate between women of the Pointblank Times Collective and the male leadership of the Houston Gay Political Caucus over access to a gay dance club, illustrates this difference.

The fourth chapter focuses on one major event in the South in 1977 – Anita Bryant's antigay crusade that started in Florida in January. This event illustrates how significant the South and Southern identity had become in the gay rights movement and in the evolution of lesbian feminism. It also exposed differences in gay male organizing and lesbian feminist activism in the South by analyzing the *Lesbian Concentrate* record album, and gay male versus lesbian responses to two legal cases, those of Joan Little and Leonard Matlovich. The Southern lesbian feminist reaction to Bryant's Save Our Children campaign became a moment to show the political development of their own feminism: influenced by Black Power and radical politics, sensitive to multiple identities.

Chapter 5 examines a second major event to take place in the South in 1977 – the National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas, held in November as part of International Women's Year (IWY). The growing inclusiveness of the women's movement was on display in Houston at the National Women's Conference. Chapter 5 also discusses the work of black lesbian and Combahee River Collective co-founder, Barbara Smith in Houston. Just as the Black Panthers looked to the South by organizing the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in Washington, D.C., in 1970, Smith turned to Southern women delegates for support of the sexual orientation plank at the conference, understanding their influence.

The final chapter discusses Southern preparation for and participation in the first National March on Washington (MOW) for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which took place in October 1979. Much of the March preparation and events after it were the consequences of increased Southern involvement in identity politicking in the 1970s. By 1979, Texas had also become a major force in the gay rights movement; male-dominated gay organizations in Texas emphasized unity for a single cause at the March. However, Southern lesbian feminists, much more radical in their politics, and the networks those lesbian feminists cultivated through the decade, came into play in March on Washington organizing as well. This MOW obviously borrowed strategies from the civil rights movement. It also simultaneously reflected two 1970s developments: the separate growth of identity politics and efforts of lesbian activists to expand feminist theory and practice to include multiple causes. These developments occurred, in large part, because of Southern political engagement.

CHAPTER II

"THE CALL OF THE SOUTH": THE CHALLENGES OF MOBILIZING A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT, 1950s - 1970

The first installment of *JET* magazine for the year 1967 featured a three-page article assessing the previous year. Its authors lamented the emergence of "Black Power" and a fragmenting civil rights movement, feared a white backlash, and worried about increasing urban violence and anti-war sentiment. They still referred to African Americans as "Negroes," and expressed concern over a departure from nonviolent strategies of resistance so prevalent in the early 1960s.¹

JET covered longtime National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) president, Dorothy I.

Height's dismissal of "Black Power" feelings. Mary McLeod Bethune founded the NCNW in the thirties and she mentored Height. An active women's organization, the NCNW elected Height president in 1958, a position she held for forty years. Height and many of her NCNW peers had worked for decades, building social and political alliances with whites, and pushing for racial justice and women's equality, including the Wednesdays in Mississippi program during the 1964 Freedom Summer. In fact, Height's activist credentials in the nonviolent tradition were well established by the late 1960s. JET, presented her opinion on Black Power as representative of the "American Negro

¹ "BELIEVE MOST NEGROES WILL NOT RECALL 1966 AS A VERY GOOD YEAR," *JET*, Vol. 31, No. 13, (January 5, 1967), 6-9, Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

² "Get Rid of 'Black Power' Slogan: Miss Height," *JET*, Vol. 31, No. 13, (January 5, 1967), 10, Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

³ Dorothy I. Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir*, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2003), 155-185. Florynce Kennedy participated in the Wednesdays in Mississippi program.

Community," perhaps unwilling to acknowledge, or unaware of the powerful political changes afoot.⁴

In the same issue, *JET* followed three stories on LGBT topics: Britain's repeal of criminal penalties for homosexual acts, the marriage of two women, and one of the first major medical studies on transgender individuals ("trans-sexuals") undergoing gender reassignment surgeries in the US.⁵

This issue of *JET* magazine capsulized the different currents of identity politics and a changing political climate in the latter part of the decade: reflecting on earlier activism, looking forward to new movements.

The tumult of the late 1960s sprouted national militant branches of previously existing identity politics movements: Black Power, feminism, and gay liberation. These movements occupied overlapping political space, often borrowing rhetoric from one another, but for the most part, they existed in isolation, speaking of singular identities and individual oppressions, rather than intersecting identities or a movement to end *all* oppressions. The period between the mid-sixties and the dawn of the seventies served as a time of fermentation for activists and social movements, a time of fragmentation and reconnection. Historian Gregg Michel argued that white Southerners who wanted to participate in positive social change in the late sixties knew that political cohesion, if possible, would be a long process, and require engagement of people in the South and activists who identified as Southern.⁶

⁴ "Get Rid of 'Black Power" Slogan: Miss Height," *JET*, Vol. 31, No. 13, (January 5, 1967), 10, Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis. This issue of *JET* magazine also objectifies black women as was common in a pre-feminist era. The magazine included a story about Jackie Wood, "A DAZZLING DANCER," posed in a bikini on a beach (pg 34) and order forms for a JET Pin-up Calendar full of scantily clad black women (pg 60-61).

⁵ "Commons Okays Ease in Britain's Homosexual Law;" "Woman Marries Woman, Both Are Fined;" "MEDICINE," *JET*, Vol. 31, No. 13, (January 5, 1967), 15, 24, 48, Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

⁶ Michel, 7-8.

This chapter provides the backdrop for the convergence of Black Power, feminism, and gay liberation that laid the groundwork for the development of Southern lesbian feminism in the 1970s. I argue that timing was key by showing that the political foment that was occurring in the South - the radicalization of SNCC and the rise of radical feminism – happened at the same time that the Black Panther Party (BPP) moved to engage Southern activism and the homophile movement turned militant in 1969. I focus first on the rise of Black Power in the South and nationally after the Meredith March in 1966, exploring how national organizations, especially the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), dealt with gender and sexuality as they matured in the late 1960s. SNCC's development toward militancy occurred concurrently with the formation of the BPP. The Panthers confronted sexism and homophobia as they outlined their revolutionary agenda. Then, I discuss the emergence of radical feminism in the late 1960s, specifically New York Radical Women and RedStockings, and how those organizations handled racial identity and sexuality. These feminist groups were symptoms of growing militant activism around the country at that time. Third, I consider how early gay rights activism developed in the mid-1950s into the 1960s on the West Coast and in the Northeast with the Mattachine Society, Daughters of Bilitis, and the Society for Individual Rights (S.I.R.). But those organizations, especially Mattachine and S.I.R., struggled to address issues of race or sex. Southern gay men and lesbians maintained lower visibility than LGBT individuals in other regions, and scholars have had trouble finding them, but by the latter part of the decade, gay men and lesbians had formed the Circle of Friends in Dallas and Houston had a growing gay community.

The June 1969 Stonewall Riot thrust gay liberation into its militant phase at the same time the Black Panther Party enjoyed its national zenith; yet despite this, both movements failed to effectively deal with concerns of the other. All these developments together were the catalyst for the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in 1970, which represented an intentional action

by the Black Panther Party to engage the South in a broader movement that sought to liberate multiple identities. A new generation of Southern feminists came of age and came out of the closet on the heels of these political shifts. They had witnessed the political changes and were connected to more veteran activists, but not bound by older modes of activism that dominated the sixties.

Gender and Sexuality in a Changing Black Freedom Movement

Since the mid-1950s, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was the face of the civil rights movement in the South, but by the mid-1960s, cracks in his alliances with younger activists were showing. For years, the SNCC had worked with King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in nonviolent resistance to racial bigotry. King emphasized legal equality, equal access to public accommodations, and the franchise as the primary goals of this alliance with minimal attention on black culture. Instead, King and SCLC capitalized on Southern religiosity in their political mobilizing. As the decade moved forward, SNCC members exhibited less interest in SCLC's religious rhetoric. Some, including Stokely Carmichael, had grown tired of King's monopoly of power and were not as religiously committed to nonviolence. SNCC's project with the most white volunteers, Freedom Summer in 1964, relied on interracial cooperation and black and white volunteers from all over the country poured into Mississippi for a voter registration drive. Freedom Summer received mainstream national media attention in large part because of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), founded in 1964. The MFDP was part of a larger voter registration project in the state meant to challenge Mississippi's status quo electoral process that had

⁷ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). King's refusal to participate in the Freedom Rides in 1961 was one example of a growing, sometimes public, rift between King and younger activists.

⁸ This kind of cultural education took a backseat to projects like the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Freedom Rides, and voter registration campaigns in the late fifties and early sixties. Freedom Schools that were part of Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964 supported classes in black history. They were symptomatic of a shift in activists' focus.

⁹ Branch, *Pillar of Fire*; Dittmer, *Local People*.

disfranchised African Americans and excluded them from the activities of the Democratic Party for decades. In the summer of 1964, the regular Mississippi Democrats planned to seat their own, all-white, delegation at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, which prompted a protest from the MFDP. Freedom Summer culminated with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party traveling to Atlantic City to claim Mississippi's delegate seats at the Democratic National Convention. They failed.¹⁰

The failure of the MFDP radicalized many SNCC members, while Freedom Summer itself opened questions about sexism and sexuality among SNCC volunteers. Freedom Summer also awoke feminist consciousness among some of SNCC's women. Many middle-class white women came to Mississippi to work for racial equality, but, according to some scholars, found themselves relegated to positions of glorified secretaries who made coffee and filed papers. Some white females, hoping to demonstrate their loyalty to the cause of anti-racism, engaged in sexual relationships with black men in SNCC. Mary King, Casey Hayden, both SNCC members, and a handful of women volunteers to Freedom Summer collaborated to record their feelings of marginalization within the movement, penning the "SNCC Position Paper." Stokely Carmichael's response to the document only fueled burgeoning feminist indignation, even if he had spoken in jest: "[Stokely] grinned broadly and shouted, 'What is the position of women in SNCC?' Answering himself, he responded, 'The position of women in SNCC is prone!'" Both King and Hayden heard him and claimed to know that he was joking, even laughed with him, but that hardly erases the subtext of the comment. 12

Dittmer, Local People, 242 - 271. Dittmer described the MFDP's strategy at the DNC, attempts at compromise by other Democrats outside of Mississippi, and MFDP's decision to reject the honorary seats offered them as a concession at the convention. Despite the 1964 failure of the MFDP, its actions fueled changes in the DNC processes evident in the 1968 and 1972 national conventions.

¹¹Rosen, The World Split Open, 103-109.

¹² Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 103-109. Carmichael apologized years later and stated that he was joking. Other veterans of the civil rights movement familiar with the position paper and Carmichael have since expressed regret that early histories of the feminist movement focused so much on this one comment by Carmichael. Some said it

Winifred Breines argues that the context surrounding the position paper was much more complex. Supposed sexual tension between Northern, middle-class white women and Southern black men had more to do with ignorance of regional differences on the part of both. Breines also contends that black women in SNCC were irritated by King and Hayden's writing, which had more to do with their experience with white men in the Left than Freedom Summer. Nevertheless, says Breines, scholarship on civil rights and the women's movement continuously highlights this gendered aspect of Freedom Summer. ¹³

Many scholars place the early to mid-sixties narrative of SNCC and other major civil rights organizations in the Deep South; this timing, location, and the religious overtones of the civil rights movement explain why that narrative says little about homosexuality. Most activists, and society in general, were unfamiliar with the language of intersectionality, while many organizations feared that adding other identity claims would only make gaining political traction more difficult. Before Stonewall, gay rights organizing remained a phenomenon mostly in northeast urban areas or on the West Coast, with mostly, but not all, white participants. In the South, many whites clung to strict definitions of white womanhood that had shaped race relations since Reconstruction; these strict definitions combined with their heteronormativity causing them to fear interracial heterosexual relationships without ostensible concern about homosexual relationships. Thus, civil rights

was taken out of context. Many highlighted instead the complex dynamics of race, sex, and sexuality in the highly charged environment of Mississippi in 1964, which cannot be reduced to one joke that Stokely Carmichael made. See http://www.crmvet.org/disc/women2.htm, accessed 27 December. 2017.

¹³ Breines, The Trouble Between Us, 16-24.

¹⁴ Jared E. Leighton, "Freedom Indivisible: Gays and Lesbians in the African American Civil Rights Movement" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2013). Leighton's work is an intervention into this narrative. Leighton also argues that the religious nature of the civil rights movement also affected how gay and lesbian activists within it chose to navigate their identities.

¹⁵ Mark Bauerlein, Negrophobia: A Race Riot in Atlanta, 1906, (San Francisco, California: Encounter Books, 2001). W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930, (Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 17 – 84; Dan T. Carter, The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995) 259 – 261; Jacqueline Jones Royster, ed., Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of

activists in that time and place, if aware of Southern constructions of sexuality, did not yet conceive of queer identities or gay liberation. While gay and lesbian civil rights activists were present in the movement, many were still in the closet or consciously focused their energies on anti-racism until later.¹⁶

New geographies of the black freedom struggle captured more national media attention in the latter part of the 1960s. Southerners who had been at ground zero for civil rights activism witnessed new developments in the northeast and on the West Coast. The Watts Riot in Los Angeles in 1965 foreshadowed the new geography while James Meredith's hastily organized March Against Fear in June of 1966 unveiled their new language and focus, when long-time SNCC member Stokely Carmichael gave his "Black Power" speech.¹⁷ That late summer and fall, urban uprisings that the media characterized as riots erupted across the country; cities hardest hit included Cleveland, Ohio, Atlanta, Georgia, San Francisco, California, and Newark, New Jersey.¹⁸

King's nonviolent methods frustrated some in SNCC who moved closer to the rhetoric of a growing Black Power movement as Stokely Carmichael had. A year after Carmichael's 1967 resignation from SNCC, he joined the Black Panther Party, a Marxist organization more concerned

Ida B. Wells, 1892 – 1900, (Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1997); Mab Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 25. In her memoir, Segrest explained how white Southerners used blackness and white interactions with African Americans as a way to "draw boundaries[,]" especially to regulate the behavior of white women.

¹⁶ Leighton, "Freedom Indivisible;" Saundra Tignor, "Saundra Tignor," in *Without Apology: Old Lesbian Life Stories*, Arden Eversmeyer & Margaret Purcell, eds., (Houston, Texas: Old Lesbian Oral Herstory Project, 2012), 285-296; Williams, "Louisville's Lesbian Feminist Union," 225. For example, in May of 1968, Louisville's black section of town, the West End, held a meeting to protest flagrant police brutality against a local black youth. Kentucky governor Louie B. Nunn called in the national guard and within 2 days 8 African Americans had been shot and hundreds more arrested. Out of this event, the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) formed. Some members disillusioned with SCEF's nonviolent tactics went on to form their own civil rights groups. Included in these ranks were militantly minded women would go on to form the Lesbian Feminist Union (LFU).

¹⁷ Dittmer, Local People, 394-396.

¹⁸ "BELIEVE MOST NEGROES NOT RECALL 1966 A VERY GOOD YEAR," *JET*, Vol. 31, No. 13, (January 5, 1967), 6-8, Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis; Lisa M. Corrigan, *Prison Power: How Prison Influenced the Movement for Black Liberation*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2016), 57.

with economic manifestations of oppressions than Christian morality. SNCC elected H. Rap Brown chairman after Carmichael's departure and also moved away from religiously-oriented organizing. Barely two months later, Brown attended the first Black Power Conference in Newark, New Jersey, along with Amiri Baraka, Maulana Karenga, and Florynce Kennedy. Kennedy had previous civil rights experience working with the Wednesdays in Mississippi program. She was also participating in the growing women's movement and already saw potential for a powerful coalition between women and blacks. She was also participating in the growing women's movement and already saw potential for a powerful coalition between women and blacks.

Carmichael's transition to militancy shown in 1965 when, while still a member of SNCC, he formed the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) in Alabama and made a black panther its symbol. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party (BPP) in Oakland, California the next year using the same symbol; together, these events catapulted black self-defense and militancy into the national imagination.²² The Panthers outlined their political goals in their "Ten Point Program." They prioritized black liberation but understood the economic and cultural impact of white supremacy. Given their revolutionary stance, the Panthers had a larger vision that included blacks "and oppressed communities." They called for black self-determination, institutional control within their own communities, an end to imperial wars and police brutality, and, reflecting their Marxist beliefs, "an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our black and oppressed communities." Their revolution also demanded "decent housing," healthcare, employment, and an

¹⁹ Carson Clayborne, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 251; Charles E. Jones, "Reconsidering Panther History: The Untold Story," in *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]*, ed. Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 8; Black Panther Party, "Ten Point Program," (1966).

²⁰ Corrigan, Prison Power, 54.

²¹. Randolph, Florynce "Flo" Kennedy, 115.

²² Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); http://www.blackpast.org/aah/lowndes-county-freedom-organization, accessed 28 December, 2017.

education system that effectively included black history.²³ This arm of the black freedom struggle moved beyond legal and judicial equality for African Americans and articulated a socialist and colonial interpretation of racism in the United States. Generations of racism, perpetuated by (internal) colonization and capitalism had, the Black Panthers believed, proletarianized African Americans, dooming them to inadequate housing, unemployment, and forcing them to "learn" in an education system that ignored their history and culture.

Despite their complex systemic interpretation of various oppressions and their origins, the Black Panther Party had done little to incorporate the impact of sexism into their world view, particularly in the early years. In the sixties, while men and women made up Panther ranks, men held most leadership positions. High profile women in the Party such as Kathleen Cleaver, wife of Eldridge Cleaver, and Ericka Huggins, wife of John Huggins, more often served as patriarchal ideal images of revolutionary women, supporting their husbands and having children. The "revolutionary art," of Emory Douglas, the one-time Party's Minister of Culture, cultivated an image of black women that likewise emphasized motherhood and helpmate status rather than political philosophers and activist leaders. His pictures, featured in *The Black Panther*, depicted often scantily clad women with a baby in one arm and a gun or knife in the other. He restricted women's activism to conventionally female roles – defending the home or hindering police who sought to take down male Panther leadership. Douglas's Panther women rarely spoke, and he frequently drew them intimidating white landlords or assisting in the killing of a "pig" police officer.²⁴ The "survival" programs of the Party usually ignored the reproductive autonomy of black women because the Party

²³ Black Panther Party, "Ten Point Program," (1966).

²⁴ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "REVOLUTIONARY ART," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 17, (October 24, 1970), 17, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Line on abortion, and sometimes birth control, was that both were tools of white racists bent on stopping a revolution by preventing the birth of its soldiers.²⁵

In late 1968 the BPP reorganized, beginning a series of actions by male Panther leadership that indicated their desire to shed male chauvinism and outline a revolutionary framework that included eliminating sexism; it coincided with the Panthers' expansion in the South. The limited role for women and narrow understanding of gender-based oppression in the Panther organization gave way, albeit unevenly, as women took on new leadership roles. For example, Hazel Mack became an important leader in the BPP's North Carolina chapter. After the death of her husband on the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) campus in 1969, Ericka Huggins rose in stature within the organization. His was also true of Elaine Brown, member of the Los Angeles Black Panthers. She worked as an activist and cultural producer within the Black Panther Party in the late sixties, touring the country playing revolutionary music, along with The Lumpen, funk band of the Party. By the fall of 1970, Brown served as Deputy Minister of Information for the Southern California Chapter of the Party. Significantly, the reorganization of the BPP, the rise of women in its ranks, the Party's Southern expansion, and the Stonewall Riot coincided with a shift in Newton's

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²⁵ Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (New York/London: New York University Press, 2003), 105-106.

²⁶ Charles E. Jones, "Reconsidering Panther History," 32 – 36. Huey Newton banned the phrase "pussy power" as a Panther slogan. In July 1969, *The Black Panther* published an open letter from Eldridge Cleaver to then-incarcerated Ericka Huggins, in which he clearly denounced male chauvinism and called for sexism to end.

²⁷ Charles E. Jones, "Reconsidering Panther History," 35.

²⁸ The Black Panther, Vol. 4 [incorrectly numbered?], No. 28, (January 9, 1971), 5, 8, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.; The Black Panther, Vol. 5, No. 21, (November 21, 1970), center page. Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

²⁹ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 21, (November 21, 1970), 7, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

³⁰ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 21, (November 21, 1970), 7, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

³¹ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 17, (October 24, 1970), 23, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

attitude about homosexuality. In 1970, he wrote a position paper that explained Black Panther support for gay liberation. According to Newton, they were another oppressed group, one with which the BPP should build a coalition.³²

Women's Liberation, a feminist organization in California, reached out to the Panthers in October 1970 when they presented a statement against racism to the press and showed support for the Party the same day that the Superior Court of New Haven, Connecticut, opened the case of Bobby Seale and Ericka Huggins.³³ The Party gestured toward an engagement with the women's movement and feminist ideas by 1970, as well. For example, *The Black Panther* advertised a demonstration by Women's Liberation in the San Francisco Bay Area in December, 1970. Granted, the Women's Liberation group had called the demonstration to again show support for Panthers, Seale and Huggins, Black Power activist Angela Davis, and several other political prisoners.³⁴ Still,

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Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People* (New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, 1995), 153; Charles E. Jones, "Reconsidering Panther History," 35; Elaine Brown. *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 241-376; Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 57, 63, 73, 76-77. Huey Newton, Panthers cofounder, favored Brown and kept her close. Later, as the Party's national profile crumbled amidst infiltration by government agents, and Newton's own drug-fueled paranoia, Panther membership declined and women began assuming even more leadership positions. Newton even named Brown Chairperson of the Black Panther Party in 1974 when he went into exile. Panther women like Brown, however, still walked a fine line between the frequently chauvinistic rhetoric of black nationalism and being a woman revolutionary. Brown stated, "A woman in the Black Power movement was considered, at best, irrelevant. A woman asserting herself was a pariah. A woman attempting the role of leadership was, to my proud black Brothers, making an alliance with the 'counter-revolutionary, manhating, lesbian, feminist white bitches.' It was a violation of some Black Power principle that was left undefined. If a black woman assumed a role of leadership, she was said to be eroding black manhood, to be hindering the progress of the black race. She was an enemy of black people." (pg 356).

³³ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "STATEMENT TO THE PRESS FROM WOMAN'S LIBERATION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 17, (October 24, 1970), 8; "NOTES ON THE TRIAL OF CHAIRMAN BOBBY SEALE AND ERICKA HUGGINS," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 17, (October 24, 1970): 11. Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis. Seale and Huggins were on trial for murder in New Haven, Connecticut, regarding the May 1969 murder of Alex Rackley, a Panther suspected of being an informant for the FBI. Two New Haven Panthers confessed to the murder and made a deal to testify for the state in exchange for a lighter sentence. One of those Panthers implicated Bobby Seale in Rackley's death. Seale stood trial with Ericka Huggins, a founder of the New Haven chapter of the BPP. The majority of the jury voted to acquit both Seale and Huggins, but the judge dismissed the case since there was not a unanimous verdict.

³⁴ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "DEMONSTRATION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 21, (November 21, 1970), 9, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

publication of an announcement of the demonstration in the Panther periodical showed their desire to build coalitions and exhibit solidarity with women because of sexist oppression.

Although the more prominent branches of the Black Panther Party were on the West Coast and in the northeast, Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City, Boston,
Philadelphia, respectively, by the late 1960s and early into 1970, the Black Power message of the
Party was growing southward. Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, for example, both had active
chapters of the Party.³⁵ The Black Panthers were also cooperating with other Black Power
organizations in the South, such as Black Liberation Fronts in Alabama, Arkansas, and Tyler, Texas,
the National Committee for Combatting Fascism (NCCF) in Dallas, Texas, New Orleans, Louisiana,
and Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and the People's Revolutionary Party in Houston, Texas.³⁶
These organizations, and like-minded individuals and groups in other areas of the South, submitted
stories and reports to the BPP newspaper. This kept *The Black Panther* readership in and outside the
South informed about instances of racial discrimination and resistance to it in Dixie. These
organizations also displayed support for the economic understanding and revolutionary politics of the
Panthers.³⁷ The white power structure in some Southern communities, the Tar Heel State, for

³⁵ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Howard, "BALTIMORE, REVOLUTIONARY LOYALITY [SIC]," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 14, (October 3, 1970), 10, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

³⁶ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Arkansas Black Liberation Front, "WELFARE AID: A NEED AND A MUST" *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 6; Alabama Black Liberation Front, "FREE THE BIRMINGHAM 5," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 14, (October 3, 1970), 11; "BLACK GI RETURNS HOME FOR LEGAL RAILROAD," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 6, Nos. 13/14, (May 1, 1971), 8; "NEW ORLEANS, LOUSIANA;" Candi Robinson, "PIGS KIDNAP DALLAS COMMUNITY WORKER," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 1, 10; N.C.C.F. New Orleans, Louisiana, "THE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE OF NEW ORLEANS LIVES ON," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 21, (November 21, 1970), 3; "N.C.C.F. Winston-Salem, North Carolina, "SOUTHERN CITY OF RACIST EXPLOITATION AND OPPRESSION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 16, (October 17, 1970), 2,; "JOINT PRESS RELEASE," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 14, (October 3, 1970), 8, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.
³⁷ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Monk Teba, "AFRICAN CONGRESS IN ATLANTA, GA. BLACK CAPITALISM RUINS IT," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 14, (October 3, 1970), 15; "BLACK GI RETURNS HOME FOR LEGAL RAILROAD," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 6, Nos. 13/14, (May 1, 1971), 8 Archie Givens Sr. Collection of African

example, unwittingly illustrated the extent of the Black Panther Party's influence in the South by mistaking local black activists for Party members. Dora Gray and George Dewitt in central North Carolina reported to *The Black Panther* that when local blacks mobilized and pushed for more black history in the high school curriculum, the principal accused them of being Panthers. Then he called on the local police chief to help him "kick them out of school on trumped up charges." By 1970, Southerners were not merely watching the Black Power movement unfold in other places; the South was a site where people were embracing black pride and adopting militant strategies of activism.

The Women's Movement Grapples with Race and Sexuality

Women activists witnessed the changing, angrier tone of civil rights in the sixties, but their growing feminist consciousness collided with an unfolding sexual revolution which altered the women's movement by 1970. The FDA approval of the birth control pill, Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl*, and publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, for example, all in the early 1960s, foretold second wave feminism. Victories in the civil rights movement produced legislation that, at least in word, afforded legal protections to women, but the realities of women's lives were far from gender equality.³⁹ The supposed sexual freedom that came with shifting attitudes about morality carved space for more openness about sexuality. However, those attitudes and introduction of the pill were all the more frustrating to some women who continued to face the restraints of a sexist society in other aspects of their lives: limited job opportunities in only

member of the military who spoke out against racism in the US Army. His activism within the ranks resulted in his return to the states. He lived in Tyler, Texas, where the local sheriff put him under surveillance. He organized to change the name of the high school to something besides Robert E. Lee High. The Tyler Black Liberation Front formed from this action.

³⁸ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Dora Gray & George Dewitt, "FASCISM AT CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 16, (October 17, 1970), 3, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

³⁹ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, xviii – xix. Other events include the 1961 Women's Strike for Peace and John F. Kennedy's creation of the President's Commission on the Status of Women.

'feminine' professions, pay disparities between men and women, restrictions on a woman's financial control of her future, if single, and her husband's control of her earnings, if married. Baby boomer women in social movements asserted control over their bodies while they still confronted sexist notions, negative gender stereotypes, and prescribed female 'duties' in political activism – a maddening paradox.⁴⁰ By the mid-sixties, women participating in civil rights activism and anti-war agitation began voicing their dissatisfaction with the gender status quo within these movements.⁴¹

Political mobilization in the second wave began in earnest in 1966 when the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed. This was the result of the Third Annual Conference on the Status of Women in Washington, D.C. when women understood that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, created in 1964 as the enforcement arm of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, would not act to guarantee equality in hiring for women.⁴² Thus, the formation of NOW coincided with the national rise of Black Power, and some of NOW's founding members were women of color. Despite the membership of more radical women such as Florynce Kennedy, and Ti-Grace Atkinson, NOW's early political focus seemed tame and mostly white. There was little concern for issues of class, race, or sexuality, and many heterosexual feminists still succumbed to lesbian-baiting from the political opposition.⁴³

Women's organizations with more sweeping concerns followed in NOW's wake and they articulated the course women's activism – specifically lesbian feminist activism – took into the 1970s. Groups such as the Women's Liberation Group in Chicago and the New York Radical

⁴⁰ Terry Anderson, *The Sixties*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pearson Longman, 2004), 168-172.

⁴¹ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, xix. See previously mentioned position paper from SNCC women from 1964 and Casey Hayden and Mary King's "A Kind of Memo" from a Students For a Democratic Society meeting in 1965. Also in 1965, Dorothy Height, head of the National Council of Negro Women, called for the organization to address the concerns of women.

⁴² Rosen, The World Split Open, xix.

⁴³ Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers, 205.

Women, formed in 1967; both groups employed more militant rhetoric than NOW. The National Welfare Rights Organization, founded in 1966 by women, addressed problems of race and class. Their platform highlighted concerns of women with intersecting identities. While these organizations were not in the South, the were symptomatic of how the women's movement was changing, growing to fight other forms of oppression besides sexism – a trait of Southern lesbian feminism.

1968 was another banner year for feminism: the federal government targeted the women's movement for investigation, just as it had listed the BPP, among others as elements dangerous to national security; Chicago hosted the First National Women's Liberation Conference; the slogan "Sisterhood is Powerful" entered the national consciousness; the National Abortion Rights Action League formed; and the New York Radical Women staged a theatrical protest of the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City. Protests and political mobilization from other radical women's groups, such as the Redstockings, increased as the 1960s came to an end. By 1969, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) considered the rising tide of radical feminist organizations enough of a threat, as they did Black Power groups, to begin infiltrating them. The FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) began in the 50s, but revolutionary activism of the 60s caused J. Edgar Hoover to unleash its fury on a number of groups, including feminist ones. The seventies opened with a burst

⁴⁴ Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1.

⁴⁵ Rosen, The World Split Open, xx – xxi.

⁴⁶ Rosen, The World Split Open, xxi.

⁴⁷ Jeffrey Haas, *The Assassination of Fred Hampton: How the FBI and the Chicago Police Murdered a Black Panther* (Chicago, Illinois: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010), 27-42; Darrel Enck-Wanzer, ed., *The Young Lords: A Reader*. (New York/London: New York University Press, 2010), xii, 5. Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 241, 251. COINTELPRO was responsible for the murder of Fred Hampton, a rising star from the Chicago Branch of the Black Panther Party, in December 1969. The existence of COINTELPRO was not public until March 1971, when a group of activists broke into a small FBI office in Media, Pennsylvania. The next month, COINTELPRO was dismantled.

of publications and organizations that spoke to the many and overlapping oppressions women faced.⁴⁸

Gender, Race, and Geography in the Homophile Movement

In the 1950s and 1960s lesbians and gay men sometimes participated, often closeted, in the civil rights and women's movements as both movements evolved; openly gay activists built their own separate movement. The homophile movement was the precursor to gay rights and, like strains of Black Power, had roots in the fifties. Unlike the civil rights movement, early homophile organizations emerged outside the South, such as the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles in 1950, and the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in 1955 in San Francisco. Activists in these two organizations who enjoyed some fame in gay or lesbian circles were few, they tended to seek quiet acceptance, or at least tolerance from society, and legal protection. Many members were only out to each other, and writers for organization periodicals often used pseudonyms for published writings. By the midsixties, these older organizations had grown branches or chapters in larger urban areas on the east coast such as Boston and New York City. Newer associations also formed. The Society for Individual Rights (S.I.R.) formed in San Francisco in the mid-sixties. It went on to publish *Vector* magazine beginning in the mid-1960s, which had a national circulation.

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⁴⁸ Rosen, *The World Split Open*, xxii. In 1970 and 1971 alone, the following works were published: *The Black Woman* (Toni Cade), *The Female Eunuch* (Germaine Greer), *Woman in Sexist Society* (Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, eds.), *Dialectics of Sex* (Shulamith Firestone), *Sexual Politics* (Kate Millett), and *Sisterhood is Powerful* (Robin Morgan).

⁴⁹ Leighton, "Freedom Indivisible," 24.

⁵⁰ Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*. Tyson argues that Black Power existed in the 1950s, as evidenced by the militant activism of Robert F. Williams in North Carolina. Therefore, the Black Power movement was more than the final chapter of the civil rights movement.

⁵¹ Harry Hay, Radically Gay: The Story of Gay Liberation in the Words of Its Founder (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1996), 1; Marcia M. Gallo, Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement, (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006), xxii.

⁵² Gallo, Different Daughters.

⁵³ Vector, Vol 2, No. 4 (January, 1968), 3, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 1: Periodicals (Soak-Vector) AR0756, Box 284; Vector, Vol. 1, No. 2 (January 1965). Don

While the DOB professed equality for all and had prominent black lesbian members, including Ernestine Eckstein and Cleo Bonner, its first African American national president, elected in 1963, they were exceptions rather than the norm. Membership in these long-standing homosexual organizations, especially male groups, was telling, though – overwhelmingly white and middle-class. Even as these groups proliferated in the 1960s, the literature they produced on the subject of homosexuality tended to privilege a gay white male identity, and exclude, or at best exploit, lesbian identities. This literature also peddled gross gendered and sexual stereotypes of people of color. This literature also peddled gross gendered and sexual stereotypes of

Lesbians and gay men lived in the South, but social conventions in the region plus fewer and smaller urban areas affected how they chose to deal with their sexualities. As LGBT scholar, John Howard, explains, the lives of gay men and lesbians in the South prior to and even during the 1960s are difficult to track. The American South "has been particularly hostile to sexual difference," and most homosexual interaction "was predicated on a complex web of forces, not the least of which were gender and race." But even in this uniquely Southern "web of forces," some future Southern

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Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture [unprocessed], Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University.

⁵⁴ Gallo, *Different Daughters*, xxii, 149, 258. Eckstein left the New York Chapter of DOB in the late 60s when she moved to California. Her activism in California broadened to black feminist praxis.

⁵⁵ Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers, 195; Gallo, Different Daughters.

Solution Dodson, BLACK & GAY: The Survey of Interracial Homosexual Practices, (North Hollywood, California: Barclay House, 1969); Gallo, Different Daughters. The former book is typical of medical "research" masquerading as erotica. It was rife with stereotypes of sexualized black bodies, at times including slave/master scenarios. The premise of several chapters indicates that white authors believed blackness influenced masculinity and sexuality in particular ways: "Are All Negro Males Basically Bisexual?" "The Psychology of the Heterosexual Negro Male," and "The Negro Drag Queen." Likewise, "physique" periodicals (basically gay male versions of Playboy) of the 1950s and 1960s contained mostly white men. As the number of men of color increased, physique magazines presented black and brown models as dark and exotic, outside of rather than one of the readership. DOB was not exploitative and broke ground putting Ernestine Eckstein's picture on the cover of the June 1966 issue of The Ladder, its publication. As Gallo points out, The Ladder, was less focused on the erotic, but the organization on both coasts had few women of color or working-class women as members.

⁵⁷ John Howard, "Place and Movement in Gay American History: A Case from the Post-World War II South," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories*, Brett Beemyn, ed., (New York/London: Routledge, 1997), 211-225, 211, 214.

lesbian feminists began to see connections between oppressions by witnessing the civil rights movement first hand. Mab Segrest for instance, was just teenager in Alabama in the mid-1960s not yet aware of her sexuality. She vividly remembered, though, when African American civil rights activists attempted to integrate the de facto white church she and her family attended in the summer of 1965. Her church stationed ushers at the front door to bar blacks. In her memoir, Segrest recalled how the event "shook me profoundly" because she could not reconcile Sunday School lessons of love and compassion with white church members locking out African Americans who wished to come in. It was not until the 1970s that Segrest 'came out,' but in reflecting on her identity, she understood that the same Southern culture that blocked the doors of her church to blacks also defined appropriate 'womanly' behavior, including heterosexuality, using race as a boundary. The racism that affected African Americans functioned with the sexism, and later the homophobia, she felt as a gay woman. Segrest's experience illustrates Howard's point and highlights how changing political currents in the latter half of the 1960s made the South a crucible for Southern lesbian feminists that came of age then.

A truly national movement for gay rights emerged when organizations formed in the South. Texas is representative of many Southern states regarding the early growth of a gay community and identity politics. Organized gay activism began in Texas in 1965 when Phil Johnson founded Circle of Friends to improve life for the Dallas gay and lesbian community. In August of that year, Bob Eddy began editing the first gay newspaper in Houston, *Albatross*, featuring bar advertisements, mostly for gay men's establishments.⁵⁹ Rita Wanstrom, a lesbian businesswoman in Houston, started

⁵⁸ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 24 - 25. Segrest was 16 when African American students from Tuskegee attempted to integrate her church.

⁵⁹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 353, n. 10.

presiding over wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples in Texas in 1968.⁶⁰ The next year, Paul Steward opened the Golden Nugget, a bar for gay black men in Houston.⁶¹ Accordingly, self-identified LGBT communities in the South started small and were frequently segmented because of gender or race, or both.

Although such activity indicated signs of life, Southern gay activism prior to 1969 was certainly still in its infancy and almost exclusively in urban centers. Most organizations, if locally organized and unaffiliated with national groups, were small; membership was more male than female, usually white, and prioritized social connection above a political agenda. This meant their engagement with the issue of homophobia took on a protective rather than confrontational posture. Most members of early Southern gay organizations were more interested in fostering a safe place to socialize than they were in overturning social conventions that kept them closeted. They lacked a deep awareness of racism's, sexism's, or even classism's impacts and what collective political impulses they felt did *not* address a wide variety of discrimination.

Years of slow but steady organizing by homophile groups, layered with over a decade of nonviolent civil rights struggle, the rise of militant Black Power, and a growing women's liberation movement provided the foundation for a turning point in the homophile movement. In the early morning of June 28, 1969, a routine police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City's Greenwich Village, turned into a riot. Resistance from bar patrons surprised law enforcement accustomed to harassing the LGBT community, but given the context of the late sixties, the LGBT community was poised for rebellion. ⁶² Gay Liberation burst into the arena of militant identity

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⁶⁰ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 173; 354, n. 28.

⁶¹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 386, n. 1.

⁶² David Carter, Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 129-256; Faderman, Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers, 194-195.

politics just as Black Power activism and women's liberation was gaining a foothold in the South.

This combination influenced the course of Southern lesbian-feminist activists in the seventies.

The Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention and the Challenge of Intersectionality

The Black Panthers' dominant presence on the national stage, increasingly raised women's consciousnesses, including lesbians', and the clear militant turn of gay rights by the summer of 1969 spurred some activists to contemplate a coalition aimed at radical and broad social change. On June 19, 1970, to coincide with Juneteenth, Panthers rallied at the Lincoln Memorial and held a press conference. This public intervention signaled the beginning of organizing for the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention (RPCC). Following the press conference, Howard University hosted a planning session.⁶³ The Convention was Eldridge Cleaver's brain child; Huey Newton reluctantly agreed to carry on with the planning even after Cleaver left the country.⁶⁴ Newton, along with east coast Panther leadership, began working with the Los Angeles Gay Liberation Front and other radical groups to organize a plenary session in Philadelphia.⁶⁵

In early September 1970, crowds of self-identified revolutionaries gathered at McGonigle Field House on the Temple University campus in Philadelphia. Most attendees were "Black and Brown," like the new chapter of the Young Lords that had just formed in Philadelphia, but white radicals also attended. They had "come, like so many fools for the revolution, to talk about a new world." According to the Panthers' newspaper, by the time the first session was over, 9,000 people

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⁶³ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Bernard Miles, "WE WANT A PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 16, (October 17, 1970), 2, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

⁶⁴ Brown, *A Taste of Power*, 281-285.

⁶⁵ Flyers, Box 1, [Folder 1:13 GLF-LA, Dances, 1970-1973], Gay Liberation Front, Los Angeles Records, Coll2012.031, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.; [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Bernard Miles, "WE WANT A PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 16, (October 17, 1970), 2, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Newton as Malcolm X's heir apparent, appearing before the crowd despite numerous death threats. 66
Barely a month had passed since Jonathan Jackson, brother of incarcerated Black Panther member
George Jackson, had been killed in a shootout in a California courthouse when he tried to free
George; Newton had delivered the eulogy at Jonathan Jackson's funeral. 67
But before Newton spoke
to the crowd gathered in Philadelphia, Michael Tabor of the New York 21 Panthers delivered a twohour address. He deconstructed the existing US constitution article by article and explained how the
framers designed it to exclude blacks, American "Indians, and all women, to say nothing of sexual
minorities." 68
With these words, Tabor had, if only symbolically, designated an inclusive revolution
to end oppression for the poor, people of color, those colonized, women, and the gay and lesbian
community - "sexual minorities."

The next day, conference attendees returned to begin drafting the promised constitution.

Activists met in churches designated for the event to begin the workshops to produce the document.

According to *The Black Panther*, "students led by the women, and the street bloods...were going to do the writing." Women writers indicated the Panthers' acceptance of women in philosophical positions in the revolution. Constitution drafting continued for three days and people gathered

⁶⁶ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "NOT TO BELIEVE IN A NEW WORLD AFTER PHILADELPHIA IS A DERELICTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 19-20, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

⁶⁷ Box 1 [Folder 1:6], "A REVOLUTIONARY FUNERAL, GLF-LA, Clippings, 1969-1987 (1 of 5), Gay Liberation Front, Los Angeles Records, Coll2012.031, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California. Jonathan Jackson was killed after he attempted to free his brother, George Jackson, Black Panther member and one of the Soledad Brothers, from state control. Jonathan took hostages in a courtroom where George appeared. The event ended in a shootout that killed Jonathan, the judge, and another prisoner, William Christmas.

⁶⁸ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "NOT TO BELIEVE IN A NEW WORLD AFTER PHILADELPHIA IS A DERELICTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 19-20, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

⁶⁹ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "NOT TO BELIEVE IN A NEW WORLD AFTER PHILADELPHIA IS A DERELICTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 19-20, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

outside the workshops to hear readings of each day's progress. The BPP newspaper described those working on the constitution as having "a religious moral passion that defies the technocratic rational tradition of the Enlightenment, an overarching and absurd hope in the transcendent nature of man in the material, existential world." Demonstrating again activists' turn away from Christian-motivated action, drafts of the constitution called for "a new religion of humanism to God in Man, to peace, to human survival." This was a different kind of political and social agitation than what had dominated the country, and especially the South, in the 1950s and 1960s.

With all these good intentions, however, underlying problems of executing a movement so wide-ranging proved difficult. RPCC organizers arranged for separate groups to convene including "Third World Peoples," "Women," "Lesbians," "Male Homosexuals," "College Students," "Welfare People," and "Street People," among others. These categories allowed no consideration for activists with intersecting identities and forced such individuals to prioritize one part of their identity over another. Which group should a Puerto Rican gay man join? What meeting would a black lesbian attend? Tabor's rhetoric further aggravated non-Panther attendees, women in particular because he called on the revolutionaries to make history in masculinist directions. He explained history in a binary: "life," "freedom," "man[hood]," "revolution and survival" on one side, "death," "oppression," "woman[hood]," "humiliation and nothingness" on the other. This implied that being female was on the losing side of history, not part of the revolution.

Marc Stein's analysis of the Philadelphia convention in his article, "Birthplace of the Nation," cited similar problems of a coalition based on identity politics. After the Stonewall Riot,

⁷⁰ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "NOT TO BELIEVE IN A NEW WORLD AFTER PHILADELPHIA IS A DERELICTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 19-20, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

⁷¹ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "NOT TO BELIEVE IN A NEW WORLD AFTER PHILADELPHIA IS A DERELICTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 19-20, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

gay and lesbian activists adopted a "discourse of minority rights," that echoed language black liberation activists were already employing. Prior to the Philadelphia convention, many gay organizations hesitated to work with the Panthers because of the Party's previous use of sexist and homophobic language. Newton's speech embracing an alliance with women's liberation and gay liberation was barely a month before the RPCC in Philadelphia and feminists and gay activists had had little time to process the BPP's attitude change. At the convention, Mother McKeever, a woman Panther, called the mostly white lesbians in attendance "men," and accused them of racism. Although the Gay Liberation Front was multi-racial, the vast majority of its members were men. At the convention, gay men supported abolishing the nuclear family, but black women, presumably straight, rejected the suggestion. 4

While convention workshops championed "Self-Determination for Women," and "Sexual Self-Determination," disagreements between different groups plagued the meeting. After two days of speeches, conferencing, and workshops, Panther organizers allowed time for open criticism of the event. Putting a positive spin on it, *The Black Panther* called this bit of the conference "*To Relieve Pain Speak Pain*," but as different people spoke, dissatisfaction percolated.⁷⁵

Building a broad political revolution through coalition was hard, as sociologist, Doug McAdam, and political scientist, Sidney Tarrow, point out. McAdam argues that social movements

⁷² Marc Stein, "Birthplace of a Nation: Imagining Lesbian and Gay Communities in Philadelphia, 1969-70," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves*, Brett Beemyn, ed., (New York/London: Routledge, 2003), 253 – 287, 262.

⁷³ Stein, "Birthplace of a Nation," 253 – 287, 272-273; Huey P. Newton August 15, 1970 speech, https://www.workers.org/2012/us/huey_p_newton_0524/, accessed 29 December, 2017. This reaction from gay organizations occurred even after Newton's August 15, 1970 speech in which he embraced a BPP coalition with women's liberation and gay liberation, saying "Whatever your personal opinions and your insecurities about homosexuality and the various liberation movements among homosexuals and women (and I speak of the homosexuals and women as oppressed groups), we should try to unite with them in a revolutionary fashion."

⁷⁴ Stein, "Birthplace of a Nation," 253 – 287, 272-273.

⁷⁵ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "NOT TO BELIEVE IN A NEW WORLD AFTER PHILADELPHIA IS A DERELICTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 19-20, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

are, in part, psychologically motivated, a factor that certainly affected activists at the RPCC. They are also dependent on the strength of the organizational ties of movement participants. The Black Panthers were, by late 1970, entering a period of turmoil and attrition, thus making their coalitions with other radical groups all the more tenuous. In *Power in Movement*, Tarrow argues that the kind of dramatically transformative action present in "cycles of protest" – exactly what the RPCC tried to achieve – is frequently less effective than incremental shifts "in political culture."

But activists committed to liberation for blacks, women, gay men, and lesbians moved forward with the second part of the RPCC set for the late fall of 1970. Gay Liberation Front (GLF) "in unity with The Black Panther Party and the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention," continued to work for a functioning coalition even after the frustrating plenary session in Philadelphia. The Los Angeles GLF hosted a number of "People's Funky Dance[s]," using all the proceeds to fund travel expenses for people attending the second part of the conference in Washington, D.C. on the Howard University campus. The Liberation Union and Citizens United for Political Prisoners in Los Angeles called a planning meeting for the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in Washington, D.C. According to the Panthers' periodical, "[s]pirit and consciousness prevailed and camaraderie ran high" at the planning meeting. Various groups organized into workshops and discussed their plans to contribute. Topics included environmentalism, education, revolutionary art, economic rights, law and political prisoners, military and police, "Third-World National Minorities," a Women's Liberation Front, and Gay Liberation

⁷⁶ Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, 1930-1970 (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

⁷⁷ Brown, A *Taste of Power*, 241-463. This was the beginning of Huey P. Newton's decline. In the early 1970s his drug use increased and he moved to consolidate his power, purging many from the Panther organization.

⁷⁸ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movement, Collective Action and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 184.

⁷⁹ Flyers, Box 1, [Folder 1:13 GLF-LA, Dances, 1970-1973], Gay Liberation Front, Los Angeles Records, Coll2012.031, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

Front.⁸⁰ These activists were dedicated to a broad-based movement for the liberation of all oppressed groups, not just some.

Organizers for the Washington, D.C. convention at Howard University expected it to produce "a new document for the people which will meet the needs of all the people" based partly on drafts created in Philadelphia. **I * The Black Panther** alerted readers that it would be held in November 1970, but exact dates changed throughout the fall. **E * Some student activists at Howard University, and the university itself were partly to blame. Many students at the historically black college rejected interracial alliances, and fees for building use on campus ran high. **B * The university's administration was especially nervous about Huey Newton bringing his political message to campus; Panther, Elaine Brown, even tapped her family's connections to Howard in negotiating the convention. **A Nevertheless, **The Black Panther** mentioned the D.C. convention in every issue between the plenary session in Philadelphia and November 27 through 29, when activists gathered for it. Stories of racist oppression, landlord ("slumlord") abuse, police ("pig") brutality, and welfare discrimination against people of color across the country filled the pages of the Panthers' newspaper in the fall of 1970.

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⁸⁰ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Black Panther Party, Los Angeles, California, "LOS ANGELES PLANNING SESSION FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 16, (October 17, 1970), 3, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

⁸¹ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Black Panther Party, Los Angeles, California, "LOS ANGELES PLANNING SESSION FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 16, (October 17, 1970), 3, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

⁸² [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] Bernard Miles, "WE WANT A PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 16, (October 17, 1970), 2; "MRS. JENKINS, LLOYD AND WILLIS McKINLEY ARE BUT ONE REASON WHY THE BLACK PANTHER CALLS FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 17, (October 24, 1970), 4, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis. This article discussed the "tentatively scheduled" RPCC in D.C.

⁸³ Stein, "Birthplace of the Nation," 253-273; Valk, Radical Sisters, 126-131, 140.

⁸⁴ Brown, A Taste of Power, 282-285.

Washington, D.C. was the Southern regional headquarters of the Party. The Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention in the nation's capital represented a new phase in revolutionary politics, an attempt to bring concurrent, yet parallel movements in coordination. Such politics had to move beyond single issues and individual identities and necessitated Southern participation. *The Black Panther's* coverage of the South equaled attention given to West Coast and northern cities as the Washington, D.C. convention approached. Women Panthers working at the Party's national level contributed stories to *The Black Panther* that covered Black Power activism in the South. There were numerous instances of racial discrimination in the South, hostility by whites against perceived black militancy, and even an attempt by COINTELPRO to quash Black Power agitation in the South. 86 Black Panther contributors of Southern stories cited each one as yet additional reasons for a constitutional convention, but they also reveal more women at higher ranks in the Party by 1970.

The Washington, D.C. portion of the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention was a purposeful action by the Panthers to engage the South in a national, even international, revolutionary movement, a movement incomplete without the South. Selection of the city was a deliberate turn towards the region. Philadelphia had been the northern part, "transformed for the second time [since the first Constitutional Convention in 1787]," and D.C. was the Southern. *The*

⁸⁵ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "Registration Form for PREPRESENTATIVES of INDIVIDUALS for the REVOLUTIONARY PEOPLE'S CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION November 27-29, 1970," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 21, (November 21, 1970), 6, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

[[]Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 1; Arkansas Black Liberation Front, "WELFARE AID: A NEED AND A MUST," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 6; Barbara Womack, Black Panther Party, Washington, D.C., "CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA BESIEGED BY BULLDOZERS AND PIGS," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 7; Candi Robinson, Ministry of Information, Black Panther Party, Oakland, California, "PIGS KIDNAP DALLAS COMMUNITY WORKER," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 10; N.C.C.F. New Orleans, Louisiana, "THE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE OF NEW ORLEANS LIVES ON," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 21, (November 21, 1970), 3; Fox & Randy, N.C.C.F. Winston-Salem, N.C., "WE FIND THE SLUMLORDS GUILTY OF GENOCIDE," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 21, (November 21, 1970), 6, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Black Panther referred to it as "the call of the South[, which] would be answered [by] the Revolutionary Constitutional Convention."87

Forces that led to the convening of the RPCC in D.C. - the juncture of Black Power, women's liberation, and gay liberation in the South – had been at work for several years, affecting Southern women with intersecting identities. Some Southern women experienced the shifting political winds of Black Power, specifically the Black Arts Movement since the early 1960s. In the summer of 1961, after her high school graduation, Pat Cooks of Houston, moved to Los Angeles, California, where one of her older sisters lived; she was only seventeen. There she met Ed Bullins, an aspiring writer, nine years her senior. Their early correspondence indicated his political influence on her and her own budding talent as a writer. Bullins encouraged her writing and they discussed race relations, black pride, and American identity. The two married June 26, 1962, and by December 1963, had moved to the San Francisco Bay Area where Bullins began writing plays. The trajectory of Pat Cooks's life from the early 1960s followed the rise of the Black Power movement on the West Coast. Her own artistic pursuits and identity would soon be part of a growing lesbian feminist awakening in the South as Southern lesbian activists engaged in a broad social movement in the 1970s to address the

⁸⁷ [Box 1, 1967 - 1971] "NOT TO BELIEVE IN A NEW WORLD AFTER PHILADELPHIA IS A DERELICTION OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT," *The Black Panther*, Vol. 5, No. 13, (September 26, 1970), 19-20, Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

⁸⁸ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Graduation Program, May 29, 1961, MC 861, Folder 1.17; Ed Bullins Letter, March 6, 1962. MC 861, Folder 2.12; Ed Bullins Letter, March 9, 1962. MC 861, Folder 2.12; Family History Notes, no date. MC 861, Folder 1.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁸⁹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Pat Parker Letter to parents, July 16, 1961. MC 861, Folder 2.22; Ed Bullins Letter, March 9, 1962. MC 861, Folder 2.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁹⁰ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Ed Bullins Letters, December 30, 1963; September 4, 1965. MC 861, Folder 2.12.; Decree of Annulment, January 14, 1966. MC 861, Folder 1.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.;

http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/deepLink?_collection=oasis&uniqueId=sch01533 accessed 12 July, 2017; Alexis De Veaux, Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004), 166-167.

complexity of oppressions for individuals of intersecting identities – the same kind of movement that the Panthers attempted to organize in Washington, D.C. in November 1970, which twenty-six-year old Pat attended.⁹¹

By then, Pat Cooks was Pat Parker, a black feminist poet. Her Southern roots, ties to the Black Power movement, and the early success of her literary career exemplify the importance of timing, the sui generis nature of the seventies as a decade. Southern lesbian feminism was the convergence of several important shifts that had occurred on the cusp of 1970: civil rights activists' move toward militancy, the rise of a feminist consciousness and women's movement in and out of the South, the Stonewall Riot, and the Panthers' attempt at the RPCC to mobilize an inclusive revolutionary movement. Following Pat Parker through the 1970s gives insight into the development of Southern lesbian feminism.

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⁹¹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker, Speech, [1980]. MC 861, Folder 13.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

CHAPTER III

"CREAT[ING] A TURMOIL": THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTHERN LESBIAN FEMINISM, 1970 - 1976

Patricia Cooks's union to Ed Bullins was tumultuous. His writing and activism often kept them separated; when they were together, they fought frequently; Bullins was jealous, possessive, and, at times, physically abusive. Their volatile relationship also contributed to other periods of separation. During these times, Pat gained more self-confidence, attending college off and on and deciding to manage her own earnings in the marriage. Patricia wrote to a high school friend to explain that she had begun to feel trapped in the second year of their marriage; she and Ed "disagree[d] as to the responsibilities of a man and woman and the obligations expected from each other." Though still legally married in the fall of 1965, Bullins

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¹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Ed Bullins Letter, December 30, 1963; January 1, 196[4]; January 2, 1964; June 4, [1964]; December 28, 1965; Pat Parker Letter, March 21, 1967. MC 861, Folder 2.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. In 1967, Parker responded to Bullins's apologetic letter in which he professed his love for her again and lamented ruining their marriage. Her peace with their relationship and her own growing self-confidence are evident. She also referred to the abuse she endured in their marriage by comparing it to her relationship with Bob Parker: "With Bob, I've found the security that I need, and I don't have to worry about losing my teeth. I can go out until 2 in the morning and not report in detail my actions."

² Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998 Ed Bullins Letters, December 30, 1963; January 1, 196[4]; January 2, 1964; June 4, [1964], [July 1964]. MC 861, Folder 2.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. In late 1963, early 1964, Bullins was away from San Francisco working on publications. He often wrote Pat multiple times a day, wondered if she was flirting with other men, and half-jokingly, half-angrily, said she was not writing him enough letters. In January 1964, he threatened to send her a "nasty letter" the next day if he did not receive anything from her and signed off "YOU KNOW HOW NASTY I CAN BE!" He also chided Parker about being overweight and threatened to divorce her if she did not write (2 January, 1964). By mid-1964, Pat had left Bullins twice as a result of their fighting; as he put it she "left...instead of staying like a woman and trying to straighten [things] out." He even questioned her womanhood again, "I don't think that you have acted like a woman in many instances..." (June 4, 1964). Later the same year he wrote Pat with instructions that she "[b]egin fixing [her]self up, and stop going around like a hag."

³ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Ed Bullins letter, June 4, [1964]; Pat Parker Letter, August 18, 1966. MC 861, Folder. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁴ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker Letter to Carolyn Burney, March 31, 1967. MC 861, Folder 2.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

admitted that he had driven her away, been unable to express his feeling of love toward her, and been unfaithful; by then Pat was seeing a white man, another writer, Robert F. Parker. Pat and Ed's marriage was annulled in January, 1966 on account of Bullins's existing marriage to another woman in Philadelphia. An equally unsatisfying marriage to Robert followed, but she kept the name Pat Parker, even after their divorce was final in March 1971. Bullins and Pat Parker, however, stayed in contact, corresponding about his burgeoning career as a playwright in the Black Arts Movement, reading Frantz Fanon, working with Eldridge Cleaver, and Black Power activism generally. Both joined the Black Panther Party after it began in October 1966. Ed Bullins even became the Panthers' Minister of Culture for a time. Pat Parker wrote to her parents in Houston about the Panthers, enclosing an article about the party for them to read. On the political and social ferment of the late sixties, an example of a

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⁵ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Ed Bullins Letter, September 7, 1965. MC 861, Folder 2.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Decree of Annulment, January 14, 1966; Francis Kelly Letter, November 3, 1965. MC 861, Folder 1.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁷ Saralyn Chesnut and Amanda C. Gable, "'Women Ran It': Charis Book and More and Atlanta's Lesbian Feminist Community, 1971-1981," in *Carryin' On in the Lesbian and Gay South*, ed. John Howard. (New York/London: New York University Press, 1997), 250, 249; [Box 11] Pokey [Anderson], "JUDY GRAHN," *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1975), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Court Papers of Divorce, March 19, 1971. MC 861, Folder 1.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁸ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Ed Bullins Letters, July 9, 1966; July 15, 1966; August 22, 1966; Pat Parker Letter, August 4, 1966; Pat Parker Letter, August 18, 1966; Pat Parker Letter, March 22, 1967. MC 861, Folder. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. http://www.blackpast.org/aah/bullins-ed-1935 accessed 12 July, 2017. Bullins was one of the founders of Black Arts West. He was working with fellow Black Arts Movement activist LeRoi Jones on an Afro-American Art Festival in Newark, New Jersey, The *Negro Digest* had published several of his pieces by mid-1966, and he was touring the country giving speeches on Black Theater. He even wanted to go visit Pat Parker's parents when he went through Houston.

⁹ http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/deepLink?_collection=oasis&uniqueId=sch01533 accessed 12 July, 2017; De Veaux, Warrior Poet, 166-167.

¹⁰ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Pat Parker Letter to Mother and Daddy, November 27, 1966. MC 861, Folder 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

politically conscious Southern woman coming of age when Black Power, radical feminism, and gay liberation converged. Her intersecting identities affected how she navigated as an activist.

By the late sixties, her artistic energies were beginning to shift from the Black Arts

Movement to feminism. She decided to go back to school in 1967 for a degree in sociology.
When the first feminist bookstore in Oakland California, A Woman's Place, opened in 1969,

Parker began working with the Women's Press Collective that shared space with the bookstore.

She became friends with Judy Grahn, founder of the Women's Press Collective, which published Parker's work in subsequent years, including her first book collection of poetry, *Child of Myself*, in 1972.
Pat Parker was also coming to grips with her sexuality as a lesbian in the late 1960s.
During the early 1970s, while Parker did not abandon her Black Power principles, she wrote more poetry and did readings, mostly in northern California, making a name for herself at, for example, the Full Moon Coffee House, for events more geared toward feminist and/or lesbian politics, than Black Power.
This transition in Pat Parker's life, her ties to the South and Black Power, and the rise of women's presses in the early 1970s is representative of a larger trend of

¹¹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Pat Parker Letter, August 18, 1966. MC 861, Folder. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹² Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 250, 249; [Box 11] Pokey [Anderson], "JUDY GRAHN," *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1975), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Pat Parker, *Child of Myself*, (California: Women's Press Collective, 1972). Don Kelly Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University.

Tonya Gipson, "Feminist lesbian poet Pat Parker to give reading," *Daily 49er*, (October 17, 1979), Pat Parker, 1944-1989, ONE Subject Files Collection, Coll2012-001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California; Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Letter to Audre Lorde, July 25, 1975. MC 861, Folder 5.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. According to this letter Parker came out to her mother in May of 1975 when she returned to Houston. She had "been building up for this moment for 8 years."

¹⁴ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, Scrapbook 1971, 1973-1974. MC 861, Folder 12.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Parker read at benefits for women in prison, women's coffeehouses, International Women's Day celebrations, and colleges. She was often listed as a "Black Feminist Lesbian Poet" or reading her "Feminist Lesbian Poetry." Parker performed at Full Moon on June 18, 1974, just a few months before Olivia Records' artists took the stage there.

Southern lesbian feminists embracing an alternative politics that aligned with their own subjectivities.

The 1970s' perfect storm of events offer an excellent opportunity for evaluating the dialogue about and reflection on identity in Southern feminisms. During the early 1970s, identity politics in the United States was evolving quickly. The period of major civil rights legislative landmarks, 1954 to 1968, played out largely in the South, as did the "radicalization" of some activists that gave rise to the Black Power movement.¹⁷ Radical feminism and a militant push for gay liberation crescendoed in the 1960s. Moving into the seventies, American feminism enjoyed some legal and judicial victories, but more important to the maturation of feminist identities and practices was the explosion of women-run presses.¹⁹ Offset type replaced linotype, which made printing easier; mimeograph machines made it much cheaper. There were the most newsletters, magazines, newspapers, journals, and periodicals from women's organizations during those years.²⁰ The proliferation of feminist print culture allowed women in the South to see what feminists and other activists outside the South were talking about and created a space for these women to participate in local, regional, and national conversations about what feminist theory and practice should look like. Lesbians in the South witnessed these changes in the political climate and waded into a revolutionary discourse at the beginning of the decade. Lesbian feminism and feminism in the South in the 1970s rose simultaneously, but not

¹⁷ Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 happened in quick succession. Stokely Carmichael coined the phrase "Black Power" in 1966.

¹⁹ Title IX went into effect in the summer of 1972 and the Supreme Court ruled on *Roe v. Wade* the following January. ²⁰ Beins, *Liberation in Print*, 6-8.

necessarily together, much the same way Black Power, the women's movement, and gay liberation had in the late 1960s.

Southernness affected the way feminists, especially lesbian feminists from the South, conceived of feminism in theory and practice because it added another complexity to their identities. The history of race relations in the South, race relations' connection to prescribed gender roles that the power of evangelical Protestantism reinforced in Southern culture, were all pieces of Southern identity that lesbian feminists brought to bear as they articulated their political philosophies. Cultural forces in the Northeast, Midwest, or West Coast were not so fraught with these particular legacies. As gay women, Southern lesbians were rejecting Southern notions of womanhood that were necessarily tied to race. For them, taking on one aspect of Southern social constructions that oppressed one part of their identity meant attacking multiple aspects of Southern social constructions, a political stance with the promise to liberate all oppressed people. Music as cultural production played a significant role in Southern lesbian feminists' activism, more so than it did for lesbian feminists from other geographies. Southern Lesbian feminists were leaders in womyn's music; their cultural contributions to it were original and uniquely Southern. They were not simply following in the footsteps of their Northern or West Coast sisters. Southern lesbian feminism tended toward the revolutionary by promoting an inclusive politics reminiscent of late 1960s radicalism, what the RPCC had attempted in 1970. It was dedicated to transforming society by fighting for racial justice, social justice, gender equality, and sexual freedom.

This chapter explores the rise of radical Southern lesbian feminism from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s by examining some lesbian feminist organizations that emerged in former slaveholding states with a history of segregation. As I argued in the introduction, the dynamics

in these former slaveholding states continued to affect the way Southern lesbian feminists conceptualized the relationship between constructions of race, gender, and sexuality, which influenced how Southern lesbian feminists formulated their political philosophies. It caused them to develop a political practice that was deeply personal and that addressed multiple forms of oppression by seeking to transform society at a cultural level. The growth of these lesbian feminist organizations coincided with the decline of major Black Power figures, particularly the Black Panthers, at the national level, but Southern lesbian feminists maintained the radical politics Panthers had articulated at the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention.

First, I discuss Southern lesbians' participation in early radical feminist organizing. From there I examine Florynce Kennedy's key role as a bridge between Black Power and radical feminism in the South, because she was a leading proponent of building a broad-based social movement. As a black woman from Missouri who was involved in the early women's movement and early Black Power organizing, she conceived of a bigger cause that was antisexist, anti-racist, and class conscious. Her radical political tendencies encouraged her to see the potential for further coalition with the gay rights movement. Kennedy traveled the country giving speeches in the early and mid-seventies. Her identity and message appealed to younger Southern lesbian feminists searching for a political voice that addressed their intersecting identities. After that I focus on the development of a handful of lesbian feminist organizations in North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas. Then I introduce the growth of Southern Lesbian Feminist musical culture: radio programs, musicians, and production collectives and companies. The chapter concludes with the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference of May 1975, which

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²¹ Randolph, Florynce "Flo" Kennedy, 10, 6.

illustrates the development of a Southern lesbian feminist political philosophy that championed many of the same causes of the Black Power movement and women's liberation. Southern lesbian feminism bloomed between 1970 and 1975; it mirrored the political vision of Kennedy's black feminism.

Southern Lesbian Involvement in Early Radical Feminism

The concomitant growth of liberal feminism, radical feminism, and lesbian feminism that occurred in the South reflected a similar phenomenon in the national women's movement, in which Southerners were involved. Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), along with black theologian and activist Pauli Murray, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) attorney Aileen Hernandez, Caroline Davis of the United Auto Workers, and Sister Joel Read, among others, organized the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966.²² Florynce Kennedy quickly became involved with the NOW's original New York chapter, as did white radical, Ti-Grace Atkinson of Louisiana.²³ By 1968, Atkinson was president of the New York chapter. Both women pressured NOW to take on a broader range of issues, such as racism and classism.²⁴ Other, more radical women's organizations quickly emerged in the late 1960s. The 1968 New York Radical Women's theatrical protest outside the Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey garnered publicity for the expanding radical feminist movement, despite the organization's short lifespan.²⁵ Radical feminists in the northeast had split into three factions by the end of January 1969 – the Redstockings, The Feminists, and

²² Rosen, The World Split Open, 69, 78-89, 126-127.

²³ Randolph, Florynce "Flo" Kennedy, 2, 7; Karla Jay, Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 37.

²⁴ Randolph, *Florynce "Flo" Kennedy*, 7, 112, 116-118, 137-138.

²⁵ Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, 36.

Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell (WITCH).²⁶ Bread and Roses, a socialist women's liberation organization from Cambridge, Massachusetts, came out of a women's discussion group within the Left in 1969, as well.²⁷

Rita Mae Brown, a white, self-identified Southerner, was directly involved with these early radical feminist organizations that proved influential in the women's movement. Brown was raised in Florida from the age of eleven. She attended college there, but officials at the University of Florida kicked her out of school because of her activism in the civil rights movement.²⁸ By 1969, Brown was in graduate school at New York University and frequented meetings of the Redstockings. A fellow Redstockings member at the time, Karla Jay, remembered that Brown's Southern accent, perhaps put on, was part of her charm. She traded on her Southern identity for effect when she spoke.³⁰

Brown exposed the hypocrisy of the Redstockings. They claimed to speak as political theorists of radical feminism, but they ignored lesbians. Marxism heavily influenced their founding manifesto – Redstockings interpreted women as an oppressed class. When Redstockings founders unveiled the manifesto at a meeting, Rita Mae Brown immediately challenged them, and in a thick drawl, demanded to know why the organization had not articulated a position on lesbians who were, she knew, so vital to the movement. Indeed, she called out the heterosexual women of Redstockings, accusing them of actually oppressing

²⁶ Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, 36-37. Jay explained the characteristics of each organization. WITCH opted for protesting in a funny or theatrical way to attract media attention, much like the Miss America Pageant had been. Robin Morgan, Cynthia Funk, Peggy Dobbins, and Florika, led WITCH. Ti-Grace Atkinson was the face of The Feminists. The Redstockings were the political philosophy wing of the women's movement.

²⁷ "Guide to the Movement," *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (Spring 1970), 60-62, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086.

²⁸ Rita Mae Brown, *Rita Will: Memoir of a Literary Rabble-Rouser* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997), 1-2, 182-183.

³⁰ Jay, Tales of the Lavender Menace, 36-37, 43-44.

lesbians.³¹ This exchange between Brown and the Redstockings illustrates an inability on the part of radical feminist organizations in the northeast to understand the complexities of intersecting identities. White radical feminists in the Redstockings had not considered how different forms of oppression functioned in the lives of women with intersecting identities, in this case, how homophobia and sexism affected lesbians. The Redstockings, like many early white radical feminist organizations, flattened interpretations of oppressions into one – sexism, and sought a one-size-fits-all praxis of Marxism to understand and fight it.³² Brown's questions pushed radical feminists to consider the matrix and consequences of intersections of identities at a time when singularly focused practices in their activism had yielded some successes. Her actions within the Redstockings demonstrate how early feminist activists struggled with identity politics, often theorizing about single identities or single solutions.

On May 1, 1970, Brown participated in another activity that evinced the growing pains of lesbian feminism and feminism – the Lavender Menace action at the Second Congress to Unite Women in New York City. NOW founder Betty Friedan and other more conservative elements in the organization were hostile to lesbians in the early seventies. Friedan feared that "homosexual issues" would distract from the true work of the women's movement and referred to them as the "Lavender Menace." Ti-Grace Atkinson had already broken with NOW in October 1969, in part, because of her embrace of lesbianism as a key political component of the women's revolution.³³ In November of 1969, for the First Congress to Unite Women, NOW

³¹ Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, 44-45.

³² Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 79-116. Breines made this argument about the Boston socialist feminist organization, Bread and Roses.

³³ Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, 138. Atkinson was not a lesbian herself, but she supported political lesbianism as an alternative to celibacy for feminists.

purposely left off the New York chapter of Daughters of Bilitis from its list of sponsors. Brown resigned her NOW position in protest.³⁴ The situation was ripe for a reaction from lesbian feminists. The Gay Liberation Front had developed following the Stonewall Riot and its members voiced a radical message with which many lesbians agreed. However, lesbians confronted sexism in the organization. Reflecting on her burned bridges with both Redstockings and NOW, Brown proposed a lesbian protest against the Second Congress to Unite Women.³⁵

Brown was not the only lesbian feminist to break from NOW. Many others were incensed by the fact that the organization failed to schedule any lesbian speakers for the Second Congress to Unite Women. Other emerging lesbian feminists, such as Karla Jay, Artemis March, Lois Hart, Cynthia Funk, and Ellen Shumsky, began meeting regularly with Brown to prepare for some sort of action.³⁶ They wanted the women's movement to accept and affirm lesbian identities and lesbian efforts.³⁷ The group eventually drafted its own document in 1970, another manifesto, "The Woman-Identified Woman."³⁸ It became the foundational writing for their new organization, the Radicalesbians. After several months of planning, studying floor plans and electrical wiring, and with the help of approximately forty women, Brown, Jay, and the others executed their protest action at the opening of the Second Congress to Unite Women.³⁹ As the event kicked off at 7p.m., close to three hundred women waited to hear the first speaker. One Radicalesbian cut the microphone while others switched off the lights. In the moment of stunned

³⁴ Jay, Tales of the Lavender Menace, 138.

³⁵ Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, 140; Kate Millett, "Libbies, Smithies, Vassarites," *Change* 2, No. 5 (September – October 1970): 42-50.

³⁶ Karla Jay, Tales of the Lavender Menace: A Memoir of Liberation, (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 142-145.

³⁷ Kate Millett, "Libbies, Smithies, Vassarites," *Change* 2, No. 5 (September – October 1970): 42-50.

³⁸ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: KNOW, INC., 1970, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc wlmms01011/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

³⁹ Rosen, The World Split Open, xxiii, 167 - 168.

and silent darkness, other Radicalesbians rushed down the aisles. When the lights came back on, Radicalesbians, in their light purple shirts that read "LAVENDER MENACE," were scattered around the auditorium. Jay, planted in the audience, jumped up and yelled that she was tired of staying in the closet; then she unbuttoned her shirt to reveal the Lavender Menace t-shirt. Rita Mae Brown then asked the audience who wanted to join them. Other Radicalesbians chimed in, as did members of the audience. Sensing they had the sympathies of enough women in the room, Radicalesbians passed out mimeographed copies of "The Woman-Identified Woman."

Although Rita Mae Brown, a Southerner, had played an important role in founding the Radicalesbians and articulating their lesbian feminist politics in the spring of 1970, "The Woman-Identified Woman" still only spoke to one intersection of identities –gay woman. Their focus was on sexism. Radicalesbians characterized the oppression women felt in psychological terms: society constructed gender roles, and women were socialized to perform constructed notions of femininity, which effectively separated them from their own personhood and put their desires in conflict with society's prescription for women. This psychological interpretation of woman's oppression is consistent with sociologist Doug McAdam's contention that social movements are psychologically motivated. The development of Southern lesbian feminism into the 1970s shows continuity with Radicalesbians' views on gender construction,

⁴⁰ Jay, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, 142-145; Rosen, *The World Split Open*, xxiii, 167 – 168; Millett, "Libbies, Smithies, Vassarites," 42-50.

⁴¹ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: KNOW, INC, 1970, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01011/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁴² Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: KNOW, INC, 1970, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01011/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁴³ Doug McAdam, Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970.

but goes further to include the psychological impact of Southern racism and race relations on lesbians in the South.

This notion of male and female roles had larger implications for Radicalesbians and for lesbians generally, because they were gay women. Their gender identity and sexual orientation complicated the way they experienced and interacted with the patriarchy. They argued that society reacted differently to a woman who assumed some "masculine traits" than it did to a man doing "feminine" things (admiring of a tomboy, sickened by a "sissy boy"). Both reactions indicated a society contemptuous of anyone in a woman's role. According to the Radicalesbians, society called this "femininity" and said any "woman who belongs to no man is to be invisible, pathetic, inauthentic, unreal."44 Women, lesbians particularly, internalized prescribed gender roles and thus contempt for woman-ness, which, argued the Radicalesbians, led women into selfhatred. 45 Patriarchy, then, was systemic, creating "rigid sex roles" that defined lesbianism and male homosexuality as an unacceptable "category of behavior." These interdependent definitions functioned as mechanisms of a patriarchal system, something women became subconsciously complicit in when they accepted domestic roles and heterosexuality. Because performing heterosexuality became a way for women to protect themselves within a patriarchal system, it had a dividing effect on a movement that included all women.⁴⁶ Male supremacy was at the root of women's oppression, especially for lesbians.

⁴⁴ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 3,

http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01011/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁴⁵ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 2,

http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01011/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁴⁶ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 1-2,

http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc wlmms01011/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

This analysis of the psychology of systemic oppression was present in the speeches of Black Power icon, Malcolm X, both before and after his split with the Nation of Islam. In May of 1962, speaking at a funeral, Malcolm X asked the black audience, "Who taught you to hate yourself from the top of your head to the soles of your feet? Who taught you to hate your own kind? Who taught you to hate the race that you belong to so much so that you don't want to be around each other?"48 He discussed the same theme of blacks hating their identity in a speech given just before his death, in 1965. Malcolm X argued that society projected a negative image of Africa, thus imposing a negative connotation on blackness. This socialization led to selfhatred among African Americans: "...you and I began to hate [Africa]...In hating Africa and in hating the Africans, we ended up hating ourselves, without even realizing it." According to Malcolm X, this "brainwash[ing]" was perpetrated by "the white man" who "very skillfully make[s] you and me hate our African identity."49 White colonialism was at the root of blacks' oppression. Just as men used constructions of lesbianism as a means of social control over women, whites used constructions of blackness as a means of social control over African Americans.⁵⁰

Despite the parallel interpretations of racism and sexism by Black Power and the Radicalesbians, respectively, membership in the latter was ultimately tied to sexuality. This might be one explanation for members' neglect of the topic of race in "The Woman Identified

⁴⁸ Malcolm X, "Who Taught You to Hate Yourself," (May 22, 1962) https://genius.com/Malcolm-x-who-taught-youto-hate-yourself-annotated, accessed 14 July, 2017.

⁴⁹ Malcolm X, "Confronting White Oppression," (February 14, 1965) http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/malcolm_x-oppression.html, accessed 14 July, 2017; Archie C. Epps, "The Rhetoric of Malcolm X," *Harvard Review*, No. 3 (Winter 1993): 71.

⁵⁰ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 2, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01011/, accessed 19 November, 2014; Malcolm X, "Confronting White Oppression," (February 14, 1965) http://www.speeches-usa.com/Transcripts/malcolm_x-oppression.html, accessed 14 July, 2017; Epps, "The Rhetoric of Malcolm X," 71.

Woman." It contained nothing about race or racial oppression. For them, lesbians represented "the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion." So, in the minds of Radicalesbians, they spoke for *all* women: heterosexual, and those of color, as well as queer women. In this way, the Radicalesbians flattened their interpretations of the problem and the solution to oppression similarly to the Redstockings. Here, the anger expressed by Radicalesbians is in line with the ire and resentment found in other radical groups. Claiming to speak for all women translated to Radicalesbians' ability to liberate not just lesbians, but others. This line of thinking reveals their political conception of sexuality. A lesbian, because she was, as a person, most in touch with her inner self and responding to her internal need to claim personhood, she would "be a more complete and freer human being than society...cares to allow her." While "The Woman-Identified Woman" echoed the systemic interpretations of some Black Power rhetoric, the sweeping assertions of the Radicalesbians about liberating society were incomplete. Their understanding of interlocking oppressions did not extend to race or propose a solution for ending racism, but they were an ideological bridge to the formulation of Southern lesbian feminism.

After graduate school and helping Radicalesbians get off the ground, Rita Mae Brown headed South from New York City to Washington, D.C., still searching for a more complete lesbian-feminist praxis.⁶⁴ Scholar Anne Valk argued that Washington, D.C.'s majority black population facilitated a political climate that encouraged interracial coalitions among activists and shaped their political thought such that even white activists were more cognizant of classism

⁵⁷ Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," 1,

http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc wlmms01011/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁶⁴ Rita Mae Brown, Rita Will, 267.

and racial discrimination, for example.⁶⁵ I argue that Washington, D.C., as a Southern place and site of radical activism, contributed to how Southern lesbian feminism developed. A healthy and growing community of lesbian feminists, many of them white Southerners, had participated in the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention at Howard University in late November 1970.⁶⁶ For example, Charlotte Bunch, born in North Carolina, had, by 1971, earned a degree from Duke University and settled in Washington, D.C.⁶⁷ Brown, Charlotte Bunch, Ginny Berson, and a handful of other women formed the Furies in the summer of 1971. It was a radical lesbian feminist organization, its name alluding to the same anger the Radicalesbians expressed.⁶⁸ The Furies spelled out a system of interlocking oppressions, but included more identities in their analysis.

Brown brought the politics of radical feminism and gay liberation from her time in New York City while black nationalism had inspired and influenced Bunch and Berson in Washington, D.C. In January 1972, the Furies collective began publishing its own periodical, *The Furies Lesbian/Feminist Monthly*. Its tone mirrored the anger Black Power groups, Puerto Rican nationalist groups, and the Radicalesbians exhibited. The Furies were one of the earliest lesbian-feminist publications to take notice of Pat Parker as a rising star, printing excerpts and a review of *Child of Myself*; it sparked readership of Parker's work among lesbians around the country. The Furies were "the 'Angry Ones,' the avengers of matricide." They called

⁶⁵ Anne Valk, "Separatism and Sisterhood: Race, Sex, and Women's Activism in Washington, D.C., 1963-1980" (Doctoral Dissertation, Duke University, 1996), 487.

⁶⁶ Valk, Radical Sisters, 126-131, 140.

⁶⁷ Charlotte Bunch Papers, 1967-1985. 85-M30--85-M66; T-170. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~sch00220 accessed 3 March, 2017.

⁶⁸ Rita Mae Brown, Rita Will, 267.

⁶⁹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998, P.J. Schimmel Letter to the Furies, August 1972; Marie Deyoe Letter to the Furies, July 13, 1972. MC 861, Folder 4.5. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

themselves and their periodical *The Furies* "because we are angry…because we are oppressed by male supremacy. We have been fucked over all our lives by a system which is based on the domination of men over women." They were "working to change this system which has kept us separate and powerless for so long." The Furies saw themselves as acting on behalf of "every woman who has ever been raped, physically, economically, psychologically." Like other revolutionary groups discussed here, the Furies identified their oppression as part of "a system which is based on the domination of men over women," and that "has further divided us by class, race, and nationality." By including classism, racism, and national identities to emphasize the scope of interdependent oppressions, the Furies' inaugural statement of position broadened their politics, whereas the Radicalesbians' "The Woman-Identified Woman," tended to focus on sexuality.

Just as Malcolm X and the Radicalesbians had proposed original sources for the system of oppressions, white colonialism and male supremacy, respectively, so too did the Furies identify an original source of oppression. They clearly spelled out their philosophy: "[t]he base of our ideological thought is: Sexism is the root of all other oppressions, and Lesbian and woman oppression will not end by smashing capitalism, racism, and imperialism." Sexism, however, set other oppressions in motion and "divided us by class, race, and nationality." Furies member Ginny Berson envisioned a larger movement to which the Furies would "make important"

⁷⁰ Ginny Berson, *The FURIES Lesbian/Feminist Monthly*, Vol. 1., (January 1972), 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁷¹ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁷² Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁷⁶ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁷⁷ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

contributions" and "destroy sexism." In her article, "Such a Nice Girl," fellow Fury, Sharon Deevey, faulted the existing women's movement for succumbing to "male propaganda" that attributed intellectual and political activity to men and "feelings" to women. The straight women's feminist movement, Furies believed, was floundering because its participants had "tried to build a politics based only on feelings," and thus reflected the idea that "women should embrace weakness."⁷⁹ Heterosexual women betrayed the power of the sisterhood when they allowed themselves to be divided by homophobia – a tool of the patriarchy. 80 The Furies moved beyond a strictly psychological interpretation of how to dismantle systemic oppression; Berson defined lesbianism as a political action. She argued that lesbian identity was "not a matter of sexual preference, but rather one of political choice which every woman must make if she is to become woman-identified and thereby end male supremacy."81 The Furies were trying to "develop a common politics" in which lesbianism was a weapon to fight patriarchy by perhaps denying a woman's heterosexual desires.⁸² As Deevey's coming out story explained, acknowledging her lesbian identity was difficult because she wanted to keep her "heterosexual privileges." She echoed Berson's understanding of constructed sexualities as machinations of the system: "heterosexuality [functioned] as an institution."83

Deevey's contention that heterosexual intercourse necessarily violated a woman underscores the Furies' belief that lesbianism was a political choice, as does her own stark

⁷⁸ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁷⁹ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁸⁰ Deevey, "Such A Nice Girl...," 2, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁸¹ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁸² Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁸³ Deevey, "Such A Nice Girl...," 2, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

transition into "becoming a dyke," symbolically cutting her hair as a way to sever the connection to her oppressed past. His engagement with self-identity, gender roles, systemic oppression, and the relationship between identity and political practice and culture, which both the Radicalesbians and the Furies embraced, continued to be a feature of Southern lesbian feminism as the decade progressed. Southern culture defined gender roles strictly and tied those roles to race, so this aspect of analysis was pronounced among Southern lesbian feminists. Rita Mae Brown's foray into civil rights activism in the South, her journey north to participate in radical feminism, then relocation to Washington, D.C., where she met other Southern lesbians, illustrates how simultaneous liberation struggles interacted in the lives of lesbian activists. Southern lesbian feminist organizations participated in the development of a political praxis through the seventies that identified systems of oppression and considered multiple identities, not just single issues.

Lesbian identity was the foundation of the Furies' political thought, but they shared a Marxist class analysis with the Black Panthers even when, as white women with white privilege, they acknowledged their own struggles to effectively combat racism. The Furies spoke directly to issues of class and discussed race and other oppressions more than the Radicalesbians. They included pieces about race and class in their premiere publication of *The FURIES*Lesbian/Feminist Monthly, but much of their discussion of race appeared in lists of oppressions: classism, national chauvinism, racism, imperialism. The Furies tended to see race as conflated with class. They could admit the problems with their own race or class privilege, but did not

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⁸⁴ Deevey, "Such A Nice Girl...," 2, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

delve too deeply into the manifestations of racism. For them, it was another form of oppression that needed to end.⁹³

Sharon Deevey revealed when she worked in a straight white women's organization before joining the Furies, she had noticed how they "were confused by guilt feelings about black, poor, and third world women," but were at a loss as to addressing the problems of race and class. Even as a Fury, however, Deevey confessed that she "ha[d] hardly begun to deal with race." Interestingly, Deevey employs a metaphor reminiscent of W.E.B. Du Bois's "double consciousness" to explain her experience living straight. She claimed that, "[a]s a heterosexual I always had to double-think." Deevey argued that all men enjoy male privilege just as Du Bois argued that all whites enjoy race privilege. This sort of psychological turmoil, which Radicalesbians also described - lesbians living in a heterosexist world - sounds eerily similar to Du Bois's words nearly seven decades earlier.

The Furies' explanation of class offered more detail, at times using a comparison of racism and homophobia to illuminate their arguments. They were a "collective" of lesbians from lower, middle, and upper-middle class backgrounds who "happened to be" white. They described straight women's fear of and contempt for lesbians as "similar to the feelings middle

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http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁹³ The FURIES Lesbian/Feminist Monthly, Vol. 1. (January 1972), 1-4, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁹⁴ Sharon Deevey, "Such A Nice Girl...," *The FURIES Lesbian/Feminist Monthly*, Vol. 1., (January 1972), 2,

Deevey, "Such A Nice Girl...," 2, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19

November, 2014; W.E.B. Du Bois, W.E.B. The Souls of Black Folk. (New York: Dover Publications, 1994), 2. Du Bois's explanation of the double-consciousness is as follows: For a "Negro" in the US, he lives in "a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other [white] world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."

class whites have towards Blacks or low class people." While the Radicalesbians discussed the conditioning that occurred in women's minds because of a patriarchal society, the Furies argued that classism and racism were linked, both "the result of our socialization." Even though The Furies believed sexism lay at the heart of their oppression, they devoted much of their first issue to pointing out the problems of "capitalism, racism, and imperialism" because they were connected methods of subjugation. Every culture had rejected them, which forced lesbians to form their culture. For this reason, lesbians "ha[d] the most to gain by ending race, class, and national supremacy within their own ranks." Throduction of this line of thinking illustrates the degree to which Black Power and black nationalism influenced developing feminist theory and foreshadowed how Southern lesbian feminisms grew, especially since so many of the Furies were from the South.

In another article for *The FURIES Lesbian/Feminist Monthly*, Deevey considered Friedrich Engels's *The Origin of the Family*. In coming out as a lesbian, giving up her heterosexual privilege, she also began to recognize her own class privilege. She admitted "[t]here are many ways in which I have not changed enough about class. Some of them I understand and just have to do something about. I know there is a lot I don't understand yet about class." Divisions along class lines, she claimed, hindered women's ability to organize effectively. Now, as part of a lesbian group, she hoped to address class issues. ⁹⁸ Rita Mae

⁹⁶ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

⁹⁷ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

November, 2014. Deevey goes on: "...I was so consumed by what I thought was 'revolutionary' -- communal everything, non-monogamy, dope--that I resisted any criticism about my class behavior. Class has been mentioned but not understood in the heterosexual women's movement, because we spent all our time dealing with men instead of with each other, and because the organization was started and controlled by middle class white women who couldn't or wouldn't see that our class behavior was the cause of many of the problems that so distressed us."

Brown added another article in which she argued that lesbians understood and embraced the class struggle, but any mobilization of the working class would be ineffective until working class men shed their sexist and homophobic attitudes.⁹⁹

The Furies called for social revolution aimed at displacing patriarchy. Oppressions based on class, race, or national origin were real, and they "want[ed] to build a movement which makes all people free." But they articulated their strategy unmistakably: "[w]e are committed to ending all oppressions by attacking their roots - - male supremacy." Their theory was that oppression was systemic, therefore a political movement would be ineffective "without systematic thought and practical organization." They also distanced themselves from "[t]he haphazard, non-strategic, zig-zag tactics" they criticized among heterosexual feminist groups, men in the Left, and "many other so-called revolutionary groups [because such actions] have led only to frustration and dissolution." Here the Furies situated themselves among, but distinct from, other radical organizations. The Furies' movement would be different, free of those mistakes brought on by engrained sexism and class privilege. 103

Lesbians differed from these other groups, Deevey explained, because they attacked the system as outsiders. Only after identifying as the ultimate outsider - a lesbian – could Deevey "[fight] pig America." This anchored the Furies' power as a political movement. But sexual orientation was a choice. A revolution of women could, in her eyes, "be made by women only

⁹⁹ Brown, Rita Mae. "ROXANNE DUNBAR: how a female heterosexual serves the interest of male supremacy," *The FURIES Lesbian/Feminist Monthly*, Vol. 1 (January 1972), 5-6. http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

¹⁰² Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

¹⁰³ Berson, 1, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Deevey, "Such A Nice Girl...," 2, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014.

who give their full energy and love to each other, that is, by lesbians."¹⁰⁶ This belief that only lesbianism can truly liberate women is comparable to the separatist, self-help message of other radical black nationalist groups and the Furies articulated their political philosophy in militant rhetoric that reflected how language of the Black Power movement influenced them.

Second Wave Feminisms in the South

Rita Mae Brown's trajectory from the run in with the Redstockings and then NOW, the Lavender Menace zap with "The Woman Identified Woman," and finally the founding of the Furies, serve to trace some of the intellectual roots and development of a Southern lesbian feminism. As the women's movement grew nationally, more radical elements appeared, and Southerners became more involved. Washington, D.C. in 1970 and 1971 represented an ideological space where Black Power, in the form of the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention, affected Southern lesbians who were just beginning their social and political activism.

Writing and theory from the Radicalesbians and especially the Furies show how internalized Southernness, radical feminism, and Black Power politics shaped identity politics for lesbians in the South in the early 1970s. Southern lesbian feminists across the South were crafting their own brand of lesbian feminism. Social and political mobilization by Southern lesbians, which had been almost undetectable in the 1960s, gave voice to their intersecting identities and political consciousness in the seventies.

Sharon Deevey, "Such A Nice Girl...," The Furies Lesbian/Feminist Monthly Vol. 1. (January 1972), 2, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014. Deevey said, "The

http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01033/, accessed 19 November, 2014. Deevey said, "The revolution means change...women changing themselves...women changing the world. There is no middle ground and no individual solution. If you, or I, choose not to change, we choose against a women's revolution and against ourselves."

Second-wave feminism flourished in the South during the early seventies and lesbian feminist organizations blossomed in tandem with feminist presses, each gaining strength from the other. 107 In 1970, Atlanta Women's Liberation formed. 108 The next year, a lesbian feminist community had emerged in the Little Five Points area of the city. 109 The Triangle Area in North Carolina was fertile ground for feminist politics. A Chapel Hill and Durham Women's Liberation group formed in the late 1960s. Many of them had previously been active in the New Left, paid special attention to class concerns, and had a socialist-feminist orientation in their politics. 110 In 1969, they began publishing *The Research Triangle Women's Liberation Newsletter*, which became the *Female Liberation Newsletter of Durham-Chapel Hill* in October. 111 They organized several consciousness-raising meetings. Group 22 was one such meeting of more radically-minded women who had children; it spawned the Lollipop Power Collective in the summer of 1971. 112 They quickly founded the Lollipop Power Press dedicated to anti-racist, anti-sexist, and class-conscious literature for children. 113

Besides Lollipop Power, local chapters of NOW emerged, women organized a Rape Crisis Center, and Womancraft operated a store that sold products made by country women. Durham's Women's Center functioned out of a YWCA space and worked to educate and

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¹⁰⁷ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 132-133.

¹⁰⁸ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁰⁹ Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 252.

¹¹⁰ Jennifer L. Gilbert, "'<u>Feminary</u>' Of Durham-Chapel Hill: Building Community Through A Feminist Press," (Master's Thesis, Duke University, 1993), 1-2, 14.

¹¹¹ Gilbert, "'Feminary' Of Durham-Chapel Hill," 1.

Gilbert, "Feminary' Of Durham-Chapel Hill," 1-2; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 346, n. 3; Baye Cobb, Crystal Chalk, and Risa Isard, "Lollipop Power Press," *Sites@Duke*, 2011, accessed 30 September, 2016. https://sites.duke.edu/docst110s 01 s2011 bec15/print-culture/lollipop-power-press/

¹¹³ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 346, n. 3. Cobb, Chalk, and Isard, "Lollipop Power Press," https://sites.duke.edu/docst110s 01 s2011 bec15/print-culture/lollipop-power-press/, accessed 30 September, 2016.

organize local women against different forms of oppression. The center hosted feminist workshops, gave free self-defense classes, sponsored a coffeehouse for women and a women's health cooperative. Lollipop Power quickly got in touch with feminists, mostly graduate students at Duke or University of North Carolina, in Chapel Hill, who joined other Triangle Area women who were still irregularly publishing *The Chapel Hill Female Liberation Newsletter*, another iteration of the newsletter that began in 1969.¹¹⁴ By the time Lollipop Power formed, Alabamian Mab Segrest was attending graduate school at Duke, helping with producing its newsletter, and participating in what would become the Feminary Collective.¹¹⁵

The burst of lesbian feminism in the South exploded onto the pages of feminist journals and newsletters and flowed in the words of lesbian poetry and fiction, much of which Southern lesbians wrote. Atlanta's Sojourner Truth Press, a women's press collective, printed "Sleeping Beauty: A Lesbian Fairy Tale" in December 1971. 120 It became an instant classic in lesbian feminist circles around the US. Rita Mae Brown, began her literary career in the early 1970s. Feminist presses provided a megaphone for her artistic and political voice. Diana Press, a women-run printer and publisher, produced Brown's *The Hand That Cradles the Rock*, a book of poetry, in 1971, and its follow-up, *Songs to a Handsome Woman*, the next year. 121 Daughters Press formed at the same time and in 1973 published Brown's lesbian novel and smash hit,

¹¹⁴ [Box 30, Folder: "WRITINGS: Feminary, Notes on newsletter, 1973-1978] Notes on the newsletter, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 248; "INTRODUCTION/HERSTORY," (July 29, 1987), 1, Mandy Carter Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹¹⁵ "Guide to Mab Segrest Papers, 1889-2014," *Duke University Libraries*, accessed 18 July, 2017, http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/segrestmab/

¹²⁰ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. This version gave credit of authorship to Vicki Gabriner who was a prominent member of ALFA once it was founded.

¹²¹ Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 249.

Rubyfruit Jungle.¹²² June Arnold, another Southern lesbian, also worked with Daughters Press. In 1973, Daughters Press published Arnold's *The Cook and the Carpenter*, a lesbian feminist book.¹²³ In early 1973 Naiad Press formed; it would go on to be a goliath in lesbian-feminist publication, headquartered in Tallahassee, Florida.¹²⁵ Naiad Press was the first press dedicated to literature about and by lesbians, publishing major authors such as Rita Mae Brown, Jane Rule, Sheila Ortiz Taylor, and Ann Allen Shockley. It published over 500 lesbian-themed titles and was, at one time, the largest and most successful publisher of lesbian writing.¹²⁶

These new thriving of networks of feminist communication spurred Florynce Kennedy's coalition building activism. She crisscrossed the country, with many stops in the South in the early 1970s, preaching a message of unity for oppressed people by combining goals of Black Power, the women's movement, and gay liberation. In the summer of 1970, Amiri Baraka convened the fourth annual Black Power Conference, this time in Atlanta, Georgia. Kennedy served as a delegate and contributor to that conference as she had to earlier meetings. By early 1971, Kennedy was touring with Gloria Steinem, a new, younger face of the women's movement that rivaled Betty Friedan. The pair gave presentations and met with organizations from

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¹²² Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 249.

¹²³ Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 249.

¹²⁵ Anyda Marchant and Muriel Crawford, "The Naiad Press," *Sinister Wisdom* 1, No. 2 (Fall 1976): 116-119. Don Kelly Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University; Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 249.

Elaine Woo, "Barbara Grier dies at 78; co-founder of lesbian publishing house," Los Angeles Times (November 13, 2011), http://articles.latimes.com/2011/nov/13/local/la-me-barbara-grier-20111113, accessed 15 July, 2017; Paul Vitello, "Barbara Grier, Publisher of Lesbian Books, Dies at 78," New York Times (November 13, 2011), http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/14/books/barbara-grier-publisher-of-lesbian-books-dies-at-78.html, accessed 15 July, 2017; "Obituary: Barbara Grier, Founder of Naiad Press," Publisherweekly.com (November 11, 2011). https://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/industry-news/people/article/49469-obituary-barbara-grier-founder-of-naiad-press.html, accessed 15 July, 2017.

¹²⁷ "Florynce Kennedy," Florynce Kennedy Papers, 1915-2004, Speaking Engagements, 1971, MC 555 [Box 19, Folder #19.3], Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Waltham, Massachusetts to Flint, Michigan, from Lexington, Kentucky to Bristol, Virginia, from Tallahassee, Florida to Commerce, Texas, Wisconsin, and Fayetteville, Arkansas, in 1971 and 1972. Page 128 Kennedy also made appearances alone. She frequently presented variations of a speech, "The Pathology of Oppression," which untangled multiple oppressions to reveal how interconnected racism, sexism, classism, imperialism, and sometimes homophobia, were. She also spoke about various forms of "Institutionalized Oppression" against women. This topic included examining social treatment of lesbians and the role of black women in women's liberation. These messages took Kennedy to New Hampshire; Colorado; Williamsburg, Virginia; Philadelphia; Sherman, Texas; Huntington, West Virginia; Athens, Georgia; and Whitewater, Wisconsin. Pust as the Black Panthers began to falter, weakened by COINTELPRO and internal dissention, Flo Kennedy brought the revolutionary politics of Black Power to growing feminist and lesbian feminist communities around the nation, including the South. Kennedy's message had a significant resonance in the South because feminist print culture was at its height and Southern lesbian feminist activism was growing.

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¹²⁸ Program; Harry Walker, Inc. "Proposed Travel Schedule," (September 13, 1971); Harry Walker, Inc., Contract (August 25, 1971); Monte Hewsom, "Ms. Florynce Kennedy and the 'Bridge-Mix' theory," *The Nameless Wonder*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (February 22, 1972); Harry Walker, Inc. Contract; Engagement Agreement, (June 29, 1972), Florynce Kennedy Papers, 1915-2004; Speaking Engagements, 1971, 1972, MC 555 [Box 19, Folders #19.3, #19.14, #19.15], Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Most of these appearances were lectures at colleges and universities. Often Steinem and Kennedy both gave presentations, then met with student organizations, both women's liberation groups and black student groups.

Patricia Hederman Associates, Temple University News Release, (January 18, 1972); Monte Hewsom, "Ms. Florynce Kennedy and the 'Bridge-Mix' theory," *The Nameless Wonder*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (February 22, 1972); Richard Fulton Inc., Confirmation; Letter from Marvin E. Hillups to Harry Walker, Inc., (February 22, 1972); Letter from Harry Walker to Deborah Bailey, (March 28, 1972); Letter from Harry Walker to Deborah Bailey, (March 28, 1972); Richard Fulton Inc., Confirmation; Harry Walker, Inc., Contract (March 1972), Florynce Kennedy Papers, 1915-2004; Speaking Engagements, 1971, 1972, MC 555 [Box 19, Folders #19.3, #19.14, #19.15], Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

The growth of second wave feminism and flurry of lesbian literature in the early seventies spurred grassroots organization in many parts of the South, including central North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas. Lesbian feminists found each other and wanted their own space. Many formed consciousness-raising groups and explored more radical politics. Elizabeth Knowlton, after dropping out of graduate school at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, joined a women's liberation discussion group and participated in a socialist feminist organization called Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Continuing this quest for identity, she tested other forms of organization. While living on a commune west of Chapel Hill, with the feminist Carrboro Collective, Knowlton recognized, for the first time, her lesbian sexuality. In 1971, she came out. Life at the commune proved difficult, though. Toward the end of 1973 the Carrboro Collective reached out to some lesbians in Durham who were working to revive a lesbian rap group that had been part of the Duke Gay Alliance. Out of this connection, the Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists (TALF) were born. Light of the South of the

These organizations and feminist publications gave recently out Southern lesbians a place to explore their identities as women, lesbians, and Southerners. Elizabeth Knowlton, some fellow members of the Carrboro Collective, and other feminists cultivated print culture by starting the *Feminist Newsletter* in 1973. It was an intellectual descendant of *The Chapel Hill Female Liberation Newsletter* and many of the same women worked on both newsletters.¹³²

¹³⁰ Cobb, Chalk, and Isard, "Lollipop Power Press," https://sites.duke.edu/docst110s_01_s2011_bec15/the-activists/elizabeth-knowlton/ accessed 19 September, 2016.

¹³¹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 346, n. 7.

¹³² [Box 30, Folder: "WRITINGS: Feminary, Notes on newsletter, 1973-1978] Notes on the newsletter, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 248; "INTRODUCTION/HERSTORY," (July 29, 1987), 1, Mandy Carter Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Knowlton edited this publication, which later became the lesbian feminist journal, *Feminary*. ¹³³ Early in 1974 they put together *Whole Woman Carologue*. Modeled after contemporary women's health guides, it was specific to North Carolina. Diana Press in Baltimore published the *Carologue*. ¹³⁴ The rise of feminist presses and a growing community of self-identified lesbians in feminist organizations illustrate the influence of lesbian identity on Southern feminism and a lesbian community more politicized than in previous decades.

In Georgia's capital, as in North Carolina, feminism and lesbian feminism grew as the decade dawned. The fact that Little Five Points became an incubator for Atlanta's version of Southern lesbian feminism traces back to 1960s race relations. White flight had emptied Little Five Points, opening the area for Southern lesbians whose politics were informed by liberation movements of the late sixties. For example, one of these women in Atlanta's lesbian feminist community was, by 1971, active in what became Atlanta's Women's Liberation and she experimented with Upstairs Downstairs, Little Five Points' first women's commune. Within six months of living together, all the women in the commune had come out as lesbians. Other women who snatched up low rent properties in Little Five Points had been part of the Third Venceremos Brigade to Cuba. This exposure to radical anti-racist and socialist politics proved influential in their ideological development. As these women moved in, they connected over their political philosophies. Many embraced communal or at least collective living and preferred businesses run without hierarchical structures. Often, their political leanings trumped traditional

¹³³ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 126.

¹³⁴ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 133; Cobb, Chalk, and Isard, "Elizabeth Knowlton," *1970s North Carolina Feminisms* (2011) https://sites.duke.edu/docst110s_01_s2011_bec15/the-activists/elizabeth-knowlton/accessed 19 September, 2016

¹³⁵ Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 253.

stability. As the lesbian community in Little Five Points expanded, many of its members focused more on living out their politics than advancing their careers. And they certainly were not interested in snagging husbands who would financially support them.

Just as in North Carolina, feminist activity and lesbian feminist activity emerged simultaneously in Georgia. The Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) held its first meeting in the summer of 1972; two years later it was major feature in the feminist landscape of the city. 138 In February 1974, ALFA established two rap groups for women and held the Susan B. Anthony Celebration. Rita Mae Brown visited the organization for the occasion to do a reading from Rubyfruit Jungle. 1974 was a big year for ALFA's growth. In June, they sponsored the Gay 90s Carnival as part of Gay Pride Week. The next month they debuted the ALFA Omegas, the first 'out' lesbian softball team to participate in Atlanta's City league. That fall ALFA began a poetry group. 139 In November 1974, Charis Books and More, a feminist-oriented bookstore, opened in Little Five Points. It was one of many newly-opened women's bookstores around the country. Because of its location and feminist politics, ALFA patronized Charis Books. It quickly became central to the lesbian community that was growing there. Charis Books was an essential piece of Southern lesbian feminism in Atlanta. Like other feminist bookstores, Charis promoted a late 1960s style of radical politics and became a site to absorb and exchange ideas. 140 ALFA had been printing a newsletter, its pages full of these ideas, since September 1973. 141

¹³⁶ Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 253-277.

¹³⁸ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹³⁹ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 241-284. In November Charis Books and More, a feminist bookstore, was founded in Atlanta.

¹⁴⁰ Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 241-284.

¹⁴¹ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Charis Books naturally had available copies shortly after it opened. The dual presence of Charis Books and ALFA explains the political and intellectual genealogy of the lesbian feminist community in Atlanta; this illustrates the growing power of lesbian feminist print culture and ALFA's active involvement in it.

In the mid-1970s, ALFA continued its political growth that demonstrated the influence of Black Power, radical politics, and black feminism, building coalitions with more radical organizations and working on a wide range of issues. A sub-group of ALFA members formed Dykes for the Second American Revolution, or DAR II, in late 1974. It was active for the next two years. They designed workshops on class and racism, promoted cooperation and understanding between black and white women, studied socialism, lesbian separatism, and the *Black Woman's Manifesto*. He Black women active in SNCC formed the Third World Women's Alliance in 1970 and produced the *Black Woman's Manifesto*, which included Fran Beal's pivotal article about intersecting identities, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female." The *Manifesto* advocated an intersectional approach to activism: revolution to end sexism, racism, imperialism, and capitalism. DAR II's reflective writing reveals deep introspection about the kind of cultural identity they were trying to create. Leven after DAR II dissolved, ALFA activism maintained its pursuit of feminist practice that answered multiple oppressions. ALFA

¹⁴² [Box 22, Folder 22.61] "Dykes for the Second American Revolution (DAR II)"; Third World Women's Alliance, *Black Woman's Manifesto*, (1970), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; ALFA Archives, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01009/#info, accessed 15 July, 2017

¹⁴³ Third World Women's Alliance, *Black Woman's Manifesto*, (1970), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/wlmpc_wlmms01009/#info, accessed 15 July, 2017

¹⁴⁴ [Box 22, Folder 22.61] "Dykes for the Second American Revolution (DAR II)" ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

activities during the 1970s show how Southern lesbian feminists took advantage of the boom in feminist print culture to develop and spread their inclusive politics.

Feminist activity increased in the Lone Star state in the early 1970s, as well. Lesbian feminism grew up alongside, though not always in cooperation. Local chapters of the National Organization for Women (NOW) emerged in bigger cities first, such as Houston and Bexar County (where San Antonio is). Then, in 1972, Texas became the eighth state to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment. Shortly after that, four women who had been members of Circle of Friends, the earliest gay organization to form in Texas in 1965, left the group to establish Dallas's own chapter of the national lesbian organization, Daughters of Bilitis. The first National Women's Political Conference was held at the Rice Hotel in Houston in 1973. The same year, Harla Kaplan, a member of Houston's NOW, started a local chapter of the Sexuality and Lesbianism Taskforce within the organization.

Establishing Southern Lesbian Feminist Culture

Lesbian feminism in North Carolina's Triangle Area, Georgia, and Texas, was running on all cylinders by the mid-seventies and connecting with lesbian feminist activism from Southerners in the D.C. area. In the spring of 1974, shortly after the publication of *Whole Women Carologue*, Elizabeth Knowlton and her girlfriend moved from North Carolina to

¹⁴⁵ [Box 23] Pamphlet, "NOW ORIGINS;" Pamphlet, "NOW ACCOMPLISHMENTS," Texas Chapter of the National Organization for Women Records, MS 190, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries Special Collections.

 ^{146 [}Box 22] Lesberadas, "lesberadas – houston lesbians unite!" *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 3, No. 5, (November 1977),
 24, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁴⁷ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 166.

¹⁴⁸ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 167.

¹⁴⁹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 169.

Atlanta. They quickly immersed themselves in the lesbian feminist community ALFA was nurturing there. "Lesbian Woman," the radio show hosted by ALFA members, had been airing on WRFG since the previous summer. The Women's Radio Collective of North Carolina also began operations in 1974. The group broadcast two programs from WDBS: "Women's Voices," short daily features, and "Women's Show," a two-and-a-half-hour program with interviews, news, and most importantly, womyn's music. This North Carolina broadcast coincided with Alison McKinney producing a gay radio show for KPFT in Houston. A group of former Furies had founded the Olivia Records Collective in 1973; they dedicated their efforts to womyn's music, which WRFG, WDBS, and KPFT all played.

In early 1975, McKinney and a handful of lesbian friends, including Pokey Anderson, printed the first edition of *Pointblank Times*, Houston's first lesbian feminist publication. From that effort, the Pointblank Times Lesbian Collective was born. North Carolina and Atlanta might have had a head start on lesbian feminism printing in Texas, but *Pointblank Times*, the periodical, quickly caught up. Collective members who put out the publication described it as "a vessel of communication for you to contribute your ideas, feelings, creativity..." 156

¹⁵⁰ Cobb, Chalk, and Isard, "Elizabeth Knowlton," https://sites.duke.edu/docst110s_01_s2011_bec15/the-activists/elizabeth-knowlton/ accessed 19 September, 2016; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 135. Also in 1974, Barbara (Bobbi) Weinstock moved from Richmond, Virginia to Atlanta. Like Knowlton, she too joined ALFA.

¹⁵¹ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁵² Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 346, n. 3.

¹⁵³ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 175.

¹⁵⁴ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 256.

¹⁵⁵ [Box 22] PBT Staff, "pointblank times herstory," *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 3, No. 5, (November 1977), pg 2-3, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁵⁶PBT Staff, "pointblank times herstory," *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 3, No. 5, (November 1977), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Although by 1977, none of the original PBT Collective members were involved in its production anymore, this quote evinces the power of lesbian-feminist print culture as a vital space for Southern lesbian feminists.

Also in January 1975, the Austin Lesbian Organization (ALO) formed. Its members began publishing their own newsletter, *Goodbye To All That*, the next month. ¹⁵⁷ Some who contributed pieces to Goodbye To All That, quoted the Radicalesbians and entertained visions of the Lesbian Nation through separatism. 158 ALO members had a hot and cold relationship with the local NOW chapter, sometimes helping coordinate workshops on lesbianism, other times frustrated with the heterosexism among straight women. ¹⁵⁹ In August 1976, contributor Nina Wouk, called on *Goodbye To All That* readers to not get so bogged down in theory that they forgot to apply their "ideas [that] can be utilized in the individual and collective lives of wymin [SIC]. She wanted lesbian feminists to be active in a "revolution' that would bring about results."160 Later that year, the ALO devoted an entire edition of their newsletter to race in a "Special Racism Issue." Its contents revealed the political influence of Southern lesbian feminists Rita Mae Brown, Charlotte Bunch, and Meg Christian, as well as veteran lesbian activists, DOB founders Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, and Gay Liberation Front organizer, Martha Shelley. 161 In its first eighteen months, the pages of *Goodbye To All That*, show an organization influenced by early lesbian organizations, struggling to find common ground with

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¹⁵⁷ K.H. "GTAT – One Year Old," *Goodbye To All That* 2, No. 1 (February 1976). Special Collections, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University.

Linda Sigel, "Separate to Survive," *Goodbye To All That* 2, No. 3 (April 1976): 5, Special Collections, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University; "Lesbian Nationalists Bulletin No. 2," *Goodbye To All That* 2, No. 7 (August, 1976): 1, Special Collections, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University.

¹⁵⁹ Kathleen Hattaway, "Now to Conduct Forum on Lesbianism," *Goodbye To All That* 2, No. 3 (April 1976): 1. Special Collections, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University.

¹⁶⁰ Nina Wouk, "Response to LNB No. 2," *Goodbye To All That* 2, No. 7 (August 1976): 2-3, Special Collections, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University.

Austin Lesbian Organization, Goodbye To All That 2, No. 9 (November 1976), Special Collections, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University.

heterosexual feminists, and working to expand their own political philosophy to be sensitive to differences.

There were now two strong outlets for developing Southern lesbian feminist ideology: feminist printing, for poetry, essays, and art, and radio airwaves, for a real-time dialogue, and lesbian music with a message. They were the two halves of Southern lesbian feminist rhetorical culture. That culture rested on creating a transformed society, free of gender stereotypes, that was committed to anti-racism, anti-sexism, and gay pride.

By the mid-seventies, Triangle Area lesbians, ALFA, the Pointblank Times Collective (PBT), and the ALO also exhibited through their literature a Southern lesbian feminism that incorporated radical politics and a comprehensive approach to multiple oppressions. The *Feminist Newsletter*, through the summer of 1973 and all of 1974 followed the current of not only the mainstream women's movement, but militant activism, including the New American Movement. Its editors also tracked the progress of women of color such as the creation of *Off Our Backs*, and Florynce Kennedy's message of bringing Black Power, feminism, and gay liberation together as a political force. When the North Carolina publication changed its name to *Feminary* in January 1975, that trend continued. *Feminary* included even more about lesbians, Ti-Grace Atkinson's sexual politics, revolutionary politics, writings of women of color, issues of racism and classism, and the formation of the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO). ¹⁶³

¹⁶² [Box 30, Folder: "WRITINGS, Feminary, Feminist Newsletter Volume IV, 1973, February 12 – December 30th"] *Feminist Newsletter*, (June 10, 1973); (August 5, 1973); (October 28, 1973); (November 11, 1973), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁶³ [Box 30, Folder: WRITINGS, Feminary, A Feminary Vol. IV, 1975 January 1 – December 21] *Feminary*, (January 5, 1975); (January 19, 1975); (March 2, 1975); (March 30, 1975); (April 1975); (September 14, 1975); (December 21, 1975), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

DAR II's political emphasis molded ALFA's development during and after its existence. As ALFA grew and started collecting political writings, its members similarly absorbed the political ideologies of black liberation and women of color. ALFA's library shelves were filled with the work of Pauli Murray, poetry of black lesbian Pat Parker, pieces by Ericka Huggins, and Black Panther literature. For example, ALFA members collected interviews of Huey Newton on gay liberation and women Panthers' opinions on the women's movement. They also stocked *The Prison Newsletter*, a Georgia Black Power publication. This diet of revolutionary writing and socialist-influenced interpretations of systemic oppressions shaped the intellectual growth and politics of ALFA members. They also stocked the politics of ALFA members.

Likewise, Texas lesbian feminists, from the beginning, demonstrated a concern for more than single-issue politics. While members of the Pointblank Times Collective often tried to work with more mainstream male-led gay rights organizations, they repeatedly featured stories on racism, economic disparity, the activism of black women such as Florynce Kennedy, and black lesbians such as Gloria Brown. They frequently included poetry by Pat Parker and excitedly announced her return home to share her work in Houston in May 1975. PBT's co-founder,

¹⁶⁴ [Box 22, Folder 22.40], *The Prison Newsletter*, Vol. 3, (Jan.-Feb. 1974), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Pauli Murray was a black lesbian (though not "out") intellectual and theologian. She was originally from Maryland but spent much of her career in New York and Boston. She wrote prolifically on civil rights, Black Power, feminism, and what it meant to be a black woman.

¹⁶⁶ [Box 22, Folder 22.47], White Lightning, (May 1974), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; [Box 22, Folder 22.49], Kim Moody, "The American Working Class in Transition," Vol. 3, (1969?) [International Socialists publication], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

 ¹⁶⁷ [Box 11] Pointblank Times, 1, No. 3, (May 1975); Pointblank Times 1, No. 4 (June 1975); Pointblank Times 1, No. 5 (August 1975); Pointblank Times 1, No. 7 (October 1975); Pointblank Times 1, No. 9 (December 1975); Pointblank Times 2, No. 2 (February 1976), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁶⁸ [Box 11] *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1975), 6, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Letter to Audre Lorde, July 25, 1975, pg. 5. MC 861, Folder 5.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Pat Parker's letter to Audre Lorde revealed that the black activist community was perhaps, still not ready to hear

Pokey Anderson was Parker's contact when Parker came to Houston and did a reading in her hometown. Austin lesbians enjoyed the Common Woman Bookstore, near the University of Texas campus. It was run by a collective of women, some of whom shared membership in the ALO. The Bookstore hosted symposiums for women, worked to organize a Women's Film Festival, boasted a wide array of lesbian feminist books and periodicals – including books published by Austin's own River Women's Press Collective, sold posters of Puerto Rican revolutionary Lolita Lebron, and carried the latest Olivia Records featuring the poetry of Judy Grahn and Pat Parker. By late 1976, the Bookstore collective was "developing sections on Black women and Chicanas." This increasing interest in the intellectual production from women of color who were not necessarily lesbians and interest in black liberation ideology shows how these predominantly white lesbians in North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas embraced a feminist theory that addressed more than sexism or homophobia. They were able to develop their political convictions because of and by participating in the growing Southern lesbian feminist network that interacted in print culture.

Music was another key dimension of this rising Southern lesbian feminist political culture. In May 1969, just a month before the Stonewall Riot, "Angry Atthis," the first lesbian recording of what southern LGBT scholar James T. Sears refers to as "the Rubyfruit Era," was written and recorded. Womyn's music expanded quickly through the decade. Olivia Records

from a black lesbian. A black woman reporter from one of Houston's black radio stations covered Parker's poetry reading and then interviewed her after the performance. Parker said the "[p]oor child looked scared to death. She sat about three feet away from me and held the microphone out at arms length. When she realized I wasn't going to rape her or her arm got tired she moved in closer."

Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Cross-Country Reading Tour handwritten notes, April 1975. MC 861, Folder 14.8. Schlesinger Library, Radeliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁷⁰ Rita Conley, "Common Woman Bookstore," *Goodbye To All That* 2, No. 10 (December 1976):10, Special Collections, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University.

¹⁷¹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 379, n. 44.

formed as a collective in 1973. Virginia musician Meg Christian and her partner, founding member of the Furies, Ginny Berson, were instrumental in forming the recording collective. The Bernice Johnson Reagon organized the musical group Sweet Honey in the Rock shortly after the establishment of Olivia Records. A child of the Black Arts Movement, the band formed in 1974 out of a music workshop that Bernice Johnson Reagon conducted at Washington's Black Repertory Theatre. Reagon grew up in Albany, Georgia and was one of the Freedom Singers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Many of Sweet Honey's original members were from Georgia. She identified as a Southerner, born in Georgia, and living in Washington, D.C., which she also said was "the South." Sweet Honey in the Rock went on to become one of the most popular bands among Southern lesbian feminists.

The growing lesbian communities in Southern urban areas were hungry for womyn's music; local lesbian production companies popped up across the South. Some formed out of conferences, others from music distributors. They raised money, promoted regional talent, hosted musical performances, and organized music festivals to draw in more widely known lesbian artists. ALFA members formed Lucina's Music in Atlanta; Richmond lesbians organized Luna Music; Houston boasted two companies: Out and Out Productions and Off the Wall Productions; Amber Music Collective formed in Lexington, Kentucky; and in Memphis, women

¹⁷² Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 256.

¹⁷³ [Box 24] Mailer, "Sweet Honey in the Rock: BLACKWOMANSOUND," ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 259.

¹⁷⁴ [Box 24] Mailer, "Sweet Honey in the Rock: BLACKWOMANSOUND," ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 259.

¹⁷⁵ Susan W., "Sweet Honey in the Rock: An Interview," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 20. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis. In this interview, Bernice Johnson Reagon said, "I was born in Albany, Georgia. I was born in the South. I live in Washington, D.C. and that's the South."

established Alternative Productions.¹⁷⁶ The musical edge of Southern lesbian feminism connected lesbians in the South and revealed a political theory dedicated to changing society by creating an entirely new culture.

Southern lesbian feminism did not grow in vacuums; these regional organizations corresponded and coordinated often. Memorial Day weekend of 1975, between 300 and 500 lesbian feminists from North Carolina, Texas, including members of the Pointblank Times Collective, Georgia, and across the country, gathered in Atlanta for the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference. ALFA proudly hosted the event which served to reinforce connections and grow a network of Southern lesbian feminists. Significantly, a number of high-profile lesbians attended and presented at the conference. Laurel Galana, co-editor of *Amazon Quarterly*, a lesbian feminist publication out of Massachusetts, was there. Charlotte Bunch, former member of the Furies, and by 1975, a founder and editor of *Quest*, another radical lesbian publication in Washington, D.C., also came. She gave a session to the conference on political theory. Her transition from Duke graduate student activist to influential lesbian feminist writer and publisher was complete. Successful Building a Lesbian Community was the conference

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¹⁷⁶ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 256.

¹⁷⁷ Adrienne Parks, "National News: Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference," *Lesbian Tide* 4, No. 7 (July/August 1975), 16. Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 184-185; [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. *Lesbian Tide* reported that "over three hundred fifty women" were in attendance. Sears puts the number of attendees at around 300, while ALFA records indicate 500. Sears also states that 18 states were represented.

¹⁷⁸ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 184-185.

¹⁷⁹ Adrienne Parks, "National News: Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference," *Lesbian Tide* 4, No. 7 (July/August 1975), 16. Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture [unprocessed], Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

¹⁸⁰ Quest: A Feminist Quarterly Records, 1970-1985; Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

theme and music concerts were one of its major highlights. Events and panels reflected a maturing Southern lesbian feminism. The Drastic Dykes, from Charlotte, North Carolina, presented a workshop on lesbian separatism. Other topics included FBI harassment, spirituality, and third-world lesbians. Atlanta's own DAR II led a workshop on socialist feminism. Workshops often generated smaller discussion groups about issues such as the relationship between class and feminism. It was clear to one observer that "many women *think* quite a lot about their either monied or non-monied position," but were still searching for an effective way "to translate their thoughts into how they can go about supporting feminist enterprises." The content of the conference evinced a race and class consciousness among the predominantly white crowd gathered; they were refining their own notions of identity and identity politics.

By 1975, lesbian feminists in the South commanded the attention of the national lesbian movement, culturally and politically; they had strengthened their own Southern networks and tapped into national ones. Lesbian feminist artists increasingly visited and performed in the South. Lesbian feminist cultural and literary production was no longer isolated in the northeast, West Coast, or big Midwestern cities such as Chicago. Nor was lesbian feminist publishing. Southern lesbian feminists made the South a site for lesbian feminist political expression through art and music. And Southern lesbian artists drew large crowds in traditional hubs of radical politics. For example, in late August 1974, Olivia Records was still headquartered in Washington, D.C., near the Virginia home of one of its founders, Meg Christian. Five of Olivia's musicians, including Christian and Casse Culver, both Southerners, performed at the

¹⁸¹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 184-185.

¹⁸² Adrienne Parks, "National News: Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference," *Lesbian Tide* 4, No. 7 (July/August 1975), 16. Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Full Moon Coffee House in San Francisco to raise money for the record label. Their appearance packed the venue with an all-women audience; fans that arrived late formed a line that wound around the building outside.¹⁸³ When Pat Parker embarked on a reading tour in the spring of 1975, she and Casse Culver worked to coordinate a joint performance in Washington, D.C.¹⁸⁴ In April 1975, Judy Grahn, lesbian poet, activist, and founder of the Women's Press Collective, toured Texas. Lesbian feminists in Austin and Houston warmly received her.¹⁸⁵ Barely a month later, Grahn's friend and collaborator, Pat Parker returned to Houston to perform a reading of her poetry. Houston's Pointblank Times Collective had been active in organizing both events.¹⁸⁶

The Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference also proved the maturation of a powerful Southern lesbian feminist political community. Comedienne, Lily Tomlin, of *Laugh-In* fame, donated money to ALFA's Red Dyke Theater troupe and provided video equipment to record their performance at the conference. Long-standing West Coast publication, *Lesbian Tide*, the periodical from Los Angeles Daughters of Bilitis, enthusiastically reported on events from the conference to its national audience. In her report about the conference for *Lesbian Tide*,

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¹⁸³ Scarlet Cheng, "olivia benefit," *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 4, No. 10, (October 1974), 23; "Casse Culver," *Paid My Dues*, (October 1974). http://queermusicheritage.com/nov2004cc.html# accessed 18 August, 2017. Casse Culver began her musical career in the mid-1960s in Washington, D.C. Her early repertoire was heavily country. That genre continued to influence her composing into the early 1980s. Demonstrating her Southern sensibilities, in the late 1970s, she toured with her band, the Belle Starr Band. Belle Starr was a mid-nineteenth century Southerner associated with several Southern outlaws, including Jesse James. Her brother worked with Confederates during the Civil War.

¹⁸⁴ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Cross-Country reading tour handwritten notes, April 1975. MC 861, Folder 14.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁸⁵ Pokey Anderson, "JUDY GRAHN," *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1975), 12-13, WLGBT [Periodicals Collection [Box 11], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁸⁶ [Box 11] *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1975), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁸⁸ Adrienne Parks, "National News: Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference," *Lesbian Tide* 4, No. 7 (July/August 1975), 16. Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture [unprocessed], Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. Lily Tomlin was not officially 'out,' but by 1975 was already involved with her long-time partner, Jane Wagner.

Adrienne Parks acknowledged incorrect generalizations about the South and distinctions between Southern lesbian feminists and those in other places: "[t]he conference differed from others I have attended in that Southern lesbian feminists organized the event. Not New York women, or West Coast women, but women who live in the South. All too often I think we fall into the stereotypical thinking that suggests 'Ain't nuthin' [SIC] much happenin' [SIC] down South.' Not true." Parks believed that the conference was particularly important to "rural women from places deep in the heart of Kentucky and Arkansas" because it showed a "growing network...by and for lesbian feminists" in the South. But by 1975, Southern lesbian feminists boasted their own flourishing print culture and healthy number of lesbian organizations. Baltimore's Women:

A Journal of Liberation had been going strong for five years. Diana Press was also in Baltimore, courting Pat Parker to be one of its editors. The ALFA Newsletter, later Atalanta, Feminary, Pointblank Times, and Charlotte Bunch's Quest were examples of this larger phenomenon. The South was a major site for lesbian feminist grassroots activism by middecade.

Like Black Power activists before them, Southern lesbian feminists also faced judicial and social harassment. Friday, 23 May, 1975, members of the Feminary Collective and Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists (TALF) traveled to Atlanta for Memorial Day weekend to attend the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference. In the early morning hours of Saturday, the 24th, five of

¹⁸⁹ Adrienne Parks, "National News: Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference," *Lesbian Tide* 4, No. 7 (July/August 1975), 16. Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture [unprocessed], Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

¹⁹⁰ "readers [SIC], we need HELP!" *Women: A Journal of Liberation*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (Spring 1970), 63, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086.

¹⁹¹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Cross-Country reading tour handwritten notes, April 1975. MC 861, Folder 14.8.
Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

them went to eat at Dobeys, a restaurant frequented by ALFA members who recommended it.¹⁹² Given that ALFA members ate there regularly, Dilly, Liz, Portia, Donna, and Jo were not hiding their identity as lesbians. However, after a disagreement about the bill, Jo Meredith, in frustration, told the cashier she would not be back to the "fuckin' place." An off-duty police officer in the restaurant bolted out of his seat, grabbed Meredith, and told her that she was coming with him. Since he did not say she was under arrest or name charges against her, she resisted. Upon her resistance, the officer threw her against the wall and started to choke her. Meredith's friends tried to intervene, but to no avail. The officer eventually released his grip on her throat long enough to handcuff her to the nearest lesbian, but he still did not inform the women of the charges against them. Once police backup arrived, an officer told all five women they were being arrested for criminal trespassing and "creating a turmoil." The arresting officer verbally abused the women, "calling them bull-dykes and faggots" as they were hauled into a paddy wagon. At the jail, they were booked and had their bond set. The Durham 5 was born. 196

Adrienne Parks, "National News: Pigs Scramble Dykes Over Egg," *Lesbian Tide* 4, No. 7 (July/August 1975), 16 Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

¹⁹³ Liz, Portia, Dilly, Jo, & Donna, A FEMINARY, Vol. 6, No. 12 (June 7, 1975), 2, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Adrienne Parks, "National News: Pigs Scramble Dykes Over Egg," Lesbian Tide 4, No. 7 (July/August 1975), 16-17. Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

¹⁹⁴ Liz, Portia, Dilly, Jo, & Donna, A FEMINARY, Vol. 6, No. 12 (June 7, 1975), 2, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Adrienne Parks, "National News: Pigs Scramble Dykes Over Egg," *Lesbian Tide* 4, No. 7 (July/August 1975), 16 Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Liz, Portia, Dilly, Jo, & Donna, A FEMINARY, Vol. 6, No. 12 (June 7, 1975), 2, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David
 M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

They spent the rest of Saturday and Sunday in jail as the conference went on. Conference organizers, however, raised money upon learning of the arrests. The Durham 5 appeared for their hearing the following Monday after the conference was over. Testimony from the police officer was, they claimed, full of lies. Their hastily hired attorney argued the illegality of their arrest since Atlanta had no obscenity laws. Even though the charge of criminal trespassing was dropped, the judge found them guilty of "creating a turmoil," gave them suspended sentences and fined each one \$35.¹⁹⁷ Upon reflection of the Durham 5 incident, Dilly said she was not "yet [ready] to label myself as a radical lesbian." Her experience, however, was clearly a transformative moment in her development as an activist. Because of it, "something was sparked inside of me." This type of harassment and attempts at intimidation were nothing new, but Southern lesbian feminists demonstrated a new pride of identity and an unwillingness to accept the status quo. They would no longer be content to "watch themselves" in a patriarchal society; they were poised to "create a turmoil" through the latter 1970s. 199

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¹⁹⁷ Liz, Portia, Dilly, Jo, & Donna, *A FEMINARY*, Vol. 6, No. 12 (June 7, 1975); Jo Meredith, "MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND IN ATLANTA," *A FEMINARY*, Vol. 6, No. 12 (June 7, 1975), 4, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁹⁸ Dilly, "<u>VIEWPOINT</u>," *A FEMINARY*, Vol. 6, No. 12 (June 7, 1975), 3-4, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁹⁹ Dilly, "<u>VIEWPOINT</u>," *A FEMINARY*, Vol. 6, No. 12 (June 7, 1975), 3-4, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Dilly was one of the Durham 5. When she told fellow lesbian friend of her experience at the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference, her friend replied, "you just have to watch yourself."

CHAPTER IV

"HUSKY LOOKING LAD[IES]," JOAN LITTLE, AND THE OLD PLANTATION: DISTINGUISHING SOUTHERN LESBIAN FEMINISM FROM GAY MALE ACTIVISM IN THE SOUTH, 1971 – 1979

Texas Gay Liberation Awakens, Temporarily

The weekend of June 26-27, 1971, between thirty and eighty gay men and lesbians who had purchased tickets from the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) of Dallas, packed their sleeping bags and camping supplies, then drove about 40 miles east of Dallas, to Quinlan, where they camped on an isolated piece of private property near Lake Tawakoni. Together, they hosted a white elephant sale of jewelry, pictures, and other handmade art. Attendees cooked out, danced with partners of the same sex, played volleyball, went on a hayride, skinny dipped in the lake, waterskied and took moonlit motorboat rides. Then, at midnight, the campers organized a small parade down Farm Road 751. Several attendees from the Circle of Friends, Dallas's oldest gay rights organization, held a sign that proclaimed "Gay Pride" as they made their way along the route. According to an anonymous correspondent from *Our Community*, a new gay periodical in Dallas, the parade and campout exuded feelings of "brotherhood," "unity," and

¹ "GAY DAY AT LAKE TAWAKONI," OUR COMMUNITY, Issue 6, (August 1971), 4, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191; Phil Johnson, "Ten Years Ago. ..," This Week in Texas, (September 11-17, 1981), 20, 23, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, AR0756, Box 64; "GAY PRIDE CELEBRATION," OUR COMMUNITY, Issue 4, (June 1971), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191.

even "pride."² On the same weekend, thousands of marchers participated in much grander parades in places like New York, Chicago, and Hollywood as they celebrated their gay identities and commemorated the Stonewall Riot. But as the author of the article pointed out, "Dallas just [wasn't] quite ready for" the "giant parades" held elsewhere. Even so, the women and men from Dallas who celebrated gay pride at midnight down a country road were part of an awakening of Southern gay and lesbian political activity.³

In this chapter, I use LGBT activism in Texas as an entry point for discussing differences in goals and strategies of Southern gay white male activists and Southern lesbian feminists that became more obvious as the 1970s went on and as the national movement for gay rights gained momentum. As a former slaveholding state, Texas shares a history of segregation and racial violence with other Southern locales I use for this study. Scholar Michael Phillips made the case that Dallas is a vehicle for understanding memory and race in the South. Texas lesbian feminists also asserted their Southern identity, alluding to Texas's Confederate past, on the pages of their own publications. For example, in an early issue of *Pointblank Times*, one reader wrote

² "GAY DAY AT LAKE TAWAKONI," OUR COMMUNITY, Issue 6, (August 1971), 4, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191.

³ "GAY DAY AT LAKE TAWAKONI," OUR COMMUNITY, Issue 6, (August 1971), 4, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, (Our Community, June-January, 1971-1972), AR0756, Box 191. [RESEARCH-Dissertation (Primary) Research – UNT Archives – UNT 3 June, 2016 – IMG 0533]

⁴ Michael Phillips, White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841 – 2001 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 1-40. Daneel Buring, Lesbian and Gay Memphis: Building Communities Behind the Magnolia Curtain (New York: Routledge, 1997). Buring described the "Magnolia Curtain," that is, being located in the American South. The location affected racial tension among blacks and whites and cultural constructions of race, gender, sexuality, and class in a particular way, unique to the region. The same influences existed in Texas.

in to address her "Southern Sisters" and encouraged them that "the South may yet rise again" because of "its Lesbian daughters." 5

Over the course of the 1970s, gay activists in the South became more involved in the gay movement, and national activists increasingly viewed the South as a site where gay communities were growing and where social, economic, and especially political power could be harnessed. First, I describe the establishment of gay and lesbian activism in Texas. Texas had radical, but short-lived organizations such as the Purple Star Tribe and the Sugar Plum Fairies. The latter two organizations, active only for a short time, illustrate how temporary that type of radicalism was among gay men in Texas. Other organizations, such as the Circle of Friends, formed in the 1960s and lasted through the 1970s in part, because they worked with the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), a gay-affirming church founded in 1968. Reverend Troy Perry, a gay man from Florida, started the MCC in Los Angeles, California in late 1968. Dallas and Houston both had their own MCCs by the mid-seventies and their churches were an anchor for gay activism.⁶ Second, I examine the mid-decade emergence of specific gay organizations in Texas: Texas Gay Task Force (TGTF), the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC), and the Houston Gay Political Caucus (HGPC). They were evidence of how gay activism stabilized and narrowed in Texas, characterized by single-issue identity politics with legal goals rather than a broad-based movement aimed at social transformation.

⁵ Pointblank Times, Vol. 1, No. 8, (November 1975), 2, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, [Box 11] David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. [SCHOOL WORK-RESEARCH-Dissertation (Primary) Research – Sallie Bingham Center – 28 July, 2016 Sallie Bingham – IMG 7853 – IMG 7860]

⁶ Troy D. Perry, *The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay: The Autobiography of the Reverend Troy D. Perry*, 25th ed. (Los Angeles: Universal Fellowship Press, 1994) [first edition 1972].

By the mid-seventies, white, male-dominated, more conservatively-minded organizations emerged as political forces in Southern cities. The rise of the DGPC and the HGPC coincided with increased political clout of national gay organizations, specifically the National Gay Task Force (NGTF), with which the TGTF was affiliated, and signs of legal progress for gay rights in the South when some states began repealing sodomy laws. Several nationally publicized court cases in the South during the 1970s, those of Joan Little, Leonard Matlovich, Mary Jo Risher, and Don Baker, also set in stark relief the differences in strategies and goals between predominantly white gay male organizations and lesbian feminists in the South. Simultaneously, lesbian feminist communities in the South grew, building their own culture that articulated a radical political philosophy still committed to addressing issues of, racism, sexism, and class discrimination from a Southern perspective. Houstonian Pokey Anderson proved adept at navigating predominantly male spaces of activism and remaining active and committed to Southern lesbian feminism at the same time, but she was an exception rather than a rule. Between 1975 and 1980, lesbian feminists sometimes worked with, but were often frustrated by organizations whose membership was predominantly male; disagreements frequently centered on issues of racism, class discrimination, and sexism. To illustrate this point, I discuss a gay dance club franchise, and the range of causes Southern lesbian feminists supported.

The revolutionary tone that characterized much of the political activism at the end of the sixties shaped the political consciousness of gay liberation nationally. Activists and writers in the gay liberation movement, especially in the early 1970s, borrowed from the revolutionary

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⁷ "SOUTHERN SHORTS," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (May, 1977), 4, 11, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. For example, the Arkansas state government repealed its sodomy laws as part of an effort to reform the criminal codes in that state.

language that Black Power organizations had used and also took cues from radical feminist rhetoric. The best example of bringing together the revolutionary tone of Black Power for the cause of gay liberation was the 16 Point Platform of the Third World Gay Revolution in 1971. It was clearly modeled on the Black Panthers' "10 Point Program." This document announced the desire of gay persons of color to participate in the existing leftist, revolutionary political mobilization. The Third Word Gay Revolution saw the individual struggles of identity politics as part of one movement, saying, "[w]e each organize our people about different issues, but our struggles are the same against oppression, and we will defeat it together. Once we understand these struggles, and gain a love for our sisters and brothers involved in these struggles we must learn how best to become involved in them." Their 16 points identified two enemies: capitalism, and "male chauvinism." The latter was the "oldest form of oppression and its foundation." The points went on to demand self-determination, women's liberation via free access to safe birth control, equity in employment and education for women of color, an end to the "bourgeois nuclear family," and a free education system that truthfully taught the history of human sexuality. It also called for a revolutionary consciousness that would eliminate competitive attitudes between men and women, people of different ethnicities, and classes that perpetuated sexism, racism, and classism. Moving beyond the established framework of the Panthers' 10 points, or the Young Lords' 13 points, the Third World Gay Revolution called for a redefinition of masculinity. The new society that resulted from this Third World Gay Revolution would be achieved through socialism.⁸ Their ambitious commitment to inclusivity arose from rifts in other

^{8 &}quot;3rd World GAY Revolution," *Fag Rag: A Gay Male Newspaper*, #2, (Fall 1971): 8, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

gay organizations over race, class, and gender issues. While activists in the Third World Gay Revolution saw themselves as uniting the black freedom movement, feminism, and gay liberation into one, cohesive movement, to outsiders, it looked like another manifestation of identity politics to add to the pantheon.

In the early 1970s, gay liberation seemed to be trying to find itself in the midst of growing pains and fervor from the emergent women's movement. Southern gay and lesbian activists began mobilizing in much greater numbers just as radical coalition-building began to unravel. A more narrowly focused group, the Gay Activists Alliance, split off from the Gay Liberation Front. The former concentrated its efforts on gay and lesbian concerns only; its leaders did not want to be "distracted" by other causes. Southern activists entered the political arena when national organizations confronted the pitfalls of coalitions and single-issue identity politics. The growth of women's presses and feminist organizations in the South, discussed in the previous chapter, also coincided with the spread of gay and gay friendly publications across the South. Prior to 1970, the vast majority of these publications were limited to the west coast and northeast, but gay and lesbian community-building and activism escalated in Dixie as the decade opened. On the second sec

As evidence of the continued impact of late sixties radicalism, urban areas in the South became sites of revolutionary activism in the early part of the decade and garnered attention from national gay-oriented periodicals. In 1971, lesbians and gay men came together to form the Gay Alliance in Louisville, Kentucky. Atlanta's Gay Liberation Front formed in 1971, modeled

⁹ Jay, Tales of the Lavender Menace, 47, 223.

¹⁰ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones.

¹¹ Williams, "Louisville's Lesbian Feminist Union," 226.

after New York City's Gay Liberation Front. The latter was, by then, floundering. 12 Much of this early seventies gay and feminist activism in the South reflected the radicalism that epitomized Black Power and gay liberation at end of the last decade because it sought coalitions. For example, the May Day Conference and Parade that Atlanta hosted in late summer 1971 drew national attendance from a variety of activists. It kicked off with a preliminary Women's Conference, sought to connect gay "revolutionary collectives," and highlighted the 16 Point Platform of the Third World Gay Revolution. Participants believed in creating a revolutionary society devoid of sexism, racism, and imperialism. ¹³ One of the conference events, a workshop on transvestitism, was put on by the Purple Star Tribe – a Dallas organization. The writer from the national magazine, Fag Rag, described the workshop as "perhaps the most moving part of the conference for gay males." Purple Star Tribe preached that drag could be revolutionary because it tore down traditional gender roles and freed men from rigid interpretations of masculinity. 14 Athens, Georgia, was the site of the Southern Convention Association of Gay Militants in 1972; it echoed similar revolutionary rhetoric.¹⁵ Gay Liberation Fronts popped up, among other places, in Columbia, South Carolina, Atlanta, Georgia, and Austin, Texas, which was the site of the first conference of Gay Liberation Front in 1971. This birth of Southern radicalism, however, was

¹² Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 253-254; Jay, Tales of the Lavender Menace, 47, 223.

^{13 &}quot;May Day Conference Atlanta," Fag Rag: A Gay Male Newspaper, #2, (Fall 1971), 4-5, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. The Purple Star Tribe from Dallas, Texas even led a workshop on the revolutionary nature of drag. They believed that men dressed as women would completely disrupt traditional gender roles and help bring about a revolutionary society.

^{14 &}quot;May Day Conference Atlanta," Fag Rag: A Gay Male Newspaper, #2, (Fall 1971), 4-5, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

¹⁵ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 354, n. 30.

¹⁶ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 386, n. 3; 354, n. 31; [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke

not necessarily long-lived; Southern activism began fracturing as the decade went on similar to what occurred at the national level.¹⁷

Social and mobilizations by LGBT individuals in Texas typified the trend of radicalism in the early 1970s that was replaced by single-issue politicking as the decade wore on. Along with the previously established Circle of Friends, new, smaller, and sometimes short-lived gay organizations formed in Texas, exemplifying the momentary flash of radical gay liberation organizing in the South that did not last through the decade. Some functioned locally while others began participating in the larger gay communities of the South. After the first national Gay Pride commemoration of Stonewall in June 1971, which Dallas gays and lesbians had quietly celebrated safely in the woods, a revolutionary Dallas organization called the Sugar Plum Fairies staged a demonstration. Dallas News, an underground newspaper associated with radical politics and the counterculture, published its own "Gay Pride Issue." The publication angered the Sugar Plum Fairies who found the newspaper "misleading and actually detrimental to the cause of gay liberation." In the first week of July during a series of meetings between the Dallas News staff and the Sugar Plum Fairies, led by someone named Digger, they agreed to redo the issue giving the Fairies full creative control. Members of the gay liberation group worked with women and gay staff of Dallas News to put together a brand new gay pride issue called

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University. In 1970, a small group of students at the University of South Carolina tried to form a Gay Liberation Front organization, but it was short-lived.

¹⁷ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 386, n. 3; 354, n. 31; [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Iconoclast. Straight male staff members stood by to assist in production. *Dallas News* released *Iconoclast* 27 July, 1971.¹⁸

This arrangement reached between *Dallas News* and the Sugar Plum Fairies shows the importance, but also the transitory influence of early seventies radicalism on the development of gay rights activism in Texas. *Dallas News* provided a leftist space for the Fairies to present gay identity and gay pride to northeast Texas. The purposefully assembled group who worked on the publication – women, gay staff, members of the Sugar Plum Fairies, with straight men in support roles – was an attempt at broad-based action, like the kind of coalition the Black Panthers sought at the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention. Rather quickly, however, groups such as the Sugar Plum Fairies and the Dallas Purple Star Tribe faded from the social and political scene. Less militant, more long-standing organizations like Circle of Friends, or faith-based institutions like the MCC, and eventually, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC), had the staying power the Sugar Plum Fairies did not. Circle of Friends and the MCC in Dallas, and Integrity in Houston, influenced the direction of LGBT activism, especially among gay men in Texas over the long run, much more than radical gay liberation organizations.¹⁹

Establishing Political Strategies and Mobilizing for Gay Rights in Texas

The evolution of Dallas's Circle of Friends shows how that organization transitioned politically over the course of the 1970s. In the late sixties and early seventies Texas had radicals

¹⁸ "DALLAS NEWS AND THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRIES," OUR COMMUNITY, Issue 6, (August 1971), 7, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, , AR0756, Box 191.

Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 353, n. 5. Dignity (the Catholic organization for lesbians and gay men) was formed in Houston before February 1972, but its founders, Father Mark Barron and Bill Buie, realized that most Catholics were not out enough to participate and that the majority of people interested in joining the group were other denominations. After this, the group reorganized into Integrity Houston, a more nondenominational organization.

as well as male-dominated groups whose political strategies fell more in line with pre-Stonewall homophile organizations, not especially attuned to the growing women's movement. The beginning of recorded activism took place in the mid-1960s when Phil Johnson and several of his acquaintances founded Circle of Friends (COF). It started with five gay persons and four heterosexual ministers.²⁰ The gathering that began as friends socializing transitioned into a politically-minded group. 21 The Circle helped organize the city's first Gay Pride Parade in 1972.²² The June 24 event was a far cry from the secretive midnight "parade" out in the east Texas wilderness the year before. Photos of the event show a diversity of LGBT participants: lesbians carrying a "SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL" sign marched alongside black drag queens with posters that read "TIRED OF HIDING – WANT TO BE FREE," and white gay men. 23 Local news coverage revealed that the Dallas City Council had been caught unawares by the "magnitude" of the parade, some 130 marchers, but had no legal reason to deny Circle of Friends a permit for the 17-vehicle, half hour march in downtown Dallas.²⁴ COF, itself, presented a diverse image in its parade float, which featured a closet for 'coming out.' A woman sat on the front of the float and a person of color, dressed in a ball gown, stood outside the closet. The

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²⁰ "I AM ME," *VECTOR*, Vol. 7, No. 8, (August 1971), 36-38, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

^{21 &}quot;Resource Center Dallas: A History of the Dallas GLBT Community," UNT LIBRARIES, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 1, Folder 1.

²² "Resource Center Dallas: A History of the Dallas GLBT Community," 1, UNT LIBRARIES, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 1, Folder 1.

²³ Photographs, (June 24, 1972), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 2: Clippings – Subject Files, ARO756, Box 75, Folder 22; [Gay Pride Parade Supporters in Dallas, Texas], photograph, (June 24, 1972); (digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc276229/: accessed March 30, 2017), University of North Texas Libraries, Digital Library, digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

²⁴ Doug Domeier, "Parade Protests Fail To Halt Homosexuals," *Dallas Morning News*, (June 24, 1972); Marc Bernabo, "Gays March Proudly," *Dallas Morning News*, (June 25, 1974), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 2: Clippings – Subject Files, ARO756, Box 75, Folder 22.

slogan painted on the side, though, "C.O.F. TEXAS' OLDEST HOMOPHILE ORGANIZATION, GAY – AS AMERICAN AS THE FLAG AND APPLE PIE," was much less revolutionary, given that Stonewall had made "homophile" activism a relic of the past.²⁵ That was also the year that Johnson appeared with fellow gay activist Frank Kameny at the American Psychiatric Association (APA) convention held in Dallas. While there, the two men slow danced. This display was responsible, in part, for the APA removing homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses in 1973 – a major victory in the movement for gay rights.²⁶

As one of the first gay organizations in Texas, in existence before Stonewall, COF membership had an interest in connecting with national networks of other gay activists. For example, when W. Dorr Legg, founder of *ONE magazine*, publication of the homophile organization Mattachine Society, toured the Southern US, Circle of Friends hosted him in Dallas.²⁷ In June 1971, lesbian activists, Kay Tobin and Barbara Gittings (also a member of the American Library Association [ALA]), took part in the Task Force on Gay Liberation "Zap" of ALA at the annual meeting in Dallas. COF members attended the meeting, anxious to witness national activism. They supported the Task Force's action and the argument that the ALA should support Mike McConnell after the University of Minnesota reneged on a job offer to be a university librarian once his sexuality came to light. One male writer for *Our Community*, Dallas's gay-oriented publication, unwittingly exhibited an attitude that grossly stereo-typed

²⁵ [C.O.F. Float in First Gay Pride Parade in Dallas, Texas], photograph, June 24, 1972; (digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc276209/: accessed March 30, 2017), University of North Texas Libraries, Digital Library, digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

²⁶ Program "AFTER STONEWALL: From the Riots to the Millennium, the sequel Before STONEWALL, Premiere Screening," UNT LIBRARIES, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 3, Folder 19, pg 1-2.

²⁷ "ONE VISITS DALLAS," *OUR COMMUNITY*, Issue 5, (July 1971), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191.

women and the women's movement when he described a female audience member at the ALA "Zap" as a "quite serious-minded, husky looking lady (evidently in the Feminist Movement)." He portrayed her as a woman who took herself too seriously and tried to interject "women's issues" into every situation.²⁸ Revealing some frustration within groups with mostly male members, four women in Circle of Friends broke off to form a Dallas chapter of Daughters of Bilitis in November of 1972.²⁹ Lesbian feminists in Texas, as across the South, sought predominantly female organizations that more specifically addressed their concerns as women. In its first ten years of existence, the Circle struggled to establish its political focus, exhibiting ties to older homophile organizations while employing some revolutionary rhetoric, eventually settling on a track of single-issue politics that the DGPC and HGPC took.

As the 1970s dawned, bigger, more established gay organizations and media outlets looked to unite lesbians and gays across the country in common cause. By the early 1970s, gay networks and activism in Texas and the South received the attention of national publications aimed at a gay audience.³⁰ At the local level, LGBT individuals in Texas, as in many Southern states, faced discrimination from law enforcement and the court system. In January 1970, however, gay Texans perceived a ray of hope when a three-person United States District Court in Dallas ruled the Texas criminal code article 524 unconstitutional. Dallas County's district attorney, Henry Wade, had been enforcing article 524 of the code, which declared homosexual

²⁸ Richard Hapsburg, "GAY LIB 'ZAPS' ALA," *OUR COMMUNITY*, Issue 5, (July 1971), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191.

²⁹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 166.

³⁰ "I AM ME," *VECTOR*, Vol. 7, No. 8, (August 1971): 36-38; Bufford King, "Big Dallas," *QQ Magazine For Gay Guys*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (January/February 1972): 54,42-43, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. Other Southern cities were highlighted as gay travel destinations in multiple national gay magazines in the 1970s.

sex acts felonies. Although Wade vowed to appeal the decision, the national gay media picked up the story, hailing it as a step in the right direction for the personal liberties of gays.³¹

The local and national attention COF attracted in the early 1970s is significant for several reasons. The national gay media outlets tended to report on Texas in two ways in the early seventies. Extensive coverage focused on Texas's gay social scene, which appeared white and male, while short blurbs about Texas and other Southern states usually appeared in sections that featured gay news from around the country delineated by location.³² The latter often reported measurable legal or political gains made by and for gay individuals.³³ National gay media coverage helped establish the Circle's longevity as an organization for gay Dallasites while the nature of the coverage predicted the way COF membership and activism developed. COF always had majority male membership and as it gained more of a foothold in the 1970s, its political focus moved toward quantifiable legal goals.

As in Dallas, 1965 was a milestone for gay mobilization in Houston as well because it signaled the beginning of a collective, albeit cautious and disjointed, identity for gays and lesbians in Texas. Bob Eddy began editing Houston's first gay newspaper, *Albatross*, in August. Although *Albatross* only published quarterly and mostly featured gay male bar advertising, it

³¹ "Homophile News Front," *VECTOR*, Vol. 6, No. 3, (March 1970): 20-21, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

³² "I AM ME," VECTOR, Vol. 7, No. 8, (August 1971): 36-38; Bufford King, "Big Dallas," QQ Magazine For Gay Guys, Vol. 4, No. 1, (January/February 1972): 54,42-43, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

³³ Vector, Vol 2, No. 4 (January, 1968): 3, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 1: Periodicals AR0756, Box 284; Vector, Vol. 5, No. 4, (March, 1969), 6. Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 1: Periodicals (Soak-Vector), AR0756, Box 284; VECTOR, Vol. 7, No. 8, (August 1971); QQ Magazine For Gay Guys, Vol. 4, No. 1, (January/February 1972), Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

served as a point of connection for Houston's predominantly closeted gay community.³⁴ In 1969, Paul Stewart opened a bar for gay black men in Houston, the Golden Nugget.³⁵ This early racial segregation only foretold future contentions over race, class, and sex in Southern gay communities.

In Houston, Texas, activism started small when gay activists there held a city-based conference about homosexuality in 1971; but, growth of local gay publications in the early seventies strengthened activist inclinations.³⁶ In 1970, Floyd Goff, using the pseudonym Phil Frank, began publishing *the Nuntius*, a periodical for the Houston gay community. He financed the venture from some of the profits from a swingers' club he owned.³⁷ Like *Albatross*, *the Nuntius* had listings for predominantly male bars, but it also included local and regional news, gossip on the gay social scene and information on drag shows. In October 1972, *the Nuntius* and *Our Community* merged into one paper, further binding the Dallas and Houston gay communities together for future political activism.³⁸ Goff's financial backing of *the Nuntius* was important to its sustainability and the staff of *Our Community* evinced its political goals and target audience on the pages of its newspaper: legal protections for gay, presumably white, men.³⁹ The same

³⁴ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 173, n. 10; 353, n. 28; 354; "GAY HOUSTON," the NUNTIUS, Vol. 3, No. 6, (June 1972), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2:Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 190.

³⁵ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 386, n. 1.

³⁶ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 354, n. 30.

³⁷ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 168; J.D. Doyle, "The Nuntius & Our Community and Update Texas/Weekly," *houstonlgbthistory.org*, accessed 30 March, 2017, http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/nuntius.html

³⁸ J.D. Doyle, "The Nuntius & Our Community and Update Texas/Weekly," *houstonlgbthistory.org*, accessed 30 March, 2017, http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/nuntius.html

^{39 &}quot;SODOMY BILL IN AUSTIN," OUR COMMUNITY, Issue 4, (June 1971); "ONE VISITS DALLAS," OUR COMMUNITY, Issue 5, (July 1971), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191.

parameters came to define the latter 1970s actions of the Gay Political Caucuses in Dallas and Houston.

The arrival of one of the early "gay" churches in Texas, the Metropolitan Community
Church (MCC), functioned as a foundational and stabilizing, if not static, force for some LGBT
Texans. Rob Shivers and Rae DeVerse founded the Dallas chapter of MCC when twelve people
met in Shivers's home. After meeting in individuals' houses, MCC Dallas eventually settled
permanently in Highland Park, one of Dallas's wealthiest and exclusive neighborhoods. 40 In
May 1971, Dallas MCC received its charter as an autonomous congregation from the Board of
Elders of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in Los Angeles. 41
Circle of Friends and MCC were the glue for much of the gay and lesbian social scene outside
the bars. 42 The Dallas MCC was a powerful force: church founder and a celebrity activist in his
own right, Troy Perry, attended performances by the Dallas MCC Thespians in April 1974. The
following Sunday, he spoke at the church. The show he attended raised money for the "gay
movement." This activity drew in all five gay organizations in the DFW area and they began
planning a state conference. 43 Dallas was the site of the first Metropolitan Community Church
international conference in the summer of 1975, demonstrating how important Texas had

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^{40 &}quot;MCC RECEIVES CHARTER," OUR COMMUNITY, Issue 4, (June 1971), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191; "METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH location history," (July 30, 1970), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 36.

⁴¹ "MCC RECEIVES CHARTER," *OUR COMMUNITY*, Issue 4, (June 1971), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191.

⁴² "Around Town," *OUR COMMUNITY*, Issue 4, (June 1971), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191; Letter from Steve Janssen to "Dear friends", (May 1974), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, AR0756, Box 62, Folder 43.

⁴³ Letter from Steve to MCC Dallas congregation, (April 1974), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 39.

become in the national movement.⁴⁴ While the MCC worked with established gay groups, Circle of Friends specifically, its white, mostly male, well-to-do, Dallas origins belied its inclusive rhetoric.

The seemingly sudden emergence of Houston as a major hub in Southern gay activism in the mid-1970s had deeper roots thanks to the growth of gay businesses and deliberate political planning and coalition of gay men and some lesbians, Pokey Anderson in particular. Just as Atlanta had the lesbian-feminist area of Little Five Points, Houston's gayborhood, Montrose, had grown quietly in the late sixties. Mr. Frizby, a private gay bath club, opened in April, 1971.⁴⁵ A decade before AIDS decimated the homosexual population, such establishments were extremely popular among gay men in LGBT magnets like San Francisco. Houston's Mr. Frizby and the Bayou City's growing "out" gay population made it a popular travel destination among Southern gays. Then, in 1973, the Bayou Landing opened a location in Houston. Bayou Landings already dotted the east and west coasts; the franchise was one of the largest gay dance clubs in the country – expanding southward in the early seventies. 46 Established national networks of lesbian feminists also began recognizing Houston as a site of resources for the lesbian community. Lesbian Tide, the publication of the Los Angeles branch of Daughters of Bilitis, named Houston's Gay Community Center in its list of gay-friendly places.⁴⁷ From 1973 to 1974, Lesbian Tide added a number of Southern locations to its resources lists and added Southern

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⁴⁴ [Box 11] "MCC," *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1975), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁴⁵ "BATH OPEN IN HOUSTON," *OUR COMMUNITY*, Issue 4, (June 1971), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 5: Other Publications, AR0756, Box 191.

⁴⁶ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 170.

⁴⁷ *LESBIAN TIDE*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (September 1973): 31, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 1: Periodicals, AR0756, Box 260.

correspondents.⁴⁸ Significantly, the national publicity from male-oriented gay publications focused on business enterprises, namely clubs and bars for gay men in Texas, whereas Southern lesbian feminists received national attention for the free community resources they provided other lesbians.

While gay and lesbian communities had been building since the late 1960s, targeted political activism in Houston began in 1973 with a push for the Houston city council to declare Gay Pride Week. Three members of the Houston Gay Political Coalition, predecessor to the Houston Gay Political Caucus, appeared before city council in May 1973. Pokey Anderson was an exception as a woman participating in this newly formed organization borne out of the Gaze Center. They also called for an end to police harassment of gay individuals. Five months later, when Democrat Fred Hofheinz decided to run for mayor of Houston, he realized the potential political power of gay support in Houston. So, in late October, Hofheinz became the only one of the top three mayoral candidates to appear before Integrity/Houston and answer questions. He earned their support and went on to narrowly win the election. Once in office, Hofheinz brought in a new police chief who met with representatives of the gay community to discuss police brutality against gays in the past. C.M. Lynn, the new chief, promised an end to raiding bars

⁴⁸ LESBIAN TIDE, Vol. 3, No. 2, (September 1973): 31; "FROM US," LESBIAN TIDE, Vol. 3, No. 6 (January 1974): 12, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 1: Periodicals, AR0756, Box 260.

⁴⁹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 170.

Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 172-173; Fred Hofheinz (former Houston mayor) in discussion with the Frank Michelle, February 11, 2008; The Houston Oral History Project, Houston Public Library, http://digital.houstonlibrary.net/oral-history/fred-hofheinz.php accessed 17 August, 2017. His outreach to them was part of his liberal, reformist political roots in the Democratic Party. He became interested in the civil rights movement in college when he met several civil rights leaders. When he began his political career in the early 1970s, he opposed what he called "the old-style Southern attitude about blacks."

where no illegal activities occurred.⁵¹ The goal of stopping police raids of gay bars demonstrates the link between the economic interests of mostly gay male activists and their political strategies.

Texas gay activists evinced their rapid growth and desire to politically mobilize with a statewide conference, but the conference also revealed latent conservatism in political strategy. The Texas Gay Conferences proved integral in mobilizing mainstream gay activism in the state and coordinating with the national movement for gay rights; it was, however, a departure from the more radical 1971 Gay Liberation Front Conference in Austin and activism of groups like the Sugar Plum Fairies and the Purple Star Tribe. Fort Worth hosted Texas Gay Conference I, the first state-wide conference in the nation, June 21-23, 1974. Out of it, the Texas Gay Task Force formed.⁵² The development and strength of gay activism in Texas was on display a year later in San Antonio, the site of the Texas Gay Conference II. Its theme was "Gays Loving, Living, Learning Together."53 Barely a week after Texas Gay Conference II, several conference attendees officially formed the Houston Gay Political Caucus (HGPC), which seemed to indicate that gay men and lesbians in Texas were working together. On June 30, 1975, HPGC members Pokey Anderson, Jerry Miller, Bob Falls, and Ray Hill held a press conference at the MCC Houston. Local media outlets had been personally invited. The 10-minutes scheduled for the press conference went over into a 30-minute conversation. The CBS and ABC affiliates, The Houston Post, and 7 radio stations were represented there.⁵⁴ The press conference effectively

⁵¹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 172-173.

⁵² Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 174; Letter from Steve Janssen to "Dear friends", (May 1974), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 43.

⁵³ [Box 11] *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 1, No. 3, (May 1975), 16, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵⁴ INTEGRITY/HOUSTON Newsletter, (August, 1975), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 42.

announced HGPC's ambitious political plans to mobilize gay voters in future elections. This sort of calculated, hierarchically organized, long-range planning that appeared in the mid-seventies became typical of Texas male-dominated gay rights activism the rest of the decade and into the 1980s.

That same summer of 1975, the unnamed political caucus that became the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC) met to begin planning their political strategy for the 1977 city council elections. In 1976, DGPC drew up its by-laws. The document was long with great detail about the organization's rigid power structure. Rules regarding the treasurer were the lengthiest of all explanations of Caucus officers. The by-laws created a Board of Trustees – the most powerful part of the organization. The Board functioned as trustees of a business would; DGPC, in fact, operated as a corporation. This stratified, capitalist-oriented formation indicated the perspective of DGPC's founding members, hinted at the direction of the organization, and was in stark contrast to many of the collectively organized lesbian-feminist groups in the South.

Texas, particularly the city of Houston, had come a long way in gay activism by 1976 because of its political successes. Robert Blaine, writer and activist from Houston, joined the staff of the regional gay newspaper, *The Barb*. The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in town was only a year old, but as in Dallas, it was a magnet for other gay organizations and their political efforts.⁵⁷ For example, Houston's MCC hosted a meeting between the mayor, Fred

⁵⁵ First meeting – 5th District Unamed [SIC] Political Caucus, (July 23, 1975), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 41. Ten people were involved in this initial meeting; at least one was a woman.

⁵⁶ Dallas Gay Political Caucus, By-Laws, (1976), 3, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 59.

⁵⁷ Robert Blaine, "Robert Blaine's HOUSTON," *The Barb: The News Monthly for Southern Gays*, [no #], (June, 1976): 4, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Hofheinz, and 30 representatives of various gay organizations of Houston: Gay Activists Alliance, Gay Political Caucus, Dignity, Integrity/Houston, Sexuality and Lesbianism Task Force of NOW, MCC, gay business persons and members of the Houston gay press in October 1975.⁵⁸ This strengthened the political power of Houston's gay community and established the city's MCC as an important part of that power. -The city's Gay Political Caucus received national attention in gay-oriented press for its successful mobilization of the gay vote that swayed local elections.⁵⁹ But Houstonian activists were also making an impact in national organizing. In the summer of 1976, the National Gay Task Force named five Southerners to its thirty-member board, three from Georgia, and two from Texas: Pokey Anderson and Gary Van Ooteghem, both from Houston Gay Political Caucus. Although New Yorkers and activists from the west coast still constituted most of the board, representation of Southern states had grown significantly, and Texas was a major part of that.⁶⁰

North of Houston and also in 1976, the Gay Student Services (GSS) on Texas A&M University's (TAMU) campus emerged.⁶¹ Similar organizations appeared at other Texas schools during the decade as they had across the South in college towns, illustrating the significance of universities in social movements.⁶² In the spring of 1976, Vice President for Student Affairs at

⁵⁸ "Fred," *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 1, No. 8, (November 1975), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵⁹ Robert Blaine, "Robert Blaine's HOUSTON," *The Barb: The News Monthly for Southern Gays*, [no #], (June, 1976): 4, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture [unprocessed], Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

^{60 &}quot;NGTF Names Five Southerners," The Barb: The News Monthly for Southern Gays, [no #], (June, 1976), 1, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

^{61 &}quot;A Selective Texas A&M GLBT Timeline," Folder - Chronology Academic Year 2005/2006, LGBTQ Collection, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁶² Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 347, n. 9; 135; http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/uaaquaduke/accessed 17 August, 2017. For example, Dale Orlando helped organize The Alliance, a group of lesbians of University of South Carolina in Columbia. Three women at the Virginia Commonwealth University, inspired by a

TAMU, John Koldus, informally denied an application from GSS to be recognized as a student organization. The university's Board of Regents was vocal in its opposition to the actions of the Gay Student Services, even before the group took formal legal action. The Board of Regents described the student organization's purpose as "diabolically counter to the traditions and standards of Texas A&M University." A formal denial followed in the fall of 1976. Koldus's justification for the denial was that such an organization would incite illegal homosexual activity on campus and cause health problems. In February of 1977, Gay Student Services at Texas A&M filed suit against the university in order to gain official recognition. They were ready for a fight – a legal fight, exemplifying a major component of male-dominated gay rights activism in the Lone Star State.

While instances of legal and political progress for LGBT persons in Texas and in other Southern states happened, homophobia was ubiquitous. Around the state, political institutions and courts repeatedly upheld discriminatory laws or allowed a homophobic atmosphere and patterns of harassment against lesbians and gays to carry on. The difference was that LGBT Texans had some political muscle to flex as the seventies progressed. Social and political forces perpetuated the kind of homophobic environment that John Koldus and Texas A&M reinforced.

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lecture from Rita Mae Brown, founded the Gay Awareness Perspective, a group of lesbian and gay men who met weekly near campus. Colleges and universities in the Research Triangle in North Carolina also fostered several organizations for LGBT individuals. Many Feminary collective members were graduate students at Duke or the University of North Carolina. Duke undergraduates formed the Alliance of Queer Undergraduates at Duke (AquaDUKE) in 1973.

^{63 &}quot;A Selective Texas A&M GLBT Timeline," Folder - Chronology Academic Year 2005/2006, LGBTQ Collection, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

^{64 &}quot;SOUTHERN SHORTS," The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice, Vol. 4, No. 4, (May, 1977), 4, 11, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

⁶⁵ PowerPoint note slides, "How'd We Get Here?" Folder - Chronology 2009-2010 Spring, LGBTQ Collection, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

For instance, in the spring of 1977, the Fort Worth Star Telegram printed a cartoon that likened gay persons to criminals, kidnappers of children, pornographers, and drug dealers. 66 In state politics, in the fall of 1977, the Texas state legislature passed a statement of intent that encouraged state universities to prohibit gay student organizations. This was a direct result of TAMU's Gay Student Services' lawsuit and shows a political climate hostile to gay rights in the state.⁶⁷ Just as GSS members at Texas A&M University prepared for a battle in court, Fort Worth's gay community was also prepared to resist the anti-gay sentiments in Texas. After the derogatory cartoon was published in the Star Telegram, forty members of that community staged a protest of the newspaper complete with picket signs with facts such as "98 per cent of all child molestors [SIC] are heterosexual."68 In 1977, it was clear that LGBT Texans were asserting themselves, tuned into the national movement for gay rights, and eager to participate in their own liberation, even if it meant using more cautious judicial strategies or tactics of pre-Stonewall homophile organizations, as in the case of the Fort Worth protest. Regional and national media outlets whose publications were directed at gay audiences took more and more interest in the activism of Texans.69

^{66 &}quot;SOUTHERN SHORTS," The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice, Vol. 4, No. 3, (April, 1977): 3, 6, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

⁶⁷ "DIXIE SHORTS", *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice*, No. 42, (September 15, 1977): 3, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

^{68 &}quot;SOUTHERN SHORTS," The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice, Vol. 4, No. 3, (April, 1977): 3, 6, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁶⁹ "SOUTHERN SHORTS," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 3, (April, 1977): 3, 6, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; "SOUTHERN SHORTS," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (May, 1977): 4, 11, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996). This back and forth between the Texas legislature and various Texas

Two actions encapsulated the legal reform political strategy of male-dominated Texas gay rights organizations in the second half of the 1970s: the 1976 case of Mary Jo Risher, and the 1979 case of Don Baker, a founding member of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus.⁷⁰ Texas lesbian mother Mary Jo Risher lost custody of her 9-year-old adopted son, Richard, because she was a lesbian. Risher and her husband divorced bitterly in 1971, but Risher easily won custody at that time. She met Ann Forman two and a half years after her divorce and the two women began a relationship. They moved into a home with Forman's daughter, age eleven, in Garland, Texas.⁷¹ As part of the Gay Pride festivities in Dallas in 1976, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus hosted Mary Jo Risher, raising money for her legal expenses.⁷²

Risher became a cause célèbre nationally among feminist and lesbian feminist groups as well as mainstream gay rights organizations such as the Texas Gay Task Force and the National Gay Task Force. NOW raised \$1,000 for her defense and Risher was also a member of Daughters of Bilitis.⁷³ Rising star in womyn's music, Meg Christian, even played a special benefit concert for Mary Jo Risher in Dallas in May, 1976. *This Week in Texas*, the king of

organizations is an example of Sidney Tarrow's idea of "dynamic statism" in which the state and the social movement interact reciprocally.

K.H., "Lesbian Mother Loses Custody," Goodbye To All That 2, No. 1 (February, 1976): 13. Special Collections, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University; People Staff, "A Texas Mother Loses Custody of Her 9-year-old Son Because She Is a Lesbian," People Magazine 5, No. 2 (January 19. 1976), <a href="http://people.com/archive/a-texas-mother-loses-custody-of-her-9-year-old-son-because-she-is-a-lesbian-vol-5-no-2/accessed 17 March, 2017; Leslie Pound, "Don Baker looks beyond lost cause," The Dallas Morning News, (August 14, 1986), clipping, August 14, 1986; (digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc947949/: accessed April 7, 2017), University of North Texas Libraries, Digital Library, digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.</p>

⁷¹ People Staff, "A Texas Mother Loses Custody of Her 9-year-old Son Because She Is a Lesbian," *People Magazine*, Vol 5, No. 2 (January 19. 1976), http://people.com/archive/a-texas-mother-loses-custody-of-her-9-year-old-son-because-she-is-a-lesbian-vol-5-no-2/ accessed 17 March, 2017.

⁷² Flyer, (June 26, 1976), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 43.

⁷³ People Staff, "A Texas Mother Loses Custody of Her 9-year-old Son Because She Is a Lesbian," *People Magazine* 5, No. 2 (January 19. 1976), http://people.com/archive/a-texas-mother-loses-custody-of-her-9-year-old-son-because-she-is-a-lesbian-vol-5-no-2/ accessed 17 March, 2017.

men's gay bar magazines in the state, put Christian's face on its cover to publicize the fundraiser that was a women-only event.⁷⁴

After the Mary Jo Risher case, there was Don Baker's case. The DGPC described Baker, coincidentally the organization's president at the time, as "the perfect plaintiff" when, in 1979, he filed suit, contesting the legality of Texas's Penal Code section 21.06.⁷⁵ This section made sodomy between consenting members of the same sex illegal in the state.⁷⁶ By the end of the seventies, the political energies of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus were focused almost wholly on populating the October 1979 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and Don Baker's lawsuit.⁷⁷ Together, the Risher and Baker cases distilled the narrow thrust of political activism among Texas, and many other Southern organizations in which gay men constituted the majority of membership.⁷⁸ The plights of Risher and Baker stemmed from their sexuality. Risher was a white, middle-class woman asserting her traditionally feminine role of mother, using the courts to maintain that role. Baker, also white and middle-class, challenged a law that singularly targeted gay men and, if over-turned, would ensure only the protection of individuals

⁷⁴ "A Concert of Music for Women with Meg Christian," *This Week in Texas* 2, No. 7 (May 15-21, 1976), Box 1, Newsletters, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University.

⁷⁵ Dallas Gay Political Caucus Membership Committee, OUR HISTORY, ([1980?]), 2, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 59.

⁷⁶ Leslie Pound, "Don Baker looks beyond lost cause," *The Dallas Morning News*, (August 14, 1986), clipping, August 14, 1986; (digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc947949/: accessed April 7, 2017), University of North Texas Libraries, Digital Library, digital.library.unt.edu; crediting UNT Libraries Special Collections.

⁷⁷ Dallas Gay Political Caucus Membership Committee, OUR HISTORY, ([1980?]), 2, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 59.

⁷⁸ Sears, "The Impact of Gender and Race on Growing up Lesbian and Gay in the South," 422-457; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*. Sears argued that there were differences in the way Southern gay young men and lesbians grew up because of social constructions that tied race and gender together in the South. In *Rebels, Rubyfruit and Rhinestones*, he discussed numerous predominantly male gay rights organizations in the South and lesbian feminists who built coalitions with them. The latter did not offer much explanation for differences in their politics on issues of race and class.

who engaged in sodomy, a sex act most often associated with gay men. Moreover, neither case addressed broader issues of racism, class discrimination, sexism, or conventional gender roles.

Nurturing Southern Lesbian Feminist Culture

As activism among LGBT Southerners increased in the 1970s, the national movement for gay rights became more structured with a hierarchical organization to incorporate newly active states, many of them Southern. The relationship between the Texas Gay Task Force and the National Gay Task Force was a prime example of this interaction. While some Southern lesbians joined these mostly male organizations, indeed played important roles in them, Southern lesbian feminists continued to develop a lesbian feminist culture and political sensibility distinct from more conservative, single-issue identity politics that emerged as the strategy from organizations like the Gay Political Caucuses in Dallas and Houston.

Just a month before Texas Gay Conference II, lesbian feminists strengthened their Southern networks at the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference in Georgia, which the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) hosted. Pokey Anderson was a member of ALFA and a founding member of the Pointblank Times Collective. The latter corresponded and coordinated with ALFA and other state organizations in Texas such as the Austin Lesbian Organization (ALO). Less than a week after the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference, the ALO organized the first Lesbian Rites of Spring in the state. Anderson penned an article for *Pointblank Times* announcing the Texas Lesbian Rites of Spring. Demonstrating their own ability to organize at

⁷⁹ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁸⁰ [Box 11] "Victory in Austin," *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 8, (November 1975): 11, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Austin Lesbian Organization, "ALO Birthday Memories," *Goodbye to All That* 2, No. 1 (February, 1976): 1-2. LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University.

Antonio, Denton, and Wichita Falls to camp for a weekend along the Colorado River. Anderson encouraged *Pointblank Times* readers to enjoy softball, feminist music, and the outdoors. ⁸¹ The Women-For-Women rap group formed as a result of this Lesbian Rites of Spring, "[i]n an attempt to further communications between Lesbian and non-Lesbian women." Whereas the Texas Gay Conferences resulted in the formation of TGTF and national, hierarchical alignment with the NGTF, which had clear political goals, the formation of a rap group out of the Lesbian Rites of Spring had broader, perhaps vague, cultural goals to transform society.

The Lesbian Rites of Spring reflected the direction of lesbian-feminist organizing in the South toward a feminist praxis that emphasized cultivating lesbian culture that was anti-sexist, anti-racist, and attentive to problems of class difference; it also differed in significant ways from the 1971 Dallas campout. Lesbians who attended the Rites of Spring camped on *public* land west of Austin. That weekend, Annette, a member of ALO, and two other women were attacked by four men. The drunken men first harassed and threatened the women, threw rocks at them, then physically attacked the women. The altercation injured Annette severely enough to require hospitalization.⁸³ Those who camped near Quinlan, Texas, in 1971 and marched with gay pride in the middle of the night, had done so safely, on private property.

⁸¹ [Box 11] Pokey Anderson, "Rites of Spring," *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 3, (May 1975): 7, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Austin Lesbian Organization, "ALO Birthday Memories," *Goodbye to All That* 2, No. 1 (February, 1976): 1-2. LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University.

⁸² Austin Lesbian Organization, "ALO Birthday Memories," *Goodbye to All That* 2, No. 1 (February, 1976): 1-2. LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University.

⁸³ [Box 11] "Victory in Austin," *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 8, (November 1975): 11, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Austin Lesbian Organization, "ALO Birthday Memories," *Goodbye to All That* 2, No. 1 (February, 1976): 1-2. LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University.

The case of Joan Little, an African American, heterosexual, working class woman, in 1974-1975 further illustrates how Southern lesbian-feminist politics diverged from that of most Southern gay men. Early one August morning in 1974, Joan Little, killed a white male prison guard at the Beaufort County Jail, North Carolina. Little claimed that she killed the guard in self-defense when he sexually assaulted her, then she escaped. Her murder trial for the guard's death began in mid-July 1975; between August 1974 and July 1975 news outlets all over the country picked up the story, which facilitated the "Free Joan Little" Movement. Major Black Power figures such as Angela Davis and Florynce Kennedy kept the case in news headlines, which lesbian-feminist organizations followed. The trial lasted four weeks, at the end of which, Little was unanimously acquitted.⁸⁴

Joan Little's case brought to light the tangled nature of race, class, gender, and sexuality in the South and lesbian feminist organizations in the South, including ALFA and Feminary Collective seized on it. *Feminary* kept readers updated on the case and trial of Joan Little, publicizing and hosting fundraisers for her.⁸⁵ ALFA held similar events and, in 1978, supported the legal defense of Dessie Woods, an African American woman in a situation similar to Little's: sentenced to twenty-two years in prison for killing a white man with his own gun when he attempted to rape her.⁸⁶ While *Pointblank Times* was geographically further removed from the

⁸⁴ McGuire, At the Dark End of the Street. Genna Rae McNeil, "'Joanne Is You and Joanne Is Me': A Consideration of African American Women and the 'Free Joan Little Movement,' 1974-75," in Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement Edited by Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin, (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 259-279.

^{85 [}Box 30, Folder: WRITINGS, Feminary, A Feminary Vol. IV, 1975 January 1 – December 21] Feminary, (March 2, 1975); (March 30, 1975); (September 14, 1975); (December 21, 1975), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁸⁶ [Box 22, Folder 22.2] AWU [Atlanta Women's Union] Minutes (January 24, 1978 – July 7, 1981), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; http://search.freedomarchives.org/search.php?view_collection=139, accessed 3 October, 2016;

Little case, the publication still featured articles that confronted the issues of racism, sexism, and sexual violence that the case raised and embraced a lesbian-feminist culture that infused politics into artistic production. Sweet Honey in the Rock, a favorite band of many Southern lesbian feminists, featured "Joanne Little" on their debut album in 1976. Feminary's North Carolina location perhaps explains some of the collective's interest in the trial, but their coverage of it and activism in support of Little shows how lesbian feminist culture in the South concerned itself with issues beyond legal protections for gay individuals.

For most Southern gay men, however, the Joan Little case was not on their political radar. Some west coast gay publications by the mid-seventies still spoke of an inclusive movement in radical terms – "We must NOT get 'hung-up' in thinking of ourselves as men or women straight or Gay, Black or White, etc. We must think of ourselves as individuals, members of the human race, regardless of who or what that person may be." These publications, for the most part though, did not cover the Joan Little case. During the weeks of Little's trial, national gay male publications that Southern gay men might have subscribed to, likewise, did not cover her case. Phe Barb, "The News Monthly for Southern Gays," contained articles about lesbian feminist liberation, legal victories for gay, usually white, individuals, and even gay black men, but it did not feature anything on the Joan Little case in the months surrounding her murder trial.

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⁸⁷ Sweet Honey in the Rock, "Joanne Little," Sweet Honey in the Rock, Fly Fishing Music, BMI, 1976, Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Sources spell Little's name various ways: "Joan," Joann," and "Joanne." I use "Joan" in my own words. Sweet Honey in the Rock's song spelled it "Joanne," so I have maintained their spelling in that instance.

⁸⁸ Carol & Cindy, "SISTERS AWAKE!" Pacific Coast Times 4, No. 8, Issue #48, (June 20, 1975): 10, Don Kelly Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁸⁹ VECTOR, Vol. 11, No. 6, (June 1975), Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁹⁰ *The Barb: The News Monthly for Southern Gays* 2, No. 8, (September 1975), Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Gibson W.

Southern white gay men, if politically active in the summer and fall of 1975 during and immediately after Little's trial, were much more interested in the story of Leonard Matlovich, a gay white male from Georgia discharged from the US Air Force when his homosexuality became known.⁹¹

The omission of news about Joan Little and a focus on the case of Leonard Matlovich by a Southern gay, male-oriented, publications at roughly the same time illuminates the contrast between Southern lesbian feminism and the activism of Southern gay men. Joan Little was black and did not identify as a lesbian, unlike the many white lesbians in the South who took up her cause. Through her case however, they articulated how Little's race, gender, and class put her in a perilous situation, at the mercy of the white male power structure; her intersecting identities left her marginalized in numerous ways. On the other hand, the Matlovich case was about a middle-class white man, excluded from an "establishment" institution, the US military, based on only one aspect of his identity – his sexuality. The two cases, both in 1975, parallel the differences between Southern lesbian feminists and gay male activists in the South.

The Old Plantation and Divergent Politics in the South

The divergent development of activism evident in the cases of Joan Little and Leonard Matlovich continued into the late 1970s in Texas. Even though Texas male-led gay rights organizations, including ones that Pokey Anderson worked with, claimed to support anti-racism

Higgins, "Pick-Ups," *THE BARB: The news monthly for southern gays*, Vol 2, No. 11, (HOLIDAY ISSUE): 3, 13, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁹¹ "I Am a Homosexual': The Gay Drive for Acceptance," *TIME Magazine*, (September, 8, 1975); Gibson W. Higgins, "Pick-Ups," *THE BARB: The news monthly for southern gays*, Vol 2, No. 11, (HOLIDAY ISSUE), 3, 13, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. See also Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, for more information on the Leonard Matlovich story.

and inclusive, non-sexist activism, lesbian feminists lived up to such rhetoric. This discrepancy in the way gay rights and lesbian feminism in the South developed in the seventies played out at the door of a popular discotheque franchise, aptly called Old Plantation. Originally the Bayou Landing, this nationally franchised dance hall opened in Houston in 1973. By 1976, owners had changed its name to Old Plantation. 92 Members of the Pointblank Times Collective heard rumors that the Houston Old Plantation used a discriminatory dress code to ensure its clientele were white men whom the club's manager described as a "nice, all-American, clean cut crowd."93 Four Pointblank Times (PBT) members, Alison McKinney, Barbara Cigainero, Ellen, and Phyllis, decided to test the rumors in early 1976. They each wore a different outfit, some apparently acceptable to Old Plantation's dress code, others not. The two dressed formally, one in a dress, the other in a pant suit, were allowed in, while the two in jeans were refused. Upon refusal, they requested and got a meeting with the club's manager - ironically out of dress code himself. He explained to the women that "bull dykes" had been in before and caused trouble. The manager also admitted that the prohibition of hats targeted black drag queens, also trouble makers. The dress code was meant to severely limit the number of African Americans in the club, only "the nice ones." The four women blasted the club when they reported their investigation of Old Plantation in *Pointblank Times*. Their stinging condemnation of the sexist and racist policy revealed a Marxist interpretation of racism and sexism that understood the dress

⁹² Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 170; 296; 387, n. 16, n. 18. Sears also discussed the fact that segregation was often de facto in gay clubs.

⁹³ [Box 11] Alison [McKinney], Barbara [Cigainero], Ellen, & Phyllis, "You Are What You Wear," *Pointblank Times* 2, No. 2, (February, 1976): 1, 12, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

code in comprehensive terms. It was one mechanism in a system of oppression that privileged white patriarchy and classed blacks and women as undesirable.⁹⁴

Pokey Anderson put pressure on the Houston Gay Political Caucus to address the blatant discrimination at Old Plantation. Less than a month after PBT's investigation of the club, the HGPC passed a resolution against those types of practices. Management at the club, however, carried on without change. For more than a year and a half, discrimination against women and persons of color continued; the few allowed in the club were reportedly being harassed. A Chicano even filed an affidavit stating managers at Old Plantation had beaten him. Pointblank Times members continued to exert pressure on the Gay Political Caucus to do something. After the Caucus invited the Old Plantation manager to a meeting, he simply read a hollow statement reiterating the club's policy of nondiscrimination. Lesbian feminists called for more action, but the HGPC refused to hear any more complaints on the matter. PBT organized their own, albeit ineffective, boycott on Old Plantation and advised their readers to steer clear of HGPC. This episode illustrates Southern lesbian feminists' commitment to anti-racism in practice. As women, though, they had little leverage since Old Plantation did not want female patrons anyway.

The trouble at the Houston Old Plantation was not an isolated incident. In early 1978, gossip surfaced at the Dallas location that the Dallas Gay Political Caucus was going to boycott the popular club – something HGPC had never done. Anxious to "dispel these types of rumors before they can cause any damage to the lines of communication and good will," Steve Wilkins,

⁹⁴ Alison [McKinney], Barbara [Cigainero], Ellen, & Phyllis, "You Are What You Wear," *Pointblank Times* 2, No. 2, (February, 1976): 1, 12, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁹⁵ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 388, n. 21.

president of the DGPC, wrote to Old Plantation management to reassure the latter that no boycott had or would occur. Wilkins explained that any DGPC boycott had to be voted on by the general membership at one of its monthly meetings. He apologized for the whole affair, vowing that the DGPC would "continu[e] to work harmoniously with all gay businesses in the future." He made no mention of racism or sexism at the Dallas Old Plantation, or similar concerns at the Houston location. When, in 1980, the Dallas Gay Political Caucus Membership Committee looked back on its record since formation in 1976, it said DGPC "[t]ried very hard to end discrimination against women and blacks in Dallas gay bars. (Again, we've been only partially successful. But we'll keep working.)" Wilkins's correspondence with Old Plantation, however, contradicts DGPC's later recollection of this incident.

This type of discriminatory "screening" at various Old Plantation locations represented the status quo in the Southern gay community where businesses, especially those that provided a place to socialize, catered to white gay men more than any other demographic. It explains why social bonds between gay men and lesbians or white and black LGBT individuals were tenuous, despite strategic political coalitions across racial lines and/or gender lines. Discrimination in predominantly gay male domains was common in Southern states, even into the 1980s. Gay men's clubs across the South, and in Washington, D.C., frequently required black patrons to

⁹⁶ Letter from Steve Wilkins to Frank Cavan of The Old Plantation, (13 February, 1978), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 146B, Folder 62.

⁹⁷ Dallas Gay Political Caucus Membership Committee, OUR HISTORY, ([1980?]), 2, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 59.

provide multiple forms of identification, often passports, and/or pay a cover charge, while white patrons were not required to show identification and were granted free entrance. 98

Not all members of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus were content to maintain the status quo, however. Just a few months after DGPC's attempt to mend fences with Old Plantation, one of its members, Steven Bedford Henley, sent a six-page letter to DGPC board members bitterly detailing the reasons for his resignation. He called the organization "a country club for upwardly mobile, financially comfortable, white, male, sexist, bigoted gays" that accepted women and people of color only in a token capacity. Henley accused DGPC of "talk of change [that] was just that - - talk, and talk is cheap."

Their treatment of women in the group also offended him. He pointed to the "recent election of a woman president that was more of a camp than a coup...because it sheds the sexist image with the 'look how open minded we are' philosophy." Henley balked at the idea that two women in its membership indicated that DGPC was "United for Equal Rights," which was the organization's slogan. While Henley admitted that lesbian separatists would never join the Caucus, he believed that the organization should make more of an effort to attract other lesbians. The arguments that DGPC offered as explanations for lack of lesbian membership – (1) lesbians did not like organizing and (2) "[1]esbians d[id]n't feel near as op[p]ressed for being gay as do gay males" – were unconvincing to Henley. He found it particularly upsetting "that the women's movement fights gay oppression but the gay movement does not fight women's oppression." DGPC's "guilt by association" contention that the feminist cause would be hurt by gay support

⁹⁸ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 170; 296; 387, n. 16, n. 18.

⁹⁹ Letter from Steven Bedford Henley to Dallas Gay Political Caucus Board Member, (July 30, 1978), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 146B, Folder 62.

was, Henley knew, just an excuse for the Caucus to avoid feminist issues all together. He believed DGPC should begin a letter-writing campaign in support of the Equal Rights

Amendment and raise money for the Women for Change Battered Wives Program. This broader activism for causes beyond gay rights, he thought, would attract more lesbians into the organization. Significantly, Henley's argument here about potential coalition projects were for *feminist* causes, not specifically *lesbian* concerns; they would, nevertheless, make DGPC more politically appealing to lesbians. Although Henley's disagreement with the DGPC was atypical, it demonstrates that while Southern white gay men had a narrowly focused political agenda, lesbians were less willing to tie themselves to single-issue politicking.

Henley criticized the rampant racism and elitism among the "good liberals" of Dallas Gay Political Caucus who were mostly affluent white gay men. His letter declared the Caucus's "minority recruitment…as active as a dead armadillo" and said "[a] non-white is about as welcome in DGPC as George Wallace in Watts." According to Henley, such rhetoric and grand shows of anti-racism, such as staging a counter demonstration against the Ku Klux Klan and creating a "committee to investigate discrimination," were empty gestures. ¹⁰² The DGPC

Letter from Steven Bedford Henley to Dallas Gay Political Caucus Board Member, (July 30, 1978), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 146B, Folder 62.

Letter from Steven Bedford Henley to Dallas Gay Political Caucus Board Member, (July 30, 1978), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 146B, Folder 62.

¹⁰² Dallas Gay Political Caucus Membership Committee, OUR HISTORY, ([1980?]), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 59; Letter from Steven Bedford Henley to Dallas Gay Political Caucus Board Member, (July 30, 1978), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 146B, Folder 62.

merely "pay[s] lip service to minorities but ha[s] no real interest [in minority concerns] at all." ¹⁰³ DGPC's habit of publicly donating large sums to well-known, though not very gay-friendly, and sometimes outright homophobic, charities struck Henley as hypocritical and "discrimina[tory] against the economically deprived" because the group "will not spend a cent helping a needy gay join the movement." They were "unwilling to help others unless compensated." The functions the Caucus organized or co-sponsored paid little attention to the financial burdens placed on members to participate and instead focused on the good "PR" these functions would generate.

To Henley, the DGPC was a group of out-of-touch, politically cautious, racist, sexist elitists with Richard Nixon's level of paranoia. They had created an organization with a stifling bureaucracy and "red tape," more concerned with good press than broad-based political activism with a heart. ¹⁰⁴

This is in sharp contrast to how ALFA, for instance, operated. ALFA had its own house that members maintained particularly for fellow lesbians "in trouble" and a space for lesbian culture. It was a free place to stay for a woman fleeing an abusive relationship, passing through town without knowing any other lesbians, or an ALFA member who found herself out of work. The house also functioned as a meeting place and host space for lesbian-feminist artists and musicians. ¹⁰⁵

Letter from Steven Bedford Henley to Dallas Gay Political Caucus Board Member, (July 30, 1978), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 146B, Folder 62.

Letter from Steven Bedford Henley to Dallas Gay Political Caucus Board Member, (July 30, 1978), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 146B, Folder 62.

¹⁰⁵ [Box 6] "*****ANNOUNCEMENTS*****," *ATALANTA*, Vol. 5, No. 4, (April 1977): 5, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Juxtaposing the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference and the Lesbian Rites of Spring with male-led gay rights activism in the South in the mid-seventies illustrates the political divergence that occurred as the Southern LGBT movement matured. The differences and disagreements in political organizing between lesbian-feminist groups and majority-male organizations in the South did not, however, preclude coalition action. Pokey Anderson's ability to juggle activism in the Pointblank Times Collective and take a leadership role in the National Gay Task Force was typical of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance as well. Early on, ALFA members proved capable of forging alliances by working with male organizations to coordinate Atlanta's Gay Pride March in 1973, and organizing with other feminist and socialist groups throughout the seventies. Simultaneously, though, ALFA consciously and deliberately created a feminist woman's space, holding fundraisers, recruiting, and holding women-only events. 106

In the latter 1970s, ALFA continued its coalitions with more radical organizations and worked on a wide range of issues. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a sub-group of ALFA members formed Dykes for the Second American Revolution, or DAR II, in late 1974 and continued functioning into 1976. Their activities and activism forged coalitions between women across racial lines and sought to understand and address multiple forms of oppression as a way to create their own revolutionary cultural identity as lesbian feminists. ALFA members attended meetings of the Atlanta Women's Union, too. Minutes of these gatherings show ALFA working with members of the National Organization for Women (NOW), organizing an anti-rape coalition and battered women's shelter, as well as corresponding with the Workers World Party.

^{106 [}Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁰⁷ [Box 22, Folder 22.61] "Dykes for the Second American Revolution (DAR II)" ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

They also provided the location of "militant bookstores" for the readers of the *ALFA Newsletter* who might be interested in the Socialist Workers Party or Georgians Against Nuclear Energy. In 1978, ALFA and Atlanta Women's Union organized a demonstration in Plains, Georgia, to protest the incarceration of Dessie Woods. ALFA even attended a weekend training workshop put on by an African liberation group, but they stopped short of endorsing the organization when they learned of its homophobia. By 1979, ALFA subscribed to *the PEOPLE'S CRUSADER*, the newspaper of Atlanta's black community. ALFA also continued embracing revolutionary politics, following the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee's coverage in *Breakthrough* of everything from Dessie Woods, to COINTELPRO, to the Black Liberation Army, and the activism of the American Indian Movement (AIM). 111

The political winds in the South were changing as 1980 approached: mainstream gay rights as a movement was gaining political clout on civil rights issues, but Southern lesbian feminism maintained its radicalism. By 1977, the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference had morphed into the Southeastern Gay and Lesbian Conference. Lesbians and gay men from around the South attended, but Southern lesbian feminists tried to keep the conference focused on comprehensive activism. The conference schedule included panels and workshops designed to cultivate a Southern lesbian community and educate attendees about classism, racism, and

¹⁰⁸ [Box 22, Folder 22.2] AWU [Atlanta Women's Union] Minutes (January 24, 1978 – July 7, 1981), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University;
http://search.freedomarchives.org/search.php?view_collection=139, accessed 3 October, 2016;

¹⁰⁹ [Box 22, Folder 22.2] AWU [Atlanta Women's Union] Minutes (January 24, 1978 – July 7, 1981), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; http://search.freedomarchives.org/search.php?view_collection=139, accessed 3 October, 2016;

¹¹⁰ [Box 22, Folder 22.39] *the PEOPLE'S CRUSADER* 41, No. 13, (July 20, 1979), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[[]Box 22, Folder 22.24] Chicago Women's Chapter of the New American Movement, *Blazing Star*, (May, 1979);
[Box 22, Folder 22.25] Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, *Breakthrough* 2, No. 2, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

sexism – other forms of oppression besides homophobia. White lesbian feminist organizers did outreach to women of color and were proud to promote presentations by and about "Third World Women." But many lesbian feminists from Houston, Atlanta, and especially the Triangle Area of North Carolina, were becoming disillusioned with trying to build coalitions with gay men in the South whose political philosophy and energy seemed singularly focused. Plans were already in the works for a Lesbian Writers' Conference in the South so lesbian feminists could continue exploring Southern lesbian identities through the expanding feminist print culture in the South. This exploration of a Southern identity distinguished Southern lesbian feminists from gay male activists in the South, but also from their Northern and West Coast lesbian-feminist counterparts who wrote about their lesbian, race, and class identities, but not Northern or Western ones. 114

Southern lesbian feminists valued and took comfort in lesbian community, frequently practiced collective living, built a lesbian culture, and practiced a revolutionary anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobia politics. Often the line between lesbian-feminist culture and lesbian-feminist politics blurred. While lesbians, participated in co-ed organizations, most were male-run and majority-male groups like DGPC and HGPC. The Dallas Gay Political Caucus was even run like a corporation.

¹¹² [Box 101, Folder: "Activism, Southeastern Gay Conference, 1977-1978"] Letter (n.d.); Memorandum (April 1-3,1977); Southeastern Gay Conference Program, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹¹³ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones.

¹¹⁴ Lesbian Voices 2, No. 3, (Summer 1976): 42-47, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086; AMAZON QUARTERLY: SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE, Vol. 1, No. 4, Vol 2, No. 1, (1973): 65-67, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086. Lesbian Voices was a San Jose, California publication. Amazon Quarterly was an Oakland, California publication. This is also true of Amazon, a Milwaukee, Wisconsin publication and Lesbian Connection from East Lansing, Michigan.

Social movement theory helps explain the divergence in tactics between Southern gay men and Southern lesbian feminists on display in Texas. The DGPC and HGPC enjoyed the economic resources of their majority-white male membership and took advantage of institutions such as the MCC to forward their limited political goals. White gay men's sense of discrimination was based on their sexual orientation, one facet of their identity. Southern lesbian feminists' sense of discrimination came from their experiences as women, as lesbians, and their economic status based on sociologist Charles Tilly's explanation of "durable inequality." White gay men in the South had more economic capital, therefore could more easily mobilize a social movement and they specifically aimed to take political action and influence legislation — a clear, measurable goal. Southern lesbian feminists had less economic capital and more extensive, less quantifiable cultural goals such as ending racism and overturning social gender constructions.

Southern gay male culture and politics were much more discernable. Extravagant drag shows that thumped to a disco beat and performed for a crowd of white gay men seemed far away from the subdued political activism that played out in courtrooms more than in the streets.

As the next chapter will show, political events in the year 1977 provide a lens for examining how

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¹¹⁵ Charles Tilly, Durable Inequality (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 147-228; Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framing (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1996). In Durable Inequality, Tilly argued that established and systemic inequalities based on socially defined categories (usually binaries: male/female, black/white) had long-term economic effects on individuals that belonged to marginalized categories. This is applicable to Southern lesbian feminists, marginalized because of their gender. When gay men and lesbian feminists in the South began participating in a social movement, Southern lesbian feminists had fewer resources to mobilize. In Sidney Tarrow's chapter on "dynamic statism" in Comparative Perspectives, he argues that the state is important for social movements because there is a reciprocal interaction between states and social movements. In Texas, male-dominated organizations like HGPC fostered political alliances with local politicians to ensure favorable city ordinances. Local politicians engaged the organization at least partly because of its economic resources – gay businesses (clubs and bars). The economic resources of HGPC and DGPC gave them political capital.

Southern lesbian-feminist activists worked with and differently from gay men in a moment of acute homophobia; the former asserted pride in their lesbian identity through their activism while still emphasizing issues of race, gender, and sexuality.

CHAPTER V

"WE'VE HAD IT WITH ANITA'S BRAND": SOUTHERN LESBIAN FEMINISTS' CULTURAL RESPONSE TO THE SAVE OUR CHILDREN CRUSADE, 1977-1978

On December 7, 1976, the Dade County Metropolitan Commission in Florida quietly and without opposition passed a gay rights ordinance that banned job and housing discrimination because of a person's "affectional or sexual preference." Albert Glass, writer for OUI an adult men's magazine, sarcastically reported one woman's reaction to the ordinance. That winter, near her Miami home, singer, orange-juice spokesperson, and former Oklahoma beauty queen, "Anita Bryant[,] had a vision. She saw homosexuals recruiting children. She saw drag queens teaching sex ed [SIC] in Baptist schools. She saw gay marriages and unisex bathrooms. And she saw it all in a flash." When she and her daughter drove by a terrible car accident one evening, "God's ways were made clear to Anita." She thanked Jesus for sparing her and realized her divine purpose: "to crush the ordinance recently passed." In just a few days, Bryant assembled her brigade – Save Our Children (from Homosexuals). On the 18th of January, 1977, Bryant and her fundamentalist followers appeared in court; she was "on fire" for Jesus and claimed that the newly passed ordinance stripped her rights as a mother. Her entourage carried signs and hurled biblical reproaches; "then Anita told a curious tale: [o]bviously homosexuals couldn't reproduce, she said; obviously the only way they could make new homosexuals was by 'recruiting our

¹ [ARO756, Box 71] Albert Glass, "ANITA BRYANT'S HOLY WAR ON HOMOSEXUALS," *OUI* 6, No. 9, (September 1977): 91 – 96, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 2: Clippings – Subject Files. *OUI* was part of the *Playboy* empire, meant to rival *Penthouse*.

children.' So they were 'freshening their ranks' by waylaying innocents in schoolyards."²
Bryant's holy quest had begun. Her Save Our Children campaign worked feverishly to repeal
the Dade County ordinance and alert the country to the dangers of gays and lesbians; her
message ripped open a national discussion about the rights and "lifestyles" of homosexuals.³

For Mother's Day 1977, Lissa, a member of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA), and 'out' to her parents for the last eighteen months, presented a card to her mother. The card pictured a two-section comic strip. The left block read, "To Mom: On this special day, I would like to thank you very much for being my mom and not some nut like..." The right block of the comic portrayed Anita Bryant behind a podium made from an orange juice carton; a sign, "ANITA CAN SAVE YOUR CHILDREN[,]" hung over her shoulder. Bryant's campaign did open a national dialogue, but it was one in which Southern lesbian feminists took part. In July 1977, Olivia Records announced the upcoming release of a new record album, *Lesbian Concentrate*. Its purpose – "especially to combat Anita Bryantism." 5

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² [ARO756, Box 71] Albert Glass, "ANITA BRYANT'S HOLY WAR ON HOMOSEXUALS," *OUI* 6, No. 9, (September 1977): 91 – 96, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 2: Clippings – Subject; Larry Laughlin, "Anita Bryant: A Crusade of Christian Bigotry," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice* 4, No. 5, (June, 1977): 3; "Miami Voters Repeal Gay Rights," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice* 4, No. 5, (June, 1977): 1, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

³ "Anita Bryant's Crusade: Where Next," *Conservative Digest* 3, No. 8, (August 1977):10-13, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 2: Clippings – Subject Files; [Box 6] Corn, "A HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 6, (June 1977): 7, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. ALFA member, "Corn," told about her trip home to Miami for Mother's Day Weekend just a few weeks before the Dade County Referendum. She had previously come out to her parents, but they rarely talked about it. On this visit, however, her dad told "Corn" how he had broached the subject of the gay rights ordinance and Anita Bryant with the adult Sunday school class he taught. He changed the minds of class members to support keeping the ordinance in favor of gay rights.

⁴ [Box 6] "EDITOR'S COMMENT," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 6, (June 1977): 7, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵ [Box 6] "ANNOUNCEMENTS," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 8, (August 1977): 9, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

The years 1977 and 1978 proved the significance of the South, as a location and as an identity, in the national gay rights movement; they also revealed fissures in gay male and lesbian resistance, social and political goals, and strategies. In 1977 the South was the site of defining and refining the struggle of identity politics. Southern women, lesbians particularly, were necessary to broaden understandings of feminism which included the concerns of race, class, and sexuality. LGBT historian James T. Sears referred that year as "a watershed for lesbians and gay southerners," a time when political organizing in the South played a significant role in the national movement for gay rights. Sears, however, admitted the turn to more conservative tactics in a politically-oriented movement dominated by men.⁶ This chapter shows how Anita Bryant's campaign exposed the growing differences between Southern male-dominated gay rights and lesbian feminism that had been growing through the decade. It also shows how Southern lesbian feminists, founders of the first women's record label, Olivia Records, were the vanguard for the musical component of lesbian feminist culture. Bryant's Save Our Children crusade, born in the South, galvanized the national movement for gay rights at a time when Southern gay men and lesbians were growing more vocal about their identities. Southern white gay men heavily influenced strategic response to Bryant. While Southern lesbian feminists actively responded to Bryant, they also worked to expand feminist praxis.

To show the significance of Bryant's campaign to lesbian feminism and gay rights in the South, I first discuss the distinctly cultural Southern lesbian-feminist response to it and the Southern protests that followed the Dade County referendum. While mobilization against Bryant's message came from both Southern gay men and lesbians, their responses differed.

⁶ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 284.

Southern lesbian feminists' reaction to Bryant demonstrated how important cultural production was in the social revolution they worked toward, illustrated ties to Black Power and black feminist ideologies, and showed an applied, tangible commitment to inclusive politics. The activism of Southern gay men sought legal protections for homosexuals and sometimes blatantly reinforced patriarchy and white supremacy. The implications of Bryant for Southern lesbian-feminist activism were profound, but events, including opposition from the right, in the late 1970s and early 1980s compounded quickly to further shape the evolution of identity politics in the new decade.

Growing lesbian-feminist communities in the South were crucibles for radical liberation philosophies. They nurtured Southern lesbian musicians whose politicized womyn's music, in turn, further cultivated these communities and a Southern lesbian identity. The popularity of womyn's music among lesbians in the South into the late 1970s and early 1980s is evidence of the lasting impact of liberation ideologies born out of Black Power and radical feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s that was not as evident among gay men. The creation of the album *Lesbian Concentrate* in response to Bryant is an episode in the gay rights movement that demonstrates distinct regional variation in gay and lesbian political activism and highlights the gender differences in Southern gay rights activism prior to the AIDS crisis of the 1980s. While Southern gay men discoed toward a more conciliatory type of single-issue identity politics, on display in their reaction to Anita Bryant, Southern lesbian feminists continued to promote more comprehensive politics, reminiscent of late 1960s radicalism, and they did so through music.

The 1970s proliferation of feminist and lesbian feminist media in the South, discussed in chapter two, facilitated *Lesbian Concentrate*; the album provides a point of examination for the connection between radical liberation ideologies and Southern lesbian feminism. Although

lesbians in the South were marginalized, the growth of women's media nurtured and linked Southern lesbian communities. Southern womyn's artists, Pat Parker of Houston, Texas, Meg Christian of Lynchburg, Virginia, and Teresa Trull of Durham, North Carolina, all appeared on the record, had ties to radical politics, and to the Southern lesbian feminist communities who enjoyed and supported the album. By the time Anita Bryant made national headlines with Save Our Children, the Southern lesbian-feminist network was thriving on this lesbian-feminist media: print and radio.

The Southern lesbian feminists who worked on and listened to *Lesbian Concentrate* demonstrate the ideological link between Southern lesbian feminism and Black Power. They exhibited pride in lesbian identity, employed militant rhetoric, identified with the plight of Third World women and revolutionary movements, and they engaged in a discourse about femininity. Lesbian feminists across the South displayed these patterns by following revolutionary movements in and outside of the United States, consuming the writings of women who identified as "Third World," and fundraising for women in prison. Prison was more significant in the

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⁷ Corrigan, *Prison Power*, 4-5. Lisa Corrigan's study of Black Power vernacular aided my analysis. She created a theoretical construction in *Prison Power* that I used as a point of departure for exploring the relationship between Southern lesbian-feminism and Black Power. Corrigan provided textual analysis of writings by imprisoned civil rights and Black Power activists. She argued that these texts prove that prison became a significant factor that shaped activists' political transformations, and that their writings affected political interpretations and organizational strategies. Based on her source base, Corrigan formulated a list of four principles that Black Power writers used in their writing: black pride, militant rhetoric, an identification with and connection to "Third World revolutionary movements," and an "engagement with black masculinity." These tenets make up what Corrigan referred to as "Black Power vernacular." Corrigan emphasized the significance of prison for black liberation.

⁸ [Box 11] *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 3, (May 1975); *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 4 (June 1975); *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 5 (August 1975); *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 7 (October 1975); *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 9 (December 1975); *Pointblank Times* 2, No. 2 (February 1976), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; [Box 22, Folder 22.2] AWU [Atlanta Women's Union] Minutes (January 24, 1978 – July 7, 1981), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; http://search.freedomarchives.org/search.php?view_collection=139, accessed 3 October, 2016; [Box 22, Folder 22.24] Chicago Women's Chapter of the New American Movement, *Blazing Star*, (May, 1979), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.; [Box 22, Folder 22.25] Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, *Breakthrough* 2, No. 2, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript

activism of Southern lesbians than Southern gay men. The *Lesbian Concentrate* LP featured some music aimed at straight, homophobic audiences – Bryant in particular; however, most of its content nurtured a lesbian identity and provided a language in which to communicate for a group of women marginalized because of their identity.⁹

Southern lesbian-feminist music had a rich heritage that resonated on the *Lesbian*Concentrate LP; it was the output of the lesbian communities that created womyn's music production companies, musicians, or both. It was political in message and in sound. Many of the women who formed the radical Lesbian Feminist Union (LFU) in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1974 had participated in radical black liberation activism prior to forming the LFU. Women of the LFU fostered a lesbian community in Louisville, opening Mother's Brew where local lesbian band, the River City Womin [SIC] performed. Bigger name lesbian-feminist acts and musicians such as Meg Christian, the Reel World String Band (feminist bluegrass band from Kentucky), Holly Near, and Cris Williamson, also played Mother's Brew. ALFA hosted the Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference in Atlanta Memorial Day weekend, 1975. Elizabeth Knowlton eagerly attended the conference where native North Carolinian and founding member of The

Library, Duke University; [Box 30, Folder: WRITINGS, Feminary, *A Feminary* Vol. IV, 1975 January 1 – December 21] *Feminary*, (January 5, 1975); *Feminary* (January 19, 1975); *Feminary* (March 2, 1975); *Feminary* (March 30, 1975); *Feminary* (April 1975); *Feminary* (September 14, 1975); *Feminary* (December 21, 1975), , Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; "ASSATA SHAKUR sentenced to hell!!!" *MOONSTORM*, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977): 26 – 31; "Dessie Woods Sharon Robinson – SENTENCED FOR SELF DEFENSE," *MOONSTORM*, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977): 49; "LOLITA LEBRON: HER STORY HER STRUGGLE," *MOONSTORM*, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977): 70, 86, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086.

⁹ Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, [Box 17], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Corrigan, *Prison Power*, 5. Corrigan explained that while some writings from the Black Power movement were aimed at white audiences, much of the work created by incarcerated activists was meant to create a rhetorical identity that would connect African Americans.

¹⁰ Williams, "Louisville's Lesbian Feminist Union," 224-240.

Furies, Charlotte Bunch made an appearance. ALFA was instrumental in organizing the music concert featured as part of the conference. Topics from panels and workshops at the conferences included FBI harassment and third-world lesbians.¹¹ Such interactions show the close relationship between womyn's music and radical politics.

Music was one element of the radical culture that Southern lesbian feminists had been building during the decade that gave them a platform for rejecting Bryant; this culture also connected them with revolutionary politics by showing interest in political prisoners. Through the 1970s, Southern lesbian feminists and musicians actively found and disseminated information about women in prison and political prisoners around the world, including Puerto Rican revolutionary Lolita Lebron, Black Panther Assata Shakur, Joan Little, and Dessie Woods. The Feminary collective in North Carolina reported on police harassment and arrest by undercover police officers of their members and even corresponded with incarcerated women at a women's prison in Raleigh. The "LETTERS FROM THE INSIDE," sounded remarkably

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¹¹ [Box 2, Folder 2.21: "Bird's Coverage of ALFA] "coming together to come together," *The Great Speckled Bird*, (Jun5, 1975): 6-7, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 185.

¹² [Box 11] Pointblank Times 1, No. 3, (May 1975); Pointblank Times 1, No. 4 (June 1975); Pointblank Times 1, No. 5 (August 1975); Pointblank Times 1, No. 7 (October 1975); Pointblank Times 1, No. 9 (December 1975); Pointblank Times 2, No. 2 (February 1976), WLGBT Periodicals Collection; [Box 22, Folder 22.2] AWU [Atlanta Women's Union Minutes (January 24, 1978 – July 7, 1981), ALFA Archives; http://search.freedomarchives.org/search.php?view_collection=139, accessed 3 October, 2016; [Box 22, Folder 22.24] Chicago Women's Chapter of the New American Movement, Blazing Star, (May, 1979), ALFA Archives; [Box 22, Folder 22.25] Prairie Fire Organizing Committee, Breakthrough 2, No. 2, ALFA Archives; [Box 30, Folder: WRITINGS, Feminary, A Feminary Vol. IV, 1975 January 1 – December 21] Feminary (January 5, 1975); Feminary (January 19, 1975); Feminary (March 2, 1975); Feminary (March 30, 1975); Feminary (April 1975); Feminary (September 14, 1975); Feminary (December 21, 1975), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; "ASSATA SHAKUR sentenced to hell!!!!" MOONSTORM, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977): 26 - 31; "Dessie Woods Sharon Robinson - SENTENCED FOR SELF DEFENSE," MOONSTORM, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977): 32 – 37; Assata Shakur, "WHAT IS LEFT?" MOONSTORM, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977): 49; "LOLITA LEBRON: HER STORY HER STRUGGLE," MOONSTORM, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977): 70, 86, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086.

¹³ A FEMINARY 6, No, 12, (June 7, 1975): 8, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

similar to rhetoric from the Black Power movement: "Revolutionary greetings" from a fellow "sister," a call for solidarity against the "keepers of Amerikkka," references to police as "dogs" and "pigs," denunciations of "all imperialist pigs!" faith in the coming "revolution, and "[a]ll power and peace to the oppressed people." Southern lesbian-feminist musicians even performed at benefits that raised money for political prisoners. For example, Teresa Trull played a benefit concert for women in prison in her home state of North Carolina. Later, in April 1977, ALFA members participated peacefully in the Witness Against Executions national protest against the death penalty, held in Atlanta. Shortly after the release of her debut album on Olivia Records, *The Ways a Woman Can Be,* and the evening of the protest, Trull held a concert for women on the Emory University campus. The next evening, she put on a workshop at the ALFA House. House, this Southern, mostly white, lesbian community with radical activist roots, race consciousness, and a desire to engage broad political dialogue, reached out to political prisoners and connected to those prisoners and each other through womyn's music as part of their Southern lesbian feminist cultural praxis.

¹⁴ A FEMINARY 6, No. 14, (July 6, 1975): 1; "LETTERS FROM THE INSIDE," A FEMINARY 6, No. 18 (August 31, 1975): 3-5, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. This issue, typical of the publication, reported on political prisoners in Chile (pg 6), celebrated the acquittal of Joan Little (pg 8), asked readers to money for legal defense funds for a class action lawsuit brought on behalf of women at the women's prison in Raleigh, North Carolina (pg 7-8), and advertised outlets where Feminary readers could get more information about women in prison: documentaries, Amnesty International, books that were collection of prison writing from women in prison (Voices from Within: the poetry of women in prison, from Magic Circle Press; From Women in Prison Here, To Women of Viet Nam: We Are Sisters, from People's Press).

¹⁵ [Box 30, Folder: WRITINGS, Feminary, A Feminary Vol. IV, 1975 January 1 – December 21] Feminary (January 5, 1975); Feminary (January 19, 1975); Feminary (March 2, 1975); Feminary (March 30, 1975); Feminary (April 1975); Feminary (September 14, 1975); Feminary (December 21, 1975); [Box 30], "Benefit Concert for WOMEN IN PRISON," Feminary 8, No. 1, (Summer 1977): 43, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁶ [Box 6] "ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 4, (April 1977): 4; "*****ANNOUNCEMENTS*****," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 4, (April 1977): 5, 6; Karen, "TERESA TRULL," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 5, (May 1977): 5, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

The musical styles that influenced the sound of Southern womyn's music further explain the politics many Southern lesbian feminists practiced. Black lesbian artists, Linda ("Tui")

Tillery and Mary Watkins were involved, early on, with Olivia Records, collaborated with Southern lesbian musicians Meg Christian and Teresa Trull, and contributed to the *Lesbian Concentrate* album. Scholar Mary Pollock attributed the particularly "black" sound of womyn's music, in large part, to them. Tillery credited jazz and blues greats, and her Baptist church's gospel for her musical inspiration. She identified as "a woman-identified woman, a womanist" and as a "black American woman, carrying on a rich, full musical tradition...black American music." Although Mary Watkins was classically trained, jazz helped her loosen up her technique to include jazz harmonies. She also began composing only on the black notes of the piano keyboard; this note combination is the same one used in Negro spirituals. 17

Other Southern lesbian musicians drew inspiration from black music. One of the most popular bands on the Southern lesbian music circuit was Sweet Honey in the Rock, a black women's group with Georgia and civil rights movement roots. ALFA's Lucina's Music was thrilled to sponsor a Sweet Honey concert, after which, band founder Bernice Johnson Reagon, congratulated the Lucina's Music collective for their work. Reagon, however, did not hold back

¹⁷ Mary S. Pollock, "The Politics of Women's Music: A Conversation with Linda Tillery and Mary Watkins," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 10, No. 1, (1988): 14-19.

¹⁸ [Box 101] Letters between Ernestine Potter to Minnie Bruce Pratt, (May 9, 1978; October 29, 1978), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers; [Box 24] Val Gray Ward, "REVIEW," *Paid My Dues: A Journal of Women & Music*, (Autumn, 1977); Susan McHenry, "TESTIFYING WITH 'SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK," *Ms*. (September 1978): 40-41, ALFA Archives; Terri Clark, "sweet honey in the rock," *Off Our Backs* 8, No. 9 (October, 1978): 19. [Box 24] Mailer, "Sweet Honey in the Rock: BLACKWOMANSOUND," ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 259. A child of the Black Arts Movement, the band formed in 1974 out of a music workshop that Bernice Johnson Reagon conducted at Washington's Black Repertory Theatre. Reagon grew up in Albany, Georgia and was one of the Freedom Singers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

when talking with ALFA members about the urgency of confronting racism.¹⁹ The strains of black musical stylings, popularity of these black musicians in womyn's music, and their way of tying in personal politics and identity shaped the sound and political awareness of Southern lesbian feminists.

White Southern lesbian feminist musicians, Casse Culver, Willie Tyson, Meg Christian, and Teresa Trull appreciated and incorporated black musical styles in their work, but also included Southern folk and bluegrass traditions. This added another political dimension to their music. Despite their growing national popularity, and relocation in some instances, Southern lesbian feminist musicians repeatedly played Southern venues; this caused Southern lesbian feminists to feel a strong bond to the womyn's music scene. Teresa Trull was already well-known and loved in the Triangle Area of North Carolina before Olivia released her first album. In 1976, Olivia Records distributed Casse Culver's *3 Gypsies* album. Like Christian's and Trull's work, and true to Olivia Records' vision, *3 Gypsies* was an all-woman production. Revealing her Southern roots, the album included fiddles, a mandolin, a five-string banjo, and

¹⁹ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives; "LUCINA'S MUSIC PRESENTS THE ATLANTA, GA DEBUT OF Sweet Honey in the Rock, BLACKWOMANSOUND," ATALANTA 6, No. 9, (September 1978): 3-4, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.; James T. Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South, (New Brunswick, New Jersey/London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 260.

²⁰ [Box 30] Donna Lee Giles, NEW RELEASE: TERESA TRULL, The Ways a Woman Can Be," *Feminary* 8, No. 1, (Summer 1977): 8-10; "ANNOUNCEMENTS," *Feminary* 8, No. 2, (Summer 1977): 43, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; [Box 2, Folder 2-1] "Off the Wall Productions PRESENTS IN CONCERT CASSE CULVER and the Belle Starr Band," (1978), Tom and Tom Collection, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; "TOURING," *Paid My Dues*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (May 1979), 17-20, 36-37, http://www.queermusicheritage.com/apr2012wt3.html accessed 6 January, 2017. For more on Meg Christian's musical style, see James Sears's *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 256.

²¹ [Box 30] Donna Lee Giles, NEW RELEASE: TERESA TRULL, The Ways a Woman Can Be," *Feminary* 8, No. 1, (Summer 1977): 8-10, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Giles described Trull effectively delivering "strength and the bluesiness" needed for the message in "Don't Say Sister."

spoons.²² When she played in Atlanta, Culver wowed the crowd, playing guitar and autoharp.²³ Culver paid homage to rural working class Appalachian musical traditions by recording a cover of bluegrass matriarch, Hazel Dickens's feminist song, "Don't Put Her Down, You Helped Put Her There."²⁴ Dickens herself was a popular act on the womyn's music circuit in the South.²⁵ Willie Tyson and Teresa Trull both used blues influences in their work, but like Culver, included a Southern sound.²⁶ In live performances, Trull yodeled with skill and channeled the radical class politics by likewise covering Dickens's tune, "Don't Put Her Down, You Helped Put Her There." She also performed "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky-tonk Angels," by Kitty Wells.²⁷ Both covers and Trull's lyrics in "I'd Like to Make Love With You," "not to you or at you as men often do," reveal Trull's musical and political roots, as she sympathized with women in rural areas living in a patriarchal world.²⁸ This 'personal is political' thread shows her radical feminism while the interpretation of women's lives doomed because of male supremacy parallels

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²² Casse Culver, 3 Gypsies, Olivia Records LP, (1976), http://queermusicheritage.com/nov2004cc.html [accessed 31 December, 2016]

²³ [Box 6] "CASSE CULVER IN ATLANTA," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 8 (August 1977): 11, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

²⁴ Casse Culver, *3 Gypsies*, Olivia Records LP, (1976), http://queermusicheritage.com/nov2004cc.html [accessed 31 December, 2016]

²⁵ [Box 6] "ANNOUNCEMENTS***," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 5 (May 1977): 3, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

^{26 &}quot;WILLIE TYSON," Lesbian Tide, (January/February 1980): 17; Willie Tyson, Debutante, Urana Records LP, (1977) [https://www.discogs.com/Willie-Tyson-Debutante/release/3815536 accessed 6 January, 2017]; [Box 18] Willie Tyson, FULL COUNT, Lima Bean Records, (1974); Willie Tyson, Willie Tyson, Lima Bean Records, (1979), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Lima Bean Records had locations in Madison, Tennessee and Washington, D.C. Lesbian Tide classified Tyson's sound as "country-minded, finger-pickin', [and] foot stompin." FULL COUNT featured "Die Smilin' Blues while Willie Tyson included songs about "Good Old Boys," and blues: "Chicken Blues," and "Parimutuel Blues." Her 1977 release on Urana Records featured "Levee Blues;" the lyrics mocked "rich boys" singing the blues and rejected the notion of women cooking, cleaning, and serving as secretaries to men.

²⁷ [Box 6] Karen, "TERESA TRULL," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 5 (May 1977): 11-12, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

²⁸ [Box 18] Teresa Trull, "I'd Like to Make Love With You," Teresa Trull, *The Ways A Woman Can Be*, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Black Power interpretations of white supremacy that created a world in which African

Americans could not succeed. This musical genealogy was apparent on the *Lesbian Concentrate* album.

The Olivia Records Collective, in Washington, D.C., represented an important link between the Black Power movement and womyn's music. Some Southern lesbian feminists, like Pat Parker, had direct ties to the Black Panthers, while other connections were more circumstantial. Two Olivia founders, Meg Christian and her partner, Ginny Berson, had been members of The Furies and future Furies had participated in the Panthers' 1970 Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention; Mary Watkins was attending Howard University when the RPCC took place on its campus that November.²⁹ Christian was involved in the radical feminist community in Washington, D.C. that had attracted Rita Mae Brown and from which The Furies came. 30 Mary Watkins, graduated from Howard University in 1972 where she witnessed the activism of the BPP and the growth of the radical lesbian-feminist movement in the capitol.³¹ Although the convention was contentious at times and The Furies were a short-lived organization, many of its members, including Berson and Christian, continued their activism through the seventies. Their political activities, including the founding of Olivia Records, demonstrate the radical feminist and Black Power ties that womyn's music continued to reflect: a commitment to ending multiple oppressions. The year Olivia Records Collective formed, they released its first record, a 45-rpm fundraiser recording that featured Meg Christian on one side

²⁹ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 256. *The Furies* 1, (January, 1972); Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 248; Pollock, "The Politics of Women's Music," 15. Ginny Berson was a member of The Furies and also founding member of Olivia Records.

³⁰ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 256. *The Furies*, Vol. 1, (January, 1972); Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 248.

³¹ Pollock, "The Politics of Women's Music," 15.

and Cris Williamson on the other.³² The fundraiser album generated enough money to produce and release the first official album for Olivia Records in 1974, Meg Christian's *I Know You Know*.³³

The politics and feminist praxis of Olivia Records was evident from the beginning.³⁴ The radical feminist, Washington, D.C., publication, *Off Our Backs (OOB)*, covered Christian from the early days. According to one *OOB* contributor, Christian's performances "engender a very special feeling among feminists that these two women [Meg Christian and Cris Williamson] are, at long last, singing our kind of music. Songs about us. In seeing them in concert, I felt together with other sisters in the community. Listening to them on record, I feel the same way...I am feeling like somewhat of a groupie, but what the hell, these women are terrific."³⁵ Olivia Records, for the time being, remained based in Washington, D.C., and had several lesbian-feminist musicians on the label by mid-1974. The Olivia collective raised money for more record production performing concerts in Washington, D.C., and across the country.³⁶ In late August, those musicians, including Meg Christian and Casse Culver performed at a benefit in San Francisco. Without much advanced publicity, a huge crowd turned out to see the show. The Full Moon Coffee House was so full, latecomers were forced to sit or stand outside. Feminists in attendance understood the music these women provided was a necessary and integral part of the

³² Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 256; https://www.discogs.com/artist/1043203-Cris-Williamson accessed 2 January, 2016. Cris Williamson, from South Dakota, had released two previous albums on other record labels, but her 1975 Olivia Records release, *The Changer and the Changed*, proved groundbreaking in the world of womyn's music.

³³ https://www.discogs.com/artist/902625-Meg-Christian, accessed 24 October, 2016.

³⁴ Jean Horan, "olivia presents... meg & cris," *Off Our Backs*, 4, No. 9, (August-September 1974): 10. Olivia Records recruited women in the Washington, D.C. area to distribute their records. Recruitment material said any women who distributed Olivia records would "be paid for their work."

³⁵ Horan, "olivia presents," 10.

³⁶ Horan, "olivia presents," 10.

women's movement.³⁷ This shows that despite being based in Washington, D.C. at the beginning, early Olivia Records artists, many of them Southern, enjoyed a following in the San Francisco Bay Area, another major site for radical politics. Olivia artists were profoundly involved in cultural production for the women's movement through their music.

By 1977, when Anita Bryant exploded onto the national stage with her homophobic campaign, womyn's music was firmly established and Olivia, one of its premiere labels.³⁸ It was a particularly busy year for Olivia Records. That spring, *Face the Music*, Christian's second album came out, along with Linda Tillery's *Freedom Time*, and Teresa Trull's debut, *The Ways A Woman Can Be* - all Olivia releases.³⁹ Olivia musicians had already begun responding to Bryant. Southern crooner Casse Culver cut a single with Sweet Alliance Music titled "What We Gonna Do (About Anita)." In the reggae genre, Culver affirmed gay and lesbian identity, called on "sisters and brothers [who were] gonna struggle in solidarity" and "save the children...before Anita leads them all astray." Employing militant rhetoric, she promised a "fight" to "keep our human rights." Olivia Records announced in late summer 1977 the release of *Lesbian Concentrate*, deliberately responding to Anita Bryant's crusade. Proceeds of the record would support the work of the Lesbian Mother's Defense Fund. ⁴¹ Feminist and lesbian-feminist

³⁷ Scarlet Cheng, "olivia benefit," Off Our Backs, Vol. 4, No. 10, (October 1974), 23.

³⁸ Heather Murray, "Free for All Lesbians: Lesbian Cultural Production and Consumption in the United States during the 1970s," in *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 16, no. 2 (May, 2007): 251-275; Stephen Holden, "Olivia Records Is a Success in 'Women's Music." *New York Times* (November 4, 1983): C16. http://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/04/arts/pop-jazz-olivia-records-is-a-success-in-women-s-music.html, accessed 3 January, 2018. Holden reported that Olivia's album sales averaged 150,000 per year.

³⁹ https://www.discogs.com/artist/902625-Meg-Christian, accessed 24 October, 2016; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 259; 380, n. 61.

^{40 &}lt;u>https://www.discogs.com/Casse-Culver-What-We-Gonna-Do-About-Anita/release/8739764</u> [accessed 31 December, 2016]

⁴¹ [Box 6] "ANNOUNCEMENTS," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 8, (August 1977): 9, ALFA Archives; [Box 22] "OLIVIA RECORDS presents a better brand than Anita's," *Pointblank Times* 3, No. 5, (November 1977): 20, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

publications praised the musical talent on the album and supported the political message it presented.⁴²

The album's front cover was stark: a can of frozen juice meant to look like orange-juice, since Bryant was an orange-juice spokesperson. Stems of the oranges completed the female symbol and the picture read, "Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology 100% Undiluted." The back cover pictured lesbians protesting. The central figure in the photograph is a black woman holding a sign, "LESBIANS FOR O.J QUR JUSTICE!" Two of the three visible faces on the album picture are women of color. This album showcased how influential Southern lesbian feminists were to womyn's music and lesbian feminist philosophies shaped by Black Power and radical politics. This was not a case of Southern women following the activist example of their Northeastern, Midwestern, or West Coast sisters. Southern lesbian feminists founded Olivia Records and when Anita Bryant's crusade originated in the South, Southern lesbian feminists led resistance to it in a cultural way. 44

For *Lesbian Concentrate*, Olivia Records gathered previously released, rerecorded, remixed, and new material. The album displayed the dominance of Southern women in womyn's music and Southern lesbian feminist musicians' radical political consciousness that

⁴² [Box 22] Claire Noonan, "OLIVIA RECORDS presents a better brand than Anita's," *Pointblank Times* 3, No. 5, (November 1977): 20, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Mer, "Review: lesbian concentrate [SIC]," *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 7, No. 8, (October 1977): 17.

⁴³ [Box 17] *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁴⁴ Murray, "Free for All Lesbians," 270; 251-275. In her article, Murray noted the preeminence of Olivia Records (founded in 1973) and the significance of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival (started in 1976), both key parts in establishing lesbian feminist culture. But her interpretation of lesbian-feminism is monolithic, without geography. I argue that Southern lesbian feminists *lead* the musical aspect of lesbian feminism. It was not a case of Southern sisters 'catching up' with their Northern and West Coast counterparts. Olivia artists headlined at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival year after year, an event that *made possible* because Southern lesbian feminists had founded the first all-women's record label in the first place. The Southern sound of womyn's music, even from Northern lesbian musicians, demonstrates the importance of Southern lesbian feminism.

emphasized lesbian liberation, but was sensitive to matters of race and class. Olivia Records Collective members, Ginny Berson and Robin Brooks wrote the "political statement" insert that accompanied Lesbian Concentrate. In it, they defined lesbian identity and asserted lesbian personhood. The "political statement" explained the aspects of lesbian oppression: growing up in a heteronormative society, sexism, prescribed gender roles defining femininity, and a legal system that stripped lesbian mothers of their parental rights. Berson and Brooks claimed that men felt threatened by lesbians since men could not control them. They hinted at lesbian separatism but focused on celebrating "our pride in ourselves" as "a new step towards our liberation [italics in original]". Commonalities to Black Power rhetoric abounded in the "political statement." Its authors criticized the limits of "[l]egalities [that] don't change the realities of an oppressive and anti-woman society." Lesbian Concentrate was a siren call to "restructure the whole society so that no one has to be 'given' their rights;" "[w]e need a new world- a world in which we control our own bodies, our work, our sexuality, our communications networks, our culture, our living spaces, our recreation, our media, our very survival. We need a world in which there are no power heirarchies [SIC]- in which all people have control over their own lives and no one's survival is dependent on the "good will" of someone else.",45

Southern white gay male activists reinforced traditional gender roles in their own narrow activism against Bryant who declared that homosexual parents and homosexual teachers

⁴⁵ Mer, "Review: lesbian concentrate [SIC]," Off Our Backs, Vol. 7, No. 8, (October 1977): 17; [Box 17] Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

endangered children. 46 For example, when gay men supported Mary Jo Risher, the Texas lesbian fighting for custody of her child, they did so as a way to make legal gains for gay parents. 47 This line of activism on the part of gay men in the South, that continued in earnest after the Save Our Children campaign started, upheld the role of women in a hetero-patriarchal vision of the family that Bryant sought to protect. Southern lesbian feminists likewise supported Risher's case and lesbian mothers in general as evidenced by *Lesbian Concentrate* sales going to the Lesbian Mother's Defense Fund. But the latter did more than that. Southern lesbian feminist musicians who performed on and produced *Lesbian Concentrate* pursued a cultural revolution to break down conventional gender constructions that kept women only in the position of mother and replace them with a culture that supported and celebrated all strong, independent women, not just mothers. Southern gay men's one-dimensional perspective on lesbian mothers reflected ingrained social constructions of gender that Southern feminists knew would require more than legal victories to change.

Presented together almost as a manifesto, the LP's musical content rejected the traditional gender roles to which Anita Bryant adhered, mocked Bryant's paranoia of a gay conspiracy to corrupt children, embraced militant language for change, and celebrated empowered lesbian

⁴⁶ "Anita Bryant's Crusade: Where Next," *Conservative Digest*, 3, No. 8, (August 1977): 10-13, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 2: Clippings – Subject Files.

⁴⁷ People Staff, "A Texas Mother Loses Custody of Her 9-year-old Son Because She Is a Lesbian," *People Magazine*, Vol 5, No. 2 (January 19. 1976), http://people.com/archive/a-texas-mother-loses-custody-of-her-9-year-old-son-because-she-is-a-lesbian-vol-5-no-2/ accessed 17 March, 2017; "A Concert of Music for Women with Meg Christian," *This Week in Texas* 2, No. 7 (May 15-21, 1976), Box 1, Newsletters, LGBTQ Archive, Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University; Flyer, (June 26, 1976), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 43.

identities.⁴⁸ In "Nina," Meg Christian remembered "Eloisa," the woman she "was never allowed to love," and spoke hopefully about "Nina" and the younger generation because "women unborn, bear the fruit of your pain."⁴⁹ "No Hiding Place" by Mary Watkins encouraged "Sherry" to effectively come out of the closet and "let it shine/ Love is not a shame/ Let it be your claim."⁵⁰ The addition of the Berkeley Women's Music Collective performance of "Gay and Proud" echoed the message of pride in identity that the love songs "Sweet Woman" (Cris Williamson), "Sugar Mama" (Gwen Avery), and "Kahlua Mama" (written by Virginia Rubino and Gioia Siciliano, performed by BeBe K'Roche) built on.⁵¹ The lyrics of "Gay and Proud" also directly challenged traditional notions of femininity. The song's narrator went to foster care "[w]here they tried to teach me/ [t]hat girls can't go climbing trees/ [o]r playing with certain toys/ [g]ot to stay in dresses/ [e]lse they're called tomboys...[they] [c]ouldn't understand why I cut my hair/ [w]hy I didn't want to wear pink."⁵² Judy Grahn's poem, "A History of Lesbianism," depicted lesbians' frustration over the constant oppression of a patriarchal society: "it's the question of

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⁴⁸ [Box 17] *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁴⁹ [Box 17] Christian/Near, "Nina," *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Meg Christian, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵⁰ [Box 17, Side 2] Mary Watkins, "No Hiding Place," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Mary Watkins, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵¹ [Box 17] Debbie Lempke, "Gay and Proud," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Berkeley Women's Music Collective, Olivia Records LP, (1977); Cris Williamson/Jennifer Wysong, "Sweet Woman," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Cris Williamson, Olivia Records LP, (1977); Gwen Avery "Sugar Mama," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Gwen Avery, Olivia Records LP, (1977); Virginia Rubino/Gioia Siciliano, "Kahlua Mama," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, BeBe K'Roche, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵² [Box 17] Debbie Lempke, "Gay and Proud," *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Berkeley Women's Music Collective, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

male domination that makes everybody angry."⁵³ Sue Fink's satirical "Leaping Lesbians" exposed the absurdity of homophobic fears. The song started with sound effects of a door creaking open, followed by an exaggerated villainous laugh. Then it warned listeners that the "leaping lesbians" were coming to "[h]ypnotize you, try to squeeze you/ We're going to get you if we can...[w]e want your loving; that's our plan."⁵⁴

"Don't Pray for Me," the album track specifically directed at Bryant, was written by Mary Watkins and performed by Linda (Tui) Tillery. 55 Both African American women participated in womyn's music from its early days. Watkins and Tillery each worked with Olivia Records on a number of projects. Their influence on womyn's music comes through in the heavy thread of "black musical idioms – jazz, rhythm and blues, gospel." 56 "Don't Pray for Me" also appeared on Tillery's 1977 self-titled album, which Olivia Records also released. That album included "Freedom Time," where Tillery introduced the rhetoric of intersectionality, a significant feature of black feminism, when she sang, "If I could just tell you what it's really like/ to live this life of triple jeopardy/ I fight the daily battles of all my people/ just to sacrifice my pride and deny my strength." Olivia Records recruited Tillery when she was touring with a

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⁵³ [Box 17] Judy Grahn, "A History of Lesbianism," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Judy Grahn, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. [

⁵⁴ [Box 17] Sue Fink/Joelyn Grippo, "Leaping Lesbians," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Sue Fink, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. This song was not a specific reaction to Bryant's campaign as it had been written before the Dade County referendum. However, it served wonderfully to make fun of Bryant's outrageous claims of a homosexual conspiracy.

⁵⁵ [Box 17] Mary Watkins, "Don't Pray For Me," *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Tillery, Linda (Tui), Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵⁶ Pollock, "The Politics of Women's Music," 14-19.

⁵⁷ Linda Tillery, "Freedom Time," *Linda Tillery*, Olivia Records LP, (1977). https://www.discogs.com/Linda-Tillery-Linda-Tillery/release/1063953, accessed 2 January, 2017; Barbara Smith, ed. *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000) [first edition, Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983]. Smith quoted part of this song in her introduction to *Home Girls*.

band in the San Francisco Bay Area. The label's short biography of her highlighted how the personal was political: "Linda sees herself as having double responsibilities as a musician. She feels strongly that as a black woman she must struggle against a double oppression. She hopes that her music will give strength to other women as they too strive to attain freedom that comes when restrictions based on race and sex are eliminated." The frequent and close collaboration between Olivia Records musicians, Mary Watkins, and Linda Tillery is evidence of a Southern lesbian-feminist politics that concerned itself with intersecting identities.

Whereas Casse Culver's song for the Anita Bryant moment addressed activists who opposed the Save Our Children crusade, Watkins wrote and Tillery sang, in part, *to* Bryant. "Don't Pray for Me" reveals their systemic interpretation of patriarchy. Watkins accused Bryant of being trapped by her "blind innocence," and asked Bryant, "A sweet Christian lady preachin' hate[,]" if she knew she was "a victim." Angrily, Tillery sang to Bryant: "Don't pray for me, ya proper lady." She called Bryant a "bitter woman" and "happy slave," and told Bryant to "stop quoting scriptures out of context to stir up fear and bigotry." Instead, Bryant should "pray for the truth your money can't buy." Watkins and Tillery alerted Bryant that lesbians, "us people," were "coming out to walk in the sunlight [and] we're coming out to fight." This perception of Bryant as simultaneous victim and oppressor, driven by money, combined with militant language of a continued fight, evinces strains of radical feminism - an oppressive patriarchal system that

⁵⁸ Olivia Records publication, Linda Tillery, ONE Subject Files Collection, Coll2012-001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archive, Los Angeles, California.

⁵⁹ [Box 17] Mary Watkins, "Don't Pray for Me," *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Tillery, Linda (Tui), Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

dictated women's behavior - and strains of Black Power ideology that linked capitalism to oppression of others.

This analysis of Bryant on *Lesbian Concentrate* was much more layered and nuanced than the attack Southern gay men leveled against her in their resistance to the Save Our Children crusade. Southern gay men often criticized and rejected Bryant in sexist, even misogynist language that offended many lesbian feminists. Male activists also focused almost exclusively on Bryant's homophobia toward gay men without seeing a link between the constructed role of woman as mother that Bryant constantly touted, or the role capitalism played in her campaign. Bars and disco clubs for gay men hosted drag shows as fundraisers to fight Bryant's efforts, but men dressed in drag was a practice that most Southern lesbian feminists found demeaning to women. This was especially ironic because drag queens of color were particularly popular among white gay men in the South in the mid- to late-1970s even though the gay male population there was segregated. In their protest of Bryant's campaign, Southern gay men sometimes exhibited sexism and racism; they were willing to speak derogatorily about her as a woman and make a spectacle of black men to support the cause against her.

Through Lesbian Concentrate, Olivia Records emphasized the work of Pat Parker by including a new reading of "For Straight Folks Who Don't Mind Gays But Wish They Weren't So Blatant." The poem appeared on the 1976 Olivia release, Where Would I Be Without You:

The Poetry of Pat Parker & Judy Grahn, but in Parker's second recording for Lesbian

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⁶⁰ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 280-288; 385. One Southern lesbian feminist in South Carolina "decried [drag shows] as 'a mockery of all women."

⁶¹ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 285. Buring, *Lesbian and Gay Memphis*. Popular African American drag queens in the South included Hot Chocolate, Tiffany Ariagas, Emore DuBois, Jimmi Dee, Crystal Lambrasia, Sable Star, Miss Peaches, and others.

Concentrate, she dedicated it "to our good sister, Anita." The poem, in Parker's ironic tone, pointed out how oppressive a heteronormative society was. Without a hint of sarcasm, Parker explained an array of seemingly 'normal' scenarios where straight individuals were actually flaunting their heterosexuality. She concluded, "[f]act is, blatant heterosexuals are all over the place. Supermarkets, movies, at work, in church, in books, on television, every day and night, every place – even in gay bars. And they want gay men and women to go hide in closets." ⁶³ As Lesbian Concentrate made clear, Southern lesbians would not do that.

Parker, another Southern lesbian, immersed in radical politics and former Black Panther Party member, fed the Black Arts Movement and radical feminism with her artistic energies by the end of the sixties when she began writing for and working with the Women's Press Collective.⁶⁴ Parker's background and political foundations variegated the threads in the Southern lesbian feminism tapestry. She performed readings of her poetry with other black lesbian musicians, Gwen Avery, Linda Tillery, and Mary Watkins; as a poet, she toured the same lesbian-feminist music circuits as Meg Christian and Teresa Trull.⁶⁵ Her popularity in Southern lesbian communities reflected a Southern lesbian-feminist political ideology expressed

⁶² [Box 18] Where Would I Be Without You: The Poetry of Pat Parker & Judy Grahn, Olivia Records LP, (1976);
[Box 17] Pat Parker, "For Straight Folks...," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Pat Parker, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁶³ [Box 17] Pat Parker, "For Straight Folks...," *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Pat Parker, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/news/schlesinger-newsletter/poet-and-activist-pat-parker accessed 3 January, 2017; Tonya Gipson, "Feminist lesbian poet Pat Parker to give reading," *Daily 49er*, (October 17, 1979), Pat Parker, 1944-1989, ONE Subject Files Collection, Coll2012-001, ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California; Chesnut and Gable, "Women Ran It'," 250, 249; [Box 11] Pokey [Anderson], "JUDY GRAHN," *Pointblank Times* 1, No. 3, (May 1975), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. In the article for California State University's student newspaper, Parker recalled the sexism she experienced as a member of the Black Panther Party.

^{65 &}quot;AN EVENING OF WORDS AND MUSIC," Gay Community News, (October 21, 1978), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, 1940-2011, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 2: Newspapers, AR0756, [Box 336].

culturally, and sensitive to concerns of race and class as well as sexism and homophobia. 66
Inclusion of Avery's "Sugar Mama" was also significant in that it dealt with black lesbian sexuality. 67 The presence of Parker, Tillery, Watkins, and Avery on *Lesbian Concentrate* is evidence that Southern lesbian feminists celebrated more than one image of lesbianism. This contrasted with Southern white gay men who did not mind, and in some cases promoted, a depiction of the gay community that was monolithic: white, male, and middle-class.

Inclusion of Meg Christian's previously released "Ode to a Gym Teacher" was a hat tip to Christian's influence on womyn's music, and, given her role at Olivia Records and the urgency of releasing *Lesbian Concentrate*, it made sense. Christian originally included the song, on her debut with Olivia Records, *I Know You Know*, in 1974. It was a big hit among Southern lesbian feminists at that time. The story of a junior high girl's crush on her woman P.E. teacher unfolds in the song: the girl doodles her initials and those of her coach, sings the coach songs, writes her a Valentine's card, and even presents the teacher with "suggestive poems for Christmas/ By Miss Edna Millay." The chorus, however, hit the political message: "She was a big tough woman, the first to come along/ That showed me being female meant you still could

⁶⁶ [Box 11] *Pointblank Times*, 1, No. 3, (May 1975): 6, WLGBT Periodicals Collection; [Box 30] Leslie Kahn, "the poetry of pat parker & judy grahn: WHERE WOULD I BE WITHOUT YOU," *Feminary* 8, No. 1, (Summer 1977): 40-42, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Leslie Kahn wrote glowingly about Parker's poetry: "The poetry on this album is what we want and cannot be praised often enough...It's good to hear Pat Parker's poetry spoken by her...[Parker's poems] contain gorgeous interior phrases [and tie] together many themes into the feeling for female revolution." Kahn concluded, "this new Olivia record is wonderful...Now woman-identified poetry can be feasted on and praised."

⁶⁷ Maria V. Johnson, "Pouring out the Blues: Gwen 'Sugar Mama' Avery's Song of Freedom, in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 25, no. 1 (2004): 93-110.

⁶⁸ Murray, "Free for All Lesbians," 251-275; Stephen Holden, "Olivia Records Is a Success in 'Women's Music." *New York Times* (November 4, 1983): C16. http://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/04/arts/pop-jazz-olivia-records-is-a-success-in-women-s-music.html, accessed 3 January, 2018; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 256. Sears called Christian a pioneer of women's music and said she "was deservedly revered as 'a founding mother of women's music."

be strong."⁶⁹ In these lyrics, Christian, conjures a militant image of woman-ness. While this gym teacher lacks a black leather jacket, beret, and firearm, the powerful image from the Black Panthers, Christian's gym teacher represents a powerful woman. She is powerful because she is empowered, but she is also powerful because of her encouragement of young women possibly struggling with their sexuality and identities as women. So much of Anita Bryant's Save Our Children crusade rested on Bryant's construction of woman as mother. "Ode to a Gym Teacher" reiterated Southern lesbians' commitment to celebrating woman as independent and strong. This contrasted with Bryant's "Christian" understanding of a woman that necessarily deferred to man and obeyed traditional gender roles.

The music of North Carolinian, blues- and bluegrass-influenced, Teresa Trull echoed a home-grown, lesbian-feminist political consciousness that aimed to transform society. To Christian's proven hit and Teresa Trull's sing-along anthem, "Woman-Loving Women" closed out *Lesbian Concentrate*. From the beginning of her musical career, Trull exhibited her feminist convictions. "Woman-Loving Women" was one of the first songs she pinned and she had done so at home, for the Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists (TALF). On her first album, *The Ways A Woman Can Be*, released by Olivia Records in spring 1977, she made sure women controlled every aspect of production; the collaborations on the album with women of color illustrate

⁶⁹ Meg Christian, "Ode to a Gym Teacher," Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Meg Christian, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. In one recording of "Ode to a Gym Teacher," Christian provided with several minutes of introductory explanation about Christian's eighth grade gym teacher, Ms. Burger, who inspired the ballad.

⁷⁰ [Box 30] Donna Lee Giles, NEW RELEASE: TERESA TRULL, The Ways a Woman Can Be," *Feminary* 8, No. 1, (Summer 1977): 8-10, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; [Box 6] Karen, "TERESA TRULL," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 5, (May 1977): 5, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; [Box 18] *The Ways A Woman Can Be*, Olivia Records LP, (1977) Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Duke University.

⁷¹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 257.

Trull's musical influences and political sensibilities. Mary Watkins, Linda Tillery, and Meg Christian all contributed to *The Ways A Woman Can Be*. Clearly conscious of Third World Women, Trull included the song titles and song lyrics in English and Spanish on the cover and liner notes, respectively. She also added her motivations for each song. For example, "Grey Day" was "about the strength and shelter of women's bonds with each other, the main energizers for political work." Perhaps the most political track on her album, "Don't Say Sister (Until You Mean It)," was Trull's "plea for strong commitment and a defining of terms in the women's movement," which she believed necessarily included lesbians. Her lyrics for "Don't Say Sister" outlined women's need for militancy: "You say fighting is wrong, I say 'did we choose it?"/ When they stab us in the back/ Give me a knife and watch me use it/ 'Cause we got a pain that spans all time/ And fighting back to survive/ It ain't no crime."⁷² Such rhetoric matches Black Power vernacular: self-defense against generations of oppression. Trull's artistic talent and unapologetic politics affected her fans. One ALFA member, Karen who saw Trull in concert, reported in Atalanta (ALFA's newsletter) that Trull's work "spoke to me as a former humanist, turned hesitant revolutionary."⁷³ Through Southern lesbian musicians, Southern lesbians were adopting a militant ideology that Black Power and radical class politics had shaped.

⁷² [Box 18] *The Ways A Woman Can Be*, Olivia Records LP, (1977) Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library Duke University; http://queermusicheritage.com/olivia-tt.html, accessed 30 December, 2016. A later verse read, "You can pacify a dog with a bone/ Call a woman your wife/ Give the poor girl a home/ Well there's no need in my life the man can satisfy/ And after all the wrongs that I've been done/ He can't rectify/ He can't rectify." The given motivation for this song presents a clear dedication to a revolutionary ideology. Her language was mostly feminist, but some was clearly about sexual orientation. However, Trull's use of the phrase, "there's no need in my life the man can satisfy" is a double entendre referencing sexuality and class ("the man" instead of "a man").

⁷³ [Box 6] Karen, "TERESA TRULL," *ATALANTA* 5, No. 5, (May 1977): 5, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Lesbian Concentrate evinces Trull's quick rise in the womyn's music scene and her political leanings. Trull's cover of blues songstress Gertrude "Ma" Rainey's "Prove It on Me" appeared on Side One of the LP, but her original song, "Woman-Loving Women" more overtly expressed her Southern lesbian-feminist principles.⁷⁴ The song recognized women's oppression: "At home or at work, they'll try to put you down." It rejected traditional gender roles: "They can't seem to understand how you survive with no loving man around." And Trull called for women's solidarity for an effective movement: "Unless we all join hands, how else can the sisterhood stay afloat." On a more humorous note, Trull recalled lesbian history: "Some folks think Sappho was a little 'touched'/ Well I think Sappho just loved that touch we all love so much."75 "Woman-Loving Women" embodied more cultural creation that affirmed and celebrated lesbian identities much the same way the Black Power movement, especially activists who embraced black culture as a means for black empowerment, preached "Black is Beautiful."⁷⁶ Trull's reference to Sappho demonstrates an effort to illuminate lesbian history for lesbians similar to the fifth point of the Black Panthers' 10 Point Program, which called for an "education that teaches us our true history and our [blacks'] role in the present-day society."⁷⁷

"Ode to a Gym Teacher," and "Woman-Loving Women" show the combination of humor and lesbian-feminist politics in Southern womyn's music. Through Olivia Records, Christian and Trull worked together frequently in the studio, toured the same places, often together, and

⁷⁴ [Box 18] *The Ways A Woman Can Be*, Olivia Records LP, (1977); [Box 17] Teresa Trull, "Woman-Loving Women," *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Teresa Trull, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁷⁵ [Box 17] Teresa Trull, "Woman-Loving Women," *Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems*, Teresa Trull, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Ogbar, Black Power, 69-123; Joseph, Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour, 1-8, 276-295.

⁷⁷ "Black Panther Party Platform and Program," *The Black Panther* 3, No. 28, (November 1, 1969), Archie Givens, Sr. Collection of African American Literature, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

put on workshops about feminist business practices.⁷⁸ Because both women were especially aware of how energy-draining working with men could be, they often played to female-only audiences.⁷⁹ Both products of radical lesbian feminist communities, the Furies for Christian, North Carolina's Triangle Area for Trull, they lived the lesbian feminism they sang about. As *Feminary* explains, Trull's transformation "started even before Olivia existed. They began with a growing women's community in the Durham area, and with a consciousness-raised Teresa deciding to refocus on women. There was an interaction there, between musician and audience, each needing something the other could provide." Here, *Feminary* author Donna Lee Giles highlighted the importance of music for herself and for Trull, both Southerners, in creating a transformative culture based on their lesbian feminist philosophies.

Southern lesbian feminists directed the production of and greatly contributed to *Lesbian Concentrate*. It was a musical vessel that promoted woman empowerment and lesbian culture as a means of survival in the face of and resistance to Anita Bryant's message. By the time of *Lesbian Concentrate's* release, the Olivia Records Collective was an established, healthy label,

⁷⁸ Terri Poppe & Janis Kelly, "moving money if not mountains [SIC]," *Off Our Backs*, Vol. 7, No. 10, (December 1977): 16. For example, Teresa Trull, Meg Christian, and her partner, Ginny Berson, all of Olivia Records, put on a workshop (sponsored by Cantobria Productions) in Washington, D.C., called "Feminist Businesses: Keeping Our Money Moving." The next day, Christian and Trull performed in concert. They described how Olivia Records functioned as a women-run business dedicated to producing music for women, employing women, and using profits to benefit feminist causes. At the workshop, the women explained how they had, since Olivia Records had become financially solvent, decided not to hire any more white women until they were able to further diversify the collective and have "more of a racial balance."

⁷⁹ Claire and Sherry, "editorial," *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2, (April-May, 1978): 3, http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/Houston80s/Assorted%20Pubs/Pointblank/Pointblank-4-2-0478.compressed.pdf accessed 3 January, 2016; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 257; [Box 30], "Benefit Concert for WOMEN IN PRISON," *Feminary* 8, No. 1, (Summer 1977): 43, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Teresa Trull performed at this concert that benefited women in prison. *Feminary* advertised this women-only event that Cerridwen Productions sponsored.

⁸⁰ [Box 30] Donna Lee Giles, "NEW RELEASE: TERESA TRULL, The Ways a Woman Can Be," *Feminary* 8, No. 1, (Summer 1977): 8-10, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

running and expanding based, in large part, on the success of its two bestselling artists, Meg Christian and Cris Williamson. Both women had tracks on *Lesbian Concentrate*, Christian had two, no doubt meant to drive up sales. The album delivered a radical political statement that was inclusive and spoke to multiple oppressions. Southern gay men, in their response to Bryant, did not insist on such broad, revolutionary politics or this aspect of gay culture. While Southern gay male activists promoted, at least in word, the notion of gay power and gay culture, music, particularly political music that affirmed their identity, was not a major feature of it. Sears described Southern gay male culture in the late 1970s as much less interested in political music or the folksy sound that was so popular in lesbian-feminist circles. Southern gay men were discoing to K.C. and the Sunshine Band and developing elaborate drag shows concomitant with the Anita Bryant campaign. In opposition to her, Southern gay men protested, but their activism was single-issue, legal, and legislatively driven. This depiction of Southern gay male activists is reflected in the historiography of the Southern gay rights movement. For Southern lesbian feminists, music was much more important.

On June 5, 1977, ALFA held its regular business meeting; organizational participation in Gay Pride events as a show of force to Bryant's campaign was at the top of the agenda. ⁸⁴ Dade County officials, caving to the pressure of Anita Bryant's campaign, had put up the gay

Murray, "Free for All Lesbians," 251-275; Stephen Holden, "Olivia Records Is a Success in 'Women's Music." *New York Times* (November 4, 1983): C16. http://www.nytimes.com/1983/11/04/arts/pop-jazz-olivia-records-is-a-success-in-women-s-music.html, accessed 3 January, 2018. Christian's debut, *I Know You Know*, had been Olivia's first release and major success. Cris Williamson's album and Olivia's second release, *Changer and the Changed*, was still Olivia's bestselling record in 1983.

⁸² Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, [Box 17], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁸³ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 180 – 196, 278 – 285.

⁸⁴ [Box 1] Financial Papers (June 1977), ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

ordinance for a referendum. Voter turnout was high and on the 7th of June, 1977, Dade County Florida voters repealed the ordinance by a more than 2-to-1 margin.⁸⁵ A week and a half later, Gay Pride Week rallies and parades across the South and the country were, according to reporters, more robust than ever, signaling a renewed energy of resistance despite the repeal. The growing and increasingly powerful gay press in the South encouraged gay Southerners to turn out in order to show Bryant and her followers that the gay rights movement was not beaten by the Dade County repeal.⁸⁶

Fallout from the Save Our Children campaign polarized the country on the issue of gay rights, electrified gay and lesbian activists, and showed how important Southern participation in the movement had been and would continue to be in its growth. Pointblank Times Collective founder and ALFA member *in abstentia*, Pokey Anderson, was elected national co-chair of the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) less than a week after the Miami repeal.⁸⁷ Back in Houston that summer, and in response to Bryant, *Pointblank Times* reported on the formation of the Lesberadas. They described themselves as "lesbian desperados," "lesbian feminist anarchist gadflies."

⁸⁵ Larry Laughlin, "Anita Bryant: A Crusade of Christian Bigotry," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice*. 4, No. 5, (June, 1977): 3; "Miami Voters Repeal Gay Rights," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice*, 4, No. 5, (June, 1977): 1, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; Miller, "Anti-Gay Organizing on the Right," *PBS.org*. accessed 18 August, 2017, http://www.pbs.org/outofthepast/past/p5/1977.html

⁸⁶ "Letters To The Editor," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice* 4, No. 5, (June, 1977): 4; "Editor's Notebook," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice* 4, No. 5, (June, 1977): 4, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁸⁷ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁸⁸ [Box 22] *Pointblank Times* 3, No. 5, (November 1977), WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

In the wake of the June repeal, Bryant tried to bask in the glory of her fundamentalist fans taking something of a victory lap around the country, but LGBT activists turned out in force, rejecting her message. Eight protestors were arrested in Chicago on June 15 when she visited.⁸⁹ The next day, when she appeared in Houston to sing at the Texas State Bar Convention there, approximately 3,000 protestors, including transgender activist Phyllis R. Frye, gathered in a display of opposition. 90 After a prayer meeting with some Texas lawyers the next morning, Bryant traveled to New Orleans for an appearance there. 91 Her future in orange-juice was already in jeopardy, though. An official for Florida's Department of Citrus publicly stated that he wished Anita Bryant would resign as Florida Orange Juice spokesperson and the department was conducting a study to determine how identified she had become with her anti-gay campaign. On June 18, 1977, her filming of Florida orange-juice commercials was suspended. 92 Resistance to Bryant's message from the Southern gay community continued strong into the fall, growing new pockets of activism. For example, when Bryant visited Richmond, Virginia, in early October, 1977, more than 200 progressives and LGBT activists staged a rally in Monroe Park in support of "Gay and Lesbian Rights." It was the first gay rights demonstration in the city's history. This protest resulted in the formation of the Richmond Gay Rights just two weeks later.93

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⁸⁹ Mary Ruth, *Anita Bryant*, Local Newscast, (1977; Dallas: KXAS, 1977.), Television. UNT Libraries, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries.

⁹⁰ Mary Ruth, *Anita Bryant*, Local Newscast, [directed/performed by ?] (1977; Dallas: KXAS, 1977.), Television; *Anita*, Local Newscast, Mary Ruth: Live, (1977; Dallas: KXAS, 1977.), Television. UNT Libraries, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Sources vary about the size of the crowd at this protest, anywhere between 3,000 and 8,000.

⁹¹ Anita, Local Newscast, Mary Ruth: Live, (1977; Dallas: KXAS, 1977.), Television. UNT Libraries, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries.

⁹² BRYANT, Local Newscast, Ed: Live, (1977; Dallas: KXAS, 1977.), Television. UNT Libraries, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries.

⁹³ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 279-280.

But Southern lesbian feminists continued their own work and feminist practices. In July, ALFA hosted the National Women's Film Circuit; they also helped with and celebrated the expansion of Charis Books & More. 94 Casse Culver began a tour, singing "What We Gonna Do (about Anita)," rallying Southern lesbians with her answer to Bryant. It took her from Durham, North Carolina, Atlanta, and eventually to Houston. 95 In the fall, representatives of Olivia Records, including Meg Christian, Teresa Trull, and Ginny Berson, took on the Lesbian Task Force of Los Angeles's National Organization for Women (NOW) in a game of Donkey Basketball. It raised money for the International Women's Year (IWY) Support Coalition that would attend the National Conference for Women in Houston that November. 96 Incidentally, Christian performed at that conference.⁹⁷ Less than two weeks after Donkey Basketball, Christian and Trull put on a workshop in Washington, D.C. and appeared in concert. 98 Pat Parker released two more books of poetry on Diana Press in 1978, Womanslaughter and Movement in Black. 99 Their perpetual performing, activism, and growing national popularity kept liberation rhetoric and ideologies on the minds of their lesbian fans – many of whom were also following the state preparation for the IWY Conference in Houston.

^{94 [}Box 6] "MOONFORCE MEDIA presents NATIONAL WOMEN'S FILM CIRCUIT," ATALANTA 5, No. 7, (July 1977): 3; [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE." Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

^{95 &}quot;ANNOUNCEMENTS," Feminary 8, No. 2, (Summer 1977): 43, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers; [Box 6] "CALENDAR," ATALANTA 5, No. 7, (July 1977): 8, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; [Box 2, Folder 2-1] "Off the Wall Productions PRESENTS IN CONCERT CASSE CULVER and the Belle Starr Band," (1978), Tom and Tom Collection, LGBT Collection, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

 ⁹⁶ Terri Poppe, "moving money if not mountains [SIC]," Off Our Backs 7, No. 10, (December 1977): 16.
 ⁹⁷ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," Big Mama Rag 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁹⁸ Terri Poppe, "moving money if not mountains [SIC]," Off Our Backs, Vol. 7, No. 10, (December 1977), 16.

^{99 [}Box 10] Black Lesbians – An Annotated Bibliography, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

The national gay rights movement had grown, in part, because of increased Southern engagement, but that growth served as an alarm bell, which drew out vicious and powerful opposition. 1977 witnessed the darkening skies that ushered in the New Right and Reagan Revolution. While the gay rights movement and feminism in the South might have been inconsistently functioning in a strained political alliance, those who opposed gay rights and women's liberation emerged as a cooperative front against both simultaneously in the 1970s.

Anita Bryant's attacks were ostensibly on homosexuality, gay men specifically, but her rhetorical critique of gay "lifestyle" and biblical justification for her actions reinforced the role of woman as wife and mother only. Her successful campaign in Florida inspired John Briggs in California to mount a political campaign against homosexuals as well – Proposition 6 or the Briggs Initiative.
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Between the vigorous rejection of Anita Bryant's campaign in 1977 and the birth of the National Lesbian Feminist Organization in 1978, lesbian feminism particularly, was riding high. But Bryant's crusade also inaugurated a period of antifeminist activism that, in retrospect, was writing on the wall for change in the political tide of the country not immediately apparent. Through 1978, while Southern lesbian feminists continued to sing, record, write, and publish,

¹⁰⁰ Tina Fetner, "Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims," Social Problems 48, No. 3 (August 2001): 411-428; Gil Troy, The Reagan Revolution: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Fetner showed how Anita Bryant's campaign was a major impetus for a Christian anti-gay counter-movement in the US. Troy argued that Reagan's election and presidential actions were a product of the contemporary political divide between liberals and a conservative movement increasingly influenced by the Religious Right. The country's reception of Reagan's policies and rhetoric were also a product of the political divide.

[[]Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. The Briggs Initiative was defeated in 1978 but had a similar effect as Bryant's campaign: galvanizing the gay rights movement while simultaneously strengthening New Right homophobic political agitation. At least one ALFA representative appeared at a press conference with other activists and ACLU members to celebrate its defeat in November 1978. As another part of the celebration, Lucina Music sponsored a performance in Atlanta by lesbian musician, Alix Dobkin.

Anita Bryant enjoyed a measure of celebrity among conservatives. In February of 1978, much to the outrage of gay and lesbian Texans, San Antonio's mayor, Lila Cockrell, awarded Bryant an honorary alcalde award from the city at an evangelical rally. 102 Elaine Noble, the first openly gay person elected to the Massachusetts state legislature, and a major political activist for gay rights in the 1970s, had visited San Antonio, and other Texas cities, multiple times to discuss strategies for political mobilization of lesbians and gays. 103 Twice before, Noble had been refused the award by San Antonio city officials. Kathy Deitsch, coordinator for the Southern Region of the Texas Gay Task Force addressed a letter Cockrell, after the mayor presented the "honorary alcalde award" to Bryant. The letter requested a meeting with Mayor Cockrell by representatives from the local gay community. They hoped to make the mayor aware of the reality and depth of anti-gay discrimination in San Antonio and learn how alcalde award recipients were determined. 104 This act of resistance on the part of San Antonio's gay community, and the Southern region of the Texas Gay Task Force made the pages of *Gaysweek*, a newspaper for gay Americans published in New York City, and demonstrates the national consciousness of lesbian and gay activists in the state. 105

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¹⁰² "San Antonio Mayor to Meet with Gay Reps," *Gaysweek*, No. 56, (March 13, 1978): 2, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture [unprocessed], Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

¹⁰³ "NOBLE ATTENDS DEMO CONFERENCE," *The Barb: The News Monthly for Southern Gays*, Vol. 2, No. 10 (November 1975), 1; "San Antonio Mayor to Meet with Gay Reps," *Gaysweek*, No. 56, (March 13, 1978), 2, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

¹⁰⁴ "San Antonio Mayor to Meet with Gay Reps," *Gaysweek*, No. 56, (March 13, 1978): 2, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

¹⁰⁵ "San Antonio Mayor to Meet with Gay Reps," *Gaysweek*, No. 56, (March 13, 1978): 2, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

In early April, the Ninth National Conference on Women and the Law was held in Atlanta, Georgia. Charlotte Bunch, former Democratic candidate for president, Shirley Chisholm, and New York State Senator, Carol Bellamy, each addressed the conference. Meg Christian and Teresa Trull provided musical performances and lesbian comedian Robin Tyler did standup. That same month, while involved in the planning of the newly renamed Southeastern Conference of Lesbian and Gay Men, some ALFA women conceived of the Southeastern Lesbian Network and began initial planning for a Lesbian Writers' Conference. A year after her "victory" with the Dade County Referendum, Bryant was still making appearances across the South. Besides her award in San Antonio, Texas, she came to Wilmington, North Carolina, where she was met by picketers. When Bryant came to Atlanta on 11 June to speak at the Southern Baptist National Convention, ALFA members constituted some of the 1,800 protesters who turned out against her. These conferences and continued resistance to Anita Bryant were, no doubt, energized by the celebration of the women's movement that had occurred in Houston, Texas, in November 1977 as part of IWY events.

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¹⁰⁶ Ellen Frye, "women and the law conference [SIC]," Off Our Backs 8, No. 5, (May 1978): 12.

¹⁰⁷ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁰⁸ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones.

 ^{109 [}Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers; [Box 1, Folder 1.7] ALFA, "JUNE 11: MARCH FOR GAY RIGHTS", [June 11, 1978?]. ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

CHAPTER VI

UNDERSTANDING INTERSECTIONALITY IN A SOUTHERN SPACE: THE IWY NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE IN HOUSTON, TEXAS, 1977

Eldridge Cleaver was in his early forties in 1977.¹ He had fled the country after a 1968 shootout with Oakland Police. Cleaver and his wife Kathleen had spent time in Cuba, North Korea, and Algeria in the meantime.² But the former Panther and recommitted Christian was back in the states, in Texas to meet with a publisher about an idea for a book.³ He had been collecting revolutionary and conservative literature and following the Anita Bryant story since his return and decided to attend the National Women's Conference that was part of the International Women's Year (IWY) events going on in Houston.⁴ Cleaver attended at least three sessions in the Sam Houston Coliseum where part of the IWY Conference was being held. He came to the conference as an observer only, not a caucus member or delegate, but reporters followed him around, curious about the past nine years. In conversations with the press in Houston, Cleaver took credit for the conference saying "he came to the conference because,

¹ Connie Skiptares, "'Just say I'm observing': Cleaver at women's session," *San Jose Mercury* (November 21, 1977). Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, [Carton 13, Folder 37], The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

² "Soul on Grace: An Interview with Eldridge Cleaver," *Eternity* (May 1977): 24, 27-29, 36-41. Eldridge Cleaver Papers [Carton 12, Folder 4], BANC MSS 91/213c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

³ Connie Skiptares, "Just say I'm observing': Cleaver at women's session," *San Jose Mercury* (November 21, 1977). Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, [Carton 13, Folder 37], The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁴ "Battle Shapes Up At Houston's Women's Meet," *The Call* 6, No. 45 (November 21, 1977): 1, 13. Eldridge Cleaver Papers [Carton 12, Folder 84], BANC MSS 91/213c; "Soul on Grace: An Interview with Eldridge Cleaver," *Eternity* (May 1977): 24, 27-29, 36- 41. Eldridge Cleaver Papers [Carton 12, Folder 4], BANC MSS 91/213c; Lois Gould, "Do Feminists Need Anita Bryant," *San Francisco Chronicle*, (July 7, 1977). Eldridge Cleaver Papers [Carton 12, Folder 48], BANC MSS 91/213c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. The latter is only one example of the many news clippings Cleaver saved about protests against Anita Bryant, including the incident in Iowa when a gay rights protester threw a banana cream pie in Bryant's face.

'after all, I worked hard to bring all this about," referencing his contributions to the civil rights and Black Power movements. He also lamented the fact that more men were not at the conference. He had come to the conference because "I need to be educated on women's issues[;]" he was "'gathering ammunition for developing my own philosophy on women's issues." Although he supported the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), he would not give full support to reproductive rights and said nothing about lesbian rights, all major topics of the conference.

The political fervor of 1977 kicked off in January with Anita Bryant's campaign and continued through the summer after the June referendum. But during that same time, women across the South and around the country were also preparing for an event that would keep the South center stage in identity politics – the National Women's Conference in Houston, Texas, that was part of IWY 1977. This chapter shows how the importance of the South in second-wave feminism and a national lesbian feminist movement manifested at the National Women's Conference in Houston. In the Bayou City, the women's movement celebrated its growth and inclusion in a Southern space; its organizers and delegates at least tried to acknowledge and address the variety of women's identities in one cause. To demonstrate the significance of the South as a location and as an identity, I first describe the IWY Houston Conference, its major participants, the proposed resolutions for it, and the Southern lesbian feminists' presence at and

⁵ Connie Skiptares, "Just say I'm observing': Cleaver at women's session," *San Jose Mercury* (November 21, 1977). Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, [Carton 13, Folder 37], The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁶ Connie Skiptares, "Just say I'm observing': Cleaver at women's session," *San Jose Mercury* (November 21, 1977). Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, [Carton 13, Folder 37], The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁷ Connie Skiptares, "Just say I'm observing': Cleaver at women's session," *San Jose Mercury* (November 21, 1977). Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, [Carton 13, Folder 37], The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

participation in it. From there I explore the significance of black feminism at the IWY

Conference by examining Barbara Smith's efforts to get the Sexual Preference Resolution

passed. Smith, the black lesbian socialist feminist and founding member of Boston's Combahee

River Collective, co-authored their monumental document articulating black feminism, "A Black

Feminist Statement." Her engagement with Southern conference delegates on that issue

illustrates the power of the South in the gay rights and lesbian feminism in the South, as well as a

move toward a feminist praxis that understood intersectionality.

International Women's Year was derived from an older International Women's Day (IWD) celebration in the early twentieth century that honored working-class women in the labor movement. The Socialist Party of America first observed the US National Women's Day in 1909. During the 1910s other European socialist organizations also began celebrating an IWD by supporting women's suffrage and showing solidarity with women workers. The formation of the United Nations in 1945 strengthened the international movement for women by supporting four global UN conferences for women.⁸ Because of its socialist roots, the Black Panther Party followed IWD events in the early 1970s. Panther Elaine Brown even gave a speech on International Women's Day 1973 in which she tied IWD to the Black Panthers' political platform.⁹ Other socialist oriented organizations in the South were also interested in International Women's Day. For instance, the socialist feminist organization Atlanta Women's

⁸ http://www.un.org/en/events/womensday/history.shtml, accessed 5 January, 2018.

⁹ Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, Tracye Matthews, Mary Phillips, and Robyn C. Spencer, "Black Panther Elaine Brown Speaks on International Women's Day in 1973," *Intersectional Black Panther Party History Project*. 8 March, 2017, accessed 5 January, 2018 https://iphpcom.wordpress.com/2017/03/08/black-panther-elaine-brown-speaks-on-international-womens-day-in-1973/

Union, which coordinated with ALFA, also sponsored events in observance of IWD before and after the 1977 Conference in Houston.¹⁰

The growth and success of women's movements around the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s strengthened IWD celebrations and publicity of it. In 1975, the UN named 8 March International Women's Day and put on one of its four global United Nations women's conferences, that year held in Mexico City. In January 1975, with Executive Order 11832, President Gerald Ford created the National Commission to confront the inequalities women faced; it consisted of 35 members from the private sector and four members of Congress, all appointed. Congress tasked the National Commission with organizing and convening a National Women's Conference; it would be an extension of the 1975 Mexico City Conference. The State Department also established an IWY Secretariat for the IWY Conference in Mexico City. Despite the fanfare surrounding the Mexico City conference, lesbian feminists, including Charlotte Bunch, had been disappointed that lesbian concerns had not even been considered by conference organizers in 1975. In 1975.

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¹⁰ Atlanta Women's Union, International Women's Day Flyer, (n.d.) [Box 22, Folder 22.13]; ALFA, International Women's Day Flyer, (1981) ALFA Archives, [Box 22, Folder 22.20], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Debbie Mauldin Cottrell, "National Women's Conference, 1977," accessed January 07, 2018, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pwgq

http://www.un.org/en/events/womensday/history.shtml, accessed 5 January, 2018; *Handbook of Texas Online*, Debbie Mauldin Cottrell, "National Women's Conference, 1977," accessed January 07, 2018, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pwgq. 1975 was designated the International Year of the Woman; that was then extended to the seventies named the "International Decade for Women."

¹² National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977), 1-5. [Box 140, Folder 9] Gloria Steinem Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Deborah Diamond, Hicks, "Lesbians Map Conference Strategy," *Daily Breakthrough: Where Women Are News*, (November 19, 1977): 7. Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Jeanette Lazam, Barbara Stephens, Sky Turtle, & Rosalie Nichols, ed. "Sexism vs. Racism: PLEXUS CONTROVERSY CONTINUES," *Lesbian Voices* 2, No. 3, (Summer 1976): 42-47, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086. Barbara Stephens, a lesbian feminist and member of the American Socialist Party, cited the Mexico City conference as an example of when activists allowed homophobia to be a divisive issue for a broad movement by excluding

Still, many mainstream feminists saw the IWY 1977 National Women's Conference in Houston as an opportunity to bring together the forces of the US women's movement and use the attention it drew to push through ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Woman's Suffragist and National Woman's Party founder, Alice Paul wrote the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923 and saw it as a way to guarantee gender equality. Both political parties tacitly supported the ERA over the decades, but second wave feminism breathed new life into the proposed amendment. Almost every major women's organization in the US supported the ERA when it sailed through Congress in 1972. The ratification process looked promising when 22 of the required 38 states approved the ERA in its first year, but ratification stalled in Southern states. Texas, Tennessee, and Maryland were the exceptions, all ratifying the ERA in 1972. Tennessee state legislators, however, rescinded their vote, withdrawing Tennessee's ratification in 1974. Houston organizers viewed the National Conference there, in an ERA-ratified state, as a way to celebrate the women's movement and take the Equal Rights Amendment over the finish line.

While the country watched Bryant's crusade and LGBT resistance to it unfold, women in every state and US territories held meetings, 56 in total, in preparation for the National Women's Conference scheduled in Houston from 18-21 November 1977, as part of International Women's

lesbian rights. She argued that the Mexico City conference had "subverted women's rights to national political power ploys."

¹⁴ Allured, Remapping Second-Wave Feminism, 217.

¹⁵ David S. Ferriero, "The Equal Rights Amendment: Unfinished Business for the Constitution," *equalrightsamendment.org* (2012), http://equalrightsamendment.org/ratification.htm accessed 5 January, 2018.

¹⁶ Ferriero, "The Equal Rights Amendment," http://equalrightsamendment.org/ratification.htm accessed 5 January, 2018; Allured, *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism*, 217.

¹⁷ Ferriero, "The Equal Rights Amendment," http://equalrightsamendment.org/ratification.htm accessed 5 January, 2018; Allured, *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism*, 217; *National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK*, (November 18 – 21, 1977), 1-40. [Box 140, Folder 9] Gloria Steinem Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Year (IWY). Each meeting voted on resolutions and delegates to send to the conference. ¹⁸
Presidents Ford and Carter mandated the conference, which had federal funding. Whatever Plan of Action the IWY Conference adopted would go to Carter. He had four months to make recommendations to the legislature; Congress then had another four months to respond. ¹⁹ Many lesbian feminists believed Houston as the site of the conference held promise for the movement they were trying to build because of Texas's early ratification of the ERA and Houston's mayor Fred Hofheinz's willingness to take the political risk of engaging with the gay community for positive change at the municipal level. ²⁰

As Anita Bryant made clear though, not all activism in the 1970s was progressive. While the number of Southerners in the movement for gay rights and women's liberation had grown, so too had a counter movement. Phyllis Schlafly had been recruiting white, middle-class, conservative-minded housewives as part of her STOP (Stop Taking Our Privileges) ERA campaign. They planned an event in Houston at the same time as the IWY National Women's Conference. Their message was that the ERA would draft women into the military, force women and men to use the same bathroom facilities, make homemakers join the workforce, mandate abortion, allow for same-sex marriage, and destroy the traditional family structure. Some anti-ratificationists argued that a federal amendment took away states' rights. Schlafly's followers also called the whole spectrum of feminists, liberal to radical, Communists. Given the

¹⁸ National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977), 1. [Box 140, Folder 9] Gloria Steinem Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

¹⁹ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁰ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 172-173.

background of IWD, then the UN's adoption of an International Women's Year, STOP ERA women believed they had every reason to be concerned. Louise Johnson, a state legislator in Louisiana and an anti-ratificationist, believed ratification would only benefit lesbians, homosexuals, and prostitutes. Her vicious campaigning helped defeat the ERA in Louisiana, one of many Southern states to never ratify it.²¹ Opposition to the ERA and the women's movement generally had been gaining momentum through the decade. Whereas those gathered in Houston to celebrate IWY were a diverse group, those in opposition were a homogeneous group: white women dependent on the financial support of their husbands who made enough money that their wives had the privilege of staying home.²² Schlafly with the help of some thirty conservativeminded groups, organized to get in state delegations to the Houston conference. They made up the "pro-life, pro-family" faction of delegates at the Houston conference and controlled roughly 20 percent of voting delegates, but often gathered at alternative meetings not part of the official sessions.²³ Houston, a Southern city, was about to be the site of an ideological showdown, one that most liberal feminists who came to the IWY Conference had not paid much attention to in their excitement leading up to November 1977.

Preparation for and execution of the conference energized the city of Houston and demonstrated the ideological growth, or at least growing pains, of feminism. Between 17,000 and 20,000 people attended the conference; 2,000 of them were delegates chosen from the state

²¹ Allured, *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism*, 217 – 220; Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1991), 239-240.

²² Allured, *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism*, 217 – 220; Faludi, *Backlash*, 239-240.

²³ Handbook of Texas Online, Debbie Mauldin Cottrell, "National Women's Conference, 1977," accessed January 07, 2018, https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/pwgq.

conference, alternates, or delegates at-large chosen by the National Conference Commission.²⁴ The National Women's Conference: Official Briefing Book contained evidence of both the continued limitations and the growth of the mainstream women's movement. The book opened with an introduction, then the "National Women's Conference Rules of Order." One section on Conference Data included the short chronology of the National Conference, 1975 – 1978, a "World Plan of Action," membership of the national commission and their biographies, and a list of past members of the national commission, among other things. The entire second section of the briefing book was devoted to "Women's History," and identity: "The American Woman: A New Perspective."²⁵ It also included a "Declaration of American Women" that pointed to increased awareness of women of color and class concerns: "We are women of different ages, beliefs and lifestyles. We are women of many economic, social, political, racial, ethnic, cultural, educational and religious backgrounds...We speak in varied accents and languages but we share the common language of American women who throughout our Nation's life have been denied the opportunities, rights, privileges and responsibilities accorded to men."26 The document even showed the influence of the class, race, and gender aspects black feminism – "[w]e are poorer than men. And those of us who are minority women – Blacks, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans – must overcome the double burden of discrimination based on race and sex."27 While this language shows growth in the white feminist movement to

²⁴ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁵ National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977) [Box 140, Folder 9] Gloria Steinem Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁶ National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977): 19. Gloria Steinem Papers, [Box 140, Folder 9], Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

²⁷ National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977): 20. Gloria Steinem Papers, [Box 140, Folder 9], Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

acknowledge the identities and concerns of those who are not white or middle-class, it omitted lesbian identity, a key component to black feminism according to the Combahee River Collective.²⁸ It also suggests that many women, particularly white women, still clung to the idea of a universal sisterhood.²⁹ The third, and biggest, section - "Issues"- however, illustrated an attention to the concerns of women who were not necessarily white, middle-class, or straight. They included old standards like the Equal Rights Amendment, but also "disabled women," "Minority Women," and "rural women," among others.³⁰ The "issues" corresponded to proposals the IWY Conference would vote on.

The IWY Conference was divided into two parts, which also showed an inconsistent affirmation of various identities, especially lesbian identities. In the Sam Houston Coliseum, official voting on resolutions took place. Using the 1848 Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention as a guide, the Thomas Albert Convention Center housed the other part of the conference – exhibits of information, crafts, books, buttons, and t-shirts; seminars; discussion; workshops; open forums; poetry readings; and entertainment.³¹ Conference attenders could obtain tickets for a production of *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/ When the*

²⁸ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*; Caraway, *Segregated Sisterhood*; Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*; Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds. Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim. New York/London: Routledge, 2013, 116-123.

²⁹ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*; Caraway, *Segregated Sisterhood*; Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism*. Breines and Roth both argued that white women mistakenly believed that a universal sisterhood across races was possible. Caraway argued that feminist theory and feminist practice are both to blame for racial divisions in the feminist movement. She proposed a feminist practice that embraces the margins without reference to the center, one that does not flatten identities in order to practice identity politics.

³⁰ National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977). Gloria Steinem Papers, [Box 140, Folder 9], Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³¹ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass; Ticket stubs, Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, [Carton 13, Folder 37], The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Program for Observers, [November 18-21, 1977], Gloria Steinem Papers, [Box 140, Folder 14], Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Organizers repeatedly compared the Houston IWY Conference to the 1848 Women's Rights Convention, referring to the former as the "Seneca Falls of the South."

Rainbow is Enuf, or enjoy a concert of womyn's music where lesbian singers Holly Near, Margie Adam, and Meg Christian performed, as well as Bernice Johnson Reagon's band, Sweet Honey in the Rock.³² This lineup demonstrates a sensitivity to identities beyond white, straight, middle-class women and celebration of lesbian and nonwhite contributions to the women's movement.

Other documents from the IWY Conference, however, showed a reluctance to affirm diversity in the movement. For example, in the "Women's History" section of the *Official Briefing Book*, organizers included a timeline, 1961 – 1975, of the women's movement. Its authors said the chronology "does not purport to cover all important events" and that it was "written from a Federal government perspective and perhaps unduly emphasizes the government developments and those that affected the government." Events listed in the timeline, though, pointed out some social, not legal or political, advancements and changes for women. They included women's exodus from "New Left" and civil rights organizations because of sexism, and the 1968 Miss America Pageant demonstration, while completely neglecting events from lesbian history such as the publications released by the Daughters of Bilitis, beginning with their periodical, *The Ladder*, the founding of Radicalesbians in 1970, or formation of the Lesbian Feminist Liberation (LFL) when lesbians split from the predominantly Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) for many of the same reasons women abandoned the "New Left." Section of the lesbian to the same reasons women abandoned the "New Left."

³² Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³³ National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977): 25. Gloria Steinem Papers, [Box 140, Folder 9], Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

³⁴ "CHRONOLOGY OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN THE U.S. 1961-1975," *National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK*, (November 18 – 21, 1977), 25 – 38. Gloria Steinem Papers, Box 140, Folder 9, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.; Rosen, *The World Split Open*, 167; Andy Humm, "Betty Santoro Dead at 67," Gay City News 4, No. 50 (December 15-21, 2005), http://gaycitynews.nyc/gcn_450/bettysantorodead.html, accessed 6 January, 2015. Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) began publishing *The Ladder* in 1957, before the chronology started, however, the Los Angeles chapter of DOB

The increased visibility of lesbians, but Southerners especially, in such a big women's movement event was symptomatic of the growth of the gay rights movement, Southern feminist activism, and recognition of the region on the part of feminists from the northeast. Evincing IWY Conference organizers' desire to be inclusive, bring prestige and an air of political legitimacy to the gathering, they had assembled a crack team for the National Commission. Regionally, New York boasted the most representation on the commission, including lesbian Jean O'Leary, then Co-Executive Director of the NGTF, Gloria Steinem, and Bella Abzug – all instrumental in conference organizing. Midwest states were collectively just behind New York's representation, but Southern states rivaled the Midwest. The Commission also had representatives from other demographics: African Americans, women in the labor movement, and even more conservative women. Other marginalized groups such as Native Americans and Asian Americans only had one representative on the Commission. Jean O'Leary was the only 'out' lesbian on it.³⁵ Former first lady, Betty Ford, then-current first lady Roslyn Carter, and Coretta Scott King all spoke at the plenary sessions. Lady Bird Johnson provided the introduction for Texan Barbara Jordan; the latter spoke to the breadth of concerns raised at the conference, reminded attendees to be aware of each other, and urged them to consider all women's needs, not just their own.³⁶

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began publishing *Lesbian Tide* within the chronology dates (1961 - 1975). DOB founders Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon had also published within the chronology date, specifically *Lesbian/Woman* in 1972.

³⁵ National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977): 10-15. Gloria Steinem Papers, [Box 140, Folder 9], Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass. Maya Angelou was a member of the National Commission, listed as being from Sonoma, California (not Stamps, Arkansas).

³⁶ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Identity politicking among lesbians and women of color was on full display as the conference kicked off. Various groups met individually to strategize about how to get certain resolutions passed and influence the direction of IWY Conference discussion. For instance, the Houston lesbian organization, the Lesberadas, prepared for other lesbians coming to Houston for the conference by organizing a caucus for lesbians the night before the conference began. At caucusing they "can deal with questions, exchange ideas, plan strategy and come up with some overall sense of unity and purpose."³⁷ This was part of the larger official Lesbian Caucus meeting with caucus members and those who supported passage of the Sexual Preference Resolution. They gathered at the Metropolitan Community Church in Houston. Since the resolutions would be introduced in alphabetical order, some at the Lesbian Caucus meeting, including Jean O'Leary and Charlotte Bunch, worried that the conference would not get that far unless they pushed conference business to stay on schedule. In anticipation of right-wing opposition to purposely slow down conference proceedings, the Lesbian Caucus hoped to amend an earlier resolution to include their concerns if the conference did not get all the way down the list. The Lesbian Caucus met again on the first night of the conference to continue planning, but that meeting was disrupted by Houston residents living near the MCC complaining to police about parking at the meeting and a fake bomb threat.³⁸ Early in the morning on 19 November, the "Racial/Ethnic (minority unit) caucus" met to discuss the conference's National Plan of

³⁷ Lesberadas, "Lesberadas – Houston Lesbians Unite!" *Pointblank Times* 3, No. 5 (November 1977): 23-24, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, [Box 22]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

³⁸ Deborah Diamond, Hicks, "Lesbians Map Conference Strategy," *Daily Breakthrough: Where Women Are News*, (November 19, 1977): 7. Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Action.³⁹ Dorothy Height, halfway through her 40-year presidency of the National Council of Negro Women then, wanted to "all get down to business right away" at the IWY Conference for the "Black Women's Agenda."⁴⁰

As the only lesbian on the National Commission, Jean O'Leary had high hopes that the conference would also mean progress for gay rights if the Sexual Preference Resolution passed. She sent out a letter to delegates prior to the conference emphasizing the conference's historical importance, diversity, and the necessity of including lesbian rights in the conference platform. While she acknowledged identity politicking, referring to the "individual priority issues," and the controversy over the Sexual Preference Resolution, she reminded conference attendees that "women who are lesbian are a definite part of the fabric of our society[,]" and had supported all of the 26 proposals for the conference's National Plan of Action. Lesbian support of "women's rights issues such as equal pay for equal work, when we have trouble keeping our jobs, [lesbian work for child care centers, when we cannot legally keep our children," O'Leary argued, evidenced lesbian commitment to feminist causes despite the homophobic discrimination they faced. Modeling some of her language on the rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr., O'Leary said "it is clear that abridgement of the basic rights of any woman diminishes the freedom of all women[; because of this] it is important that all women learn about the lesbian situation."41 O'Leary's letter reflected the hegemony of white women's history by paralleling the conference to the 1848 Seneca Falls Woman's Rights Convention, perhaps appealing to the straight, white,

³⁹ Adrienne Critchlow, letter to IWY Sister Delegates, (November 9, 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁴⁰ Adrienne Critchlow, letter to IWY Sister Delegates, (November 9, 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁴¹, Jean O'Leary of NGTF, Letter to Delegates, (November 11, 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, [Box 2, Folder 34], Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

middle-class women in attendance. At the close of the letter, however, O'Leary made a less than subtle comparison between the Sexual Preference Resolution in 1977 and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's resolution for woman's suffrage in 1848.⁴²

The National Commission prepared a structure for the conference and an agenda that included some controversial issues. The agenda for the conference was adoption of a National Plan of Action, which consisted of voting on 26 different proposals that had been formulated at the individual state meetings earlier in the year; those that passed would become resolutions of the conference. Proposals included topics such as healthcare and services for elderly women, prevention of rape, establishing a Women's Department in the Cabinet, combatting child abuse, and help for battered women. Proposals regarding "disabled women, minority women, and Welfare" that came out of the state conferences were substituted with redrafted proposals that maintained the goals of the original proposals. They passed. ⁴³ The three most controversial proposals were support of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), reproductive freedom, which emphasized protection of access to safe abortions, and the "Sexual Preference" proposal, also referred to as the "lesbian rights" proposal. ⁴⁴

Interestingly, the most controversial proposals said nothing about class or race, but included sexuality – as though the women's movement had matured enough to include the needs and concerns of working class women and women of color, but not gay women. Thirty-four

⁴², Jean O'Leary of NGTF, Letter to Delegates, (November 11, 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402. Ironically, O'Leary did not mention that it was Frederick Douglass's extemporaneous speech in support of woman's suffrage at the Seneca Falls Convention that helped pass such a controversial resolution.

⁴³ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁴ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

states had adopted various recommendations on sexual preference at their respective conventions. Six states filed minority reports dissenting from state platforms that were prolesbian rights, while four states specifically passed resolutions that were anti-gay. The official "Sexual Preference" proposal, a composite of what came out of those conventions, had modest legislative goals: recommending that legislatures at the federal, state, and local levels pass laws that eliminated discrimination based on sexuality "in areas including, but not limited to, employment, housing public accommodations, credit, public facilities, government funding, and the military." The proposal recommended that state governments reform penal codes and repeal state laws that regulated sexual acts performed privately between consenting adults, but many states, including some in the South had already begun to do so. The rest of the proposal dealt with protecting lesbian mothers in child custody cases by mandating that sexual preference not be a determining factor for custody or visitation rights. This recommendation was one of the shortest of all 26 at the conference. Half of its argument had to do with lesbian mothers, thus

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^{45 &}quot;SEXUAL PREFERENCE," National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK, (November 18 – 21, 1977), 213-214. [Box 140, Folder 9] Gloria Steinem Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass

⁴⁶ Deborah Diamond, Hicks, "Lesbians Map Conference Strategy," *Daily Breakthrough: Where Women Are News*, (November 19, 1977): 7. Eldridge Cleaver Papers, BANC MSS 91/213c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

⁴⁷ "SEXUAL PREFERENCE," *National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK*, (November 18 – 21, 1977), 213-214. Gloria Steinem Papers, Box 140, Folder 9, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.; "SOUTHERN SHORTS," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice* 4, No. 4, (May, 1977): 4, 11, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas; [Box 22] Lesberadas, "lesberadas – houston lesbians unite!" *Pointblank Times*, Vol. 3, No. 5, (November 1977): 24, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. For example, the penalty for "homosexual acts" in Texas was reduced from a felony offense to a misdemeanor in 1973. Arkansas reformed its sodomy laws in 1975. Repeal, or at least reform, of sodomy laws was a major thrust of gay male activists in the South even though the wording of most such laws only tangentially related to lesbians. Thus, lesbians stood to gain little by their repeal.

keeping women in a feminized role.⁴⁸ But it was the proposal up for conference vote and lesbians and their allies worked hard for its passage.

Supporters of the controversial proposals, the Sexual Preference Resolution in particular, realized that the conference had to stay on schedule for the lesbian rights plank to pass. In an effort to keep the pace of the conference moving and voting on time, proposals from the state conferences were voted on and approved without amending them, thus limiting the amount of debate on each issue. Women in attendance who opposed such issues as reproductive freedom, the ERA, or rights for lesbians, formed a coalition. Their strategy for defeating these proposals was to repeatedly question points of order, thus halting the proceedings. Attendees from this "anti" faction complained frequently that they were not getting equal time to express themselves on those issues. On those issues.

Southern states were an important part of the Houston conference because their delegations had the numbers to sway votes; thus displaying the power of Southern feminism.

New York's representation dwarfed all the other states with 88 delegates, but Texas was the most powerful Southern delegation – 58 delegates to rival the second largest delegation from Pennsylvania with 60 delegates. Texas delegates also sat closest to the stage and right next to a microphone on the convention floor where voting took place. Florida brought 40 delegates,

⁴⁸ "SEXUAL PREFERENCE," *National Women's Conference: OFFICIAL BRIEFING BOOK*, (November 18 – 21, 1977), 213-214. Gloria Steinem Papers, Box 140, Folder 9, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁴⁹ Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Mary Wadding, "IWY Results Are Still In Question," Big Mama Rag 6, no. 1, (January 1978): 7. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁵¹ PRO-PLAN CAUCUS CONVENTION FLOOR PLAN, (November 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, [Box 2, Folder 34], Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York; Lesberadas, "Lesberadas – Houston Lesbians Unite!" *Pointblank Times* 3, No. 5 (November 1977): 23-24, WLGBT Periodicals Collection,

just behind California's 46. North Carolina had only one less delegate than Massachusetts, the latter of which many viewed as a political powerhouse. Virginia and Georgia were also well-represented with 30 delegates each.⁵²

Perhaps because of Anita Bryant's ongoing campaign, lesbian feminists were more prepared for hostility to their cause than their liberal, heterosexual feminist sisters. Aware of the IWY Houston conference's importance for lesbians, Southern lesbian feminist organizations put their energies and resources toward preparation for it. In the months leading up to the IWY Conference in Houston, Southern lesbian-feminist publications were saturated with information about it. In contrast, *The Barb*, more geared toward a gay male audience, ignored the topic. 53 Showing their ability to multi-task while politicking, Southern lesbian feminists eagerly prepared for the IWY Conference months in advance even as they mobilized against Anita Bryant. For example, ALFA also followed the headway lesbian and gay activists were making with the Carter Administration on gay rights. *Atalanta* celebrated the beginning of a series of meetings between members of President Jimmy Carter's staff and LGBT activists including the coexecutive directors of the NGTF, Jean O'Leary and Bruce Voeller, and North Carolinian Charlotte Bunch. 54 The meetings were, for lesbian feminists, in preparation for and connected to

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[[]Box 22]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. The vast majority – 52 out of 58 – of Texas delegates supported women's rights and were not part of the New Right backlash.

⁵² PRO-PLAN CAUCUS CONVENTION FLOOR PLAN, (November 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, [Box 2, Folder 34], Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁵³ The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice 4, No. 2 (March, 1977); The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice 4, No. 3, (April, 1977); The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice 4, No. 4 (May, 1977); The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice 4, No. 5, (June, 1977); The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice, No. 42 (September 15, 1977); Tom Oosterhoudt, "Jimmie Dee: Miss Gay America," The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice, No. 42 (September 15, 1977): 8-9, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁵⁴ ALFA, *ATALANTA* 5, No. 5 (May 1977): 2. ALFA Archives, [Box 6]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; "Editor's Notebook: White House," *The Barb: The Southern Gay Voice* 4,

the upcoming IWY Conference in Houston.⁵⁵ The fact that O'Leary was the only lesbian on the IWY Conference's National Commission did worry ALFA members, though. After all, that Commission had determined that "LESBIANISM WAS AMONG THE ISSUES NOT CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE OR IMPORTANT [SIC]."⁵⁶ ALFA had its own point person, Martha, for organizing lesbian participation in the state conference that fed into the national conference in Houston.⁵⁷ In an effort to make lesbians' concerns part of Georgia's conference policy recommendations, ALFA urged its membership to attend the conference at a cost of \$5.50 each, pushed to sponsor a Lesbian Workshop at the state convention, and help get "at least one 'out' lesbian elected as a Georgia delegate" to the National conference in Houston.⁵⁸

The Lesberadas in Houston hoped the conference in their city would pass peacefully with positive gains for lesbians, but they met heavy opposition at "[o]ur first target: the Texas IWY Convention." Since lesbians in Houston had previously participated openly and without repercussions in ERA rallies, parades, and other conventions, they hoped that mobilizing for lesbian visibility at the state IWY Conference would go as smoothly. At the Texas state conference, Lesberadas asserted pride in their lesbian identity, "speaking out for our points of

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No. 3 (April, 1977): 2, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

⁵⁵ ALFA, "National Gay Task Force is Going Up in the World," *ATALANTA*, 5, No. 5 (May 1977): 2. ALFA Archives, [Box 6]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵⁶ ALFA, "National Gay Task Force is Going Up in the World," *ATALANTA*, 5, No. 5 (May 1977): 8. ALFA Archives, [Box 6]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Use of capitalization was present in the original.

⁵⁷ "NEWS," ATALANTA 5, No. 4 (April 1977): 2, ALFA Archives, [Box 6]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵⁸ ALFA, "National Gay Task Force is Going Up in the World," *ATALANTA*, 5, No. 5 (May 1977): 8, ALFA Archives, [Box 6]; ALFA, "Local Ads and Announcements," *ATALANTA*, Vol. 5, No. 5, (May 1977): 9. ALFA Archives, [Box 6]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵⁹ Lesberadas, "Lesberadas – Houston Lesbians Unite!" *Pointblank Times* 3, No. 5 (November 1977): 23-24, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, [Box 22]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

view" and publicly showing affection for one another – holding hands and kissing. They met open hostility at the Texas state conference from antifeminists and members of the Ku Klux Klan who showed up to "protect our women from militant lesbians." The same antifeminist forces accused Lesberadas of "soliciting straight women for sex" at the state conference. Having experienced the vitriol and slander they did at the state conference, the Lesberadas approached the National Conference in Houston mentally prepared for homophobic "baiting," antagonization, and attacks from their opposition. Despite the "Dodge City mentality" that the Lesberadas felt some *Pointblank Times* readers might have, the group was hopeful that their unity and visibility at the IWY Conference in November would occur without a violent backlash. In a plea to other lesbians to turn out for the National Conference, Lesberadas cited the successful Human Rights Rally in Houston in June 1977 and a protest against Anita Bryant the same month in which 8,000 people demonstrated. The Lesberadas took pride in the fact that lesbian visibility was high at both events and both events passed nonviolently. ⁶⁰

Barbara Smith, like ALFA and the Lesberadas, understood the significance of passing the "Sexual Preference" resolution, however modest its goals, and doing so in the face of potential opposition.⁶¹ While Southern lesbian feminists made preparations for IWY in Houston, she prepared to harness Southern support for lesbian rights at the conference. Smith, like some Southern lesbian feminists, also foresaw the physical and ideological threat opposition forces

⁶⁰ Lesberadas, "Lesberadas – Houston Lesbians Unite!" *Pointblank Times* 3, No. 5 (November 1977): 23-24, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, [Box 22]. David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; "Battle Shapes Up At Houston's Women's Meet," *The Call* 6, No. 45 (November 21, 1977): 1, 13. Eldridge Cleaver Papers [Carton 12, Folder 84], BANC MSS 91/213c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Sources varied about the size of the crowd at this protest, anywhere between 3,000 and 8,000.

⁶¹ Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, eds. Carole R. McCann and Seung-kyung Kim. New York/London: Routledge, 2013, 116-123; Barbara Smith [handwritten] letter to multiple organizations [1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

posed to a broad-based women's movement that she and fellow Combahee River Collective members envisioned. Smith had been preparing months before arriving in Houston as a Massachusetts delegate at the IWY Conference. Representing the Abortion Action Coalition in Boston, Smith drafted a formal letter to send to state IWY chairpersons and the National Chairperson urging them "to do everything possible to ensure the safety [and] security of all (mass) delegates [and] participants who will be attending the nat[iona] IWY Convention in Houston."62 She warned letter recipients "that the right wing & [r]ight to life forces view the National IWY Convention as an opportune moment to increase their attacks against the women's movement, black movement, & gay movement." Since these conservative factions had some voting participants, "[i]t is extremely important that everyone organizing this convention be prepared for any potential racial or sexual harrasment [SIC] and/or assault."63 Throughout the conference, safety concerned Smith and she was always "[p]repare[d] for Disruption."64 Such wording shows that Barbara Smith viewed the Houston conference as a site where multiple movements – were joining forces for good. She anticipated opposition from the right wing as ALFA members had. She urged unity for a bigger cause that included numerous segments of identity politics. 65 The kind of broad-based movement Smith envisioned was the same that

⁶² Barbara Smith [handwritten] letter to multiple organizations [1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁶³ Barbara Smith [handwritten] letter to multiple organizations [1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁶⁴ Barbara Smith, handwritten notes about lobbying for the Sexual Preference Resolution at IWY 1977 (1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34. Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁶⁵ Massachusetts Coordinating Committee for the National Observance of International Women's Year, EDUCATION RESOLUTION, [November 1977]; Voting body of the Greater Boston, Massachusetts District Meeting for Massachusetts Coordinating Committee for the National Observance of International Women's Year, <u>RECOMMENDATION FORM</u>, [November 1977]; Barbara Smith, "A GROUP OF CONCERNED FEMINISTS..." [November 1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, [Box 2, Folder 34], Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York. Smith's intersecting identities manifested in her activities at the IWY Conference

ALFA, the Feminary Collective, TALF, the Pointblank Times Collective, and the Lesberadas wanted.

Based on her grassroots efforts at the Houston Conference, Smith lobbied to make black feminism and its inclusivity a feature of conference activism by reaching out to Southern lesbian feminists. Besides averting potential racial or sexual violence directed at marginalized women, Smith sought to ensure inclusion of lesbian rights in the resolutions passed by the conference. On the first day of conferencing, Smith released a statement from the Non-Delegate Lesbian Caucus, of which she was also a part, that championed the passage of the IWY National Plan of Action. The caucus understood that the "Sexual Preference" resolution would not immediately remove the oppression lesbians faced, but saw it as "a positive beginning step toward liberation of all women."66 The press release pointed out patriarchal society, celebrated lesbian identities and, true to black feminism, tied it to a larger movement: "[a]s Lesbians we cannot separate our struggle from the struggles of all other oppressed people. We recognize that the same system that oppresses us as Lesbians oppresses all people of color." Wording articulated Smith's own intersecting identities translated into activism; "the Lesbian caucus of the IWY Conference, as a multi-racial group, has, as a basis of unity, a commitment to eliminate racism within ourselves."67 This statement identified its authors as lesbians, but only mentions the oppressions

which exemplified black feminism's broad platform that addressed multiple oppressions and sought a movement beyond single-issue identity politics. She sought passage of the Sexual Preference Resolution, but also support of the ERA, reproductive rights for women, "quality education for all regardless of ethnic origin and sex," "the creation and maintenance of quality non-profit daycare programs accessible to all women and all children regardless of ethnic origin, sex or economic status; including infant care to preschool."

 ⁶⁶ Press Release: "NON-DELEGATE LESBIAN CAUCUS STATEMENT," (November 18, 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.
 67 Press Release: "NON-DELEGATE LESBIAN CAUCUS STATEMENT," (November 18, 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

of sexism and racism, *not* homophobia. However, they argued that they were also sensitive to these oppressions because of their lesbian identity.⁶⁸

Smith's papers and handwritten notes from before and during IWY Conference indicate the depth of her preparation and efforts to bring black feminist theory to the forefront of conference activism.⁶⁹ She was feverishly corresponding with individuals and organizations she believed would be allies in a fight against right wing forces in Houston; significantly, she contacted more Southern women than women from outside the South. Several Southern lesbian-feminist communities in Texas and others in Durham, North Carolina, and Atlanta, Georgia were all on her mailing list.⁷⁰ The Feminary Collective resided in Durham, and Smith communicated with ALFA member and radical activist in her own right, Vicki Gabriner.⁷¹ Smith's furious pace of coalition-building with Southern women from those areas and other organizations increased once the conference began. She moved from delegation to delegation, gathering information on each state, spoke to members of the NGTF, who included Pokey Anderson, members of NOW, and took detailed notes on issues and state delegations. Smith made specific notes, down to hotel room numbers, of delegates from Southern states she lobbied to support the Sexual Preference

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⁶⁸ [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Submissions, correspondence, minutes, 1978-1980], Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Mab Segrest, one of the editors for *Feminary*, echoed a similar argument about her Southern lesbian identity in drafts of articles she prepared for special issues of the journal. The ostracization she felt as a lesbian in the South made her see how white ideas about race were tied to socialized gender roles and sexuality. Her experience as a Southern lesbian fueled her antiracist politics.

⁶⁹ Barbara Smith, "A GROUP OF CONCERNED FEMINISTS..." [November 1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, [Box 2, Folder 34], Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York. Smith's fellow feminist activists worked to get her and other women nominated as Massachusetts delegates because they supported four items: a woman's "right to control her own body[,]" "Freedom of sexual/affectional preference[,]" "School integration/quality education[,]" and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Mailing List [1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

Mailing List [1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34, Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

Resolution.⁷² She did not worry about the Washington, D.C. delegation being hijacked by people from the right.⁷³ Florida's delegation, despite having 27 supporters of the ERA, "doesn't feel good." The remaining thirteen Florida delegates came from the right, some affiliated with Klan and Nazi groups. Smith noted that Florida's delegates seemed more sensitive to abortion rights than gay rights, possibly because many of the "white liberals" in their ranks "banded together after [being] called 'dykes." Three women in the Florida delegation had "radical politics" and were "leaning" toward supporting the Sexual Preference Resolution. With those three, Smith sought political alliance.⁷⁴

Smith's relentless lobbying illustrates that she recognized Southern women were necessary to building and would understand a broad-based political movement that moved beyond single-issue identity politics because different types of oppression were interlocking. They also show her political acumen and capacity for grassroots organizing. She drafted and redrafted talks and letters appealing to black women and white women, straight and lesbian, to work together and consider the similarities of their oppressions. In one, Smith reminded heterosexual black women of the plight of black lesbian mothers, comparing lesbian mothers of any race to enslaved black women forcibly separated from their children. She also drew direct connections between Anita Bryant's "virulent bitter attack on lesbians and gay men" to other forms of bigotry: "the anti-gay rights forces in this country are also those who are anti-busing,

⁷² Handwritten notes, [November 1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, [Box 2, Folder 34], Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁷³ Barbara Smith, handwritten notes about lobbying for the Sexual Preference Resolution at IWY 1977 (1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34. Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁷⁴ Barbara Smith, handwritten notes about lobbying for the Sexual Preference Resolution at IWY 1977 (1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, Box 2, Folder 34. Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

anti-E.R.A., anti-abortion, for-the death penalty, in other words your average American racists." This was Smith's plea to fellow black women *not* "to side with those who are our oppressors on an issue" – the anti-gay coalition Bryant had created oppressed black women whether or not they were lesbian. Smith saw the political capital of lesbian-feminist radicals in the South at the IWY Conference and the power of black solidarity on women's issues and gay rights. It was a place where she was able to leverage them to promote movement growth and dialogue between movements – something former activist and historian Winifred Breines pointed out that white lesbian feminists in the northeast were not able to do in the 1970s.

The IWY Conference in Houston proved that the South was an influential space for expanding notions of feminism, nurturing a lesbian liberation movement, and a rallying point for opposition to those causes. Lesbian delegates in Houston mobilized at the conference. Just a day after the conference ended, Barbara Smith appeared before the press with other delegates and observers at the University of Massachusetts to discuss their experiences in Houston.⁷⁷ Emboldened by official recognition of lesbians there, lesbian activists began planning a series of national lesbian conferences and decided to form the National Lesbian Feminist Organization (NLFO).⁷⁸ One of the founding mothers of the lesbian movement, Del Martin, was the keynote speaker at the inaugural convention for the NLFO in Los Angeles in March 1978.⁷⁹ Texas had

⁷⁵ Handwritten notes, [November 1977], Barbara Smith Papers #8402, [Box 2, Folder 34], Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York.

⁷⁶ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 79-116.

⁷⁷ Press Release: (November 22, 1977), Barbara Smith Papers #8402, [Box 2, Folder 34], Special Collections SC 84-2, Lesbian Herstory Archives, Brooklyn, New York. The press release announcing this event described Smith as "a delegate from Boston's black community."

⁷⁸ Kathy Pantzer, "Unite & Organize: Nat'l Lesbian Organization," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 3, (March 1978): 6. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

⁷⁹ Kathy Pantzer, "Unite & Organize: Nat'l Lesbian Organization," *Big Mama Rag* 6, no. 3, (March 1978): 6. Periodicals Collection, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

demonstrated its power in the gay rights movement and significance to the women's movement by 1978; but the Southern city also capsulized the way Southern involvement in both movements was not necessarily unified or monolithic.⁸⁰

By 1978, Southern participation in the national gay rights movement and the national women's movement was undeniable. But increased Southern political engagement in the women's movement and gay rights, which contributed to the growth of both movements, also invited religiously motivated opposition. Just as Anita Bryant's crusade was a lightning rod for Christian conservatism, the IWY 1977 in Houston served to rally anti-feminist forces. Phyllis Schafly's STOP (Stop Taking Our Privileges) ERA campaign staged a counter event in Houston that took aim at feminist goals by glorifying a white, middle-class, heteronormative society that effectively ignored the economic realities white working-class and women of color faced and denigrated the partnerships and families that gay individuals formed. Although Schlafly had been fighting ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment since 1972, her successful organization of conservatives in 1977 at some state conventions in preparation for the IWY Conference surprised many feminist activists and motivated women with antifeminist sentiments to become politically active. The celebration of female empowerment and presentation of a women's movement finally embracing more than liberal feminism at the IWY conference in

^{80 &}quot;Noble Attends Demo Conference," *The Barb: The News Monthly for Southern Gays* 2, No. 10 (November 1975): 1; "San Antonio Mayor to Meet with Gay Reps," *Gaysweek*, No. 56, (March 13, 1978): 2, Don Kelly Research Collection of Gay Literature and Culture, Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas. Elaine Noble, lesbian activist and first openly gay person elected to Massachusetts state legislature repeatedly worked with Texas activists on national strategy for gay rights.

⁸¹ Faludi, *Backlash*, 239-240.

⁸² Faludi, *Backlash*, 239-240.

Houston in November 1977 also strengthened bonds between anti-gay and anti-feminist forces. The latter united in the Religious Right.

This political development surrounding Anita Bryant and the IWY Houston Conference in 1977, however, prove the significance of the South as a location for identity politicking in the 1970s. By 1978, Southern activists had become important players in the gay rights movement and in women's liberation. In June of 1978, indicating the growing prominence of the South in the national gay rights movement, Dallas hosted the Texas Gay Conference V. It had come a long way in just five years, drawing national figures as speakers including Harvey Milk, recently elected member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. Milk's opposition to Anita Bryant and the Briggs Initiative and his historical election to the board as an openly gay man made him an icon in the gay rights movement. His assassination barely six months after his trip to Dallas shaped gay identity politics and the evolution of a broad, multi-issue movement in the last year of the seventies that produced another March on Washington. Machington.

⁸³ Short bio on Don Amador, [April 1977] Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 44; Suzy Kalter, "We Gays Have Our Own History and Culture' – and Don Amador Is the Expert," *People Magazine* (December 12, 1977); Dallas Gay Political Caucus Membership Committee, OUR HISTORY, ([1980?]), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 59. Don Amador, activist, aspiring politician, and California scholar on gay history and culture, and NGTF member and lesbian activist from New York, Virginia Apuzzo, also spoke at the Texas Gay Conference V.

⁸⁴ Scott Anderson, "Politics: Ballot by the Bay, San Francisco," *The Advocate* 279, (November, 1979): 7-9, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 2: Newspapers, ARO756, Box 313.

CHAPTER VII

"WE ARE NOT SINGLE ISSUE PEOPLE": THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS, 1978-1979

The Call to March

During the spring of 1978, tensions brewed between Southern gay men and Southern lesbians over political platforms and strategies; but wheels were already turning for a March on Washington. Pointblank Times Collective (PBT) members and Gay Political Caucus members in Houston had been participating in a national boycott of the Coors Beer Company since 1977 because of the company's overtly homophobic and discriminatory hiring practices. PBT members, still boycotting Florida Orange Juice because of Anita Bryant, viewed the boycott in the tradition of the table grapes boycott that supported Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers. For a while, the boycott sent Coors sales in Houston and other gay communities around the country plummeting, but the beer company mounted an ambitious ad campaign in gay communities. On March 15, 1978, just two days before the National Lesbian Feminist Organization held its founding conference in Los Angeles, HGPC member, Ray Hill talked with two Coors Beer representatives on his radio program, inviting them to celebrate ending the boycott. PBT members were furious and blasted Hill in their newspaper for, among other

¹ Jonathan Tasini, "The Beer and The Boycott," *The New York Times Magazine*, (January 31, 1988). http://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/31/magazine/the-beer-and-the-boycott.html?pagewanted=all, accessed 28 June, 2017.

² Claire Noonan, "Editorial," *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 2. [http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html accessed 20 June, 2017]

things, sacrificing the cause to capitalism; Hill, however, defended himself in long letter to Pointblank Times.³

Hill's response to *PBT* illustrated his ability to speak in feminist terms, while admitting that HGPC did not attract or retain a near balanced ratio of lesbian members. Appealing to PBT members' feminist sensibilities, Hill said he was not trying "to deny the existence of my own sexism or the existence of sexism among gay men in Houston," nor did he "claim to be rid of all vestiges of sexism." Hill was "try[ing] hard to overcome the sexism that I inherited from the cultural environment that we all share." He argued that the supposed "power" he held was only a result of the efforts he devoted to cultivating relationships with politicians and the media; anyone else could also do this with the same level of effort. Then Hill asserted that the HGPC had a "broad constituency" and even though "participation by women is less than most of us would like," there was "no reason why the organization could be considered closed to women to participate to optimize concern for feminist issue[s]."

Through 1978, Southern, predominantly white, lesbians continued to develop their own culture, confront the difficult issues of race and class, and committed themselves to multiple causes. That same spring, Southern lesbians met for the Southeastern Conference of Lesbians

³ Ray Hill, Letter, *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 5-6. [http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html accessed 20 June, 2017]

⁴⁴ Ray Hill, Letter, *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 5-6. [http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html accessed 20 June, 2017]

⁵⁵ Ray Hill, Letter, *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 5-6. [http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html accessed 20 June, 2017]

⁶⁶ Ray Hill, Letter, *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 5-6. [http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html accessed 20 June, 2017]

⁷⁷ Ray Hill, Letter, *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 5-6. [http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html accessed 20 June, 2017]

and Gay Men in Atlanta, the remnants of the 1975 Great Southeastern Lesbian Conference.⁸

ALFA women attended, as did many from the Feminary Collective in North Carolina.⁹ It was during those meetings, and partly out of frustration over working with gay men, that the *Feminary* women decided to take their journal in a new direction and the idea for a Southern Lesbian Writer's Conference was born.¹⁰ To continue celebrating lesbian culture and a womenonly space, many Southern lesbians traveled to the annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in August, where Southern acts performed, women camped and held workshops.¹¹

In early fall, ALFA hosted the band Sweet Honey in the Rock for a concert, which some Feminary Collective members also attended. Sweet Honey stayed the night and the next morning, had a kind of forum over breakfast with ALFA members, Lucina's Music Collective members, and some from North Carolina who came for the performance. In what was, at times, a tense and uncomfortable conversation, lead singer, Bernice Johnson Reagon "tolerated no bullshit." She challenged the lesbian feminists to consider identity, "movement," and "struggle" in more ambitious terms. Johnson emphasized her identity and struggle as a black woman, often frustrated by trying to work with white activists; lesbian feminism did not necessarily help her

⁸ "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, [Box 1, unlabeled folder], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

^{9 &}quot;ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, [Box 1, unlabeled folder], Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.; Feminary 10, No. 1 (1979): 2. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

¹⁰ Feminary 10, No. 1 (1979): 2. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*.

¹¹ ALFA, "JUNE 11: MARCH FOR GAY RIGHTS", *ALFA Newsletter*, [June 11, 1978]. ALFA Archives, [Box 1, Folder 1.7], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹² Susan W., "Sweet Honey in the Rock: An Interview," Feminary 10, No. 1 (1979): 18 – 25. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis; "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, [Box 1, unlabeled folder], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. The ALFA timeline shows that the concert occurred in July 1978, whereas Feminary reports that it took place 30 September, 1978.

fight. She told them, "[w]e are black women and that's what we are fighting for. But we are not single issue people. We are black, and we are fighters, and we have a connection to everyone who fights." One Feminary member recalled the breakfast conversation: "[i]t hurt while it was happening[,]" but she "felt myself expand." It resonated with her when Johnson said, "I identify with fighters." The women of Feminary, ALFA, and Pointblank Times wanted to be fighters alongside her in the broader struggle even if it meant the discomfort of confronting their own race and class biases.

Meanwhile, a committee of activists had formed in Minnesota with the idea of a March on Washington, D.C., modeled after the monumental August 1963 March on Washington at which Martin Luther King Jr. gave his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech. ¹⁴ Civil rights activist and labor leader A. Philip Randolph first conceived of a march on the nation's capital for African American workers to protest the discriminatory hiring practices of American military contractors in 1941. President Franklin D. Roosevelt averted such a demonstration then by issuing Executive Order 8802 which created the Committee on Fair Employment Practice. As the civil rights struggle expanded in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Randolph and younger civil rights activists, such as Bayard Rustin, believed that a march in Washington, D.C. would be an important event for the movement. They began planning for a march in late 1961. In June of 1963, president John F. Kennedy called for civil rights legislation in a televised address. March

¹³ Susan W., "Sweet Honey in the Rock: An Interview," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 18 – 25. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

¹⁴ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

organizers hoped that the August 28, 1963 peaceful March on Washington would spur action in Congress toward civil rights legislation for African Americans.¹⁵

The Minnesota committee of activists had prepared a position paper on the topic of a March and began contacting other activists across the country when, in November 1978, political divisions caused the group to disband. Harvey Milk quickly revived the March idea based on the work they had done. Just as the organizers in 1963 had hoped, the group of Minnesota activists and Milk hoped a March on Washington would be the impetus for civil rights legislation for gays and lesbians. Then, on November 27, San Francisco mayor, George Moscone, and city supervisor Harvey Milk were murdered by fellow city supervisor, Dan White. The assassinations gave the proposed March additional meaning: achieve civil rights for gays and lesbians and honor Harvey Milk. In the wake of Milk's death, 300 San Franciscans formed the National Outreach Committee (NOC), which began contacting other organizations around the country. The NOC sent out the original position paper and a questionnaire to gauge interest in such a March using mailing lists from the NGTF, Women's Outreach Committee, labor organizations, feminist organizations, and "Third World gay groups," a contemporary term used by and for activists of color who practiced revolutionary politics. The such as the political politics.

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¹⁵ Patrik Henry Bass, *Like a Mighty Stream: The March On Washington, August 28, 1963* (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2002), 49-75.

¹⁶ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979).
UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

¹⁷ Scott Anderson, "Politics: Ballot by the Bay, San Francisco," *The Advocate*, Issue 279 (November 1979): 7-9. Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 2: Newspapers, ARO756, Box 313. "Moscone, Milk Slain—Dan White is Held," *San Francisco Chronicle*, (November 28, 1978): 1. http://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/Chronicle-Covers-The-assassinations-of-Moscone-10629367.php, accessed 28 June, 2017.

¹⁸ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10. Activists had been self-identifying as "Third World" as early as

Scholar of Southern LGBT history James T. Sears cast the October 14, 1979 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (MOW) in a generally triumphant tone. He described several Southern states' delegations to the MOW as sometimes gender-separated, but united in common cause. To Sears, the March signaled progress on the part of Southern gay men who demonstrated a modicum of sensitivity to issues of gender that had not existed earlier in the gay movement.¹⁹ I argue that a deeper examination of the gender segregation at the March is necessary and the unity Sears celebrates must be contextualized. The March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (MOW) on October 14, 1979 represented the national growth of a movement for gays and lesbians in the 1970s and the impact of increased Southern involvement in that movement over the course of the decade. That combination at the particular historical moment, when feminist print culture was at its height and Black Power enjoyed more social influence than political power, resulted in a gay movement that spoke the language of inclusion and broad goals even though it did not always live up to the rhetoric.²⁰ The gay white men who guided political activism in the South were products of their time, affected by the social context and rhetoric of the Black Power and women's movements, even if not wholly convinced.²¹ Southern gay men capitalized on single-issue identity politics and engaged state and national organizational hierarchy when they organized the March on Washington. They sought to build

the 1960s. Use of the term indicated revolutionary activism on the part of people of color aimed at dismantling multiple forms of oppression, racism and sexism, but also imperialism and capitalism. The Third World Women's Alliance, formed in 1968, is an example of an organization that identified as "Third World." Its membership consisted of some SNCC women who made a coalition with Puerto Rican women activists.

¹⁹ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 299-301.

²⁰ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 159-190. Ogbar's final chapter highlights the importance and profundity of Black Power's cultural impact in the US.

²¹ Remmington, "Twelve Years Fighting: Homosexuals in Houston, 1969-1981."

their own movement that emulated the success of the civil rights movement, using similar tactics, with similar legislative and legal goals that applied to gay men and sometimes lesbians.

The MOW also illuminated how many Southern lesbian feminists were likewise molded by context, influenced by the era's radical politics and where they were from, but this sometimes led to tension across gender lines. Many Southern lesbian feminists worked to build a broad-based movement in which they stood in solidarity with Third World people, and other oppressed groups, that is, they lived the politics they preached. They had adopted a form of identity politics rooted in grassroots organizing with a multiplicity of goals based on their intersecting identities, which their Southernness helped them understand. These gender differences in the South meant LGBT activism was still fractured because gay white men dominated political strategy and power and were able to mobilize more movement resources.

This chapter shows the impact of increased Southern involvement with identity politics through the 1979 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. March planning, the March itself, and effects of the March all took place in the wake of the Black Power movement's cultural influence. The seventies witnessed the creation of a bigger gay rights movement that was, in the South especially, divided about race and class, often along gender lines. Growing power of the South in the gay rights movement, Texas in particular, was obvious at the March, as was the movement's revolutionary, if not sometimes hollow, rhetoric. First, I examine the February 1979 planning conference for the MOW in Philadelphia to show the extent of Texas's power in the national gay rights movement and the influence of more radical politics on March organizers. The planning conference mandated organizational requirements that brought out political differences between Southern men and Southern women as organizing progressed.

Then, I discuss Texas activists' mobilization for the March at the local and state levels to

illustrate the manifestation of difference in strategies and goals among Southern gay men and lesbians. Such mobilization strained already tenuous alliances between gay men and lesbians because the former were focused on demonstrating the strength of a movement for gay rights rather than building a movement dedicated to ending multiple oppression. From there, I describe the March and its programming to analyze the contradictions of the event: how it was both progressively inclusive and continued to marginalize certain groups simultaneously. This paradox existed because two phenomena had occurred through the 1970s: (1) the growth of Southern lesbian feminism evidenced the cultural impact of revolutionary social movements, especially Black Power and radical feminism, and (2) increased Southern involvement in a national gay rights movement was dominated by gay men who understood the cultural impact of those movements, but were not as committed to them as Southern lesbian feminists. I conclude with how the activism of many lesbian feminists in the South continued to be informed by their intersecting identities, especially their Southernness.

From the beginning of March planning, lesbians demanded gender equity and gay men from Texas exercised their newfound power in the national movement; these two forces were sometimes at odds. Less than three months after the assassination of Harvey Milk, in late February 1979, gay and lesbian activists from around the country, including ALFA member Margo George, met in Philadelphia to discuss the potential for a March at the capital. Some organizations and groups prepared written opinions about the Philadelphia Conference ahead of time. For example, the Women's Caucus, made up of lesbian feminists from Philadelphia, made

²² Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 300; Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

clear that they were not completely behind March organizational activities and wanted a guarantee of gender parity in decision-making.²³ They felt that the goals of the meeting were not clear, they criticized the lack of transparency over funding, feared that such an event would actually quash the kind of grassroots organizing it was supposed to encourage, and worried that the selection process of delegates "could easily end up perpetuating sexism, racism, ageism and classism."²⁴ For all of these reasons, the Women's Caucus members were reluctant to commit their full energy, or even participation, to the Philadelphia Conference.²⁵

Others in attendance appeared overly eager before much was decided. Gary Van Otteghem of Houston and a member of the NGTF, prematurely gave a press conference the morning of Friday, 23 February, at which he announced that a march for human rights would take place on October 28. Attendees and delegates were welcomed, had time to register, and began caucusing informally that evening. Many of the Texas representatives also met with some from California. Ooteghem's group stayed focused on a late October March, while the California representatives pushed for a July date, since they had already been working toward that goal. An argument over the March's date erupted before the conference had even decided

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²³: Women's Caucus, Position of the Women's Caucus, Philadelphia Convention for a March on Washington, D.C., (February 1, 1979), 1. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

²⁴: Women's Caucus, Position of the Women's Caucus, Philadelphia Convention for a March on Washington, D.C., (February 1, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

^{25 :} Women's Caucus, Position of the Women's Caucus, Philadelphia Convention for a March on Washington, D.C., (February 1, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

²⁶ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979); Phil Johnson, "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

²⁷ Phil Johnson, "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

to hold a March at all. According to a Dallas representative, California and New York dominated the date discussion even though both states thought the March should be in 1979.²⁸

Delegates involved with early MOW organizing made gender parity and representation of people of color imperatives, but they were sure how to enforce them. Substantive meeting started on February 24 with around 150 delegates present, most from New York or Northern California.²⁹ Perhaps in response to the Women's Caucus position paper, one of the first motions of the conference – even before deciding if there would be a March – was for gender parity for all March preparations. This meant an equal number of women and men in positions of leadership, for publishing information about the March, and in paid staff positions. All public statements about the March were supposed to have "non-gender specific language," as well. The second piece of this motion included ensuring "50% female representation" and "20% overall minority representation in conference/March preparations and leadership, and the goal to place minority-group members in a majority of paid staff positions." In the discussion that followed this motion, some delegates suggested that such requirements for gender parity and minority representation "not be strictly enforced with regard to voting at this meeting, but will apply as plans for further action begins." Eventually, the inclusionary motion passed with the

²⁸ Phil Johnson, "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

²⁹ Phil Johnson, "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

³⁰ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

³¹ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

understanding among delegates that strict enforcement of gender parity and minority representation would be in effect at a later time in MOW planning.³² This accounts for the display of diversity at the MOW, but also reflected lack of commitment to inclusion and fighting racism, sexism, and classism within individual organizations in the South.

The argument over scheduling the MOW revealed the power of Texas in the national movement and the strength of more radical elements, some Southern, who hoped to bring together gay rights with other movements. Some organizations came prepared with position papers that presented their perspectives. For two-and-a-half hours delegates debated the pros and cons of having a March and when the March might take place.³³ Many representatives from Texas organizations supported waiting until 1980 for a March; they included the Lesberadas and most from the Houston Gay Political Caucus (HGPC). All the delegates from Washington, D.C. also opposed a 1979 March, but the California delegation pushed for a July 1979 date.³⁴ After a series of motions and amendments, the conference settled both debates and gestured toward coordinating with other movements. There would be a March in October 1979. Delegates then tried to figure out how to coordinate the MOW with the already planned Third World Gay Conference in D.C. and avoid a scheduling conflict with NOW's national conference in Los

³² Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979).
UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

³³ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

³⁴ Phil Johnson, "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

Angeles, also that month.³⁵ Rearranging March dates with consideration for feminist and Third World activism shows the influence of California in this meeting, the influence of the feminist movement (NOW), and Third World gay organizations on MOW planning. It also shows that MOW organizers wanted as many causes as possible represented in a national demonstration for lesbian and gay rights.

After scheduling the March, the Philadelphia meeting crafted the MOW's goals; some were clear and measurable through legislation but conservative, while others required drastic social change. Discussion of the official statement of purpose for the MOW lasted until Sunday of the conference. Those in attendance finally agreed on the wording: "[t]o end all social, economic, judicial, and legislative oppression of lesbian and gay people." It also included demands for a repeal of all anti-gay legislation, passage of comprehensive gay rights legislation at the national level, an Executive Order that banned discrimination against lesbians and gays in federal employment and federally contracted work, an end to discrimination against lesbian and gay parents in child custody cases, and rights for gay young people, including a revision of age-of-consent laws. Significantly, the most specific goals in the statement of purpose were legislative and judicial in nature – protecting the legal rights of lesbians and gays; the conference was vague about ways to stop "social, [and] economic...oppression." 36

On the final day of the Philadelphia Conference, several motions indicated two, sometimes conflicting forces that shaped March organization and movement development: more

³⁵ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

³⁶ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

radical activism that ensured women and people of color would be represented in March events and organization of regional decision-making for the MOW that privileged particular Southern locations or gave the South more influence. For example, the conference passed a motion that activities would be coordinated with groups that would have a difficult time traveling to Washington, D.C. for the March. The motion called for the creation of a fund that would facilitate these organizations' participation in the March.³⁷ This showed a sensitivity to class struggle. Demonstrating a desire to highlight diversity, another motion to pass formed a Coordinating Committee responsible for directing and coordinating the March, but not making decisions about it. It consisted of the chairs of already existing committees – Outreach, Media, Fundraising, and Logistics – and two coordinators from the national coordinating office, plus two more staff coordinators from the logistics office in Washington, D.C. Another board, an Advisory Board, would also be formed, made up of representatives from various constituencies – women, Third World, youth, "handicapped, and older gays." On the other hand, a subsequent motion followed that said "regional meetings should make decisions that will guide the decisions of the National March." It passed.³⁹ This structure meant that a large state, like Texas, would have a disproportionate say in MOW planning. It also advantaged urban areas in the state that had large gay populations. The conference then took a break for regions to elect facilitators that would function as liaisons between the national office and caucus. Once reconvened, the

³⁷ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

³⁸ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

³⁹ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

conference passed a motion by the Southern Caucus that the South would be split into two regions, making seven in total.⁴⁰

The early agreement to maintain gender parity kept March planning true to equal gender representation even though equal representation did not occur organically. The first motion on the structure of MOW planning called for the formation of a National Board to be composed of one representative from each organization that endorsed the March. This would ensure the engagement of local groups in MOW decision-making and build lines of communication.

Members on the National Board served as links between local, regional, and national groups.

This motion passed. Other motions passed created a National Steering Committee to make decisions about the March; it would meet in mid-May. Finally, a motion setting the exact March date for 14 October passed in coordination with A.B.S. Jones, a Columbia, Maryland, man of color, and others involved, with planning the Third World Gay Conference, which had been moved to 12-15 October. Before adjourning on Sunday, the conference voted that twelve Coordinating Committee members would be elected; nominations and acceptance by

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⁴⁰ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁴¹ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁴² Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10. In the meantime, an Interim Steering Committee would be formed and consist of 6 "facilitators" from the already established 6 national regions. Each region was further divided into sub-regions, as many as 8 sub-regions per region. Regional facilitators were responsible for organizing meetings for the sub-regions. Sub-regional meetings would then elect 4 representatives to the National Steering Committee.

⁴³ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10. A.B.S. Jones, was deeply involved with planning the Third World Gay Conference and was also part of the Philadelphia conference. He, Konda Mason, and Amy Horowitz, were all dedicated to a March that was inclusive and addressed multiple oppressions.

acclamation followed, but "in order to fulfill the requirement of gender parity, 5 more women were nominated."⁴⁴

Regional representation at the Philadelphia conference was unbalanced, giving some places more of a say than others. The Dallas representatives complained that "[w]ith the structure of the conference we were out voted on every issue," and thus were unable to get a 1980 March date, among other things. They were also irritated by "[t]he general attitude of many of these delegates[, which] was radical and militant." Texans, like Phil Johnson (founder of Circle of Friends), who complained of voting imbalance did not seem to recognize what they had achieved, successfully upending California's plans for a July March, and getting Ray Hill of Houston as chair of the National Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was divided into six regions, each electing 24 delegates. Regional break-downs grouped Texas with the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. Texas held four times as many delegates as any other state in its region. The steering committee was divided into six regions.

The National Coordinating Committee that the conference created met after the original meeting adjourned; it also weighted the input of more conservative elements from Texas and more radical individuals from the other Southern areas, accentuating the divergent forces of the

⁴⁴ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Conference for the March on Washington, D.C.," (February 23-25, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁴⁵ Phil Johnson, "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁴⁶ Phil Johnson, "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁴⁷ Phil Johnson, "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

MOW organization.⁴⁸ Nine men and ten women constituted the Coordinating Committee.

Predictably, New York was well represented with nine members; California had three. The D.C. area had four representatives, Texas two, and Detroit, Michigan had one.⁴⁹ Both Texas representatives were men from Houston: Ray Hill, assigned to the Logistics Committee and Steve Shiflett, assigned to the Fundraising Committee.⁵⁰ The make-up of this committee meant A.B.S. Jones of Maryland, and Konda Mason and Amy Horowitz of the District, shared the same vision of Southern lesbian feminist organizations like the Feminary Collective, ALFA, and the Pointblank Times Collective.⁵¹

The meeting of the Coordinating Committee established regional representation, which also made gender differences in Southern organizing salient. The Northeast Region had more women than men, but the Southern region had more men than women.⁵² Houstonians again

⁴⁸ "Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁴⁹ "Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10. I include A.B.S. Jones of Columbia, Maryland in the Washington, D.C. area because Columbia is within 30 miles of the capital and much of Jones's activism up to that point had been in Washington, D.C.

⁵⁰ "Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10. These assignments were fitting of Texas organizations – Ray Hill worked predominately with mostly male groups and groups that were mostly gay white men had more money than lesbian feminist organizations.

^{51 &}quot;Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10; Ann Allen Shockley, "Racism and Sexism," *Off Our Backs* 9, No, 10 (November 1979): 13. Conference documents list Maryland and Washington, D.C. in the Mid-Atlantic region. Other members on the committee shared a lesbian political philosophy aligned with black feminism. Kat Duval, for example, was a member of Salsa Soul Sisters in New York City, an organization for lesbians of color. Betty Santoro of New York was a member of Lesbian Feminist Liberation.

⁵² "Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10. The Northeast Region was Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. New York carried the most seats. Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, and southern Virginia made up the South region. Tennessee and Georgia had the most seats there. ALFA member Margo George represented Atlanta, Georgia.

dominated the Prairie Region, to which Texas was assigned. The only two representatives for that region of six states were both white men from Houston. ⁵³ Between Hill and Shiflett on the National Coordinating Committee and Kent Naasz and Ron Oruc monopolizing the Prairie Region, Texas influence on March organizing was substantial. Similarly, the D.C. Area monopolized the Mid-Atlantic Region organizing, but this time with more leftist representatives who also influenced the National Coordinating Committee – A.B.S. Jones, Konda Mason, and Amy Horowitz. ⁵⁴ These were the two Southern forces that shaped the MOW: white gay men from Texas whose less visionary activism was oriented toward legal goals and a gay man of color and two lesbians from Maryland and Washington, D.C. respectively, who advocated for multiple radical causes and an inclusive movement.

This breakdown of regional representation gave New York and California the biggest advantage, but it also allowed Texas and Washington, D.C. a larger role in the planning and preparation in the MOW. Such a breakdown obscures the work of lesbian feminist communities in North Carolina (Feminary) and Atlanta (ALFA), and even Kentucky (Lesbian Feminist Union), but also minimizes the lesbian feminist activists in Texas. The Houston Gay Political Caucus, of all the Texas organizations, controlled representation at the state level, and regional breakdowns allowed Ray Hill and Steve Shiflett to then play a big role in the national planning. Washington, D.C. was a hotbed for radical feminist and lesbian feminist activism as well as Black Power organizing. Overrepresentation of Washington, D.C. activists and A.B.S. Jones,

⁵³ "Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁵⁴ "Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10. Delaware, West Virginia, and northern Virginia had no representation.

and their participation in the Third World Conference meant that they would support a diverse lineup at the MOW.

Planning for the MOW continued over the summer, and it was often emotionally fueled by developments in the case of Harvey Milk's assassination. Just a week before Gay Pride celebrations began around the country for the tenth anniversary of the Stonewall Riot, assassin Dan White was convicted of manslaughter in the deaths of San Francisco mayor Moscone and supervisor Milk. White received a sentence of seven years and eight months in jail for the murders. Riots in San Francisco's gayborhood, the Castro district, followed, an exhibition of outrage and heartbreak in the gay community that White had not received a harsher punishment for assassinating Harvey Milk. Nevertheless, March organization pushed forward.

Development and coordination of the MOW took place in Texas in the summer of 1979; following the rules of gender parity and minority representation was a priority. Some Texas delegates had returned from Philadelphia disgruntled, including Phil Johnson of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus (DGPC). Following the Philadelphia conference, he was not immediately convinced of the significance of its outcome and perhaps unhappy with the apparent overrepresentation that Houston received.⁵⁷ The power Houston assumed at the national level of March planning had national and state implications that appeared in July 1979 when the Interim

⁵⁵ Jay Jeffries, "Meanwhile, on the coast..." *Upfront* 2, No. 15 (July 11 1979): 19, 21. Botts Collections of LGBT History, Inc. Houston, Texas.

⁵⁶ [Cover], *The Advocate*, Issue 270, (June 28, 1979), Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 3: Publications, Sub-Series 2: Newspapers, AR0756, Box 311.

⁵⁷ Phil Johnson], "Report on National Conference in Philadelphia," (February 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10. Johnson's notes reflected his opinion "that we offer support for this march on a limited basis...because of [the] time situation. We should select delegates for the National Steering Committee as it will be the first gay and lesbian body ever to meet with equal geographic representation, and could be an important step forward for the gay movement."

Steering Committee for the March and then other Texas organizers met.⁵⁸ Houston hosted a planning conference from July 6 to July 8, 1979, to determine MOW policy.⁵⁹ In the invitation to the July meeting, the Interim Steering Committee reminded potential attendees that "[d]elegations are expected to include at least 50% women and should also be certain to include at least 20% Third World Women."⁶⁰ It also encouraged organizations to bring all local media coverage of the March and lists of contacts for other LGBT groups to compile. Lastly, in compliance with initial requirements from Philadelphia, the letter said, "[r]emember to publicize the National Third World Gay Conference along with your publicizing of the march."⁶¹

Maintaining the visibility of various identities as dictated in the Philadelphia planning conference proved difficult in Texas. The Agenda Committee began meeting in Houston the afternoon before the planning conference began to work out an agenda for the conference based on proposals, caucuses, and position papers they had received in June. ⁶² The Interim Steering Committee was also already worried about the possibility of some groups not having

Interim Steering Committee and National Coordinating Committee for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Letter, (June 23, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10; North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 24, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

⁵⁹ Interim Steering Committee and National Coordinating Committee for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Letter, (June 23, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁶⁰ Interim Steering Committee and National Coordinating Committee for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Letter, (June 23, 1979), 4. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁶¹ Interim Steering Committee and National Coordinating Committee for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Letter, (June 23, 1979), 4. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

⁶² Interim Steering Committee and National Coordinating Committee for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Letter, (June 23, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

representation and how to handle the issue of proxy voting. The main recommendation promoted a kind of segregation by gender, race, and region; it provided that

if a delegation that has 4 delegates only sends one to Houston, the person could only have 1 proxy vote, as opposed to 3. The proposal includes the request that only men carry men's proxies and only women carry women's proxies. The same concerns apply to the race of the person not in attendance. Third World people can carry Third World proxies, and white people can carry white proxies. And one can only carry a proxy vote from one's own area.⁶³

While meant to ensure inclusion, decisions such as the one about proxy voting, were actions in the organization for the MOW that effectively separated gay white men from lesbians and queer people of color who, in the South, already functioned on different ideological platforms.

Despite initial hard feelings of some Dallas Gay Political Caucus members after the February conference in Philadelphia, by July, the North Texas Committee for the March on Washington (NTCMW), which was made up of many DGPC members, was going strong, participating in March planning just as much as the Houston Gay Political Caucus. March organizers at the national level were also aware of the power of Texas gay activism, not just the power of Houston. For example, when *This Week in Texas*, the premiere gay bar rag, ran a suggestive ad for a Houston bath club that endorsed the March, the MOW's Executive Committee in the New York office contacted the NTCMW to see if the Dallas organizers could rein in such content. NTCMW agreed to work quietly behind the scenes with *This Week in*

⁶³ Interim Steering Committee and National Coordinating Committee for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Letter, (June 23, 1979), 3. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

Texas to make sure similar ads that might bring bad press to the MOW did not occur in the future.⁶⁴

In spite of their eagerness for MOW work, the NTCMW, had trouble meeting standards of diversity and concerns over representation that the Philadelphia conference established.

NTCMW meetings regularly began with updates from a travel agent who put together travel packages for individuals traveling to the March. Packages ran between \$138 and \$158, depending on the purchase date of the plane ticket. There was not follow-up discussion about the possibility that someone might want to attend the March, but be unable to afford the travel package presented. Minutes of NTCMW meetings show that several gay men of the DGPC personally financed different events and ephemera for the North Texas Committee. Fundraisers discussed were virtually all having MOW items made, such as t-shirts, buttons, posters, that DGPC members would then purchase. These indicate a lack of sensitivity to class issues.

Similarly, male-dominated gay organizations in Houston did not suffer from a lack of funds or worry that their membership could not afford fundraiser items. These organizations, spearheaded by HGPC, sponsored Gay Day at Astroworld in Houston, renting out the amusement park to fundraise for the March on Washington. Those wishing to benefit the MOW had to purchase tickets in advance. Approximately 7,000 people, the majority of whom were

⁶⁴ North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Executive Committee Minutes, (July 31, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14. This was also reminiscent of the way DGPC handled the situation with The Old Plantation night club the previous year.

⁶⁵ North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 17, 1979); North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 24, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

⁶⁶ North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 17, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

men, attended the event, which raised \$12,000.⁶⁷ For the March itself, the Houston Human Rights League paid for a full-page ad in the official program for a buttons fundraiser that sold pins with pro-gay rights slogans. The ad said "GAY* is an inclusive term meaning lesbians, gay men and gay transpeople...After expenses, all profits will go to the Houston Human Rights League and other gay service organizations." No other states took out ads so big. In fact, Texas organizations' ads in the official program dwarfed the ads by other states and Texas was the best represented state in the MOW program – even better than New York and California. This all illustrated the financial power of large, urban Texas gay organizations that dominated gay activism and the publicity such activism commanded.

The organizing done by the women of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance shows the sharp contrast between the way Southern gay men and Southern lesbians prepared for the MOW. That summer of 1979, as DGPC and HGPC raised money for the March on Washington and coordinated with state and national organizations, ALFA was also doing its own organizing for the March. ALFA's financial reports from the summer of 1979, however, indicate that the group was operating in the red. Their fundraisers drew \$70 at a time and did not rely solely on the deep pockets of their members. ALFA's committees were virtually all internal since they had not formed an entirely new organization to work on the MOW as DGPC had. Although ALFA had a

⁶⁷ "ASTROWORLD GAY DAY THIS SUNDAY," *This Week in Texas* (September 28 – October 4, 1979), http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/misc-astroworld.html accessed 16 June, 2017; "Astroworld," *Upfront* 2, No. 21 (October 12, 1979): 9. Botts Collections of LGBT History, Inc. Houston, Texas.

⁶⁸ NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), 36. UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44.

⁶⁹ NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), 13, 36. UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44. Texas organizations included DGPC, HGPC, the Gay Organization of Dallas, the Austin Lesbian/Gay Political Caucus, San Antonio Country, the Texas Gay Task Force, Inc., and the Houston Human Rights League.

contact person working with the NGTF, most of their coordinating for the March was done with other local women's groups. ⁷⁰ Meeting minutes from ALFA show that the organization was multi-tasking, coordinating events for several different causes. ⁷¹ Groups such as Gay Political Caucuses of Dallas and Houston worked almost exclusively on the MOW. ALFA had less funds and more causes, while male-dominated groups had more money and fewer causes. This was typical of the Southern lesbian feminists I have discussed here. Their Southern identities helped them better understand how systems of oppressions worked together to oppress multiple groups of people in different ways and explains why their activism was not singularly focused.

Structure of lesbian feminist organizations in the South tended to be looser, less hierarchical, and connected on a horizontal, rather than vertical, network of organizations. ALFA organized locally with male-dominated groups, but not necessarily nationally for gay rights, as they did for the women's movement in the case of the IWY in Houston. Feminary was its own entity, as was Pointblank Times Collective. Lesbian feminists in the South connected with each other on a social and cultural level while organizing at a grassroots level. Those networks for Southern lesbians breached regional boundaries set up by the MOW national organizers, rather than fitting inside of them. The structure for the way gay men in the South organized helped them, especially men in Dallas and Houston, be better represented when the MOW was put together.

ALFA, General Meeting, (July 8, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Margo George was the person in contact with NGTF and ALFA member in abstentia, Pokey Anderson, was part of NGTF.

⁷¹ ALFA, General Meeting, (July 8, 1979); ALFA, ALFA General Meeting, (August 5, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Besides overlooking class concerns, Texas organizations repeatedly failed to meet MOW standards of gender parity. In the NTCMW, there were only six women to 21 men. Even though the men far outnumbered the women, women members served double, often triple duty, cochairing sub-committees to maintain the gender parity in leadership positions prescribed in Philadelphia. When discussing the creation of new sub-committees, only men were nominated, men made motions, men seconded those motions, and women who made reports to the committee were almost always last on the agenda. The NTCMW presented a diverse image to the public, suggesting women speakers for their MOW publicity events, such as African American Dallas City Councilwoman Juanita Craft, Texas politician Sissy Farenthold, and black Houston congresswoman Barbara Jordan. They even unanimously agreed to sponsor fellow member Debbie Shaffer as the spokesperson to the press regarding the March on Washington. This illustrates how some Southern white gay men knew the rhetoric of inclusive politics, knew the gay rights movement would benefit from presenting an inclusive image, but had a difficult time being inclusive in their own organizations.

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⁷² North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, National Committee for the March on Washington Chart, (August 7, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

⁷³ North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 17, 1979); North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 24, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Executive Committee Minutes, (July 31, 1979); North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 24, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14. A DGPC member reported to the committee that Steve Shiflett of HGPC could arrange for Sissy Farenthold to speak at a NTCMW event. This shows that DGPC and HGPC were maintaining their relationship in spite of possible ill will brought on by the Philadelphia conference. Sissy Farenthold was an established political powerhouse in Texas by the late 1970s, having run for governor twice, and also been in the running for the vice-presidential slot on the 1972 Democratic ticket. She was also proponent of the ERA.

⁷⁵ North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 24, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

Securing prominent women to endorse the March on Washington was not a reflection of the committee's make up, internal interactions, or their commitment to women's issues, though. The majority-male organization understood the momentum of the women's movement that was increasingly inclusive and the benefits of associating gay rights with it. The NTCMW purposely put forward a diverse image of their cause to give the impression that their goals had the support of women and people of color. They used women in the media because they recognized the good optics female speakers lent to the MOW cause and sought them out even though women did not constitute half the membership. At the very end of July 1979, Debbie Shaffer finally expressed concern about the gender imbalance of the NTCMW's leadership structure that conflicted with requirements set at the Philadelphia convention. To rectify the situation as much as possible, she motioned that the committee also elect a woman co-chair, so gender parity could be maintained. A lively discussion took place after Shaffer's motion where "most were in agreement with her remarks," but men blamed the problem on "the apparent laxity of interest on the women's part to fill such positions [of] responsibility." After that, the motion "per se died for lack of a second." The failure of her motion was followed by an empty motion, by a man, that the group would "actively strive to solicit and to include women into positions of authority." That motion was immediately seconded by another man and unanimously passed without any follow-up solutions for how NTCMW would attract and recruit lesbian members. ⁷⁶ The male membership of the North Texas Committee saw the need for unity, "numerous people working

⁷⁶ North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Executive Committee Minutes, (July 31, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

together for one cause," but were not concerned with making sure women were involved, or if everyone could afford to participate in the March.⁷⁷

The DGPC and NTCMW did work to drum up numbers for the March as it grew closer, but they made it clear that the appearance of a unified crowd for the March was their priority. DGPC viewed Texas Gay Conference VI in Austin, August 17-19, as a state prelude to the MOW.⁷⁸ In preparation for the October 14 March, the NTCMW sent a letter to the Houston Conference Delegates, in August of 1979. They wrote, "[w]hile we of the North Texas Committee, are very much concerned about Lesbian Visibility, we are far more concerned with united Homosexual visibility on a national level." The North Texas Committee also had its own media sub-committee which published a newsletter titled *The Battlecry*, with updates about MOW planning and Texas participation. Its September issue showed that Texas organizers feared turnout for the March would be disappointing and urged LGBT Texans to get involved and attend the event in Washington, D.C.⁸⁰

Interactions within the NTCMW reveal that the Dallas committee supported appearances more than equal inclusion or providing a safe space for lesbians and people of color. Houston men may have been willing to give a nod to considerations of sex and race because they knew

North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 17, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

⁷⁸ Dallas Gay Political Caucus, dialog: Newsletter of the Dallas Gay Political Caucus 3, No. 7 (August 1979): 1, UNT Libraries, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

⁷⁹ North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Letter to Houston Conference Delegates, (August 15, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

⁸⁰ The North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, *The Battlecry*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (September 21, 1979), UNT LIBRARIES, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 2: Phil Johnson Collection, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

they should, or could speak that language, as Ray Hill did, without necessarily living up to that consistently. The North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, however, was willing to sacrifice lesbian visibility for the appearance of lesbian and gay unity. The effect of both positions dismissed gender, racial, and class differences to make the MOW a positive spectacle of gay political power that white gay men stood to gain the most from and could be the face of.

The March on Washington Experience: 12-15 October, 1979

Thursday, October 11, 1979, the ABC television network demonstrated how the issue of gay rights had captured national attention by airing a one-hour documentary, *Gay Lifestyles*, a "human-interest approach to the gay movement." HGPC's periodical, *UPFRONT*, recommended its readers tune-in if they were not coming to the March. Some Southern lesbian feminists, however, were already there, enjoying "[a]n evening of culture in conjunction with the Third World Conference," held that night. Linda Tillery and Mary Watkins were half the concert entertainment for the event. Third World Lesbian/Gay Conference itself was the next three days, the last coinciding with the March on Washington, Sunday.

More than fifty lesbians gathered at Ansley Mall in Georgia that October weekend. They met a women-only bus dubbed the "WORKING WOMEN'S EXPRESS" that ALFA members,

^{81 &}quot;what if i'm [SIC] not going...?" *Upfront* 2, No. 21 (October 12, 1979): 5. Botts Collections of LGBT History, Inc. Houston, Texas.

^{82 &}quot;what if i'm [SIC] not going...?" *Upfront* 2, No. 21 (October 12, 1979): 5. Botts Collections of LGBT History, Inc. Houston, Texas.

⁸³ "Newsfront: Related Events," *Upfront* 2, No. 21 (October 12, 1979): 4. Botts Collections of LGBT History, Inc. Houston, Texas.

⁸⁴ NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), 41. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44; "Newsfront: Related Events," *Upfront* 2, No. 21 (October 12, 1979): 4. Botts Collections of LGBT History, Inc. Houston, Texas; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 300.

coordinating with the Atlanta Women's Union, had chartered to traveled to Washington, D.C. 85
The cost per woman was \$49, significantly lower than what NTCMW's travel agent put together for Texas activists to travel. 86 As ALFA women traveled through the night, they danced in the bus aisle and sang along with Motown music. 87 The Atlanta Women's Union also arranged housing and childcare in the capital for those lesbians who needed either. 88 Once these women arrived in Washington, almost half of them boarded the mass transit system carrying backpacks and sleeping bags. A man saw them and asked if they were going camping. One ALFA member replied that they were there for the March. The man asked what march; she answered "for lesbian and gay rights." "Oh...uh...good luck," he said. 89

As Southern lesbians descended on Washington, D.C. to make a weekend of MOW activities, their influence on national lesbian feminist culture was evident. The impact of Anita Bryant's crusade two years earlier was still palpable, but so was the lasting influence of Southern lesbian musicians, the sound they created, and the politics they preached. As part of a public concert thrown with the March, Meg Christian and Linda Tillery entertained the crowd with fellow musician, Lynn Frizzell, singing "Hurricane Anita." ⁹⁰ That Friday, lesbian comedian,

⁸⁵ Atlanta Women's Union, Flyer, (1979) ALFA Archives, [Box 22, Folder 22.20], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; ALFA, "Report on the National March," *Atalanta* 7, No. 11 (November, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁸⁶ Atlanta Women's Union, Flyer, (1979) ALFA Archives, [Box 22, Folder 22.20], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Minutes of Meeting, (July 17, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

⁸⁷ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 300.

⁸⁸ Atlanta Women's Union, Flyer, (1979) ALFA Archives, [Box 22, Folder 22.20], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁸⁹ ALFA, "Report on the National March," *Atalanta* 7, No. 11 (November, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁹⁰ NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center

Robin Tyler emceed a women-only concert. Judy Regan, and pioneer lesbian folk celebrity, Maxine Feldman also performed.⁹¹ After the concerts, there was a women-only dance at one hotel, and a Third-World party at the Harambee House, site of the Third World Conference.⁹²

On Saturday, October 13, a Presidential Nomination Convention Project for Lesbians and Gay Men was held in Washington, D.C. It was a 1980 planning meeting. Parents and Family of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) had an open business meeting at the First Congregational Church, a press conference and dinner followed. The Lone Star in Washington Texas-style barbeque was also held to benefit the North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Terry Tebedo of the DGPC was in charge. Other events that day included a Gay Youth Open House, a meeting of Parents Who are Gay (PWaGs), the First National Lesbian/Gay Concert at the Sylvan Theatre, by the Washington Monument, started at 6 p.m., a Disco dance "in conjunction with the Third World Conference" at 10 pm. Castleberry and Dupree performed, as did the Great American Yankee (GAY) Freedom Band from Los Angeles, Maxine Feldman, Carol MacDonald and Isis. Florynce Kennedy, Kate Millet, Troy Perry, and Margo St. James all spoke. Admission was

Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 300.

⁹¹ ALFA, "Report on the National March," *Atalanta* 7, No. 11 (November, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁹² NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44; Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 300.

free. Attendees were encouraged to make a picnic of it.⁹³ In the early afternoon, Jimmy Carter participated in a two-hour "Ask the President" program that NPR aired.⁹⁴

Many lesbian feminists reflected their intersecting identities and commitment to gay rights *and* feminist politics when they decided their placement in the March. As part of a strategy to promote visibility for an array of "minority" groups, many women's and lesbian groups opted to march together, regardless of the state they were from. Women of ALFA assembled under an ALFA sign on the National Mall Sunday morning before taking their place near the front of the parade. Pokey Anderson, Pointblank Times Collective founder and NGTF board member, also marched at the front, holding the hand of an ex-flame. The line-up of the March started with women and "Third World Women," then persons who were "Physically Challenged," followed by children, older LGBT individuals, and the International section led by Puerto Rico. The decision of ALFA, Anderson, and other Southern lesbians to march at the beginning shows how they identified as lesbian feminists first, sympathetic to concerns of and in solidarity with Third World women.

⁹³ "Newsfront: Related Events," *Upfront* 2, No. 21 (October 12, 1979): 4, 29. Botts Collections of LGBT History, Inc. Houston, Texas; ALFA, "Report on the National March," *Atalanta* 7, No. 11 (November, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁹⁴ "what if i'm [SIC] not going...?" *Upfront* 2, No. 21 (October 12, 1979): 5. Botts Collections of LGBT History, Inc. Houston, Texas.

⁹⁵ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 301.

⁹⁶ ALFA, "Report on the National March," *Atalanta* 7, No. 11 (November, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁹⁷ James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South*, (New Brunswick, New Jersey/London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 301.

⁹⁸ NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44.

After the designated identities marched, each state would be represented, organized by the previously determined regions. Texas activists involved with March planning threw their weight around making Texas the very first state in line. ⁹⁹ Cowboy hats dotted the Texas contingent as the March proceeded down Pennsylvania Avenue. Leading the fray, with an American flag in one hand, and a Bible in the other, was Houston's own transgender activist and member of the Houston Gay Political Caucus, Phyllis Frye. ¹⁰⁰ Texas's position at the front speaks to the state's influence in MOW planning; Frye's presence, front and center, speaks to the individual strength of her personality.

The experience of the March was powerful. Reports on the number of people present varied, anywhere from 50,000 to 250,000. The March itself lasted about 2 hours; NPR reported on the March and aired part of the subsequent rally live. The Great American

⁹⁹ NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), 34, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44.

¹⁰⁰ NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), 34, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44; UPFRONT, 2, No. 22 (October 26, 1979), LGBTQ Archive, Phyllis Frye Collection [unprocessed], Cushing Memorial Library, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Perdydurke, "Gay pride and politics," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 6. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9; Robin Tyler, Troy Perry, Adelle Starr, Michiko Cornell, Rene McCoy, Bill Blish, Arly Scott, Maria Diaz, Steve Alt, "March on Washington/Pacifica Program Service, 1979 (Tape 1 of 4)," *Herstories: Audio/Visual Collections of the LHA*, accessed June 21, 2017, http://herstories.prattinfoschool.nyc/omeka/document/SPW1158; ALFA, "Report on the National March," *Atalanta* 7, No. 11 (November, 1979):1. Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Perdydurke, writing for a gay-friendly press estimated more than 100,000 while the National Public Radio (NPR) live radio broadcast of the march said capital police estimated the crowd at 250,000. Perdydurke wrote that "straight media" claimed only 50,000. ALFA reported 250,000 in attendance.

Perdydurke, "100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 7. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9. Also from Los Angeles, the L.A. Gay Men's Chorus participated. They and the GAY Freedom Band show that gay men did music, but there was not a gay men's musical sound (besides disco) or type of political music. They danced to disco and joined choirs where they sang as gay men, but the act of singing together as 'out' was more important than the message of the songs they sang. For womyn's music, especially for Southern lesbian feminists, the sound and the message were as important as being 'out' as a lesbian artist.

Yankee (GAY) Freedom Band out of Los Angeles led the parade. Participants – LGBT identified people and their allies - carried signs that highlighted pride of identity, political convictions, and humor: "Country Faggot," "Lesbianas de Color," "Young Gay and Proud," "We're Asians Gay and Proud," "I am not a closet mother," "Homophobia and nuclear power – two things we can do without," "Dykes Opposed to Nuclear Technology (DON'T)," and "Sex is Fun," among others. One woman in the parents' section of the March held a sign that read "Piss on Anita." Evincing the popularity of Meg Christian's music, one sign read "I Know You Know," the title of Christian's debut album. Police security around the March tripled when marchers made their way behind the White House, where a few homophobic anti-march protesters held religiously-motivated signs. In response, some marchers began chanting, "2-4-6-8, Smash the family, church, and state," and "2-4-6-8, How do 'ya know Amy's straight?" Another account reported that two men threw tear gas at March participants as the March wrapped up; there were no reported injuries. 108

¹⁰³ Perdydurke, "100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 7. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

Perdydurke, "100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 7. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

¹⁰⁵ Perdydurke, "100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 7. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

¹⁰⁶ Perdydurke, "100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 7. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

¹⁰⁷ Perdydurke, "100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 7. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

¹⁰⁸ Perdydurke, "100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 7. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

Marchers poured onto the National Mall as they finished marching, right into the rally, which lasted 4 hours. They streamed onto the Mall, holding signs, holding clenched fists, and holding hands; they chanted "We are everywhere! We are everywhere!" for five consecutive minutes. Lesbian stand-up comedian Robin Tyler and Houstonian Ray Hill presided over the rally as co-masters of ceremonies. The rally was a mixture of speeches and entertainment. Multiple speakers used Anita Bryant as a punch line. 110

The March Paradox

The programming of the rally aimed to emphasize how diverse the gay community was. Various speakers celebrated differences and argued that variety of identity among lesbians and gays should not be divisive, but provide a source of strength and power. March programmers made sure to have diversity represented, including gay young people, older gays, lesbians and gays of varying abilities, organizations for deaf gays, gay religious groups and gay atheists, Latino gays and lesbians, black gays and lesbians, Asian American homosexuals, and American Indian gays. Of the twenty-five speakers, eleven were women. They included Southern lesbian and Furies co-founder Charlotte Bunch, lesbian activist and author Kate Millett, Juanita Ramos of the Comite Homosexual Latinoamericano, Lesbian Feminist Liberation representative Betty Santoro, the president and vice president of the National Organization for Women, Adele

¹⁰⁹ Perdydurke, "100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 7. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

Perdydurke, "Gay pride and politics," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 6. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9. Robin Tyler referenced Anita Bryant multiple times. In one instance, Tyler said "Anita Bryant is to Christianity what paint-by-numbers is to art." Arlie Scott, the vice president of NOW exclaimed, "Look at us!...Eat your heart out, Anita Bryant!"

Perdydurke, "Gay pride and politics," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 6. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

Starr of PFLAG, the executive director of the NGTF Lucia Valeska, black lesbian writer Audre Lorde, and long-time activist Flo Kennedy. Florynce Kennedy gave a signature irreverent speech with the same black feminist message she had advocated since the 1960s – build a politically and economically powerful movement based on coalition efforts to end multiple oppressions. At least two signers were present for the whole rally, providing sign language for speeches and songs. One signer even kept up when the speakers spoke Spanish. 114

The entertainment was equally progressive, organized by women representatives from Washington, D.C. who constituted the "Cultural and Entertainment Committee" of the National Coordinating Committee for the MOW, Konda Mason and Amy Horowitz, both members of the radical D.C. organization, Roadwork. British rocker, Tom Robinson, performed "Glad to be Gay," three gay men in a disco group, Gotham, performed their recent release and party tune, "AC/DC Man." More of the entertainment, however, was female and influenced by Southernness. Early lesbian singer Maxine Feldman performed "Give Me That Old Lesbianism," sung to the tune of the gospel classic "Give Me That Old Time Religion." Holly Near, another lesbian musical celebrity, asked the crowd to hold hands, clasp arms, and join her

¹¹² NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), 35, UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44.

¹¹³ Perdydurke, "Gay pride and politics," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 6. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

¹¹⁴ Perdydurke, "Gay pride and politics," *Post-Amerikan* [1979]: 6. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9.

¹¹⁵ Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979), 2. UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

http://queermusicheritage.com/apr2004m.html, accessed 22 June, 2017. Contrast between Gotham's music and lesbian feminist music was stark. Gotham was significant because they were an openly gay band. Their music, however, had little political substance. "AC/DC Man" was about one gay man keeping his sexual partner satisfied: "I'm your AC/DC Man/ I'll turn you on any way I can." It sounded very similar to "YMCA" by the Village People.

in a round of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." Meg Christian gave her rendition of "Leaping Lesbians," at which point women in the rally audience got up, jumping and whooping among the crowd. Mason and Horowitz, along with A.B.S. Jones, were also the three paid staff, coordinating the March from the Logistics office. Jones, likewise, was involved in the previously planned and simultaneously occurring Third World Gay Conference. Influence on March content by these three ensured a diverse lineup for the rally, even when individual local, state, or regional organizations attending the MOW, especially from the South, were predominantly white and male.

Regardless of the intentions of some March organizers to highlight the power of diversity, the message did not always find a receptive audience. When Asian-American lesbian activist and poet, Michiko Cornell spoke of white skin privilege and a lack of consciousness about the struggles of Third World lesbians and gays, some white people in the crowd were visibly uncomfortable or offended. NPR's Amy Sands interviewed a woman, Gwendolyn, from New York City, who was "delighted" to hear Cornell's speech. Gwendolyn also expressed frustration with the MOW and the movement because it did not seem to fully address the "interrelatedness between oppressions" that tied racism to homophobia. "If we don't talk about

^{Perdydurke, "Gay pride and politics: 100,000 lesbians and gay men march in Washington,"} *Post-Amerikan* [1979]:
UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1:
Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 9; Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 379, n. 44. Maxine Feldman first wrote "Angry Atthis" in 1969, a few months before Stonewall, then recorded it in 1972.

Don Mager, "Minutes of the National Coordinating Committee Meeting," (February 25, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

¹¹⁹ Robin Tyler, Troy Perry, Adelle Starr, Michiko Cornell, Rene McCoy, Bill Blish, Arly Scott, Maria Diaz, and Steve Alt, "March on Washington/Pacifica Program Service, 1979 (Tape 1 of 4)," *Herstories: Audio/Visual Collections of the LHA*, accessed June 21, 2017, http://herstories.prattinfoschool.nyc/omeka/document/SPW1158.

racism, we can't really look at what homophobia and sexism is [SIC]."¹²⁰ Many Southern lesbian feminists had expressed the same frustration during the 1970s, but many white gay men, specifically the Texas men so involved with MOW planning, were more interested in the appearance of unity from a diverse crowd of marchers than actually confronting the various forms of oppression they faced or figuring out how different oppressions functioned together.

Organization of the MOW provided a space for different identities to articulate multiple oppressions in a way that alienated other white gay men and some white lesbians while simultaneously supplying a sense of solidarity that such an assembly was meant to achieve. Separating out each "minority group" in the March provided visibility for those groups as March organizers wanted to show "[g]ay men and lesbians gather together in our rich diversity." ¹²¹ It also showed sensitivity to lesbians' concerns that gay men had not always demonstrated, as James T. Sears argued. Indeed, Alan Young's contribution to the official souvenir program for the MOW acknowledged gender differences: "[t]hose of us who are men and those of us who are women may cross paths frequently or not so frequently during this voyage [of life as a gay person], but by and large the voyage will be different for us on the basis of gender." ¹²²

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¹²⁰ Robin Tyler, Troy Perry, Adelle Starr, Michiko Cornell, Rene McCoy, Bill Blish, Arly Scott, Maria Diaz, and Steve Alt, "March on Washington/Pacifica Program Service, 1979 (Tape 1 of 4)," *Herstories: Audio/Visual Collections of the LHA*, accessed June 21, 2017, http://herstories.prattinfoschool.nyc/omeka/document/SPW1158. Gwendolyn went on to say that "this [the march]" was part of a "system" that bred those three kinds of oppression – racism, sexism, and homophobia, specifically.

¹²¹ Alan Young, "Welcome to the March," "NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program," (October 14, 1979), 1-3. UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44.

¹²² Alan Young, "Welcome to the March," NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), 1-3. UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44.

However, organization of the MOW also left state contingents predominantly white and male. This separation demonstrated the double-edged sword of identity politics and the struggle of LGBT individuals with intersecting identities. The effect of separating out different groups perpetuated the notion that concerns of lesbians, queer people of color, LGBT people with disabilities, gay youth, and allies of lesbians and gays were not central to the "gay movement," which was decidedly white and male. But including all these identities in one event projected the message that lesbians, people of color, LGBT individuals of varying abilities, gay young people, and allies all supported the limited political and legal goals of white gay men who were the poster children of the gay rights movement. Secondarily, it implied that gay white men supported broader anti-sexist, anti-racist activism that would end oppression for more than just gay men. Pokey Anderson and other lesbians fondly recalled the feeling of unity floating in the air. 123 After all, it was easy for lesbians and gay men to bond as they sang songs and made jokes about Anita Bryant, even though their methods of opposing her had been very different. ¹²⁴ One big March achieved the "united Homosexual visibility on a national level" that the NTCMW wanted without the predominantly male organization having to do much more than pay lip service to the social concerns and oppressions that other March participants of various and intersecting identities faced. 125

¹²³ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 301.

¹²⁴ NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR LESBIAN AND GAY RIGHTS: Official Souvenir Program, (October 14, 1979), 3. UNT Archives, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries. Series 1: Resource Center Records, Sub-Series 1: Resource Center, ARO756, Box 6, Folder 44. The program included the lyrics to "Harvey Milk's Body" to be sung to the tune of "John Brown's Body." The second chorus read, "We will end discrimination/With appropriate legislation./ We're the glory of our nation./ Anita won't tread on us." The last line of the song said, "And remember in November we vote."

North Texas Committee for the March on Washington, Letter to Houston Conference Delegates, (August 15, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 14.

The implications of the March for the gay movement going forward were tied to the effect of separation in the MOW. The event made clear that the South was now a powerful site of gay activism. Texas's extensive role in shaping the MOW, and internal politics about race, class, and gender among LGBT individuals back home in the Lone Star State indicated the direction that the gay movement took. The kind of social movement Southern lesbian feminists envisioned and the political culture they cultivated, sensitive to racism, classism, and sexism, as well as homophobia, was overshadowed by a narrowly focused agenda. That agenda was bent on legislative protections for sexual orientation only by a group of activists who could speak the language of liberation from Black Power and radical feminism but did not always follow such rhetoric.

Southern Lesbian Feminist Activism Concurrent to the March on Washington

In spite of the flurry of activity surrounding the March on Washington from February through the fall of 1979, Southern lesbian feminists continued to devote their energies to feminist causes in the South and developing lesbian connections and culture. From the spring of 1978 through 1979, as MOW planning got underway, a group of Southern lesbians met "almost monthly in various locations around the S.E. [Southeast]." ALFA and Feminary Collective members both attended and kept in contact about the planning meetings for the first Southeastern Lesbian Celebration. They worked to increase the number of black women in attendance and pushed white lesbians "to deal with their racism and to form closer contacts with black women at the meetings in their communities." Feminist writers gave a talk at the ALFA House in

¹²⁶ "News," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 81. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

¹²⁷ "News," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 81. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

March, and ALFA members were thrilled when Lucina's Music sponsored a concert by lesbian musician Margie Adam in April 1979. The first annual Womanwrites Conference convened in central Georgia in June. The same weekend the planning conference for the MOW was going on in Houston in July 1979, dozens of women who were part of the Southeastern Lesbian Network met in Richmond, Virginia. Many of the women who attended were from Virginia or North Carolina, but several ALFA members drove together all the way from Atlanta. A week later, ALFA worked in conjunction with the Women's Union in Atlanta, hosting a community party to fundraise for the March on Washington. Southern lesbians, including some from the Triangle Area of North Carolina traveled again to Michigan in late August to attend the Fourth Annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, at which many Southern lesbian musicians played.

The same sort of cultural lesbian feminist activism continued in the South after the March on Washington; it demonstrated Southern lesbian feminists' grassroots, rather than hierarchical, organizing for a multiplicity of causes and their regional identity. Just one week after marching in the nation's capital, many ALFA members traveled to Nashville, Tennessee, to meet other

¹²⁸ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Lucina's Music hosted many womyn's music concerts over the years. In 1979, they sponsored another concert in November 1979; it featured performances by Medusa Music artists.

¹²⁹ [Box 1, unlabeled folder]ALFA, "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹³⁰ Interim Steering Committee and National Coordinating Committee for the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, Letter, (June 23, 1979). UNT Libraries, Resource Center LGBT Collection of the UNT Libraries, Series 2: Phil Johnson, Sub-Series 1: Personal Collection, ARO756, Box 62, Folder 10.

¹³¹ [Box 1] ALFA, ALFA General Meeting, (August 5, 1979), 6. Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹³² [Box 1] General Meeting, (July 8, 1979), 3. Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹³³ "WHAT'S HAPPENING," What She Wants 7, No. 3 (August 1979): 11, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086.

Southern women to participate in the Southern Take Back the Night demonstration that was part of a nationally coordinated effort. Nashville women organizing the event wanted "[a] large regional" turnout and "invite[d] all Southeastern women to participate" not just lesbians. Instead of elaborate hierarchies of committees that majority-male organizations often used, the Nashville organizers encouraged "[w]omen in local communities...to organize locally and statewide, by spreading information, and to provide transportation/funds to allow as many women to come from their communities as possible." Nashville organizers also cooperated with other women's groups attending to make sure needs for "housing, childcare, and those of handicapped women" were met. Significantly, ALFA's call for participation in the demonstration appealed to lesbians' Southern, rather than state, identities.

Southern Identity in Lesbian Feminist Activism

Participation in the MOW was one of many actions to which Southern lesbian feminists applied their political energies. This kind of activist multi-tasking was a feature of Southern lesbian feminism. Southern identity was a major part of how lesbian feminists in the Triangle Area of North Carolina, Houston, and Atlanta processed their politics, understood intersecting identities and systems of oppression, reached out to women of color, and organized for multiple causes during the 1970s. When ALFA collaborated with the Gainesville (Florida) Feminist

¹³⁴ ALFA, ALFA General Meeting, (August 5, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 158, 166-167. [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Take Back the Night was an international event that Boston area women's groups, including black feminist organization, the Combahee River Collective, organized in the US in 1978. 1979 was the first year Atlanta participated in the event. There had been a local Atlanta Take Back the Night March in May 1979, in which ALFA also participated in. It was the city's first such march.

¹³⁵ ALFA, ALFA General Meeting, (August 5, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹³⁶ ALFA, ALFA General Meeting, (August 5, 1979), Financial Papers, [Box 1], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Action Group, they compiled a lesbian feminist songbook, *Singing For Our Lives*, that displayed rich Southern musical traditions whose roots illustrate Southernness as one of several intersecting identities. They reached back to Negro spirituals, changing the lyrics of "Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham" to read "rock my soul in the bosom of sisterhood." With gospel gusto they sang "gimme that old lesbianism" instead of "old time religion." And channeling Confederate rebellion, they wanted to do "away, away, away, with patriarchy" to the tune of "Dixie." In one of *Pointblank Times*'s early issues, a woman wrote to the periodical addressing her "Dear Southern Sisters." She congratulated the collective on their publication and requested a sample copy. Then curiously, she said, "[w]ith its Lesbian daughters the South may yet rise again!" Continuing their interest in black feminism and desire to end multiple oppressions experienced by individuals with intersecting identities, ALFA hosted Southern black activist and author, Ann Allen Shockley in November 1979. 139

The editors of *Feminary*, much like those of *PBT* and the *ALFA Newsletter/Atalanta*, continued their commitment to revolutionary and anti-racist politics by following local Black Power activism and keeping up with the work of women of color through the seventies and into the early 1980s. Members of the Feminary Collective gathered information about the Wilmington 10, a group of Black Power activists seemingly railroaded by the judicial system,

Gainesville Feminist Action Group, ALFA, Singing For Our Lives," ALFA Archive, [Box 1, Folder 1.7], David M. Rubinstein Rare Books & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹³⁸ Pointblank Times 1, No. 8, (November 1975): 2, WLGBT Periodicals Collection, [Box 11] David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹³⁹ ALFA, "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, [Box 1, unlabeled folder], ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Ann Allen Shockley was from Kentucky and worked at Fisk University. Her 1974 book, *Loving Her: A Novel*, illuminated the experience of discrimination for black lesbians.

and publicized a fundraiser for the political prisoners in 1977.¹⁴⁰ Editors Minnie Bruce Pratt and Mab Segrest corresponded with prominent black lesbian activists/writers such as Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith and Lou Blackdykewoman from South Carolina.¹⁴¹ The journal celebrated black lesbian artistry, including Pat Parker's poetry, the musical stylings of Linda Tillery, and the Blackwomansound [SIC] band, Sweet Honey in the Rock.¹⁴² Concern for and understanding of the mechanisms of racism, and black feminist theory were important aspects of Southern lesbian feminism and Southern lesbian identity for the women of Feminary.

The Southern facet of lesbian feminists' identities in North Carolina, Georgia, and Texas was evident in the literature of *Feminary*, ALFA, and *Pointblank Times*; frequently they turned Old South language on its ear by employing the rhetoric of "rising again." In 1978, as soon as Minnie Bruce Pratt and other lesbian feminists in North Carolina decided to take *Feminary* in a different direction and reimagined it as a literary journal, they set out to define a Southern lesbian identity. Mab Segrest, drafted and redrafted an essay she eventually contributed to the journal that served as a call to action for Southern lesbian writers to redefine Southernness. 144 In

¹⁴⁰ "Witness Against Executions," (April 8-10, 1977), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 101, Folder "Activism: Wilmington 10"], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁴¹ Personal notes and correspondence, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 29, Folder: WRITINGS, Feminary, Black women poets, writers, 1980-1981]; Correspondence and personal notes, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 101, Folder "Activism Women of Color, 1980s"], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 42.

¹⁴² Personal notes and correspondence, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 29, Folder: WRITINGS, Feminary, Black women poets, writers, 1980-1981]; Correspondence and personal notes, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 101, Folder "Activism Women of Color, 1980s"],; Pamphlets and flyers, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 101, Folder "Activism Sweet Honey, 1978"], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁴³ Notes on the newsletter, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 30, Folder: "WRITINGS: Feminary, Notes on newsletter, 1973-1978] David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Writings, (1978-1980), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Submissions, correspondence, minutes, 1978-1980], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University;
 Mab Segrest, "Southern Women Writing: Toward a Literature of Wholeness," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 28 - 43.
 Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

this personally reflective piece, Segrest recalled growing up white in Alabama but also sensed her difference - unnamed lesbianism - from other whites. As a thirteen-year-old, she witnessed the tense desegregation of an Alabama public school. In that moment, she empathized with the black students and identified with them as "different." She "knew in my gut that what I heard people around me saying about black people had somehow also to do with me." This scenario, to Segrest, was necessarily Southern and influenced her identity. In college, Segrest sought an explanation of her identity in Southern literature, immersing herself in the Southern Gothic. She read female characters Othered by their peers because these women dared to live outside heterosexuality and prescribed femininity by spinsterhood. All this, she internalized. 146

As she matured, Segrest came to understand the link between race and sexuality in the South. It was foundational to her understanding of self; she called this understanding "my most intense [experience] of identity." Southern literature had, according to Segrest, made grotesque any women who exhibited independence of thought. And independence of thought is what allowed her to evaluate race relations and see the absurdity of racism. This link was destructive: Southern racism had everything to do with Southerners trying to control and regulate white women's sexuality. Segrest tied this to the legacy of slavery, which had created a society in which white Southerners refused to question their customs; they had abandoned their

Writings, (1978-1980), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Submissions, correspondence, minutes, 1978-1980], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Writings, (1978-1980), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Submissions, correspondence, minutes, 1978-1980], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. William Faulkner's Joanna Burden in *Light in August* was especially significant to Segrest connecting feminism to anti-racism.

¹⁴⁷ Writings, (1978-1980), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Submissions, correspondence, minutes, 1978-1980], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Mab Segrest, "Southern Women Writing: Toward a Literature of Wholeness," Feminary 10, No. 1 (1979): 29 - 32.
Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

consciences. Her essay called on feminists in the South, black and white, to reexamine Southern traditions about race, gender, and sexuality. Through new Southern writing, they could create a new Southern literature. Segrest praised lesbian writers from the South: June Arnold, Rita Mae Brown, among others. They were the "most exuberant women writing in the South…some of the best lesbian fiction is by Southern-identified women." Old Southern culture that Southern literature had perpetuated kept black and white women apart, but "Southern feminist writers, black women and white, who have a new vision, who are rediscovering their obscured tradition and seeking a new form and new language" could produce "a literature that will rise." 151

Southern lesbian feminist practice shines most in the preparation for a series of *Feminary* issues published in 1980 and 1981. Planning for these issues began in the late seventies after several Southern lesbians connected at the Southeastern Lesbian and Gay Conference in Atlanta, in April 1978; they were the culmination of years of contemplation on race, class, gender, and sexuality in the South. This exercise in reflection played out at least two years prior to the 1980 and 1981 issues. Pratt, Segrest and the rest of the editorial board brainstormed a handful of topics focused on the South as an influencing factor on identity. Starting in late 1978, *Feminary* began calling for submissions for these focused issues. Topics included "southern lesbian

¹⁴⁹ Mab Segrest, "Southern Women Writing: Toward a Literature of Wholeness," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 32 - 35.
Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

¹⁵⁰ Writings, (1978-1980), Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Submissions, correspondence, minutes, 1978-1980], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁵¹ Mab Segrest, "Southern Women Writing: Toward a Literature of Wholeness," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 43. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

¹⁵² Feminary 10, No. 1 (1979): 2. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis; Feminary, Vol. 9, No 1, (Spring 1978), Social Welfare History Archives (Gender Collection), University of Minnesota Libraries.

migration," "black women & the south," "southerner as Other," and "lesbians & home." They sought to find their identity in the silences of history, to discover "the rebellious feelings and actions of Black people and women" because "[o]ur collective past has been distorted and hidden from us – so that to remember it, we must rediscover it." Beginning in the spring of 1978 to their special 1981 issues, *Feminary* included numerous articles on race, class, southern identity, and lesbian identity. In 1981, they unveiled their "Herstory of the South."

Lesbian feminists continued to identify as Southerners as they excitedly began work with the National Lesbian Feminist Organization, the brainchild of lesbians at the IWY Houston Conference in 1977. Rather than sorting themselves by state, as gay male activists often did, Southern lesbian feminists initially worked to form a Southern Caucus within the NLFO. 157 By mid-1978, *Pointblank Times* struggled to stay afloat. Financial woes made production sporadic, Pokey Anderson was devoting more energy to the NGTF, but collective members were excited to work within the NLFO, just as the Feminary Collective was. 158 *It's About Time!*, newsletter of the NLFO, began production out of Houston at that same time, evincing the importance of the

¹⁵³ Correspondence and personal notes, Segrest drafts, "FUTURE ISSUE, STAYING OR LEAVING: THE SOUTH AS HOME," Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, [Box 29, Folder "WRITINGS, Feminary, Submissions, correspondence, minutes, 1978-1980"], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

¹⁵⁴ Feminary Vol 11, No. 1/2 (1980), 140, Social Welfare History Archives (Gender Collection), [HQ 75 .F46x], University of Minnesota Libraries. [SCHOOL WORK-RESEARCH-Dissertation Research-Tretter Collection U of MN-30 June, 2016-IMG 2506]

^{155 [}HQ 75 .F46x] Feminary, Vol. 9, No 1, (Spring 1978); Feminary, Vol 10, No. 1, (1979); Feminary, Vol. 10, No 2 (1979); Feminary Vol 11, No. 1/2 (1980), Social Welfare History Archives (Gender Collection), University of Minnesota Libraries.

¹⁵⁶ [HQ 75.F46x] Feminary Vol 11, No. 1/2 (1980), Social Welfare History Archives (Gender Collection), University of Minnesota Libraries; Jaime Cantrell, "Subscribe to Feminary! Producing Community, R-egion, and Archive," in Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories. Eds. Amy L. Stone and Jaime Cantrell. (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015): 311-335.

¹⁵⁷ "News," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 82. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

¹⁵⁸ "The 'NLFO' is founded," *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 3. http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html, accessed 20 June, 2017

city for lesbian activism.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, Feminary "encourage[d] women to accept the idea of a National Lesbian Feminist Organization[,]" even though they continued to identify as Southern.¹⁶⁰ The lesbian feminist platform the NLFO proposed dealt with "discrimination based on sexual preference, sex, race, class, age, and physical disability" and the organization was "committed...to education and the development of lesbian culture."¹⁶¹

Also in 1978, Baltimore-based Diana Press published *Movement in Black*, the collected works of Pat Parker, the popular black lesbian feminist poet from Houston. Since the early seventies her work found a welcoming and affirming audience among Southern lesbian feminists, white and black. In *Movement in Black* she mused about a revolution: "If I could take all my parts with me when I go somewhere and not have to say to one of them, 'No, you stay home tonight, you won't be welcome / because I'm going to an all-white party where I can be gay but not Black / Or I'm going to a Black poetry reading, and half the poets are anti-homosexual / or thousands of situations where something of what I am cannot come with me./
The day all the different parts of me can come along / we would have what I would call / a revolution. Significant contents are along and half the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual which is a significant content of the poets are anti-homosexual

Southern lesbian feminists in the 1970s attempted to live up to this revolution Parker described in word and action; the March on Washington was part, but not all of that revolution. Nor was it always easy for Southern lesbian feminists to live up to this revolution. Their

¹⁵⁹ "The 'NLFO' is founded," *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 3. http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html, accessed 28 June, 2017.

¹⁶⁰ "News," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 82. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

¹⁶¹ "The 'NLFO' is founded," *Pointblank Times* 4, No. 2 (April-May 1978): 3. http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/women.html accessed 20 June, 2017

¹⁶² Pat Parker, Movement in Black: The Collected Poetry of Pat Parker, 1961-1978, (Oakland, California: Diana Press, 1978).

¹⁶³ Pat Parker, Movement in Black, expanded ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Firebrand Books, 1999).

Southernness and ties to radical politics caused them to ponder deeply the tangled relationship between race, gender, and sexuality while the 1970s provided them a print space to expand on their Southern lesbian feminist practice and culture. Their feminist practice required them to critically examine themselves, identify their own racial and class biases, and dedicate themselves to ending racism and class discrimination. White, middle-class lesbians had to be accountable to their sisters of color. This process of critical self-examination was ongoing and sometimes uncomfortable, but caused many Southern lesbian feminists to adopt a type of identity politicking that aimed to stop multiple forms of oppression, some of which might not have affected them directly.

Southern white gay men were much less willing to engage in this process of self-examination, which made the identity politics they practiced narrower in focus. The effect of highlighting diversity at the March on Washington by separating out various 'minority groups' provided a language of inclusion while allowing white gay men to continue to be separate from other LGBT individuals. The single-issue cause of white gay men appeared to be supported by the other queer people of color, lesbians, and those of differing abilities and classes while most gay white men, especially those in the South, did not adopt a political agenda that advocated for the concerns of other identities. The "gay movement" was the next in line after the civil rights movement; gay activists were the descendants of black liberation activists, not their partners in a movement to end oppression for both identities, or all identities for that matter. Unlike many Southern gay white men who viewed themselves as carrying on the 'next' struggle for one cause and one identity, Southern lesbian feminists, especially those in Texas, Georgia, and North

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¹⁶⁴ Segrest, Memoirs of a Race Traitor, 42.

Carolina, believed they were joining an *ongoing* struggle for multiple identities – a revolution to end all oppression – the same one Bernice Johnson Reagon had described that morning in the ALFA House in 1978 when she said "we are not single issue people." ¹⁶⁵

The 1979 March on Washington conveniently bookends the narrative of gay rights activism for the 1970s just as Ronald Reagan's 1980 election seemed to signal the rise of the Right in American politics. Such simplified periodization by decade, however, neglects the significance of Southern identity and Southern space in 1970s identity politics. It also erases the different forms of identity politicking that Southerners, particularly Southern lesbian feminists engaged in as they developed their own feminist praxis. Southern lesbian feminists carried their convictions and the organizational skills they learned in the seventies into the eighties as the political landscape changed around them. Their commitment to a broad-based movement to end all forms of oppression and the influence of their Southern identities continued.

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¹⁶⁵ Susan W., "Sweet Honey in the Rock: An Interview," *Feminary* 10, No. 1 (1979): 18 – 25. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In late 1979, *Feminary* editor, Mab Segrest, worried over a series of killings; the bodies of murdered black school children were turning up around Atlanta. It was the beginning of the Atlanta Child Murders.¹ Then on November 3, not even a month after the National March on Washington, Segrest was horrified when members of the Ku Klux Klan killed five individuals from the Communist Workers Party (CWP), a loosely organized group of North Carolina textile workers, who were participating in an anti-Klan rally in Greensboro, North Carolina. This was the Greensboro Massacre.² In 1980, an all-white jury acquitted the six Klansmen charged with murder in the deaths of the five CWP members. Another all-white jury acquitted them again four years later.³ Between the trials, and after the 1984 trial, Klan activity in the state escalated at an alarming rate.⁴ Southern lesbian feminists' response to the Atlanta Child Murders and the Greensboro Massacre, and their continued activism in the 1980s illustrates their commitment to a broad liberation movement for all people, even as the gay rights movement grew to face a staggering health crisis and the country moved into an era of conservatism.

In the conclusion of his synthesis of Black Power, Peniel Joseph described the late 1970s as "far less romantic and politically cohesive" than the early 1970s for Black Power activists.

¹ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 5. The killings went on through 1981 and became known as the Atlanta Child Murders.

² Segrest, Memoir of a Race Traitor, 5-8.

³ Mab Segrest, My Momma's Dead Squirrel: Lesbian Essays on Southern Culture, (Ithaca, New York: Firebrand Books, 1985), 185.

⁴ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 17-30.

Despite this lack of cohesion though, Joseph argued that "Black Power contributed to the multiplicity of social justice movements that, on the surface, seemed more splintered than in the decade before." He included black feminism and gay and lesbian rights in the social movements to which Black Power contributed, but pointed out how much "harder to categorize" the seventies were – "more democratic and diverse than the mythic 1960s." But, if we look South, we can see how important the South and Southern identity were for radical, anti-racist activism in that period. Gregg Michel made this case with his work on the Southern Student Organizing Committee, but there is more to find, a richness, if we follow that thread into the 1970s.⁶

Even with the fragmented characteristics of 1970s identity politics, we must not overlook the South as a site of progressive activism or Southerners as important players in that activism, as some scholars have done. In her conclusions, Winifred Breines explained how black and white socialist feminists came together by the late 1970s and into the early 1980s to build coalitions, however fraught with tension. First, she discussed formation of the Coalition for Women's Safety to oppose violence against women. ⁷ Breines offered "The Varied Voices of Black Women: An Evening of Words and Music" 1978 concert tour, which the Coalition for Women's Safety in Boston supported, featuring a line-up of all black lesbian artists: Linda Tillery, Mary Watkins, Gwen Avery, and Pat Parker. Breines's assessment of the concert's organization gave credit to the efforts of white socialist feminists in Massachusetts without acknowledging that impetus for the concert came from a radical group in Washington, D.C., Roadwork, the same group responsible for organizing entertainment at the MOW less than a year

⁵ Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*, 294. ⁶ Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*.

⁷ Breines, The Trouble Between Us. 164.

later. Breines described a painful process of self-reflection about race that plagued black and white feminists' relationships with each other and political cooperation for so long. Southern lesbian feminists were and had been participating in this process of self-reflection simultaneously, if not before. During her cross-country reading tour in 1975, Parker had coordinated with women in Diana Press to have a reading and concert featuring herself, Casse Culver and Willie Tyson. 9 In November, 1976, Pat Parker went to see Culver perform at the Full Moon Coffeehouse in San Francisco. With irritation, she wrote in her diary how she "[r]ealized for the umpteenth time how white this movement is." This frustration, however, did not keep Parker, from working with white Southern lesbian feminists. Pat Parker, Linda Tillery, Mary Watkins, Teresa Trull, and Meg Christian, with a few others, toured together through 1977 and 1978, "in solidarity with women in prison," and as part of the Women on Wheels tour. 11 The creation of the Lesbian Concentrate album by Olivia Records in 1977 featured the same five women.¹² The Feminary Collective in North Carolina, including editors Minnie Bruce Pratt and Mab Segrest, had been working on their special series of *Feminary* issues dedicated to race, black lesbians, and Southern lesbian identity since 1977.

Later, Breines rightfully celebrated early 1980s collaborations between white women and women of color who all held socialist feminist convictions: Barbara Smith, Pat Parker, and

⁸ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 164 – 166. Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; "The Varied Voices of Black Women" program, November 6, 1978. MC 861, Folder 13.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge Massachusetts.

⁹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; E. Sharon "Lois" Gomillion Letter to Pat Parker, April 1975, 1975. MC 861, Folder 14.8. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁰ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Journal Entry, November 29, 1976. MC 861, Folder 8.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹¹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Flyers and promotional material, March 26, 1977. MC 861, Folder 12.4; Flyer, June 18-19, 1977, MC 861, Folder 12.3. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹² Lesbian Concentrate: A Lesbianthology of Songs and Poems, Olivia Records LP, (1977), Catherine Nicholson Papers, [Box 17], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Minnie Bruce Pratt, for example.¹³ It is true that Combahee River Collective co-founder Barbara Smith was active in the Coalition for Women's Safety, the significance of Combahee's "Black Feminist Statement," in 1977 was profound in feminist history as was the formation of Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press and its publications, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, in 1981, and *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, in 1983.¹⁴ However, Breines ignored Pat Parker's ties to Black Power, Minnie Bruce Pratt's Southern identity, and the sexuality of all three women as important factors that influenced their writing and politics. In hailing the rise of third wave feminism, which was interracial and addressed intersecting oppressions and multiple forms of discrimination, Breines neglected the role that Southern lesbian feminists played in its birth.

In the 1970s, the Southern lesbians I discussed here, the women of Olivia Records, the Feminary Collective, ALFA, the Pointblank Times Collective, sought a political philosophy that would revolutionize society by eradicating multiple forms of oppression: sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, heterosexism, and imperialism. They were engaged in a revolutionary feminist praxis that worked toward the uncomfortable coalitions Breines mentioned, that included analyses from women of color, and that required white, middle-class women to confront their own privilege. This process revealed activists who refused to flatten or universalize their identities and were constantly critical of their own cultural dynamics. ¹⁵

¹³ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 169- 175, 184, 194-195, 200.

¹⁴ Breines, *The Trouble Between Us*, 169-171; Anzaldúa and Moraga, eds. *This Bridge Called My Back*; Smith, ed. *Home Girls*.

¹⁵ Valerie, "The Second Michigan's Wimmin's Music Festival: Amazon Culture or Just Another Amerikan Consumer Event," *Feminary* IX, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 10-13, 59. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Disagreements among these women sometimes caused factionalism, but the discourse around those disagreements indicates the vibrancy of Southern lesbian feminism and the grassroots political environment they built. For example, Southern lesbian feminist artists had been instrumental in building a womyn's music scene that they meant to be a political tool, but after some commercial success at a national level, one Feminary author wondered if that success had begun to separate the musicians from their audience because of too much "amerikan" individualism and consumerism. Valerie wrote about her impressions of and experiences at the second annual Michigan Wimmin's Music Festival in 1977. She celebrated the diversity of women, saying "there was such a mixture of wimmin, so many divergent types! there were smart clothed party dykes, laughing gentle hippie lesbians, tough serious crewcut political activists, shy student couples, wild eyed feathered naked gypsies dressed in scarves and bells and paint and cymbals...[SIC] advocates of monogamy, non-monogamy, capitalism, socialism, anarchism, spirituality, politics, reformism, revolution, gay liberation, lesbian feminism, [and] separatism." Valerie admitted that "ours was no easy blanket unity." She wondered what they all had in common and if it would sustain a movement: "the smile in our eyes, our love for each other, maybe not much more. maybe that's enough. we were together in anarchistic consensual unity." But Valerie worried that too much success and centralization of womyn's music might have muted its power for grassroots organizing. The establishment of "stars" at one national festival created a line separating rather than a connection between the "big-name" artists and their audience. She wondered if more attention to strengthen regional music festivals was in

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¹⁶ Valerie, "The Second Michigan's Wimmin's Music Festival: Amazon Culture or Just Another Amerikan Consumer Event," *Feminary* IX, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 10-13, 59. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

order. This would lower costs for women who wished to attend and support more community-based acts and local artists while making it easier to maintain what she called "communal intimacy." Valerie's thoughtfulness shows how Southern lesbian feminists sought to balance their expansion and community effectiveness and were often critical of their own processes; to be so was a function of the politics they practiced into the next decade. More generally, Southern lesbian feminists contributed to feminist music and literature in the 1980s, as they continued to explore how the racism of Southern culture interacted with their own lesbian identities and how that interaction affected their activism.

Southern lesbians continuously responded to their Southern identities during the 1970s and in their cultural production beyond. Sometimes they drew inspiration from their Southern identities, at times they rejected Southernness, but it was central to their activism. Southern identity affected how they interpreted not only race, but gender, and sexuality, *and* how racism interacted with white Southern cultural constructions of femininity and masculinity, which defined acceptable expressions of sexuality. Even though Pat Parker left Houston, Texas, when she was only 17, she repeatedly referenced her Southern identity in private and published writing. On occasion, Parker referred to herself as a "country girl." In correspondence to a high school friend, Parker admitted that she never personally experienced "the hardships of the South," but she knew about them. ¹⁹ In 1967, while Pat was still married to Robert Parker, a

¹⁷ Valerie, "The Second Michigan's Wimmin's Music Festival: Amazon Culture or Just Another Amerikan Consumer Event," *Feminary* IX, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 10-13, 59. Jean Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

¹⁸ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker Letter to Audre Lorde, July 25, 1975. MC 861, Folder 5.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

¹⁹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker Letter to Carolyn Burney, April 29, 1967. MC 861, Folder 2.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

white man, she missed a family member's funeral for fear of returning to Texas because of miscegenation laws there.²⁰ Despite early admissions of avoiding personal encounters with Southern racism, Parker later used Texas and her Southern identity as a touchstone to demonstrate her credibility when discussing racial discrimination. In one poem, she wrote "I grew up in the American south/ heard the word nigger at four/ was told I was no good at six/ saw a black man beaten at seven/discovered tracking at ten."21 Her 1982 poem, "Georgia, Georgia, Georgia on my mind," a reaction to the 1979-1981 Atlanta Child Murders, discussed racial violence in the South and systemic racism.²² When Parker did return to Houston in 1975, she found some of its Southern customs quaint.²³ But she also exhibited a respect for some things Southern and a pride in her own Southernness. In Houston, when Parker did a reading at the Women's Center, organized by Pokey Anderson and the PBT Collective, she stayed with her family. Marie Cooks, Parker's mother, had prepared gumbo, Pat's "most favorite dish of food."24 Parker penned a poem about her mother in 1982, "Trying to do how mama did can un Do you." In it, she said she "first realized Mama's power [when] I tried to cook a pot of gumbo/ Gumbo- a southern dish..." The poem tells how Parker tried to cook Southern staples like

²⁰ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker Letter to Carolyn Burney, March 31, 1967. MC 861, Folder 2.13. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²¹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Poem, "There are those some new thinking enlighten ones," [1988]. MC 861, Folder 10.15. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²² Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Poem, "Georgia, Georgia on my mind," 1982. MC 861, Folder 9.33. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²³ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker Letter to Audre Lorde, July 25, 1975. MC 861, Folder 5.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁴ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Poem, Pat Parker, letter to Willie Coleman, June 28, 1975. MC 861, Folder 2.18. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

gumbo, biscuits and gravy, sweet potato salad, and hot water cornbread, but could never get it just right.²⁵ In private, though, Parker bragged about her own ability to cook Southern cuisine.²⁶

By the early 1980s, Meg Christian was one of the brightest stars in womyn's music. Audiences had long noted Christian's Southern humor, charm, and accent, which added so much to her stage presence.²⁷ She, Ginny Berson, Teresa Trull, and the rest of the Olivia Records Collective had relocated from Washington, D.C. to Oakland, California, after their success of the late 1970s, but Christian maintained her "down home" Southern style and continued to grapple with her Southern roots. In 1981 she released another album, *Turning it Over*, titled from lyrics in "Southern Home," a song she wrote for the album. "Southern Home" told the story of Christian coming to terms with her Southern identity. She had moved "from the South" with friends "as soon as we could get out." They were "[f]leeing Confederate closets of pain/losing the accents we learned to disdain/go to hell Southern bigots and belles." But when her friends decided to return home, Christian had to acknowledge "a love I'd been trying so long to ignore/ a longing so deep and so strong/ For my Southern home." Having gotten older and seen more of the world, she realized all the South had taught her; it would always be part of her. She was "reclaim[ing the South's] soft beauty as my own," and even though she enjoyed living in the West, she was "holding those old Blue Ridge Hills in my heart." She would "dream of the place that has known me the best/embrace what I love and turn over the rest." Christian vowed "Oh I will never lose you again."28 She admitted in a 1980 interview with off our backs that she "fe[lt]

²⁵ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Poem, "Trying to do how mama did can un Do you," 1982. MC 861, Folder 10.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁶ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Poem, Pat Parker, letter to Willie Coleman, August 6, 1975. MC 861, Folder 2.18. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

²⁷ Sears, Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones, 256.

²⁸ Meg Christian, "Southern Home," *Turning it Over*, Olivia Records LP (1981).

like I'm still kind of a tourist in California."²⁹ "Southern Home" was classic Christian, acoustic, folksy, with tight gospel harmonies in the chorus, the twang of a country guitar and mandolin, and so popular with fans that it also appeared on her *Best of Meg Christian* album in 1990.³⁰

Mab Segrest had been contemplating the implications of Southern identity for lesbians since the mid-70s and writing about it since 1977; her work in the 1980s and 1990s also maintained a hard, Southern edge. In 1980, she began coordinating the *Feminary* 11, No. 3 issue, which investigated the South as a location and Southernness as one facet of intersecting identities. For the publication, Segrest wanted to examine the migration of Southern lesbians, usually out of the South, black women and the South, the "southerner as Other," and lesbians' interpretation of "home." In her call for submissions, the notions of Southernness as a significant part of identity, performing Southernness, and the relationship between Southernness and other forms of oppression were clear:

Being Southern has seldom been politically correct. Southern-identified women, both Black and white, inhabit a strange Otherness. The South for most of its history has served as a psychic dumping ground for the rest of the country. White people outside the South have often found it easier to deal with racism as a Southern problem—to project their own racism onto white Southerners, who sometimes with grotesque relish, often with a sense of entrapment, have acted it out. Also, a great deal of misogyny seems to collect around the stereotype of the Southern white woman—the Southern belle.³¹

She wondered how the Otherness of Southern women, black and white, affected them. Did women outside the South feel prejudice against them? Segrest even mused about Southern women's ability to "pass" as a non-Southerner, the same way a person of African descent might

²⁹ Meg Christian and Katherine Davenport, "interview: meg talks," *Off Our Backs* 11, No. 3 (March 1981): 19, 22. ³⁰ Meg Christian, *The Best of Meg Christian*, Olivia Records CD (1990).

³¹ [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Black women, poets,/writers, 1980-1981"], "FUTURE ISSUE, STAYING OR LEAVING: THE SOUTH AS HOME," [1981] Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. This was one of the last issues of *Feminary*.

"pass" as white, or a lesbian might "pass" as a heterosexual.³² For her, Southern identity was as affecting as race, gender, or sexuality. All these intersecting identities, Segrest knew, influenced activism; "lesbian-feminists [were] begin[ning] to tackle the huge issue of racism in the women's movement," and Segrest wanted to know what role Southern women would play in that endeavor.³³

In the introduction to *My Mama's Dead Squirrel*, fellow feminist writer Adrienne Rich said Segrest was "writing as a Southerner;" "she writes in and for her own culture, because it's in the struggles with her own culture that she became a writer." Some of the essays included in the collection Segrest had begun working on in 1977 as an editor with *Feminary*. Segrest's youth in the South as the civil rights movement played out in the mid-60s began her reflection on racial identity. That reflection only intensified when she came out as a lesbian in the mid-70s; it fueled her search for self and quest to understand the place she came from, and determine a political philosophy. The forward to Segrest's 1994 *Memoir of a Race Traitor* opened with an explanation:

This book is the work of one white woman, who is also a lesbian, thinking race, feeling race, acting against racism in a sustained way over one bleak decade in her country's history. I write it from the vantage point of Alabama and North Carolina, the American South whose history presented me in my adolescence with a continuing preoccupation about my country and my people. I have written this treatise on the souls of white folks with an urgency that it be exemplary, a template into which white readers can read themselves."³⁵

³² [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Black women, poets,/writers, 1980-1981"], "FUTURE ISSUE, STAYING OR LEAVING: THE SOUTH AS HOME," [1981] Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

³³ [Box 29, Folder "Writings, Feminary, Black women, poets,/writers, 1980-1981"], "FUTURE ISSUE, STAYING OR LEAVING: THE SOUTH AS HOME," [1981] Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

³⁴ Segrest, My Momma's Dead Squirrel, 14.

³⁵ Segrest, Memoir of a Race Traitor, ix.

Segrest consciously borrowed from and named the black scholar W.E.B. Du Bois when she wrote that "[t]he problem of the 21st century – to extend W.E.B. Du Bois' insight – will also be the color line, and it is time we figure this out."³⁶ For Segrest, her identity as a Southern lesbian had everything to do with her interpretation of oppressions and how she would function as an activist. She "[could] not look at race in an uncomplicated way;" she was a lesbian "who has worked to articulate the many interfaces among misogyny, racism and homophobia in a culture ravaged by all three."³⁷ Each part of her identity helped her understand what the other parts of her identity meant; that conviction continuously informed her politics.³⁸ Memoir of a Race Traitor was about Segrest's experience in the 1980s, organizing anti-Klan activism with the North Carolinians Against Racist and Religious Violence (NCARRV, pronounced "en-carve"). She joined an ad hoc interracial group of 10 people, mostly veteran activists, in June 1983. By the fall of 1984, they decided to formalize their group into NCARRV. From the beginning, Segrest wanted to coordinate their efforts in opposition to rising Klan activity, but she "knew I needed the freedom to link homophobia to racism. I also knew I could no longer hide my sexual orientation to any employer." She "made sure that all the [NCARRV] Board members knew that I was gay," which was still a crime in North Carolina. They voted unanimously to make her a coordinator.³⁹ As the memoir explained, her years of reflection on Southernness and the interdependent nature of interlocking oppressions had led her to NCARRV work. 40 Unlike Pat Parker and Meg Christian, Segrest remained in the South, living in North Carolina through the

³⁶ Segrest, Memoir of a Race Traitor, ix.

³⁷ Segrest, Memoir of a Race Traitor, ix.

³⁸ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 3.

³⁹ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 12.

⁴⁰ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 6-17.

1980s. All three women, however, illustrate the importance of Southern identity and its lasting impact on their activism.

Southern lesbian feminist activism and Southern radical activism generally, extend beyond the states on which I chose to focus. The research here is certainly not exhaustive. My emphasis on Southern lesbian feminism in the Triangle Area of North Carolina, Atlanta, Georgia, and urban areas of Texas, was a conscious decision, though my research uncovered lesbian feminist activities and organizations in other Southern places. Janet Allured wrote on feminists, many of them lesbians, in Louisiana. 41 There was a radical women's organization in Missouri, Moonstorm, that shared the same politics as Pointblank Times, the Austin Lesbian Organization, Feminary, and ALFA, as well as significant lesbian feminist organizing in Kentucky. 42 Jackson, Mississippi, even had its own newsletter for gay women in the 1970s, the Lesbian Front. 43 The organizations I chose as subjects resided in urban areas, but there were intentional communities of women in rural areas such as the Carrboro Collective in North Carolina and several collectives or communes of women in northwest Arkansas, for example.⁴⁴ Perhaps there were more than circumstantial connections to the chapters of the SSOC and later Southern lesbian feminism in the same areas. The University of Florida, where Rita Mae Brown attended in the 1960s, had a chapter of the SSOC, as did Duke University and the University of

⁴¹ Allured, *Remapping Second-Wave Feminism*.

⁴² MOONSTORM, LESBIAN-FEMINIST MAGAZINE, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977), 89, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086; Williams, "Louisville's Lesbian Feminist Union," 224-240.

⁴³ "Publications," *MOONSTORM, LESBIAN-FEMINIST MAGAZINE*, 4th Year, No. 10, (Fall 1977), 89, Lesbian Issues Collection, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Box AR 91-086.

⁴⁴ Cobb, Chalk, and Isard, "Elizabeth Knowlton," https://sites.duke.edu/docst110s 01 s2011 bec15/theactivists/elizabeth-knowlton/ accessed 19 September, 2016; Anna M. Zajicek, Allyn Lord, and Lori Holyfield, "The Emergence and First Years of a Grassroots Women's Movement in Northwest Arkansas, 1970–1980" Arkansas Historical Quarterly 62 (Summer 2003): 153–181.

North Carolina, where Mab Segrest and Meg Christian went to graduate school and college, respectively. Atlanta also had a once thriving chapter of the SSOC in the late 1960s. Such an investigation might provide an explanation for how and why identity politics changed from the 1960s to the 1970s, and beyond. Transitional questions are important for moving this research forward.

And surely, the transition between the 70s and 80s is fertile ground for research about the evolution of LGBT activism. The 1979 March on Washington seemed to close the decade on a high note for gay rights, at least projecting pride and the growing number of LGBT activists, even if they were not all on the same page. But other clouds, bigger than political differences, were forming. A gay man in New York City went to the doctor in 1979 with a rash and enlarged lymph nodes. His doctor diagnosed him with a rare type of skin cancer. Through the rest of 1979 and into the early 1980s, a few gay publications in New York City and San Francisco began printing tips for sexual health because of a rise in a mysterious illness, possibly a cancer, manifesting in gay men. Mainstream media finally picked up the story in 1982. The *New York Times* reported that doctors sometimes called the disease gay-related immunodeficiency, or G.R.I.D. During the same time, women with sick babies visited doctors; they had weak immune systems, infected with the HIV virus. These were the first cases of what was later

⁴⁵ "Guide to Mab Segrest Papers, 1889-2014," *Duke University Libraries*, accessed 18 July, 2017, http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/segrestmab/; Meg Christian and Katherine Davenport, "interview: meg talks," *Off Our Backs* 11, No. 3 (March 1981): 19, 22. Minnie Bruce Pratt also received her graduate degree from the University of North Carolina in 1979.

⁴⁶ Michel, Struggle for a Better South.

⁴⁷ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 51.

⁴⁸ Walter Holland, A Journal of the Plague Years: Poems, 1979-1992 (New York: Magic City Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ Lawrence K. Altman, "New Homosexual Disorder Worries Health Officials," *The New York Times*, (May 11, 1982). http://www.nytimes.com/1982/05/11/science/new-homosexual-disorder-worries-health-officials.html?pagewanted=all, accessed 28 June, 2017.

renamed Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).⁵⁰ The 1980s brought Reagan conservatism, feminist backlash, and the AIDS crisis that would shape discussions of race and interaction between gay men and lesbians within LGBT activism for that decade. The deeper polarization of politics in subsequent years has kept questions of identity, intersectionality, and systemic oppressions in national political dialogue, as the presidential election of 2016 illustrated.

Despite national attention on AIDS and a gay rights movement whose 1980s media coverage made it appear predominantly male, Southern lesbian feminists continued their own political culture that championed a broad spectrum of causes, celebrated womyn's music, and strengthening a network of activists that had begun in the early 70s. In early 1980, in response to the Atlanta Child Murders, ALFA joined the Atlanta Anti-Klan Coalition.⁵¹ Through the year, Lucina's Music, ALFA members, sponsored several concerts of womyn's music, including the Pretty Good for Girls Band in March and a joint performance by Mary Watkins and Linda Tillery in September.⁵² That same month other alum from the *Lesbian Concentrate* album, Pat Parker, Gwen Avery, and Teresa Trull, performed in the First Annual West Coast Women's Music and Cultural Festival. Charlotte Bunch of the Furies and *QUEST* and Margaret Sloan, a black lesbian feminist from Tennessee who co-founded the National Black Feminist Organization with Flo Kennedy, both did workshops for the same festival.⁵³ Gwen Avery and

⁵⁰ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 51.

⁵¹ [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. The Atlanta Child Murders went on from 1979 to 1981.

⁵² [Box 1, unlabeled folder] "ALFA/LESBIAN TIME-LINE," Financial Papers, ALFA Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁵³ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Flyer, September 1980. MC 861, Folder 11.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Margaret Sloan was also a Southerner from Chattanooga, Tennessee. She was co-founder of the National Black Feminist Organization.

Pat Parker reunited again in November 1980 to appear with Judy Grahn and Cherríe Moraga, among others, at a poetry festival in San Francisco.⁵⁴

When Cherríe Moraga, Barbara Smith, and their Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press put together *This Bridge Called My Back*, published in 1981, they included "Revolution: It's Not Neat or Pretty or Quick," a speech Pat Parker had given in August 1980, shortly after founding the Black Women's Revolutionary Council.⁵⁵ An expanding network of black lesbians connected through Pat Parker had been years in the making, though. Margaret Sloan appeared with Parker for several poetry readings in the mid-1970s.⁵⁶ Parker had been corresponding with another Kitchen Table founder, Audre Lorde, for over seven years, since the early 1970s.⁵⁷ Lorde had put Parker in touch with Anita Cornwell in Philadelphia; Parker even visited Cornwell during her 1975 tour.⁵⁸ Parker's roommate at the time was Linda Tillery - two years before *Lesbian Concentrate* came out.⁵⁹ Ann Allen Shockley, Tennessean and author of the black lesbian novel, *Loving Her*, reached out to Parker in April 1975, interested in putting together a collection to "[document] the black woman's experience in America;" she had gotten Parker's

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⁵⁴ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Flyer, November 1980. MC 861, Folder 11.10. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁵ Pat Parker, "Revolution: It's Not Neat or Pretty or Quick," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga, eds. (New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1981), 238-242.

⁵⁶ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Flyer: Benefit Poetry Reading for International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, April 10, 1976; Flyer, April 6, 1977. MC 861, Folder 12.4. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁷ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker/ Audre Lorde correspondence, 1974-1989. MC 861, Folder 5.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁸ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker Letter to Audre Lorde, July 25, 1975. MC 861, Folder 5.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁵⁹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker Letter to Marie Cooks, June 24, 1975. MC 861, Folder 2.22. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

contact information from Lorde.⁶⁰ Through that connection, Parker began work as an editor for Baltimore-based Diana Press in 1977.⁶¹ Parker remained in contact with Barbara Smith, Anita Cornwell, and Audre Lorde about things political and personal until her death from breast cancer in 1989.⁶² These women had connected with each other because of their individual identities, utilized the growth of lesbian feminist print culture in the 1970s to spread their political convictions, which helped to connect and grow Southern lesbian feminism.

White Southern lesbian feminists celebrated Pat Parker and her work and consumed the literature of other women of color that were not necessarily from the South; both influenced their politics as evinced by *Feminary* from 1977 to 1981. Southern lesbians of all ethnicities exhibited a willingness to ask hard questions about how systemic forms of oppressions function in concert, have difficult conversations about the manifestations of racism and classism, and form alliances in their activism despite the awkwardness or tension that their differences in identity sometimes caused. Their labors from the 1970s brought them together in a national lesbian-feminist movement in the 1980s. In 1981, Persephone Press released *Lesbian Poetry*, *An Anthology*, which included work by Pat Parker and Minnie Bruce Pratt. ⁶³ In preparation for its roll out, Pat Parker, Judy Grahn, Audre Lorde, and a handful of other contributors toured as part of "The

⁶⁰ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Ann Allen Shockley Letter to Pat Parker, April 29, 1975; June 15, 1975; Ann Allen Shockley Letter to Louis Crew, May 23, 1975. MC 861, Folder 5.14. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶¹ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker Letter to Ann Allen Shockley, August 15, 1977. MC 861, Folder 3.9. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Parker's correspondence with Ann Allen Shockley reveals a web of connections between Audre Lorde, Anita Cornwell, Parker, and Shockley.

⁶² Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Pat Parker/Anita Cornwell correspondence, 1987-1989. MC 861, Folder 3.1; Pat Parker/Barbara Smith correspondence, 1976-1989. MC 861, Folder 5.15; Pat Parker/Audre Lorde correspondence, 1974-1989. MC 861, Folder 5.1. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶³ Elly Bulkin and Joan Larkin, eds. *Lesbian Poetry, an Anthology* (Watertown, Mass.: Persephone Press, 1981).

Lesbian Poetry Reading." Minnie Bruce Pratt and Barbara Smith edited *Yours in Struggle:*Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism, which came out in 1984. Mab

Segrest wrote My Mama's Dead Squirrel: Lesbian Essays On Southern Culture, published in

1985. In the late 1980s, Segrest worked with Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, calling for feminist papers on racism. That culminated in the 1990s publication of The Third Wave:

Feminist Perspectives on Racism. By the 1980s, the network of black lesbians from in and outside the South were connected to and working with white Southern lesbian feminists who had wrestled with racism and the privileges that some parts of their identities gave them. Together, these women shaped national feminist consciousness. Because of them, the women's movement grew to include more than just liberal feminist ideas.

While Southern lesbian feminists moved forward in their organizations, the changing political climate of the 1980s, particularly the feminist backlash, took its toll. The height of lesbian feminist publishing was over. Many local lesbian feminist periodicals, *Goodbye To All That* in Austin and *Pointblank Times* in Houston, for example, did not survive into the 1980s. Other Southern lesbian-feminist bands formed in the early 80s, such as the Fallopian Tubes out of Florida, unique for playing tubas, but with a shrinking lesbian-feminist print culture to publicize them they were unable to rise in womyn's music the way Christian or Trull had.⁶⁷ *Feminary* began unraveling in late 1981, because of internal disagreements about the journal's

⁶⁴ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Persephone Press Letter to Pat Parker, March 30, 1981. MC 861, Folder 15.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶⁵ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, "Call for Submission," 1988. MC 861, Folder 15.7. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁶⁶ M. Jacqui Alexander, ed. *The Third Wave: Feminist Perspectives on Racism* (New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1998).

⁶⁷ [Box 23, Folder 23.35] Fallopian Tubes Flyers and correspondence, ALFA Archive, David M. Ruben stein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

direction, changing personal relationships, and because several collective members moved away. But several of its members, along with members of the Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists (TALF) revived its previous incarnation and began publishing *The Newsletter*. In 1982, Mandy Carter, a black lesbian who had worked with the Lesbians of Color organization in California, moved to Durham and became lead editor for *The Newsletter*. Organizations such as the Dallas Gay Alliance (originally the DGPC), and the Houston Gay Political Caucus only grew in power. Over time, HGPC, improved the way it incorporated women members and embraced more feminist politics. Thrice-elected openly lesbian mayor of Houston, Annise Parker, came through its ranks, and even ran a bookstore, Inklings Bookshop, with Pointblank Times founder and HGPC member, Pokey Anderson, from the late 80s into the 1990s. Annise Parker sharpened her political teeth in the HGPC and even served as its president in 1986 and 1987. Her political rise through that organization, election to city council, and eventually one of the first openly-lesbian mayors in a major US city, shows how far HGPC's political clout, and the LGBT movement generally, have come in the Southern city.

The 1970s was a specific time for Southern lesbian feminism to grow. The maturation of different identity politics movements and the rise of feminist print culture in the South gave space for Southern lesbians to explore their identities in a political context. Much of their

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⁶⁸ Segrest, Memoir of a Race Traitor, 46.

⁶⁹ [Box 216] Introduction/Herstory of The Newsletter (July 29, 1987), Mandy Carter Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

⁷⁰ [Box 216] Introduction/Herstory of The Newsletter (July 29, 1987), Mandy Carter Papers, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/cartermandy/accessed 10 August, 2017.

⁷¹ Sara Fernandez, "1973, Pokey Anderson: Out & Everywhere." *houstonlgbthistory.org*. http://www.houstonlgbthistory.org/banner1973.html accessed 10 August, 2017.

⁷² Mike Snyder, "Mayoral hopeful Parker says she's 'ready to lead'," *Houston Chronicle* (October 15, 2009). http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Mayoral-hopeful-Parker-says-she-s-ready-to-lead-1741435.php accessed 10 August, 2017.

activism connected the Black Power Movement to women's liberation in a real way. The movement they worked toward addressed multiple oppressions because they, as Southern lesbians, had intersecting identities. Although Mab Segrest worried that lesbian-feminism could be "dangerously over-literary and under-strategic," she realized that it "had given me a clear analysis of how power operates among people in a culture's institutions." It also began her education into political organizing. She got practice building networks, working with community agencies, mobilizing people of different races.⁷³

Even after conservatism swept the country in the 1980s, they continued their dedication to this kind of movement and used the networks they had built in the 1970s to keep their revolutionary work going. Pat Parker and Segrest exemplified this. In 1985, Parker visited several countries in Africa and kept a journal, as she had for over twenty years, during her travels. In that journal, she jotted down notes for an organization she envisioned. It would be a "public organization[,] open to all lesbians" and increase its "membership by Recruitment." In a list, Parker wrote out this organization's platform: "Anti-racist[,] anti-classist[,] anti-sexist[, and] anti-imperialist." It would "take the best of BPP [Black Panther Party] + Women's Movement." Segrest's work with NCARRV only solidified her understanding that racist and homophobic oppressions function together with other forms of oppression. She meant to resist oppression in all its forms.

The political fervor these Southern women encountered in the late 1960s only grew and proved to be a crucible in the 1970s when lesbian-feminist print culture flourished. There, in that

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⁷³ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 47.

⁷⁴ Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Journal Entries, 1985. MC 861, Folder 8.12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁷⁵ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 27 - 49.

decade, they recognized their own sexual identities; the lesbian-feminist connections they made and the lesbian spaces they created in the South and in writing served as an activist training ground. The politics of identity they developed was, they believed, a necessary piece of one movement that joined many movements. Their experience in the 1970s, and intersectional understanding of identity politics prepared them for the Reagan years where, as Segrest put it, "there is no separate safety" for individual identities. Southern lesbian feminism had taught her that "Lesbian space' had better be a world where everyone belongs." As necessary as Segrest understood that separate political theorizing and organizing might have been temporarily, she "realize[d] how such movements separate people as much as bring them together." Segrest was ultimately committed to a united movement, one that practical application would achieve. She knew activism must be more than coalitions; it should be rooted in relationships. ⁷⁸ Parker, Segrest, and other Southern lesbian feminists purposefully cultivated deep relationships across racial lines and worked together for a variety of causes, even when it was uncomfortable because of differences in identity, because of their faith in one movement to end all oppressions.⁷⁹ Their intersecting identities as Southern lesbian feminists informed their efforts, which contributed to a broadened women's movement more sensitive to the effects of racism, classism, and homophobia, a women's movement willing to confront those oppressions.

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⁷⁶ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 49.

⁷⁷ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 47.

⁷⁸ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 47, 49.

⁷⁹ Segrest, *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, 42; Lou Dublin, Letter, Minnie Bruce Pratt Papers [Box 29], David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University; Pat Parker Papers, 1944-1998; Journal Entry, November 29, 1976. MC 861, Folder 8.11. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Segrest explained that her 1970s activism introduced her to the black feminism of the Combahee River Collective, and bonded her to women from a variety of racial, ethnic, class, and religious backgrounds, including Barbara Smith, Cherrie Moraga, and Lou Blackdykewoman Dublin, a black lesbian activist in South Carolina. Minnie Bruce Pratt also carried on a long correspondence with Lou Dublin. Pat Parker repeatedly worked with white women, even when it frustrated her.

NOMENCLATURE

ALFA Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance

ALO Austin Lesbian Organization

BPP Black Panther Party

COF Circle of Friends

DGPC Dallas Gay Political Caucus

DOB Daughters of Bilitis

HGPC Houston Gay Political Caucus

MCC Metropolitan Community Church

MOW March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights

NBFO National Black Feminist Organization

NGTF National Gay Task Force

NLFO National Lesbian Feminist Organization

NTCMW North Texas Committee for the March on Washington

PBT Pointblank Times

SSOC Southern Student Organizing Committee

TALF Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists

TGTF Texas Gay Task Force

POKEY ANDERSON – Anderson is a lesbian from Houston, Texas. She co-founded the lesbian feminist Pointblank Times Collective in 1975 and was a member of ALFA *in abstentia*. She was also active in the Houston Gay Political Caucus from its early days. In 1976, the National Gay Task Force named her to its board.

RITA MAE BROWN – Brown is a white, self-identified lesbian from Florida. She was involved in civil rights activism at the University of Florida, then went to New York where she was active in the radical feminist group, Redstockings. She was a founding member of Radicalesbians and The Furies. Brown also authored the popular lesbian novel, *Rubyfruit Jungle* in 1973.

CHARLOTTE BUNCH – Bunch is a North Carolinian. She attended Duke University and moved to Washington, D.C. In 1971, she co-founded The Furies. She later founded and was editor for *Quest*, a radical lesbian publication.

MEG CHRISTIAN - Christian is from Lynchburg, Virginia. She attended college in North Carolina, then in 1969, moved to Washington, D.C., where she was a member of The Furies. In 1973, Christian and her partner, Ginny Berson, co-founded Olivia Records. She released her first album, *I Know You Know*, on the label in 1974 and went on to become one of its best-selling artists.

FEMINARY COLLECTIVE - The Feminary Collective in the Triangle Area of North Carolina published *Feminary*, a lesbian-feminist journal. Some members of the Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists (TALF) were also members of the Feminary Collective. *Feminary* had several iterations. It started in 1969 as *The Research Triangle Women's Liberation Newsletter*, which became *Female Liberation Newsletter of Durham-Chapel Hill*, then the *Chapel Hill Female Liberation Newsletter*, and eventually *Feminary*.

THE FURIES – This radical lesbian feminist organization formed in 1971 in Washington, D.C. Prior to its formation, some of its members had worked with the Black Panther Party to organize the November 1970 Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention held in the nation's capital.

OLIVIA RECORDS – A group of former members of The Furies, including Meg Christian and Ginny Berson, founded the Olivia Records Collective in Washington, D.C. in 1973. It was the first all-women music production collective.

PAT PARKER – Parker was a black lesbian poet and activist from Houston, Texas. She moved to California after high school, joined the Black Panther Party, and participated in the Black Arts Movement. In the late 1960s she came out as a lesbian. Parker worked with Olivia Records and toured with other artists from the label.

POINTBLANK TIMES COLLECTIVE – The PBT Collective formed in 1975 in Houston, Texas. They also produced their own periodical, *Pointblank Times* in the late 1970s.

MINNIE BRUCE PRATT – Pratt was born in Selma, Alabama. She earned a B.A. at the University of Alabama and a Ph.D. in English Literature from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Pratt worked for five years as a member of the editorial collective for *Feminary*.

MAB SEGREST – Segrest was born in Alabama. She moved to North Carolina in the 1970s and earned a Ph.D. in English Literature from Duke University. Segrest was a member of the editorial collective for Feminary in the 1970s and its few issues in the early 1980s.

TERESA TRULL – Trull was born in Durham, North Carolina and was a product of the Triangle Area lesbian feminist community there. She joined the Olivia Records Collective and the label released many albums by her, starting with her debut, *The Ways a Woman Can Be*, in 1977.

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