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*Approved by the Thesis Committee:*

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Amy Brandzel

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**No Longer Fenced Out: Outlaw Media Discourse and  
Resistance to Gentrification in Greenwich Village**

by

**Joseph F. Gallegos**

**B.A., Political Science, University of New Mexico, 2010**

THESIS

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**ABSTRACT**

Greenwich Village is a so-called “gayborhood” that accepts and welcomes LGBT people. However, Greenwich Village has been undergoing gentrification for the past few decades, and this process exists due to a police-created order of violence that subjugates and displaces queer people and people of color. This order seeks to create a space that is friendly to capital and wealth.

Resistance requires strategies that do not necessarily hew to mainstream methods of getting a message out, such as using mainstream media to make a case against gentrification. These often fail, as they will fall on deaf ears of those who seek to create this order in the first place. Instead, I argue that social movements must rely on what Lena Carla Palacios calls “outlaw vernacular discourse,” expressed through what I argue is a form “outlaw media.”

This thesis will examine two examples of outlaw media, a 2001 documentary film produced by the queer youth activist group Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment (FIERCE), which looked at the destruction and rebuilding of the Christopher Street piers in Greenwich Village. The other example uses flyers and documents from the HIV/AIDS activist group ACT-UP NYC, who were attempting to fight then-mayor Rudy Giuliani’s policing strategies.

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## Introduction

On a clear, crisp, and slightly breezy October night, I stood on the Christopher Street pier, an area that is now known as Hudson River Park Pier 45 in the West Village of New York City along the Hudson River. To the west is the lights of Jersey City, New Jersey, and to the east are the lights of condominiums and the buildings in the West Village, with Lower Manhattan a little bit to the south and east. It was a calm night, with only myself and a few others on the pier. I noted a couple of men fishing on the edge of the pier. I also noted a small group of what appeared to be young adults standing approximately 10 yards away from me, speaking to each other in Spanish. Cannabis smoke was in the air, and the group passed what appeared to be a bottle among themselves. After a few minutes of the individuals standing around, I spotted two New York City police officers on bicycles on the shore. The officers then stopped and looked outward on the pier once they reached its base, approximately 50 yards away. The group quickly noticed the officers and started to make their way off the pier. As they proceeded towards the shoreline, the officers stood silently—the group of individuals passed near the officers who did not appear to interact with them directly. After the group left the pier, the officers continued on their patrol. I continued to stand on the pier.

The officers seemed to have little concern about my presence or the presence of the men fishing on the pier. There appeared to be a silently understood order on the pier: certain people belonged on the there, while others did not. Despite violating the same rule as these youths, my presence did not seem to be a threat. Likewise, the men who were fishing, who also appeared to be white, were part of an acceptable group, despite them also flouting park rules.<sup>1</sup>

Police impose order in ways that are both kinetic, as in a beating or shooting, while other ways

<sup>1</sup> “Amended Hudson River Park Rules & Regulations” (Hudson River Park Trust, 2013), [https://www.hudsonriverpark.org/assets/content/general/Hudson\\_River\\_Park\\_Rules\\_Official-2013.pdf](https://www.hudsonriverpark.org/assets/content/general/Hudson_River_Park_Rules_Official-2013.pdf).

provide a more subtle, if equally menacing form of violence. An officer standing still offers more of the *potential* for violence. Just as the compressed spring on the striker inside a police officer's gun is ready for violence as it holds potential energy, awaiting the pull of a trigger and striking the firing cap, releasing a shot in a violent burst of kinetic energy, the officers standing at the base of the pier offered the potential for kinetic violence. The removal of these youths on the pier is but one small example of what I argue is how gentrification takes hold while providing an excellent example of what Neil Smith calls the "revanchist city."<sup>2</sup>

The police forcing the young people off the pier was an example of the police imposing violence. While there were no directly violent physical activities such as a beating or shooting that night, it is still an example of stripping people of humanity because it illustrates the common ways that the police create order in a gentrifying New York City. The violence of displacement is inherent to modern policing and urban planning. The revanchist city is only for those deemed productive and upstanding, and for those not stripped of humanity.

This example of police violence is also an example of how police create order. Mark Neocleous argues as much in *The Fabrication of Social Order*, where he argues that police do not exist for public safety or to prevent and stop crime, but to create an order, one that is inherently bourgeois. The police create the conditions for capital to flourish, and people who do not fit into that bourgeois order should be rejected and removed.<sup>3</sup> The youths I observed on the pier were, from what I could tell, not an example of people contributing to this order, and were subject to removal. Contrary to popular beliefs on capitalism as an economic system in which capitalism flourishes when government gets out of the way, it flourishes when the government plays an

<sup>2</sup> Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 45–47.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Neocleous, *The Fabrication of Social Order: A Critical Theory of Police Power* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 4–5.



extremely active role in getting *others* out of the way.

I am interested in how situations like these came to be. I am interested in the material conditions that created the need for marginalized people to reclaim their humanity. In short, I argue that the situation I witnessed on the pier is due to a violent, police-imposed, and class-based order that is part of the process of gentrification.<sup>4</sup> This process of gentrification is interested in making certain people human while denying humanity to others through a process of social death, as Lisa Marie Cacho argues.<sup>5</sup> This violent order imposed and created by law enforcement agencies like New York Police Department (NYPD), in places like Greenwich Village, an area regarded in mainstream discourse as a “gayborhood” or an area that society considers LGBT friendly. Since Greenwich Village is a gayborhood, numerous gay bars, clubs, and other spaces fill the area. There are also rainbow flags festooned on buildings throughout the neighborhood, and a short walk reveals men are holding hands with men and women holding hands with women. However, the situation is far more complicated than merely seeing gay spaces, places, and people.

To be sure, Greenwich Village is a place with a robust queer history. Just down the street from the Christopher Street pier is the Stonewall Inn, a place often credited in mainstream gay discourse as the site of the start of the gay liberation movement with the Stonewall Uprising in June 1969. The Stonewall Inn is a gay bar in Greenwich Village that was a place of relative escape for queer people in the 1960s. As one patron of the Stonewall Inn in the 1960s said in the PBS documentary, *Stonewall Uprising*, “the bar was a toilet, but it was a temporary refuge from the street.” The bar was subject to regular raids by the NYPD seeking people engaged in any sort of homosexual behavior, a criminal act at the time. Then on June 28, 1969, there was finally an uprising by the bar’s patrons

<sup>4</sup> Neocleous, 1–21.

<sup>5</sup> Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 31.

where patrons effectively removed the police from the Stonewall Inn and ended the raids that were occurring there. There are differing accounts of who “threw the first brick” at police officers and began the uprising. However, many accounts say that queer and transgender people of color were instrumental in starting the uprising and removing the police.<sup>6</sup>

In June 2019, the administration of New York City mayor Bill de Blasio finally issued a formal apology for the raid that occurred at the Stonewall Inn that night.<sup>7</sup> Despite this apology, the NYPD has continued to engage in a pattern of racist conduct that targets queer people and people of color. Much of this conduct stems from former mayor Rudy Giuliani’s “stop and frisk” and “broken windows” policing policies, based on the 1982 article in *The Atlantic* titled “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety” by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. This (in)famous article argued that police must impose an orderliness in neighborhoods that fights what the authors call “untended” behavior, thereby causing minority communities to respect their neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup>

The year after the Stonewall Uprising was the first gay pride celebration and parade in Greenwich Village. This first parade was a genuinely radical celebration of the NYPD’s defeat over those several days the previous year. It was radical in the sense that it was one of the first times that queer people publicly made their claim to the right to the city. Until this point, queer spatial claims to the city had been limited and tenuous, at best. Instead, there was a literal takeover of the street by queer people. They were finally able, to some degree, come “out of the closet,” as

<sup>6</sup> Kate Davis and David Heilbroner, *Stonewall Uprising* (First Run Features, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Gold and Derek M. Norman, “Stonewall Riot Apology: Police Actions Were ‘Wrong,’ Commissioner Admits,” *The New York Times*, June 6, 2019, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/06/nyregion/stonewall-riots-nypd.html>.

<sup>8</sup> James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety,” *The Atlantic*, March 1982.

was said by an individual interviewed in *Stonewall Uprising*.<sup>9</sup> The Stonewall Uprising also created a change of discourse around what it meant to be queer. Suddenly, the idea of being publicly queer lost at least some stigma. The earlier incarnations of pride were among the earlier forms of outlaw media and spatial practice that penetrated the mainstream consciousness. It is this idea of outlaw vernacular discourse expressed through outlaw media, or the idea of expressing oneself in a way that makes a discursive claim to humanity that rejects the notion of mere acceptance in mainstream media and society, as argued by Lena Palacios, that I am interested in with this project.

Indeed, it was in these early years that there might have been some potential for a genuinely radical queer future coming out of these celebrations. Since then, versions of gay pride parades and celebrations have popped up around the world, but many of them have lost their radical edge. Today, pride parades around the world have floats celebrating various corporations, politicians, and even the police and the military. I have personally witnessed police officers and soldiers marching in pride parades in multiple North American cities, including Portland, Oregon, Washington, DC, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Vancouver, British Columbia. These parades include corporate floats from weapons manufacturers like Lockheed Martin and Honeywell, who celebrate gay pride through rainbow flags and “inclusive” workplace policies that allow gay people to work there designing weapons meant to kill dark-skinned people overseas. Displays like this are anathema to the ideals of the early pride parades. Instead, modern gay pride parades are taking the idea of inclusivity and merely integrating it into the capitalist discourses of consumption and nationalism. A place like the West Village may appear to be a better place to be queer. However, I argue that this image depends on oppression and displacement, whether in Afghanistan, through promoting weapons manufacture or down the street at the Christopher Street piers due to policing and gentrification.

<sup>9</sup> Davis and Heilbroner, *Stonewall Uprising*.

Scenes like these at pride parades illustrate what Manalansan argues is a method of desensitizing queer communities into acceptance of inequality in their communities for the promise of the “American Dream” of consumption, along with some degree of domestic privacy.<sup>10</sup> Even the most superficial scratch beneath this veneer of inclusivity reveals rampant inequality and violence. Inequality and violence are part of the culture, both inside and outside of the LGBT community. Wealthy white gay and lesbian residents of places like Greenwich Village, through the use of the police and the state, push this violent removal.

Even the Stonewall Inn today is no longer what many might call a liberated space. In the adjacent park, the Sheridan Square Viewing Garden, artist George Segal installed statues representing two couples in 1992, one with two men, and the other with two women.<sup>11</sup> These bronze statues were whitewashed and are physically white, where they represented people who were cisgender, but lesbian and gay. In 2016, President Barack Obama declared the Stonewall Inn a national monument.<sup>12</sup> The Stonewall Inn, in repeated visits in 2018-2020, was festooned with corporate logos, such as for JetBlue Airways. The liberatory potential of an event like the Stonewall uprising has turned into a corporate and government opportunity to show representation without support for the queer community.

The neighborhood around the Stonewall Inn, once also a potential site of liberation, is instead a site of gay gentrification. The Christopher Street piers, which is the location of the earlier vignette, has become a sanitized space that once held more radical potential as a site of cruising,

<sup>10</sup> Martin F. Manalansan, “Queer Worldings: The Messy Art of Being Global in Manila and New York: Queer Worldings: Manila and New York,” *Antipode* 47, no. 3 (June 2015): 566–79.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Kuhn, “Sheridan Square Viewing Garden News - Gay Liberation Monument Celebrates 20th Anniversary : NYC Parks,” accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/sheridan-square-viewing-garden/dailyplant/22699>.

<sup>12</sup> Eli Rosenberg, “Stonewall Inn Named National Monument, a First for the Gay Rights Movement,” *The New York Times*, June 24, 2016, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/25/nyregion/stonewall-inn-named-national-monument-a-first-for-gay-rights-movement.html>.

meetup, and even living for some members of the queer community throughout much of the latter half the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> Instead, New York City has redeveloped it into a space that is restricted and limited to only certain hours and times and activities.<sup>14</sup> The forces behind this wave of gentrification in Greenwich Village are so powerful that it has mostly overwhelmed any opposition to it.

Gentrification has become such a mainstream idea that it might seem like a natural progression of urban space - as cities develop and grow, they naturally get rid of the old and build the new, and that means that some new people move in while others move out. Any negative consequences of that might seem like merely the unfortunate results of progress. This thesis argues that this is the opposite. Gentrification is, in fact, a deliberate way of keeping order that is also an effective way to exclude and remove people. Gentrification is part of an order that is not created by the people who live there but is instead the result of top-down, state-imposed order, imposed mostly by the police, in line with Neocleous's argument.

This thesis also argues that to oppose gentrification and its acceptance in society, one cannot appeal to the good nature of the larger society. Gentrification seems like a nearly inevitable part of the urban experience. One need only walk around Greenwich Village, the Castro in San Francisco, or the Gay Village in Montréal, to see that gentrification is the norm. This is not to say that there is no resistance to gentrification, but that has a certain level of acceptance in mainstream society. Gentrification is something that many of us participate in, whether deliberately or otherwise. Indeed, I wrote, edited, and revised, and examined archival documents for significant portions of this thesis while sitting in hip coffee shops in gentrifying Albuquerque, Washington, DC, Portland, and even New York City neighborhoods. These coffee shops are some of the classic

<sup>13</sup> *Fenced Out*, Youth-Produced Documentary (Paper Tiger Productions, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> "Amended Hudson River Park Rules & Regulations."

signs of a gentrifying neighborhood, such that social science researchers can quantify the relationship between coffee shops and gentrification using listings from the review website and app Yelp.<sup>15</sup> This sense of normalcy around gentrification and its signs, even by its critics while engaged in work critical of it, I argue, makes it difficult to combat through mainstream discourse.

Gentrification is the norm because it is part of an order that the police have already constructed. A police-created order can seem to create a sense of inevitability, which is what Neocleous argues – this order *is* society. Thus, to make an argument against gentrification, I argue that it is not enough to appeal to mainstream goodwill. The order of gentrification *is* what many well-intentioned people want, and they genuinely believe that it will make a city better because that order is what is already in place. As Cacho argues, those who fail to fit the existing order are no longer human, so there must be some alternative way to claim that humanity.

In order to do this, one cannot appeal to the “politics of respectability.” These politics, as Frances White pointed out long ago, often depend on one group appealing to the mainstream, and then resulting in the exploitation of others.<sup>16</sup> The politics of respectability are precisely the kind of politics that I argue support gentrification. One who is already socially dead and so devalued by society as others exploit them cannot rely on that same society’s goodwill. Similarly, the LGBT people of Greenwich Village and other urban “gayborhoods” have a similar status from engaging in the politics of respectability. They exist and are held up by society to show that being LGBT can mean success, thereby making those who have not enjoyed economic success as somehow defective or problematic in their very existence, further justifying their oppression.

Getting their message across requires appeals to the mere desire to exist, and not necessarily

<sup>15</sup> Edward L. Glaeser, Hyunjin Kim, and Michael Luca, “Nowcasting Gentrification: Using Yelp Data to Quantify Neighborhood Change,” *AEA Papers and Proceedings* 108 (2018): 77–82.

<sup>16</sup> Frances White, *Dark Continent Of Our Bodies: Black Feminism & Politics Of Respectability*, 1st edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 14–20.

to be respected or loved by those in power. Accomplishing this means not relying on the authorities to simply reform policies since the very fundamental existence of those policies and modern forms of governance are antithetical to the needs of the oppressed. Ultimately, this means that queer people of color must tear down the existing system, rather than attempt to become a part of it. Thus, this means using media methods that lie outside of the mainstream. Such media methods do not mean that there is no room for any sort of incremental policy changes as a short-term stopgap to try to improve what Dean Spade calls people's "life chances," but it does mean that these are not the end goal. Instead, the goal is for a queer utopia, where queerness can genuinely claim its right to the city.<sup>17</sup>

This project further argues that "outlaw vernacular discourse," as proposed by Lena Palacios, is a critical intervention into the media landscape.<sup>18</sup> This discourse, which allows for outlaw media, is a way for activist groups to utilize media to make demands from the state, or society as a whole, that may seem impossible. Outlaw media interventions require that activists use media to set a discursive tone that might not have otherwise existed without it. Instead of demanding that change occurs through the normal political process and media, one must instead use media in unorthodox ways. These media methods often fail, as even Palacios says. These methods create space for a claim to humanity, a claim so often denied to those most marginalized.

This project will discuss two examples of outlaw media used by queer people of color in New York City. The first is the 2001 short documentary film *Fenced Out*, produced by the Paper Tiger Film Collective and FIERCE, a queer youth of color organization in New York City. The film examines the closing of the Christopher Street piers in the West Village for their redevelopment

<sup>17</sup> Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law*, Revised, Expanded edition (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Lena Carla Palacios, "Killing Abstractions: Indigenous Women and Black Trans Girls Challenging Media Necropower in White Settler States," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 2, no. 2 (2016): 35–60.

in the late 1990s and early 2000s as part of the larger Hudson River Park, which spans much of the west side of Manhattan.<sup>19</sup> The Christopher Street piers were a key place for queer people of color in the 1980s and 1990s and had a history that dates back further as a cruising and hangout spot for gay men.

The second media examples are flyers and information packets created by the HIV/AIDS activist group ACT-UP NYC in 1994. These flyers harshly criticize the newly elected mayoral administration of Rudy Giuliani, a right-wing mayor. He would kickstart many of the worst policing and development policies in New York City, many of which continue to exist to this day. These flyers and packets not only criticize Giuliani but also offer their demands and strategies for how to make them a reality. Some of the demands and strategies are part of the standard modes of community organizing, while others are different and fit much closer into the mold of outlaw media.

This paper will argue that outlaw media, while it may at times be a flawed strategy, is a useful way for activist groups to get out their message in a way that rejects the authority of those in power and instead seeks to build a different world from the ground-up. Outlaw media is useful because it has the potential to alter discourse around the discussion of liberation. This paper does not seek to argue that outlaw media is the end-all-be-all of activism or that it will, by itself, bring material change. Still, it has potential as one strategy among many groups can use to change media discourse that will more effectively achieve social justice goals. Outlaw media can serve as a model for other strategies that also reject the politics of respectability and reform, at least as an end goal.

With this project, I am interested in the *discourse* of claiming humanity. This project does not intend, nor does it claim to by itself solve any of the material problems that marginalized people such as the users of the Christopher Street piers face. While this project is not directly engaging

<sup>19</sup> *Fenced Out*.



with the material, it hopes to, in some way, contribute to the discourse that will affect the material. When one can claim their humanity, I would argue that it gives them at least the hope and the ability to change the world around them. José Esteban Muñoz argues as much when he argues for the idea of a “queer utopia” of a world that does not yet exist and may never exist.<sup>20</sup> However, the notion that there is hope behind this change in discourse can encourage people to fight on through failure. In some sense, the cases that I will discuss are making attempting to think of that utopia. Thus, I am interested in changing material conditions for queer people of color. However, I argue that changing the discourse of queer oppression, and even failure, is part of one potential strategy that activists can marshal in their attempts to improve the material. I leave it to other scholars and as a challenge to myself in my future work to think about translating this into methods that improve the material.

In addition to saying what this project aims to do, I must say who I am. I situate myself as a relatively privileged queer person of color who has not personally experienced many of the things that the people who used the Christopher Street piers experienced, nor have I experienced having HIV-AIDS. Thus, it is essential for me to simply tell the stories of those who have been through those experiences. Then, I must analyze them through people of color whenever possible.

## Methods

This thesis is interested in how marginalized queer people of color contest the violence and exclusion of the revanchist city. In doing so, I have picked two case studies, the film *Fenced Out*, produced by the social movement FIERCE and documents from the HIV/AIDS activist group ACT-UP NYC. These groups are both engaged in a process of contesting gentrification policies

<sup>20</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

in New York City, and they have engaged with them through the use of what I argue is outlaw media. In doing so, they are attempting to alter the discourses around gentrification and exclusion in order to bring material change. The fact that it is outlaw media is due to the type of discourse they are attempting to engage in.

I have chosen only two case studies for this project, though there are undoubtedly far more case studies one could look at. Time and resources dictate that I can only examine a limited number of cases. I chose these two separate case studies as a way to illustrate how separate social movements that are similarly-situated might use outlaw media to achieve similar, but separate goals. This is despite the fact that these movements are not directly linked, though their causes have a great deal of overlap.

On the other hand, picking simply one of these examples would not be sufficient because it would not properly illustrate how social movements might separately use outlaw media to achieve their end goals. I deliberately look at them as separate cases because having two different cases illustrates the potential of different social movements using outlaw media. I hope that the ideas behind this project are somewhat generalizable to other social movements, which is why I did not only pick one case study.

Furthermore, I picked case studies specifically involving the two social movements of FIERCE and ACT-UP NYC because they both represent some of the most marginalized communities in New York City, and in our society as a whole: homeless queer people of color, and HIV-positive people. There is also a great deal of overlap between these two groups, despite not being exactly the same. Outlaw vernacular discourse, and thus the outlaw media derived from it, is part of the discourse of those who are most marginalized, at least according to Palacios. Thus, this project is necessarily looking at and interested in the discourse of the oppressed. It is not a discourse simply of people who do not like the state. To do that would mean that white

supremacists engage in outlaw media discourse, which they do not. Despite engaging in some discourse that might look similar in that they are rejecting the state and any sort of politics of respectability by the state, they are not engaging in outlaw media discourse because they are not marginalized. Indeed, they are part of the mainstream of society and receive a great deal of mainstream media and political attention.

While looking at these archival documents, I read them not as pieces that their authors explicitly thought to make and call “outlaw media,” but how they end up fitting into this mode of outlaw media that I attempt to define, and how social movements can use those outlaw media discourses derived from outlaw vernacular discourse to achieve their goals. Put another way, I believe that these archival examples are outlaw media by their very essence, though not necessarily by design, and fit the definition I outline in this thesis.

To look at this, I focused on the types of claims and arguments these piece of media were engaging in. Were the authors of a particular piece of media engaged in standard activist discursive practices like asking the government for a particular policy change through letter writing campaigns and the like, or were they engaged in something deeper than that, where they make demands for existence and survival, with or without the state’s support? In the archives I explored, I saw examples of media interventions that reject the politics of respectability and appealing to the state. In doing so, they were engaging in some form out outlaw vernacular discourse, and thus were outlaw media.

In doing this project I necessarily exclude certain other discourses both within these specific case studies and within other examples of media put out by these social movements. I did this because outlaw media is only one part of a larger strategy that can be used to achieve certain material ends. This is not to say that other, more standard types of media discourse are completely useless and have no role in a larger social movement liberation strategies, but that they are not the

exclusive ways of doing things. This project seeks to tease out what outlaw media is and is not, and its potential as a strategy, among others, in a larger social movement struggle.

### **Gentrification and Police Violence**

The original inspiration for this project is Christina Hanhardt's *Safe Space*, a book in which Hanhardt explores the history of neighborhood violence in LGBT communities from the 1950s until the 2000s. Hanhardt looked at the roles of social movements, ranging from the early days of organizations such as the Mattachine Society in the 1950s and 1960s to more radical groups such as the Lavender Panthers in San Francisco. The Lavender Panthers modeled themselves after the Black Panthers and engaged in armed street patrols to protect queer people on the streets of San Francisco. Hanhardt continued to examine the role of anti-violence movements, both radical and mainstream, in their efforts to protect queer people in urban spaces. Some of this organizing would prove to be problematic. These problematic moments included movements that would end up engaging in violence against other queer people based on their demands for safety by using the police as a tool to ensure that safety.<sup>21</sup>

This violence against queer people in urban spaces is, as noted by Hanhardt, often carried out by the police throughout much of the history that the book covers. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, with a growing sense of mainstream acceptance of LGBT people who engaged in more normative-like practices of monogamy and nuclear family arrangements, these LGBT communities in places like Greenwich Village began to see the police as a potential protector and savior. This violence happened in New York (and other cities) as the state, through the police, created an order that allowed for gentrification.

<sup>21</sup> Christina B. Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

One also cannot discuss gentrification and police violence without a discussion of Wilson and Kelling's "Broken Windows Policing" article. This seminal, if infamous, article argued that the police must maintain order in a way that creates community pride. As the term "broken windows" implies, Wilson and Kelling argue that the police should primarily focus on engaging in foot patrols that seek to deal with so-called "quality of life" violations such as broken windows and vandalism. When the police deal with these violations, the thinking goes, there is a pride in the community that comes from having a "clean" neighborhood.

The "research" that Wilson and Kelling cited in making this argument was a study done by Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo. He is perhaps best known for one of the more notable examples of unethical research in history. In his Stanford Prison Experiment, undergraduates simulated various roles in a prison such as being guards and inmates, resulting in traumatizing abuse directed towards the "inmates." Zimbardo's research on "broken windows," which occurred two years before the Stanford Prison Experiment, was putting broken-down cars in the Bronx and Palo Alto, California while observing them for several days to see what damage members of the community did to it. People quickly stripped the car in the poorer neighborhood of the Bronx. In contrast, the car in the much wealthier Palo Alto lasted several days until Zimbardo smashed a window on the car, resulting in further damage by community members. Zimbardo argued that this showed that people who saw broken things wanted to break more things, thus the police needed to prevent people from breaking things in the first place.<sup>22</sup>

Wilson and Kelling's argument, and their supporting evidence point to the notion of the police creating order, and that order is a "cleaner" one that paves the way for a more respectable population to exist in these spaces. As is evident after years of broken windows policing under the Giuliani and Bloomberg administrations in New York City, this type of policing has not

<sup>22</sup> Wilson and Kelling, "Broken Windows."

improved the neighborhoods for the people already living there. Instead, this policing has displaced people as property values skyrocketed, resulting in places like Greenwich Village becoming places strictly for the wealthy while removing those who are deemed undesirable and out of order.

Correia and Wall's *Police: A Field Guide* examines this phenomenon of police violence and its relationship to gentrification more broadly. Through a keyword-style approach, Correia and Wall look at several words and techniques used by police to impose order and create gentrified violence that disproportionately affects queer people of color. The word "violence" lays the groundwork for this, where Correia and Wall explain that the power to kill is the crucial power to creating a police-imposed order. This police-imposed order is where the police sanction violence against the populace in any way that it sees fit.<sup>23</sup>

Violence creates an order, which is dealt out by what Correia and Wall call the "violence workers" of the police.<sup>24</sup> The order, in the case of the West Village, is gentrified. This gentrified order, according to Correia and Wall, is one where the police "manage the organized displacement of the poor" so that hipsters and artists can move into an area followed by the upper-echelon of white society. Simply put, this is the process of turning poor neighborhoods populated by people of color into rich ones primarily populated by white people.<sup>25</sup>

Mark Neocleous further theorizes this in *The Fabrication of Social Order*. Going back to medieval Europe, Neocleous theorizes how social order is fabricated from whole cloth by police. Policing is also not strictly limited to actual police officers and police departments. Police have historically been any sort of power and authority that is focused on creating a particular social order, even

<sup>23</sup> David Correia and Tyler Wall, *Police: A Field Guide* (London; Brooklyn: Verso, 2018), 101–2.

<sup>24</sup> Correia and Wall, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Correia and Wall, 193.

when they are not called “police.”<sup>26</sup> However, in the modern world, it is generally police forces, though they are empowered by the state and serve the state’s interests. In the case of a place like Greenwich Village, the “police” might include developers and the city government other than the NYPD. Policing thus is part of the larger fabric of society.

### **Media Discourse, Social Death, and the Politics of Respectability**

The concept of social death and how it informs media discourses is key to this project. Lisa Marie Cacho’s theorization of social death gives a good explanation. Cacho argues that through state-sponsored racialization and the stripping of rights, people of color and those who are otherwise “queered” become socially dead, meaning that they lack an actual existence in our society. This idea allows both state and non-state actors to impose continued violence on these people. By existing in a state of social death, people are killable, rapeable, and displaceable. This state, in turn, renders their very existence and voices unrecognizable to mainstream society, as well as to mainstream discourse. When a subject such as an undocumented immigrant is socially dead, their stories and their struggles are unintelligible.<sup>27</sup> People who have been rendered socially dead must find other ways to get their message out and to resist their oppression. Resistance can come in counterintuitive ways.

Some of these counterintuitive methods are key to this project. To understand the background of altering media discourse, we must further understand the concept of “outlaw discourse,” as laid out by Lena Carla Palacios in her article “Killing Abstractions: Indigenous Women and Black and Trans Girls Challenging Media Necropower in White Settler States.” In this article, Palacios

<sup>26</sup> Neocleous, *The Fabrication of Social Order*.

<sup>27</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 37–38.

argues for engaging in a politics of refusal when it comes to media discourse.<sup>28</sup> Since the oppressed subject, which could include figures such as queer people in Greenwich Village, is already socially dead, they must engage with media in ways that only those who are socially dead can. They can still make demands, but not always in ways that might be palatable to mainstream society.

When engaging in outlaw discourse, the “speaker” cannot necessarily rely on the politics of respectability in appealing to the larger society. According to Palacios, by attempting to assign value to oneself, they end up devaluing others.<sup>29</sup> In turn, this undermines solidarity among oppressed peoples and can end up playing directly into the oppressor’s hand. Such normative approaches risk enhancing existing carceral discipline in ways that demands for safety by the LGBT community have also done. Still, this is not to say that outlaw media is unable to speak to those who are not socially dead and who enjoy more privilege. This type of media *must* speak to them. The approach must instead focus on finding ways to use this media without trying to make oneself respectable or appealing to their goodwill. It is instead about appealing to the idea of humanity. Those with power and privilege need not respect those who are trying to speak to them but must instead simply recognize their humanity. More important than that, those who are creating this media must recognize their humanity. Outlaw media, while having a long-term goal of eliminating capitalism and the systems that support it, is also interested in simply claiming a right to exist. This claim provides both hope and the potential to pave the way toward material changes.

An example of this type of outlaw vernacular discourse that Palacios cites is the response by some activists to the murder of Islan Nettles, a black transwoman murdered in Harlem in 2013. While some mainstream LGBT rights groups were attempting to “humanize” her while trying to make her fit into mainstream narratives about the inherent “goodness” of her and other trans

<sup>28</sup> Palacios, “Killing Abstractions.”

<sup>29</sup> Palacios.



people by illustrating Nettles' deservingness as someone who was employed and a taxpayer. Part of the mainstream LGBT response was to push for a bill in New York called the Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (GENDA), which would have specifically added gender identity to a list of protected categories listed as hate crimes.

In contrast to this, one activist named Lourdes Ashley Hunter chose to speak about Nettles in different terms. Instead of praising Nettles as a worthy member of society and pushing for hate crimes legislation, Hunter emphasized that Nettles's murder was the result of gentrification, police violence, and mainstream LGBT rights movements that exclude queer and trans people of color. Indeed, Hunter rightly describes hate crimes legislation as simply another way to increase violence against queer people of color through the enhanced police surveillance and violence that comes with criminalizing anything. Hunter did these thorough speeches at rallies in support of Nettles, where the dominant discourse was one of further carceral intervention.<sup>30</sup>

Claiming humanity instead of simply making legislative demands and trying to express the inherent "goodness" to a person in relation to society is a revolutionary act. By queer people making themselves human, despite all of the opposition, they are countering the existing narrative about themselves. Neoliberalism demands that people either live the mythical American dream or perish seeking it. The idea that something other than this is possible is deemed impossible. It is through the idea of simply wanting to survive without joining into the larger American neoliberal project that makes things like outlaw media so unintelligible. Thus it must be wiped out or appropriated and made legible. This illegibility has the potential to avoid appropriation since one must alter the message to become subject to appropriation.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Palacios, 45–46.

<sup>31</sup> Palacios, "Killing Abstractions."

My use of Palacios is an attempt to utilize and expand upon her theories. Specifically, I am interested in outlaw media and outlaw vernacular discourse as a method of making demands outside of the state. This is not entirely in line with Palacios, who argues instead that demands can be made by any means necessary, including through the state when needed. Palacios is also thinking of outlaw vernacular discourse as not necessarily being a particular form of media, which is another way that I differ from Palacios. I specifically am interested in how outlaw vernacular discourse can create the types of media that I call outlaw media.

Groups must take different approaches, even if those approaches have a high likelihood of failure. While many of these efforts may ultimately be doomed to failure, they also open up possibilities of discursive change. Palacios argues that these approaches will vary depending on one's relationship to settler colonialism and slavery.<sup>32</sup> One example cited by Palacios is that Indigenous feminists might argue that decolonization does not have to answer to or be accountable to settlers. Arguing this challenges the idea that settler colonialism is inevitable and that people must work inside of it for their rights. Thus, while there may not be a guarantee, or even realistic hope, of success from a given intervention, they are still part of a project to change material conditions. Media intervention is primarily a discursive act, but it has material consequences. If one can imagine a better world, then there is at least some hope of creating a better world.

José Esteban Muñoz also theorizes this in *Disidentifications*. Muñoz argues that queer people of color can alter the discourse around them through the rejection of mainstream gay discourse. Through this rejection, a person can reclaim their humanity by making the narrative their own. For example, Muñoz discusses the punk artist Vaginal Creme Davis, also known as Dr. Davis.

<sup>32</sup> Palacios.

Davis played with several types of cultural tropes around being a drag queen by mocking everything from commercialized drag performances to white supremacists. In doing so, David disidentified with mainstream queer culture, turned it back on itself, and in turn potentially alter discourse around what it means to be queer.<sup>33</sup>

Settler colonial discourses are a crucial part of this discussion, and it is central to the idea of outlaw media as initially theorized by Palacios. Greenwich Village is still a contested site of settler colonialism, and gentrification and removal is still one component of that. Most people do not think of New York City as an Indigenous site, but that is by design. Indigenous communities that once occupied what we now call Manhattan Island cease to exist, at least in anything resembling their original form, making analysis through the lens of settler colonialism more difficult and obscured.

Still, as Ted Rutland argues, urban planning relies on racializing discourses that are all derivatives of settler colonial discourses of removal. In Rutland's example, the state (and effectively police) remove people and manage the land that is now Halifax, Nova Scotia. These discourses of removal and management have been part of an ongoing process that, while first applied to the Mi'kmaq, have been expanded to remove, displace, and ultimately control the black population in Halifax. The discourses alter slightly but ultimately have the same effect. Settler colonialism is the same as the racialization of other people of color, but that settler societies use many of the same logics to displace and control populations. We still must distinguish between the original occupants of land and arrivants, even if they are people of color. One cannot change the original owners of unceded land, as is the case with the Mi'kmaq in what is now Halifax.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers Of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), Location 2081-2083 of 5327.

<sup>34</sup> Ted Rutland, *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth-Century Halifax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 12–13.

Outlaw media, however, has the potential to make settler colonialism's role in urban gentrification intelligible. Land stolen from Indigenous people becomes a tool to harm other non-settler arrivants. The chain of oppression throughout the settler state is where the potential for Indigenous-arrivant alliances lies, thereby increasing the power and legitimacy of non-Indigenous movements. These types of alliances have the potential to pave a path towards decolonization. Any social movement must seek and obtain the consent of Indigenous communities, as is argued by Harsha Walia.<sup>35</sup> Outlaw media is then a potential tool in the toolbox for creating such alliances and obtaining consent.

With this approach comes great risks. As Palacios explains, that outlaw discourse could be productive and create real social change. It could also be co-opted and used against those very communities, or it could remain outlaw and simply fade into history and remain marginalized.<sup>36</sup> Still, this media needs to exist in order to have any effect whatsoever on the discussion. However, as pointed out earlier, these risks potentially come with great rewards. There is the potential to change a community once seemingly in opposition into a potential ally.

The most significant risk here is with the co-optation of radical movements. American history is rife with examples of social movements and their actions being co-opted and used to perpetuate racist and settler projects. One obvious and closely related example is the co-optation of the modern gay liberation movement that began in Greenwich Village, which set the very stage for the gentrification projects that this thesis discusses.

The two examples that follow in this thesis are each forms of outlaw media in their own right in large part because of the audiences they attempt to engage. Neither of the projects I will later analyze necessarily seek mainstream media attention. Instead, they are primarily seeking to

<sup>35</sup> Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (Oakland, CA : Washington, D.C: AK Press, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Palacios, "Killing Abstractions."

influence discourse *within* social movements in a way that will make them more accountable to those they serve. Instead of promoting enhanced hate crimes legislation, thereby increasing violence against queer people of color, these examples of what I consider outlaw media seek to help people claim their rights to and their space in the city. People make this claim by simply making the argument for their existence and their humanity, regardless of the state. The fact these examples do not always make demands of the state does not mean that they refuse to do so entirely, rather the state is not their main focus.

The examples that follow are also examples of grassroots media, which is arguably another aspect of what makes a piece of media “outlaw.” Small grassroots activist groups created both the film *Fenced Out* and the examples of media from ACT-UP NYC. Similarly, elites did not create outlaw media, but instead, it is created by grassroots activists and social movements. While it is true that examples of otherwise outlaw actions can make it into mainstream discourse, I argue that it ceases to be outlaw media at that point. Generally, a piece of outlaw media ceases to be outlaw once it is in mainstream discourse, particularly if used to advance the interests of the state or capital.

For example, the early gay pride parades after the Stonewall Uprising are no longer an outlaw act in part because they now serve capital’s ends by promoting the military, police, and corporations as I have alluded to earlier in this thesis. Thus, a once revolutionary and outlaw act, such as a gay pride parade, is flipped on its head as the first parades were explicitly anti-police and even anti-capital. However, there are now police officers marching in pride parades while police departments, including the NYPD, paint police cruisers in rainbow colors for pride month.<sup>37</sup> This

<sup>37</sup> Avianne Tan, “NYPD Unveils Rainbow-Themed Vehicle Before City’s Gay Pride March,” ABC News, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/nypd-unveils-rainbow-themed-vehicle-ahead-citys-pride/story?id=40072112>.

does not necessarily mean that *all* expressions of outlaw media by an elite figure cannot continue to be outlaw, provided that it in some way advances something truly revolutionary such as resistance to the police and capital.

### Queer vs. LGBT

It is important to emphasize the significance of the differences between being LGBT and queer. In popular mainstream gay culture, such as in mainstream gay publications and media such as *The Advocate* or *Out Magazine* tend to use the term “queer” interchangeably with being LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender). This work has been part of an effort to “take back” the idea of being queer from the use of queer as a slur.<sup>38</sup> However, the term “queer” is not necessarily interchangeable with LGBT. I argue that queerness is much more complex and nuanced than simply being LGBT.

In a sense, queerness as this thesis defines it hews closer to older definitions of someone or something that does not quite fit in - who fits outside of societal norms. That said, we must narrow the definition of queer not to include *all* of those who are outcast, as that too has the potential to alienate and exclude. Thus, my definition of queer necessarily includes primarily those who fall into the broad category of LGBT, but with a class distinction. Indeed, class informs much of this project. Thus, my distinction between those who are LGBT will primarily include the middle-to-upper middle class of society, and who tend to skew white. On the other hand, queer might be defined to include those who may be LGBT, but are poor people and people of color.

Several writers, including Jasbir Puar and Jack Halberstam, have asserted that “queer” is more of a relation of class and nationalism. In Puar’s case, the queer figure is a figure of the racialized

<sup>38</sup> Jenna Wortham, “When Everyone Can Be ‘Queer,’ Is Anyone?,” *The New York Times Magazine*, July 12, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/17/magazine/when-everyone-can-be-queer-is-anyone.html>.

terrorist who stands in contrast to those subjects to “align themselves with U.S. imperial interests.”<sup>39</sup> This figure creates a sort of binary between the “worthy” queer figure versus the unworthy ones, with the unworthy ones subject to discipline and death, whether at the hands of the carceral system or military action. A gay drone operator in a newly Don’t Ask Don’t Tell-free US military fires the missile that kills the unworthy queer subject, while celebrating the newfound diversity of the US imperial killing machine. These dead and dying queer figures are not necessarily LGBT but are instead the unworthy queered figures. My assertion is not entirely in line with this idea since I am still arguing that those who are queer are still likely to be (or are at least perceived to be) LGBT. Still, Puar’s assertion of the dangerous queer figure provides a useful starting point to thinking about queerness as not merely being LGBT status.

Puar uses the term “homonationalism” to describe the logic behind this. Someone who identifies as LGBT can easily fit into the mainstream of American nationalist society, provided that they hew closely enough to familial and patriotic norms that allow a continuation of neoliberal violence. Thus, for most liberals, the institution of same-sex marriage and the end of policies such as Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell in the US military were vital goals. Indeed, they are important goals that make a difference in the lives of many people. While there was hardline conservative opposition to these types of policy changes, they have, over time, come to enjoy acceptance in much of American society. The end of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell simply means that more people can join in the US imperial project. The institution of same-sex marriage means that more people can create nuclear families that will contribute to capitalism. Of course, this is the point of providing LGBT people more acceptance into American society.

This idealized family values ideal of the LGBT figure is also one of the vanguards of gentrification. Relatively wealthy and predominantly white LGBT people are acceptable in that

<sup>39</sup> Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), xi.

they allow capital to flourish when given the right conditions.<sup>40</sup> LGBT people in nuclear-like families who have much money to contribute to the economy can build the order as imposed and created through policing. In other words, they fit into this order. They do not create it, but they can engage with it as it serves their economic interests. On the other hand, people who are queer are not as well served by this.

In times of explicit criminalization of being LGBT through legislation such as sodomy laws, people who are “just” LGBT might have more closely fit the definition of queer that I propose. In some cases, LGBT people manage to fit into broader American society because of their ability to contribute to American nationalism, such as President James Buchanan, a man understood by many to have been gay, nonetheless lived under the protection of his elite status.<sup>41</sup> In this sense, our society has lifted select queer people out of queerness when it is convenient or useful. Thus, what this thesis describes is not a new phenomenon, but is instead part of an ongoing, slowly expanding tent that seeks more people for its imperialist purposes.

Halberstam’s definition is about class. The queer figure in Halberstam’s theorization is the figure who does not contribute to capital in a meaningful way. They lose their value due to their lack of economic value.

These figures then become subject to criminalization and removal because of this status. Halberstam describes this as such:

People, especially in modernity, will and do opt to live outside of reproductive and familial time as well as on the edges of logics of labor and production. By doing so, they also live outside the logic of capital accumulation: here we could consider ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent boys, sex workers, homeless

<sup>40</sup> Hanhardt, *Safe Space*.

<sup>41</sup> Ezekiel Emanuel, “America Has Already Had a Gay President,” *Washington Post*, March 26, 2019, sec. Opinions, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/pete-buttigieg-wouldnt-be-americas-first-gay-president/2019/03/26/0b7b1eb4-41de-11e9-922c-64d6b7840b82\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/pete-buttigieg-wouldnt-be-americas-first-gay-president/2019/03/26/0b7b1eb4-41de-11e9-922c-64d6b7840b82_story.html).



people, drug dealers, and the unemployed.<sup>42</sup>

When thinking of queerness, it is these “ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers” and the like that are the truly queer figures. While it is true that many of these people might identify as somewhere in the spectrum of LGBT people, they are more importantly queer because of their lack of status and the intersecting forms of oppression they face.

Lisa Marie Cacho’s theorization of queerness in *Social Death* is useful here. In the conclusion of the book, Cacho discusses her cousin and what she views as his queerness, even though he was not himself LGBT. He does not fit into normative society, making him a queer figure in a way that it also devalues him as both an asset to capital and in terms of his humanity. She explains that as an individual, she values him, but at the same time, he lacks value in society as a whole. Cacho’s cousin has never held steady employment, excelled in education, or otherwise contributed to the capitalist economy, and he is unlikely ever to do so.<sup>43</sup> Thus, with Cacho’s reasoning, queerness is not necessarily about being LGBT, and this project will attempt to make that distinction. The people who have gentrified Greenwich Village are, generally speaking, not queer by this definition. They may have previously held a queer status, but they mostly do not now.

Greenwich Village could have been thought of as a queer space at the time of the Stonewall riots. Although many of the queer people were, in fact, white, they were still queer because society still largely rejected people who held the LGBT identity. As time went on, Greenwich Village became decreasingly queer and transitioned into a more LGBT space, progressing to what we see today. As LGBT demands for safety from the police increased, they removed the area’s queerness, and the gentrification process proceeded.

<sup>42</sup> J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 10.

<sup>43</sup> Cacho, *Social Death*, 147–68.

## Intersectionality and Articulation

A discussion of queerness and forms of oppression that queer people face must also engage with intersectionality and articulation. Intersectionality, as proposed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s, argues that power structures create oppression in interlocking ways that one cannot simply understand from one form of identity. A black woman experiences different forms of oppression based on those identities that are not purely anti-black or anti-woman. Crenshaw looked at this in terms of discrimination law, where she criticized court rulings against black women, where judges rejected the notion of intersecting forms of oppression. An example cited by Crenshaw is in *DeGraffenreid v. General Motors*, where a judge rejected a black woman's argument that a particular layoff pattern was discriminatory because it effectively targeted black women. Instead, US District Court Judge Harris Wangelin held that a discrimination claim can only stand based on being black *or* being a woman and that there are no unique factors in being a black woman. Crenshaw argues precisely the opposite that the discrimination a black woman faces *is* a unique form of discrimination that is only intelligible to a black woman.<sup>44</sup>

While Crenshaw focused on gender and sex as two axes, one can also put that in conversation with other identities such as queerness. Chan and Howard attempt to do that, arguing that intersectionality and queerness share many parallels, yet they also differ in meaningful and useful ways. Queerness and queer theory do not explicitly engage with intersectionality, much as theories behind race and gender do not either; queerness can add another “intersection” to intersectionality. At the same time, intersectionality can contribute to queerness by bringing the differences between

<sup>44</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139–67.

various queer groups together.<sup>45</sup>

Intersectionality in their oppression is what many of the queer people of color in Greenwich Village are experiencing. They are facing oppression because of all of their identities - being people of color, queer, and often for being women. All of these forms of oppression are what allow gay gentrification to occur. Intersectionality has another potential use to gentrifiers and the police who create the order that supports them. By creating multiple oppressions and non-oppressions, the existing order can, in effect, pick out the things that help them fit into more normative spaces, such as whiteness. Intersectionality is clearly understood by those who wish to impose order. If you are white but LGBT, you can experience a more “normal” life under these conditions. By separating these intersecting oppressions, the neoliberal tent of inclusion expands ever-so-slightly while at the same time creating further problems for those groups that find themselves disfavored.

When creating outlaw media, intersectionality is a useful approach. Instead of appealing to those in power, one can appeal to the people who are subject to the gentrified order and bring them into the fight against intersecting forms of oppression through gentrification and policing. This appeal is, of course, a risky move for any group to take, yet that is, at the same time, an essential part of what makes outlaw media what it is. It has the potential to be either ignored or appropriated by those in power. It has the potential to be productive and generative in that it can persuade people on an issue such as gentrification.

Articulation, as described by Stuart Hall, is also a useful analytic here. While intersectionality usefully explains the connections and intersections that groups such as the people who use the Christopher Street piers have, it does not fully explain the ruptures and the disconnections among them as well. Articulation, as proposed by Hall, is the notion that different groups and ideologies

<sup>45</sup> Christian D. Chan and Lionel C. Howard, “When Queerness Meets Intersectional Thinking: Revolutionizing Parallels, Histories, and Contestations,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 67, no. 3 (February 23, 2020): 346–66.

can have unity under certain circumstances, but that they are not always and necessarily connected. There is no inherent and intrinsic connection among say, people of color, and LGBT people. Hall uses the metaphor of a truck where the trailer connects to the cab, but through what is only a temporary and separable connection, and that connection exists only when necessary and useful.<sup>46</sup>

Articulation is useful to break down the notion that LGBT people have some sort of permanent connection with other groups. One could argue that the appropriations of queer culture come from intersectionality, allowing police to create a false sense of unity among different cultures. It is through these ideas of permanent intersectionality that the politics of representation can come into play in harmful ways. A black lesbian who lives in Greenwich Village is a way to paper over and undermine the authentic connections and intersections that queer people of color face in such a space.

With Stuart's theory of articulation, we can instead look at the use of outlaw media as a way to both create these articulated alliances and undermine the ones that have appropriated and created by gentrifiers. Outlaw media can highlight the genuine moments of unity among queer people, and others who do not generally fit into the larger normative society. Outlaw media, as this thesis will demonstrate, can also show that simply being LGBT does not mean that you are the same with all other people who might identify as LGBT. Indeed, the notion of queerness can be based on articulation as well. Articulation can show us that a queer person and an LGBT person are not necessarily the same; they are groups that can be connected and related. However, they are also often disconnected based on class, race, or other categories.

<sup>46</sup> Stuart Hall, David Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen, eds., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

## Queer Geography

Another fundamental theoretical basis for this project is queer geography. This project is interested in how people create, destroy, and alter space and place through queerness and the interactions among queer people. It is through this conflict that people contest space and place throughout Greenwich Village. As gentrifiers move into a space created for them by a police-imposed order, they effectively de-queer spaces like Greenwich Village.

Queer geography is, in short, how queerness shapes and finds itself shaped by space and place. Their spaces have shaped the definition of queer.<sup>47</sup> Often this is in public space, as this is often the only space available to those who are queer, including both those who are economically disadvantaged and those who are LGBT. Thus, queerness often has a sort of public existence that normative culture often lacks. Heteronormative culture emphasizes the private as *the* space for heteronormative performances, contrasting with public queerness. Thus, the refuges for those deemed queer often end up including spaces like bathhouses, parks, beaches, and places like the Christopher Street piers.

At the same time, queerness has had a long history of altering the spaces and places of Greenwich Village. Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Greenwich Village was a spot of gayness and queerness, particularly for gay men. George Chauncey argues that gay life in Greenwich Village, and the rest of New York, was thriving. This experience favored white gay men, but it was still an example of queer life in New York. The very existence of open queerness created the urban geographies needed to allow queer life of any sort to flourish.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Yolanda Retter, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Gordon Brent Ingram, eds., *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*, 1st Edition (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997).

<sup>48</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, Kindle Edition (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1995).

Gay and queer life also existed in the adult movie theaters and shops of Times Square only a few stops up the 1, 2, or 3 train from Greenwich Village. As Samuel Delaney points out in *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*, much of this part of west Manhattan was part of the queer geography of New York from the 1970s until the 1990s until gentrification reached that area too.<sup>49</sup> The people who visited the theaters were often also residents of Greenwich Village and went back and forth. This suggests that queer geography is not a stable, static idea; rather, it is a story of people constantly in motion attempting to meet their needs.

Queer space is also a place of diaspora, whether global or local. As the police displace people from certain areas, they must find other places to exist. As Manalansan points out, the “messiness” of being queer ends up requiring motion, whether that is within a city like Manila or from the Philippines to a place like New York. This motion is not always even, ideal, or even political.<sup>50</sup> Manalansan’s “mess” is about messing up normal family ties and conceptions of space, and queer people of color in Greenwich Village are part of that idea of messing things up through their *queerness*, not necessarily their gayness.

It is important to distinguish between queer and LGBT geography, and the resulting spaces and places. As Natalie Oswin points out, many LGBT people do not exist, nor do they want to exist in spaces that exist in opposition to normative spaces. Indeed, they want to be as “normal” as possible.<sup>51</sup> The desire for normalcy means that the spaces occupied by those who identify as LGBT are not necessarily “queer.” Indeed, they are some of the most normative sites of all. This transformation is what has happened to spaces like Greenwich Village or the Castro in San

<sup>49</sup> Samuel R. Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

<sup>50</sup> Manalansan, “Queer Worldings.”

<sup>51</sup> Natalie Oswin, “Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality: Deconstructing Queer Space,” *Progress in Human Geography* 32, no. 1 (February 2008): 89–103.

Francisco. The overarching police-imposed order exploits this desire for people to want to live “normal” lives.

Queer geography is instead interested in these spaces that exist in opposition to normative space. These spaces are not necessarily due to a revolutionary and deliberate desire to separate from normative space but are instead spaces that have potential as space for queerness to merely exist.<sup>52</sup> Queer geography is also interested in ideas beyond simple sexual orientation. Queer geography also grapples with race, class, and gender. Indeed, certain queer subjects may not even be LGBT themselves but are still queer in several ways. Indeed, in some ways, queer geography sits in opposition to LGBT geography.

It is also important to emphasize the material nature of queer geography. This thesis interprets queer geography as being settled in space and place in a literal physical sense and, informed by the very material needs of its subjects. For example, spaces such as the Christopher Street piers became queer spaces out of the material needs of the queer community. These material needs may have been the sexual needs and desires of gay men who used the piers in the decades around the Stonewall Uprising, or this may mean the need for a living space for transgender people of color, such as Sylvia Rivera. She set up squatter communities on the piers in the 1990s.<sup>53</sup> Spaces like the Christopher Street piers are, in essence, a site of queer class conflict. They are spaces reappropriated from their original use as sites of commerce. After decades of their use as a queer space, gentrifiers and the police reappropriated the space as a de-queered and sanitized space.

### *Fenced Out*

The first piece of outlaw media intervention that this project will examine is the short

<sup>52</sup> Oswin.

<sup>53</sup> *Fenced Out*; Hanhardt, *Safe Space*.

documentary film *Fenced Out*. Young people with the group FIERCE along with the Paper Tiger Collective, produced the film in 2001. The approximately twenty-eight-minute film focuses on queer people who used to occupy the Christopher Street piers and the project to redevelop the piers as Hudson River Park. The film also gives a brief queer history of the piers and the surrounding area. This history traces some of the radical resistance that has occurred here, starting with the Stonewall Uprising, and continuing through the late 1990s and early 2000s. Finally, the film attempts to offer a vision of hope for queer people in Greenwich Village. Also centered in this film is a class analysis. The youths depicted in the film are not from affluent Greenwich Village families. Indeed, many of them did not even live in the area if they had a home at all. If they lived in the area, it is because they were homeless and squatting on the piers.<sup>54</sup>

*Fenced Out* was a film created by the Paper Tiger Collective in collaboration with the queer youth social movement FIERCE. The film's speakers and narrators were mostly members of this group. However, they also interviewed some older queer activists, including transgender activist Sylvia Rivera, and several people who were involved in the Stonewall Uprising some thirty years earlier at the time of filming. While the film did not explicitly state who their intended audience was, the film's website says it is to "raise awareness about the increasing displacement, violence, and criminalization experienced by LGBTSTQ youth of color." The website also states that they have reached "over 3,000 people" with the film.<sup>55</sup> This was not a film that reached a wide audience, and one cannot say why only approximately 3,000 people have been reached. However, the relative do-it-yourself aesthetic of the film with grainy images, basic graphics, and sometime awkwardly-executed interview questions and commentary suggests that it was never intended to be a message

<sup>54</sup> *Fenced Out*.

<sup>55</sup> "Fenced OUT: FIERCE's Youth-Produced Documentary | FIERCE," accessed April 20, 2020, <http://www.fierceny.org/fenced-out-fierces-youth-produced-documentary>.



to city or national leaders. *Fenced Out's* use of words common within the queer community such as “cruising,” words that at the time were not in widespread usage in mainstream society, would suggest that the film was meant for a queer audience.

The film begins with an unknown narrator telling the audience that everyone needed a place to be comfortable and to “do shit.” The pier, according to the narrator, was this place for this. Then, another narrator asks the audience to imagine persecution for being who you are and suggests that the pier was an escape. The narrator then goes on to point out that the pier is the “home” for a large number of homeless gay youth. The next section of the film interviews several people who used the piers. One person recounts how they found the piers in the first place, citing the difficulty of finding Christopher Street. Another interviewee discusses how this was the center of their social life, saying that it took over 45 minutes to greet everyone they knew on the pier. Another unnamed interviewee said that people go to the pier for security - that they can do things that they cannot do at home around their families.

These interviewees show that the piers are a sort of outlaw space. The piers were never meant by the city to be a hangout spot for young queer youth, yet that became their use. The outlaw nature of the space makes it contradictory to the police order and by the city. The piers are a sort of spatial representation of the contradictions of being an “outlaw” in any sense. Something that is outlaw is never supposed to exist, yet it exists despite all of this. Indeed, the piers have a long history as a queer space, which the film will explore later.

Next, the film goes into a discussion of what was happening to the piers at that time of the film’s production, which the city had fenced off in preparation for turning it into what is now Hudson River Park Pier 45. The unnamed narrator gives some context about the larger Hudson River Park project, its location, and the reasons for building it. The narrator, in an apparent sarcastic tone, says that Hudson River Park was to be a “green and blue oasis for all of New York

to enjoy - except for us, of course.” Next, some text flashes across the screen, giving the context of what the situation was on the ground for homeless queer youth. It begins by citing the \$330 million cost of the Hudson River Park project juxtaposed with the \$2.3 million that New York City spent on LGBTQ youth programming in 2000. It then goes on to cite a statistic showing that over 35% of New York’s homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, while at the time, no shelters existed for LGBT youth. The only existing infrastructure was one transitional living program and two group homes for a total of approximately 45 beds. The film then returns to the imagine theme, where it asks the viewer to “imagine that the only safe place you have is a place that is now being bombarded by gay bashers who are beating, raping, and murdering you and your friends. At the same time, the police act like the criminals that they are supposed to take off the street.”<sup>56</sup>

In this discussion, there is an appeal to the state. Indeed, when making an argument that exists outside of the state, such as what outlaw media does, one cannot simultaneously ignore the idea that people are seeking relief right now that can, to some degree, improve people’s lives. More beds for homeless queer youth in New York City is merely one element of an attempt to improve life chances and redistribute them in a more equitable way, similar to Dean Spade’s argument in *Normal Life*.<sup>57</sup> Such an argument does not mean that there is no end goal of shedding the state from demands, but there remains a reason to make limited appeals with the understanding that these are only wholly incomplete measures.

In this section, the call to imagine suggests a sort of queer futurism. There are problems in the past, but there is still hope for the future. The narrator asks the viewer to walk in their shoes and imagine facing beatings and rape, but from that, there is hope for new places and spaces for

<sup>56</sup> *Fenced Out*.

<sup>57</sup> Spade, *Normal Life*, 7.

queerness to thrive and exist. The video does not explicitly say how these spaces should happen, and while there exist demands on the state to, for example, increase homeless shelter bed space, they also seem to be seeking something that exists outside of the state - sort of queer utopian space. The narrator asks the viewer to imagine a better scenario and a better space. They want queer-friendly spaces, but it seems that it is up to them and the viewer to make these spaces happen.

In this, the film also alludes to the notion that the police create a violent order for the sake of economic development, and that it is no accident. Such a violent order is in line with Neocleous's argument that police *create* an order for capital, rather than merely enforce an existing order.<sup>58</sup> It seems that the filmmakers are arguing that the police create a sort of gay-bashing order by allowing others to engage in this sort of behavior. Even when it is not the police themselves who are directly engaging in violent acts against the youth on the piers, it is nonetheless a violent act, much like the violence imposed on the youth I observed on the piers in the opening vignette of this project.

Next, the film discusses police behavior on the pier. The film then noted that the police were not interested when people came to harm the youth on the piers, but would "swarm" whenever anything else happened. One interviewee then discusses how the police have told them that the residents do not want them in the area anymore. Next is a video clip of a police officer telling several people that they are no longer welcome on the pier and that they can walk, but cannot "hang out." Once again, this is a violent police action, even if there is not a physical assault.

This clip is another example of the construction of order. The neighborhood does not want the young queer youth on the piers, yet it is not the neighborhood directly voicing their opposition to these individuals. Newsletters from the Greenwich Village Homeowners Association dating

<sup>58</sup> Neocleous, *The Fabrication of Social Order*, 13.

from the 1980s and 1990s made it clear that people were upset about the activities on the piers and wanted a space that resembled the Hudson River Park. One example from a Greenwich Village Homeowners Association newsletter in May 1994 complained of the expansion of the PATH trains, a commuter rail line that runs between New York City and New Jersey because it would hurt the existence of a continuous park. Later in the same issue, in the newsletter's "police report" section, there is praise for the NYPD's stepped-up enforcement by "arresting and summoning for 'quality of life' violations such as disorderly conduct, alcohol, health code, and environmental violations" in the areas around both the waterfront, close to the area of the Christopher Street piers and Washington Square Park, another well-known queer hangout space.<sup>59</sup>

Taken together, these sections in the newsletter suggest a great deal of anxiety among the homeowners of Greenwich Village of both the types of people who might exist in these spaces and of the city expanding infrastructure that might benefit poor people, such as the PATH train. Additionally, their praise for the NYPD's policing of quality of life violations, a phrase taken straight out of broken windows policing and then-mayor Rudy Giuliani's initiatives along those lines, suggests a police creation of order. A homeowners association is using the state's carceral language - a language created by and for the state and its police. It is the police creating the order and the sense that there are problems that need fixing through various types of spatial fixes such as removing and displacing people. The will and the desire of Greenwich Village homeowners are mostly a product of the creation of state order, much in line with Neocleous's argument that the police fabricate order.

This scene is reminiscent of what I witnessed during my visit to the Hudson River Park, as described in the introduction of this thesis. Specific individuals are marked for removal and

<sup>59</sup> "Association of Village Homeowners Newsletter," May 1994, Box 2, Folder 2, New York Public Library, Association of Village Homeowners Records (1960-2003).

violence, while others are not. One's right to exist on the piers is based on class and what is desirable for the enforcement of an order. Neither my or the men fishing's presence on the pier was a threat to "order," but the group of youths was. The evidence of this is in fact that the police seemed to show little interest in my presence, even though I was violating the very same laws as those youths were by loitering on the pier late at night. This scene shows the central state intervention - one of removal and oppression. The police officer in the clip is an agent of change, one that is at work fabricating the social order that they demand of the residents. The police officer was creating an order of sanitized space where LGBT people can exist without having to encounter poverty, people of color, or anything else that might trouble them. This police sanitization of the area is part of the process of de-queering Greenwich Village and the Christopher Street piers.

The police are engaged in the process of creating an LGBT order, one that is separate from a queer state. Indeed, the very concept of order is not queer. If we define queerness as being a state in which one does not fit into the normative social order, and order is normative, then queerness is a state of disorder, at least in the context of the modern nation-state. This LGBT order is not one demanded by the residents necessarily but is instead a co-optation of the existence of queerness. This creation of order is the result of queerness and a queer state but is not itself queer.

This new order was not one of freely-expressed queerness but was one of a sort of homonationalist and subdued "queer" order. A person can join this order if they contribute a sufficient amount of capital and consumption to the economy, and only then can they have a shot at inclusion in the homonationalist order. Once there, they are in a position to enjoy the benefits that this order creates for them. Misfits do not belong. Exclusion seems like the police are merely enforcing the will of the people rather than continuing to enforce an order that they created.

The piers became expanded as a hangout and cruising spot after the Stonewall uprising,

according to Bob Kohler, a white male veteran of the Stonewall uprising interviewed for the film. Transgender activist Sylvia Rivera then explained that the piers were mainly a spot for gay men, while for the trans community, it was a place for sex work. This juxtaposition of two people who used the piers for different purposes at the same time is instructive. Two different types of people from different social classes and places in society who had vastly different experiences, with Rivera describing the piers as a “playground” for gay men while at the same time being a place of survival for trans women.

Rivera’s description of the piers also occurred while she was giving the filmmakers a tour of the piers and the area where she, along with several others, set up a squatter camp. According to Rivera’s account in the film, she lived on the piers for over a year in 1996-1997. The film juxtaposes sites on the piers along with footage taken at the time of the squatter camp, all the while as the filmmakers do not criticize or suggest that this squatter camp was not problematic. This is yet another example of how *Fenced Out* is outlaw media in that it shows illegal activities in which people are claiming space in a positive light. The film is not making a demand of the city to set up new housing on the piers but is showing how some people have used this space to make themselves human and to claim their own space in the city.

This section of the film makes it clear that the piers were not some sort of utopia for queer people in the years before their redevelopment. The piers were already a segregated, racialized, and gendered location. White gay men dominated the space, often at the expense of people of color and transgender people. In this, one can see that even truly queer communities are subject to many of the same problems and hierarchies that existed throughout society. The hierarchies that were most prevalent in the 1960s and 1970s were on full display in the early days of the Christopher Street piers, and these problems and hierarchies would continue to play out in the decades to follow.

Photographic evidence from the piers during this era would broadly support Rivera's assertions. These piers were populated mainly by white gay men, at least the way the photos depicted them. White gay men, while still facing severe oppression in the post-Stonewall era, still had more of a claim to humanity in the existing power structures by merely being white and men. These men were often of a higher class than the queered trans women who also utilized the same space. Indeed, these white gay men would eventually find their way into truly being accepted into mainstream culture, hence the recent state of Greenwich Village.<sup>60</sup>

The use of the piers by trans people as a place for sex work is also a continuing theme that exposes some of the hierarchies inherent in the queer community. While trans people were permitted to exist and be on the piers, they existed as mere playthings for white gay men who may have found them useful for sex, according to Rivera. While everyone who populated the piers was part of some sort of queer community, Rivera's telling of her experience in the space that it was not a space for everyone, also noting that queer cis women were virtually nonexistent on the piers. One lesbian interviewed in the film named Regina Shavers said that lesbians did not use the pier and that they were even unwelcome. Women, save for trans women as sex workers, did not fit into the place that white gay men had created at the piers. It would not be until decades later that queer women would be able to play any significant role in the development of the piers, or any other queer space in New York City.

The film then goes into an explanation of the area around the piers. The waterfront along the Hudson River at the time had several gay bars, and the piers were dilapidated and dangerous with broken glass and structurally unsound buildings. It was a place that the police lacked effective authority or interest. Of course, in later decades, this space would begin to come to the attention

<sup>60</sup> Will Kohler, "Sex in the 1970's: NYC's Christopher Street, the Trucks, and the West Side Highway Piers," Back2Stonewall, January 17, 2020, <http://www.back2stonewall.com/2020/01/gay-sex-nyc-history-christopher-street.html>.

of the city's authorities as a space for a new type of placemaking - one of police-imposed order.

This scene suggests the existence of a space ripe for the type of "broken windows" policing that Wilson and Kelling proposed back in 1982. The piers were undeniably a run-down space and in disrepair, according to much of the photographic evidence that exists. Additionally, space held a great deal of value as a site of potential capital investment, while the people who used the space had little value to capital themselves. The social order created by the police necessitated broken windows policing.

The film again notes an absence of women and people of color on the piers after Stonewall. Interviewee Regina Shavers, who identified as a lesbian, explained that she never had use of the piers in the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, there were no real public spaces for lesbian of color, and that they did not feel entitled to such space. Even wearing pants could result in a woman getting beaten by the police.<sup>61</sup>

The next section of the film discusses the scene on the piers in the 1990s. Once again, the police effectively had no control over the area. The film argues that the piers were the most welcoming before Rudy Giuliani became mayor. Finally, Sylvia Rivera explains life on the piers in an improvised community set up by several transgender people of color in the 1990s, going through a detailed explanation of what she experienced until the police removed her and her fellow residents.

A significant shift would occur when Rudy Giuliani became mayor of New York. The police largely ignored the piers under the administrations of Ed Koch and David Dinkins throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Mayor Giuliani would play a pivotal role in bringing broken windows policing to the forefront in New York, making promises to do as much in his 1993 mayoral election

<sup>61</sup> *Fenced Out*.



campaign.<sup>62</sup>

Giuliani painted an image of New York as a crime-infested space in which nobody could safely live, and that needed the heavy hand of the law to protect it. It is in this context that the Christopher Street piers began their slide toward gentrification. Giuliani was also listening to capitalists and the investment they brought. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, The Greenwich Village Association of Village Homeowners complained of these “quality of life” problems, very much in line with what Wilson and Kelling discussed in their *Atlantic* piece. They complained of the existence of homelessness, saying that it was driving property values down and driving people away from Greenwich Village, despite the growing population of Greenwich Village and New York City more broadly.

These complaints included complaints about drug use both near the waterfront and in Washington Square Park. There were also complaints from the AVH about increases in robberies, allegedly caused by people experiencing homelessness. Giuliani was eager to respond to their and others’ calls for change. Under the Giuliani administration, funds for homeless shelters and other services took dramatic cuts. Additionally, in a move that seemed targeted at the queer community, most funds for HIV/AIDS treatment in the city were cut, eliminating entire programs.<sup>63</sup> These cuts sparked massive protests from within the queer community, including several incidents of violence between groups of HIV/AIDS protestors and New York City police who tried to put the protests down through direct violence and surveillance.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Francis X. Clines, “Candidates Attack The Squeegee Men,” *The New York Times*, September 26, 1993, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/26/nyregion/candidates-attack-the-squeegee-men.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Steven Lee Myers, “Giuliani Proposes \$800 Million More in Spending Cuts,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 1994, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/26/nyregion/giuliani-proposes-800-million-more-in-spending-cuts.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Greg Smith, “FBI Eyeing AIDS Groups,” *New York Daily News*, May 15, 1995; “Activists to Protest Giuliani’s Proposed Budget at City Hall This Afternoon” (ACT-UP NYC, October 25, 1994), Reel 14, Box 19, Folder 6, New York Public Library ACT-UP New York Records; “Target Rudy: Fight Aids Flyer” (ACT-UP NYC, March 22, 1994), Reel 14, Box 19, Folder 6, New York Public Library ACT-UP New York Records.

Meanwhile, the homeowners of Greenwich Village, speaking through the GVHA newsletters, objected to proposals for Hudson River Park, arguing that it would create a public space that would bring even more “vagrants” and “drunks” to the area than before.<sup>65</sup> The Association of Village Homeowners opposed nearly every project along the Hudson River, including a floating barge jail on the waterfront which existed during the 1980s.<sup>66</sup> The city moved this facility to its present location as part of the Rikers Island complex due in part to pressure from the Association of Village Homeowners. This resistance further complicates the notion that removing people was merely enforcing the will of the people of Greenwich Village. Instead, the order was created by the police, and not Greenwich Village’s residents.

The film ends with a monologue about the purpose of the film, which was to create a place for future generations of queer people of color, along with signature-gathering efforts to ask the city to stop the Hudson River Park project. Then, there is a defiant poem ending with the lines, “we will never leave.”

The film sets a sad yet defiant tone throughout. It does show a limited amount of engagement with the state to achieve its ends, but at the same time, it refuses to see the state as the end-all-be-all of liberation for the piers. It is this that makes this intervention an example of outlaw media discourse. The state and the police, while they exist, are no longer seen as the solution to their problems. The state *is* the problem, and only through their activities outside of ordinary media discourse can they get that message out to the oppressed queer community. This film is an example of the politics of refusal that Latty et al. discuss. While it is unclear what impact they thought they

<sup>65</sup> “Association of Village Homeowners Newsletter,” May 1994.

<sup>66</sup> Jeffrey Zaleski, *The Greenwich Village Waterfront: An Historical Study Prepared by the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation* (New York: Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, 1986); “Association of Village Homeowners Newsletter,” February 1986, Box 2, Folder 1, New York Public Library, Association of Village Homeowners Records (1960-2003).

would have on the discussion around the Christopher Street piers, it did not seem like an appeal to then-mayor Rudy Giuliani. It was an appeal to other queer people who might wish to intervene in places like the Christopher Street piers. It is an appeal to make these spaces queer again, to make spaces where poor queer people of color can simply “do shit,” as the unnamed narrator of the film tells us at the very beginning.

### **ACT-UP NYC**

Another significant outlaw media intervention dates back earlier than the controversy surrounding the Christopher Street piers. However, this intervention focuses on the removal and cutting of funding for HIV/AIDS medical assistance to New Yorkers, many of whom lived in Greenwich Village in the mid-1990s after the start of the Giuliani mayoral administration. There were also related media campaigns that targeted the Giuliani administration’s attempt to target the queer community in other ways, such as by the closing down of gay bars, sex clubs, book stores, and movie theaters through zoning laws.

ACT-UP NYC engaged in campaigns of flyering and engaging with local media to make their demands known, though not necessarily in ways that make demands from the state, even if they are in response to state actions. Instead, these examples of media seek to highlight their claims to exist in the city. This is not to say that there are no demands made of the state because ACT-UP did seek to make the Giuliani administration bring back funding for people living with HIV/AIDS. Still, their central claims to simply have a right to exist were not demands made on the state itself, as the examples will illustrate.

Like the example in *Fenced Out*, all of the media described here is made by grassroots activists, many of whom have names unknown to me because they are the anonymous authors of flyers, how-to guides, and other documents that sought to get out ACT-UP’s message. These pieces of

media also do not seek to strengthen capital. Indeed, their anti-Giuliani activism sought to undermine the police and capital.

Both the cutting of funding for HIV/AIDS support services and the attempts to close down gay spaces represent attempts by the Giuliani administration to harm, displace, and criminalize the queer community. I argue that attempts to harm the queer community were separate from how the city was interacting with the LGBT community. The city, instead of focusing on well-to-do gays and lesbians, focused on the most marginalized people, such as those who are HIV-positive, or those who visit places like sex clubs.<sup>67</sup>

Shortly after taking office in 1994, Giuliani sought to cut the city's Department of Social Services budget by over \$100 million, with much of that money coming from healthcare services for the poor, including HIV/AIDS. In total, Giuliani ended up proposing around \$1.2 billion in budget cuts, making the cut to the Department of Social Services some 8 percent of the entire city's budget cut.<sup>68</sup> At around the same time, Giuliani sought to ban pornography in the city, which would include the bars and clubs mentioned earlier, as well as establishments that sold erotica.<sup>69</sup> Once again, this is part of the creation of a police-imposed order. This anti-queer, racist, and anti-sex order favored the normative because that was what existed. A police-imposed order predated Giuliani's tenure as mayor and was a product of ideals espoused by Kelling and Wilson in the previous decade. While this broken windows-style order predated Giuliani, he sought to impose it in new and harsher ways.

<sup>67</sup> Myers, "Giuliani Proposes \$800 Million More in Spending Cuts."

<sup>68</sup> James C. McKinley Jr, "THE GIULIANI BUDGET: THE OVERVIEW; Giuliani's Budget Proposes Cuts For Spending and Work Force," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1994, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/11/nyregion/giuliani-budget-overview-giuliani-s-budget-proposes-cuts-for-spending-work-force.html>.

<sup>69</sup> Robin Pogrebin, "NEIGHBORHOOD REPORT: WEST VILLAGE; Rezoning Worries Gay Residents," *The New York Times*, July 2, 1995, sec. New York, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/07/02/nyregion/neighborhood-report-west-village-rezoning-worries-gay-residents.html>.

At this time in history, people who were HIV-positive effectively faced a death sentence, making their lives worthless in a neoliberal economy. They will never be able to have children, buy expensive homes, and consume - at least not for long. Thus, they were easily disposable in city budget cuts, and they are a population unlikely to gain much sympathy with the general population, especially in the mid-1990s, when the media portrayed HIV/AIDS as a gay-only disease. Similarly, those who might engage in public sex acts, whether going to a club or a bar, are also antithetical to a neoliberal order where the private holds value above all else. The kinds of people who might go to places like this are not part of the idealized LGBT community and are not the type of people who are likely to be in the vanguard of gentrification.

The outlaw media discussed here took a different approach than in *Fenced Out*, and it might seem somewhat more traditional than a youth-produced documentary film. However, it is also a potentially useful form of outlaw media in that, like *Fenced Out*, was focused on improving the lives of queer people without necessarily making demands of the state. Much of the media distributed in the early days of the Giuliani administration was traditional flyers and posters that objected to the policies of this new administration. However, what it demanded did not necessarily always seek simple policy changes from the Giuliani administration. People who objected to Giuliani and his policies instead sought a different reality. Queer people sought the ability to exist and were not seeking the approval or respect of mainstream New Yorkers or its authorities. By not attempting to engage in the politics of respectability, these activist groups were engaging in outlaw media discourse.

In one flyer from 1994, the headline reads, "Giuliani wants to...Burn the Constitution." The flyer then goes on to argue that Giuliani had announced a plan to ban pornography in New York City. The plan then argues that the plan would ban all gay movie theaters, adult gay book stores, adult gay booth stores, and all bars, clubs, and theaters that featured nude dancing. In response,

activists formed a group called “The Save Sex Coalition” to respond to these policy proposals by the Giuliani administration, where they sought to re-legalize public sex acts in New York. This flyer in particular seeks to call out various Giuliani administration policy proposals a “homophobic scheme” and “censorship.”<sup>70</sup>

While it is true that the Save Sex Coalition was referencing the US Constitution, they did not make any specific legal argument in this particular piece of media. There was no specific argument that the Giuliani administration was violating the First Amendment or any other statute or ordinance that protected gay spaces. The Save Sex Coalition instead simply demanded the preservation of these spaces. Many of these types of spaces were part of a queer community that did not fit into either mainstream heterosexual culture or even mainstream LGBT culture. These are not spaces that built mainstream family values and are not part of a future gentrified and orderly New York, save for perhaps limited numbers of gay bars and clubs, similar to many of the mainstream clubs that now exist in places like Greenwich Village.

What, in effect, the Save Sex Coalition was defending was public sex. They were demanding that they be able to exist in a public and open way in an America that still officially banned “sodomy” in many parts of the country. This demand went beyond even what many heterosexuals demanded. Public sex has seldom been a demand of any group, and the fact that they were putting such a message out in public made is what makes this particular piece of media outlaw. As mentioned before, some bars and clubs have remained in places like Greenwich Village, but they also fit a particular narrative of homonormativity.

Today, one cannot find gay booths or bars that feature nude dancing in Greenwich Village. There are also no pornographic movie theaters in the area. While the Save Sex Coalition did not

<sup>70</sup> “Giuliani Wants to...Burn the Constitution” (ACT-UP NYC, 1994), Reel 14, Box 19, Folder 6, New York Public Library ACT-UP New York Records.

bill itself as an explicitly anti-gentrification organization, it was nonetheless effectively seeking to stop the gentrification of New York, including in areas like Greenwich Village and Times Square. The spaces that they sought to protect, with some exceptions, are non-gentrifiable, at least not until there is a way to appropriate sex booths, nude dancing, or gay pornographic theaters. Instead, the only way to gentrify these spaces is to eliminate them.

With Mayor Giuliani's proposal to cut funding for HIV/AIDS services, groups such as ACT-UP NYC released media calling on people to "target Rudy" in order to fight AIDS. Some of this media sought to reverse or alter specific policies, such as funding cuts to these services. At the same time, flyers and posters that sought more "impossible" demands appeared. One flyer from 1994 titled "It's time to change Rudy's plan" had two columns, one listing Giuliani's plan for the city, and another with ACT-UP NYC's demands.

One of the items listed under the "Rudy Plans..." column says that Giuliani plans "To support N.I.M.B.Y. [Not In My Backyard] groups trying to keep homeless people & services out of 'their' neighborhoods." The other demands column says, "Recognition of NIMBY for what it is: BIGOTRY- racism, classism, and AIDS-phobia." When citing Giuliani's plan, they attempted to undercut the claims of the NIMBY residents to the area. By using scare-quotes about "their" (NIMBY) neighborhoods, they are arguing that the NIMBY residents do not have a legitimate claim to space. In the other column, they are arguing that NIMBYism is bigotry. Nobody made a specific policy proposal or an appeal to the politics of respectability. Instead, it is an offensive attack on gentrifiers.<sup>71</sup>

On this same document in the "Rudy Plans..." column, it says that Giuliani plans, "Increased evictions & police sweeps of squats, homesteads, and homeless encampments." This statement is

<sup>71</sup> "It's Time to Change Rudy's Plan" (ACT-UP NYC, 1995), Reel 14, Box 19, Folder 5, New York Public Library ACT-UP New York Records.

in contrast to “No eviction of squats. Turn squats over to their occupants with no tax burden.” in the “We Demand” column. ACT-UP NYC is making what is, in effect, an impossible demand. There is no policy in any existing neoliberal framework that would allow for squats to become legalized while undercutting the property rights of landlords and other property owners. This demand does not seek acceptance or respect from other New Yorkers or the government. They effectively want to become outlaws without harassment from the government.

Another item on the list is even more explicit in seeking to become outlaws. The “Rudy Plans...” column reads, “To cut building inspectors, tenant support consultants & tenant lawyers, allow current city-owned housing to deteriorate & create no new rent control or stabilization programs.” The opposing demand reads, “No evictions of tenants. Make rent control & rent stabilization permanent, institute massive rent toll-backs. Restore building code enforcement against landlords, not against squatters.” There are some specific policy demands in this, such as those surrounding rent control. However, there is also the demand that enforcement and policing be used against landlords and property owners, and not against squatters. In effect, they are demanding that squats not be subject to the law, while the wealthy are under the arm of law enforcement. A demand like this is nearly impossible to make in a neoliberal society, as it counts on the opposite order to survive. These types of demands are what make flyers like this outlaw media.

Some of the demands outlined in this flyer are also more powerful thanks to their unintelligibility to the state. They are seemingly impossible things in our current framework of understanding, yet they are physically possible. Such a move makes them hard to appropriate. In contrast, demands such as same-sex marriage instead seek to make LGBT people more mainstream and acceptable to society, which is why the US Supreme Court would eventually accept it. Same-sex marriage was once an impossible demand, but it is, in fact, a demand that ended up



fitting in very well with mainstream society.

Another relevant ACT-UP NYC document is the “Target Rudy Giuliani Direct Action Primer” packet, also released in 1994 in response to Giuliani’s election and anti-queer policy proposals. The document outlines several more traditional media actions that aim to gain visibility for the HIV/AIDS community, including speaking to reporters and engaging in letter-writing campaigns directed at public officials. The document also encourages direct engagement with media by giving a full guide on how to speak to reporters and maximize the impact of direct action. None of this constitutes any form of outlaw media discourse as such, but the document lists some “high-risk” actions that ACT-UP could potentially take in order to get their message out, which is where forms of outlaw media come into play. The overall thrust of the document also suggests an outlaw narrative.<sup>72</sup>

Much of the message of this packet, presumably distributed to activists within ACT-UP NYC, is merely letting people live their lives. They are seeking visibility in the media for this, but they are not seeking acceptance. Instead, the introduction to the packet discusses doing “zaps” of politicians, not seeking their support. They also seek to bring down corporations who charge high prices for AIDS drugs and to get health care services. Of course, these demands are also part-in-parcel with many standard community organizing goals, many of which do not engage in any sort of outlaw media discourse. Instead, it is how they attempt to achieve this that matters most.

One of the “high risk” actions that the packet discusses is to “Interrupt a local live newscast with AIDS-specific information and demands for continued coverage of the AIDS crisis.” Such an action is an attempt to hijack the current media discourse and insert a new narrative. This new narrative, based on the rest of the packet says, does not seem to suggest that people with

<sup>72</sup> “Target Rudy Giuliani Direct Action Primer” (ACT-UP NYC, 1994), Reel 14, Box 19, Folder 6, New York Public Library ACT-UP New York Records.

HIV/AIDS should be liked or adored by the community, but instead, they should be allowed to exist and get the healthcare they need. Nowhere in any of ACT-UP's materials are demands that they get to live in gentrified, sanitized spaces and that they want to have upward mobility in society beyond mere survival and existence. In an era before the preventions and treatments that exist for HIV/AIDS now, this was perhaps the most that they could demand in any case. Nonetheless, this quickly falls into the realm of outlaw media.<sup>73</sup>

All of the actions taken by ACT-UP NYC are part of an effort at survival - not acceptance. They are protesting against a government that does not care about their very survival or lives, which forces them to undertake different types of interventions than when one is part of a group that has at least some standing in society. Those who are queer, which can include those with HIV/AIDS.

### **Conclusion**

Outlaw media, as argued in this thesis, serves the purpose of providing a voice to those who are voiceless. It does not, however, give a voice that is recognizable to mainstream society, nor does it necessarily need to be recognized. Outlaw media is instead a medium for merely trying to exist. The measure of success in a piece of outlaw media need not be whether it convinces a government, corporation, or group of individuals that the media producer's cause is just. The measure of success is instead that it allows the media producer a means of existence and of building hope for the future, however faint that hope may be.

The voice that outlaw media can give varies, but I argue that it can give some of the most marginalized communities a say in their fate. Outlaw media, while only one part of a broader strategy of liberation, has at least the potential to let the marginalized bend discourse in their favor,

<sup>73</sup> "Target Rudy Giuliani Direct Action Primer."

to help achieve material goals such as space-making for queer people of color. Social movements, of course, have to decide for themselves what that voice looks like and who does and does not get that voice. These processes sometimes plays out in both useful and problematic ways as, as Maylei Blackwell discusses, where Chicana feminist movements fought both amongst themselves and with others to see who gets that voice.<sup>74</sup> I do not pretend to be an authority on who gets to have a voice, as I am not directly involved in these struggles. I can only hope to bring archives forward for others to evaluate.

Still, while I am not in a position to give voice to any one social movement or another, I would still argue for the importance of giving voice to the oppressed. For example, far-right social movements and activists may engage in certain types of “outlaw media” practices that, while similar in some respects to the types of outlaw media I argue for in this thesis, are fundamentally different. For example, the far-right patriot movements led by the Bundy family by engaging in anti-government protests through their occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon in 2016 and their armed standoff with agents of the Bureau of Land Management in Nevada in 2014 are examples of activism that indeed call for a sort of liberation from the state. However, while there may be some similar appearances in that groups like FIERCE also seek to liberate themselves from the state, they are seeking to tear down a white supremacist order that has created the conditions for gentrification in New York.

On the other hand, far-right groups like the Bundys and their associated militias seek to uphold white supremacy and make claims to land that they are not in any way entitled to. In the case of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge occupation, they destroyed Indigenous sites that were near

<sup>74</sup> Maylei Blackwell, *Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement*, Chicana Matters edition (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

the refuge, an explicitly racist act that sought to uphold settler colonial claims to property.<sup>75</sup> This is precisely the opposite types of politics that I advocate for and that I think outlaw media should be used for. Outlaw media should be for liberatory movements that *are not* engaged in upholding settler colonial and white supremacy. This is true for any social movement, even ones that might be regarded as less extreme than the one led by the Bundy family. As I have discussed earlier, even mainstream LGBT social movements engage in upholding white supremacy through their promotion of gay gentrification, making them far more similar to right-wing militias in that regard. Outlaw media is not for them either.

Once again, this project is interested in looking at ways to alter the discursive landscape around gay gentrification. While the interventions discussed are not in and of themselves material interventions, they instead play a role in paving the way toward more material interventions. They provide hope and a will to go on and continue to fight. While it is true that one cannot eat hope or keep the physical body alive with hope, it can provide the will to continue fighting for and obtaining those material things.

This thesis is an effort to highlight a few small examples of queer futurism through the use of outlaw media. At first glance, a piece of outlaw media may appear to be a piece of pessimism. It exists in a media ecosystem that largely rejects it. It makes demands that are often seemingly impossible, even if the existing power structure were to be more receptive to those demands. It also does not mostly seek or gain any sort of acceptance to a broader audience. Outlaw media might seem like a pointless exercise given what might seem like the futility of a small collective of queer youth or a small HIV/AIDS organization to change larger power structures with meaningless demands.

<sup>75</sup> Sam Levin, "Fresh Outrage after Militia Seen Rifling through Tribal Artifacts at Oregon Refuge," *The Guardian*, January 21, 2016, sec. US news, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/21/oregon-militia-standoff-malheur-wildlife-refuge-native-american-artifacts-paiute-tribe>.

While this is true, it is also attempting to look towards the future and material change. It is attempting to create a utopia. José Esteban Muñoz argues that queerness is in and of itself a utopian idea that transcends current reality. As Muñoz says, “Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality.”<sup>76</sup> People generate outlaw media with this ideality in mind. A film such as *Fenced Out* is attempting to make a newly queered world from the ashes of what they have experienced. They accomplish this by looking at the past, but then move on to a new queer future.

Outlaw media can also be useful as a way to create queer space and place. Outlaw media can help generate new queer geographies and strengthen existing ones. Outlaw media can work towards creating the conditions for people to reclaim and re-queer a space that the police have appropriated. In a media landscape flooded with outlaw media, there might be a chance for it to achieve hegemony in our discourse. To accomplish this, it will require us to generate far more of it. Without a more significant emphasis on such media, there is unlikely to be more of it, or for it to have any significant impact. At the same time, we must always watch out for the risk of outlaw media appropriation, which is then turned back into mainstream media, used to maintain the current power hegemony.

I also argue that there is the potential for outlaw media to be used by different social movements at different times and places for a variety of end goals. It is also important to note that my examples are looking at social movement outlaw media interventions in the 1990s and early 2000s, before the age of social media. Today’s media landscape is drastically different from that of the eras described in this thesis. Still, some of the lessons of this are useful today. Specifically, social movements can still create their own media that rejects the state and the politics of respectability, but can disseminate it to a far wider audience than tended to be possible in decades past, though this may be using mainstream social media tool such as Twitter and YouTube.

<sup>76</sup> Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 1.

Ultimately, the medium is not the most important factor, but the particular types of discourse and messaging behind it are crucial. If anything, I argue that outlaw media can be even more powerful in the era of social media.

Finally, this thesis does not attempt to answer how to prevent outlaw media appropriation. However, we must attempt to answer that question if the concept of outlaw media is to enjoy even some success in changing minds and creating better living conditions for queer people of color. Finding ways to avoid that appropriation is another project I challenge myself to, and that I hope other scholars challenge themselves to accomplish.

While outlaw media will not by itself bring back the Christopher Street piers, de-gentrify Greenwich Village, or cure HIV/AIDS, it contributes in some small way to creating the conditions to make those things happen. That is what I hope to contribute with this thesis, and I hope that future research by myself or others can go even further towards the radically queer world that I hope we can all live in someday.

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