

Organizations and Resources to Check Out:

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence
> www.incite-national.org

Critical Resistance (to abolish the prison industrial complex)
> www.criticalresistance.org

Bash Back! Radical Queer and Trans Folks
> bashbacknews.wordpress.com

Free the New Jersey Four: Bay Area Solidarity Committee
> freenj4.wordpress.com

Surviving Militarism, Racism & Repression: An Emergency Preparedness Kit for LGBT & Queer Youth
> www.afsc.org/Youth&Militarism/

Community-Based Groups Confronting Sexual Assault & Abuse

UBUNTU (women of color and survivor led)
> iambecauseweare.wordpress.com

CARA (Communities Against Rape and Abuse)
> www.cara-seattle.org

Northwest Network (queer and trans survivors network)
> www.nwnetwork.org

Safe OUTside the System (LGBTSTGNC people of color accountability)
> www.alp.org/whatwedo/organizing/sos

Denver On Fire
> www.myspace.com/denveronfire

[Bash Back! Denver] contact
bashbackdenver@gmail.com
myspace.com/bashbackdenver

Creating Radical Change



***Challenging the Mainstream Gay Agenda:
On Marriage, Militarism, and
Hate Crime Laws***

[Bash Back! Denver] is a local queer and trans group working to radicalize Creating Change. We seek to bring a localized, radical analysis of oppression and the Non-Profit Industrial Complex to NGLTF's Creating Change Conference while it is in Denver this year, and to hold NGLTF accountable to its collusion with capitalist oppressors and disaster-profiteers.

NGLTF & Creating Change are brought to you by:

[Wells Fargo] donates \$50,000+ yearly to NGLTF and is an enormous banking institution that is highly active in the Denver area. Here and elsewhere, Wells Fargo has worked to institutionalize white supremacy and reinforce poverty by offering predatory loans exclusively through branches located in poor communities and neighborhoods of color. Wells Fargo recently received a \$50 billion bailout/tax break package intended to provide relief to the households the bank had systematically bankrupted. The bank recently announced, however, that not a single dime would go towards relief, instead adding the \$50 billion directly to its profit margin. Wells Fargo has also actively withheld millions of dollars in back wages owed to Chicana@ workers for more than 50 years.

[CH2M Hill] is a top sponsor of this year's Creating Change Conference. Headquartered here in Denver, CH2M Hill is part of the large complex of corporations engaged in disaster profiteering. CH2M Hill has won contracts in Iraq and New Orleans, including a no-bid FEMA "disaster relief" contract post-Katrina. Paralleling the War on Iraq, the US government's War on Blacks in New Orleans has used "reconstruction" packages to clean up its image while handing off millions of dollars to favored corporations.

[The Ford Foundation] grants \$300,000+ a year to NGLTF. The foundation has a long history of efforts to pacify militant organizations in urban areas, specifically Black liberation groups, as described in Robert L. Allen's "Black Awakening in Capitalist America." Ford Foundation consistently works to steer organizing agendas in conservative directions by funding research and services geared to calm civil unrest. In 2004, a grant that the foundation had offered to INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence was revoked because of the organization's statement of support of the Palestinian liberation struggle.

the bottom line: Foundations and corporations that are invested in state and capital won't fund projects that threaten those interests. So organizations like NGLTF will always limit their agendas to minor reform and assimilation. Creative fundraising as an alternative to state and foundation grants allows organizations to work on creating radical change.

Well then, is there another way? Can we fight straight-married privilege *and* not be dull? Yes, by redistributing these marriage-exclusive benefits to all relationships. For example, all of my friends and none of my abusers should be allowed to visit me in the hospital. Queer groups—especially ones that have huge lobbying resources—should work for laws and policies that redistribute benefits to all people, rather than trying to boost some gays into the marriage club.

These laws and policies include domestic partnership benefits, universal visitation rights (excepting abusers), universal health care, progressive immigration reform, and access to adoption (and abortion) for everyone.

We need to work on sharing resources within our communities, too. And rather than protecting abusers in LGBT communities through silence, denial, and inaction, we need to organize for community-based responses to violence. Because the police and the injustice system are no solution.



Gay Marriage: For and Against

by Bash Back! Denver

You might have thought Bash Back!, as a radical anti-assimilationist queer group, would be against marriage. But in order to provide a balanced look at this very touchy subject, we decided to offer two very different stances and let *you* decide. So here they are: the #1 reason against gay marriage and the #1 reason for it: *dismantling it!*

Bash Back's #1 Reason Against Gay Marriage

In the debate over marriage, this might be a new one for you. We need to resist gay marriage as part of confronting domestic abuse and sexual assault. Queer and trans people already face a lack of available domestic violence and sexual assault resources because most organizations cater to straight people and/or are institutionally queer/trans-exclusive. Marriage as a governmental contract grants an abuser legal "access" to their spouse's body, space, legal/financial life, and mind. A married abuser can control their spouse with far greater intensity and impunity than an unmarried counterpart and the survivor has less recourse to escape and control their own space and life.

Luckily, LGBT communities have two things going for us. One is that (almost) no queer people are married, and unmarried people are significantly safer. Our second advantage is our relatively strong communities and healthy skepticism of the police and injustice system. Combined, these form a starting point for developing our own response to interpersonal violence within and against our communities.

Dismantling

Bash Back's #1 Reason for ^ Gay Marriage

We must admit, when we hear that the state distributes literally hundreds of benefits to married partners that are withheld from unmarried partners/households—thereby systematically privileging straight partners over gay partners in taxes, housing, immigration, health care, etc—we pay attention. After all, our goal is to dismantle systems of straight privilege, and here it is: marriage.

But is inclusion really what we want? Inclusion into a normative, conservative, woman-hating, rape-legalizing, abuser-protecting, and—gotta say it—positively *boring* institution? Don't get us wrong, we love a fabulous wedding party, but we have plenty of those without getting legally married.

Confronting the Non-Profit Industrial Complex

Excerpts from the introduction to the INCITE! anthology The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex
by Andrea Smith

Dylan Rodríguez... and Ruth Wilson Gilmore argue that the NPIC is the natural corollary to the prison industrial complex (PIC). While the PIC overtly represses dissent the NPIC manages and controls dissent by incorporating it into the state apparatus, functioning as a "shadow state" constituted by a network of institutions that do much of what government agencies are supposed to do with tax money in areas of education and social services. The NPIC functions as an alibi that allows government to make war, expand punishment, and proliferate market economies under the view of partnership between the public and private sectors*.

Capitalist interests and the state use non-profits to:

- *monitor and control social justice movements;*
- *divert public monies into private hands through foundations;*
- *manage and control dissent in order to make the world safe for capitalism;*
- *redirect activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass-based organizing capable of actually transforming society;*
- *allow corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work practices through "philanthropic" work;*
- *encourage social movements to model themselves after capitalist structures rather than to challenge them*

* bash back! does not support the existence of government, nor do we recognize the state's authority to make decisions that affect our lives. The state does so only by force and met with our resistance.

NJ4 background: intersectional injustice

by the Bay Area NJ4 Solidarity committee

On August 18, 2006, seven young African American lesbians traveled to New York City from their homes in Newark for a regular night out. When walking down the street, a man sexually propositioned one of the women. After refusing to take no for an answer, he assaulted them. The women tried to defend themselves, and a fight broke out. The women were charged with Gang Assault in the 2nd degree, a Class C Felony with a mandatory minimum of 3.5 years. Patreese Johnson was additionally charged with 1st Degree Assault. Three of the women accepted plea offers. On June 14th, 2007 Venice Brown (19), Terrain Dandridge (20), Patreese Johnson (20), and Renata Hill (24) received sentences ranging from 3 1/2 to 11 years in prison.

Too Legit To Quit: On the NJ4

The following is a reflection on organizing to free the NJ4, written by the Bay Area NJ4 Solidarity Committee, including Bea Sullivan, Deg Gold, Eric Stanley, Inez Sunwoo, Ralowe Ampu, and Xan West.

All of us organizing with the Bay Area NJ4 Solidarity Committee are from pretty different backgrounds but have experienced street violence because we are queer people of color, Black women, faggots, Asian butches, fat dykes, dykes perceived as trans, lesbians, and many other identities. And while we were not surprised that the US criminal injustice system did not side with the young Black lesbians from New Jersey, we were outraged at the criminalization of their basic right to survive and at the racist, homophobic, transphobic, and dehumanizing labels such as "wolf-pack" in the media. Because the times call for radical action, we wanted to be collectively ready and active within a culture of self-defense that would break our loved ones out of prison. That vision has been our motivation since we began in March of 2007.

Since we were in the Bay, we began by reaching out to queer people of color organizations in New York City. After repeated attempts to make contact with these organizations thought to be working on the case we heard nothing; however we did start building relationships with the folks on the inside and their families. In order to move beyond the emotional challenges raised by these limitations, we chose to ground our organizing in understanding our accountability first to the four incarcerated women. As organizers on the outside, we know the importance of consistency when working with folks on the inside.

From those who already knew much about the NJ4's story to those who barely even knew their names, people came through to bake cupcakes, throw fundraiser dance parties, make t-shirts, set up and break down events, donate their car for a day, make banners and posters and buttons on living room floors, or just show up and support. We flyered at the Folsom Street Fair in September of 2007 and again at a big lesbian event, Sister Comrade, honoring Audre Lorde and Pat Parker. The amazing thing about this case is how quickly young queers of color, old lesbians, and other impacted folks identify with the NJ4.

We also started meeting regularly to help organize a larger movement. Our collective printed thousands of newspapers, which are useful for spreading the word about the case. Amazingly and much to our surprise, Terrain got out of prison just a few days before the Dyke March. With 200 people, we welcomed her to the SF Women's Building at an event called "Who's Got Yo Back," which featured Angela Davis, Ojala, Kimma Walker (Terrain's mother) and us.

Calling All Queers: Desert the Military!

In response to the promise by Obama's spokesperson that the new president will overturn the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy, Bash Back! against militarism is issuing a call to all queers in the US Armed Forces. Please consider:

As an openly gay or lesbian service member, you can now:

- ♣ visit foreign lands
- ♣ kill and conquer the people you are told are your enemy
- ♣ defend the imperial supremacy of our great nation
- ♣ collude with putting people of color on the front lines while white people call the shots in their offices
- ♣ break the wills and dignity of "grunts" in boot camp
- ♣ perpetuate the most vicious manifestations of rape culture
- ♣ and use rape as a weapon against occupied populations
- ♣ participate in reinforcing strict gender roles and identities
- ♣ and be open about your sexuality while doing it!

Or you could join the bash back! army of queer liberation, where we:

- ♥ fight wars against homophobia
- ♥ "shock and awe" transphobia into oblivion
- ♥ lay siege to white supremacy
- ♥ search and destroy rape culture
- ♥ give poverty draft recruiting a dishonorable discharge
- ♥ create fortresses of solidarity, ranks of love, and fronts of liberation

To our queer brothers and sisters and twisters in the Armed Forces:

*Desert your posts, **turn on your commanders**, go AWOL, seek asylum in Canada, join us in the war at home by shutting down recruitment centers and kicking recruiters out of our schools.*



Professional activism

Most organizing models of today have inevitably been influenced by the nonprofit-industrial complex (NPIC) and its penchant towards professional activism. Those of us working to realize justice for the New Jersey 4, given our individual and varying experiences with organizing, recognized this as a problem and decided to work around and against it.

Even after many important words have been written about the NPIC, our organizing minds, desires and realities are consistently ensnared and mesmerized by its limitations. The NPIC's legacy is much broader than just the structuring of organizations; it cuts deep into our impoverished dreams of another world and another way to do things. The deadening of our collectively radical, queer imaginations is perhaps the most violent effect of the NPIC.

This is an attempt to open up these conversations and remember that a few people sitting around a kitchen table can achieve more than a well-funded and staffed organization. Our hope in doing this is to simultaneously work to free the NJ4, support cultures of self-defense, and challenge the models of organizing that reproduce oppression.

Radical tomorrow

A number of nonprofits offer vital services necessary for our survival under capitalism. (Some are even nice enough to let us gather in their meeting rooms.) However, we must constantly question what is paid for, what we gain, and how might we continue to organize in ways that do not reproduce the same kinds of domination we wish to undo. We must also continue to question: Who is doing the labor of organizing compared to who is credited when gains are made? Are we creating multicultural figureheads that give the face of diversity so the homophobic and white supremacist veins of the Left can feel better about diversity? Or are we digging in deep, working with those most affected, and creating worlds that may never make it into a magazine or blog, yet are changing the very realities we live?

Our radical communities must also constantly transform notions of resistance and interrogate why there is so much silence surrounding the NJ4 and cases similar to theirs. The immediate question that comes to bear in the midst of revising strategies for confronting violence is this: Beyond vigils and annual reports, what does it take to be resourceful enough to connect struggles and do antiviolence work before we are dead and imprisoned?

For updates and information on how to get involved in the Bay Area contact freenj4@yahoo.com, or see www.freenj4.wordpress.com

Hate the State: On Queer "Hate Crime" Laws

by Ariel McGowan

In June 2008, Duanna Johnson, a transgender woman of color, was arrested in Memphis, Tennessee on a prostitution charge. In a jail holding area, a Memphis police officer called her a "he/she" and a "faggot," and then beat her while another officer held her down. The brutal beating was caught on video tape and released to the media. Duanna was in the process of suing the city of Memphis for police brutality when she was found murdered in an alley on November 9, 2008.

In response to this brutal incident of police violence and murder, the HRC issued a pathetically timid statement asking the Memphis Police Department to "treat transgender people with respect and fairness."

At the same time, HRC is using much stronger rhetoric in leading a charge to strengthen "hate crime" legislation, and almost every LGBT organization has taken up the hue and cry.

Laws Don't Stop the Lawless

The state is the central organizer of violence against queer and trans communities. This violence takes the forms of colonialism, police brutality, immigration control, sex/gender policing, HIV/AIDS policy, sex work policing, reproductive control, and imperialism, and primarily oppresses queer and trans people of color.*

Violent attacks also come at us from individuals socialized into interpersonal violence by homophobic, transphobic, white supremacist systems of oppression. We need to mobilize against both forms of violence, while recognizing them as distinct. The state creates "hate crime" legislation to criminalize interpersonal violence while co-opting radical movements, normalizing state violence, and creating a façade of protection and justice. This deflection of attention away from state violence is remarkably successful: the agendas of major LGBT organizations prioritize "hate crime" laws while never mentioning state violence.

It is no surprise that HRC, NGLTF and others take the "hate crime" bait hook, line, and sinker. LGBT non-profit corporations are organized for the management of queer anger. When queer and trans people recognize oppression and begin to organize for liberation, these middlemen are ready

to step in and subdue, disempower, and offer a petition to sign. They act as a mid-point between the oppressive state and the insurgent masses. They distill direct action into lobbying and replace images of militant opposition with corporate logos and smiling gay faces. They build careers out of suffering, offer services to people who should get solidarity, and even beg the state to put more queers in the military and more people in prison.

We should be aware of whose interests are served by the incarceration of more (homophobic and transbashing) people. The Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) is a term used by the prison abolition organization Critical Resistance to describe a complicated intersection of state and economic interests in the business of incarceration. The rise of "hate crime" legislation has been part of the rise of the PIC, alongside the "war on drugs" and the repression of radical movements.**

At the risk of restating the obvious, "hate crime" laws protect no one from the state itself. In fact, "hate crime" laws protect no one but the state itself.

Creating Accountability

At best, the incarceration of a queer basher puts one dangerous person in a cage while leaving the apparatus of violence intact. It does nothing to address root causes, dismantle state violence, or change the basher's behavior.

Our communities can do better. Even while we struggle against state violence, we have to prioritize mobilizing effective responses to interpersonal violence within and against our communities. This means creating alternatives to the police to respond to sexual assault, domestic violence, and homophobic and transphobic attacks. We need to organize for the very real, immediate, and essential work of collective response to the interpersonal violence "close to home". We need to prepare now, and not wait for the next big attack within or against our community.

Similarly, at the same time that we work to create alternative models of accountability, that work cannot be separated from the struggle against state violence. Since the state is the central organizer of violence against us, the central question is still: how can we hold the state accountable to the people?

* Adapted from INCITE! Principles of Unity, www.incite-national.org

** Critical Resistance: What is the Prison Industrial Complex?, www.criticalresistance.org