

Sex After Marriage? The Future of Queer Liberation (draft for comments)

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### Introduction: Marriage as Full Citizenship

Lesbians and gays have won same-sex marriage rights in Canada and many other places. There has been considerable debate about the impact this has had on the politics of sexual liberation. Much of the debate has focussed on the desirability of marriage itself and its normalizing impact on queer communities, often posed in terms of a theoretical dispute between queer theory and liberalism. A queer feminist anti-racist marxism offers resources that frame these debates differently, examining the impact of gaining full citizenship in a time of intensified commodification on lesbian/gay life and the politics of sexual liberation.

The political importance of legal same-sex marriage rights in Canada and elsewhere was not simply about marriage, as such. Rather, same-sex marriage rights represented the final step to full citizenship for lesbians and gays, granting formal equality which Kathleen Lahey (1999) characterized as “constitutional personhood”. George Chauncey (2004:140-141) interviewed people seeking legal marriage in the United States, and found they were often pursuing recognition of equality rights. “But the people waiting in line didn’t just want the rights, protections and benefits that married couples had. They wanted to be recognized as truly equal to them.”

Indeed, it was only the possibility of full equality represented by legal marriage rights that made some of these people aware of the extent to which they had resigned themselves to limited citizenship constrained by legal discrimination. “The sudden possibility of getting married made many people wonder if they had been complicit before with their second-class citizenship (Chauncey 2004:141).” Same-sex marriage recognition has served as the capstone of the struggle of lesbians and gays for full citizenship, in Canada, much of Europe and possibly South Africa. Thus lesbians and gays are now entering into the gap between full citizenship and genuine liberation, as many others (workers, women, people of colour) have before.

The struggle for full citizenship has been a hallmark of many emancipatory social movements under capitalism. Previously excluded peoples have fought their way in to citizenship rights, ranging from gaining the rights to vote through to legal protection against discrimination. Geoff Eley (2002) documents the development of the European left through its role in the long struggle of the working class for full citizenship. He describes this struggle in terms of “democracy made social”; the twofold process of winning formal democratic rights (such as the electoral franchise) and of extending those rights more deeply into the social realm (winning access if not entitlement to education, health care, social services and benefits).

Women and people of colour have similarly fought for democratic and social rights as key dimensions of struggles for emancipation. This has included fights for decolonization, enfranchisement, legal personhood, protection from discrimination and access to the social rights of citizenship. In all cases, the accomplishment of full citizenship rights has fallen far short of the genuine liberation envisioned by the more radical layers within the struggle. At the same time, the accomplishment of full

citizenship has often been associated with a substantial, if perhaps temporary, demobilization of the movement, as immediate goals of the struggle are obtained.

### The Struggle for Lesbian and Gay Citizenship<sup>1</sup>

Lesbians and gays won full citizenship through hard struggles, as was the pattern with other oppressed and exploited groups. In Canada, these struggles have had many dimensions, including demands for: the right to privacy (the struggle against police harassment and raids in bars and bathhouses), inclusion in human rights codes as grounds for non-discrimination, an end to discrimination against people living with HIV and full access to treatment, sexual freedom, including access to safer sex resources and information, the right to a public presence in media and culture, freedom from police harassment and homophobic violence, and recognition of same-sex relationship and marriage rights.

The success of these struggles has been quite remarkable, and a number of these key demands have been won over time. This is in part the result of an important history of militancy, a willingness to take to the streets and mobilize against police harassment, state inaction around AIDS and HIV and the failure to recognize human rights and same-sex relationships. This militancy was driven by exclusion from full citizenship that created a distance from and mistrust of official institutions, by the life and death urgency of AIDS activism, by the widespread (though not universal) understanding of “coming out” as a political act and finally by the playful, naughty and erotic energy that drove these demonstrations (see Sears 2005, Wilson 1993).

Some of these rights were pioneered as gains by unions through collective bargaining before being enshrined in law. In 1981, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers were the first union in the Canadian state to win non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in a collective agreement, at a time when that right was recognized in the human rights code only in Quebec. In 1985, Toronto library workers (and particularly Karen Andrews) represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees were pioneers in winning the recognition of same-sex relationships, guaranteeing the access of partners and dependents to benefits. AIDS/HIV added a new intensity to struggles around relationship recognition, as partners often found themselves excluded from medical decision making, hospital access and legacies.

In many ways, the access to a public presence (out of the closet) was a central dimension of the struggle for full citizenship for lesbians and gays. The issue of cultural presence is integrally related to, though not reducible to, political struggles around full citizenship. It is much easier to have an openly gay or lesbian public profile if one is formally protected against police harassment, legal discrimination and if one's relationships are recognized at work and in law. Further, the mobilization of lesbians and gays to win rights developed an important kind of collective confidence and assertion. This public presence has included the emergence of particular urban spaces defined as gay (and to a much lesser extent, lesbian), the rise of Pride celebrations to a very high profile, the appearance of lesbian and gay public figures including successful politicians, and a cultural presence in books, films, music, television, theatre and visual art.

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<sup>1</sup> I am deliberately using the term lesbian and gay here as full citizenship rights are restricted specifically to lesbians and gays and not 'queers' more broadly defined to include transgender, bisexual, two-spirit or others

Full citizenship has produced very real gains for many lesbians and gay men, who in many cases can now live quite openly in such a way that their sexual orientation is seldom an issue in their daily lives (see Seidman 2004). Yet not all queers benefit fully, or in some cases at all, from these changes. Men benefit much more than women, who have far less access to public spaces or profile. Relationship recognition has actually hurt some people on benefits, who now face the same process of policing of partners' incomes that heterosexuals have long endured.

Struggles around full citizenship including relationship recognition and workplace rights have also pushed the movement towards increasing gender normativity, marginalizing transgendered people and gender rebels. Street youth are pushed out of gentrified lesbian and gay areas. Working class people have been increasingly left aside as professional and managerial spokespeople have come to define the movement (Kinsman 1996, Richardson 2005 and Warner 1993). People with money gain privileged access to the commodified spaces and lifestyles that tend to be identified with lesbian and gay communities. This has created an image that queerness can't be poor (Hollibaugh 2001).

Full citizenship has not necessarily addressed issues of homophobic violence, so that those who are cast as "queer" (whatever their actual sexuality may be) continue to face brutalization in the streets, the schools, their homes and other places (see Janoff 2005). Queer people of colour continue to face what Crichlow (2001) described as "double invisibility"; within lesbian and gay communities they tend to be invisible due to their colour, while within their cultural communities of origin they are often invisible due to their sexuality.

The politics that distinguished post-Stonewall lesbian/gay liberation from previous movements for homosexual rights have now largely vanished. These liberation politics emphasized visibility rather than respectability, confronting the system rather than finding a safe place inside the dominant power relations and the abolition of the compulsory family system rather than integration into state and church regulated familial relations (see Sears 2005). This is often portrayed within a queer theory frame as a reorientation from transgressive queerness to assimilated lesbian and gay sexual citizenship (see Duggan 2002). This analysis sheds light on the trajectory of lesbian/gay politics from radicalism to reform within the system. It is, however, limited in its account of the wide-ranging changes taking place in lesbian/gay life.

The idea that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered politics boil down to a choice between assimilation and transgression revolves around a moralistic call to queerness. This is not enough for understanding the ways people negotiate their everyday lives in relation to projects for change. As Sheila Rowbotham (2001:191) wrote, "There are no easy answers to the question of how you live in a world you want to change radically." Those of us who believe radical change are caught between the actual world we live in and the places we want to go. A moral exhortation to abandon the world and live prefiguratively outside of society can lead to personal and political isolation.

Indeed, the call to eternal queerness is not unlike the 'maximalist' position in the socialist movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Everything was oriented around revolution, and the maximalists had very little to say to workers on strike negotiating for concrete changes within the system. At the other end of the spectrum, the reformists completely limited their horizons to what could be gained within the system and had nothing to say about fundamental change. The challenge is to find

ways to use the possibility of revolution as a strategic guide to struggles within the system. Similarly, queer politics need to find ways of using the broad goals of sexual liberation to guide daily struggles in which people make gains that really do improve their lives.

I believe marxism offers powerful tools to make sense of the contradictory combination of genuine victories and increased marginalization that have led to the current state of queer political demobilization. Specifically, I will argue here that marxist state theory and the analysis of commodification help make sense of the pattern of gains and losses in queer struggles. This theoretical approach will contribute to making sense of the fact that lesbians and gays have made important gains over the past 25 years, during a period in which the center of political gravity shifted substantially to the right. As Elizabeth Wilson (1993:115) notes, the queer movement “has managed to advance when all around were in retreat.” A historical materialist account of the social conditions for this advance offers important insights for the understanding of sexual politics in capitalist states.

### The Politics of Citizenship

The contemporary depoliticization of the queer movement and lesbian/gay existence has often been analyzed in terms of “sexual citizenship”. Richardson (2005) argues that sexual citizenship, with its focus on equality rights, leads to claims of sameness. Duggan (2002) describes this as “homonormativity.” In this frame, citizenship is seen primarily as a means of regulating lesbian/gay existence, or more importantly of internalizing self-regulation.

This account of sexual citizenship marginalizes the state, or indeed omits it altogether. This is based in part on a historical argument that the state is less important in the neo-liberal era, where citizenship is organized primarily in terms of consumer behaviour not state regulation in an epoch marked by the privatization of responsibility (Binnie and Bell 2004, Evans 1993). This is grounded in theoretical perspectives which de-emphasize the state, focussing instead on relations of governmentality that are not identified with any specific social location. Rather, in the words of the famous quote from Foucault (1980:93) “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere”.

I want to argue, in contrast with this dominant trend, that an understanding of this phase of development for queer life and politics benefits from a more specific marxist understanding of citizenship in relation to the capitalist state and relations of commodification. The limits of full citizenship derive from by the character of the capitalist state and the impact of the commodification of social relations. Citizenship is a very specific relationship between an individual and the state (Tilly 1995:8). Through this relationship, the individual is constituted as the subjects of rights and the object of administration (Kay and Mott 1982:93).

Through citizenship, the state delimits and claims its population. Yet this is contradictory, as the population from below also attempts to claim its state, winning for example certain democratic rights (Eley 2002 and Foot 2005). But this relationship is not symmetrical, as the state is rooted in capitalist reproduction and therefore ultimately must seek to reconcile mobilization from below with the continuation of the dominant social relations (see Simon Clarke 1983). The capitalist state is set within a broader social system based on inequality and commodification (things produced for exchange on the market).

Citizenship is necessarily exclusionary (defining citizens and non-citizens) and fundamentally structured around capitalist social relations. Capitalist citizenship is

focussed around lies a set of formal equality rights, established first and foremost between buyers and sellers of commodities. This formal equality qualifies all to be owners of property, though in reality most are not in any position to acquire the key productive resources of society. Pashukanis (1989:127) wrote, "For the quality of being a subject of rights is a purely formal quality. It qualifies all persons as equally worthy of property, but by no means makes them property owners."

Citizenship is therefore a relationship with the state characterized by formal equality as potential owners of property. In a fascinating analysis, Eric Clarke (2000) examines ways that marriage serves to legitimate practices of sexuality within this framework. He argues that sexuality threatens to undermine these citizenship rights, which are uniquely accorded to human beings. Sexuality is seen as animalistic, particularly as sexual possession objectifies people. This objectification reduces humans to property and disqualifies them as property owners. Marriage is a mutual contract that regulates sexuality, distinguishing people from animals. It is only the reciprocity of that mutual contract that ensures that the individuals involved are not objectified as property. Thus, the historic exclusion of women and slaves from full reciprocal rights within marriage was linked to their disqualification from full humanity. Kevin Floyd (2006) argues that these sexual ethics were picked up by Lukacs.

The post-Stonewall gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements originally contested the relationships of citizenship from the outside. The early aspiration of the movement were not limited to inclusion within the realm of citizenship, indeed did not even focus specifically in that area. The shift to a human rights perspective was a gradual one, and should be seen as contradictory. On the one hand, it was grounded in increased confidence, as it was only through struggle that became possible to aspire to full citizenship as the barriers seemed impossibly large in the early years of the movement. At the same time, a more reform-oriented layer arose within the movement, narrowing of the horizons of transformative vision to what could be accomplished within the dominant social relations (Sears 2005, Seidman 2004)

Duggan (2002) and Richardson (2005) argue that the attainment of full citizenship represents a specific process of normalization, recognizing certain same sex practices as acceptable within dominant norms on the condition that non-conforming practices be ostracized. New rights are granted but framed within new responsibilities. Diane Richardson 2005:521 wrote:

the responsibility of lesbians and gay men is now to adopt disciplined sexual practices through the internalisation of new norms of identity and sexual practices associated with a certain (heteronormative) lifestyle, with various rights granted through demonstrating a specific form of "domestic" sexual coupledness.

This trajectory towards full citizenship is not unique; movements of women, workers and people of colour had similar historical experiences. In all of these cases, a diverse and wide-ranging movement including significant sections drawn to a broader transformative vision has narrowed its horizons to full citizenship and formal equality. The qualifications for full citizenship include self-restraint and acceptance of the limits of formal equality, as previously excluded groups prove themselves worthy of rights by eliminating the practices and claims that would mark them as distinctive. W.E.B DuBois wrote powerfully about the way this worked for African-Americans:

I am not fighting to settle the question of racial equality in America by getting rid of the Negro race; getting rid of black folk, not producing black children, forgetting the slave trade and slavery, and the struggle for emancipation; of forgetting abolition and especially of ignoring the whole cultural history of Africans in the world. (DuBois1973:150)

There might be some parallel with the idea that full citizenship for lesbians and gays means getting rid of the queer, dropping the outsider critique of sexual regulation grounded in the historical and contemporary experiences of the excluded, particularly those who do not fit the gender and sexual normative patterns of monogamous coupledness.

### Queers in a Lean State

Lesbians and gays won full citizenship during a period of dramatic change in social policy associated with the rise of the lean state in conditions of neo-liberalism (see Sears 1999). The terms of full citizenship have been dramatically shifted, with massive cuts to the limited entitlements associated with the broad welfare state (in areas such as social assistance, housing, health, cultural programming, education and unemployment insurance) and an intensification of the harsh regulation of the population through policing, immigration controls and the security apparatus.

The lean state aims to eliminate alternatives to the market (sale of our working capacity to earn money to purchase goods and services) to meet our needs and wants. This does not mean, however, that the state has withdrawn from the regulation of our everyday lives. Indeed, the harsh regime of policing, immigration controls and security surveillance extends ever deeper into our lives. Lean citizenship is based on the use of state power to orient the population towards the market by eliminating alternatives to the wage for survival at a social defined minimum standard and through a harsh regime of discipline.

There are quite specific reasons that lesbians and gays gained full citizenship just as the limited social rights of the welfare state were being hacked away and the security regime was being ramped up. The shift to the lean state included important elements of privatization, as the provision of a variety of goods and services was pushed onto the market, deregulation as the state backed away from the establishment and enforcement of minimum standards in such areas as health, safety, hours of work, and financial responsibility. This included elements of selective moral deregulation, as the state moved away from established practices of ethical and cultural formation of the population in specific areas.

The capitalist state got involved in moral regulation as a response to a perceived crisis in working class self-reproduction in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as increased working class activism. Galvanized in part by workers mobilizing to fight for basic rights and minimal subsistence, state policy-makers began to see the early industrial working class was seen as too unhealthy and too unproductive, with predilections for hedonism and boisterous forms of leisure and hedonism. Over time, states developed a wide variety of forms of moral regulation, from public health interventions through vocational education to rational leisure and the control of alcohol, gambling and dancing. The illegality of male homosexuality was part of this framework of moral regulation, which aimed to bolster restraint, productivity and patriotism through the enforcement of particular family structures, leisure practices, city forms and state services.

The shift to the lean state that began in the 1970s included the reduction of certain forms of moral regulation in favour of the discipline of the marketplace. This

is parallel to the rise of lean production methods in the workplace in the same time period, based on what Parker and Slaughter (1994) refer to as “management by stress”, meaning worker productivity would be shaped by the threat of job losses, minimal personnel levels to create constant overwork, and ongoing reminders of management’s capacity for relocation rather than specific management human resources strategies. The restructuring of the welfare state similarly reduced the parameters of social policy, relying on the threats of economic failure, ill-health with minimal services and legal penalties to regulate production and reproduction. Further, some of the practices associated with moral regulation in the period of the welfare state actually limited access to highly profitable market opportunities, in such areas as gambling, alcohol sales and the commodification of childhood.

Moral deregulation opened up new market opportunities and subjected working class people to dramatically intensified stress and insecurity. In many ways, the granting of specific forms of rights to lesbians and gay men fit with this pattern of moral deregulation, and thus could be considered as parallel to the deregulation of gambling that occurred in the same period. Sexual regulation is a threat to market “freedom” and ultimately a fetter on the commodification of desire and the eroticization of commodities that operates within capitalism.

Yet we cannot go too far with this argument as this partial moral deregulation went along the sharpening of coercion that predated but was intensified by the ‘war on terror’ after 2001. Christian Parenti (1999) describes this as a society-wide lockdown. Queers have been caught up in this sharp coercive turn, through the surveillance of ‘public’ space such as washrooms and parks, through the crackdown on street youth who are disproportionately queer, and through raids on back rooms and the women’s bathhouse in Toronto. Queers with low incomes, who are racialized, or who do not fit the mainstream image have been hit particularly hard by this coercive turn.

### Commodification, Citizenship and Sexuality

The forms of visibility of lesbian and gay life reflect the ways sexuality is experienced in a capitalist society in the specific moment of neo-liberalism. Lesbian and gay sexuality has become visible in new ways at a time when markets were expanding ever deeper into our daily lives. Rosemary Hennessey (2000) has done important work on the ways lesbian and gay existence is organized around processes of commodification. Indeed the most prominent spaces of open lesbian and gay life are commodified, whether that mean bars, magazines, clothing shops, stylists, restaurants or pride parades. It requires money to appear as gay or lesbian, either by displaying particular styles or tastes, being seen in particular places, or reading specific publications. Kevin Floyd (1998) points out that marxists negotiate a complex terrain here, combining a critical analysis of the commodity form with a real understanding of the ways commodification has contributed to the development of spaces of open lesbian/gay existence.

The first wave of lesbian and gay liberation produced a number of community spaces that were not commodified, whether in the form of the non-profit press (The Body Politic, Angles, the Gay Community News) or accessible lesbian and/or gay centres. Many of these have disappeared, in part as commercial viability became possible. Escoffier (1997) argues that before Stonewall, the commodification of lesbian and gay life was stifled by state repression, which meant that tended to be dominated by illegal organizations who could deal with the ongoing police harassment and related challenges. Indeed, the same rackets tended to be active in

gambling, alcohol, dancing, bars for homosexuals and other activities stymied by moral regulation.

Lesbian/gay liberation opened the door both to new politicized community spaces and to legitimate entrepreneurship for queer spaces. The politicized community spaces tended to fade as the movement depoliticized and as the commercial infrastructure expanded. A variety of queer market niches then developed, at least some of which acted as harbingers for the hip heterosexual market (see Danae Clark 1991, Mort 1996 and Sender 2004 ).

The commodification of lesbian and gay visibility goes even deeper, with the Queer Eye phenomenon. Gay men (in particular) have become market role models, particularly in opening up a new consumerist masculinity (Mort 1996). The public image of the gay man has shifted from the lecherous pervert waiting to pounce on innocent meat to the asexual super-consumer, for whom all that energy has been sublimated into clever bitchy comments and polishing up perfect, shiny living spaces. In urban centres, this model consumerism has included becoming pioneers of gentrification, along with cultural workers and other 'bohemians' (Knopp 1992:665). Gay zones often occupy working class areas that are transformed as the initial resident find themselves unable to afford their own neighborhood. Richard Florida (2004) casts this as a real contribution to the vitalization of urban spaces, arguing that the visibility level of open lesbian/gay life is an important indicator of the presence of a "creative class" that can drive a city forward into the next economy.

It is understandable to wonder, in the current circumstances, if shopping makes you gay or if being gay makes you shop. The net result of this commodification of gay visibility is the invisibility of queers without much money, who cannot enter the spaces of outness. This also contributes to the racialization of open same-sex expression, as commodification and racialization often go together in specific ways. McBride (2005) argues in "Why I hate Abercrombie and Fitch" that the images attached to that iconic clothing line men, marketed quite consciously to gay men, were imbued with specific forms of whiteness.

The impact of commodification goes deeper than even these important questions of consumerism. Marx (1977) examined the specific ways commodities are fetishized in capitalist societies. We attribute mystical powers to things that are exchanged on the market for very specific reasons. Commodities seem to have the real power in society, while the lot of humans seems to be to perform degraded labour without any real control.

The power of commodities is expressed when the price of oil skyrockets, stocks plummet or basic food staples suddenly become unaffordable to millions. These things seemed to be beyond our control, worked out between the commodities themselves outside of any human agency. The most important things that can rock our existence, make us lose our job or home, seem to be quite beyond our control.

We therefore aspire to become like commodities by entering the sphere of circulation itself. Commodities are only fetishized when they are still in the sphere of circulation. Once we buy something and take it home, it becomes a mere use value and sheds its mystical allure. The t-shirt is not transformative and does not make me look like a 20 year old, even if for a moment in the store it seemed to have magical powers.

Commodities in the sphere of circulation hint at our dreams of a better world, though they never make good on those promises. This is particularly true as we only gain access to commodities through earning a wage doing degraded labour in which

we seldom feel truly ourselves. Our bodies become the site of drudge work and pain, while the world of commodities in circulation seems enchanted by transformative powers. Our real bodies are thus degraded by their association with mindless, painful labour in which we cannot recognize our own work (see McNally 2000).

Thus, sexual liberalization under capitalism has largely had the impact of increasing the free circulation of sexual imagery, rather than our real control over our bodies and our lives. There is still a tremendous silence around actual sexual practices, which is confined behind closed doors where even partners often find difficulties in discussing what they want to do or not to do. In the specific realm of sexuality, it is commodified sexual imagery in the sphere of circulation that seems to have the real power, while actual sex is the complex activities of real people with their different desires and their flawed bodies (at least relative to the highly processed sexual images that circulate). Indeed, our actual bodies are associated with shame, as Probyn (2000) discusses in a rather different theoretical frame.

It is common to think that sexualization in a capitalist society is rooted in the straightforward idea that sex sells. Yet Sender (2004:201) asks, "If sex sells why must gay sex be so contained?" Part of the stigmatization of same sex practices might be that they were bluntly sexual as there was no accepted script for turning them into circulating, the way for example weddings are send heterosexual relationships into the sphere of circulation for brief moment that serves to ensure that they are not 'just sex'. The circulation of lesbian and gay images that has been opened up by access to full citizenship may have shut down the dangerous associations of same sex practices with real bodies doing real things.

#### Membership has its privileges

The accomplishment of full citizenship for lesbians and gays is contributing to a rapid political realignment, in which some capitalist states are claiming to represent lesbian and gay citizens, who in turn are identifying themselves in new ways with the state and dominant social relations. This realignment is occurring at a time of intensified imperialism, racialized domestic crackdowns in the name of 'national security' and a sharp decline in the rights of immigrants and refugees.

Lesbian and gay rights have moved quite rapidly from pariah status to a marker of 'civilization' in the so called 'war on terror'. This is in sharp contrast with Cold War, when homosexuals were persecuted as potential security threats and cast as subversive to a gender normative national security regime (see Kinsman and Gentile 1998). In Canada, for example, the state security apparatus sought to identify homosexuals and drive them out of jobs on the pretext that they were vulnerable to blackmail and could not be trusted.

The changes are remarkable. The Canadian military had a contingent in Toronto's Pride Day 2008 and used it as a recruiting ground. States are using lesbian and gay rights as part of an imperialist ideology that centres around civilizational claims understood in terms of legal-rational secular humanism rather than Christian uplift. Jasbir Puar (2007:20-21) argues that same-sex marriage is being used as "yet another marker in the distance between barbarism and civilization, one that justifies further targetting of a perversely racialized and sexualized Muslim population." Thus lesbian/gay rights become part of the human rights imperialism in which war is justified in the name of oppressed populations target states (see Mooers, etc.). They are used to justify anti-immigrant measures, such as the threat to use a "Dutch values" test by showing pictures of gay men kissing to potential newcomers in the Netherlands (reference).

Similarly, pro-Israeli campaigns have used claims about lesbian/gay rights as part of a liberal-democratic construction to justify the displacement and brutalization of Palestinians. Blair Kuntz (2006) describes programs to tour lesbian/gay community spokespeople to Israel and campaigns to denounce pro-Palestinian speakers as anti-gay. "The presence of such a concerted campaign by many people not normally motivated to speak out on behalf of gay rights is clearly designed to portray Israel as humane and tolerant, while demonstrating that their Arab, specifically their Palestinian, neighbors are not."

This resonates with the predominance of whiteness in the lesbian/gay project in the imperialist heartlands. I am using the term 'lesbian/gay project' to capture the social and political project of gaining visibility, fighting for equality rights and mobilizing for sexual freedom that has largely defined the lesbian/gay movements and communities that have formed since Stonewall in 1969. Many queer people of colour find themselves marginalized by this lesbian/gay project which is framed around the experiences of a specific group (mainly white gay men from particular class positions) who mistake themselves for all who engage in same sex practices. The whiteness of the lesbian and gay project is not simply a historical accident that will be overcome as more people of colour come out and are encouraged to step into positions of leadership. Rather, the association of lesbian and gay with whiteness is deeply grounded in the character of lesbian and gay sexual and political identities, and in the specific circumstances which gave rise to these identities.

The lesbian and gay project arose originally in the US and then spread quickly to many places in the global north. Insofar as it spread to the global south, it was associated primarily with members of the elite. Within the global north, it has been identified disproportionately with men who are white and better off. The political frame of the project reflects this specific history. As Peter Drucker (2000:1) wrote, "By time people in the 'First World' started noticing the Third World, some of their basic political and scholarly assumptions were well established. These assumptions were based largely on the middle-class experience in advanced capitalist countries.

This is not to forget the important role that working-class queers have played in the movement, from the early street-fighting in the Stonewall riots to the negotiations of non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and same-sex benefits through collective agreements. Nor is it to ignore the important role of lesbians in moving the movement towards a broader emancipatory political agenda, in such areas as parental rights, paid benefits and more complex understandings of sexual freedom. But, as stated above, the lesbian/gay project is increasingly defined and expressed through the words and actions of business owners and professionals. Further, even when we include the full reach of the project, noting the role of working class queers and lesbians, we are still dealing primarily with white folks.

Insofar as queer people of colour have formed communities and mobilized politically, it has not tended to be under the lesbian and gay banner. There are specific reasons for the whiteness of the lesbian/gay project. First, open lesbian and gay identities are seen as transcending other forms of same sex practice, casting them as precursors and lesser expressions. Marlon Ross (2005:161) argues that there is an "evolutionary logic" to conceptions of lesbian/gay identity rooted in coming out, rooted in a "powerful narrative of progress." In this narrative, the closet door marks, "the threshold between up-to-date fashions of sexuality and all the outmoded, anachronistic others."

Thus, Joseph Massad (2007) writes about the way lesbian/gay perspectives have missed the complexity of forms of same sex practice in the Arab World. This is

true more broadly, including the ways that the practices of African-American men have been understood as 'pre-gay' (e.g. not yet ready or able to come out) rather than as other forms of sexual practice with their own integrity.

Secondly, lesbian and gay identities have been grounded in an individualistic conception of freedom that is grounded in the idea of the unencumbered individual making choices (e.g. to come out publicly as gay). This has been particularly true of gay men, where the standard of sexual freedom is grounded in the agency of the individual in the sexual realm. However, if we expand this individualistic conception of choice to include contracted unions (couples) that might or might not also raise children, then it would also include many lesbians. It would not include those who are encumbered by ties to community or extended family (see Ahmed 2005:151-2). People of colour, who are often grounded in extensive communities as a result both of cultural histories and experiences of exclusion and oppression, are less likely to fit the model of 'free' lesbian or gay.

The post-Stonewall lesbian/gay project (even in the expanded language of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and queer (lgbtq)) might best be understood as a necessary but partial step to sexual liberation. It has framed important and militant emancipation struggles that have won significant victories. But, the lesbian/gay project has often ignored this partiality, implicitly or explicitly taking on universalistic claims in which lesbian and gay is seen as transcending other same-sex or gender non-conforming practices. The next challenge, having accomplished full citizenship, is to recognize this partiality and develop new strategies and alliances to overcome it.

### Hot Freedom

The accomplishment of full citizenship has, in essence, left lesbians and gays married to the state. The struggle for full rights has been crucial, challenging legal discrimination and the heterosexual monopoly on public space. It is important now to celebrate these victories, but also to recognize the way they relocate the lesbian and gay project within capitalist social relations.

To move beyond these limited gains, we need to look towards a project of genuine sex and gender liberation in which everyone has the power and the resources to control their bodies and their lives. This requires a broader social transformation, that challenges the boundaries of citizenship, the dominant gender relations and the gendered division of labour, the persistence of racialization, and the impact of commodification and exploitation in the workplace. A queer feminist anti-racist marxism can make an important contribution to that struggle, specifically clarifying the nature of the state, processes of commodification and relationship of sexuality to the social reproduction of class relations, providing that it is genuinely in dialogue with the indigenous theories of emancipation that emerge from within liberation struggles and is grounded in an expansive understanding of social reproduction that captures the ways in which class is gendered, sexualized and racialized.

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