

The Origins and Development of the National Transgender Rights Movement in the United States of America

Abstract

This article examines the emergence of a national transgender rights movement in the United States in the latter half of the twentieth and first decade of the twenty-first century. Drawing on newly available materials from the Trans Equality Archive at the National Center for Transgender Equality in Washington, DC, this study shows that the transgender movement has been neither wholly independent of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) movement, nor simply a subdivision of it. Through a process of hybridization, the transgender movement became simultaneously its own independent movement and a constituent of the LGBT movement. In building this argument, this article tells an untold story about the history of the movement. First, I narrate the emergence of a shared transgender collective identity separate from LGB identity. Second, I describe the burgeoning of a transgender movement and detail its continued distinction from the LGB movement. Third, I explain how the transgender movement pushed to turn the “LGB” movement into the “LGBT” movement, while still maintaining its independence. The article sheds light on the complex dynamics of contention among national advocacy organizations that gave shape to the contemporary transgender rights movement. It also contributes to the scholarship by tracing the distinctive evolution of the national transgender movement, which has operated alongside grassroots trans movements.

Introduction

In the summer of 2019, as the world prepared to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion credited with launching the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) movement, debates about who “threw the first brick” reached a boiling point. It had become popular to credit Marsha P. Johnson and/or Sylvia Rivera—a Black trans woman and a Latina trans woman, respectively—with sparking the rebellion by throwing a brick at the police officers raiding the Stonewall Inn. (Or maybe it was a handbag, or a shot glass, or a Molotov cocktail; it depends on the storyteller.) In a 2018 episode of the Comedy Central program *Drunk History*, for example, Crissle West described a

scene in which Johnson and Rivera stood up to two police officers, with Johnson throwing a shot glass at a mirror, thereby launching a riot. When *Stonewall*, Roland Emmerich's 2015 flop, credited a fictional white gay boy from the cornfields of Indiana with throwing the first brick, there was a flurry of outrage and the press criticized how the film "whitewashed" the true history.¹ LGBT activists rallied against the film, even earning recognition as "the *Stonewall* Rioters" as finalists for *The Advocate's* 2015 Person of the Year.

The problem is, the myth of Stonewall is just that—a myth.² It was not the first riot (that honor likely goes to the 1959 Cooper Do-nuts riot in Los Angeles), it didn't launch the LGBT rights movement (organizations like the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society were founded in the 1950s), and, perhaps most upsettingly, no bricks were thrown.³ Johnson did not arrive until 2AM on the night of the riots and thus could not have sparked them, and Rivera wasn't there at all.⁴ The rewriting of the Stonewall myth to center Johnson and Rivera reflects contemporary struggles over transgender inclusion. It is about including trans people (and, in particular, trans people of color) because they have been systematically excluded and centering them because they've been relegated to the periphery.⁵ It is an act meant to say that trans people are vital to the LGBT community and should be valued within it. What this understandable symbolic rewriting does, however, is mask the history of struggle between gay men and lesbians and trans people, and the divisions between their movements. It obscures the decades of work that went into converting the "LG movement" into the "LGBT movement." And it erases the work of the independent transgender movement that took form after Stonewall, developed its own cultures, institutions, and practices, and persists today.

This article presents a different history of the US transgender movement—one that abandons the mythic pretenses of Stonewall and calls attention to the decades of separation and conflict between the LGB and the T portions of the acronym. As I argue, the transgender movement is neither wholly independent of the LGBT movement, nor simply a subdivision of it. The transgender movement is simultaneously its own independent movement and a constituent of the LGBT movement, and the establishment of this status quo required a process of hybridization. Drawing on newly available materials from the Trans Equality Archive at the National Center for Transgender Equality in Washington, DC, this article aims to answer the question, how did the national transgender rights movement in the United States come into being?⁶ In doing so, the article narrates the process of hybridization that established the contemporary status quo and tells an untold story about the history of the movement.

My work draws broadly on the political process theory of social movements and, more specifically, the influential work of social historian and social movement theorist Charles Tilly.⁷ In Tilly's words:

A social movement is a sustained series of interactions between national power-holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly-visible demands for changes in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support.⁸

Worth noting here are Tilly's emphases on national, rather than local, power-holders and on movements seeking inclusion in the political processes of state. From this theoretical perspective, the US transgender rights movement consists of those organizations that interface with federal powerholders to demand social, political, and economic change while successfully claiming to speak on behalf of transgender citizens across the country. Similarly, the LGB(T) movement consists of those organizations that interface with federal powerholders to demand change while successfully claiming to speak on behalf of LGB(T) citizens.

In maintaining a focus on the emergence of a national transgender rights movement in the United States, this article builds upon, yet stands apart from, other histories of transgender activism coming out of transgender studies, critical theory, and cultural studies that have conceived of "social movements" in more colloquial terms, describing the work of decentralized activists engaging in collective (often more militant) action at local levels.⁹ These studies typically trace the origins of the transgender movement to transgender street activism of the 1970s in places like New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco and to the emergence of local and grassroots organizations in the late 1990s and early 2000s that claimed to originate in that tradition, while being highly critical of the "nonprofit industrial complex" in which formal social movement organizations (like those centered in the political process perspective) participate.¹⁰ My argument sets aside these concerns not in tacit rejection of the anti-statist and anti-liberal strain of thought that runs through this work, but because the more formal movement organizations that focused their activism on the state and other institutions of social, cultural, political, and economic power have had significant, under-examined influence on the contours of transgender history. As such, this article aims to round out scholarly understandings of the history of the transgender movement field by tracing the distinctive evolution of the national movement during the past half century, which has operated alongside the wider grassroots trans movement typically centered in the literature.

The article unfolds as follows. I first demonstrate that, counter to conventional wisdom, the transgender movement did not originate within or concurrently with the LGB movement, but rather emerged separately and over a longer period. From there I proceed to narrate the emergence of a shared transgender collective identity separate from LGB identity and the consequent coherence of a transgender proto-movement. Then I describe the burgeoning of a robust transgender movement and detail its continued distinction from (and opposition to) the LGB movement. Finally, I analyze the so-called "ENDA crisis" and explain how the transgender movement pushed to turn the "LGB" movement into the "LGBT" movement while still maintaining its independence and autonomy.

Prehistory: Origins of the Gay and Lesbian/Transgender Schism

The schism between gay men and lesbians and transgender people is partially attributable to the fact that the transgender community emerged from the intertwining of three separate threads of identity: (1) gay "street queens," drag queens, and other gender-variant figures, who were pushed out of the LG community in the era of (post-)Stonewall politics; (2) heterosexual transvestites, who viewed themselves as distinct from homosexual "deviants"; and (3)

transsexuals, who formed loose communities around medical providers while largely trying to blend undetected into heterosexual society.¹¹ Importantly, the latter two categories mostly consisted of middle- and upper-class white people aspiring to “respectability,” while the first group included more working-class people and people of color considered beyond the scope of respectability.

Transsexuality emerged as a mode of identification distinct from transvestism even before it had a name. By the 1930s, the popular press was publishing accounts of medical innovations in sexual transformation, largely pioneered by German physician Magnus Hirschfeld at the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* in Berlin. These reports provided exemplars to would-be transsexuals throughout Europe and North America. These medical marvels were discussed in popular magazines and sexological journals and the doctors whose work was covered were inundated with letters begging for (often experimental) treatment. Letter writers emphasized the necessity of transition and their difference from mere cross-dressers and fetishistic transvestites, whose deviance they did not share.¹² In the 1940s, fueled by the possibility of medical transition, would-be transsexuals increased pressures for medical access, and those who received it pushed for legal recognition of their genders. Communities formed around the few places such medical treatment could be accessed, but otherwise people seeking treatment did so in isolation.¹³ The label “transsexual” finally emerged as a category of self-identification in the late 1940s, popularized by German-American endocrinologist Harry Benjamin.

Concurrent with these developments, gay men and lesbians began to associate more freely in urban environments, developing their own collective identity. With post-war demobilization and transformations in the labor market, veterans and civilians alike moved into major cities, where they socialized in gay bars, launched gay media outlets, and developed shared gay consciousness.¹⁴ In Los Angeles, the gay male Mattachine Society was founded in 1950, while in 1955 the lesbian Daughters of Bilitis formed in San Francisco. From there the homophile movement expanded, laying the groundwork for the LG movement to come. Yet while people we would today consider transgender participated in these urban communities, they were excluded from the movement. Though homophile organizations were not explicitly opposed to transgender people, they viewed transgender concerns as “parallel rather than intersecting, at least partially due to the central role gender normativity played in the homophile movement’s public politics of respectability.”¹⁵

Amid the increasing visibility of both transsexuality and homosexuality in the middle of the twentieth century, transvestites found themselves increasingly lumped in with one group or the other by the mainstream. But transvestites were distinct from transsexuals because they did not want access to transition-related medical treatment and from homosexuals because they largely identified as heterosexual. According to Hill, they wanted to let “the ‘girl-within’ . . . find expression, but only periodically and in moderation.”¹⁶ Indeed, male transvestites often strove to convince their families and therapists they were neither transsexuals nor closeted gay men. For several decades, transvestites would organize separately and exclusively via specialized publications, like *Transvestia*; sorority-style chapter organizations, like the Society for the Second Self (Tri-Ess); and regional conferences like Fantasia Fair, Be All You Can Be, and Southern Comfort.¹⁷

The gay liberation movement, for its part, did not want much to do with trans people either. After Stonewall, a national movement launched in the form of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), a broad-based coalition of gay men, lesbians, street queens, and other sexual radicals. The GLF expanded across the country quickly, but within six months fissures began to show. On one side were those who felt GLF was dominated by white, middle-class gay men, while women, street queens, people of color, and working-class people were pushed aside.¹⁸ On another were those who felt GLF was too antiestablishment in its politics.¹⁹ This latter group formed the Gay Activist Alliance (GAA), which quickly came to dominate the movement and convert it to the cause of “gay rights.” Whereas trans people had made a place for themselves in GLF under the auspices of a “drag queen caucus,” they were explicitly excluded from and by GAA.²⁰

As it became clear that trans people would be excluded from the first Christopher Street Liberation Day march and the blossoming gay liberation movement more generally, separate trans organizations began to emerge in 1970, including Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), the Queens Liberation Front, Transsexual Activism Organization, and Radical Queens. From then on, the tenor changed and the rift between gay men and lesbians and trans people was no longer about trans exclusion from the movement, but about outright anti-transness. At the 1973 pride rally in Washington Square Park, for instance, Jean O’Leary of GAA took the stage to ridicule Rivera and denounce drag queens as offenses to womanhood.²¹ Lesbian Feminist Liberation, an organization founded by O’Leary, handed out flyers denouncing “female impersonators” and imploring attendees to “keep queens off the stage.”²² Rivera fought her way onto the stage amid boos from the crowd to admonish attendees for the movement’s treatment of trans people. Following the incident, Rivera disbanded STAR and left the movement for the next 20 years.

Much of the post-Stonewall drive to exclude trans people centered on panics about trans womanhood (the echoes of which are heard in contemporary discourse). Two key incidents of trans-exclusion in the 1970s focused on Beth Elliott, a trans lesbian folk singer, who was vice president of the San Francisco Daughters of Bilitis (DoB) and a writer for the newsmagazine *The Lesbian Tide*. In 1972, Elliott was forced out of her position with DoB—and out of the organization altogether—after a group of “[n]ew, young members, politicized through adherence to an emerging separatist politics,” demanded her removal on the grounds that transsexual women are not women and cannot be lesbians.²³ *The Lesbian Tide*, encouraged by those in DoB who supported Elliott, printed a statement affirming the womanhood of transsexual women and advocating for trans-inclusion in lesbian organizations, but the tides of the lesbian movement had already shifted.²⁴ The second incident involving Elliott occurred the next year at the West Coast Lesbian Conference. Elliott was scheduled to perform, but two women stormed the stage, grabbed the microphone, and screamed into it that Elliott should not be allowed to perform because she was a transsexual and, therefore, a rapist. That night, Robin Morgan, author of *Sisterhood is Powerful*, rewrote her keynote speech, which was meant to be on the conference theme of unity, to instead denounce lesbians who would work with “men” and decrying transsexuals. As Enke recounts, “Morgan attacked Beth Elliott as ‘a male transvestite, an opportunist, an infiltrator, and a destroyer with the mentality of a rapist.’”²⁵

These ideas about trans women gained wider circulation through the work of Janice Raymond. Raymond rose to fame off her 1979 book *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male*, a vitriolic screed that reproduced Morgan's claim that trans women perpetrated "rape" by transitioning and entering women's spaces. The primary figure of her outrage was Sandy Stone, a trans woman sound engineer who, having worked with music legends like Jimi Hendrix, left the mainstream music industry to work for the independent lesbian record label Olivia Records in 1974. In 1976, Raymond circulated a draft chapter of her book among the Olivia Records collective, accusing Stone of working toward the destruction of Olivia in specific and womanhood in general with her "male energy." While Olivia Records stood by Stone, whom they had known from the outset was transgender, Stone chose to leave the label in 1979 to avoid the mounting political tensions sparked by Raymond and her book.²⁶

Transgender men, for their part, found themselves in a similar position of exclusion from LG spaces, but also faced secondary exclusion from transgender spaces, which centered on transgender women or male transvestites.²⁷ Working to redress this invisibility and exclusion, Lou Sullivan, a prominent advocate for transgender medical care access, founded FTM (now FTM International) in San Francisco in 1986. The organization spread nationally and helped form an organized trans male community by the early 1990s.²⁸

By the start of the 1990s, then, fragments of transgender collectivity had emerged, and they were considerably distant from the LG community. But these collectives had thus far failed to organize a coherent movement. Consequently, those who envisioned social and political change for transgender people saw inclusion in LG activism as the most likely path to success.²⁹ They fought, for instance, for inclusion in the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation, lobbying to include "transgender" in the name of the march.³⁰ When the final votes came and it was announced that "transgender" would not be included, cheers went up from those present at the organizing meeting.³¹ The vote made it clear to trans people that inclusion in LG activism was not a dependable path to equality and thereby accelerated the emergence of transgender advocacy.

From Transsexual Menace to Transgender Rights

The three threads of trans identity I defined began to intertwine in the 1980s. By the early 1990s, this process was more-or-less complete, and all three were increasingly referred to with the single label we use today: "transgender." By all accounts, the term "transgender" was popularized by activist Holly Boswell in a 1991 article in *Chrysalis Quarterly*, a community periodical published by the American Educational Gender Informational Service (AEGIS). The article, titled "The Transgender Alternative," suggested "transgender" as an umbrella term for people who identified as *transsexual* or *transvestite*, or anywhere in between—a term that "encompasses the entire spectrum."³² "Transgender" meant "identifying oneself across gender lines," so each group could identify with it and, therefore, with one another.³³ The term was then given wider circulation and an explicit political valence by Leslie Feinberg, whose pivotal 1992 pamphlet, *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come*, called for a "transgender" movement that would tackle the

intersecting oppressions experienced by those with non-normative relationships to gender. As Stryker notes, this “marked both a political and generational distinction between older transvestite/transsexual/drag terminologies” and newer conceptualizations of a single “transgender” community.³⁴

A key driver of this intertwining and the political organizing that followed it was the transvestite conference circuit. The oldest ongoing conference was Fantasia Fair, which first met in 1975 in Provincetown, Massachusetts as a week-long retreat for heterosexual male transvestites. Over the 1970s and 1980s, such conferences proliferated across the country, and by the 1990s “there was another medium or big regional conference almost every month, year-round, each with its own distinct regional flavor.”³⁵ They also had broadened their audience from only male transvestites to include transsexual women and the occasional trans man.³⁶ Surgeons became more common panel presenters and event sponsors, and panels increasingly focused on workplace difficulties and other similar issues. The International Foundation for Gender Education (IFGE) was launched in 1987 in Boston, holding its first annual conference and launching the magazine *Transgender Tapestry*, which became a central forum for transgender thought and commentary. And in 1990, Dallas Denny founded AEGIS in Atlanta, Georgia, which, in 1991, launched *Chrysalis Quarterly* and kicked off the first Southern Comfort conference. Southern Comfort quickly became a fixture of the transgender social calendar and an important national conference that scaled up the kinds of local meetings held across the country during the preceding decades, while explicitly courting a “transgender” audience.³⁷

However, as Wilchins recounts, these conferences were *social* events and were deliberately apolitical. Trying to capitalize on these tightening national networks, but orienting them toward political struggle, Texas attorney Phyllis Frye (who went on to become the first openly transgender judge in the country) organized the first conference on transgender politics, the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy (ICTLEP), in 1991. In particular, Frye founded ICTLEP to provide an avenue for transgender activists to develop political change strategies because LGB law groups were closed to trans people and failed to address transgender legal concerns.³⁸ Conference participants developed new legal theories, drafted the International Bill of Gender Rights, and, according to political scientist Paisley Currah, “cement[ed] the networks that were going to be necessary to put the movement in place.”³⁹ The conference also published proceedings that birthed a flurry of transgender legal activism, which further connected activists at a national level.

After the 1994 ICTLEP, Frye and fellow activist Karen Kerin travelled to Washington, DC, where they attempted (unsuccessfully) to speak before the Senate Hearings on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), from which the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and its coalition partners had omitted transgender people. It became increasingly obvious to Frye and the activists organized through ICTLEP that the work advanced at the conference needed to be put into practice in Washington. From October 1994 to March 1995 Sharon Stuart worked to “pick up the momentum that ICTLEP had generated” and launch an organization called the Transgender Education and Advocacy Coalition (TEAC), ultimately convening Frye, Kerin, Riki Wilchins, Jessica Xavier, and Jane Fee, who had just lobbied Minnesota politicians to enact the first statewide, transgender-inclusive nondiscrimination law.⁴⁰ Though the plans

for TEAC never came to fruition, a number of other groups were created in the early 1990s. In San Francisco, Anne Ogborn and Susan Stryker launched the short-lived Transgender Nation in 1992.⁴¹ The group came to prominence in 1993, when it protested the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, demanding the depathologization of transgender identity. In New York in 1994, Wilchins launched *Transexual Menace*, inspired by Transgender Nation, to protest transgender exclusion from the 25th anniversary commemoration of Stonewall.⁴² By the fall of 1995, over 40 cities had founded Menace chapters and the Menace had launched its own newsletter, *InYourFace! Political Activism Against Gender Oppression*, which was distributed as an insert to other publications, such as *Transgender Tapestry* and *Chrysalis Quarterly*, and became a clearinghouse for transgender political news.⁴³

The 1990s also saw the emergence of trans male activism across the country. Of particular significance was the expansion of FTM, which Lou Sullivan had founded in 1986. After Sullivan's death in 1991, Jamison Green took over leadership of the organization. By 1994, Green had grown FTM to a global organization and, accordingly, changed the name to FTM International. At a local level, trans male organizations were founded in major cities across the country, such as FTM Alliance (now Gender Justice LA), founded by Masen Davis in Los Angeles in the late 1990s.⁴⁴ As Califia argues, the emergence of a strong trans male activist community combined with the burgeoning of trans women-led political organizations around the mid-1990s to "produce a change in the tone of transgender activism and its agenda," reorienting activism away from inclusion in the LGB movement and toward directly affecting the political system.⁴⁵

At the same time as these in-person collectives began nationalizing the work of transgender activism, the internet began to diffuse more widely in the United States. Activists who had relied on fax to share resources with colleagues in other states began shifting their correspondence online, which made communication more immediate and constant.⁴⁶ Though activists continued to meet at conferences, the time in between filled with political discussion and organizing, as well. In 1994, Frye's email newsletter, "The Phyllabuster" cultivated a larger network of would-be activists than could meet at conferences and updated them on the political progress being made in the far reaches of the country.⁴⁷ That summer, Gwendolyn Smith, a San Francisco-based journalist, founded an America Online (AOL) chatroom for trans people called The Gazebo, which quickly grew to have tens of thousands of unique monthly visitors. The Gazebo was a safe space in which trans people across the country—most of whom were not yet "out of the closet"—could express their identities, connect with other trans people, and become politicized actors. Indeed, many people who became stalwart figures of the transgender movement were first educated in transgender politics in The Gazebo or one of the other transgender chatrooms of the early internet, including Mara Keisling, founder of the National Center for Transgender Equality.⁴⁸ This digital networking further contributed to the independence of the transgender movement because it enabled organizing outside the confines of the LGB movement. Led by trans people from outside the "gay world," the nationalization of the movement was the result of the networking of individuals who were based in local political contexts. The LGB movement, in

contrast, was nationalized through centralized activist organizations like GLAAD and HRC working in New York, DC, and Los Angeles.

These two national movements—the networked proto-movement of transgender activists across the country and the institutionalized LGB movement based in major coastal cities—were in constant conflict. At the local level, LGB organizations pursued statewide nondiscrimination protections that deliberately excluded transgender people, with only one state—Minnesota—including protections for gender identity and expression. At the national level, LGB organizations fought to exclude transgender people from the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), even though a transgender-inclusive version of the bill had been prepared and was ready for Vermont Senator Jim Jeffords to introduce. When a number of national transgender leaders met in Houston for the 1995 ICTLEP, they learned that HRC “pushed their non-transgender-inclusive version of ENDA through for introduction in Congress,” and it became clear once more that the LGB movement was not an ally.⁴⁹ Online organizing kicked into high gear and increasing numbers of previously apolitical trans people joined the digital movement, denouncing HRC and mobilizing supportive local LGB communities to oppose the national LGB organizations. By September, HRC called a meeting with transgender activists, including Frye, Kerin, Stuart, Wilchins, and Xavier, which resulted in an agreement for Xavier and Stuart to work with Chai Feldblum, the author of HRC’s version of ENDA, to draft an amendment to the bill that would add protections for gender identity.⁵⁰ HRC pledged not to oppose the amendment if it were introduced, but stopped short of agreeing to “work for, support, or even recommend” its introduction.⁵¹ That burden fell to trans people, so the next month over 100 trans people and allies from 35 states convened for a two-day lobbying event in DC to push for the amendment’s introduction.⁵² Unfortunately, though, without the support of a national organization, their efforts failed to persuade any legislators to propose the amendment. That November, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (now the National LGBTQ Task Force) presented Frye with an award for her work for a trans-inclusive ENDA, but the gesture was empty. Not until 1999 did the Task Force finally decide to oppose a trans-exclusive ENDA and to refuse to work toward the passage of any bill that wasn’t trans-inclusive—two years after the National Organization for Women had adopted a resolution proclaiming unqualified support for transgender rights.⁵³

By this point, the need for an institutionalized national transgender movement—beyond the local activism happening around the country and the networked activism afforded by the internet—was clear.⁵⁴ Leading transgender activists, many of whom had been involved in ICTLEP (though, notably, not including Frye), and leaders of major transgender organizations like AEGIS, FTM International, and Tri-Ess gathered in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania in November 1996.⁵⁵ The gathered activists agreed to establish an organization called the Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) “to educate society on transgender issues and to advance a legislative agenda in Congress.”⁵⁶ The founding board, impressed by Wilchins’s work leading *Transsexual Menace* and by an impassioned speech she had given at the previous year’s Be-All conference on the need for national political change, appointed her its executive director.⁵⁷

GenderPAC launched its mission by taking over the job of organizing national lobby days, which Frye, Kerin, and Wilchins had been leading

themselves. In May 1997, about 60 activists convened in DC to once more lobby for transgender-inclusive legislation—most crucially ENDA, which Congress, with the support of HRC, was still considering without transgender protections.⁵⁸ As a new organization without recognition on Capitol Hill and without the leadership of Frye, GenderPAC was dependent upon HRC for access to congressional offices and training on how to lobby. HRC convinced GenderPAC to lobby for including transgender protections in the Hate Crimes Statistics Act rather than focus on ENDA.⁵⁹ Over the next few years, GenderPAC continued lobbying alongside other transgender organizations and activists for trans-inclusion in the Hate Crimes Statistics Act and ENDA but failed to make progress. Then, at the end of 1999, GenderPAC shifted focus entirely, advancing a mission of “gender rights.”⁶⁰ This new perspective decentered transgender people in favor of a dedication to freeing all people from the pressure to conform to gender stereotypes—from the football jock who is reprimanded for crying after a loss to the butch lesbian who is told to dress more femininely at work.⁶¹ The recently placed cornerstone of the national transgender movement, organized around a new collective transgender identity, was no longer dedicated to transgender rights, and the movement needed to regroup.

Making the Modern Movement

Though GenderPAC wouldn’t formally dissolve until 2009, it imploded in 2001. Tensions had been mounting as trans community leaders critiqued GenderPAC both for its failure to combat HRC’s endorsement of a trans-exclusive ENDA and for its perceived abandonment of the transgender community it was meant to represent.⁶² The major focus of this latter criticism was GenderPAC’s insistence on universalizing the struggle for “gender rights” and, in doing so, making transgender rights no longer about transgender people. Fights over this new direction advanced by Wilchins raged among the board of directors, which included leaders of several transgender social groups, community leaders, and accomplished advocates.⁶³ Seeing the lack of support for her new vision, Wilchins reincorporated the organization as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (rather than as a political action committee) and pushed the few remaining community leaders on the board—including Donna Cartwright and Liz Seaton—to resign.⁶⁴ Wilchins then replaced most of them, as well as the managing director, with cisgender members.⁶⁵

The fallout continued as the Spring 2001 issue of *Transgender Tapestry* published several editorials—including from former board members Denny and Cartwright—denouncing GenderPAC and enumerating the behind-the-scenes machinations of the board.⁶⁶ Attempting neutrality in its portrayal of the crisis, *Tapestry* published an interview with GenderPAC’s new managing director, Gina Reiss, but her answers only confirmed the criticisms levied by former board members:

[A]s a lesbian who’s always being challenged because of how she looks, acts and dresses, gender has always been my issue. And none of [the existing transgender advocacy] groups felt like they were addressing it adequately. . . . GenderPAC’s post-identity approach suited me well.⁶⁷

The issue crushed whatever standing GenderPAC had retained among the community and, as Park noted, without the support of the community the organization had no grounds on which to advocate for trans people. Since leaders from other transgender organizations had been purged from the board, GenderPAC lacked the support of the movement it was meant to lead, effectively casting it out altogether.

The collapse of GenderPAC left both a power vacuum and a bevy of advocacy needs for the community. This led to a flourishing of transgender organizations across the country, including the Transgender Law and Policy Institute (TLPI), founded in New York City in 2001 by Kylar Broadus, Paisley Currah, Jennifer Levi, Shannon Minter, and Liz Seaton as a clearinghouse for transgender political information; the Sylvia Rivera Law Project (SRLP), founded in New York City in 2002 by transgender attorney Dean Spade as a direct legal services organization for low-income trans people and trans people of color; the Transgender Law Center (TLC), founded in San Francisco, California in 2002 by Dylan Vade and Chris Daley as a state-wide direct legal services and public policy advocacy organization; the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF), founded in New York City in 2003 by Michael Silverman as a litigation and legal advocacy organization; and the National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), founded in Washington, DC in 2003 by Mara Keisling as a public policy and political advocacy organization for the transgender rights movement.⁶⁸ The activists who founded these organizations—many of whom had left GenderPAC or been disappointed in GenderPAC's failure to represent their needs—joined with other activists across the country in the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition (NTAC), which had been founded in 1999 as a loose network of mostly local transgender organizations who shared information and coordinated strategies.⁶⁹ Beyond NTAC, the founders of these organizations formed friend-based coalitions, speaking often to strategize and navigate the uncertain early years of the burgeoning movement.⁷⁰

Of these new organizations, NCTE emerged early on—already by 2005—as leader of the modern transgender movement.⁷¹ NCTE became, to borrow Nownes' phrasing, "the dean of transgender rights organizations."⁷² In large part this had to do with founder Mara Keisling's professional competencies, her connections to other leading activists, and her efforts to cultivate a national network of support. One major supporter was Frye, who ordained Keisling as successor to her legacy of political leadership—an honor she had withheld from Wilchins.⁷³ Keisling also had the support of several other trans political leaders, including former GenderPAC board members like Cartwright, and was well connected to the small network of DC insiders working on transgender policy. Keisling had made her name within transgender political advocacy at a local level, running the Statewide Pennsylvania Rights Coalition (SPARC), which pushed for trans-inclusion in the state hate crimes bill, among other legislative lobbying activities.⁷⁴ She then travelled to various conferences, sharing her experiences and meeting with other activists to deepen networks of support.

At one conference in 2001, *Creating Change*, several transgender advocates including Keisling, Cartwright, Currah, and Minter gathered for a day-long institute. There Keisling was introduced by Cartwright to Lisa Mottet, a cisgender lesbian working at the Task Force.⁷⁵ Mottet had started working at the Task Force in 2001, where she established the organization's Transgender Civil

Rights Project. Her work consisted primarily of drafting a trans-inclusive alternative to ENDA and advocating for trans-inclusion in the federal Hate Crimes bill, and she was the first lawyer in DC whose full-time job was working on transgender rights.⁷⁶ Mottet, like Cartwright, was impressed by Keisling and the two convinced her to move to DC and found NCTE.⁷⁷ From there Keisling worked to earn buy-in from prominent advocates to serve as board members and supporters, including: Cartwright, who served as the first board chair; Diego Sanchez, a trans man and prominent figure in the Massachusetts Democratic Party, who would go on to serve as Senior Policy Advisor to Congressman Barney Frank; Andy Marra, an Asian-American trans woman from New York, who would go on to serve as executive director of TLDEF; Amanda Simpson, a corporate leader at the major defense contractor Raytheon, who went on to become the first transgender political appointee when President Obama appointed her to the Department of Defense; and Masen Davis, who ran FTM Alliance in Los Angeles and went on to become executive director of TLC and then CEO of the LGBT advocacy organization Freedom for All Americans; among others.

Within a few years of NCTE's existence, it had become widely recognized as the leading national organization. GenderPAC continued to exist in name but was quickly displaced in the eyes of both policymakers and LGB organizations as the authority on transgender issues, causing significant resentment among its members. After some discussion, Wilchins and Keisling reached an uneasy detente, agreeing at least not to undermine one another's efforts.⁷⁸ This ultimately served NCTE's interests by clearing any real opposition to its leadership, but it did nothing to staunch GenderPAC's hemorrhaging reputation. NCTE's emergence also elicited hostility from NTAC, which quickly saw its standing as the national hub for advocacy across the country slip away.⁷⁹ In part this was because NTAC was, according to Sanchez, "conceptually giant, deliverably tiny."⁸⁰ That is, as a network of activists scattered across the country organized primarily by phone and email communication, NTAC lacked the unified vision, material infrastructure, and sheer physical proximity to decision makers required for national political work. Thus, once NCTE was operating in DC and it became clear it could be more effective than NTAC, most of NTAC's supporters shifted their efforts to advancing NCTE.⁸¹ With Frye retired from transgender activism, GenderPAC's reputation tarnished, NTAC's support diminished, and NCTE at the crest of a wave of new transgender rights organizations, the guard had changed, and a new national movement had been established.

In part this new national movement succeeded because of the work Keisling put in to ensure that, though NCTE was based in DC, it was sufficiently connected to trans communities and organizations across the country. The first step was recruiting a founding board that represented key centers of transgender power across the country.⁸² But beyond the board, Keisling worked to establish grassroots support. She spent the organization's first years traveling, meeting with local transgender groups and LGBT community centers in cities across the country, soliciting individual donations (which she insisted should comprise more than half of the organization's financial support), and meeting with advocates at local conferences.⁸³ NCTE also publicized their work in local support group newsletters, the radio shows and blogs of transgender "thought

leaders,” and the national transgender periodicals to build local support among advocates and community members they failed to reach through Keisling’s travels.⁸⁴ Keisling then formalized this network of local supporters in NCTE’s national advisory board, which involved roughly 60 of these supporters in NCTE’s decision-making processes. As Mottet noted, this “feedback mechanism” kept NCTE responsive to the community it represented, embedded it in the work being done in every state, and “created real legitimacy” for the fledgling organization.

NCTE’s approach to national networking centered the organization in the emerging national movement, but it was not the totality of the movement. Instead, the movement emerged as a field of interacting and collaborating organizations consisting of the cohort founded in the same 2001–03 period as NCTE. These organizations, including TLPI, SRLP, TLC, and TLDEF, formed what Cartwright called a “satellite ring” around NCTE, and their interdependencies permitted them to be a self-sustained movement independent of LGB organizations.⁸⁵ Of course, the Task Force was an LGBT organization (if only in name), but its participation in transgender advocacy occurred almost exclusively through its financial sponsorship of NCTE and Mottet’s collaborations with Keisling and other transgender advocates.⁸⁶ More central were collaborations among the transgender movement organizations, working toward various policy objectives at state and national levels, and often in direct opposition to LGB organizations.⁸⁷ For example, when *Gay City News* published an article on June 13, 2003 reporting that Congressman Barney Frank would exclude transgender people from the HRC-endorsed ENDA bill he sponsored, and reproducing disparaging comments Frank had made about trans-inclusion efforts, NCTE and TLPI issued a media advisory announcing a conference call to be held on June 17 addressing the issue.⁸⁸ The advisory was circulated to a number of LG media outlets—including *Gay City News* and outlets in New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, DC, Boston, Chicago, and elsewhere—and the two organizations coordinated talking points, dividing scripted comments and prepared answers to anticipated questions between Keisling and TLPI’s Paisley Currah.⁸⁹ The collaboration positioned these organizations as representatives of their own movement, speaking to a community with which they sought to establish coalitional goodwill.⁹⁰

Indeed, much of the new transgender movement’s independent operations focused on transforming the policy positions and advocacy practices of the LGB movement. This was largely driven by the pragmatic need for institutional power to affect the political system. As a movement newer and less resourced than the LGB movement, the trans movement could more effectively win change by making LGB advocacy trans-inclusive.⁹¹ Early successes came via the pioneering work of Minter at the National Center for Lesbian Rights and Levi at Gay and Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD, now GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders), who transformed the missions of their organizations and secured significant transgender legal victories with these LGB organizations’ resources. But as the largest LGB movement organization and the main driver behind federal gay rights legislation, HRC was the ultimate target of the trans movement’s inclusion efforts. However, leaders of the movement realized that so long as a number of other organizations remained LGB-focused without including trans people, HRC would not change. Thus, transgender activists focused on

organizations like Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA), convincing them to change their mission statements to include trans people so as to isolate HRC as the lone trans-exclusive standout.⁹²

Once HRC was sufficiently isolated, its executive director, Elizabeth Birch, bent to pressure and invited transgender movement leaders including Currah, Jamison Green, Keisling, Minter, Mottet, Donna Rose, and Seaton to address HRC's board of directors in August 2004.⁹³ Later that same month, the board of directors voted to support ENDA only if it were trans-inclusive moving forward, and the organization changed its mission statement to include trans people. These were small victories, though, considering HRC made no such promises about any of its other legislative and policy work.⁹⁴ Moreover, even after HRC included transgender people in its mission statement, its lobbyists' commitment to trans inclusion remained superficial. When they met with congressional staff alongside representatives from transgender movement organizations (most often NCTE), they professed their support for trans-inclusive legislation, but in private meetings with those same congressional staff people, they often denied that support.⁹⁵ The transgender movement organizations, for their part, were aware of the tenuous relationship they had with the LGB movement and self-consciously worked toward inclusion in LGB policy advocacy even as they continued to build their own movement power and policy positions. As Keisling explained,

We were insisting on there being a trans movement *and* we were insisting on the gay rights movement being an LGBT movement—and that the T be a real part of it. . . . That LGBT organizations exist, but that there be trans organizations. That we were working for access according to gender identity and expression to facilities, and we were working for gender neutral facilities. That we were working for the ability to change ID documents based on your identity and working to get gender and sex markers off of ID documents.⁹⁶

The transgender movement tried to derive as much benefit from the LGB movement as possible, but transgender movement success wouldn't look like LGB movement success, and so it needed to stand on its own two feet.

Much of the work of getting the transgender movement on its own two feet was accomplished by earning recognition from other civil rights and identity-based movements. NCTE and its allied organizations successfully worked to persuade leaders in the women's movement, for example, to vocally support pro-transgender policy change and for trans-inclusion in legislation protecting women and sexual minorities.⁹⁷ NCTE in particular further shored up recognition from and relationships with these allied movements for the transgender movement by advocating vocally for the policies these movements were pushing for, even if the relevance to trans people was not immediately evident.⁹⁸ This work became a crucial investment for the trans movement when bills like the Hate Crimes Prevention Act were introduced and the Anti-Defamation League endorsed trans-inclusion in the bill, or when transgender organizations sought to join the famed Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of over 200 national organizations across various rights movements.⁹⁹ NCTE's active involvement in fighting for policies important to many member

organizations increased support for its admission to the Conference. Once NCTE joined the Conference, transgender issues became a new focus not only for transgender movement organizations and the small number of trans-inclusive LGB movement organizations, but also for hundreds of newly allied organizations across the country.¹⁰⁰ The transgender movement was now a legitimate form of political advocacy in the United States, recognized as its own independent, autonomous field.

Turning LGB into LGBT (While Keeping an Independent T)

It would be easy to see the emerging independent transgender movement's work to increase trans-inclusion among LGB organizations as an effort to forge a coalition with the LGB movement, especially when considering the similar work transgender organizations did to ensure trans-inclusion among other civil rights groups. However, the true aim wasn't coalition, but hybridity; that is, transgender advocates wanted to be equal members in a truly LGBT movement even as they maintained their status as an autonomous movement. Indeed, over the early years of NCTE, many of the group's efforts centered on pressuring LGB organizations to take up transgender issues and increase the inclusion of transgender people on their staffs. Much of this work was conducted via media, using local LGB newspapers, radio stations, blogs, and other outlets to increase LGB support for trans people within communities and state-wide advocacy groups.¹⁰¹ From NCTE's perspective, increasing trans-inclusivity among LGB groups across the country would pressure national organizations to follow suit. NCTE also used local DC media to hit national LGB groups at home, appearing prominently in publications they would read. For example, Keisling was interviewed in a 2004 issue of *Metro Weekly*, a free LGB newspaper in DC. In the interview, Keisling discussed the importance of "'T' be[ing] included in LGBT," arguing "We're all one community and we're all being attacked by the same forces and the more of us who stand together, the better," and chastising those who would argue otherwise.¹⁰²

Beyond media, NCTE built relationships with LGB groups to increase their trans competencies and encourage trans-inclusion. The most consistent relationship was with the Task Force, as Keisling and Mottet pursued the vast majority of their work in concert.¹⁰³ But NCTE was only one organization incubated by the Task Force; the National Stonewall Democratic Federation (a national organization for the LGBT Democratic caucus) and the National Association of LGBT Community Centers (eventually renamed CenterLink) rented office space in the Task Force's building alongside NCTE, and Keisling formed relationships with their respective directors, Dave Noble and Sheila Healy. As a triumvirate of executive directors of small organizations in close proximity, Keisling, Noble, and Healy supported each other, and Noble and Healy made their organizations stalwart allies for both NCTE specifically and transgender-inclusion in the LGB(T) movement more generally. Beyond the Task Force office building, Keisling established collaborations with Equality Federation, a San Francisco-based LGBT policy advocacy organization, and GLSEN, a New York-based organization focusing on LGBT issues in K-12 education, to help make transgender issues a priority.¹⁰⁴ Building on these relationships, NCTE and the Task Force co-published a series of reports and guides on how LGB

movement organizations could improve their trans-inclusive practices, setting new standards for the expanding LGBT movement.¹⁰⁵

By 2007, when Congressman Frank introduced a new version of ENDA, several national (and most local) “LGB” groups had become earnestly “LGBT” organizations. Even HRC lobbied in favor of an ENDA that included protections for gender identity and expression that spring.¹⁰⁶ In September, however, Frank split ENDA into two separate bills: one that included only sexual orientation and one that included only gender identity and expression. His justification was a sexual-orientation-only bill might earn enough votes to pass, but trans-inclusion would drive away key supporters.¹⁰⁷ With no chances of passing as a bill protecting only gender expression and identity, splitting ENDA was a calculated act of leaving trans people behind. This decision tested newly “LGBT” organizations’ commitment to that change and put the transgender movement in a position to determine once and for all whether it could be excluded from the LGB(T) alliance system.

HRC reneged immediately, throwing its support behind the transgender-exclusive ENDA bill. When the news hit, Keisling, Mottet, and Noble were gathered at the Task Force and they set to work implementing Mottet’s signature strategy of “the cheese stands alone,” a reference to the nursery rhyme “The Farmer in the Dell,” in which the members of the farmer’s household and a series of animals are sequentially removed until only the cheese remains. The strategy entailed completely isolating the target so it would be forced to defend its position without allies.¹⁰⁸ The first move was to appeal to Tammy Baldwin, the only other out gay legislator, to make Frank the sole LGBT person in Congress supporting a bill that left trans people behind. The appeal took the form of a letter expressing that LGBT advocates and communities across the country opposed abandoning trans people. Keisling, Mottet, and Noble called several leaders from other groups, securing seven agreements to sign the letter.¹⁰⁹ As word spread, more groups called Keisling to pledge signatures. Within 48 hours, over 100 organizations from around the country signed.¹¹⁰ Within a week, roughly 300 groups had pledged their support to a trans-inclusive ENDA.¹¹¹

With a critical mass of LGBT organizations across the country dedicated to passing a trans-inclusive bill, Noble pushed for a coordinated campaign, which the Stonewall Democrats and CenterLink helped lead.¹¹² Leaders from the approximately 300 LGBT groups Keisling, Noble, and Mottet had organized joined a series of phone calls, on one of which Nadine Smith, executive director of Equality Florida, named the coalition United ENDA.¹¹³ The campaign focused on mobilizing political action at national and local levels to isolate Frank and HRC. Activists from the Transgender Law Center and the National Center for Lesbian Rights, for example, engaged in local activism in San Francisco to pressure Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to oppose the trans-exclusive bill.¹¹⁴ For her part, Keisling toured the country giving speeches to local LGBT social and political groups to mobilize grassroots support for a trans-inclusive bill, particularly among the LG sector of the community.¹¹⁵

But United ENDA realized it couldn’t rely only on mobilizing sympathetic groups; it also needed strategic communications to inspire resistance among those not already sympathetic to trans-inclusion and to create a groundswell of opposition to HRC and the trans-exclusive ENDA bill. NCTE, for instance, cultivated a more prominent public image for Keisling via Twitter to capitalize

on the personalized communication style the platform afforded.¹¹⁶ They also secured targeted presence in local gay media outlets to inform individual members of the LGBT community about HRC's betrayal of trans people.¹¹⁷ Other organizations participating in United ENDA developed robust media strategies, too, including the Task Force, which published editorials in LGBT and mainstream press outlets, placed feature stories on issues of transgender discrimination in communities where prominent instances of such discrimination had happened, and worked with "opinion leaders, community leaders, straight allied organizations and other entities . . . to magnify the public education messaging" about the need for a trans-inclusive ENDA.¹¹⁸

United ENDA failed to force a re-merging of the two bills, and the trans-exclusive version passed the House of Representatives before being defeated in the Senate. But the campaign achieved something more significant: it ensured the trans-inclusivity of the LGBT movement moving forward. HRC's standing in the community and among movement organizations suffered, and the organization reversed course yet again to advocate solely for trans-inclusive legislation. Other LGBT groups that might have entertained omitting transgender people from their advocacy saw what the consequences would be.¹¹⁹ The Democratic Party also took the lesson, quickly incorporating transgender advocates into their policy agenda. Most significantly, Chair of the Democratic National Committee Howard Dean appointed NCTE founding board member Diego Sanchez to the DNC Platform Committee. In that capacity, Sanchez secured the inclusion of gender identity in nondiscrimination protections as a party priority. In Sanchez's words, the "gender identity part was no problem in the room because it followed the United ENDA exclamations of 'don't you dare think about taking out trans people.'"¹²⁰ And in symbolic apology for his actions on ENDA, Frank hired Sanchez as a senior policy advisor.

Thus, United ENDA was successful for several reasons. First, NCTE's leadership of United ENDA made it not only the symbolic and material leader of the transgender movement, but also a central player within the now-trans-inclusive LGBT movement. At the same time, the contentious politics of the campaign ensured that transgender activists remained committed to preserving their own organizations and sustaining their own movement. As transgender visibility increased and transgender policy battles became more common in the following years, these factors came to shape the movement's approach to navigating the LGBT alliance system in important ways.

Conclusion

In her post to NCTE's *Medium* page on January 6, 2018, Keisling reflected on the accomplishments the organization had achieved in the fifteen years since its inception. As she recounted, "a Pennsylvania state senator [once] told me that I should be pleased to meet with him, because five years earlier he wouldn't have even let me in his office."¹²¹ Now, just over fifteen years since NCTE's founding, transgender Americans have a seat at the table, whether in the DC congressional offices of their representatives, as representatives in their own right on city councils and school boards across the country, or as legislators in the Colorado, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Virginia General Assemblies. These changes are the hard-won victories of transgender activism. But whereas

much of the extant historiography of the transgender movement has focused on the local activism, less attention has been paid to the work that went into building and sustaining a national movement for transgender rights in the United States. This article has sought to address that lacuna in transgender movement history and, in doing so, demonstrate that the national transgender movement emerged separately from the LGB movement and developed parallel to, and often in conflict with, it.

Ending the history of the origin and development of the national transgender rights movement with the United ENDA campaign may give the impression that the transgender movement simply merged into the LGBT movement, within which it became an inside agitator to ensure LGBT organizations addressed transgender issues. Yet this is not the case. Contemporary sociological research makes clear that the transgender movement has maintained independence and autonomy, even as LGBT organizations have attempted to claim “ownership” over transgender issues and, in doing so, displace transgender organizations.¹²² As such, the complex process of hybridization analyzed in this article has endured in the form and function of the contemporary trans rights movement. The analysis presented here not only clarifies our empirical understanding of the origins and development of the national transgender movement, but also offers a new lens through which to understand both historical and contemporary dynamics within the LGBT alliance system.

Endnotes

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1. Stephen Holden, “Stonewall’ Doesn’t Distinguish Between Facts and Fiction,” *New York Times*, September 24, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/25/movies/for-stonewall-an-indiana-born-avatar.html>.

2. Sociologists Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna Crage offer a robust discussion of the historical and political reasons Stonewall was selected as the mythic genesis of the LGB(T) movement and make abundantly clear that the Stonewall narrative is, indeed, mythic; see Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna Crage, “Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth,” *American Sociological Review* 71 (2006): 724–51. Recent work by transgender legal theorist Florence Ashley offers further exploration of how the idea that the Stonewall rebellion was led by trans women of color entered the contemporary mythos, in large part due to the backward projections of political fantasy by figures such as the artist and filmmaker Tourmaline; see Florence Ashley, “La Sainte de Christopher Street [The Saint of Christopher Street],” *Spirale* 276 (2021): 43–47.

3. Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, *Gay L.A.* (Berkeley, CA, 2009); John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (Chicago, 1998).

4. Eric Marcus, “Marsha P. Johnson and Randy Wicker,” *Making Gay History*, March 1, 2017, <https://makinggayhistory.com/podcast/episode-11-johnson-wicker>; Stephan Cohen, *The Gay Liberation Youth Movement in New York* (New York, 2008).

5. Morgan Page, "It Doesn't Matter Who Threw the First Brick at Stonewall," *The Nation*, June 30, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/trans-black-stonewall-rivera-storme>.

6. For more on the founding and development of the Trans Equality Archive, see Thomas J Billard, "Preserving Transgender History in its Own Right: A Case Study of the Trans Equality Archive," *Bulletin of Applied Transgender Studies* 2, no. 1–2 (2023): 119–27.

7. While Tilly never explicitly aligned himself with political process theory, he is generally associated with the political process perspective due to his close work with the theory's main proponents, Doug McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, and his similarly state-focused understanding of social movements; see Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago, 1982); Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (New York, 1994); and Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (New York, 2001).

8. Charles Tilly, "Social Movements and National Politics," in Charles Bright and Susan Harding (eds.) *State-Making and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory* (Ann Arbor, 1984), 306.

9. My use of the word "colloquial" here is intended to highlight how this understand of social movements aligns with *popular* understandings of what a movement is but diverges from *theoretical* understandings of what a movement is within political sociology. Neither understanding is more correct or more important, nor is this colloquial usage less analytically generative.

10. See, for example, B. Lee Aultman, "The Rise of Transgender Social Movements: Narrative Symbolism and History," in William R. Thompson (ed.) *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (New York, 2021); Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade, "Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We've Got," in Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith (eds.) *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex* (Oakland, CA, 2011); Dan Irving, "Transgender Politics," in Nancy A. Naples (ed.) *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies* (Hoboken, NJ, 2016); Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham, NC, 2015); and Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA, 2017).

11. Genny Beemyn, "U.S. History," in Laura Erickson-Schroth (ed.) *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves* (New York, 2014); Phyllis Randolph Frye, "Facing Discrimination, Organizing for Freedom," in John D'Emilio, William Turner, and Urvashi Vaid (eds.) *Creating Change: Sexuality, Public Policy, and Civil Rights* (New York, 2000); Jessi Gan, "'Still at the Back of the Bus': Sylvia Rivera's Struggle," *Centro* 19 (2007): 124–39; Robert Hill, "Heterosexual Transvestism and the Contours of Gender and Sexuality in Postwar America," PhD diss. (University of Michigan, 2007); Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley, CA, 2017).

12. Meyerowitz.

13. Meyerowitz; Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," *Radical History Review* 100 (2008): 144–57.

14. D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics*.

15. Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity," 150.

16. Hill, "'We Share a Sacred Secret': Gender, Domesticity, and Containment in *Transvestia's* Histories and Letters from Crossdressers and their Wives," *Journal of Social History* 44 (2011): 732.

17. Beemyn, "U.S. History"; Frye, "Facing Discrimination"; Hill, "Heterosexual Transvestism"; Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*; Stryker, *Transgender History*; Riki Wilchins, *TRANS/gressive* (New York, 2017).

18. Stryker, *Transgender History*.
19. Beemyn, "U.S. History."
20. Beemyn; Gan, "Sylvia Rivera's Struggle"; Stryker, *Transgender History*.
21. Gan.
22. Gan, 133.
23. Finn Enke, "Collective Memory and the Transfeminist 1970s," *TSQ* 5 (2018): 16.
24. Emma Heaney, "Trans Women in 1970s Lesbian Feminist Organizing." *TSQ* 3 (2016): 137–45.
25. Enke, "Collective Memory," 17.
26. Enke.
27. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed*; Stryker, *Transgender History*.
28. Beemyn, "U.S. History"; Frye, "Facing Discrimination."
29. Frye.
30. There is a separate history to be told of how bisexual people came to be included with gay men and lesbians, turning the LG movement into the LGBT movement. For a starting point, see the essays contained in Section I of Naomi Tucker, ed., *Bisexual Politics: Theories, Queries, and Visions* (New York, 2013).
31. Aaron Devor and Nicholas Matte, "ONE Inc. and Reed Erickson," in Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (eds.) *Transgender Studies Reader* (New York, 2006): 389.
32. Holly Boswell, "The Transgender Alternative," *Chrysalis Quarterly* 1 (1991): 29.
33. Boswell.
34. Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity," 146. See also, for an explicitly political analysis of how "transgender" came to have a clear political valence, see Zein Murib, "Transgender: Examining an Emerging Political Identity Using Three Political Processes," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3, no. 3 (2015): 381–97.
35. Wilchins, *TRANS/gressive*, 6.
36. Stryker, *Transgender History*.
37. Stryker, *Transgender History*; Wilchins, *TRANS/gressive*.
38. Frye, "Facing Discrimination."
39. Deborah Sontag, "Once a Pariah, Now a Transgender Judge," *New York Times*, August 30, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/30/us/transgender-judge-phyllis-fryes-early-transformative-journey.html>.
40. Frye, "Facing Discrimination," 463.
41. Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity"; Stryker, *Transgender History*.
42. Pat Califia, *Sex Changes: The Politics of Transgenderism* (Jersey City, NJ, 1997).
43. Wilchins, *TRANS/gressive*.
44. See Masen Davis, oral history interview transcript, December 21, 2018, Box 1, Folder 2, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
45. Califia, *Sex Changes*, 223.
46. For a longer and much more nuanced exploration of the relationship between the internet, transgender identity, and trans activism, see Avery Dame Griff, *The Two Revolutions: A History of the Transgender Internet* (New York, 2023).
47. Frye, "Facing Discrimination"; Sontag, "Once a Pariah."
48. Frye; Sontag.
49. Frye, 463.
50. Elias Vitulli, "Employment Non-Discrimination Act, Trans-Inclusion, and Homonormativity," *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 7 (2010): 155–67.

51. Vitulli, 162.
52. Frye, "Facing Discrimination."
53. Vitulli, "Employment Non-Discrimination Act," 162; Frye, "Facing Discrimination." For a rich analysis of the conversations regarding LGB coalition with transgender groups that unfolded both within and facilitated by the Task Force, see Murib, "Rethinking GLBT as a Political Category in U.S. Politics," in Marla Brettschneider, Susan Burgess and Christine Keating (eds.) *LGBTQ Politics: A Critical Reader* (New York, 2017).
54. As transgender legal advocate Shannon Minter recounted, "The movement was initially so local [because] it was a challenge to get the resources and just organizational ability to put any national groups together"; Minter, oral history interview transcript, December 6, 2018, Box 1, Folder 2, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC. See also, for rich historical detail, the "Institutionalizing Inclusion" section of Murib, "Transgender."
55. Wilchins, *TRANS/gressive*.
56. Pauline Park, "GenderPAC, the Transgender Rights Movement and the Perils of a Post-Identity Politics Paradigm," *Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law* 4 (2003): 747–66.
57. Dallas Denny, "We're from GenderPAC and We're Here to Help You," *Transgender Tapestry* 93 (2001): 13–15; Wilchins, *TRANS/gressive*.
58. David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender* (Durham, NC, 2007).
59. Valentine.
60. Park, "GenderPAC."
61. Lisa Mottet, oral history interview transcript, November 28, 2018, Box 1, Folder 2, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
62. Donna Cartwright, "Whither GPAC?" *Transgender Tapestry* 93 (2001): 56–58; Park, "GenderPAC"; Valentine, *Imagining Transgender*.
63. Dallas Denny, "GenderPAC's Implosion," *Transgender Tapestry* 93 (2001): 6–7.
64. Cartwright, "Whither GPAC?"; Denny, "We're from GenderPAC"; Park, "GenderPAC."
65. Denny, "GenderPAC's Implosion"; Denny, "We're from GenderPAC."
66. Denny, "GenderPAC's Implosion"; Denny, "We're from GenderPAC"; Cartwright, "Whither GPAC?"
67. "GenderPAC moves to Washington." *Transgender Tapestry* 93 (2001): 16.
68. Anthony J. Nownes, *Organizing for Transgender Rights: Collective Action, Group Development, and the Rise of a New Social Movement* (Albany, NY, 2019); Valentine, *Imagining Transgender*.
69. Valentine.
70. Keisling, oral history.
71. Cartwright, "Whither GPAC?"; Minter, oral history.
72. Nownes, *Organizing for Transgender Rights*, 40. TLPI co-founder Shannon Minter went so far as saying of the movement, "There was pretty much almost nothing going on in terms of national political advocacy before NCTE"; Minter, oral history.
73. Sontag, "Once a Pariah."
74. Sean Bugg, "Trans Mission: Mara Keisling and the Politics of ENDA," *Metro Weekly*, August 19, 2004, Box 12, Folder 4, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC; Keisling, oral history; Mottet, oral history.
75. Keisling; Mottet.
76. Keisling; Mottet.

77. Donna Cartwright, oral history interview transcript, November 27, 2018, Box 1, Folder 2, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC; Mottet.
78. Cartwright, oral history; Mottet oral history.
79. Mottet.
80. Diego Miguel Sanchez, oral history interview transcript, December 19, 2018, Box 1, Folder 2, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
81. Cartwright, oral history; Mottet oral history.
82. Cartwright.
83. Cartwright; Davis, oral history; Mottet, oral history.
84. "Communications and Media Plan," June 20, 2005, Box 12, Folder 5, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC; "NCTE Draft Communications Plan Outline," November 1, 2004, Box 12, Folder 5, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
85. Cartwright, oral history.
86. Vitulli, "Employment Non-Discrimination Act"; Mottet, oral history.
87. E.g., "Issues Alert," December 2003, Box 12, Folder 3, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC; "Transgender People and the Federal Marriage Amendment," ca. 2003, Box 12, Folder 5, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC; Keisling, oral history.
88. Paul Schindler, "ENDA Unlikely to be Broadened," *Gay City News*, June 13, 2003, Box 12, Folder 1, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC; "Media Advisory," June 14, 2003, Box 12, Folder 3, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
89. List of gay media outlets and contact information, ca. 2003, Box 12, Folder 3, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC; Keisling's scripted comments to gay media, ca. 2003, Box 12, Folder 3, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
90. Keisling's scripted comments.
91. Keisling, oral history; Mottet, oral history.
92. Mottet.
93. Vitulli, "Employment Non-Discrimination Act."
94. Vitulli.
95. Cartwright, oral history.
96. Keisling, oral history.
97. E.g., National Organization for Women, "NOW Applauds Groundbreaking Effort to Pass Gender-Inclusive Law," May 26, 2005, Box 12, Folder 7, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
98. Gautam Raghavan, oral history interview transcript, August 27, 2018, Box 1, Folder 2, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
99. Mottet, oral history.
100. Mottet.
101. "Communications and Media Plan."
102. Bugg, "Trans Mission."
103. Mottet, oral history.
104. Mottet.
105. "Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People," ca. 2010, Box 12, Folder 43, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC; also "Transgender Inclusion: Principles for Success," ca. 2010, Box 12, Folder 51, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
106. Vitulli, "Employment Non-Discrimination Act."

107. Stryker, *Transgender History*.
108. Mottet, oral history.
109. Keisling, oral history.
110. Vitulli, "Employment Non-Discrimination Act."
111. Keisling, oral history.
112. Keisling, oral history.
113. Minter, oral history.
114. Davis, oral history.
115. E.g., "The State of the Transgender Movement," ca. 2008, Box 12, Folder 16, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
116. "New Media/Communications," May 22, 2008, Box 12, Folder 18, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
117. E.g., Eric Resnick, "'Work On Something that Amazes You': NCTE's Mara Keisling Says LGBT People are Winning," *Gay People's Chronicle*, April 25, 2008. Box 12, Folder 15, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
118. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, "Interim Report to the Calamus Foundation," ca. 2010, Box 12, Folder 19, Trans Equality Archive, NCTE, Washington, DC.
119. Minter, oral history.
120. Sanchez, oral history.
121. Mara Keisling, "Celebrating 15 Years," *Medium*, January 6, 2018, <https://medium.com/transexualitynow/celebrating-15-years-d98b9278c434>.
122. In large part, LGBT organizations' efforts to claim ownership over transgender issues is attributable to the legalization of marriage equality by the Supreme Court in *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015. For decades, LGBT organizations like HRC had justified their existence and obtained funding on the fight for marriage equality. With marriage equality the law of the land, these groups needed new fights on which to justify their existence and to fundraise. The arrival of the so-called "transgender tipping point" the year before marriage equality provided them with a much-needed public purpose; see, for example, Carlos A. Ball, Introduction to *After Marriage Equality: The Future of LGBT Rights* (New York, 2019); and Nownes, "Transgender Rights Interest Groups in the United States," in William R. Thompson (ed.) *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics* (New York, 2019). However, transgender organizations have succeeded at maintaining autonomy from LGBT organizations and at driving the agenda on transgender issues, thanks to their careful navigation of the hybrid dynamics analyzed in this article. For a longer and more thorough illustration of the transgender movement's continued independence, see Billard, *Voices for Transgender Equality: Making Change in the Networked Public Sphere* (New York, 2024).