



Edition 2!

Queer

Liberation

July, 2025

Credits

Liz

- 9. Rejection
- 12. Necromancy
- 13. Dreaming of the Future
- 14. Opossum
- 15. The Future
- 23. Dissonance
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Dear Reader,

In our second edition of Southern Scum we continue to explore themes of **queer liberation**. This issue focuses heavily on **assertions of authenticity** leading to liberation as well as advocating for **community and collective action**. These themes are explored through multiple mediums including **visual art, poetry, narrative, and essays**.

We hope you enjoy the second edition of Southern Scum and **thank you** for reading!

Euphoria

The silhouettes of bark-covered guardians wave against the moonlight, welcoming me once again into their arms. Tucked away in a rural area, the forest is populated by countless eastern white pine, yellow poplar, red maple, and black walnut trees; it has miles of winding trails up sloping hills, around ponds ruled by the bullfrogs, and through long patches of big bluestem grass. My reprieve from the cacophony of that time, the guardians brush my arms like old friends. With the fear of coming out to the people I lived with weighing my shoulders down, and unable to turn to family for support, I found resilience to continue forward every time I fled to the forest.

2 AM – wallowing in the sweltering heat of the house, trapped behind closed doors overhearing whispers about people like me, and feeling like a marionette eternally forced to dance along a tightrope, I decide once again to make my lonely pilgrimage. Getting into my old metallic-green Grand Am, with the constant remnants of water that leaked into it soaking the floorboard and my feet, I set out on my journey scraping across the gravel under the guidance of the full moon and with the summer night's air billowing through my hair. Arriving with no other soul in sight, still hearing the Weathers sing, "I don't know euphoria / Would like to meet her someday," I see the guardians beckoning me home, offerings of peace on the tips of their fingers. Stepping out of the car onto the asphalt scar, I head towards the stairs that lead to heaven. Beginning my Sisyphean task of exploring all the nooks and crannies the forest has to offer, the guardians part way for me. Going further into the forest, I hear the guttural roar of the bullfrogs, the shrill chirping of camel crickets, and the distant hooting of a barred owl that occupy this sanctuary with me. I take a running leap across the creek, whose makeshift bridge had long since

decayed, and turn to reminisce on that little clearing behind me, thinking about the first time I stepped foot there.

Like my other visits here, my marionette strings inevitably pull me up the hills, to that little outcropping where I can stare out across the sea of guardians, seeing little porch lights on the outskirts and imagining the lives of the sleeping people they protect. Sitting against one of the rocks to rest, I was able to accept that, even if the people I cared about wouldn't be around when I left the woods, I would continue walking forward. Leaving another part of my soul at my Mecca, I head back to my car, prepared to bear the cacophony again. Spurred by loneliness weeks later, I invite my friend and roommate, Howard, and our friend, Louis, to make the pilgrimage with me for the first time. Despite not knowing if they'd accept me, I wanted to savor those times we shared and to show them the holiness of the place my strings led me to. Time and time again we went together, crawling along those trails hidden beneath the watchful eyes of the guardians, leaping across the bubbling creek, our feet squelching in the mud as we walk through grasses reaching for the heavens, from full moons to new moons and back again, always ending up at that outcropping on the hill as we shared laughter and built memories with the foundation of the stone we stood on.

The peace that I found in the guardians' arms and those little porch lights gave me the strength to continue living. At times, I would find myself lost in the woods, unsure of which direction would take me where I wanted to go. The thought of having to backtrack was frightening, knowing that path would ultimately leave me holding on to strings better left to fray, so I pushed forward, determined to finish each pilgrimage with new knowledge that would help me finally release those strings.

It's been years since I first dragged my friends to this holy place, and the resilience I gained through my pilgrimages helped me finally come out to them – they accepted me with the open arms of the guardians. Looking back at the trail behind me, parsing through all the pain and misery that led me to this place, I think I've finally met Euphoria. We made another pilgrimage recently, and standing on that outcropping we saw the porch lights flicker off and the sun slowly heave itself above the horizon, revealing a sea of flowing yellow, red, and green that had been hidden beneath the moonlight.

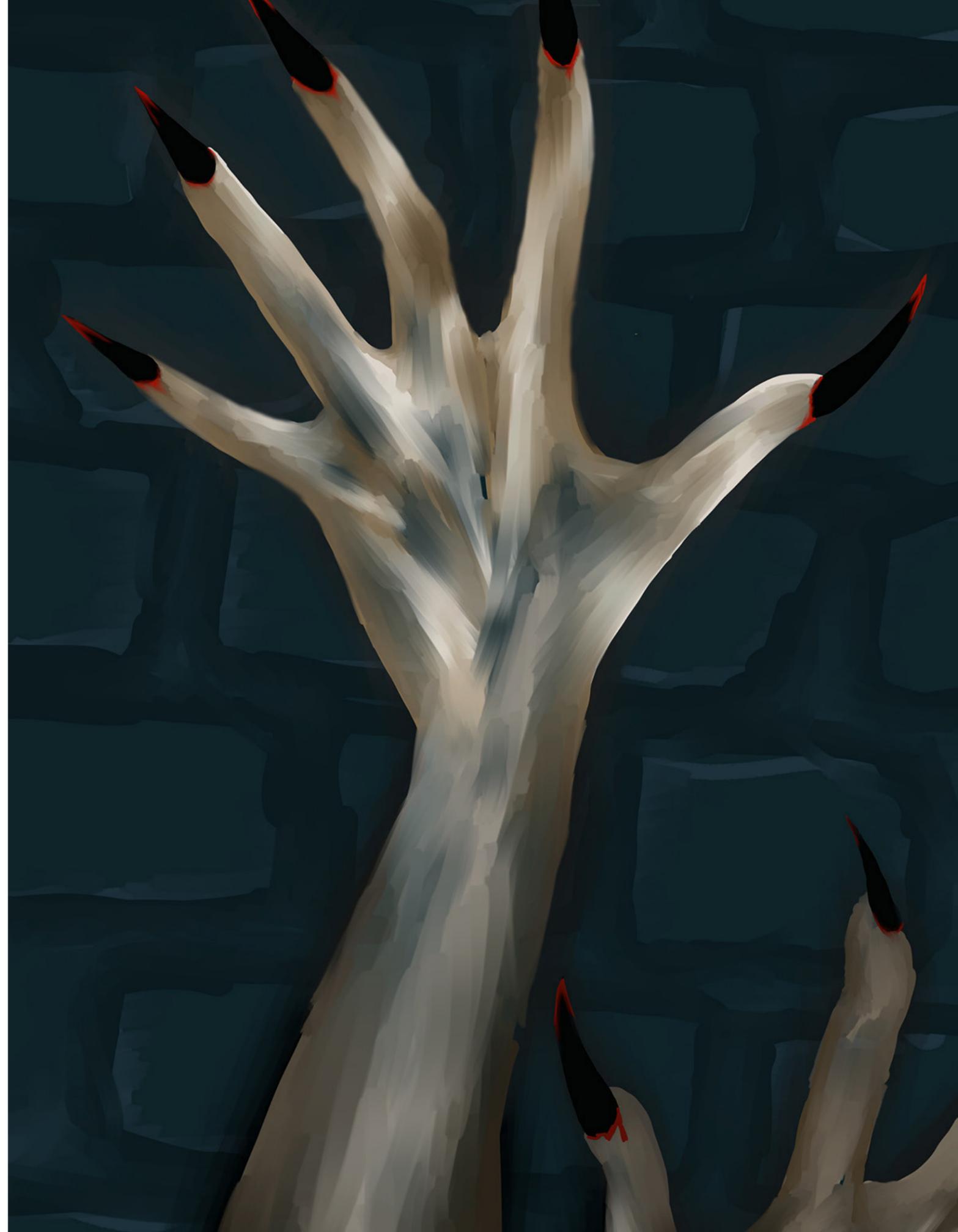


I am clawing

I will be free

I may break my nails

but i cannot be stopped



Necromancy

Each morning a death
That dark act of necromancy
in the mirror—

My body dies as I button
that shirt
While pastel blue dreams of liberation
melt under my tongue

I tell myself I must
die to survive
 but I can't
 believe it.

Numbly wincing at each “Mr.”
A not yet dead name
robs any joy found in coworkers.

When I get home
When the shirt falls from my body
When my friends cradle me in my name
I am reborn
With liberation melting
under my tongue
 but I know
 tomorrow
 I must—
 die again.

Dreaming of the Future

One day,
Will I lay in the sun?
Out in a park
It's warm life sleeping into my cold dead flesh.
It's wine buzzing on my lips,
As my friends hold me tenderly with their eyes.

Will a warm breeze rustle my hair?
And cool a body that is finally mine

But now I melt under harsh fluorescents.
Crushed by my button ups and slacks and dead names and “he's.”

One day,
Will I live after death?

Opossum

An opossum lies—
For so long—
On the side of the road.
I forgot if I was
dead or just playing

I can no longer tell
If the writhing inside
Is the need for something more—
Or maggots eating
My rotten corpse.

I can no longer tell
If the sun is causing
The warmth on my belly—
Or the heat of rot
Billowing from within.

Years pass,
Time blends together

Then I awake—
within myself.
I claw out
from inside
my flesh
scraping
and
tearing

until my fur splits

and out of my corpse
I rise—
alive again.

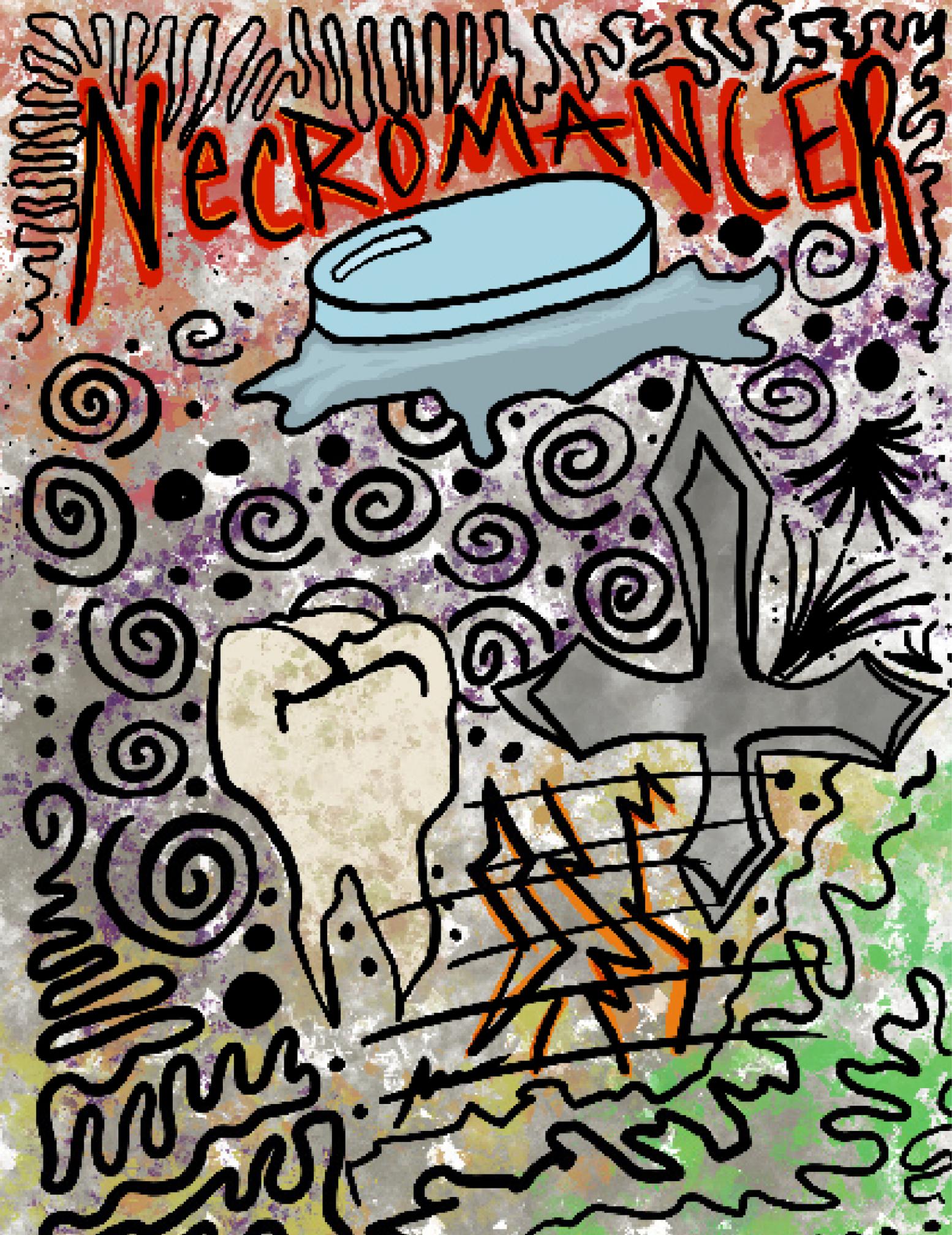
The Future

How fast the future
snuck up on me.

A day I imagined to be far off
Reclining in a park
Under a tree
Feeling the warmth of the sun
On a body that felt like me

Now I lay
Under an oak tree
I look down
The arms I see
Feel like my own
The legs and feet
The small budding breasts
Are all me.

The sun seeps into my skin,
And I remember,
When this could only be imagination.
But now,
I feel
peace.



Dear Readers!

This is your page

vent your frustrations here!

Once again caught off guard

Once again I am wrong

As I am jolted back into reality

As I face the consequences of my actions

I scold my beliefs
that I think I must leave behind to be like the others

How...
Does it all keep coming?
Never seals.
Never stops.
Never

It stares at me
Watches me as I forget
Predicting my tempo'd stumble

It's like I keep slipping
Stumbling to catch myself
And then slipping back over again

Why can't I let myself be free
I feel stuck
I should be grateful
To be this far down and grown

This cycle is very familiar to me
And I have not made any changes
I don't want to stop
If it all stops coming
Then what will be my excuse?

If I make the change...
Why do I believe it'll be so big
Why do I think I need to be so perfect for it

I haven't made any changes
So please don't stop
If it all stops coming
I will no longer be disturbed and blaming

My cage

I hate this cage
I don't want to be owned
Yet I have tied me up and tied me down

I wish to step aside that now
It happened and that is in the past
And now I am here
These two places
I want to be free
Back to back
Not face to face

I am always scared to lose touch with reality
Even when I feel happy
Even when I feel free

They do not like me because of change
And I have confused their brain

What if one day
All happy and gay
I look around and realize
no one's there to play

By my mistake I've turned them all in
Their resentment and love is messy and grim
It wasn't just one thing
It wasn't just another

I am scared to lose touch with reality
And I am extremely insecure with what it all has
To do with me

I try to be better
But that is just a drop in the ocean
of my own confusion

I am aware I am not always the problem
Topics are enforced by long standing systems
But doing nothing only feeds the slips and states

And so I cry out loud so all can hear it
I will call and call and call again
This will be my latest rendition
To score myself on where I can be an addition
To be somewhere clearer

Do not take my rights away
I will fight for this part of me
I will continue and grow my responsibilities

Queer is me
Gay and alive

**I was raised on
Johnny Cash!**

**Why are you shocked that I want to
break my rusty cage?**

Is that not what you taught me?



Dissonance

I want a cigarette. I have never wanted anything more as I pace back and forth on my balcony. It's day 3 of quitting, day 3 of withdrawal. My head hurts, I have no energy, and I'm profusely sweating.

Three sharp knocks travel through my apartment and out the balcony door. I push my way inside stepping over takeout containers and dirty clothes to the door. Through the peephole I see the goofily distorted smile of Wren as they keep changing angles to give a new hilariously distorted look. I'm surprised but glad to see them. I open the door halfway to hide the mess behind me.

"Hey! Are you still going to the show tonight!?" Wren asks before I can even try to start the conversation.

"Yeah." I was planning on missing this show, wasting my month old ticket.

"It's almost time to go, if you want I can give you a ride?"

Fuck, now I really have to go.

"Give me a few minutes to get ready and I can meet you at your car." I feel bad not inviting them in but the couch is buried in trash and I don't want them to be repulsed by the biohazard of an apartment I have created. Not to mention that the apartment is 80 degrees since I've not been able to afford to run the AC for the past 2 months.

"Cool, see you soon!" Wren appears to take no offence to the lack of an offer.

I rush to pick out an outfit, pulling the least wrinkled clothes from the pile of laundry I never folded. Then I grab the pushup bra that makes me look like I at least have any tits. I wish the estrogen would speed up on that front.

Half stumbling to the bathroom I look in the mirror. Damn, I look like shit. I hastily dry shave with my electric razor; I'm unable to fully remove the stubble, no matter how much I try. I do my eyeliner, put a little too much color corrector on my upper lip and chin, apply foundation, blush, then my cliché black lipstick. Sweat is already seeping through my upper lip. In the mirror I still see the stubble through my make up and I can't tell if it's real, the lighting, or in my mind. I check my phone and realize I don't have time to fix it.

Fuck, I want a cigarette.

I rush down the stairs to Wren's car. We get to the show late but the opener hasn't started yet. Wren gets a PBR at the bar, I don't since my card would decline if I tried. The opening band is setting up now but they haven't done their sound check so we go to the porch, hoping to bump into some friends. One of Wren's friends, who I've never met, is sitting at one of the tables so we go over to chat. Wren introduces us, Blake seems cool. While going through the usual small talk, Blake takes out a pack of cigarettes. That urgent lust for nicotine boils in my spine. Before

taking one out he offers one to Wren and I. Wren looks at me quietly asking if i'm still quitting with their eyes. I think I am?

"No thanks, I'm trying to quit."

"Damn you care more about your lungs more than I do," Blake jokes.

"It's actually not that, if I get lung cancer I get lung cancer. It's solely because it will fuck with my HRT, makes it weaker."

"Damn that's tough, guess you'll have to live your full life expectancy," Blake chuckles and then goes to put away the pack without taking out a cigarette.

"Oh you don't have to do that! It's fine if you smoke around me," I blush a little, feeling embarrassed and like a burden.

"Don't worry about it, don't want to make it harder on you. Besides, if I smoked now I would lose the lie that I'm only a 'social' smoker. Might actually have to accept my nicotine addiction."

Blake, Wren, and I continue to chat until we hear the first sound check of the night.

The band sounds good. A local emo band and they have so much energy on stage. I usually love moshing but I just don't feel the energy yet. The band has it but I don't. I wade near the pit, even getting to the wall to push people back in but the courage and energy never boil over into that catharsis. The band ends with the usual thank you and a killer last song and then we head back outside.

"That was a great set, surprised you didn't also go in the pit," Wren says.

"It was, just couldn't get over myself," I chuckle.

"You got to more sets, nights still young," Blake adds.

We chat benignly for a little and then Wren catches me off guard.

"So how was that protest you went to last week?"

I'm surprised that this catches me off guard. Usually I feel either good or at least opinionated about political action. But I don't know what to say. I have nothing to complain about. It was radical enough and had some great speakers but something feels off. Like it didn't matter, like I shouldn't have gone, like I'm a fraud and everyone knew it.

I mumble something about the energy and good speeches but drastically want to change the subject. Then the next band starts and we go back in.

Before we step through the door I see a poster pasted to the wall. A call to action for a protest against the newest proposed attack on trans people. I feel despair and then shame. As my face flushes I find relief that the darkness of the venue will swallow me.

I can't really experience this band. A hardcore set that is objectively great. Good energy and a good pit but I can barely hear the blasting music. My body feels heavy and numb. I'm not even moving but I can't stop sweating. My head starts hurting again and I feel so distant. Like I am the only one not here.

At some point the music stops and I sheepishly follow Wren back to the patio. They stop for a moment on the way out to take a picture of the poster. I almost ask Blake for a cigarette. But instead just stand with them only half present as Wren and Blake discuss something or the other. The final band's sound check starts, Wren and Blake head in, I follow, I want to go home.

I just have to get through this set then I can go home. Curl up in my apartment. I don't want to ever be seen again. I do the required head nodding because if I don't I will either look weird or like I hate the band and they are good.

Wren grabs my hand. They pull me, with Blake, to the pit. I feel like I can't resist but also can't go into the pit. But Wren's persistence and kind smile lead me to the center. We push, skank some, and as the pit fills up the bodies I collide with and slight pain that pushes against me puts me back in the venue. The music bleeds into me, bass pounding in my chest, melody in my limbs, ringing through my ears, I feel release.

The band stops between songs and the singer takes the mic off of the stand. They begin the classic, cliché, call to action that you get from many punk acts. But this speech hits me differently. Maybe it was the mosh pit or that they are a great public speaker but it feels authentic in a way I have not heard before. For once I actually felt like I was a part of the community being called to action instead of an observer of it.

Their set continued and was the best of the night. By the end of the show I was exhausted but somehow still moshing. Then the music stopped and people started heading out. I find Wren near the bar with water.

"Hey can you send me that picture of the poster you took?"

"Sure," I can't read if Wren is surprised or not as we are both exhausted "are you going to go tomorrow? Should be a good time, might get to yell at a cop."

"Yeah I'll see you there."

Hey Readers

How are you?

You've made it so far

I am proud of you

Please Continue

**Just wanted to
check in**

Reradicalizing Queerness and the Necessity of Anti Assimilation in the LGBTQ+ Movement

In the United States, we are facing a roll back of secured rights for LGBTQ+ individuals and an expansion of attacks on transgender and gender non conforming people under the current political administration. While these attacks are being done from actors outside of the LGBTQ+ community, both out of hatred and to gain political capital, the community is especially vulnerable to them in part due to the mainstream adoption of assimilation politics. The expansion of assimilation politics within the LGBTQ+ community has continued since the adoption of "civil rights" tactics in the late 1990s to early 2000's to such an extreme that even radical language within the community has been neutered, for example the term Queer. As a community, to establish true protection, rights, and a better future for LGBTQ+ and all other marginalized people we should move away from the neoliberal assimilationist strategy and instead advocate for a reradicalization of Queerness as a strategy for liberation.

The post Stonewall LGBTQ+ movement in the United States began having fairly radical, if conflicting, politics, strategies and goals. Alan Sears' "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" proposes why the movement had radical origins as well as argues that the movement has begun to abandon these principals due to the adoption of assimilation politics and its unbalanced adornment of rights to certain sections of the LGBTQ+ community while abandoning others. Sears writes "[t]he experience of coming to terms with one's own lesbian or gay sexuality has been politicizing... as an ascending movement confronted deeply entrenched patterns of... oppression. This is now changing, as the emerging framework of civil rights meets the political goals of many lesbians and gay men."¹ Sears explores how this movement was split along differing radical ideological lines between gay liberation politics and lesbian feminism, however importantly both of these movements were focused not around assimilation but liberation and the destruction of the systems each group viewed as oppressive.² Lesbian and gay influenced socialist feminism would attempt to resolve the conflict between these two political strands, but due to the suppression of Marxist thought at the time it ultimately failed to.³ Instead more moderate postmodern queer theories, advocating for reform not liberation, would dominate the LGBTQ+ community until challenged by militant AIDS activists who would found groups such as ACT UP, leading to the radical queer movement of the late 80s to 90s.⁴ This marked a temporary return to anti assimilationist liberation focused ideology. Sears writes "the new queer movements marked a revival of militant gay liberationism centering on militancy, visibility and abolition of the compulsory family system."⁵

¹ Sears, "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" 93.

² Sears, "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" 97-98.

³ Sears, "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" 99.

⁴ Sears, "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" 99.

⁵ Sears, "Queer Anti-Capitalism: What's Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?" 100.

This radical queer movement did face some limitations in being a radical movement, struggling in areas of intersectionality as revealed by Sears as well as Cathy J. Cohen in “PUNKS, BULLDAGGERS, AND WELFARE QUEENS THE RADICAL POTENTIAL OF QUEER POLITICS?” Cohen writes “queer activists who evoke a single-oppression framework misrepresent the distribution of power within and outside of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities, and therefore limit the comprehensive and transformational character of queer politics” demonstrating the importance of intersectionality in building a truly radical movement.⁶ This new movement also coincided with the queer identity and the emergence of queer theory⁷. At the time these were three, interrelated but not identical uses for the word queer, each one however assuming a radical connotation⁸. In Cassiopeia Mulholland-London’s “The Only Thing We Have to Queer Is Queer Itself: Naming the Cultural Machine of Radical Sexual Politics” she argues that since the beginnings of the radical queer movement the word itself has become assimilated and lost its radical meaning. Mulholland-London writes of the term Queer “the term has taken it from referring to a slur, a cultural machine of oppression; to referring to a radical political ideology, a cultural machine of transformation; to a general description of LGBTQ+ identity, which currently fits into a cultural machine of assimilation.”⁹ Mulholland-London goes on to write “assimilationists have instead recalibrated ‘queer’ to refer to... LGBTQ+ assimilation” and “the concept of queerness... has become ‘lifestyle queerness... identifying as queer without dedicating themselves to dismantling the systems of power that actually harm the most vulnerable LGBTQ+ people.”¹⁰ Mulholland-London demonstrates how even the explicitly radical branches of the LGBTQ+ movement have been co-opted to work within the systems of oppression they once challenged.

While the adoption of neoliberal assimilation politics and deradicalization of the Queer and LGBTQ+ movements has led to some successes, such as the legalization of gay marriage in the United States, it has also disenfranchised and harmed some of the most vulnerable members. Furthermore due to the reformist nature of assimilation politics these strategies also allowed victories to be rolled back in the face of reactionary movements as can currently be seen in the Trump administration’s attacks on transgender people. In Myrl Beam’s *Gay, INC.* he explores how the neoliberal nonprofit structure rose to prominence in the LGBTQ+ movement.¹¹ Throughout his book Beam demonstrates how this adoption of neoliberal non profitization causes harm to vulnerable LGBTQ+ people (especially youth and people of color) as well as how

⁶ Cohen, “PUNKS, BULLDAGGERS, AND WELFARE QUEENS THE RADICAL POTENTIAL OF QUEER POLITICS?” 441.

⁷ Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?” 99.

⁸ Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?” 99.

⁹ Mulholland-London, “The Only Thing We Have to Queer Is Queer Itself” 11.

¹⁰ Mulholland-London, “The Only Thing We Have to Queer Is Queer Itself” 15-17.

¹¹ Beam, *Gay, Inc.* 31-40.

nonprofits promote assimilation tactics and restrict autonomy and agency within LGBTQ+ communities, especially among the youth. Beam explores multiple ways that these organizations cause harm including exploitation and the creation of “deserving” victims. Beam writes that the actions of some nonprofits “call upon, the actual monetization of feelings” and of expectations at District 202, a supposedly “by and for” youth non profit, that “youth at work at District 202... would never interfere with the unspoken and largely invisible structure of the nonprofit itself—the board and their power, its fiscal management, fundraising, budgeting priorities, and perhaps most importantly, its understanding of itself in relation to its object, youth.”¹² Beam demonstrates how nonprofits are required, by their very structure, to exploit those they are supposed to be serving using emotional appeal to draw in donations to continue the nonprofits existence. Furthermore Beam reveals the creation of a deserving victimhood in nonprofits which frequently excludes more marginalized members of the LGBTQ+ community such as homeless youth and people of color. Beam demonstrates this exclusion through looking at the Chicago AIDS crisis and its non profits finding that it was based on narratives that assumed Black people to be primarily exposed to HIV through drug use and pushed the narrative its clients were “upstanding, employed, tax paying, out gay men” focusing on a deservedness to contradict the “popular welfare queen and other racialized symbols of the *undeserving* poor.”¹³ Beam also reveals that certain services were then withheld from those considered “undeserving” such as homeless youth and, through alienation from the community due to this rhetoric, HIV positive people of color.¹⁴

The problem of narratives that disservice, exclude, and harm more marginalized LGBTQ+ community members is not just a symptom of the nonprofit system but stems from assimilation based politics as a whole and its use of homonormativity. Laura Mendez’s “Queer Assimilation” explores this stating that these political discourses create “the good gay/bad gay dichotomy” that “encourages people to police even the most personal and intimate aspects of their behavior, and then ‘rewards’ them with social acceptance.”¹⁵ This self-policing to fit into the “good gay” category forces all LGBTQ+ people into a violation of personal privacy and self that does not have an equivalence for heterosexuals.¹⁶ Furthermore by creating this other category it leads to a division and othering of members of the community who cannot force themselves into the “good gay” role something that Mendez explains is harder for trans people, gender nonconforming people, Queer people, and people of color.¹⁷ Cohen notes a similar

¹² Beam, *Gay, Inc.* 58,124.

¹³ Beam, *Gay, Inc.* 61.

¹⁴ Bam, *Gay, Inc.* 62-63.

¹⁵ Mendez, “Queer Assimilation” 3.

¹⁶ Mendez, “Queer Assimilation” 3, 5.

¹⁷ Mendez, “Queer Assimilation” 3-5.

problem writing that “incorporation and assimilation are exposed as simply expanding and making accessible the status quo for more privileged members of marginal groups, while the most vulnerable in our communities continue to be stigmatized and oppressed.”¹⁸

In Nat Raha and Mijk Van Der Drift’s *Trans Femme Futures* they explore not only how neoliberal assimilationist politics can be othering and exclusionary but also how they can support power structures that cause harm under the false promise of creating protection for LGBTQ+ people. They explore the example of hate crime legislation arguing that it is “an investment into punitive culture... doesn’t make us safer... and instead shores up the power of the carceral state.”¹⁹ Sears comments on a similar reality acknowledging “changes in state policies have created certain openings for queer civil rights, yet at the same time queers have been caught up in new forms of coercive policing.”²⁰ This mix of civil rights gains but expansion of state power has led to a weakening of the LGBTQ+ movement as a whole. Sears argues “we have fallen rather short of the ambitious goals of all-round sexual emancipation set out by the radical movement for lesbian and gay liberation... [t]his demobilization leaves many queers out in the cold. The consolidation of lesbian and gay civil rights has tended to benefit some more than others.”²¹ Sears notes the demobilization of the assimilationist cause that leaves the community with non equitable gains and less power as a whole. This can also be seen in *Gay Inc.* and the non profit system specifically in how District 202 stripped youth of power within their community.²² Due to the inequity of gains and homonormative politics associated with assimilation politics, oppression and infighting is created and bolstered within the LGBTQ+ community, especially targeted at poor, gender non conforming, transgender, and people of color members of the LGBTQ+ community. Sears explores the class dynamics of this writing “[s]treet youth are now hustled out of queer areas by cops acting on behalf of gay or lesbian residents intent on creating comfortable middle-class neighborhoods. People with money (more often men than women) have privileged access to the commercialized spaces and consumer lifestyles that define visible queer ‘communities.’”²³ Due to the inequity in assimilation politics we see a divide among our community through class, leading to a less cohesive and oppressive community. Sears also notes other aspects of oppression within the community that stem from these inequities, such as racism, writing “[l]esbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people of color often face a double invisibility, effaced by the racism within queer communities and marginalized by the stigmatization of

¹⁸ Cohen, “PUNKS, BULLDAGGERS, AND WELFARE QUEENS THE RADICAL POTENTIAL OF QUEER POLITICS?” 443.

¹⁹ Raha and Van Der Drift, *Trans Femme Futures* 108.

²⁰ Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?” 103.

²¹ Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?” 93.

²² Beam, *Gay, Inc.* 124.

²³ Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?” 93.

same-sex identities and practices within their cultural community.”²⁴ This oppression within our community due to classism and racism can also be seen in the non profit system as revealed by Beam’s analysis of the issues surrounding the HRC, AVP, and the Boystown neighborhood.²⁵ Mulholland-London also notes that the deradicalization in the LGBTQ+ community has weakened our collective power. Mulholland-London specifically focuses on the deradicalization of the word Queer and how it has led to a loss of radical organizing and potential within the community as it has become a term of assimilation.²⁶

As neoliberal assimilationist politics have weakened, divided, and continued to oppress our community, both from the inside and outside, a change in strategy appears to be necessary during these times. This new politics must be radical in nature and incorporate leftist intersectional analysis to lead to success. In Todd May’s “There are No Queers” he notes in building a new Queer liberation politic we must navigate “three separate dangers... each of which threatens to push us into one of the other two. The three dangers are these: identity politics, reductionist Marxism, and liberalism.”²⁷ May notes that this movement must build “connections to other struggles, or else we risk marginalizing the struggle and undercutting that agenda.”²⁸ Sears makes a similar assertion to May, specifically proposing a queer Marxist feminist lense to address this issue. Sears writes the adoption of this politic “turns our attention to many dimensions of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered existence that have been neglected in queer theory accounts, including class relations and divisions of labor, the dynamics of state regulation, the specific impact of capitalist restructuring and the cultural logic of processes of commodification.”²⁹ Sears goes on to explain the benefits of addressing these issues stating that “A queer anti-capitalism takes us back to the best of the liberationist politics that emerged after Stonewall: the militancy, the breadth of vision and the transformative commitment.”³⁰

Beyond the philosophical adoption of a new lens to engage with politics, Raha and Van Der Drift lay the groundwork for what a new radically transformative politics would look like and the strategies it must incorporate. They explore how we must focus on community care and mutual vulnerability writing “[v]ulnerability reveals its power in mutuality” and “collective care encourages the flattening of hierarchies.”³¹ They also argue for the abandonment of purity politics and frictionless environments for an

²⁴ Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?” 93.

²⁵ Beam, *Gay, Inc.* 82-85, 98-102, 114-116.

²⁶ Mulholland-London, “The Only Thing We Have to Queer Is Queer Itself” 19-20.

²⁷ May, “There Are No Queers” 2.

²⁸ May, “There Are No Queers” 2.

²⁹ Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?” 94.

³⁰ Sears, “Queer Anti-Capitalism: What’s Left of Lesbian and Gay Liberation?” 109.

³¹ Raha and Van Der Drift, *Trans Femme Futures* 60-61.

adoption of complacency and accountability to better challenge oppressive systems writing “claims to innocence are harmful in their denial of violent structures... one feels exempt from scrutiny and accountability” and “[c]omplicity goes both ways: it requires facing one’s actions *and* being held accountable for how one’s positionality might inform those actions... claiming to be a part of the problem disallows and escape into liberal innocence.”³² They also assert “[t]his is not an idealist project, or hope, or a future that might emerge after a struggle, but the everyday shift of sensibility, connections, and relations.”³³ This is especially important as we work to bring liberation and radical politics back to the LGBTQ+ community as it is not a hope that oppression will cease to exist in some ambiguous future but we must strive and work towards liberation now.

The adoption of neoliberal assimilationist politics has divided, oppressed, and weakened the LGBTQ+ movement. For a better future that strives to liberate all people we must readopt a truly radical intersectional framework and strategy. Adopting aspects of class, gender, sexual, and racial analysis as well as strategies of mutual care and complacency within our community building and organizing. We are in a regressive administration and era for Queer rights in the USA currently, by adopting anti assimilation we can work to build power and care in ways divorced from the power structures that are currently working to oppress, exploit, and kill us. Adoption into these structures or avoidance of their brutality should not be the goal, instead we must advocate for their total dismantling.

³² Raha and Van Der Drift, *Trans Femme Futures* 106-107, 110-111.

³³ Raha and Van Der Drift, *Trans Femme Futures* 188

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