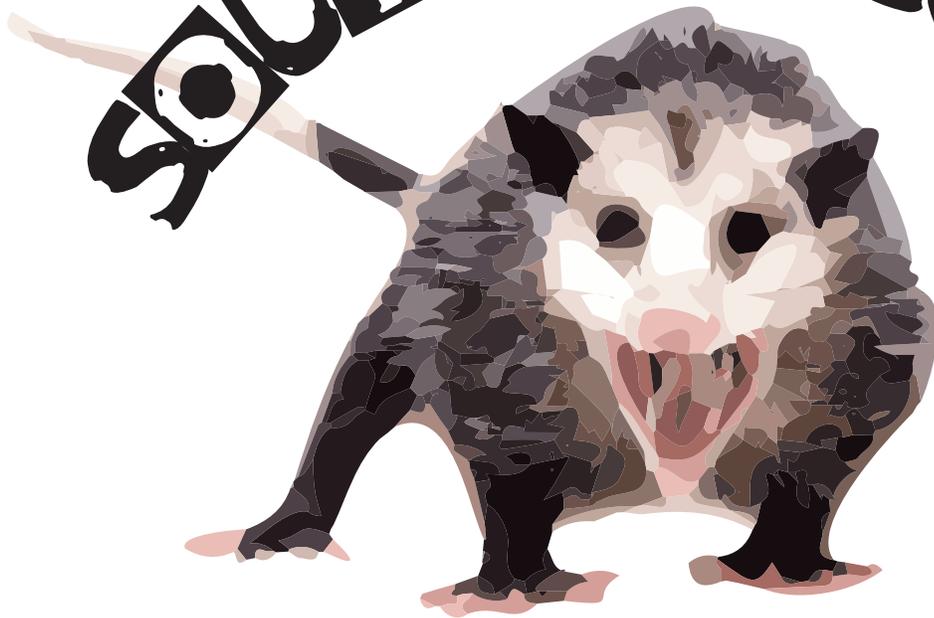


SOUTHERN SCUM



COLLECTIVE

**Queer Discovery
and Resistance**

Issue One February, 2025

Credits

Leaf

- 5. Moths
- 6. Under the Trees
- 15. Internalized Arachnophobia
- 17. Gatherings
- 25. Priorities of Queer Resistance

Lee

- 4. Opening
- 8. Fashion

Gracie

Logo
Graphic Design
Illustration

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Come in close,
what do you... Do?
who are you?
And what do you want?

If you're reading this...

It's far obvious you are one with a
perverted mind of sorts.
One with a mind that leans into the
freaks and weirdos.

whether you are one or with us, this
is a radical queer booklet filled
with what is basically known as the
writers pure hearts and souls dripped
onto the paper.

Moths :

By: Leaf H

We are the creatures who
Flew into their houses at night
Fleeing the cold of a world they created

After months melting in a cocoon
Our bodies and mind rearrange
To escape the ground of vulnerability

Swatted and sprayed
Murdered in our weak peace
Legs curled to our chest, bodies crushed

We see each other
We see the extravagant patterns of our wings
We see the soft fuzz of our bodies

Why wont they see our beauty?

Under the Trees:

By: Leaf H

The trees never cared, who's hand I held

Walking in their shade

Branches never coiled

Leaving us exposed

Our love could blossom

In their shade.

The moon never dimmed, when he held me tight

Basking in its beams

It never fell from the sky

Leaving us in the dark

When our hearts fused

Illuminated the moonlight.

Fall never fell quiet, after he shattered my heart

Leaving me in its cacophonies

Birds and squirrels never quiet

To leave my sobs exposed

The flowers never questioned, when my heart healed
If I ever could have loved him
Since I held her hand.

The birds never became silent, as her lips touched mine
Sitting on a park bench.

Their serenade never stopped, leaving us in silence
As we became smitten.

Natured never cares;
Love it always pairs.

I GO OVER

MY ARMOR INTACT

**I COME BACK
HOME**

I TAKE

IT ALL OFF

and

GET TO IT

COMFORTING MYSELF

Dear Diary,

TODAY I MADE A
NEW FRIEND

THEY showed me new things.
And how to wear it.

But I take it off before
going anywhere,
Everyone would think
it's weird.

Later that day,

I DO SOME DRESS UP

I PUT THIS ON
TAKE THAT OFF,

I TRY SOMETHING NEW,
AND I TAKE IT OFF

BUT I KEEP ON THAT
OTHER THING...

One day,

I feel weird!

The pills aren't working.

but...

putting on a
different outfit
does...

Ahh_{h_h}

this is me



Internalized Arachnophobia

By: Leaf H

A plastic skeleton sits on the porch months after Halloween. Remaining due to negligence. Between its ridgid ribs sits a small, fuzzy, spider. The spider feels smart, they know that the rib cage will protect their body from the hunger of birds. If they fill it with webs they can catch many bugs to feed on.

Weeks come and go. The moon rises, the sun sets. The spider stays in the skeleton building a complexly confined web. They eat the poor bugs that fly into their trap. Each day the spider continues to add more threads. Their web grows creating clashing silk diagonals in their plastic corpse.

One morning, before the sun has risen while the sky is a dusky dawn, a wren spots the spider. Patiently sitting on their web, visible between two plastic ribs. The wren swoops from its perch. Colliding the plastic cage, its maw is stopped millimeters from the spider's exposed body. The spider becomes more careful. They hide behind the ribs of their cage, safer but imprisoned. The seasons begin to change and the spider becomes more reclusive. They stay in their plastic corpse for months; feeling safely trapped by their rigid bones. Meals still come, but the web has begun to fill every free space in the skeleton's chest. The spider has trouble navigating their own home and they still fear the ever present threat of birds. They begin to forget what life was like outside their skeleton, the warm beams of sun become alien as they hide away each day.

The sun rises on a particularly warm summer day. Despite hiding behind a rib and the many layers of clashing webs entombing the spider, despite the constructed darkness of the plastic cavity, a beam of sun pierces through, illuminating the spider. The spider wants to flee. Away from the light that signals the watching eye of a bird, deeper into the corpse. But it hesitates. The sun feels nice. The spider stays in the ray, soaking warmth into their blood.

The darkness of the spider's life becomes uncertain. A protection that leaves it yearning for the sun. For a web out of the safety of their skeleton. In a tree or between blades of grass. Where they can feel the warmth of the world, exposed to death but free. These thoughts terrify the spider but continue to ruminate in their mind. The spider sits on the outside of the skeleton, feeling the warmth of the sun and the terror of being prey. After a day outside the clashing cocoon of the web with its decoration of death the spider decides.

The spider rests in their new web. Between two branches, half illuminated by the light of the day, they doze. No longer will they live in the manufactured corpse of another for safety. Enjoying a true life, despite its persecution. One day the spider is asked if they are the same spider who lives in the skeleton. The spider struggles to answer this question, not knowing what to say. It feels like so long ago and now they simply are. After pausing for moments of an eternity they respond. "Not anymore."

Gatherings

By: Leaf H

All my life I heard stories of undead gatherings in the woods. Some nights, when I was younger, I could hear the music and clamoring voices bleed into the night from their refuge. Recently, I decided I must see these meetings myself. The town never agreed on how to treat the undead. However, they mostly believe that those who gather in the woods should at least be avoided, if not dispersed, arrested, or destroyed. Occasionally more liberal mayors offer the undead amnesty when elected; but regardless of the town's official policy, gatherings in the woods always continue.

The town has a handful of undead residents, who are begrudgingly accepted as they took the offer of amnesty. However, despite claiming their undeath and being met with suspicion and occasional disdain, more often than not they side with the living over the undead. My aunt accepted an amnesty offer before I was born. While she claims to feel for the undead plight and advocates for new, more lenient amnesty offers, the taxes on her three-story house and her ballots for the "lesser evil" help fund occasional raids on gatherings the town declares as "unruly," "illegal," or "violent."

Tonight, I find myself skulking in the dark woods, for the third night in a row, to catch another glimpse at the gatherings. The past two nights I observed something I did not expect to see, joy. I was prepared for the rumors of the woodland undead being monsters, eating children and such, to be true. Or that they were just like everyone else in town. But they had a sense of joy that is alien to me. In town joy is a weak feeling, sometimes even fleeting. At best it becomes your sole focus for a moment before abandoning you. But in the forest, above the clanking of bones and chattering jaws, a peculiar communal joy resonates in the air.

Last night, the music began as a significant number of people entered a forest grove. There was a collage of clashing fashion and undead nakedness that covered the dance floor. Tuxedos swayed besides spiked leather jackets and those who wore nothing at all. Bones clanked, people embraced, and others danced or just chatted by the dance floor. All of these interactions held an authenticity never seen among the living.

Tonight the undead begin to gather around a long, roughly carved, wooden table in the center of the same secluded pine grove. People hug as they greet each other before adding homemade dishes and drinks to the table. After filling the table with food and the seats with guests, a figure stands clinking her glass. One half of her face holds a confident smirk while the other half, missing its flesh, reveals a stark white skull.

“Welcome friends, to our community dinner. I would like to thank everyone who brought something, even if you could only spare your presence.”

As she speaks, people quiet down, holding an apparent level of trust and respect in her.

“As we discussed at last weeks dinner-”

Something touches my shoulder and makes me jump back in fear, falling out of my hiding spot.

“Hi! I saw you skulking about the other night. You should come and sit down tonight. Maybe get a meal.” A kind looking corpse with pale white skin, short hair, and a gash running from their shoulder to their hip says. “Sorry if I scared you, you just looked lonely.”

My brain froze. Do I run? Awkwardly decline and leave? Or is that too suspicious? Despite the joy and apparent hospitality I waver. Even the undead in town warn that people at these gatherings are dangerous. But this person beaming at me, waiting for a response, seems genuine and, again, kind.

“Uhm– yeah. Sure, I’m Jaden.” I say before consciously coming to a decision.

“Nice to meet you, I’m Spork.” They say and begin to walk towards the table.

As I follow in silence, curiosity and caution dominate my mind. These feelings couple with the desire to fill the short silence as it has become unbearable.

“So what’s like your deal? You know I’m living right? Shouldn’t you at least be asking me to leave?”

“Or eat and murder me?” I add mostly joking, as I regret disclosing my living status.

“Like I said, you looked lonely. Besides, anyone is welcome to eat as we all should be able to. Unless you want me to eat and then murder you?” They retort, grinning.

By the time we find two seats, the speaker has finished and is filling her own plate. Spork greets the two people sitting across from us.

“Hey Ve’son and Dave! This is Jaden by the way. I found ‘em hiding at the edge of the grove.”

“Just like you Ve’son.” Dave jeers, playfully jabbing him.

“Shut up Dave!” Ve’son laughs before kissing him on the cheek. The sense of warm welcome ironically unsettles me further. I never felt this accepted in a social setting, let alone by strangers.

“So why are y’all out here anyway?” I ask, immediately noting that my question sounds ruder than I intended.

“Why do you live in that town? It’s not even made for the living.” Ve’son defensively snaps.

“Chill Ve’son. I’m sure they mean nothing by it.” Dave says. “Ve’son is very passionate but that does aptly sum it up.”

Dave chuckles defusingly. I notice his tuxedo shirt is speckled with blood. The deep dry maroon is the same color as his extravagant eyeliner. His outfit and makeup complement his dark skin and kind eyes.

“The town is made to cruelly create misery for all but its most affluent, serving to continue their position. If you can’t survive its rules and expectations it becomes more oppressive forcing you to either conform or die. So we found our community and got the hell out of there.”

“That town needs to be fucking burnt down or at least abandoned. The longer it stands the more likely they wont even tolerate us out here.” Ve’son ads, mostly seriously but with tones of humor.

Ve’son reaches for the tarnished, silver, chalice of wine in front of him. It glows in the moonlight and reflects his bright smile and light brown skin.

“So why are you out here? Creeping about?” Spork chuckles, shifting the conversation to a less serious mood.

I open my mouth to answer but stop as I realize I don’t have an answer. Or at least it is not the same as I originally thought. I don’t know what it has become. Why am I here? Why did I stay after being caught? I begin to sweat and awkwardly adjust my jacket, stalling for time but knowing I need to answer. Ve’son smiles at me warmly.

“I-uh don’t really know. I always heard stories and then when I saw you, you were all so happy and like, I have never seen people so kind and caring and- sorry I shouldn’t be here.” I get up, fleeing to the edge of the grove.

“Where are you going? It’s okay, there isn’t any reason to leave?” Spork says in a rising intonation that fails to reassure me. As I continue to hurry out of the woods, into safety, I feel a hand on my shoulder.

“Hey, I get it if you need to leave. The first time out here can be daunting.” Ve’son calmly says “But you mentioned that you have never seen people happy like this; maybe you should stay at least a little longer. Maybe get to experience it yourself, not just see it.”

* * *

As I lie down on my bed, who's sheets I should have washed last week, a dissonic melancholy grabs me. My usual loneliness and discontent don't feel stronger than normal, but somehow more poignant? Or less numbed? I begin to regret staying longer, for having the best night of my life. It has revealed the unbearableness of my usual sorrow. Maybe this town, my life, isn't made for any of us? As this question looms over my mind, I drift to sleep.

Usually I don't remember my dreams. Sleep slips me into a silent, inky nothingness. This morning however, as I get ready to go to work, snippets of a dream lurk in my mind. I was happy? Happy because there was something different about me that felt true. I remember arguing with a faceless, imposing man. But my words were not my own. I explosively articulate Ve'son and Dave's critiques of the town before the man shrinks to my own size. I blink out my memory as the impending work day becomes a reality. Over half an hour I dully force myself to get clean and dressed before I trudge out the door. At work, my mind wanders to the next undead gathering, a concert, the Spork insisted I come see on Friday. Throughout the week I loop through my monotonous labor, occasionally disturbed by the hope of community. Then I force myself back into action. Friday morning I debated calling out. The monotony and hopelessness of my daily life clashing against the excitement of the coming night creating an unbearable friction.

* * *

As I return to the grove, I notice similar faces and vibe to the previous gathering. Some more spiky jackets and pins, sure, but you still saw the occasional formal outfit despite the hardcore scene. Spork is loitering near the stage wearing a worn denim jacket, held together by a hodgepodge of patches, pins, studs and hope. Their shoulders are adorned with inch long, gleaming, metal spikes jutting towards the night sky.

“Glad you made it! I don’t know if this music is your thing but regardless, these nights are always fun. Great people and you get to let loose a little more than at a dinner.”

As the first band begins to play, Dave and Ve’son appear nearby. The band is loud and angry and a little hard to understand. But I can feel the music and emotion in my bone marrow. Next to us a mosh pit begins to form. Spork and Dave occasionally disappear into the pulsing circle of pushing, weird dancing, and explosive expression. Each time they exit with slightly more blood and viscera anointing them. But I guess that is to be expected when a bunch of people with open wounds get into close, physical contact. Either way they don’t seem to be bothered by it. The band finishes their set and the raw music is replaced by a slight ringing in my ears. The next band begins to set up, leaving the grove significantly quieter, however the clinking of bones and chattering voices remain.

“Zombie fucks!” a voice from the edge of the wood pierces the chatter. For a moment I think it is coming from an undead person, using coarseness for emphasis or humor. As I turn in that direction however, I see a group of townspeople holding clubs and the occasional small firearm walking into the light of our celebration.

I recognize the leader of the group. He’s a local cop that used to give speeches about safety and drugs at my old school. He was out of uniform but wielded a police baton in his clenched right hand. He begins to rant, disjointedly, about undead depravity and violence. The air of celebration has been replaced with tension.

While he raves, I notice Ve'son, Dave, last week's speaker, and a few other attendees slip into the woods. I can't tell if the man is trying to intimidate and "lecture" us or rile up his own mob. Spork pushes past me, their skeletal hand somehow hot on my skin.

"Can y'all just fuck off for once! You don't want us in your shitty town so we left and now we cant even be out here ei-" before they can finish speaking the police baton crashes down on their skull. Spork collapses to the ground.

I run to them as the grove stands still. The wind doesn't dare to blow. The cop looks surprised by his own action. Spork doesn't move as I shake them. As grief and rage well within me, filling every part of my body and leaking from my eyes, I look back to the mob. Within the cluster of faces, beyond the neighbors and cops, I see my aunt.

A group rushes from the woods wielding a plethora of improvised weapons. Members of the mob begin to shoot. I feel a sharp pain in my chest. Spork becomes heavy. I drop their body and everything fades.

* * *

My eyes snap open and I find myself lying on the forest floor. Dave and Ve'son are watching over me. I bolt up with anxious energy.

"I'm still here? Does that mean? Is Spork okay?" Before anyone else speaks I can tell by Dave's grim face that Spork is gone.

"You only come back once. Try to calm yourself a little, you just died. Take a moment to collect yourself." Dave says with caring tact despite his visual grief.

I look down at my chest covered in still seeping blood. The image shocks me as I feel no pain. I turn to Ve'son. His face somehow holds even more sorrow but it is accented with a righteous rage. His eyes are red with tears still welling up and occasionally rolling down his cheeks. He hands me a lighter and a hastily constructed torch.

“We won the fight. The cops and council fled. The unrest in town boiled over when we began to riot and large portions of residents joined in. Goods are starting to be handed out to those who need them like food and coats as well as the apartments and houses that have stood empty for years. There are already plans to elect a new council, tenants union, and labor union to govern.” Ve’son rambles both to catch me up and due to his shaken composure “But first we are going to burn down the banks, emptied jail, and the court house.”

“Maybe Jaden should rest, after just undying and all?” Dave carefully suggests.

“That’s up to them but after what happened to Spork I think they might want to set something on fire. Hell of a better introduction to undeath either of us got. A community around them and the beginning of real change. Beats waking up alone and cold. Not knowing what happened to you or that others like you even exist.” Ve’son replies “But you are right. If they want to rest they should.”

“You’re right. If Jaden wants to help burn something down they should as well. I know I will.”

Over the next few months a new normalcy begins to emerge. Fields and factories now owned by those who work them, democratically. Elections were transparent and honored more than the desires of the petty oligarchs that ruled us prior. The distinction between living and undead has begun to wither away as town life began to work for us all. Things are not perfect. We still have the occasional struggles from shortages or social tension like all groups of people do. But despite the struggles a sense of community always takes precedence. It is that same, previously peculiar, joy from the grove, that joy that beamed from Spork. I still miss them I wish they got to be here because they fucking deserve to, we all do.

Priorities of Queer Resistance

By: Leaf H

Gay marriage is a legal institution I have somewhat taken for granted. Obergefell v. Hodges was decided in 2015 when I was a freshman in high school and before 2022 felt like it was here to stay. Similar to Roe v Wade, opposition to the case by establishment conservatives seemed fringe. However with the overturning of federal abortion protections in 2022, many rights and privileges that appeared to be cemented in precedent have now been called into question. Many members of the LGBTQ+ community worry about the loss of marriage, rightfully so, but Queer and marginalized people are losing and will lose many protections with the looming Trump administration of the American regime. Trans and gender nonconforming people still face legalized harassment and oppression, something that the Trump administration has promised to expand. People with wombs have lost abortion protections. Harassment and Queer bashing still remain issues as well as housing insecurity and youth homelessness in the community. The question that concerns me is, if gay marriage is lost, should it become a main priority of the Queer movement as it was pre-Obergefell v. Hodges? Against Equality's collection "Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage" gains new relevance in our current moment. This collection is made up of essays before the legalization of gay marriage but critiques surrounding the prioritization of gay marriage, mismanagement of LGBTQ+ resources, and marriage itself being an oppressive institution. In our current historic context, they ask if gay marriage is overturned, should fighting for its preservation be the rallying issue of the modern Queer movement?

The movement for gay marriage was presented as a priority due to the narrative that it would solve multiple issues for the Queer community around respect,

discrimination, access to health care, and protection from exclusionary violence and hate crimes.¹ The Against Equality collective challenge and question this assertion with Ryan Conrad writing “marriage does little more than consolidate even more power in the hands of already privileged gay couples engaged in middle class hetero-mimicry” and “[g]ay marriage does not challenge economic systems set up to champion people over property and profit.”² Similarly Kate and Deeg as well as Eric A. Stanley argue that marriage does not fix the issues in the system but reform the system to expand privilege and power to a small section of affluent gay couples while not reaching the goals of liberation or even the improvement of life for the majority of LGBTQ+ people.³ As gay marriage has been legal in the United States it allows us to investigate these claims. According to Drabble et al. “Average levels of stress, psychological distress, and life satisfaction did not significantly change for individuals in same-sex relationships after national marriage legalization.”⁴ Similarly we can look at data around hate crimes and health care discrimination. According to the yearly FBI crime statistics hate crimes against LGBTQ+, transgender, and gender nonconforming people have consistently risen over the years and there was no visible decline to this after the legalization of gay marriage.⁵ While these numbers may be impacted by a higher visibility of the Queer community, with reported numbers spiking every June or a higher likeness to report crimes, it shows that gay marriage did not achieve its intended goal of less violence

¹Equality Network, “Why is same-sex marriage important?,” 2013; Liu, “Overview of Same-Sex Marriage in the United States,” 2012; Mollmann, “Gay Marriage: The Issue Is Respect,” 2011.

²Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 59.

³Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 15–95.

⁴Drabble et al., “It’s complicated: The impact of marriage legalization among sexual minority women and gender diverse individuals in the United States,” 2020.

⁵Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Hate Crime in The United States Incident Analysis,” 2024.

against the Queer community due to respect or assimilation. LGBTQ+ patients still face medical discrimination limiting the ability for care according to a 2018 CAP survey, numbers are higher among transgender individuals and this discrimination even impacts coupled LGBTQ+ parents.⁶ There has also been a continued persecution of Trans people both culturally and through legislation. The Trevor Project has found that the implementation of antiTrans legislation is correlated with a 72% increase in suicide among Trans youth.⁷ Something that the legalization of gay marriage also has not appeared to impact. Due to these flaws, prioritizing gay marriage as it may benefit aspects of Queer people, beyond simply having a legal certification and increase in economic rights if one chooses to marry, seems to be not as impactful as claimed or hope.

While there were some aspects of improvement due to the legislation of gay marriage such as “perceptions of increased levels of family support and decreased levels of stigma and support from friends among individuals in same-sex relationships” it appears that gay marriage is not a multi faceted cure to the oppression LGBTQ+ people face. However the Against Equality collective does offer alternatives and authors within it do not completely denounce marriage activism. Kate and Deeg argue that we focus on the root causes of systematic issues such as fighting for socialized medicine and to “fig[ht] to create a society in our own image. A decent and humane society where we can be free.”⁸ Conrad argues that we should be focusing the fight not on legislative change but on cultural change writing “[c]hanging a law in a book does much less to create an atmosphere of safety for queer and trans folks than long-term cultural change.”⁹

⁶Mirza and Rooney, “Discrimination prevents LGBTQ people from accessing health care,” 2018.

⁷News, “Anti-Transgender Laws Cause up to 72% Increase in Suicide Attempts Among Transgender and Nonbinary Youth, Study Shows,” 2024.

⁸Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 47.

Keyon Farrow's essay "Is Gay Marriage Anti-Black???" critiques the prioritization of gay marriage based on the lack of protection and utilization it would give to the Black community. Farrow writes "I think that even if same-sex marriage becomes legal, white people will access this privilege far more than black people. This is especially the case with poor black people who, regardless of sexual preference or gender, are struggling with the most critical of needs (housing, food, gainful employment), which are not at all met by same sex marriage."¹⁰ This demonstrates that gay marriage as an institution is biased towards the distribution of rights to white couples over Black Queers. Farrow also state that gay marriage "does not address my most critical needs as a black gay man to be able to walk down the streets of my community with my lover, spouse, or trick, and not be subjected to ridicule, assault, or even murder."¹¹ Farrow also mentions that gay marriage "does not adequately address homophobia or transphobia" leading further to critique the idea of its prioritization as it does not serve the safety of the Queer community as a whole.

While gay marriage may not be the solution it was expected to be, is there a harm in championing it? Especially as it can be a more accepted and supported idea in mainstream politics? Against Equality argues, beyond its failures to make the changes it promises, that these marriage campaigns have used massive amounts of money that could be better spent improving the lives of Queer people. Eric A. Stanley writes "[w]e reject a gay agenda that pours millions of dollars into campaigns for access to oppressive institutions for a few that stand to benefit."¹²

⁹Against Equality, "Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage," 62.

¹⁰Against Equality, "Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage," 42.

¹¹Against Equality, "Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage," 43.

Similarly to Kate and Deeg, Stanley continues to advocate for challenging the institution as a whole and focusing on issues that benefit the entire community or other oppressed people as a whole such as fighting police brutality, fighting for end to the war on terror, medicare for all, wealth taxation, and an end to people being considered illegal.¹³ Conrad focuses on this point through the lens of Maine’s campaign against Prop 1. Conrad writes “the marriage campaign in Maine is spending money with abandon. The “No on 1” group spent close to \$6 million over the duration of the campaign, taking 1.4 million in donations in the first three weeks of October alone.”¹⁴ Conrad reveals at the same time community resources such as AIDS clinics, health/reproductive clinics, and Queer youth support groups are struggling to afford to provide resources.¹⁵ Conrad also critiques that national gay marriage advocacy groups donated over \$400,000 on election night.¹⁶ Conrad argues that “If the NGLTF or HRC were interested in improving the lives of queer and trans Mainers, they would have given this kind of funding to issues actually outlined as critical at the statewide symposium.”¹⁷ In this case money is being spent on an issue the local Queer community did not view as critical when it would be better spent in other areas to support the Queer community. If the end goal was to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ mainers the No on 1 and national gay marriage movements failed to properly utilize resources in the area. Conrad works to put this spending into context writing “the largest funding source for LGBT organizations in the state is the Equity Fund, which only distributes \$40,000 a year amongst the numerous LGBT applicant organizations” and challenges us to “[i]magine what kind of change could be made if that \$6 million was used to support organizational capacity building and programming of those organizations providing essential services and advocacy.”¹⁸

¹³Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 32.

¹⁴Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 61.

¹⁵Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 61.

¹⁶Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 60.

¹⁷Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 60.

¹⁸Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 61-62.

As previously mentioned, Stanley not only decries the waste of resources but refers to marriage as “access to oppressive institutions for a few that stand to benefit.”¹⁹ This assertion aligns with some other members of Against Equality who question the merits of the institution of marriage as a whole. Kate Bornstein argues that marriage should not be in charge of distributing rights for couples as it largely is controlled by religious bodies violating the Constitution’s separation of church and state.²⁰ Boenstein continues this critique arguing the expansion of marriage will also cause larger inequities due to the systematic disadvantages of marriage in its current state writing “[s]ingle parents, many of whom are women of color, will not get the 1,500-1,700 rights they need to better and more easily raise their children” and “[m]arriage is a privileging institution. It has privileged, and continues to privilege people along lines of not only religion, sexuality and gender, but also along the oppressive vectors of race, class age, looks, ability, citizenship, family status, and language.”²¹ Here we see a critique of not only gay marriage but all marriage as a tool of oppression. These ideas are also seen in Farrow’s writing. Farrow writes “debates over “family values,” no matter how broad or narrow you look at them, always have whiteness at the center, and are almost always anti-black.”²² Farrow also critiques the inequities of adoption that gay marriage leads to writing “Since black families are in fact presented and treated as dysfunctional, this explains the large numbers of black children in the hands of the state... In many cases trans-racial adoptions are the result. Many white same-sex unions take advantage of the state’s treatment of black families; after all, white queer couples are known for adopting black children as they are so “readily” available.”²³

¹⁹Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 32.

²⁰Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 24.

²¹Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 24-25.

²²Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 39.

²³Against Equality, “Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage,” 39.

Returning to Conrad's work we also can critique the classism and patriarchal violence of the institution of marriage. Conrad writes "[t]hese 1,138 [federal marriage] rights... largely pertain to the transfer of property and money" and "[g]ay marriage reinforces the nuclear family as the primary support structure for youth even though nuclear families are largely responsible for queer teen homelessness, depression, and suicide."²⁴ Through these critiques we can see marriage as a legal concept as an institution that unjustly and oppressively restricts rights towards individuals and not as an institution whose expansion will bring liberation. MJ Kaufman and Katie Miles continue to critique this structure as a piece of "late liberal capitalism" and argues that "its promise of formal rights over real restructuring, of citizenship for those who can participate in the state's economic plan over economic justice for all" is part of the manipulation and harm of the expansion of marriage to include gay couples. They also critique how this institution and the rights that come with it stem from inherent exclusion on rights for others, writing "making it seem like [through gay marriage] the queer community's only interest in health care is in the inclusion of some members of two person partnerships in the already exclusive health care system."²⁵ This quote, similar to the conversion around priorities, reveals that gay marriage does not fix inequalities around health care but instead is an institution of exclusion towards health care. Overall the Against Equality essays critique gay marriage as a continuation of the systematic oppression that is currently tied to marriage as an institution.

The writings in Against Equality's "Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage" continue to be relevant as we live in a political climate that both threatens gay marriage and has began to remove rights previously protected by court precedent.

²⁴Against Equality, "Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage," 59-60.

²⁵Against Equality, "Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage," 79.

These critiques and modern context demonstrate that, while individuals may appreciate the ability to have their marriages sanctioned by the state, the institution of marriage, even gay marriage is at best not beneficial for many in the Queer community and at worst is a continuation of oppression and exclusion of rights towards others. This dialogue could be further expanded on through a Black Queer lens, as I could not add in depth cultural and anecdotal analysis to engage with Farrow's writings on perceptions of marriage within the Black community and if these sentiments have changed over the 10 years of legalization of marriage. The question of if gay marriage should again become the priority for the Queer movement seems to be that gay marriage does not challenge the systems of power that are actually oppressing the Queer community. Conrad aptly sums up this sentiment, writing "[w]e must fight the rhetoric of equality and inclusion in systems of domination, like marriage and the military, and stop believing that our participation in those institutions is more important than questioning those institutions' legitimacy all together."²⁶

²⁶Against Equality, "Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage," 63.

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Thank you for

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COLLECTIVE

c u again soon?