though I have spent considerable time and energy unlearning my own racism as much as possible and learning how to identify it in both myself and the world around me, however, my understanding of racism differs from my understanding of cis_hetero_sexism because I am not targeted by its unrelenting violence. Focusing on the intersections between these two systems of oppression does not mean that sexism, classism, ablism, and other systems of oppression that I might not be (as) aware of are not relevant for the comics I analyze. It simply means that my analysis is, for the most part, limited to the aspects I am most familiar with. This does not make my analysis untrue, but it does make it incomplete and it risks coming to conclusions that might have to be revised once more attention is paid to the systems of oppression that I did not focus on.

2.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERSECTIONAL LGBTIQ POLITICS IN THE U.S.[39]

Intersectionality is, of course, not only a theoretical concept, which functions as a research paradigm, but is also embodied in and articulated through much political activism. In the following chapter, I will not only outline the history of intersectional LGBTIQ activism but also point out how and why it is often left out of many accounts of LGBTIQ history. This historical overview serves to further situate both the comics I analyze as well as my own research project within a history of intersectional LGBTIQ activism and theorizing.

In the U.S., queer comics in general are a product of LGBTIQ activism and culture 'after Stonewall.' The Stonewall riots, which took place at the Stonewall Inn in New York on June 27th, 1969, marked a turning point in LGBTIQ organizing in the U.S. While the Stonewall riots were not the first time that LGBTIQ

39 This chapter has an unfortunate metronormative bias. In his book, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism*, Scott Herring details how queer studies tend to treat LGBTIQ life in large urban areas as the normative ideal and really as the only worthwhile reference point for LGBTIQ life in general. This chapter, too, draws only on examples from New York and the Bay Area in this short overview of the history of intersectional LGBTIQ politics. This is not to say that these kinds of politics were only practiced in urban locales. It is rather a reflection of the metronormative focus of the two books that serve as my main sources, Emily K. Hobson's *Lavender and Red* and Christina B. Hanhardt's *Safe Space*. Where LGBTIQ histories in other locales are relevant for my analysis, I include them in more detail in the respective chapters.

bar patrons fought back against police harassment (the Compton's Cafeteria riots in San Francisco, for example, took place three years earlier, in August of 1966, cf. Stryker and Van Buskirk, 49), they galvanized LGBTIQ organizing all across the U.S. in a way that no previous event had. As Stephen M. Engel reports, "In 1969, before the Stonewall riot, fifty homophile organizations existed in the United States; by 1973, there were over eight hundred gay and lesbian groups, and by the end of the decade they numbered into the thousands" (45). Similarly, the freedom day / pride parades that have been taking place annually since 1970 in multiple cities across the U.S. and later the world to commemorate the Stonewall riots grew exponentially in size within a few short years. In San Francisco, for example, the first parade in 1972 already mobilized an impressive 50,000 people, but that number grew to 200,000 in 1977 (Stryker and Van Buskirk 67). As these numbers indicate, LGBTIQ movements across the U.S. increased dramatically in size and strength after the summer of 1969. In her study *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco 1950-1994*, Elizabeth Armstrong concludes, "In the 1970s, the gay community in San Francisco acquired an unprecedented power and visibility. The number of organizations, both nonprofit and commercial, exploded" (113).

Many of the newly emerging LGBTIQ organizations in the late 1960s and early 1970s were, in fact, rather intersectional in their politics. In 1969, radical politics were 'in the air' in the U.S. Hobson describes the political context in which the Stonewall riots took place as follows: "Across the long 1960s a wide assortment of radicals [...] came to reject the idea that the US nation-state set the horizon of equality and freedom. They created not just a 'New Left' set apart from the Communist Party, but a 'Third World Left' motivated by anticolonial struggle and Chinese, Cuban, and diasporic black revolutions" (7). The LGBTIQ movement that mushroomed across the U.S. after Stonewall was firmly located within this political environment. As Hanhardt writes, "Early gay liberation was closely linked to the New Left and, in general, stood in solidarity with anti-imperialist, revolutionary nationalist, and radical indigenous activisms. These political movements tended to focus on a critique of state violence and to support self-determination and place claims" (21).

Stephen M. Engel concurs that "[t]he gay liberation theory which emerged in the post-Stonewall era was essentially New Leftist in that it was not concerned with the goals of gays and lesbians alone, but with overturning the white male hegemony which characterized modern capitalism" (41). Susan Stryker and Jim Van Buskirk report that in the Bay Area in particular, "[p]sychedelic aesthetics, student unrest, the tactics of the civil rights struggle and black militancy, labor organizing, social critiques rooted in the anti-war movement, the second wave of

feminism, and Marxist political analysis all contributed to the rise of the gay liberation movement" (53).

Organizationally, these multi-issue LGBTIQ politics were embodied most famously by the Gay Liberation Front, the founding of which Hanhardt describes as follows:

> Before the fires of Stonewall had cooled, the GLF was founded in New York. In less than a year, there were branches in San Francisco, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Austin, as well as on college campuses nationwide. The branches were united on a few key points: social reform and cultural assimilation were limited; gay liberation must be tied to the liberation of women, people of color, and decolonizing nations (the name itself was another retooling of the rhetoric of analogy and alliance, based on the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam); and oppression was an issue of structural power, linked at once to the institutions of capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and imperialism. (86)

Historiographies of the gay liberation movement commonly portray this movement as having spontaneously erupted out of nowhere and then dying down again almost instantly. For example, Stephen M. Engel writes that "Gay liberation evolved from one transcendental moment that symbolized the shift from victim to empowered agent. It came in the late evening of Friday, 27 June 1969 at a seedy gay bar, the Stonewall Inn, in Greenwich Village" (40). About the movement's demise, he states, "By the end of the decade the political side of the movement almost seemed to fizzle faster than any of its predecessors. Spun out of similar concerns that grounded the civil rights and feminist movements, the gay and lesbian rights movement emerged as much of the leftist energy began to wane and as the national culture turned conservative" (40), and he claims that, by then, "Gay liberation as a tenable ideology had died" (46).

Similarly, Armstrong asserts, "The sudden decline of the new Left reduced conflict between radical and moderate strands of gay liberation by eliminating the viability of the more radical agenda" (xi). Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele flatly declare that "the liberation model didn't last. It gave way to a model – based on the main ethnic minority rights model of the time – that presented gay and lesbian people as a distinctive minority and aimed to achieve rights and legal protections *within* the existing social order" (52).

In recent years, scholars such as Hanhardt and Hobson have countered these narratives by tracing intersectional activism both before and after the 'Stonewall moment.' Hanhardt writes, "LGBT activists were involved in political organizing that sought to shake the status quo for years prior to Stonewall. Individuals

challenged staid homophile organizations while working with those who abraded the norm and were actively involved in leftist, counterculture, feminist, and black and Third World liberation struggles throughout the 1960s" (84f). She cites "the police watchdog group Citizens Alert" (85), the Central City target area campaign, which sought to direct War on Poverty funding to San Francisco's Central City area, which included the Tenderloin and served "as home for many of San Francisco's low-income Filipino families, the elderly, and single people, as well as a place for transient queer uses" (62), as well as "the Committee for Homosexual Freedom, which blended elements of left radicalism and militancy with exuberant gay pride" (85) as examples of intersectional LGBTIQ activism in the Bay Area during the 1960s. While these groups and initiatives did not comprise the mainstream of LGBTIQ activism during this time, they nevertheless laid the groundwork for the gay liberation movement that took off after Stonewall, with the Committee for Homosexual Freedom actually changing its name and becoming the Gay Liberation Front in San Francisco in 1969 (Hobson 26).

Hobson also criticizes common narratives that portray radical, intersectional LGBTIQ politics as "ineffectual, isolated, and rare" (6). She writes:

> [W]hat truly defined the gay and lesbian left was not that it was born in the late 1960s but that it grew for years thereafter. Quite a lot happened after Stonewall. Over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, gay and lesbian leftists pursued an interconnected vision of liberation and solidarity [...]. They engaged socialist and women of color feminism and struggled against the US and global New Right. They organized as lesbians and gay men for peace and justice in Central America and drew on lessons from Central American solidarity to organize direct action against the political crisis of AIDS. Their efforts find legacies today in contemporary queer activism, including queer work against prisons, queer immigrant organizing, queer involvement in Palestinian solidarity, and the Black Lives Matter movement. (4)

As these genealogies show, intersectional LGBTIQ activism and critique are neither new nor exceptional. At least since the 1960s, many LGBTIQ activists in the U.S. have recognized that LGBTIQ people are not only targeted because of their sexuality and/or gender but also because they are poor, sick, disabled, racialized, and/or colonized. They have organized to oppose a broad array of interlocking systems of oppression that target LGBTIQ people along with straight cis people and have therefore sought alliances with non-LGBTIQ movements that similarly seek to overthrow systems of heteropatriarchal, racialized capitalism. As Hobson puts it,

the gay and lesbian left, a movement that stretched from the heights of the 1960s to the depths of the AIDS crisis[, ...] defined sexual liberation and radical solidarity as interdependent. Gay and lesbian leftists saw heterosexism as interconnected with war, racism, and capitalism, each system using the other as a mechanism and support. They argued that full sexual freedom depended on anti-imperialist and anti-militarist change and that, by organizing as gay and lesbian radicals, they could achieve multiple and overlapping goals. The gay and lesbian left did not simply pursue alliance between distinct political causes, but also, more aspirationally, worked to forge an integrated and nonbifurcated politics [...]. And, by pursuing their politics across bodily, local, and global as well as national scales, gay and lesbian leftists crafted a vision for change that moved beyond liberal and neoliberal inclusion in the United States or other capitalist states. (2)

This strand of LGBTIQ politics, activism, and theorizing is often forgotten in histories of LGBTIQ movements in the U.S. It may be glimpsed as a flare-up of intersectional activism as in most accounts of the years immediately following the Stonewall riots, but it is hardly ever recognized as a consistent strand of LGBTIQ movement building. Most historiographies of LGBTIQ activism construct the history of the LGBTIQ movement as oscillating between different poles. Barker and Scheele, for example, see the defining conflict in the LGBTIQ movement as one between essentialist identity politics on the one hand and queer politics based in "practices" and "affiliations" (53) on the other hand. Douglas Crimp defines "essentialist separatism" and a "liberal politics of minority rights" (14) as the two defining modes of LGBTIQ activism after the demise of the Gay Liberation Front. Both of these common portrayals erase the continuing existence of intersectional activism since the entire spectrum of LGBTIQ activism that they acknowledge is largely located within non-intersectional, single-issue branches of LGBTIQ activism. Hobson analyzes the problem with this approach and also illuminates the relationship between intersectional activism and queer politics:

Certainly, both separatism and liberal rights have been long-standing strands of gay and lesbian politics, and both gained strength between Stonewall and ACT UP. But Crimp was incorrect to present them as the only modes of politics developed in the 1970s or 1980s. Throughout those decades, gay and lesbian leftists challenged both separatism and liberalism, crafting a broader, more complex, and more sustained array of politics than Crimp understood. The gay and lesbian left continued the 'identification with other political movements' that Crimp believed was practiced only at the outset of gay liberation. It had been 'rethinking identity politics' for decades by defining sexual liberation through radical solidarity. It offered queer politics a genealogy, even if that was a genealogy Crimp

did not know. This is not to say that the gay and lesbian left was simply queer politics by another name, or vice versa. By and large, gay and lesbian leftists only sometimes embraced destabilized views of gender and sexuality. They generally failed to incorporate, and in some cases expressed criticism of, bisexual and transgender identities, butch-femme expression, and BDSM. Likewise, queer activists of the 1990s did not always pursue multi-issue radicalism. (192)

Hobson's analysis gestures at the fact that while intersectional activism can be militant and/or antinormative, it does not have to be. Nor is all militant and/or antinormative activism necessarily intersectional. There are certainly overlaps between these various modes of LGBTIQ activism, but they are not all one and the same. The distinction that I am most interested in for the purpose of this book is the distinction between intersectional and single-issue branches of LGBTIQ activism and politics.

Single-issue politics are characterized by their exclusive focus on only one system of oppression and their refusal to address how that system of oppression might intersect with others in the lives of different segments of the targeted group. Apart from their general disinterest in political struggles against other systems of oppression, single-issue politics also typically fail to address how they themselves might be complicit in the perpetuation of other forms of oppression. Crenshaw lays out one of the central problems with this type of politics. She writes that "dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis" and that this way of thinking in turn leads to a "focus on the most privileged group members" ("Mapping" 140). She explains "that this focus on otherwise-privileged group members creates a distorted analysis of racism and sexism because the operative conceptions of race and sex become grounded in experiences that actually represent only a subset of a much more complex phenomenon" ("Demarginalizing" 140), which leads her to state that the dominant discourses within single-issue anti-racist and feminist movements "are often inadequate even to the discrete tasks of articulating the full dimensions of racism and sexism" ("Mapping" 1252). In her talk, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," Lorde also pointed out that sexism has many faces and does not only exist in the incarnation that white middle-class women are most familiar with: "in a patriarchal power system where whiteskin privilege is a major prop, the entrapments used to neutralize Black women and white women are not the same" (118).

Applied to the particular intersection between racism and cis_hetero_sexism that is most relevant for my project, this means that because of its intersections

with white privilege and racist oppression, the cis_hetero_sexism faced by white LGBTIQ people looks different from that faced by LGBTIQ People of Color. Focusing only on the experiences and most pressing needs of the more privileged (i.e. white) segment of the LGBTIQ population inevitably leads to an inadequate understanding of the workings of cis_hetero_sexism in society as a whole and it grounds political projects that will only benefit those LGBTIQ people who are otherwise most privileged. Crenshaw developed the analogy of people stacked in a basement to describe this phenomenon:

> Imagine a basement which contains all people who are disadvantaged on the basis of race, sex, class, sexual preference, age and/or physical ability. These people are stacked-feet standing on shoulders - with those on the bottom being disadvantaged by the full array of factors, up to the very top, where the heads of all those disadvantaged by a singular factor brush up against the ceiling. Their ceiling is actually the floor above which only those who are *not* disadvantaged in any way reside. In efforts to correct some aspects of domination, those above the ceiling admit from the basement only those who can say that 'but for' the ceiling, they too would be in the upper room. A hatch is developed through which those placed immediately below can crawl. Yet this hatch is generally available only to those who – due to the singularity of their burden and their otherwise privileged position relative to those below – are in the position to crawl through. Those who are multiply-burdened are generally left below unless they can somehow pull themselves into the groups that are permitted to squeeze through the hatch. ("Demarginalizing" 151f)

As this analogy graphically illustrates, single-issue politics usually fail all but the most privileged members of the groups whose liberation they purportedly seek. As Jin Haritaworn et al. elaborate in their introduction to *Queer Necropolitics*, since 9/11 in particular, several scholars within intersectional queer studies have also "turned their attention to the violence of inclusion itself, looking at the ways various intersections between racism, border regimes and wars differentiate between those queers folded into legal and political subjecthood, and those destined for wartime killing or everyday deadly abandonment" (12). The inclusion of some LGBTIQ people is violent not only because it still excludes many people, like Crenshaw's basement metaphor suggests but also because it "serves to usher into consent those who have traditionally been critical of the racist state" (Haritaworn et al., "Introduction" 18). Intersectional projects not only need to ask, "Who is still left outside?" but also, "Whose oppression do I become complicit in through being included?" and, "Whose oppression is justified through my inclusion?"

On the second question, Morgan Bassichis and Dean Spade assert that "the basic assumptions, tactics, and epistemologies underlying contemporary queer political claims often unwittingly reproduce and are productive of the fundamental structures of anti-blackness, settler colonialism, and permanent war undergirding the United States itself" (194). In essence, they are saying that the U.S. is a settler colonial state, built on the simultaneous exploitation and exclusion of Black people, and has been at war both inside and outside its current national borders for most of its existence. If single-issue LGBTIQ politics seek recognition from and inclusion into this state for those LGBTIQ people who 'but for' their gender and/or sexuality would be able to belong to the group benefitting from these systems of oppression, they not only throw under the bus all other LGBTIQ people who are still targeted by them, they also become complicit with these systems of oppression, from which they benefit and which they do not in any way challenge.

On the third question, Puar in her book, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, and in her article, "Israel's Gay Propaganda War," as well as Haritaworn et al. in their article, "Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the 'War on Terror,'" have offered valuable analyses of how Western states have increasingly pointed to their inclusion of some LGBTIQ people to distract from and justify murderous racist, colonial, and imperial regimes. I will return to their concepts of 'homonationalism' and 'gay imperialism' in more detail in chapter 5.2.1 For now, suffice it to point out that proponents of single-issue LGBTIQ politics not only become complicit with the violence of the states into which they seek inclusion but also consent to letting themselves be used to justify the violence visited upon others in the name of (supposedly) fighting for the rights of LGBTIQ people.

Since at least the late 1960s, the two broad strands of single-issue and intersectional LGBTIQ politics and activism have clashed repeatedly in the U.S. Even before Stonewall, Leo Laurence, "a young white man who served as editor of the homophile SIR's [Society for Individual Rights] publication Vector" (Hobson 24) wrote an article called "Homo Revolt: Don't Hide It!", in which he

> challenged SIR to join the broader left movement, especially by abandoning gay inclusion in the military in favor of opposition to the Vietnam War. He urged gay and lesbian radicals to see links between sexual liberation and support for the Black Panthers, and he lambasted SIR and the Tavern Guild for 'middle class bigotry and racism,' in part because of the Guild's refusal to work with Citizens Alert against police abuse. (Hobson 24)

The issue of military inclusion was already prominent in this early conflict and would continue to be one of the most central dividing issues between single-issue and intersectional approaches to LGBTIQ activism. Hobson writes, "It was one thing to claim the 'right' to organize as workers, to be gay on the job, or to be protected from state abuse, but quite another to seek the 'right' to participate in the US Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines" (84). While intersectional activists could work together with single-issue activists on some liberal issues that sought to increase the life chances of LGBTIQ people within the U.S. by fighting for comparatively slight modifications to existing structures of power, they usually drew the line at seeking inclusion into the U.S. military, which they saw as an institution enforcing U.S. imperialism abroad and thus harming countless people all over the world, including LGBTIQ people whose life chances were diminished by the forces of U.S. imperialism.

SIR responded to the charge issued by Laurence by pushing him "out of Vector and declar[ing] itself a resolutely 'one-issue' organization addressing only 'those issues that pertain to the homosexual as a homosexual'" (Hobson 24). SIR thus formulated a central tenet of single-issue activism: Those issues that pertain to LGBTIQ people as colonized LGBTIQ people, racialized LGBTIQ people, economically exploited LGBTIQ people, disabled LGBTIQ people and so forth are of no concern to single-issue LGBTIQ activists. Laurence in turn founded the Committee for Homosexual Freedom, which then became the Gay Liberation Front in San Francisco. The Gay Liberation Front in turn found itself embroiled in similar conflicts. Hanhardt summarizes the conflict as it played out in New York:

> But not all gay activists were happy with the multi-issue thrust of an anti-imperialist stance. A concern with maintaining an explicit, gay-only focus was behind the founding of the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) when its members broke away from the GLF in New York at the start of the 1970s, citing the need to focus on a more gay-centric agenda, pursue winnable social reforms, and look for positive publicity. GLF members who were in solidarity with broader liberation politics were criticized by GAA founders for subordinating the concerns of gays for the struggles of 'others' (even as the former position also tended to default to a focus on white gay men). Frequently made in such general terms, this complaint was nonetheless often a thinly veiled expression of opposition to working in solidarity with Black Power and Third World liberation campaigns, especially support of Cuba. (89)

In the mid 1970s, another large Bay Area organization, Bay Area Gay Liberation, experienced a split similar to the Gay Liberation Front in New York over the issue of military inclusion. Hanhardt states that the split was

> due to by-then familiar rifts over adopting a broad-based leftist versus gay-focused agenda. The more left-identified Progressive Caucus continued [...] coalition work on issues as varied as support of farmworkers and solidarity with the Chilean resistance to military dictator Augusto Pinochet. The group's members argued that a struggle unilaterally focused on gay oppression would only assist 'white middle class men' and that 'gay people's problems cannot be solved by reacting to the symptoms of anti-gay prejudice, but must attack the system at the root [...]: Imperialism. (99f)

From the beginning of the gay liberation movement, intersectional and single-issue activists also clashed over the question of separatism. In 1970, Los Angeles activists began circulating the idea of a gay take-over of Alpine County in a very sparsely populated part of Northern California. They imagined a kind of "safe haven" for gay people, an entire county run entirely by and for gay people (Hobson 34f). Intersectional activists criticized this project as an essentially colonial endeavor, arguing "that gay nationalism stood in conflict with Third World solidarity and that it replicated the gay ghetto. By contrast, they argued that sexual liberation could be achieved only through anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist revolution" (Hobson 12). As the Alpine County controversy showed, lesbian and gay separatism with its inherent single-issue focus stood in opposition to intersectional activism. LGBTIQ Activists of Color across the country further "emphasized the points that racial and sexual identities are not autonomous categories and that for many lesbians and gay men of color, gay separatism was neither appealing nor feasible" (Hanhardt 123).

In her book, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*, Hanhardt analyzes the related issue of gay neighborhood formation and protection. She details a series of conflicts between single-issue and intersectional activists all the way from the 1970s to the 2010s. As she convincingly argues, these conflicts usually pivot on the question of violence. Single-issue activists typically portray 'street crime' as the single gravest danger facing the increasingly affluent and largely white gay residents of gay neighborhoods like the Castro and Greenwich Village and they implicitly and explicitly identify low-income People of Color as the perpetrators of said crimes. Single-issue activists thus call for the state to 'protect' them through increased criminalization and policing from the perceived threat posed by the presence of low-income People of Color (including low-income LGBTIQ People of Color) in gay neigh-

borhoods. Intersectional activists have consistently resisted these space claims in the name of white gay capital by "[s]how[ing] how certain lesbian and gay people were harmed rather than benefited by gentrification. Moreover, they refused the discourse of protection as they sought safety outside traditional measures [...]. In doing so, they demonstrated that identification with the state risked making a call for violence while seeking a wide variety of lesbian and gay rights claims" (Hanhardt 120).

AIDS activism, beginning in the early 1980s, was another site where tensions between single-issue and intersectional activists flared. Direct action strategies against the spread of HIV/AIDS, which arose out of multiple LGBTIQ organizations, many of which had ties to earlier intersectional activism, quickly became largely identified with ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, which was founded in 1987. According to Hobson, "Direct action against AIDS culminated two decades of work by the gay and lesbian left" (158). Just like earlier incarnations of gay and lesbian leftist politics, however, ACT UP was soon faced with an internal rift between

> 'treatment' and 'social action' agendas, also termed single- versus multi-issue politics. Tensions between these agendas became heightened by 1988 and led multiple ACT UP groups [...] to split apart between 1990 and 1992. The treatment agenda, often characterized as a call for 'drugs into bodies,' centered on expanding and speeding up the research and availability of AIDS drugs and drug regimens. The social action agenda looked to the conditions in which people with HIV and AIDS lived and became sick; it sought to put 'bodies into health care' and to consider how problems of housing discrimination, incarceration, immigration, sex work, and racism, sexism, and poverty affected both the spread of the virus and access to and efficacy of medical care. (159)

Hobson identifies AIDS as one of the contributing factors that eventually led to the demise of a specifically leftist strand of LGBTIQ activism in the early 1990s because many of the central figures who had been active for years, even decades, in the gay and lesbian left were killed by the virus (190).

The end of the Cold War and what was seen by many as the end of socialism as a viable political option, of course, further weakened the left in general and "the United States's already minimal commitments to social welfare – though under attack since the 1970s – became further decimated by neoliberal policies built on privatization, 'personal responsibility,' and 'law and order'" (Hobson 190). While intersectional LGBTIQ activists forcefully opposed the first Gulf War in 1991 (Stryker and Van Buskirk 117) and continued to oppose military inclusion in the 1990s (Hobson 189), "[n]ational gay and lesbian organizations

[...] gained influence while prioritizing military inclusion and marriage equality, goals that many radicals criticized as homonormative" (Hobson 190f). The term *homonormativity* was coined by Lisa Duggan, who defined it as "a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption" (50). Citing Duggan, Hobson argues that, during the 1990s, "against earlier frameworks of liberation, gay and lesbian 'rights' have increasingly been incorporated into a 'superficial multiculturalism' that reifies gay and lesbian people as white and affluent and redirects attention from redistributive goals. Proponents of the rights agenda came to present it as the ultimate horizon of freedom, seeming to leave no other possibilities for change" (Hobson 190).

In my reading, the political formations that Duggan dubbed "homonormative" are only the post-Cold-War incarnations of much older strands of single-issue LGBTIQ politics, as they adapted to the deepening power of neoliberalism. After all, Armstrong cites a quote from radio commentator Randy Darden from May 1969, in which he claims that "the greater part of the gay community has a financial interest in a stable, affluent society. We rely on the patronage of well-heeled, middle-class heteros for our stage shows, beauty parlors, fashion shows and other services" (95). A much clearer articulation of homonormative politics is hard to find than this statement that fully affirms "heteronormative assumptions and institutions" and praises "a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in [...] consumption" years before neoliberalism even dawned on the political arena.

With the demise of the gay and lesbian left during the 1990s, homonormative single-issue politics were able to dominate LGBTIQ politics to such an extent that a resolutely single-issue group like Queer Nation, which "sought to move away from the racial and gender divisions that plagued the movement by asserting a new unitary identity of 'queer'" (S. Engel 55) could come to embody what Barker and Scheele, in a move that erases decades of intersectional activism, term a "renewal of radical activism" (53) in the 1990s. Stephen M. Engel notes that

> instead of working through the gender and racial rifts that have damaged the movement, queer nationalism subsumed and belittled them in order to preserve cohesion. Film maker Marlon T. Riggs found the centrality of white middle-class concerns of Queer Nation profoundly alienating: 'the New [Queer] Nationalists, on the rare occasion they acknowledged my existence at all, spoke of me with utter contempt, spat and twisted my name like the vilest obscenity.' (56)

Hobson similarly argues that Queer Nation "relied on white and middle-class definitions of both 'straight' and 'queer,' and aspects of its work defined sexual freedom and safety in alliance with US state violence" (193). It seems as if in the wake of the demise of the gay and lesbian left, single-issue politics temporarily accrued so much influence within the broader LGBTIQ movement that they did indeed seem to define the horizon of possibility for LGBTIQ activism.

However, an important caveat remains: This perspective which sees single-issue LGBTIQ politics as so dominant during the 1990s that they all but eclipsed intersectional alternatives is essentially a white perspective. In 2016, Hobson published her brilliant history of the gay and lesbian left, *Lavender and Red*, and she makes a point of highlighting the often-overlooked participation and leadership of People of Color in leftist movements. Nevertheless, many of the larger groups associated with the gay and lesbian left were still dominated by white people. The Gay Liberation Front in San Francisco, for example, "both began and remained composed primarily of white men" (Hobson 26). Bay Area Gay Liberation, which succeeded the Gay Liberation Front in San Francisco, similarly had a predominantly white membership (Hobson 80). Hanhardt reports that "the majority of the members of both the Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance in New York were gay white men, and many reported the groups as unwelcoming, tokenistic, or even hostile to other people" (121f).

AIDS activism showed a similar picture: "As AIDS direct action developed, it too was largely white; this was true of Enola Gay, of John Lorenzini and Bill Blackburn, and of most members of Citizens for Medical Justice, the AIDS Action Pledge, and ACT UP groups" (Hobson 159). Hobson summarizes, "The historical gay and lesbian left [...] proved inconsistent in its analysis of racism and its membership remained largely white" (198). The history of intersectional LGBTIQ activism in the U.S. is incomplete in the absence of a comprehensive history of LGBTIQ of Color activism, including, but not limited to activism that understood itself as specifically leftist. Even though both Hobson and Hanhardt provide glimpses of the rich history of LGBTIQ of Color activism in their accounts of the gay and lesbian left and LGBTIQ anti-violence activism respectively, there is as yet no historical account that takes LGBTIQ of Color activism as its starting point and traces its development through the years.

From these glimpses, it can be inferred that conflicts over racism often led to the formation of separate groups of LGBTIQ People of Color within larger leftist LGBTIQ contexts, with these groups often splitting from the contexts they were originally formed in. In New York, for example, the Third World Gay Revolution was one of the offshoots of the GLF that formed in 1970 (Hobson 31). On the West Coast, the Third World Gay Caucus formed out of BAGL, but

ended up becoming its own autonomous group (Hobson 83). Of course, LGBTIQ People of Color also formed their own groups quite apart from white contexts, like Gente, for example, "a Bay Area group of lesbians of color that numbered as many as forty people and that first formed as a softball team" (Hobson 53). For the 1970s, Armstrong lists "the Native American Gay Rap Group (1972-73), the Black Gay Caucus (1977-78), the Gay Latino Alliance (1977-94), the Gay Asian Support Group (1978-81), and the Third World Lesbian Caucus (1977-79)" (149) as further examples of LGBTIQ of Color groups. While there were comparatively few of these groups in the 1970s, "[b]y the early 1980s the number of organizations representing LGBT people of color had exploded, and there was also a vibrant mix of multiracial LGBT groups on the left. A total assessment of these organizations could fill volumes, although it would be quite challenging to keep pace with each group's rapid starts, finishes, and changes" (Hanhardt 149). Stryker and Van Buskirk concur with this assessment when they write about the Bay Area:

> Queer groups addressing issues of color began to appear in the mid-1970s, but this trend accelerated rapidly in the 1980s. Black and White Men Together formed in 1980, and the Association of Lesbian/Gay Asians formed in 1981, to mention only two examples. A Little More – a women's dance club with a primarily black, Latina, and Filipina clientele – was located in the Mission near Esta Noche, a Latino men's bar with a strong drag presence. Berry's, a long-established bar in Oakland, served mostly black male patrons. By the decade's close, various queers-of-color groups were producing a substantial body of newsletters and periodicals. The Gay Asian-Pacific Alliance [...] published *Lavender Godzilla*. *Trikone* focused on the South Asian community, and *Aché* was aimed at women of African-American descent. (106)

Instead of attempting an impossible overview (in the absence of more comprehensive research) over the many groups representing LGBTIQ of Color activism, I want to focus briefly on two issues that have been of particular relevance to LGBTIQ of Color groups. The first one concerns racism within LGBTIQ contexts. As Stryker and Van Buskirk observe, "gay and lesbian culture could be every bit as racist as the dominant society. Just because white queers were learning to resist one form of oppression that personally affected them did not guarantee they understood their role in perpetuating other forms of oppression" (55). Carding policies at LGBTIQ clubs, where People of Color would have to show two or three separate pieces of ID at the door or would only be allowed inside in small numbers, were (and are) of particular concern. Hobson recounts a specific

example of organized protest against these practices. Under the leadership of People of Color, BAGL

> initiated pickets outside the Mineshaft, a large and notoriously racist club, and by September 1975 threatened a boycott. Under this pressure, the Mineshaft agreed to BAGL's 'Bill of Rights' for employees and patrons of gay bars, baths, and other businesses. This included asking only for one 'valid ID,' agreeing to consider people of color and women for jobs, and banning discrimination on the basis of 'race, sex, lifestyle, or style of dress.' Although bias was by no means eradicated, the campaign set bar owners on notice. (80)

Racism was not only rampant in the bar and club scene, however. Even though intersectional groups attempted to address multiple registers of power simultaneously, they were nevertheless often so racist that People of Color left them in protest. In San Francisco, for example, People of Color in ACT UP started the Bayard Rustin Coalition "to address both the racialized impact of HIV/AIDS and 'racial insensitivity' in the group itself" (Hobson 177). Hobson cites a statement by the group titled, "Racism within ACT-UP/SF," which makes it clear that "what is especially of concern about ACT-UP/SF is that ACT-UP/SF militantly denies its own racism" (qtd. in Hobson 177).

Partially in response to both institutionalized and interpersonal racism from white LGBTIQ people, LGBTIQ People of Color also formed their own groups that were specifically by and for them. Hobson analyzes the racial dynamic behind the formation of Gente as follows:

> Gente's members observed that when they entered bars as individuals, they found themselves racially 'invisible,' yet when they entered as a group 'somehow, we cause a threat.' These receptions inspired black and Latina women to form Gente to claim and remake their identities as lesbians of color [...]. Gente used softball to generate multiracial bonds among women of color and to redirect energy away from responding to white women's perceptions and expectations. (53)

As these examples show, conflicts over racism within LGBTIQ contexts are neither new nor exceptional, but have characterized the post-Stonewall era from the outset.

The second issue I want to focus on is LGBTIQ solidarity with movements led by People of Color both nationally and internationally. Hobson cites the example of AIDS activist Guillermo Gonzalez who "spoke out about his frustration that despite their long-standing presence, 'gay people of color are invisible to the left,' and he defined lesbian and gay solidarity with Central America as one way

out of that invisibility and beyond a single-issue, racially limited gay politics" (1). It only makes sense that LGBTIQ Activists of Color would be better connected to movements for racial justice in the U.S. and to international liberation struggles than white LGBTIQ activists and are therefore often well-equipped to lead intersectional LGBTIQ coalitions and solidarity movements. Already in 1970, the Third World Gay Revolution in New York "advocated coalitions with black and Third World liberation struggles and challenged white gay liberationists who claimed that such organizations were intractably antigay or who focused on the sexism of black men over that of white men" (Hanhardt 123). In particular, they mobilized for the Black Panthers' Constitutional Convention at Temple University in Philadelphia in 1970 (Gossett 581) after Huey Newton had published a letter "call[ing] on his fellow Panthers to confront their 'insecurities' about women and gay men, to reject sexist and homophobic language, and to include gay and women's groups in events" (Hobson 31).

Lesbian and gay solidarity with Central America "began in 1978 through the Gay Latino Alliance and Bay Area Gay Liberation, expanded in 1979 through the group Gay People for the Nicaraguan Revolution, and by the early 1980s became a defining concern of the gay and lesbian left" (Hobson 98). Hobson describes gay and lesbian solidarity as "a politics by which activists adapted barrio transnationalism to further radical sexual politics and to build multiracial lesbian and gay community" (98). She writes that "Many of the activists who initiated and led solidarity were not Nicaraguan or Salvadoran, but rather situated other Chicana/o and Latina/o identities in relation to the Mission District's barrio transnationalism" and that "Slogans linking Nicaragua to Vietnam, Chile, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, and the campaign to free Angela Davis all became common, written into protest signs, political posters, and Mission District murals" (105). Solidarity with the Sandinista revolution allowed activists to build multiracial LGBTIQ community and practice an intersectional politics.

LGBTIQ newspapers also "juxtaposed coverage of Central American solidarity with articles about local Latina/o gay and lesbian organizing, debates over racism in lesbian and feminist communities, and articles on gay and lesbian politics in Mexico, Argentina, Cuba, and elsewhere in Latin America," thereby "encourag[ing] readers to see Central American solidarity as linked to the goals of anti-racist community and cultural understanding" (Hobson 113). Solidarity abroad was thus connected to fighting racism within the U.S. and within LGBTIQ communities. The strength of LGBTIQ solidarity with Nicaragua was demonstrated

in March 1988 [when] President Reagan – falsely claiming that the forces of Nicaragua's Sandinista government had crossed into Honduras – sent 3,200 US soldiers to the region to prepare for a full-scale military assault. His action was turned back in the face of protests in 150 US cities and objections from Congress. San Francisco activists organized ten days of demonstrations lasting from March 17 through 26, including marches that brought downtown traffic to a standstill and produced more than five hundred arrests. A 'Gay and Lesbian Task Force' – a temporary coalition led by the AIDS Action Pledge and including LAGAI and many affinity groups – served as one of four groups leading the protests, joined by the Pledge of Resistance, CISPES, and the Nicaragua Information Center. (Hobson 173)

In 1990, however, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional lost to U.S. backed Violeta Chamorro in the national elections. The electoral defeat of the revolution in Nicaragua further weakened intersectional LGBTIQ activism in the U.S. during the 1990s.

If single-issue politics seemed to define the horizon of possibility for LGBTIQ activism in the 1990s, the attacks on September 11, 2001 further deepened the alliance between the U.S. nation state and white LGBTIQ people with U.S. citizenship. The attacks led to an unprecedented rise in homonationalist politics (cf. Puar), which began to offer inclusion to white LGBTIQ people with U.S. citizenship while using the charge of 'homophobia' to dehumanize People of Color, particularly Arabs and Muslims, in order to justify the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as racist measures within the U.S.[40] The escalating homonationalist attacks on people who were read as Arab and/or Muslim increasingly demanded some form of resistance from intersectional LGBTIQ activists. Hobson writes that, in contrast to earlier forms of leftist intersectional activism, within these new formations of intersectional activism that grew in the 2000s, "a commitment to people of color leadership and an understanding of racism in and as state violence have become central" (198). She offers the following brief genealogy of post-9/11 intersectional LGBTIQ activism:

One important turning point came in 2008, when the simultaneous election of President Barack Obama and voter approval of California's anti–gay marriage Proposition 8 prompted some observers to declare that 'gay is the new black.' Compelled to counter such specious comparisons between race and sexuality, a broad range of queer activists sharpened their challenges to single-issue LGBT politics. Their responses ran alongside

40 For a more detailed analysis of homonationalism after 9/11 as well as its precursor in anti-Cuban politics see chapter 5.2.1.

and intersected with transnational queer critiques organized through Palestinian solidarity, which gained strength through the first decade of the twenty-first century and especially following the 2008–9 Gaza War. Much as the Central American solidarity movement fueled gay and lesbian radicalism in the 1980s, queer radicalism today has been profoundly affected by Palestinian solidarity, especially the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, which calls for Israel to comply with international law by ending its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and respecting the rights of Palestinian residents and refugees. Queer activists have especially challenged 'pinkwashing,' a term used to name the Israeli government's effort to minimize criticism by emphasizing its limited tolerance for Israelis who are gay or lesbian [...]. Another turning point for queer radicalism, particularly in the United States, could be seen in 2012 and 2013 with the rise of 'undocuqueer' activism, the campaign to free Chelsea Manning, and the growth of Black Lives Matter. (194)

As this short historical overview of LGBTIQ politics within the U.S. has shown, there has been a continuing, if not always equally strong tradition of intersectional LGBTIQ politics, activism, and critique spanning the past five decades, constantly reinventing itself, adapting to new circumstances and challenges, shifting and re-shifting its focus to what seemed to be the most pressing issues in any given time-period. This intersectional strand of activism has sometimes been dominant within larger LGBTIQ movements, but more often than not it has been shunted to the side by single-issue LGBTIQ politics. Nevertheless, intersectional activists have thought long and hard about how LGBTIQ people are impacted differently across different registers of power. Time and again, they have pointed out that the solutions sought by single-issue activists only benefit the most privileged segment of LGBTIQ people and in some cases like military inclusion or immigration barriers for supposedly 'homophobic' Arabs and Muslims actively harm some segments within the larger LGBTIQ community. Over and over again, they criticized the racism and colonialism present in LGBTIQ spaces. And over the years, they kept attempting to build alternative ways of living that did not rely on inclusion into the dominant structures of power. It is important to keep this long history of intersectional LGBTIQ activism in mind when assessing the racial politics of LGBTIQ comics. Intersectional LGBTIQ politics were around since long before the emergence of queer comics and the ways in which these comics do and do not engage with these politics and legacies shed light on the implicit and explicit politics espoused by queer comics.