

astonishing pace, all signs currently also point to a drastic decrease in the life chances of LGBTIQ people, which in turn increases the urgency of fighting for the lives of LGBTIQ people as well. Despite these drastic, rapid shifts in the discursive terrain in the past few years, Bassichis and Spade document the enormous influence discourses claiming that ‘gay is the new Black’ had as recently as a few years ago, particularly in the legal field:

White gay and lesbian rights advocates and the lawyers who lead their charge consistently analogize the gay and lesbian rights struggle to the black civil rights movement. Examples abound. *Lawrence v Texas*, the Supreme Court decision finding sodomy statutes unconstitutional, was lauded as ‘our *Brown v Board of Education*’ (Graff 2003). Same-sex marriage advocates consistently analogize their struggle to *Loving v Virginia*, the 1967 case in which the Supreme Court declared anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional (American Foundation for Equal Rights (n.d.); Capehart 2011; Farrow 2005; Klarman 2005: 485-86; Pascoe 2004; Rosenfeld 2007). More broadly, the articulation of the fight for same-sex marriage or gay and lesbian rights generally as a ‘frontier’ of civil rights (Beavers 2000: 31-33; Colvin 2011; Marquez 2008; Seltzer 2011; Tolbert and Smith 2006), or sometimes ‘the final frontier of the civil rights movement’ (Marco n.d.; May-Chang 2008). (203)

In this chapter, I will read *Stuck Rubber Baby* as a complex fictional narrative that ultimately gives credence to the claims, propagated by these dominant discourses, that Black people and white gay men suffer from the same oppression and that the fight for racial justice belongs to the past while the fight for sexual justice belongs to the present. I will also analyze how these claims complicate intersectional politics by suggesting that openly gay white people are racially innocent and that fighting for the increased visibility of gay white men makes specifically anti-racist activism unnecessary.

#### **4.4 CONSERVATIVE CRITIQUES**

Whereas *Stuck Rubber Baby* positively takes up discourses that frame ‘gay as the new Black,’ these discourses have also been critiqued both on conservative and on intersectional grounds since their emergence. Already in 1993, Lena Williams wrote for the *New York Times* that “some conservative blacks oppose homosexuality on religious grounds.” Three years later, Boykin concurred that “conservatives in the black religious community [...] rejected any comparison between blacks and gays” (31). He identified Colin Powell as “the most visible

African-American opponent of the comparison between blacks and gays" (31), citing him as arguing, "skin color is a benign, non-behavioral characteristic. Sexual orientation is perhaps the most profound of human behavioral characteristics. Comparison of the two is a convenient but invalid argument" (qtd. in Boykin 32).

When conservatives reject any and all comparisons between racism and *cis\_hetero\_sexism*, this rejection can itself be an expression of *cis\_hetero\_sexism*, which denies that LGBTIQ people face oppression at all and that this oppression needs to be dismantled. This absolute rejection of comparison also neglects the existing similarities in practices of domination directed against People of Color and against LGBTIQ people. Boykin asserts, for example, that "[t]he arguments against gays in the military provide one of the clearest examples of the common language of racism and homophobia" (255) with identical arguments being used to argue for the exclusion of gay and lesbian service members as were used to argue against Blacks in the military. Boykin also reminds his readers that overt expressions of interpersonal racism and *cis\_hetero\_sexism* can function in remarkably similar ways. He cites Melvin Boozer, who told the 1980 Democratic National Convention, "I know what it feels like to be called 'n\*\*\*' and I know what it feels like to be called 'f\*\*\*' and I can sum up the difference in one word: none" (84). Without claiming that racism and *cis\_hetero\_sexism* are 'the same' or 'equally severe,' it can be helpful to identify similar practices of domination directed against different (though overlapping) groups of people. Identifying these specific practices can facilitate a process of learning from different traditions of activism how best to combat them (all the while guarding against the danger of appropriating modes of resistance without accountability and reciprocity).

## 4.5 COMMON INTERSECTIONAL CRITIQUES

### 4.5.1 Are All the Gays White and All the Blacks Straight?

Claims that 'gay is the new Black' are not typically rooted in a simultaneous engagement against both *cis\_hetero\_sexism* and racism. Quite to the contrary, these claims often serve to cleave the fight against *cis\_hetero\_sexism* from the fight against racism. Intersectional critiques show that one way this division is achieved is by using the comparison between the Civil Rights Movement and the gay and lesbian movement to imply that "all gays are white while all blacks are