1969 – 1980

PRIDE IN DIVERSITY

RELIGIOUS, RACIAL, AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES
TRANSGENDER ACTIVISM
BISEXUAL VISIBILITY
LESBIAN-FEMINISM
'Sisterhood is Beautiful' was an ideal we strove for in all parts of our lives.

IT WAS AT KATE'S CABIN DOWN a long rugged country road in southern Oregon where I sipped homemade lemonade, curled up in the big armchair in front of the picture window, and soaked up all things lesbian. I read Well of Loneliness and wept, read Edward the Dyke and chuckled, read back issues of Quest and pondered. I listened to their collection of

When I came out two months earlier in San Francisco, that spring of 1975, one of the things that was most important to me was to meet another Asian lesbian, of which there seemed none at the time. Only one name was ever mentioned, but I never got to meet her, someone named Sapphire, before I left California to live on women's land. And then one hot afternoon a big boat of a car came up the road and an Asian woman emerged looking for Kate. Suddenly I found myself looking
face to face and exchanging words with this woman in a moment strange—not only because this was the only other Asian face I'd ever seen in the whole state—but because I found her beauty undeniably captivating. At once I knew that this was Sapphire.

Still being so new to lesbians, every time I met some it was an event of note and aroused great anticipation, fear, and **excitement**. Sapphire was an imposing figure with a stunning mane of thick, lustrous black hair that swept down the length of her back. Her presence commanded attention. (Actually I am taller than Sapphire but low cabin ceilings and my sense
of invisibility led me to believe that all lesbians I met that summer were taller and bigger than they were).

I thought we'd have an instant rapport based on our common upbringing in the San Francisco Chinese-American community, based on the voluminous reading I'd done about lesbian feminism... about the Movement... reading poetry about us being common loaves and an army of lovers. The concept 'Sisterhood is Beautiful' was an ideal we strove for in all parts of our lives. I had harbored secret hopes that I'd find in Sapphire a fascinating, powerful, older Asian sister to look up to... or at least make a friendly acquaintance with.

– Canyon Sam
**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

In the 1970s, gay replaced homosexual as the term of choice from within the community. Initially, gay was predominantly used as an umbrella term meaning both gay and lesbian people. When the phrases gay rights movement and gay liberation movement are used, it refers to the fight for gay and lesbian rights. As the 1970s progressed, lesbian activists preferred to be identified as lesbians, rather than gay or gay women. Outside of the broader meaning of the term gay in "gay rights movement" and "gay liberation movement" or in organizational names from the 1970s (such as the Gay Liberation Front and National Gay Task Force), when the term gay is used in this text it refers specifically to gay men.

Although the term LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) has been used throughout the text, it is not a term people used in 1970s. Transgender and bisexual activism emerged in the 1970s, but each functioned on the outskirts of the gay liberation movement. In fact, in this era, transgender and bisexual activists often faced discrimination from gay and lesbian communities. Transgender is used in this text as an umbrella term that covers all people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior differs from those typically associated with the sex they were at birth. Queer was considered a derogatory term in the 1970s, unlike the positive all-inclusive meaning it has today.
IN THE LOS ANGELES SUBURB
of Huntington Park in 1968, Troy Perry started the first LGBTQ ministry in the United States, the Metropolitan Community Church. Despite homophobic attacks, the congregation grew from 12 members in 1969 to 43,000 members in almost 300 congregations in 22 countries by the 21st century. Father Patrick X. Nidorf opened the first ministry for LGBTQ Catholics, DignityUSA, in Southern California in 1969. By 1972, the organization had members in twenty states and chapters in ten cities. Beth Chayim Chadashim became the world’s first LGBTQ synagogue when it started services in Los Angeles in 1972. The rapid proliferation of LGBTQ synagogues across the world led to the first World Congress of GLBT Jews in 1975. In 1974, Louie Crew began the newsletter Integrity for gay and lesbian members of the Episcopalian Church, resulting in the opening of a handful of Integrity chapters across the United States. In 1977, Matthew Price helped found Affirmation—Gay Mormons United, with early chapters in Salt Lake City, Denver, and Dallas. By 1979, chapters in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Salt Lake City had helped to create a national charter and newsletter.

In the post-Stonewall era, racially and culturally identified groups also emerged. In 1970, Third World Gay Revolution groups started in New York and Chicago, and Unidos, a Los Angeles organization
for gay Latino Americans, held its first meeting. In 1974, African-American and Latina-American lesbians in New York founded Salsa Soul Sisters as a social alternative to the discriminatory bar scene. In 1975, Randy Burns, a Northern Paiute, and Barbara Cameron, a Lakota Sioux, founded Gay American Indians. San Francisco’s Asian-American Alliance and Boston Asian Gay Men and Lesbians were founded in the late 1970s. Other groups of the era include the Native American Gay Rap Group (1972), Gay Latino Alliance/GALA (1975), Third World Lesbian Caucus (1977), and Black Gay Caucus (1977). The National Coalition of Black Gays emerged in 1978 and sponsored the Third World Lesbian and Gay Conference in 1979, bringing together a coalition of racially and culturally identified groups.

**TROY PERRY, A PENTECOSTAL MINISTER,** moved to California after being expelled from his Tennessee congregation because he was gay. Adrift and despondent, Perry was inspired by a police raid of a local gay bar to create “a church for all of us who are outcast.” In October 1968, in the living room of his rented house, Perry conducted the first service of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). Membership expanded rapidly, and in 1971 the church purchased property of its own, the first openly LGBTQ organization to do so.

The expansion of church membership gave Perry a pulpit through which to mobilize LGBTQ people for equal rights. He led effective protests on the discriminatory policies of local businesses, police, and government. Perry went on hunger strikes to raise money and awareness for important causes such as the fight against California Proposition 6 (the initiative proposed to fire gay and lesbian educators from public schools). He performed some of the nation’s first public gay wedding ceremonies in 1969.

Perry was a national figure within the LGBTQ rights movement. He helped to establish the National New Orleans Memorial Fund to provide medical assistance and support services to victims of a fire that killed 32 people at a New Orleans gay bar that housed MCC church services. In 1977, he participated in the first gay and lesbian coalition to meet at the White House. Perry took a train across the country to encourage support for the 1979 National March on Washington, and in the process brought the LGBTQ movement to previously isolated communities. He performed mass wedding ceremonies at that March on Washington and repeated the act in subsequent marches.
IN 1970, TRANSGENDER ACTIVISTS Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson broke from New York’s Gay Activists Alliance to start the Street Transvestite Action Revolution (STAR). STAR advocated for transgender rights and opened STAR House to provide shelter for transgender youths at risk. In Los Angeles, Angela Douglas founded the Transsexual/Transvestite Action Organization (TAO). TAO opened chapters across the United States and published the national magazine *Mirage* to advocate for transgender rights. However by the end of the decade, STAR, TAO, and the 

**Angela Douglas and the Los Angeles Gay Liberation Front picket a bar in 1969 for its posting of the sign “Fagots Stay Out.”**

**S Y L V I A R I V E R A** 1951 – 2002

**TRANSGENDER WOMAN SYLVIA RIVERA WORKED** and lived on the streets of New York City and was subject to frequent violence and police brutality. When the police stormed the Stonewall Inn in 1969, Rivera took an active part in the resistance. She became one of the founding members of the New York Gay Liberation Front and an early member of the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA). Finding GAA dismissive to the cause of transgender people, she co-founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) with Marsha P. Johnson. However, the organization folded two years later, and by the end of the decade, Rivera was back living on the streets. The Sylvia Rivera Law Project was established after her death to “guarantee that all people are free to self-determine their gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination or violence.”
leading transgender-advocacy organization, Erickson Educational Foundation, had folded. Although small community groups persisted, discrimination against transgender people, both from within and outside the gay and lesbian communities, would keep transgender men and women from broader visibility and civil rights mobilization until the early 1990s.

By the 1970s, numerous universities and private doctors had formed gender identity clinics to conduct reassignment surgeries. Fearful of abuse by unqualified practitioners, a group of clinicians, therapists, and researchers began forming standards for care at the yearly International Symposia on Gender Identity. The Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association (HBIGDA), formed in 1979, gave official sanction to standardized procedures for reassignment treatments.

The increase in reassignment surgeries led to a surge of requests for changing the listed gender on government-issued identification cards. When the legal rulings on those requests conflicted with one another, it demonstrated the difficulties judges had in interpreting cases regarding gender nonconformity. In 1977, the successful legal challenge by transgender woman Renée Richards to play professional tennis on the women’s circuit, pointed to an improving understanding of gender identity, although it would be some time before municipalities, states, and the judicial system consistently provided some measure of equality.

THE MODERN CONCEPT OF bisexuality gained the nation’s attention in Alfred Kinsey’s research of the 1940s and 1950s in which he found widespread indications of bisexuality within the United States population. In 1963, Jefferson Poland and Lee Koch started the Sexual Freedom League, one of the first bisexually-oriented groups. In 1964 in New York, the Sexual Freedom League collaborated with gay activists in the first known LGBTQ protest. In 1965, Poland moved from New York to San Francisco where the league’s activities garnered broad media coverage.

In 1972, New York bisexual activists formed the National Bisexual Liberation Group, one of the first known groups expressly for bisexuals, and published one of the first known bisexual newsletters, The Bisexual Expression. This was followed by the Bisexual Forum in New York in 1974, the San Francisco Bisexual Center in 1976, and ByWays in Chicago in 1978. In 1972, at the annual Friends General Conference in Ithaca, a subgroup of bisexual Quakers wrote the "Ithaca Statement on Bisexuality” and published it in the Quaker’s Friends Journal and the LGBTQ periodical the Advocate, raising bisexual awareness and consciousness.
IN 1970, THE LESBIAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT came into prominence at the second Congress to Unite Women. Forty lesbian women wearing “Lavender Menace” T-shirts seized the conference and forced an open dialogue about lesbians in the feminist movement. The Lavender Menace women took the name Radicalesbians and, along with groups such as the Lesbian Feminist Liberation, advocated for lesbian rights and liberation. Reversing course from earlier hostilities against lesbian members, National Organization for Women (NOW) delegates at the 1971 national conference approved a resolution recognizing a woman's right to define her own sexuality and lifestyle.

Building on the success of the first West Coast Lesbian Conference in 1971, Jeanne Córdova invited lesbians from around the world to a second conference in 1973. With over 2,000 in attendance, the conference was the largest gathering of lesbians to that date.

Lesbian feminists opened their own bookstores, restaurants, and softball leagues to create a supportive community independent from patriarchal and heteronormative society. Amazon Bookstore opened in Minneapolis in 1970 to become the nation’s first known feminist bookstore. Women’s spaces such as the Woman’s Building in Los Angeles were founded as exclusively female centers of art and culture. By 1975, some 50 lesbian publications circulated to tens of thousands of readers across the United States. Women's presses such as Diana Press, Naiad, Clothespin Fever Press, Daughters Inc., and Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press brought pro-feminist, pro-lesbian books to the market. Olivia Records opened in 1973 and quickly became the leader in producing women’s music. Building on the success of regional festivals, the National Women’s Music Festival in 1974 and the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival in 1976 launched to become two of the more successful music events to celebrate feminist and lesbian musicians and the separatist ethos.
Bisexual artist Kate Millet (in white) with feminist Wiccan Zoe Budapest at the National Lesbian Conference in 1973.