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## Drag Magazine: A Study of Community

Olivia Austin

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*Drag Magazine: A Study of Community*

Olivia Austin

An Honors Thesis Submitted for partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with  
honors in History from Hamline University.

April 9, 2021

**Drag Magazine: A Study of Community**

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## Abstract

This research aims to understand the trans/drag community and its relationship to political activism and the lesbian and gay community in the 1970s and early 1980s. I aim to answer the following questions: How did *Drag* perceive the relationship between the gay/lesbian community and the trans/drag community? How did *Drag* function in the trans/drag community? How did *Drag* benefit its readers? Transgender individuals and drag queens were at the forefront of activism in the 1960s during the Compton's Cafeteria Riot and the Stonewall Inn Riots. Recently, there has been more attention to the critical transgender activism by Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. Still, there is little academic research on other drag queen activism historically between Stonewall and the start of the AIDS epidemic. I conducted archival research at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. To conduct my research on trans/drag activism, I examined the magazine *Drag*. In my research, I found that *Drag* played an important role in the building of a trans/drag community. During the 1970s, the trans/drag community was met with hostility from the gay and lesbian community, who often ostracized them from their activism. *Drag* created an expansive drag community that encompassed a wide spectrum of transfeminine/drag identities and provided support to that community.

## Introduction

In 1971, drag queen Lee Brewster (1943-2000) was invited to speak at a discussion group in New York City. Before the event, she received a call from an unnamed “homosexual stranger”: not to support her but to tell her that she should not speak because drag queens were “vicious people” who should not speak to homosexual groups. In an interview in 1973, Angela Keyes Douglas, who identified as transsexual, recalled that she had tried to be a part of the Gay Liberation movement, but experienced a “tremendous amount of prejudice” from gay males, and ultimately gave up her efforts “to rise above my [gay male] oppressors and enlighten them” and left the movement in 1970.<sup>1</sup> These are two examples of how the trans/drag community was ostracized by the gay and lesbian communities in the 1970s.

As viewers have learned from the recent efforts by the LGBTQ+ community today and films such as *The Death and Life of Marsha P. Johnson* and *Stonewall Uprising*, trans/drag people were important actors in the Stonewall Riots of 1969 and the years of activism that followed. Yet during this period, they were unwelcome in most parts of the lesbian/gay community and movement. (The widely-used abbreviation LGBTQ+ is of relatively recent provenance.) In response, some trans/drag people created their own communities and performed their own political activism. One example of this is the magazine *Drag*. Published throughout the 1970s, *Drag* provided the transfeminine community with news and resources. *Drag* also worked to create and bring together a large and accepting transfeminine community.

In this paper, I am interested in the broad community of trans/drag or transfeminine women, that is, people Assigned Male at Birth (AMAB) who identified in a variety of gender-queer ways. I will be using the terms trans/drag and transfeminine to describe the

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<sup>1</sup> “Angela Keyes Douglas: A Drag Interview with Ben Miller,” *Drag Magazine* 3, no 10 (Apr- Jun 1973): 30.

community in the 1970s as a whole. I will examine *Drag* magazine from the Stonewall Riots until 1977 to explore the ways it endorsed activism and created a supportive trans/drag community.<sup>2</sup> I will begin by providing some history of and context around gender non-conforming individuals in the United States during the twentieth century, with a focus on years following the Stonewall Riots. I will then review the current scholarly literature on transfemininity in the postwar period, noting that there is almost no work done on the period between 1969 and 1983. In an effort to begin to fill that gap, I will then provide my analysis of *Drag* magazine, with an eye to answering the following questions: How did *Drag* perceive the relationship between the gay/lesbian community and the trans/drag community? How did *Drag* function in the trans/drag community? How did *Drag* benefit its readers?

### **Naming and operating on trans/drag people**

I begin with a brief history of two things: the many terms that have been used over the past century and a half to describe individuals who identify as a different sex than the one they were assigned at birth, and the disciplining of them by the medical community. Many early terms conflated gender identity with sexuality. For example, in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth centuries, one of the first terms coined by sexologists was “invert,” to describe an individual who exhibited or experienced characteristics considered the property of the sex opposite to the one they were assigned at birth. The term “inverts” was used to describe homosexuals, and was intended to describe people who had male souls (or personalities) in female bodies or female souls in male bodies. As a result, the term conflated homosexuality and gender identity.

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<sup>2</sup> While *Drag* was published until 1983, from 1977 to 1983 only four issues were published. My research focuses on the magazine up to 1977.

The term “transvestite” was first used in 1910 by German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld in his book *Die Transvestiten* or *Transvestites*. Hirschfeld sought to distinguish between cross-dressers, homosexuals, transvestites, and fetishists by looking at cases of 16 people assigned male at birth and one person assigned female at birth.<sup>3</sup> While he concluded that cross-dressing, homosexuality, and fetishism were connected with each other, he separated transvestites from the rest. In 1919, Hirschfeld established the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin. In 1926, Hirschfeld used the term “total transvestite” to describe individuals who not only wanted to cross-dress, but also wanted to undergo sex reassignment.<sup>4</sup>

Medical responses to transgender people included psychotherapy and surgery, with surgery far less available, especially in the United States. Let us begin with surgical approaches. As with the term “invert,” the early forms of “sex reassignment surgery” conflated gender identity and sexuality and were used both to affirm the former and “cure” the latter. The surgeries were described as “sex transformation.” The surgeries started in the early twentieth century in Germany, under Eugen Steinach, who in 1915 performed surgery to cure a man’s homosexuality by removing one of his testicles and replacing it with a testicle from a heterosexual man. By the 1930s, “sex reassignment surgeries” were performed in Europe under Hirschfeld. For example, Earl Lind, who was assigned male at birth and viewed herself as a woman, had her penis and testicles removed by Hirschfeld in order “to possess one less mark of a male.” In another case, doctors performed three surgeries on Lili Elbe, who was also assigned male at birth. In the first surgery, her external genitalia was removed; in the second human ovaries were implanted. During her third surgery in 1931, in which doctors tried to construct a “natural outlet from the

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<sup>3</sup> Vern L. Bullough, “Magnus Hirschfeld, an often overlooked pioneer,” *Sexuality & Culture* 7, no. 1 (2003): 66.

<sup>4</sup> Barry Reay, *Trans America: A Counter-History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020), 32.

womb” (a vagina) and she died.<sup>5</sup> These new surgical options were not available to transgender people in the United States. American doctors would only perform sex surgeries on intersex patients; they refused to operate on people we would now call transgender. In the United States, articles about sex reassignment surgery appeared in *Sexology* magazine in the mid-1930s. Soon, some Americans became interested in sex reassignment surgery; a handful traveled to Europe in hopes of availing themselves of options that were not available in the United States. *Sexology* often published letters from individuals who cross-dressed and inquired about sex-change operations.

Sex reassignment surgery became a bit more accepted in some medical circles in the 1960s. Dr. Harry Benjamin played a role here. In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, Benjamin was a prominent doctor who advocated for surgery for his patients who wanted it. (The term “transsexual” is attributed to Benjamin, who used the term at a lecture in 1953 for the Association for Advancement of Psychotherapy.) Benjamin said that, unlike transvestites, who wish to dress as the opposite sex, transsexuals wish to be the opposite sex. In his 1954 essay titled, “Transsexualism and transvestism as psychosomatic and somatopsychic syndromes,” Benjamin distinguished transsexualism from transvestism. Benjamin wrote, “While the male transvestite *enacts* the role of a woman, the transsexualist wants to *be* one and *function* as one, wishing to assume as many of her characteristics as possible, physical, mental, and sexual.”<sup>6</sup> He believed doctors could cure transvestites, but not transsexuals, through psychotherapy. By the late 1960s, a few medical professionals in the U.S followed Benjamin and endorsed for surgery over psychotherapy for transsexual patients. The editors of *Sexology* became more open to sex reassignment surgery by the 1960s. For example, in 1964, when F.S. from Indiana wrote a letter

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<sup>5</sup> Joanne J. Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 17, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle, *Transgender Studies Reader* (CRC Press LLC, 2006), 46.



that began, “I am what the world terms a transsexualist,” the editors replied that “there are a number of cases in this country where the operation to change a man into a woman has been performed. Some of these have turned out quite successful.”<sup>7</sup>

However, surgery was not widely available or approved of in the general medical community. During the 1950s, most doctors, scientists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts (while they disagreed on how to treat trans people) viewed cross-dressing, transvestism, and transsexuality as a set of psychological disorders and opposed surgery. Psychoanalyst Frederic G. Worden and clinical psychologist James T. Marsh, argued (based on interviews with five AMAB patients who wanted sex reassignment surgery) that trans people had “an extremely shallow, immature, and grossly distorted concept of what a woman is like socially, sexually, anatomically, and emotionally.”<sup>8</sup> Worden and Marsh strongly objected to surgical intervention, even if patients requested it. Some doctors claimed to be ethically against sex reassignment surgery because they stated they had to remove healthy tissue. Others refused to perform sex reassignment surgery because they feared litigation. Some people who were denied surgery resorted to self-castration; when that produced medical complications, doctors were then willing to help. For example, when Caren Ecker, who was AMAB, removed her testicles herself and almost bled to death, a doctor removed her penis and saved her life.<sup>9</sup>

In a mid-1960s survey of 355 doctors, only one-quarter believed that surgery would harm patients’ mental health, but most participants still said they would disapprove of sex reassignment surgery. Many doctors feared the possibility of a lawsuit after performing sex reassignment surgery. In response to the survey publication, doctors who supported surgery started publishing follow-up reports from patients after surgery. Benjamin published the results

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<sup>7</sup> Reay, 69.

<sup>8</sup> Meyerowitz, 108.

<sup>9</sup> Meyerowitz, 145.

of surgery on 151 patients. He concluded “that 86 percent had ‘good’ or ‘satisfactory’ results” and stressed that “[m]ost patients no matter how disturbed they still may be, are better off afterward than they were before.” However, psychoanalytical approaches remained dominant, and most psychoanalysts held negative opinions about MTF transsexuals, seeing them as “anxious, guilt-ridden homosexuals.” Many did not recognize transsexuals (who we would now call transgender people) as a specific group. For example, prominent psychoanalyst and psychiatrist Charles W. Socarides said in 1969 that “transsexuals were either transvestites, homosexuals, or struggling against intense homosexual urges.”<sup>10</sup>

Doctors who did offer surgery were more likely to see transsexuals as different from both from transvestites and homosexuals. In 1966, Benjamin attempted to define and distinguish transvestism and transsexualism via a “Sex Orientation Scale.” He labeled one end of the scale as “pseudo transvestites who gained sexual pleasure from cross-dressing,” and the opposite end of the range as “‘high intensity’ transsexuals with ‘total psychosexual inversion.” Benjamin saw these on a continuum, saying that “one condition [transsexualism] seems to develop out of the other [cross-dressing] so that a sharp clinical separation cannot always be made.”<sup>11</sup> Benjamin also concluded that transsexuals sought sex reassignment surgery, and transvestites did not.

In 1968, Benjamin published his groundbreaking book, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* that included research he had worked for the past seventeen years. *The Transsexual Phenomenon* had a significant effect on the trans/drag community at the time. In his book, Benjamin argued that a person’s gender identity could not change, and doctors should work with patients to help them lead happier lives in their stated, self-identified gender. A few months after the book’s publication, John Hopkins University Medical Center established the first sex reassignment

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<sup>10</sup> Meyerowitz, 120-123, 173.

<sup>11</sup> Meyerowitz, 175.

program in the United States. After that, there was an increase in the number of institutions in the United States with sex reassignment programs, providing new options for many across the country. The heightened medical attention to trans issues prompted the creation of a new category of psychopathology, Gender Identity Disorder, which was listed in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in 1980.<sup>12</sup>

In the twenty-first century, our language and understanding has changed. We understand that gender identity and sexuality are separate. We use the term “transgender” to describe people who know their gender identity to be different from the one they were assigned at birth. We reject the term “change” or “sex change” in favor of the word “confirmation,” to recognize the fact that transgender people are not changing, but rather confirming their identity. We say “assigned male at birth” (or AMAB) rather than “born male.” We know that surgery is not seen as a mark of having “completed” a transition.

While I believe our current terminology to be the most accurate and the most respectful, as a historian I am also driven to honor the specificities of the past. To that end, I will be using the terms “transvestite,” “transsexual,” and “drag queen” for individuals from history who defined themselves as such. Terms were (and are) used in a variety of ways. “Trans” could mean “transvestite” or “transsexual.” “Drag queen” was used by a wide variety of people who cross-dressed full-time or part-time, as a life choice or as performance (insofar as we can distinguish these). *Drag* focused on and spoke to the transfeminine community. In an effort to best capture and honor the people and period I am analyzing, I have chosen to use the terms “trans/drag” and “transfeminine” to refer to AMAB people who identified as a heterosexual transvestites, homosexual transvestites, transsexuals, drag queens, and female impersonators, and to refer to their larger community as a whole.

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<sup>12</sup> Susan Stryker, *Transgender History*, 138-141.

### **Trans/drag history 1950-1983**

In post-war America, perhaps the first important moment in trans/drag history was the highly publicized life and transition of transsexual Christine Jorgensen (1926-1989) in 1951. Jorgensen's sex reassignment surgery and life as a woman impacted others in the United States and attracted media attention in the United States and worldwide. It was the first widely-publicized sex reassignment surgery in American and was in the public consciousness not just of the trans/drag community but of the wider American public. Jorgensen took hormones for two years and underwent psychiatric counseling before having surgeries in 1951 and 1952 in Denmark. Jorgensen's surgery attracted a lot of media attention in the United States. Jorgensen was white, blonde, middle-class, and glamorously put together; she fit the 1950s image of the desirable blonde bombshell. In addition, Jorgensen was a willing participant in the framing of her own experience as an "inspiring story of personal triumph." She wanted her own story to positively impact public opinion of transsexuals and worked hard to create a positive public image and to counter any depictions of her as a "freak" or a "pervert." In early December 1951, Jorgensen's story appeared on the front page of the *New York Daily News* headlined "Ex- G.I. Becomes Blonde Beauty" and featured before-and-after pictures. The article turned her into a celebrity, with offers from magazines and nightclubs. Soon multiple articles appeared, including a popular series in *American Weekly* for which she was paid \$25,000 (equivalent to about \$250,000 today). Reporters worked with Jorgensen's self-presentation, emphasizing her femininity. For example, they described "her long yellow hair curling on a pillow" and her "smooth, low pitched voice—without a trace of masculinity" and "a slight down her upper lip,

but no sign that she ever used a razor.” One reporter stated that Jorgensen seemed like a “natural woman,” presumably the highest form of praise.<sup>13</sup>

After Jorgensen's story was publicized, others were as well. Charlotte McLeod's story in *Time* magazine in 1954 was headlined “In Christine's Footsteps.” Like Jorgensen, McLeod was keen to explain that her “trans-ness” was different from homosexuality. In March 1954, Roberta Cowell's transition appeared in national newspapers. Cowell had been neither effeminate nor gay, and was married and had two children. In May 1954, millionaire John Cabell “Bunny” Breckinridge, who was married to a woman but openly gay and performatively eccentric, made headlines when he planned to undergo sex reassignment surgery (though he did not have it). While Jorgensen, McLeod, and Cowell had all attempted to separate sex reassignment surgery from homosexuality in the minds of the public, Breckinridge's story reconnected them. Overall, the many stories on sex reassignment surgery had a great effect on people.<sup>14</sup>

There was a mixed response from the homophile movement--the white, male, middle- to upper-class homosexual rights movement that was the face of organized gay rights in the 1950s--to Christine Jorgensen's story. The homophile movement emphasize respectability and focused on convincing the greater public that not all homosexual men were effeminate. Members disliked media coverage of transsexuality because they feared public conflation of homosexuality and transsexualism, and did not want the public to see surgery as a “cure” for all those who lived outside of cis-gender heteronormativity. In *ONE* magazine, Jeff Winters wrote that Christine Jorgensen did a “‘sweeping disservice’ to gay men. As far as the public knows you were merely another unhappy homosexual, who decided to get drastic about it.”<sup>15</sup> He worried

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<sup>13</sup> Meyerowitz, 52-53, 62-64.

<sup>14</sup> Meyerowitz, 84.

<sup>15</sup> Meyerowitz, 177.

that because Jorgensen was advocating for sex reassignment surgery to “cure” transsexuality, medical professionals would try to use it to cure homosexuality.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there was no unity among those who identified as homosexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, and drag queens. There was also a lot of separation based on social class. San Franciscan Louise Lawrence, who identified as a “permanent transvestite” created different social groups by placing personal ads in magazines and contacting people arrested for cross-dressing. Lawrence worked with homosexuals, cross-dressers, and transsexuals; however, she was unusual in this regard. There was a lot of inter-group antagonism and often, to lift up their own group, people would tear down another. For example, a short-lived publication called *Transvestia: The Journal of the American Society for Equality in Dress* (it put out only two 1952 issues, with most copies privately distributed, was dormant, and then was revived in 1960) was published by Virginia Prince and aimed to increase acceptance of heterosexual transgender individuals. Prince herself identified as a “straight transvestite;” she supported transgender heterosexuals but opposed transgender homosexuals.<sup>16</sup> In 1960, when *Transvestia* was revived, one of its main goals was to distinguish homosexuals from transvestites. In their first 1960 issue, they said “[t]ransvestism should not be confused or compared with sex deviants[t]ransvestism is merely and simply an aesthetic expression and manifestation of artistic appreciation for true beauty and charm.” Over and over, homosexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, and drag queens would demean each other in the press. In 1961, Prince, with other *Transvestia* subscribers founded one of the first transgender organizations, called the Hose and Heels Club. This led to the creation of a national organization, the Foundation for Personality Expression (FPE). FPE presented itself as an advocacy group for all transvestites. In reality, it welcomed only heterosexual male-to-female (MTF) transgender women as members and excluded gay people,

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<sup>16</sup> Stryker, 64-65.

FTM transsexuals, and cis-gender women. Prince supported transvestism but opposed transsexuality; she was strongly opposed to sex reassignment surgery and viewed it as “a mistake for transvestites to undertake.” At the same time, some transsexuals saw transvestites and drag queens as “queers or freaks.”<sup>17</sup>

In the late 1960s, transgender people started to gather into more formal but still fragmented groups. In 1967, MTF transsexuals in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco formed a political group called Conversion Our Goal (COG). COG demanded freedom from police harassment, legal rights to change sex, job opportunities, equal housing at equal rates, and equal services at equal prices in stores and restaurants. They often met with the city members, including police, and sometimes spoke with the press about their concerns. COG also published a *COG Newsletter*. COG only lasted two years because of a lack of funding, but two members started two separate short-lived organizations based on their different ideologies. In 1968, Louise J. founded the California Advancement for Transsexual Society (CATS) with only three members and an assimilationist view of activism. In 1969, COG's members started the National Transsexual Counseling Unit (NTCU) and Transsexual Counseling Service.<sup>18</sup>

Starting in the late 1950s, gay men, lesbians, drag queens, and transgender people throughout the United States protested unjust treatment. One of the first riots occurred in 1959 at Cooper Do-nuts, which was a meeting place for many gay people, drag queens, and sex workers, many of whom were people of color. The police would routinely harass Cooper's Do-nuts customers. In May 1959, when the police started harassing, drag queens resisted arrest; the subsequent riot is historicized by some scholars as the first LGBTQ+ protest in the United States, a full decade before the Stonewall Riots. Another unplanned uprising occurred in Philadelphia at

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<sup>17</sup> Meyerowitz, 181-185.

<sup>18</sup> Susan Stryker, 100-101; Meyerowitz, 231-232.

Dewey's, a late-night coffeehouse that was popular with gay and lesbian people and sex workers. In April 1965, Dewey's said they would start refusing to serve gay customers, claiming they drove away business; this sparked a protest of over 150 people. In the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, the customers at Compton's Cafeteria had enough of the police harassment and identification checks. In the summer of 1966, when a police officer asked a drag queen for identification, she threw a hot cup of coffee in his face. People started throwing dishes, breaking windows, and damaging police cars and a nearby newsstand was set on fire. Compton's Cafeteria was not covered in any mainstream newspapers, and the police reports disappeared. The only evidence of the riot was the interviews that took place decades after the event.<sup>19</sup>

The Stonewall Riots of June 1969 have been historicized as a singular spark that started the gay rights movement. However, in fact, they were part of this pattern, in which gay and trans people and sex workers resisted pervasive, low-level harassment by police at commercial gathering spots. The Stonewall Inn was a mafia-owned bar on Christopher Street in the Greenwich Village area of New York City. It opened in 1967 and became a meeting place for gays, lesbians, and drag queens. As was the case in many places, the police routinely raided the Stonewall inn, checked the customers' identification, and arrested people for cross-dressing. One night on June 28th, 1969, Stonewall patrons resisted the police. People threw things at police officers; drag queen Sylvia Rivera allegedly threw a beer bottle at a police officer after he hit her with a baton.<sup>20</sup> But in a departure from previous protests, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, both of which had national readerships, covered the Stonewall Riots (so did three New York newspapers, the *New York Daily News*, *New York Post*, and the *Village Voice*). The coverage was varied in terms of accuracy and sympathy for the rioters. Only one early report

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<sup>19</sup> Susan Stryker, 82-89.

<sup>20</sup> Ann Bausum, *Stonewall: Breaking Out in the Fight for Gay Rights* (New York: Viking, 2015), 47-56.



mentioned lesbian participation, and only one mentioned the presence of drag queens. The *New York Daily News* mocked and diminished drag queen activism, saying that “[t]he Queens pranced out to the street blowing kisses and waving to the crowd.” and that drag queens “stood bra strap to bra strap against” the police.”<sup>21</sup>

The gay and lesbian rights movements blossomed in the aftermath of Stonewall. The Gay Liberation Front (GLF), the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), and the National Gay Task Force were all started in response to the riots. Many lesbians felt excluded from these gay organizations and feminist organizations such as the National Organization for Women (NOW). In response, Karla Jay and Rita Mae Brown formed the Lavender Menace. In 1973, in response to gay and lesbian activism, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) removed homosexuality as a mental disorder. The counter-movement, led by Anita Bryant’s “Save Our Children” campaign--which emerged in 1976 during the fight for a gay rights bill in Dade County, Florida--started using rhetoric such as “[h]omosexuals will recruit our children. They will use money, drugs, alcohol, any means to get what they want.” On January 18, 1977, the bill passed 5 to 3. However, the Save Our Children campaign fought to repeal the bill and succeeded on June 7, 1977. In April and May 1978, gay rights bills in St. Paul, Minnesota, Wichita, Kansas, and Eugene, Oregon, were repealed.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the Save Our Children campaign, gay and lesbian groups continued to fight for their legal rights. However, trans/drag people met with hostility in these new organizations and movements. In response, trans/drag individuals started to create their own organizations. After being excluded from the GAA, Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, who were both drag queens of color, started Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) in 1969. STAR’s

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<sup>21</sup> “Police Again Rout ‘Village’ Youths,” *New York Times* (New York, N.Y.), June 30, 1969.

<sup>22</sup> Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 220-221.

main goal was to help homeless queer youth find food, shelter, and stay out of jail. They then added STAR House, which provided housing for homeless trans/drag youth and inspired the opening of similar houses in other cities. Judy Brown, a transgender woman, formed Transvestites and Transsexuals (TAT) in 1970 and Transsexuals Anonymous (TA) in 1971. In response to institutional transphobia, MTF transsexual Angela Douglas left the Los Angeles Gay Liberation Front and founded the Transvestite/Transsexual Action Organization (TAO) in 1970. TAO held street protests, political demonstrations, and published two newsletters. One of the longer lasting trans/drag organizations was the Queens Liberation Front (QLF). It was founded in 1969 partly in response to the lack of trans/drag inclusion at the Christopher Street Liberation Day March. One of its biggest accomplishments was the publication of its magazine, *Drag*, which was in print into the early 1980s.<sup>23</sup>

In 1981, the first cases of what would later be named AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) appeared, and *The New York Times* released an article titled, “Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals.” By 1983, cases were continuing to rise and the United States was experiencing the AIDS crisis. The trans/drag population was extremely hard-hit by HIV and AIDS, in part because many trans/drag people were sex workers. The AIDS crisis marks the start of a tragic new chapter in trans/drag history, which is beyond the bounds of this paper.<sup>24</sup>

### **Historiography of trans/drag activism**

Overall, trans/drag people are overlooked, hidden even from histories of LGBTQ+ life, including accounts of Stonewall, where trans/drag people were important leaders. A few scholars are looking at trans/drag life, which demonstrates progress, but they focus on the Stonewall

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<sup>23</sup> Stryker, 110-112.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 224-225.

Riots, the 1980s, and ballroom culture. Few have written on post-Stonewall pre-AIDS trans/drag life, and no one has analyzed *Drag* magazine. My research begins to fill this gap.

Until recently, very few historians included the trans/drag community when they wrote about LGBTQ+ history. In the past twenty years, this has begun to change. Yasmin Nair, Betty Hillman, and Susan Stryker all argue that trans/drag people have been overlooked in LGBTQ+ history.<sup>25</sup> Too often, society often forgets their names, stories, and contributions. Nair argues that bisexual and trans actors are often not included in LGBTQ+ storylines. Hillman argues that although many drag queens were trailblazers during Stonewall, they were ignored and ostracized first by the LGBTQ+ community and then in historical narratives. Stryker argues that history overlooks drag queens involved in the Stonewall and Compton's Cafeteria Riots because of the hierarchies of class and respectability within the LGBTQ+ community. Since many drag queens participated in sex work, they were ostracized by white middle and upper-class lesbian and gay communities. The movement privileged economically secure cis-gender gays and lesbians over working-class drag queens or "street queens" who were "challenging notions of class as well as gender respectability."<sup>26</sup> The LGBTQ+ histories remembered are those of the racially, socially, and economically privileged, while the voices of transgender folks and drag queens are almost absent from history.<sup>27</sup>

Very few historians look at the trans/drag community before Stonewall. The few historians who looked at trans/drag activism before Stonewall argue that trans/drag people made a significant contribution. Hillman argues that trans/drag people were important leaders in the

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<sup>25</sup> Yasmin Nair, "Forget Stonewall," *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* 26, no. 3 (2019); Betty Hillman, "The Most Profoundly Revolutionary Act a Homosexual Can Engage In: Drag and the Politics of Gender Presentation in the San Francisco Gay Liberation Movement, 1964-1972," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20 (2011); Susan Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity," *Radical History Review* no. 100 (2008): 145-57.

<sup>26</sup> Hillman.

<sup>27</sup> Elias Vitulli, "The Employment Non-Discrimination Act, Trans-Inclusion, and Homonormativity," *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* (Sep 2010), 156.

1966 riot at Compton's Cafeteria. Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna Crage argue that the Compton's Cafeteria riot was not covered by the mainstream or homophile media, or historicized, because the participants were lower-class trans/drag sex workers. Nair makes a similar point about the 1968 riot at the Trip Bar in Chicago.

The Stonewall Uprising has been historicized as the beginning of the modern gay rights movement. Yet until very recently, the centrality of trans/drag actors at Stonewall was overlooked. Hillman and Stryker are both now correcting this. Hillman notes the important work of trans/drag people during Stonewall. Stryker also cites the importance of trans/drag people during the Stonewall riot, and notes that drag queens fought for the rights of the gay and lesbian community even though they had little power and were not respected within that community after Stonewall.<sup>28</sup>

Much recent work on Stonewall analyzes not the event itself but how the riots became historicized; some of this work touches on trans/drag activism and history. In their 2006 article "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth," Armstrong and Crage argue that the ways that Stonewall has been historicized are highly problematic, and that Stonewall was historicized because some of those involved were "high-resource, radical gay men."<sup>29</sup> Nair makes a similar argument in their 2019 essay "Forget Stonewall." Similarly, Gabriel Mayora argues that Stonewall is remembered because of the presence of gay white men, and that transgender activism was marginalized as part of the process of cis-gender, white, affluent activists creating a storyline of Stonewall being the first and the start. Mayora says that transgender presence at Stonewall continues to be marginalized in such films as *Stonewall* (1995)

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<sup>28</sup> Stryker, "Transgender History, Homonormativity, and Disciplinarity"; Hillman.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, "Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth," *American Sociological Review* 71 (October 2006): 744.

and *Stonewall* (2015).<sup>30</sup> Armstrong and Crage go on to argue that activists remembered Stonewall because of the continued activism after Stonewall rather than because of the actual event, and that from the start many saw the event as “commemorable.”<sup>31</sup> Richard Schneider states that Stonewall is actually not remembered as a historical event at all; it is simply used as a symbol of the LGBTQ+ community.<sup>32</sup>

There is almost nothing written about trans/drag life between Stonewall and the AIDS epidemic. What has been written is mainly recuperative work that narrates, but does not analyze, trans/drag culture, activism, or politics.<sup>33</sup> Scholars have looked at trans/drag activism and outreach during the AIDS epidemic, starting in the mid-1980s. Isaac West and Jeffrey Bennett argue that drag performances during the AIDS epidemic were not just entertainment; rather, drag performances were part of “tactical repertoires” that empowered their audiences.<sup>34</sup> There has also been scholarly attention paid to the ballroom culture of the 1990s and 2000s, in which Black and Latinx queer performers participated in drag as a performative artform. Many scholars, including Marlon Bailey and Steven Schacht, examine ball culture and how queer people of color, including cross-dressing and transgender people, have survived in a racist and homophobic society. Bailey looks at the ‘realness’ categories at balls and argues that they are not evidence of internalized racism or homophobia, but rather are “strategies used by these Black queer people to

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<sup>30</sup> Gabriel Mayora, “Her Stonewall Legend: The Fictionalization of Sylvia Rivera in Nigel Finch’s *Stonewall*,” *Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* (2018).

<sup>31</sup> Armstrong and Crage, 744, 725.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Schneider, “In Search of Stonewall,” *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide* 26 (2019).

<sup>33</sup> Meyerowitz, and Deborah Rudacille, *The Riddle of Gender: Science, Activism, and Transgender Rights* (New York: Anchor Books), 2006.

<sup>34</sup> Isaac West and Jeffrey Bennett, “United We Stand, Divided We Fall”: AIDS, Armorettes, and the Tactical Repertoires of Drag,” *Southern Communication Journal* 74 (July 2009): 303.

negotiate and survive a sometimes perilous and complex social terrain.”<sup>35</sup> Schacht argues that balls use social class, race, gender, and sexual orientation to question social status in society.<sup>36</sup>

Other scholars have studied the contemporary artform of drag. Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp argue that drag queens use their platform to challenge traditional ideas of gender. Greaf argues both that drag queens break the heteronormative idea of gender and that queens reinforce gender stereotypes. They argue that drag queens show how “gender identity is something that is created, changed, and ultimately performed.” Greaf also argues that drag is anti-feminist, while Rupp and Taylor argue that drag is feminist.<sup>37</sup>

However, there has been almost no scholarship on the trans/drag community in the United States between Stonewall and the onset of the AIDS epidemic. This essay starts the work of filling this historical gap by looking at one rich source on trans/drag life during the 1970s, *Drag* magazine. It explores what *Drag* magazine offered its readers, how it functioned as a resource for readers, its relationship with the lesbian/gay community, and how it created a smaller, supportive (if disparate and imagined) trans/drag community.

### ***Drag* magazine**

*Drag: A Magazine About the Transvestite* was a magazine by and for the transfeminine trans/drag community. It was published by the Queens Liberation Front (QLF), an organization founded by drag queen and activist Lee Brewster in early 1970. The QLF described itself as a platform, not a member organization, with plans to create drag balls, publish *Drag*, and organize

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<sup>35</sup> Marlon M. Bailey, “Gender/Racial Realness: Theorizing the Gender System in Ballroom Culture,” *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 2 (2011): 384.

<sup>36</sup> Steven P. Schacht, “Paris is Burning: How Society's Stratification Systems Make Drag Queens of Us All,” *Race, Gender & Class* 7 (2000).

<sup>37</sup> Caitlin Greaf, “Drag Queens and Gender Identity,” *Journal of Gender Studies* 25 (2016): 656; Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp, “When the Girls Are Men: Negotiating Gender and Sexual Dynamics in a Study of Drag Queens,” *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30 (2005): 2128.

speakers to educate people on MTF cross-dressing. *Drag* was in print for 29 issues in total. Between 1971 and 1976, it published four issues per year (plus a 1975 supplement). It then published annual issues in 1977, 1978, 1980, and 1983 before ceasing publication. *Drag* reached a wide range of individuals from different cities including but not necessarily limited to, New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, West Springfield and Boston, Miami, London, and Paris. Issues generally cost between \$2 and \$3.50, though three issues were priced at \$8. A typical issue began with a news section that reported on events from all over the country and occasionally around the world. Next were longer articles on a wide variety of topics, from coverage of protests to theater reviews and accounts of cross-dressing in history. The magazine also ran advertisements for books, lesbian and gay magazines, makeup consultations, shapewear, and wigs. At the back of each issue were classified advertisements. Anyone could place a personal advertisement by filling out a short form and mailing it in with one dollar (six dollars if they wanted to add a photo of themselves).

An early editorial in *Drag* stated that “[t]he only radical element” of the trans/drag community “is the fact they all want to be able to wear the clothes they choose without being classified as criminals.”<sup>38</sup> Of course, in the 1970s and early 1980s, this was indeed radical. The first issue of *Drag* stated that its primary goal was to advocate legalizing cross-dressing, regardless of one’s sexual orientation. *Drag* spoke to all AMAB people who cross-dressed, including those who identified as straight, gay, transsexual, transvestite, female impersonator, and/or drag queen. It covered and supported the efforts of activists throughout the U.S. In 1972, *Drag* claimed to have a mailing list of over 2,000 individuals and organizations that reached 3,500 people around the country.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “The Impossible Dream? No!” *Drag Magazine* 1, no. 1 (Oct-Dec 1971): 4-5.

<sup>39</sup> *Drag Magazine* 2, no 6 (Apr-Jun 1972): 13.

A spring 1973 article on how to pursue gender-confirmation surgery ended with a declaration that was at the core of *Drag*'s mission:

There is no rule that states that every transsexual must undergo surgery, nor is there any rule that states that every transvestite must receive hormone therapy. If you are happy with yourself as you are, stay the same. If you are unhappy with yourself, change, but please, for your own sake, change for the better.<sup>40</sup>

Even in this article, which offered advice on how to start the process of surgical gender confirmation, *Drag* did not encourage anyone to do one thing or another, nor did they dictate any standards of what it took to qualify as a 'real' transvestite or transsexual, a bona fide member of the transfeminine community. Instead, *Drag* envisioned a broad and inclusive trans/drag community in which people were members because they said that they were.

*Drag* described itself in terms of legal advocacy and education. Since my source is the magazine itself, and not readers' experiences of it, I cannot be sure of its reception or effect in the world. My interpretation, however, is that *Drag* had another goal that was less clearly articulated but very important: to unite the trans community, which was splintered into different factions and activist groups. *Drag* was, uniquely, a resource for all of those who identified variously as drag queens, cross-dressers, transvestites, and transsexuals in the post-Stonewall pre-AIDS era. It was as a resource and an imagined community that *Drag* seems to have been most successful; indeed, its coverage of legal battles across the country functioned in practice less as legal activism than as a feature of community-building. While *Drag* advocated for legal changes, I argue that their most significant function was the creation of a larger drag community that encompassed a wide spectrum of transfeminine/drag identities and provided support to that community.

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<sup>40</sup> "Changing Sex," *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 10 (Apr-Jun 1973): 1-3.



*Drag* news covered events relevant to the trans/drag community, most of which were not reported in the mainstream media. These included details of arrests and trials of transfeminine women, articles on New York City Pride marches, coverage of the San Francisco trans/drag scene, and updates on new trans organizations across the U.S. In this pre-internet era, such reporting provided information that was difficult for individuals to obtain, especially if they did not live in the few large cities that were known for their large and active gay communities. *Drag* made its readers aware of various forms of harassment and violence, by the police and other actors. It also highlighted QLF's attempt to educate the public, to fight against the criminalization of cross-dressing in New York City, and to support other activists' efforts in other states. *Drag* news created a national community for transfeminine women.

### **Feeling unwelcome**

In its earliest issues, the editors of *Drag* seemed to feel very much a part of the gay activist community; in fact in the first issue of *Drag* they announced that “[w]e hope to gain a lot from our homosexual brothers, who have unashamedly paved the way for us.”<sup>41</sup> A year after Stonewall, the Queens Liberation Front raised funds and participated in the first New York City Pride march, held on June 28th, 1970 (and also called the Christopher Street Liberation Parade). A sign carried read on one side, “We’re ONLY NUMBER TWO; BUT WE TRY HARDER,” and the other side read “SECOND CLASS CITIZENS, THAT IS.”<sup>42</sup> *Drag* described themselves as second-class citizens to the lesbian/gay community. *Drag* continued to emphasize the role of trans/drag people in the Stonewall, saying that they founded the movement and that many of the lesbian/gay community members neglected their participation. Even though they were often excluded, QLF hoped to be united with the gay/lesbian community. At the first Pride parade,

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<sup>41</sup> “The Impossible Dream? No!” 4.

<sup>42</sup> “The Impossible Dream! No?,” 5.

drag queens, transsexuals, and transvestites marched together. *Drag* reported that while they had been told police would be arresting cross-dressers, in the event, no cross-dressers were arrested; in fact, *Drag* reported, no one from Queens was harassed at all by police or lesbian/gay individuals at the march. The parade was a post-Stonewall moment of coming together. Many trans/drag individuals tried to hold on to the possibility of unity between lesbian/gays and drag/trans communities.

The following year, *Drag* reported a similar sense of unity at the March on Albany (March 14th, 1971) to repeal laws against “female impersonation.” Members of the Queens Liberation Front and S.T.A.R were present at the march, including Lee Brewster, Bunny Eisenhower, Sylvia Rivera, and Marsha P. Johnson. Bunny Eisenhower and Bobbie Wilson (the director of the Queens Liberation Front in D.C), who carried a “QUEENS” banner. *Drag* stated that “this is the first time in the history of the homophile movement that the gay organizations have publicly acknowledged as one of their goals the legalization of female impersonation.” *Drag* also commented that there was a “feeling a spirit of unity and satisfaction” at the march.<sup>43</sup>

In 1972, the third year after Stonewall, thousands of people marched in the New York Pride parade. The QLF and S.T.A.R marched together, and *Drag* reported a larger-than-ever trans/drag presence. But is also reprinted for its readers a San Francisco *Examiner* column in which the writer said he while agreed that gay sex should be legal, he opposed parades because children “must BE PROTECTED from homosexuals appealing on the street with drag and with lipstick on.”<sup>44</sup> Gay sex was acceptable; transfeminine drag was not.

By 1973, *Drag* conveyed its frustration with many lesbians and gays because they often excluded the trans/drag community from their activism. As noted in the introduction, Lee

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<sup>43</sup> “March on Albany: Seek Statute to Legalize Crossdressing!,” *Drag Magazine* 1, no 3 (Jul-Sep 1971): 30-33.

<sup>44</sup> *Drag Magazine* 2, no. 8 (Oct-Dec 1972): 12.

Brewster was told that drag queens were “vicious people” who should not address homosexual groups. Brewster refused to cancel the engagement and experienced no harassment or hostility at the event; in fact, the anonymous caller called Brewster back to apologize. But the hostility was undeniable. At the end of the article on the talk, *Drag* said, “This again proves the statement of Queens Liberation Front that the homosexual is the drag queen’s worst enemy.”<sup>45</sup> This was a compelling and powerful statement by *Drag*. Previously right after Stonewall, QLF had tried to unite with the gay/lesbian community, but QLF changed their tone due to the continued transphobia directed at them.

There was more than one *Drag* article that reported on lesbian hostility towards transfeminine people. A 1974 article reported that Queens Liberation Front member Bebe experienced discrimination from lesbians at a feminist conference. Speaker Jill Johnston made negative comments about the drag actress Holly Woodlawn. When Bebe accused Jill Johnson of being a “Neo-fascist and dictating to women as well as men,” a woman in the audience screamed, “Jill, don’t answer that it is a male question.”<sup>46</sup> This is an example of how many lesbian feminists did not accept trans/drag women as women.

In 1975, at a Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) planning meeting for a demonstration, the Lesbian Liberation subcommittee opposed any participation by drag queens, who, according to *Drag* they saw as mocking women. The planning committee suggested a compromise in which drag queens would perform in “non-sexist entertainment only,” but that did not satisfy the subcommittee, the members of which left the meeting, and ultimately the GAA, to form Lesbian Feminist Liberation. Morty Manford, former president of the GAA and a leading and a privileged member of the gay community, did not stand up for drag queen participation and said

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<sup>45</sup> *Drag Magazine* 1, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 1971): 8.

<sup>46</sup> “Bebe Infiltrates Feminist Conference,” *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 16 (Oct-Dec 1974): 8.

he found the conflict “rather boring.” Bruce Voeller, Ronny Gold, Jim Owles, and Alan Ross all stated that they did not want the demonstration to be associated with drag queens. Furthermore, Gold (the head of the media division of the National Gay Task Force) said that the demonstration organizers would be telling the press not to photograph drag queens because they were a “stereotypic of the homosexual.” The QLF saw Gold’s comments as gay trans/drag-phobia. Bebe Scrapie of QLF said, “I don’t understand why we have to spend all this money and time fighting another minority group. The straight homosexuals can’t win acceptance by putting us down.”<sup>47</sup>

*Drag* wrote almost annually about the trans/drag community being ostracized during Pride. In an interview with *Drag* about Pride 1973, Max E. Verga, a cis-gay who identified as a female impersonator, said:

Here I am, a liberated gay, interior and fashion designer, FEMALE IMPERSONATOR, human being, in whatever role my mood at the time strikes me. But by the end of what was to be our day, my day, a part of me was singled out, was rejected, and publicly damned by a part of the gay movement. A radical lesbian said that as a female impersonator, I was degrading women, so she in turn found it necessary to degrade me.<sup>48</sup>

Verga was expressing how he felt left out of the activism at Pride in 1973. Verga’s statement as a cis-gender female impersonator shows how *Drag* aimed to include everyone in the larger trans/drag community. An article on Pride 1973 discusses multiple instances of the exclusion of trans/drag involvement. For example, the 1973 Christopher Street Committee said that they had to preview the drag acts three days before the parade. *Drag* reported that many of the drag performers were offended, but agreed because they were committed to community unity. The committee also voted against “special interest speeches”; nevertheless, Sylvia Rivera took the mic at Pride 1973 to talk about how poorly the trans community was treated by the gay and lesbian community. Brewster said she did not condone Rivera’s intervention, but she agreed with

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<sup>47</sup> “Not All Quiet on the Gay Lib Front,” *Drag Magazine* 5, no. 17 (Jan-Mar 1975): 5-6.

<sup>48</sup> “Drags & TV’s Join the March,” *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 11 (Jul-Sep 1973): 5.

Rivera's statements. *Drag* announced that the trans/drag community would continue to remind everyone that there would not be a gay liberation movement without trans/drag activism.

Nevertheless, many gays and lesbians worked to exclude them.

A 1974 article *Drag* called, "Gay is not Proud of Queens on Parade" made the editors' feeling that trans people were being excluded clear: "[i]t now appears that the Gay Liberation Movement is the most organized oppressor of the transvestite lifestyle."<sup>49</sup> The article pointed out that Ron Gold (of the National Gay Task Force), had recently stated that the media should "not photograph the transvestite as he is not truly a representation of the gay lifestyle."<sup>50</sup>

In 1974, a gay and lesbian group from Hunter College had printed a photo collage of drag queens from the 1974 pride parade with the caption "[w]e thought you would be interested in knowing just what GAY PRIDE is. It certainly is not the transvestite or drag queen." In the article, they included a list of statements and overall opinions against trans participation in Pride. The first statement was by the Lesbian Feminist Movement, stated that "[a]s Lesbians, we cannot view transvestism, or drag queens other than as a parody and ridicule of women," and that the LFL was "offended by the ridicule directed at them by men assuming the costume parodies of heterosexuality." *Drag* also discussed the opinion of gay men listed in the *Drag* article and said, "transvestism oppresses Gay men by perpetuating society's stereotypes of us. Our goals, hopes, and loves are not represented by men playing at being women."<sup>51</sup> Trans women were not seen as "real women" by many lesbians; cross-dressing men were seen as overly feminine and outrageous by many gay men. Neither trans/drag people nor trans/drag activism was welcome in the gay and lesbian community.

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<sup>49</sup> "Gay is not Proud of Queens on Parade," *Drag Magazine* 5, no. 18 (Apr- Jun 1973): 31.

<sup>50</sup> "Gay is not Proud of Queens on Parade," 32.

<sup>51</sup> "Gay is not Proud of Queens on Parade," 34.

The last pride covered by *Drag* was the Gay Pride March 1977 in San Francisco. *Drag* noted that San Francisco Pride drew in a large number of people and cited Anita Bryant's recent legal victory in Florida as the cause. *Drag* said that Anita Bryant's movement caused the gay/lesbian and trans/drag communities to march together again in spite of their previous hostile relations. *Drag* noted in its reporting that Cocoa Lockhart, who identified as a cross-dresser, was even scheduled as a speaker; while she did not get to speak because of timing issues, *Drag* reported positively on the fact that she was even scheduled.<sup>52</sup>

### **Understanding the law**

Much of *Drag* was dedicated to coverage of legal issues related to cross-dressing. This reporting made clear how dangerous it could be to live as a trans/drag woman. Throughout *Drag* we see QLF fighting to legalize cross-dressing. The Queens Liberation Front held the first legal trans Halloween ball, which took place in New York City on October 30th, 1970. The New York Penal Law Section 250.15 prohibited individuals from being "masked or in any manner disguised." There was an exception for a masquerade party with a license, but even then "males dressed in female attire were not admitted." Brewster argued that the regulation "discriminated against the male as there was no provision restricting the type of costume women might wear." The Queens Liberation Front convinced local officials to remove the clause referring to males in female attire and obtained a license for the ball. *Drag* viewed this as a major victory towards the legalization of cross-dressing.<sup>53</sup>

*Drag* published interviews with trans/drag people about their experiences. In a 1973 interview with Angela Keyes Douglas, she talked about her medical opinions, her experience in jail, and her experience working in the gay community. She said she thought psychiatry was

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<sup>52</sup> "Gay Pride March '77," *Drag Magazine* 7, no. 25 (1977): 18-21.

<sup>53</sup> "Hail to Queens," *Drag Magazine* 1, no. 2 (Apr-Jun 1971): 18.

“unscientific” and simply a way for medical professionals to make “homosexuality/transsexualism” a medical condition. She recounted her experience getting arrested in Miami, Los Angeles, and Venice, placed in cells with male inmates, and subjected to “rape attempts, beatings, [and] hassles.” When she was arrested in Olympia, Washington, for hitch-hiking, she was placed in the women’s jail because the police thought she was a post-operative transsexual. The sheriff stripped her, realized that she had not had gender confirmation surgery, and then threatened and banned her from returning to the city. On the Gay Liberation movement, Douglas said she suffered a “tremendous amount of prejudice” from gay men. She stayed involved in gay activism until 1970, attempting to combat transphobia, but ultimately left to form her own organization, Transsexual Action Organization (TAO).<sup>54</sup>

*Drag* reported on changes and challenges to laws around cross-dressing in Chicago. In 1973, the article “Drag Addiction No Crime” reported that following the arrests of four people in drag, Circuit Court Judge Jack Sperling had ruled a Chicago ordinance outlawing cross-dressing unconstitutional, stating that the law the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment and that “[w]hat a person wishes to wear is a matter of individual right.”<sup>55</sup> In 1974, *Drag* reported that the Chicago City Council had filed a motion to vacate Sperling’s decision. At the end of the article, *Drag* included a list of seven steps for trans/drag people to take if they were stopped by police or arrested.

Then in 1975, the story took yet another turn. A 1975 article titled “Chicago TVS Legal or Not????” reported that a different circuit judge, David J. Shields, released a different ruling supporting the ordinance. The defense argued that the law was vague, denied equal protection, violated privacy rights, free expression, and due process of the law. In response, Judge Shields

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<sup>54</sup> “Angela Keyes Douglas: A Drag Interview with Ben Miller,” *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 10 (Apr- Jun 1973): 28-33.

<sup>55</sup> “Drag Addiction No Crime,” *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 12 (Jul- Sep 1973): 5.

said that issue was not how one dressed but rather the intent to conceal biological sex, which the city had the right to forbid.<sup>56</sup> While this was not good news, it was important information for readers in and around Chicago. It also spoke to legal difficulties other readers might face elsewhere.

*Drag* reported on arrests for cross-dressing all over the United States. In 1971 *Drag* reported that the police in Dallas, Texas arrested Carol and charged her with “impersonation of a female in a public place at a time other than a festival,” but that she was later released. *Drag* reported to its readers that *The Advocate*, a gay and lesbian magazine, had described the case as one in which a “preoperative transsexual charged with wearing a mask or disguise in public won a municipal court case.” *Drag* interviewed Carol and quoted her extensively in their own coverage. She said, “My voice gives me away every time, along with the fact that I’m 6’ 2.” The police took her clothes and she spent 24 hours in jail. Carol said, “They took my clothes and put me in a release tank with male prisoners for one hour with nothing on except a girdle and shoes. I have [a] quite well-developed bust now after nine months of shots.”<sup>57</sup> *Drag* stated that the officers’ actions were not justified. The absence of witnesses was the sole reason, *Drag* reported, that the judge dismissed Carol’s case. In this article, *Drag* informed readers of how many trans/drag individuals were treated horribly by police when arrested.

Also in 1971, Angela Keyes Douglas was arrested for cross-dressing in Miami. The judge dismissed the charge, calling it a “bad arrest,” but did not rule on the constitutionality of the ordinance. A year later the same law was applied in the August 1972 arrest of Willie Lee Peterson by a patrolman who stated that Peterson “was wearing a wig, a women’s nylon blouse,

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<sup>56</sup> “Chicago TVS Legal or Not???” *Drag Magazine* 5, no. 17 (Jan-Mar 1975): 8.

<sup>57</sup> *Drag Magazine* 1, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 1971): 6-7. Some of the coverage of this event was based on reporting in the larger LGBT magazine the *Advocate*.



slacks, and he was carrying a purse.”<sup>58</sup> This time, Circuit Court Judge Thomas Testa ruled that the law was unconstitutional because it was too vague and did not state the kind of crime it was preventing. He suggested that the city could write a new law that determines how people dress in various public and private buildings. *Drag* reported that the assistant Florida State Attorney said that he had no plans to appeal to a high court and that the decision was only valid in its district. Here again, *Drag* informed readers of the legal fates of both cross-dressing laws and cross-dressers nationwide.

Another cross-dressing case covered by *Drag* was Nicole Murray’s arrest in San Diego in 1975. The police charged Murray with a violation of the city’s cross-dressing ordinance, “with intent to deceive and for the purpose of committing an unlawful act.” *Drag* detailed the legal arguments made and the outcome. Murray’s attorney argued that the law violated the freedom of expression and argued further that wearing women’s clothes should not be seen as a violation of the law. The city attorney countered that the law was not discriminatory because it applied to both males and females dressed as the opposite sex. He added that “[w]hether the defendant is a transsexual or not is irrelevant to the statute.”<sup>59</sup> The judge upheld the ordinance as constitutional. This was not good news for the trans/drag community, but it was important news, and *Drag* disseminated it. *Drag* also highlighted the positive moment in which Murray’s attorney’s argued that laws against cross-dressing violated freedom of expression.

All three of the cases above were typical in that they remained at the municipal level. As *Drag* stressed, in such cases decisions could be easily overturned by a different judge. Rachell Mayes’ case, however, was different in that it reached the Texas State Supreme Court. Mayes challenged Houston’s cross-dressing ordinance based on its vagueness, but the court upheld it.

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<sup>58</sup> “Transsexual Conference in Miami,” *Drag Magazine 1*, no. 2 (Apr-Jun 1971): 8-9.

<sup>59</sup> “San Diego Court Ruling Backs Clothing Ordinance,” *Drag Magazine 5*, no. 18 (Apr-Jun 1975): 5.

The *Drag* article on *Texas v. Mayes*, “Highest Court Leaves Texas TVs Illegal,” noted that the ruling set a precedent in Texas and so “stamp[ed] a kind of finality on the legality of Houston’s disguise ordinance.”<sup>60</sup> *Drag* also corrected false reports in local papers that the decision came from the United States Supreme Court, when it was actually the State Supreme Court. *Drag* also reported that the United States Supreme Court had declined to hear the case, and explained that the United States Supreme Court often declines to hear cases without giving a reason.

Of course, *Texas v. Mayes* had an impact beyond its legal remit, and *Drag* drew readers’ attention to that fact. The 1974 article, “San Francisco Arrests 40 Drags” noted that the arresting officer referenced *Texas v. Mayes* when ten drag queens in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco were arrested and charged with “dressing in the clothes of the opposite sex.”<sup>61</sup> Another 1974 article highlighted the impact of *Texas v. Mayes* in a Louisiana cross-dressing case in which Charles Williams was arrested three times in two weeks. *Drag* reported that Alexandria Police Chief Jack Rogers stated that Williams would continue to be arrested if she wore women’s clothes. He also stated that his enforcement of the ordinance caused “a group of some 20 or more black transvestites,” two of whom were previously arrested for assault and robbery, to leave Alexandria. According to *Drag*, Rogers said, “I don’t really care which way the court rules [on Williams’ arrest], really, because the ordinance has already done its work.” Once the case arrived in municipal court, Williams’ lawyer, Kaplan, argued that the law violated the due process clause of the 14th amendment because of its vagueness and “failure to give a person of ordinary intelligence fair notice that his contemplated conduct is forbidden by the statute.” Kaplan said that the ordinance portrayed all those who cross-dress as “prospective criminals.” *Drag* emphasized that the municipal judge presiding, Judge Foote, said that he had reviewed the *Texas*

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<sup>60</sup> “Highest Court Leaves Texas TVs Illegal,” *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 15 (Jul-Sep 1974): 4.

<sup>61</sup> “San Francisco Arrests 40 Drags,” *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 15 (Jul-Sep 1974): 7.

v. *Mayer* decision when considering the case. Judge Foote denied the injunction prohibiting future arrests based on the ordinance and said Williams “could help himself by curtailing his activities.”<sup>62</sup> *Drag* made an additional point for its cross-dressing audience: although Williams had been living as a woman for two years, she could be arrested for cross-dressing until she started taking hormones and sought psychiatric counseling towards with plans to undergo a sex-change operation. *Drag* successfully reported on many cross-dressing arrests and court cases with inclusive language for the general public. By reporting on the cross-dressing cases, *Drag* informed readers of the court process when a law was challenged. It provided readers with a basic understanding. For example, if they were arrested under a cross-dressing ordinance and wanted to challenge the law, they had an idea of the arguments used for and against the law. Readers learned how various city judges viewed cross-dressing laws and why they found ordinances constitutional or unconstitutional. *Drag* also provided advice for individuals if they were stopped by police or arrested, which was critical information to many *Drag* readers. In its reporting, *Drag* always included the perspective of the trans/drag people who had been arrested for cross-dressing. Arrested cross-dressers shared their experiences of being arrested and of being put in jail, usually with men even if they were trans women. *Drag* made clear to readers that they were not alone, and if arrested, they had resources like the ACLU available to them.

*Drag*'s news section reported on arrests of trans/drag women for sex work; these articles often included interviews with arrested sex workers. By reporting on sex work, *Drag* helped combat the stigma associated with sex work. It stood in stark contrast to many contemporaneous gay magazines, which focused on white, middle-class, and cis-gender people and shunned sex-workers in their focus on the construction of the “respectable homosexual.” In contrast, *Drag*

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<sup>62</sup> “Louisiana Ordinance Forbids Drag,” *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 15 (Jul-Sep 1974): 7-9.

included trans sex workers in its imagined community. *Drag* reported news about sex workers several times during this period. A 1972 article explained to readers the differences between police tactics for arresting cross-dressers and arresting sex workers (though many of its readers were probably both). (It noted that a report on arrests given by San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto indicated that in 1969 there had been 286 arrests of men for soliciting sex and 57 arrests for cross-dressing.) Most commonly, police officers in plainclothes would approach the individual when they were talking to a customer and question them. Then, the police would arrest them for soliciting. Often the cases were dropped due to a lack of evidence. The second police arrest tactic was when the police gathered near an area congregated by sex workers.<sup>63</sup> In a 1972 article, *Drag* reported that 41 drag queens had been arrested in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco, a working-class area frequented by both sex workers and police officers for “obstructing the sidewalk and wearing women’s clothes with the intent to deceive.”<sup>64</sup> Even though it was not explicitly stated in the charges, the drag queens arrested were most likely sex workers. *Drag* reporting on sex workers humanized sex workers. One interesting article published in 1974 described a scene in which two suburban high school students, Larry Leathers and Linda Hill, spent a whole day, from the afternoon into the early hours of the next morning, attempting to interview sex workers in the Tenderloin District. *Drag* reported that, when the students approached one sex worker and began asking questions, the students were shocked. *Drag* reported that the students were shocked when they heard the sex worker’s lower, “male” voice. Hill said to the sex worker, “When you were across the street, I thought you were a woman.” She replied, “Thank you. That’s the whole idea.” She said that she took female

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<sup>63</sup> *Drag Magazine* 2, no. 5 (Jan-Mar 1972): 30.

<sup>64</sup> *Drag Magazine* 2, no. 7 (Jul- Sep 1972): 9.

hormones, and made between 50 and 60 dollars a night as a sex worker. The article was short but provided readers with a knowing and sympathetic perspective on sex workers.<sup>65</sup>

The best example of *Drag*'s coverage of sex workers is a long article titled "Male Prostitution," about trans/drag sex workers. The overall tone of the article is accepting and admiring of these sex workers. It features interviews with trans/drag sex workers that figure them as experts on trans/drag life. The article starts by noting that the "world's oldest profession" included women, men, and "fairly often included men dressed as women," and that many trans/drag women who lived in drag full time earned all or part of their living through sex work. One interviewee, who identified herself as a "TV Prostitute," was described by the reporter as looking well-rested and happy. She offered information on many aspects of trans/drag sex work. She explained that many drag queens who performed at nightclubs supplemented that income with sex work. Speaking of her work, she said that most clients did not care which "sex" gives them oral sex. She said, "I don't go out of my way to disturb my image. He sees a woman he buys, and I give him what he wants." When the *Drag* reporter asked how she "got away with it?" she explained some of her strategies. If "the John" became touchy, she distracted him by touching him. She preferred performing sex work in cars, explaining that both parties were more likely to remain at least partly clothed. When "TV Prostitute" described a trans/drag sex worker in her 30s who had been on the streets since she was 14 years old and who was on hormone therapy with plans to have sex reassignment surgery, *Drag* said, "[t]he fact that she can afford all the medical attention this type of surgery requires indicates that business is VERY good," thereby casting both the woman and her work in a positive light.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> "Students Score, Meet TV Hooker," *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 14 (Apr- Jun 1974): 9.

<sup>66</sup> "Male Prostitution," *Drag Magazine* 2, no. 7 (Jul- Sep 1972): 18-19.

*Drag*'s representation of sex work as a credible profession destigmatized sex work for readers who previously had a different view. The representation was important because sex work was a large aspect of the drag community, so reporting on the work included an underrepresented part of the drag community. *Drag*'s reports on sex work were also critical because based on the articles about sex work, *Drag* made an effort to voices from all the social classes that made up the drag community, and tried to be inclusive of all in the community.

*Drag* reported on harassment of and assaults on trans/drag people. This was especially vital for the community because the police often did not act when trans/drag people were assaulted or murdered; furthermore police brutality against trans/drag people was common. A 1972 article reported that in Washington, D.C., three drag queens out walking were followed by three soldiers. Anxious, the three drag queens started to walk faster, but the soldiers kept following them. Then one of the drag queens turned around and said, "You do not want us, we're boys in drag." The drag queens ran in different directions, but the soldiers ran after one, pulled off her wig and her clothes, and started beating her. A laughing crowd began to gather around. Finally, someone called the police, but the police officers who arrived were also laughing. The officers separated the attacker and the victim, and two gave the soldiers a "good talking to" before releasing them without any charges. *Drag* argues that the attack should not have been dealt with this way, and that the police should have charged the soldiers. Instead, the police had "condoned the actions of the three assailants, in complete disregard of the drags' rights." *Drag* made the point that these assaults would continue to occur, and that the drag community needed to know their rights. *Drag* noted that for bystanders and police alike, the attack was a form of entertainment: "Everyone had to see the show, the naked drag, crying hysterically..." while spectators, including the police officers, laughed. After the assault, everyone left calling the drag

queens “sissies.” *Drag* said that they would not be able to change the views of “he-men,” and that the perpetrators would continue to harass and assault drag queens.<sup>67</sup> *Drag* encouraged readers to fight back and sue anyone who harassed them, even the police, which may have encouraged people to fight for their rights. *Drag* always wanted their readers to know their rights and fight for their rights when anyone, including law enforcement, violated them.

On one noteworthy occasion, QLF and *Drag* interfered directly in a miscarriage of justice. In 1974, transvestite William Battles was murdered by a group of young assailants described by a witness as between the ages of 14 and 20 years old. The police did not make any arrests until the QLF stepped in and threatened to expose the police department’s lack of interest in the case because the victim identified as a transvestite.<sup>68</sup> The QLF showed that they would fight to stop injustice against trans individuals from continuing.

In 1975, Calvin Williams charged the Pittsburgh Police with brutality. Two witnesses, Joyce Nunnally and Jan Alridge, said they saw Williams and two others who were wearing women’s clothing leaving a restaurant when police officer Welch approached them. Williams ran across the street and was grabbed by two men, who were later discovered to be off-duty police officers. Officer Welch started beating Williams with a blackjack. The witness said that Welch hit Williams 15 to 20 times in the head and kidney area.<sup>69</sup> There was a common theme of police brutality against trans individuals and police neglect when trans individuals were assaulted or murdered. It is especially important that *Drag* included news about crimes against trans individuals because then they were aware that it occurred. Also, it helped raise awareness within the community.

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<sup>67</sup> “Capitol Punishment,” *Drag Magazine* 2, no. 5 (Jan-Mar 1972): 32-33.

<sup>68</sup> “Transvestite Murdered in New York,” *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 15 (Jul-Sep 1974): 6.

<sup>69</sup> “Transvestite Charges Pittsburgh Police with Brutality,” *Drag Magazine* 5, no. 18 (Apr-Jun 1975): 7.

### Creating its own community

Alongside *Drag* reporting on gay transphobia and legal oppression was another, more uplifting strand of articles on trans/drag activism and community. *Drag* expressed their hope to build a community, “Now heterosexual, homosexaul, part time, and full time drag queens, it’s time for us come off our ‘queenly’ throne and go amongst the ‘common’ people and let them know that we’re really people, with REAL feeling.”<sup>70</sup> Even though the article was mainly about fighting for equal rights, their underlying fight was to start to build a whole trans/drag community. It is important to note that *Drag* illustrated the hope to unite the trans/drag community in its first issue. *Drag* highlighted QLF efforts to educate the public by speaking at colleges on the east coast—Rutgers University, New York University, Paterson State Teachers College, and Newark State College —and also at Mills College in the San Francisco Bay area. For example, in summer 1971 QLF members Debbie Hartin, Kay Gibbons, Bunny Eisenhower, and Barbarella were invited to speak in a New York University course on “Homosexuality” about when they started cross-dressing and about the distinctions between “the heterosexual transvestite, the homosexual transvestite, the drag queen, and the transsexual.” Bunny started cross-dressing at the age of three; Gibbons said that she started cross-dressing in grade school; Barbarella said she “wanted to be a women only after attending a drag ball.”<sup>71</sup> The presentation, followed by its write-up in *Drag*, gave listeners and readers a sense of security that they were not alone. Since the class was about homosexuality, it exposed the students to new identities, and their personal stories helped destigmatize the topics.

*Drag* also published news of the drag scene in San Francisco. Coverage of San Francisco by staff writer Linda Lee appeared in almost every issue, in the last several pages. Lee’s

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<sup>70</sup> “The Impossible Dream! No?,” 4.

<sup>71</sup> *Drag Magazine* 1, no. 3 (Jul-Sep 1971): 10.



contribution of news and updates on the San Francisco drag scene was significant because it showcased another active part of the country besides New York. Lee reported on her own experiences at Pride, shared medical information, offered tips for everyday trans/drag life, and provided legal updates. Lee's annual spring coverage of Pride Week focused on transgender visibility. Her 1971 coverage stressed how many "queens and transsexuals" attended San Francisco pride events throughout the week. She also noted Pride Week tensions between the trans/ drag and gay communities: "[t]here is still a bit of an antagonism directed at the cross-dressers by the GAY community. 'Straight' gays apparently like us as lovers, but hate to be seen with us publicly dressed."<sup>72</sup>

Lee's article on the Gender Dysphoria Clinic of the Stanford Medical Center explained that it was the only such clinic on the west coast and explained its screening procedures and post-op support. Lee also provided useful everyday information. In winter 1974 she provided a list of six San Francisco gay bars that were trans/drag friendly and explained that she personally had been to those establishments without any issues and that "[p]ublication of the list will be of great value to our sisters, as some of my closest friends don't even know about them."<sup>73</sup> On the fifth anniversary of *Drag* magazine, in 1974 Lee celebrated by reporting that the San Francisco city council had voted to overturn the city law prohibiting cross-dressing.<sup>74</sup>

Articles by other writers included reviews of drag-queen performances and community events. The 1974 article "New York Drag Oasis" reported on the Miss Gilded Grape Contest at the Gilded Grape Bar in New York City: "[t]he queens range from after theatre types in gowns to hookers."<sup>75</sup> *Drag* highlighted non-performative community-based participatory events such as

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<sup>72</sup> Linda Lee, "San Francisco Scene," *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 16 (Oct-Dec 1974): 18.

<sup>73</sup> "San Francisco Scene," 18.

<sup>74</sup> Linda Lee, "Linda Lee's Drag Scene," *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 16 (Oct-Dec 1974): 26.

<sup>75</sup> "New York Drag Oasis," *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 14 (Apr-Jun 1974): 31-32.

the Fantasy Fair, organized by the OutReach Foundation founded in 1976. OutReach Foundation held the Fantasy Fair for a week in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and brought in people from all over the United States of all ages, from their 20s to 70s for presentations, makeup and voice workshops, and social events, and. The end of the *Drag* article stated that the Fantasy Fair “made participants aware that each could grow in dignity and achieve an acceptable female lifestyle. It demonstrated, as best it could that indeed a transvestite could live free from fear and guilt.”<sup>76</sup> The Fantasy Fair provided an opportunity for anyone in the trans/drag community to learn more, meet others, and build community. *Drag’s* coverage of the Fantasy Fair allowed readers from other parts of the United States to learn more about the different trans/drag community events, which was especially important since *Drag* was an important magazine for news and coverage of trans/drag events.

Lee Brewster organized drag celebrations around Mardi Gras, including both “Lee Brewster’s Mardi Gras Ball,” an annual party held in New York City in the early 1970s, and an annual gathering of drag queens in New Orleans during its Mardi Gras festivities. In coverage of the 1972 “Lee Brewster’s Mardi Gras Ball” *Drag* said trans/drag individuals came from all over the east coast to attend the ball, and “It was reviewed in at least four newspapers in the U.S as well as several foreign publications”<sup>77</sup> The first Mardi Gras tour covered in *Drag* was in 1971, *Drag* described the street as “full beautiful queens who come from all over the country for this grand parade” in New Orleans.<sup>78</sup> If people could not attend the celebration in New Orleans, they had an opportunity to attend the “Lee Brewster’s Mardi Gras Ball” in New York. In its coverage of the 1973 trip to New Orleans, *Drag* described the event as an opportunity for drag queens to gather, dress up, and celebrate, where “transvestites come out of the closet wearing everything

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<sup>76</sup> “Fantasy Fair” *Drag Magazine* 7, no. 25 (1977): 37-38.

<sup>77</sup> “Lee Brewster’s Mardi Gras ‘72 Ball,” *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 9 (Jan-Mar 1973): 13.

<sup>78</sup> “New York, New Orleans, Mardi Gras,” *Drag Magazine* 1, no. 3 (Jul-Sep 1971): 35-37.

they own: sequins, feathers, furs, and more cleavage than you'd see at a silicone convention.”<sup>79</sup>

*Drag* reported that Lee G. Brewster’s Mardi Gras Tour had 1,500 people attend in 1973. In *Drag*’s 1974 coverage, writer-participant Madame X of New Jersey initially thought that the weekend in New Orleans was “foolishness.” After attending the tour, she discovered the event served for her as a form of therapy, self-awareness, and self-acceptance, and it was a place “to freely express one’s emotions and personality after a lifetime of suppression and guilt is the most pleasant form of intoxication.” She said, “My alter ego became a living and functioning entity without that cloak of fear and tension from the threat of police and/or civilian harassment.”<sup>80</sup>

Madame X’s coverage of Lee G. Brewster’s Mardi Gras Tour shows trans/drag community events were powerful and that individuals in the community should attend an event, even if they are hesitant at first. Her reporting on the event made an impact because she could speak to a wide audience about how it impacted her. People were able to build long-lasting relationships with each other as over 70% of the 1975 attendees had attended a previous Mardi Gras ball.<sup>81</sup>

Brewster also had a store, Lee’s Mardi Gras Boutique, which served all cross-dressing women with a special focus on performing drag queens. The *Drag* articles on Mardi Gras were proven to be popular because, in the 1977 article, they said that the readers insisted they write about the Mardi Gras weekend in New Orleans, which illustrates the impact of the yearly event.<sup>82</sup> The weekend gave people a chance to meet others and to be completely themselves without judgement and fear of persecution.

*Drag* highlighted the emergence of trans organizations across the United States. This informed some readers of resources near them, and offered all readers a vision of a growing

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<sup>79</sup> “Welcome to Mardi Gras ’73,” *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 11 (Jul-Sep 1973): 22-32.

<sup>80</sup> Madame X, “Into the Streets,” *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 15 (Jul-Sep 1974): 18.

<sup>81</sup> “Lee G Brewster’s 5th Annual Mardi Gras!,” *Drag Magazine* 5, no. 19 (Jul-Sep 1975): 27-37.

<sup>82</sup> “Mardi Gras 77 Revisted,” *Drag Magazine* 7, no. 25 (1977): 24-25.

national trans community. Few trans organizations existed in the 1970s; many organizations written up in *Drag* were started because of a local need. In 1971, *Drag* reported on the founding of trans group Androgynous Organization (AO) in Los Angeles, which offered trans individuals medical and legal recommendations. *Drag* quoted its founder, Charlotte, as saying that “[w]e will be trying to help transsexuals help their parents understand their problems.”<sup>83</sup> Similarly, *Drag* had a 1973 article highlighting the founding of Hidden Life, by Yvette in Hawaii, to address political, employment, and social issues in Hawaiian trans/drag community. Yvette explained to the *Drag* reporter that many trans/drag women were forced out of their homes as 13- or 14-year-olds, had difficulty finding work, and engaged in sex work because it was one of their only options.<sup>84</sup> Hidden Life planned job training programs to help those who wanted other forms of work. *Drag* also wrote about the Transsexual Counseling Service, founded in 1967, in its spring 1974 edition. The Transsexual Counseling Service was based in San Francisco; it fought police harassment and provided other services for other trans/drag people. *Drag* described this organization as a “referral service” for trans people seeking doctors, surgeons, electrologists, psychiatrists, lawyers, or housing information.<sup>85</sup>

*Drag*'s inclusion of these organizations in the magazine gave readers of *Drag* information about where to access help. *Drag*'s reporting on these organizations gave readers a sense of hope that they could receive help and resources from a local organization. *Drag* also continued to build the community by reporting on the new trans organization because it gave the people in those areas the ability to gather and help each other.

By 1973, just as it was clear that the trans/drag community were unwelcome in the gay and lesbian community, it was clear that *Drag* was a broad and accepting trans/drag community.

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<sup>83</sup> *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 10 (Apr-Jun 1973): 38.

<sup>84</sup> *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 10 (Apr-Jun 1973): 5.

<sup>85</sup> *Drag Magazine* 4, no. 14 (Apr- Jun 1974): 29.

This is evident in the “Letters to the Editor” that appeared in a few of the later issues of *Drag*. Published letters testify to the importance of *Drag* to at least some readers. In Fall 1973, Elaine from California said, “Keep up the good work-- Thanks to you-- ‘girls’ like me have a home.”<sup>86</sup> Jenny from California said, “Congratulations on an inspiring magazine... I heartily agree with your philosophy of unity among transvestites.”<sup>87</sup> Most of the letters to the editor highlighted how *Drag* has helped create a community. People wrote about how they gave their friends a copy of *Drag*, which illustrates how the magazine has reached a large audience, and that people benefitted from reading the magazine. Some people highlighted how the trans/drag community deserved more recognition in the larger gay community. For example, Bob McCarroll from Massachusetts said, “[g]ay liberation owes a lot to the drag queen and, obviously it still needs to learn more about tolerance from them.” and “[i]f Gay Liberation is to reach its final goal, it is going to have to provide liberation for everyone. The brothers from Queens Liberation Front and STAR can certainly help fight for that.”<sup>88</sup> Bob McCarroll wrote about how the trans/drag community deserves more credit for all they have done for the Gay Liberation Movement, and they deserve to be included in the fight. Paula Lee wrote in exclaiming that she “especially liked issue No. 10 with its articles on sex change,”<sup>89</sup> which is important because information on medical information was not necessarily easily accessible for drag/trans people. Barbra Freyn highlighted the importance of community building, “It’s about time the gays, TVs and TSs break down the barriers between us and work together. United we stand; divided we stand still wishing something would happen.”<sup>90</sup> She made clear that when standing together, a social group can

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<sup>86</sup> *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 12 (Oct-Dec 1973): 35.

<sup>87</sup> *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 12 (Oct-Dec 1973): 36.

<sup>88</sup> *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 12 (Oct-Dec 1973): 40.

<sup>89</sup> *Drag Magazine* 5, no. 17 (Jan- Mar 1975): 38.

<sup>90</sup> *Drag Magazine* 6, no. 24 (Oct-Dec 1976): 26.

make a significant difference. When a group is divided, it is challenging to continue to fight and make progress.

There are a few examples from the “Letters to Drag” section that show how far *Drag* reached around the country and world. Jack Crawford wrote from prison in 1973 and said they had been incarcerated since 1969. Crawford said, “I just saw your magazine for the first time today and was really impressed and hope to see more of them. I am also very interested in some correspondence with various tvs.”<sup>91</sup> Crawford’s letter shows how *Drag* reached many trans/drag individuals and how *Drag* built community. Another example is from *Drag*’s winter 1976 issue. Yvonne wrote in to say that she could only find older issues of *Drag* in Germany and France and hoped to buy a subscription.<sup>92</sup> The fact that Yvonne has access to *Drag* magazine in Germany and Paris shows the impact that *Drag* made on the trans/drag community. Jon wrote from London explaining how they wish they had a larger drag scene. Jon explained that there was not a long-run radical trans/drag group in London at the time. Until the middle 1970s, Jon said London did not have a drag-centered magazine and the one that exists “*Drag Queens*” focused more on theatrical drag rather than covering political issues. Jon stressed that London needed a magazine like *Drag*.<sup>93</sup> Jon’s letter is an example of how impactful *Drag* was on many in the drag/trans community. Overall, all of the letters illustrate how *Drag* affected the trans/drag community members and its importance.

## Conclusion

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<sup>91</sup> *Drag Magazine* 3, no. 12 (Oct-Dec 1973): 40.

<sup>92</sup> *Drag Magazine* 6, no. 24 (Oct-Dec 1976): 31.

<sup>93</sup> *Drag Magazine* 5, no. 17 (Jan-Mar 1975): 19.

Trans/drag people have played an essential role in creating equality and achieving civil rights in the U.S. LGBTQ+ community. Unfortunately, their role has not always been acknowledged and documented as a part of history. Only recently has their participation at Stonewall been celebrated as part of LGBTQ+ history. In the first months after Stonewall, the trans/drag community felt included in the overall Gay Liberation Movement, but this feeling was short-lived. As seen through *Drag* magazine's lens, the trans/drag community has faced discrimination from the non-LGBTQ+ community and the lesbian and gay community. Despite the many instances and years of discrimination across the United States and beyond, the trans/drag community showed resilience, fought for their civil rights, educated their community by sharing news, and held various community events throughout the 1970s.

The magazine *Drag* played an influential role here, as it served as a form of communication that connected the trans/drag community across the United States. In its first issue, *Drag* said, “Now it's time, as most attitudes are being challenged and we're getting onto the bandwagon and hope to have all of you jump on it with us....we're coming out!... Fighting...”<sup>94</sup> *Drag* started their magazine by encouraging drag/trans individuals to stand up for themselves and their rights together with the rest of the community. They voiced their welcoming community for anyone that cross-dressed to join without any questioning anyone's validity. The QLF used *Drag* as a platform to share news, events, and overall critical information to the trans/drag community. *Drag* magazine played a substantial part in the building and the expansion of the trans/drag community in the United States in the 1970s.

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<sup>94</sup>“The impossible Dream! No?,”*Drag Magazine* 1, no. 1 (Oct-Dec 1971): 4-5.

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