

PRIDE DENIED

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ABSTRACT

Largely shot during World Pride in Toronto in June 2014, *Pride Denied* is a political essay documentary that explores the stakes of contemporary LGBT politics, organizations, and celebrations. In particular, *Pride Denied* traces the transformation of contemporary pride events from activist roots to large, corporate-sponsored events that actively displace street-based folks such as sex workers and the homeless/underhoused. *Pride Denied* also looks at how state governments and corporations increasingly invoke rhetorics of LGBT inclusion to proffer a “progressive” image of themselves — a practice known as “pinkwashing” — in order to distract attention from imperial wars, settler colonialism, environmental destruction, and other human rights abuses. Lastly, the film explores how LGBT movements and organizing on issues such as marriage primarily address the interests of wealthy LGBT people while largely ignoring the needs of everyone else — especially people of color, transgender folks, and non-citizens.

Pride Denied addresses these topics and more through interviews, event footage, and archival research. The film primarily targets audiences at post-secondary educational institutions as well as queer and trans community activists.

DEDICATION

This film is dedicated to all the queer
and trans people still suffering from police and
state violence in the US and Canada, including:

CeCe MacDonald,

Chelsea Manning,

and the New Jersey 4

(Venice Brown, Terrain Dandridge,

Renata Hill, and Patreese Johnson)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-------------|
| ABSTRACT | II |
| DEDICATION | III |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | IV |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | VI |
| LIST OF FIGURES | VIII |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| VISUAL TREATMENT & STRUCTURE | 3 |
| HOMONATIONALISM & PINKWASHING..... | 6 |
| HOMONATIONALISM & THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE “MOVEMENT” | 10 |
| PRIDE & WORLD PRIDE..... | 15 |
| THE EMERGENCE OF WORLD PRIDE..... | 18 |
| ARTISTIC PROCESS..... | 23 |
| PRE-PRODUCTION PLANNING | 23 |
| PRODUCTION | 25 |
| POST-PRODUCTION | 28 |
| EDITING..... | 30 |
| TEST SCREENINGS | 30 |
| SOUND, SOUND EDITING, AND FINAL MIX..... | 31 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| INFLUENCES..... | 33 |
| AUDIENCE..... | 35 |
| PREVIOUS WORK..... | 36 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 38 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 39 |
| FILMOGRAPHY..... | 44 |
| APPENDIX A: PRODUCTION SCHEDULE..... | 46 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| FIGURE 1. STILL IMAGE FROM PRIDE DENIED. | 4 |
| FIGURE 2. STILL IMAGE FROM PRIDE DENIED. | 5 |
| FIGURE 3. HAMAS, ISIS, AND IRAN KILL GAYS LIKE ME. | 8 |
| FIGURE 4. STILL IMAGE FROM PRIDE DENIED. | 18 |
| FIGURE 5. STILL IMAGE FROM PRIDE DENIED. | 26 |

INTRODUCTION

Shot against the backdrop of the 2014 World Pride event in Toronto, *Pride Denied: Homonationalism & the Future of Queer Politics* is a 55-minute long documentary. The film focuses on sites of ongoing oppression of queer and trans people that have been largely obscured in the mainstream media in recent years by the incorporation of some LGBT subjects into the folds of nationalism and citizenship and with the widespread celebration of “advances” like marriage rights. These urgent issues include: state violence (disproportionally faced by queer and trans people of color); the criminalization of public sex (especially targeting sex workers), alongside the marginalization of other queer forms of intimacy that aren’t hetero and homonormative couplings; and the ongoing lack of access for many to basic rights such as economic security, health care, affordable housing, immigration, and freedom of movement.

In North America, contemporary pride events are widely understood to have evolved out of sites of revolt and resistance— such as the anti-police riots at the Stonewall Inn in NYC in 1969 and the protests that emerged after police bathhouse raids in Toronto 1981 (which I cover briefly in *Pride Denied*). But in addition to these two events, which tend to be the most well known and most associated with LGBT movements in the US and Canada respectively, historians have continued to unearth numerous other examples of revolt and resistance around the same time period (Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman’s documentary *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria* is a good example).

Today, however, pride is big business. Non-profits formed for the purpose of hosting pride events in cities such as Toronto, San Francisco, and New York sport multi-million dollar budgets. But where and how is this money spent? And to what ends?

Pride Denied critiques the expansion of pride events from small, community-organized, protest marches and picnics into large, corporate-sponsored events focused on parties, parades, and celebrity spectacles. The film also imagines ways of celebrating the past while continuing to build on the many accomplishments of queer and trans activists to end oppression for everyone. As Christina Hanhardt reminds us in the film: “LGBT and queer activists have been the best at showing us for generations that protest and transformation can also be about pleasure, about pride, about humor and fun, and about celebrating what we have while asking for more.”

In this paper, which is designed as a companion piece to the film *Pride Denied*, I begin by offering an overview of the scope and aesthetics of the film. The rest of the paper is comprised of two primary components: first, a description of the historical and theoretical underpinnings of the documentary (homonationalism, pinkwashing, critiques of same-sex marriage campaigns, and the history of pride events); second, a description of the artistic process of making the film, followed by a discussion of *Pride Denied* in the context of artistic influences that helped shape the project, the intended audience of the film, and how the piece builds on my earlier work.

VISUAL TREATMENT & STRUCTURE

Pride Denied draws from interviews, event footage, and archival materials to trace the modes through which state governments (such as Canada, the US, and Israel), corporations, and even a large number of LGBT non-profit organizations (including pride groups) deploy discourses of LGBT inclusion to mask practices of social, cultural, economic, environmental, and human rights abuses and/or adopt policies that cater to wealthy elites at the expense of marginalizing others, especially non-citizens, people of color, and poor queer and trans folks.

The film is loosely organized into five main topics: histories of LGBT revolts against police violence (especially Stonewall and the bathhouse raids); the corporatization of pride events; activist challenges to corporatization and pinkwashing campaigns (told through the lens of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid in Toronto); contemporary practices of police violence against queer and trans folks that is largely ignored in, or is in fact facilitated by, mainstream LGBT politics and organizations; and the ways in which the same-sex marriage movement has drained resources from queer and trans communities to organize for benefits that accrue to the most privileged LGBT individuals along lines of race, class, gender, ability and more.

In order to develop and connect these issues, the film relies heavily on an aesthetic and structure of juxtaposition. One of the ways this is most visible in the film is in the three short segments— one each at the beginning, middle, and end— that employ a split screen technique. The split screen is comprised of two images

placed side by side that have been cropped into a 4:3 aspect ratio (see figures 1 and 2).



Figure 1. Still image from Pride Denied.

On the left: participants of the Night March, June 23, 2014. On the right: Deb Pearce, host of the World Pride Opening Ceremonies, June 20, 2014.

In each instance, I selected the images to encourage the spectator to compare and contrast the various settings, such as the opening segment that highlights two different events that occurred during World Pride: the spectacle of the opening ceremonies of the official World Pride event and the “Night March,” a community organized march unaffiliated with Pride Toronto or World Pride that occurred three days after the opening ceremonies. The pairings invite the viewer to notice similarities and differences as well as draw conclusions about gaps, elisions, and

ideological stakes of various spaces and organizations that help to illustrate the underlying organizational topic of the film: homonationalism.

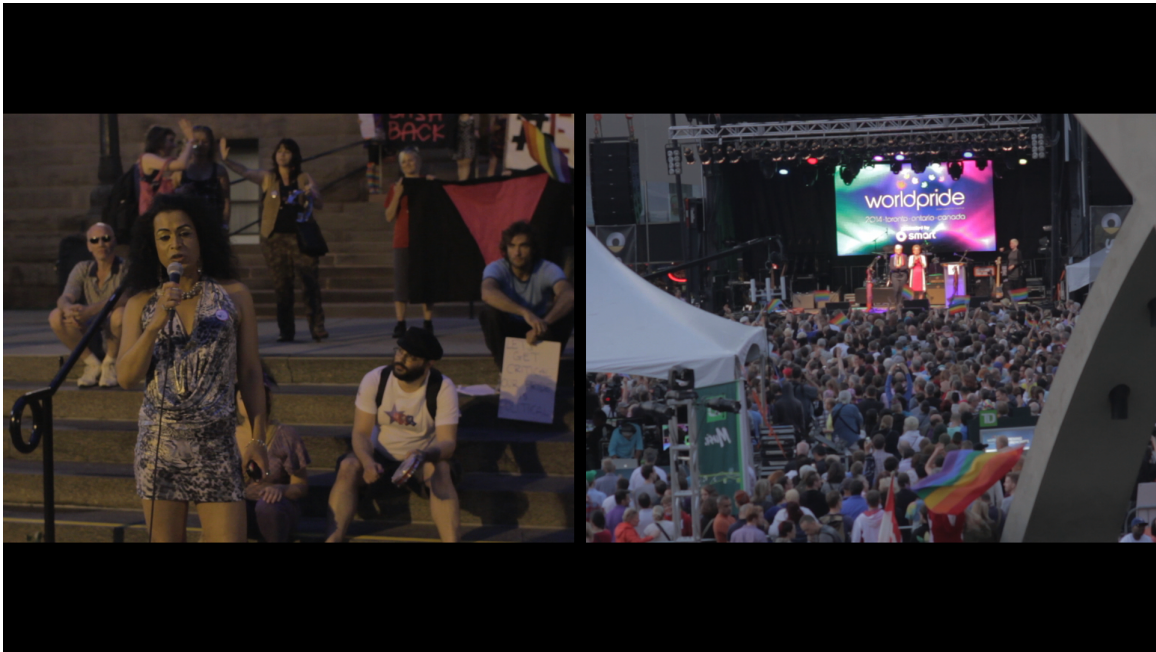


Figure 2. Still image from *Pride Denied*.

On the left: a transwoman speaks about being harassed in Toronto's "gay village" at the Night March, June 23, 2014. On the right: Ontario Premiere Kathleen Wynn, with her partner, on the stage at the World Pride Opening Ceremonies, June 20, 2014.

HOMONATIONALISM & PINKWASHING

Homonationalism, a concept first coined by queer theorist Jasbir Puar in her book *Terrorist Assemblages*, refers to the ways in which forces such as capitalism and the state have appropriated certain aspects of LGBT civil rights discourses in the post-9/11 era to justify imperial expansion and settler colonialism by nation states including Canada, the US, and Israel. According to Puar, homonationalism is a “facet of modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states (“Rethinking Homonationalism” 337).” Puar notes that, in this sense, homonationalism refigures the citizen to fully include certain LGBT subjects once demarcated as sexual others to state and citizenry while creating new categories of sexual, deviant others to the state (see figure 3). This process, for example, became visible in the days leading up to World Pride when the Canadian government, while claiming to support LGBT rights at home and abroad by condemning anti-homosexuality laws in places like Uganda, denied numerous entry visas for LGBT people from places such as Uganda and India who had been invited to Toronto to participate in the World Pride Human Rights Conference (Keung; Scott). Eventually several, though not all, of the delegates received visas (Tepper; Kabuye; Lusimbo).

Puar notes that “homonationalism is fundamentally a deep critique of lesbian and gay liberal rights discourses and how those rights discourses produce narratives of progress and modernity that continue to accord some populations access to citizenship—cultural and legal—at the expense of the delimitation and

expulsion of other populations,” most especially “racialized others (“Rethinking Homonationalism” 337).” Nation states such as the US, Canada, and Israel now frequently represent themselves as progressive and modern, as opposed to purportedly “backward” regions of the world such as the Middle East and Africa, due to their supposed support of limited LGBT civil rights agendas.



Hamas, ISIS and Iran kill gays like me.

My name is Rennick Remley. I'm a gay American. And I support Israel.

If I lived in Gaza or Israel's neighboring states, I would be thrown in jail, mutilated or killed.

Though I am not Jewish, Israel is the only country in the Middle East where I can live without fear. I am free to adopt children, serve openly in the military, advocate for my community's rights and be accepted as a human being.

I visited Israel and marched with thousands of people from around the globe in Jerusalem's Gay Pride parade, and all were treated with dignity. The freedom I experienced made me feel at home.

That's why I'm appalled that so many in the Western world – including the media, Hollywood, and self-proclaimed human rights activists – fail to hold terrorist organizations like Hamas and autocratic governments like Iran accountable for their persecution of LGBT communities.

Have you no decency?

Hamas calls homosexuals subhuman, accusing us of engaging in a "filthy practice" that is punishable by death.

It's not an empty threat. Gay Palestinians have been tortured and killed. That's why many gay Palestinian men risk their lives to cross the border and seek refuge in Israel.

If I lived in Iran, or under Hamas' ideological cousin ISIS, chances are you'd be seeing my picture.

Not in this ad, but hanging from a crane in a public square. That's a regular practice against gay men by the Iranian regime.



The only way for gays to avoid persecution in Iran is to undergo a forced sex change operation.

To those who scapegoat Israel while pretending to care about human rights yet remain silent about the oppression and violence Hamas, Iran and other Middle East countries inflict on the gay community:

Shame on you. You are letting them murder us, literally.

Your misguided actions ensure that LGBT people in the Middle East continue to live in hiding under constant threat of violent death.

It's time to hold oppressive dictators and religious fanatics accountable for their homophobia and violence against LGBT communities.

As a nation that respects the rights and humanity of every citizen, Israel is a model for the rest of the region. Speak up for Israel. You don't have to be Jewish to love the only democracy in the Middle East.

Join the fight for justice and human rights in the Middle East at shmuley.com, thisworld.com and StandWithUs.com.

In Israel, I am free.

This ad was organized, produced and paid for by **This World: The Values Network**, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, Executive Director, and **StandWithUs**.



Figure 3. Hamas, ISIS, and Iran Kill Gays Like Me.

Full page advertisement in the New York Times, December 22, 2014, paid for by Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, Executive Director of This World: The Values Network, and Stand With Us.

In addition, Puar defines homonationalism as the way in which, especially after 9/11, certain queer subjects have been accorded the rights and privileges of citizenship by the state at the expense and expulsion of others, mostly people of color. She also argues that it manifests as "the use of 'acceptance' and 'tolerance' for gay and lesbian subjects as the barometer by which the legitimacy of, and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated" ("Rethinking Homonationalism" 336). Thus homonationalism reflects imperialist discourses and practices through which certain nation states are deemed to be legitimate and progressive based on notions of their "tolerance" and "acceptance" of gays and lesbians, a rubric which is then in turn used to delegitimize and/or frame as backwards states and peoples that are deemed to fail to meet this standard.

Frequently, western liberal LGBT civil rights discourses can themselves be imperialist and nationalist. For example, Anna Rekhviashvili, a Georgian activist who came to Toronto as the International Grand Marshal for World Pride, commented in an interview for the documentary that western models and narratives of LGBT civil rights "progress" are used almost as a yardstick to measure the status of local movements worldwide. She also observed that the mere existence of a local "pride" event is used to signify both the existence of a proper LGBT rights movement as well as the relative progressivism of a country (Rekhviashvili).

HOMONATIONALISM & THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE “MOVEMENT”

The deployment of homonationalism is perhaps nowhere more visible than in same-sex marriage campaigns and their celebrations. Legal marriage rights have become one of the primary barometers by which nation states promote themselves as “progressive,” a discourse that was widely prevalent in World Pride speeches, videos, events, and promotional materials in the 2014 event in Toronto, Canada. In addition, the national rhetorics of same-sex marriage as inclusion and legal “equality” reached new levels in North America after June 2015 when the US Supreme Court overturned laws banning same-sex marriage, legalizing it in all 50 states.

A few days later, the US Supreme Court announced its decision to fully legalize same-sex marriage while millions of people in the US, including many queer and trans folks, languish in prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers (Spade). The links between the two are more than circumstantial. The rise and expansion of the institutions of marriage and the prison industrial complex/border security state are actually intimately intertwined.

Most major legal victories touted as “historic advances” by LGBT leaders and their largely assimilationist non-profits have come at the expense of the literal and figurative disenfranchisement and dispossession of others. As certain LGBT people have been welcomed into the fold of the US nation-state with certain benefits and privileges of citizenship and white supremacy (property and inheritance rights, access to health care, tax benefits, and, with the 2015 Supreme Court decision, likely

immigration rights as well), others — especially people of color and poor people (including queer and trans people for whom race and class oppression largely render the benefits enjoyed by some LGBT folks meaningless) — continue to face increasing marginalization and criminalization at the hands of police, prisons, and the ever expanding border security state, as well as a lack of access to basic needs such as shelter, food, education, health care, and movement (frequently denied to both queer and trans citizens and non-citizens).

It's possible in a number of ways to directly link the enfranchisement of certain segments of the LGBTQ "community" with the dispossession of others both within and without the LGBTQ community (and this is surely not an exhaustive list):

- There has been a shift in financial and other resources away from community based organizations that offer direct services to state and national marriage campaigns (Conrad);
- The legal and discursive language used to enact the supposed advancement of LGBT rights, from the investment in "privacy" in *Lawrence v Texas* (2003) to "dignity" in the marriage decisions of 2013 and today, have been quite conservative and furthered the contraction of access to basic human rights for other groups of people, including reproductive rights for women and trans people (Franke; Weiss 95);
- Nations such as the US, Canada, and Israel use the limited legal rights, such as marriage, granted to LGBT people to paint themselves as "progressive" states (pinkwashing)—in contrast to "backwards" and "homophobic" others, who

- are not coincidentally usually people of color—in order to deflect attention away from, or indeed argue for the necessity of, campaigns of war, imperialism, and genocide (Puar "Israel's Gay Propaganda War"; Puar "Rethinking Homonationalism"; Puar "Homonationalism as Assemblage");
- As Yasmin Nair points out in her research on *US v Windsor* (2013), the Supreme Court decision that overturned the "Defense of Marriage Act" (which Nair also presents in *Pride Denied*), marriage advocates carefully chose Edith Windsor to be the test case plaintiff in front of the Supreme Court. Windsor was a multi-millionaire who challenged the estate taxes she was required to pay on a large inheritance from her deceased partner. Thus, from the beginning, same-sex marriage campaigns have in actual practice been largely focused on the enrichment and expansion of property and other rights (Kinnucan and Nair).

The almost exclusive focus on the part of mainstream LGBT leaders and organizations on a narrow agenda of LGBT rights that benefit only the most privileged and wealthy is not just a simple accident of organizers failing to be inclusive in their agendas. Marriage, and other "rights"-based campaigns on the part of mainstream LGBT organizations, have been purposefully crafted not to demand actual equality and basic human rights for all, but to argue for a notion of equality that maintains systems of white supremacy in the United States by advocating for wealthy LGBT people to have access to the full benefits and privileges that the mostly white, heteronormatively-coupled 1%-10% enjoy (Agathangelou, Bassichis

and Spira; Luibhéid; Muñoz; Warner; Weiss).

To give an example: just a few days prior to the Supreme Court announcement in June 2015, an undocumented Latina transwoman, Jennicet Gutierrez, disrupted a self-congratulatory love fest between LGBT “leaders” and Barack Obama at an event at the White House celebrating the “success” of the inclusion of some lesbian and gays into the fold of US citizenship. Gutierrez interrupted Obama's press conference, calling attention to the abuses of the US immigration detention system, including the disproportionate harms experienced by LGBTQ people caught up in the system (Gutierrez).

The response of Obama and the LGBT leaders in the room was to shame and boo her.¹ Video of Obama’s press conference at the event capture him scolding Gutierrez, saying “shame on you,” and calling security to escort her from the room. The mostly white LGBT leadership in the crowd outright boo and hiss at her, and cheer Obama's dismissal of Gutierrez and her concerns, chanting over and over: “Obama! Obama! Obama!”²

In many ways, this scene at the White House could not have been better staged. Immediately after Gutierrez speaks out, Obama jokes with the crowd and the press, “Listen, you’re in my house,” letting everyone know that he will dictate who is welcome, as well as who gets to speak and how. But of course the White House is not

¹ The disruption in which Jennicet Gutierrez voice is audible can be viewed in this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=16&v=vv9wRNuptC8>

² Video featuring Obama’s commentary can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w710GC6Jx9w>

Obama's house. It is a figure of the domestic space of the nation, and all those leaders of mainstream LGBT organizations were there because the incorporation of certain LGBT people into the US national body, and the marginalization of many others, is an important part of contemporary US domestic and international nation-building in a time of endless wars. The forcible removal of Jennicet Gutierrez, who risked possible deportation with this action only to have other LGBT folks boo and hiss at her, was a visual, audible, and spatial representation of the way that both US national policies and LGBT organizational politics exclude and demonize racialized others (citizens and non-citizens alike).

When the LGBT leaders at the White House refused to stand up for Gutierrez and join her call to end immigration detention, they made visible the institutional racism and cis-sexism at the center of the same-sex marriage campaign in particular, and mainstream LGBT politics, organizations, and pride events in general.

PRIDE & WORLD PRIDE

The origins of contemporary LGBT pride events in North America are typically traced to rebellions such as the Stonewall Inn uprising that took place in New York City in June of 1969, and protests against the bathhouse raids in Toronto in 1981. As many scholars and activists today observe, however, the collective memory and celebration of Stonewall tends to emphasize discourses of identity, civil rights, sexual citizenship, coming out, and visibility while eliding the complex history of race, class, gender, and sexualities of participants, as well as the fact that people were rioting as a form of resistance to police and state oppression. As Christina Hanhardt notes,

the memory of “Stonewall” (as the riots are now called) as a long overdue, passionate expression of selfhood often omits the facts that it was a collective challenge to the police and that it was just the latest clash in an ongoing struggle. Furthermore, the gay liberation organizations that arose in the aftermath of the riots believed that protection from the police would depend on their forming coalitions with other social movements, including Black Power, radical feminisms, and Third World decolonization. This was in contrast to the approach adopted by their immediate predecessors, homophile activists who largely advocated for police accountability through liberal reform measures. Consequently, the refusal of Stonewall’s participants to collaborate with dominant institutions not only marked a rejection of social assimilation (in which, for example, the adoption of gender norms might promise protection) but was also in defiance of the partnership solutions to urban conflict that had been popular with policymakers in the 1960s, such as community policing and War on Poverty initiatives. (Hanhardt 1)

Hanhardt’s history of Stonewall as challenge to state/police violence and

assimilation through coalitional political formations offers an important and timely intervention into many popular and subcultural narratives of the “origins” of North American LGBT organizing that evacuate the political, material, and economic context of the Stonewall riots. It is also an especially timely intervention as furor has recently erupted over the trailer of yet another film about the riots, *Stonewall* (directed by Roland Emmerich) is set to open in September 2015, sparking over 20,000 to sign a petition boycotting the film over what appears to be yet another film portrayal of the riots that portrays a white, cisgender gay man at the forefront of the events while largely erasing the central participation of drag queens, butch dykes, people of color and other gender outlaws who frequented in the Stonewall Inn at the time.³

Emmerich’s *Stonewall* is not the first popular depiction of the riots to erase the diverse and rich coalitional nature of the participants of the riots as well as the numerous groups that emerged after that challenged the previous modes of assimilationist politics of the homophile movement such as the Gay Liberation Front, the Gay Activists Alliance, and STAR. Kate Davis and David Heilbroner’s 2010 documentary *Stonewall Uprising* almost entirely features interviews with and the perspectives of white gay men, featuring only one minor interview subject who is a man of color, one trans woman, and two white lesbians.

Hanhardt’s project traces the ways in which LGBT organizing that emerged

³ For the boycott, see <https://unite.gsanetwork.org/petitions/boycott-2015-stonewall-movie>. I use the word “appears” in the previous sentence because the uproar has centered around the trailer for the film, which has not yet been released or reviewed by any of the film’s critics.

out of the Stonewall rebellion has over time, via narrativizations and practice, elided and erased the coalitional and anti-assimilationist roots of the riots and, in some cases, have transformed into movements that implicitly or explicitly target and marginalize young, poor, queer and trans people of color. For example, Hanhardt notes how, a little over thirty years after the Stonewall riots, a group of largely white residents, business owners, and politicians from the Greenwich neighborhood (widely known as New York City's "gay" district), organized a rally in Christopher Park, the same site where the Stonewall rebellions occurred. This time, however, the rally was organized around a theme of "Take Back Our Streets" and called for the police "enforcement of quality-of-life" laws against various populations of people of color in the neighborhood, specifically targeting and including LGBT youth of color and trans women of color sex workers (1-2). A flyer for the Take Back Our Street rally, labeled a "notice of public hearing," states: "Summer is coming! Fight back against our new neighbors; (sic) the Bloods and the Crips plus our old neighbors, the dealers, the hookers, the pimps, the johns, etc" (3).

During World Pride in Toronto, Toronto police introduced a similar street-cleanup campaign that targeted sex workers,⁴ drug users, and people who were homeless or underhoused, in the downtown east side, pitting a largely white community of World Pride organizers and festival goers against a diverse

⁴ Many trans women of color work in the area and have already been subject to numerous attempts by residents—frequently led by gay men—to push them out of the area. See for example Andrea Houston, "Homewood Stroll Battle Heats Up" November 2, 2011, Daily Xtra, from <http://www.dailyxtra.com/toronto/news-and-ideas/news/homewood-stroll-battle-heats-4631> (accessed August 29 2015).

population of local residents, including many poor and working class people and people of color (Cole).



Figure 4. Still image from Pride Denied.

Zoe Dodd speaks against increased policing in the area in and around the Toronto World Pride festival at a press conference hosted by the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, June 16, 2014.

The Emergence of World Pride

World Pride is a trademark owned by the US non-profit organization Interpride, a network of pride event organizers that “was founded in 1982 in Boston, MA USA as the National Association of Lesbian and Gay Pride Coordinators.”⁵ Interpride accepts bids and selects host cities for World Pride events, which in turn pay Interpride a licensing fee for the privilege. Though World

⁵ <http://www.interpride.org/?page=history>, accessed August 20, 2015.

Pride is structured mostly as a global tourist event with no ties to any local histories of organizing or rebellion, World Pride frequently invokes the legend of Stonewall as the origins of the event, as it did in 2014 when the Toronto organizers featured “Stonewall 45,” a performance piece conceived and directed by Gein Wong and Kim Katrin Milan, as the “centerpiece” of the festival (interviews about and footage of the event included in *Pride Denied*). There was no similar mention or commemoration of the 1981 bathhouse raids in Toronto, which is commonly recognized as having spurred protests and marches that eventually became Toronto’s annual pride events.

The first world pride took place in Rome in July 2000. It was designed to challenge the anti-LGBT stance of the Catholic church by coinciding with the Vatican Jubilee, a commemoration of 2000 years of Catholicism (Luongo 167), and, as with other World Pride events, catered to a wealthy, western audience with the means for global travel:

there were clearly distinct categories among the gays and lesbians at World Pride. Westerners, characterized by consumerist Americans and northern Europeans, represented one end of this spectrum. At the other end, perhaps less visible overall, were gays and lesbians from the developing world, many of whom were able to come because of the sponsorship of Western organizations. (Luongo 167)

Though World Pride events typically feature a human rights conference as one small part of the organized festivities, the event from the start has been geared more towards tourism with similar characteristics to

circuit parties:

World Pride's success depended on more than the politicians, the activists, and the movers and shakers of the GLBT movement. It depended on tens of thousands of gay and lesbian tourists coming from around the world to vacation in Italy and participate in the event. (Luongo 172)

In June 2014, Interpride and Pride Toronto, a non-profit organization that has assumed control of local Toronto pride events (even going so far as to trademark the term "PRIDE" in 2000⁶), hosted the fourth World Pride. Earlier World Pride events took place in Rome (2000), Jerusalem (2006), and London (2012), with the next occasion planned for Madrid in 2017.

Rome's World Pride in July 2000 was an exquisite example of "selling liberation" and of the confluences between organizing and tourism. The IGLTA and the International Gay and Lesbian Association worked side by side to promote the event to activists, tourists, and activist-tourists alike by focusing on "bringing in" gay and lesbian activists from the "Third World" while "selling" World Pride to the "First World." (Puar "Circuits" 123)

Similarly, at World Pride 2014, activists from the "Third World" were sponsored and brought in from around the globe for World Pride's Human Rights Conference, which was touted as a major selling point by the conference as well as World Pride organizers. The conference, organized at the elite University of Toronto, had

⁶ Matt Mills, "Who Owns Pride?" January 2, 2007, Daily Xtra, from <http://www.dailyxtra.com/vancouver/news-and-ideas/news/owns-pride-10394> (accessed August 29 2015). Pride Toronto also attempted to trademark the terms "Trans* Pride" and "Dyke March," but backpedaled when faced with an outpouring of community criticism. See Ben Spurr, "Pride Toronto Seeks Trademark on Dyke March, Trans* Pride" July 20, 2015, Toronto Star, from <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2015/07/20/pride-toronto-seeks-trademark-on-dyke-march-trans-pride.html> (accessed August 29 2015).

numerous corporate sponsors (TD Bank, IBM, Cisco Systems), sported a registration fee of CAD\$275 plus tax (more than \$300 in total), and had a limited number of attendee slots, making the conference unaffordable and/or otherwise inaccessible to many local activists and most of the local community.

World Pride is often represented, by itself and others, as having a dual organizational purpose: of celebrations (parties, parades) on the one hand and political/human rights organizing (mostly circumscribed to the WP Human Rights Conference), where the conference serves a legitimizing function for the predominantly celebratory structure of the festival. Puar notes that the comingling of parties with a smattering of human rights focused events have become a common practice in LGBT organized tourist attractions. Rather than being oppositional practices, “pleasure tourism” and “political travel,” as Puar has labeled them, go hand in hand in marketing to the global gay traveler (“Circuits” 124).

In this sense, World Pride embraces the model offered by the LGBT tourist industry that promotes an image of mobile cosmopolitan queer subjects whose travel destination choices are linked to human rights concerns. Same-sex marriage in particular is figured as a primary draw for LGBT tourism, according to a survey sponsored by the Canadian Tourism Commission that “reveals that 50 percent of gay travelers from the United States and Australia see Canada’s gay marriage laws as an attractive pull, and ‘the ability to legally marry in Canada out-strips other travel motivators, such as attending gay pride events, gay ski weeks, or gay circuit parties (Boyd 225).’” It is thus no surprise that marketing for the 2014 World Pride

in Toronto heavily featured Canada's "progressive" views on same-sex marriage, and that organizers for the event began the World Pride Opening Ceremonies with a video featuring Edith Windsor, the plaintiff in the successful 2013 US Supreme Court challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act (a topic which is explored in more depth in the documentary itself).⁷

⁷ The video that launched the opening ceremonies can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j9_OysiOzYE.

ARTISTIC PROCESS

From early June to mid-July in 2014, I conducted 15 interviews with queer activists, artists and academics (plus one politician) from Canada, Uganda, and Georgia, in addition to documenting numerous events at and around World Pride. The strongest concerns that emerged through these interviews revolved around regulations of sex, practices of policing, and discourses of safety and security on both a local and national level.

Pre-production Planning

Around June 1, 2014, I decided I to make *Pride Denied*. World Pride was about to commence in my current hometown, Toronto, and I, along with many of my friends, were disgusted by the assimilationist LGBT politics and fawning over corporations that was already starting to permeate our lives. With events scheduled to start within weeks, however, I had to act fast, and I had a number of hurdles to overcome (especially financial, considering I had about \$20 to my name at the time).

Having made many shorts, and one 50-minute long doc, over the past 20-plus years (see below for a description of how this project can be contextualized with this prior work), I knew better than to just start shooting and "figure things out" as I went. But, in this case, I had almost no time to prepare. I watched a few documentaries that I admire and that I thought might be relevant for the kind of film I wanted to make (Marlon Rigg's *Tongues Untied* was a key inspiration). And I scrambled to gather equipment and a small crew.

Fortunately, I had access to equipment through the university. Due to the small inventory of cameras at the school, as well as my own physical limitations, the best I could do to shoot with was a Canon 7D, which is actually a versatile run and gun camera (a camera that is easily operated in a fast-paced environment where conditions can change rapidly, which is quite common in documentary filming). It came with a (non-digital) Nikon prime lens kit (which I paired with my own cheap Canon 17-85 zoom lens) and a manfrotto tripod and monopod. There were lots of great options at the school when it came to audio equipment, so I opted for a Sennheiser 416 shotgun microphone, a boom pole with optional zeppelin/fur covering for outdoor recording, a Tascam DR-100 handheld audio recorder. For lighting, I had a 1,000w 1ft by 1ft LED light panel (daylight balanced) and a bounce circle/reflector.

For crew, I recruited Lulu Wei to help with cinematography (as well as several other friends who popped in to film occasionally); two co-producers, Danielle Waters and Aimée Mitchell, who assisted with finding and scheduling subjects as well as general planning and conceptualization (they also helped with production when available); and several undergraduate film majors (Nicole Ng, Glynnis Henderson, and Rachel Mallouk) to help with sound recording and general production assistance. I purposefully focused on recruiting a diverse group of women for my primary crew, though a number of my male-identified friends pitched in occasionally.

In retrospect, the one thing I most wish I had planned more around was

crafting the style and look of the film. While I had some ideas about the kinds of topics I wanted the film to address, I didn't have a clearly thought out framework for how I wanted the film to be shot, which likely led to some communication deficiencies on my part when working with other camera people. This led to a passive style of shooting that produced very different looks especially for event coverage.

Production

Within two weeks of deciding to make the film, we began shooting. We dove in by simply showing up at events with our gear in mid-June. The first event was a protest at Immigration Canada on June 12, 2014, spurred by the Canadian government's refusal to grant visas for some attendees from the global south (primarily Uganda and India) who planned to attend the World Pride Human Rights Conference. The second was a protest/event on June 14, 2014 against the Canadian parliamentary Bill C-36, a proposed law (that eventually passed) to re-criminalize sex work after the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the country's anti-prostitution laws in December 2013 (see figure 5). I and my co-producers began approaching people we met at these events, usually organizers or artists who were heavily involved with organizing protests, marches, and other events, for possible interviews about their work and the issues with which they were engaged.

I began shooting knowing there were several general topics I was potentially interested in covering in the film: the corporate influence on pride events and

organizations; race and class politics in pride event spaces and mainstream LGBT organizations in general; pinkwashing; and the increasing marginalization of sex workers (and the lack of advocacy for public sex more broadly) as mainstream LGBT organizations, including pride organizations, work to sanitize the image of LGBT people through the privatization of sex via institutions like marriage, for example.



Figure 5. Still image from Pride Denied.

Monica Forrester takes part in a "die in" protest against Bill C-36 at the intersection of Sherbourne St. and Gerrard St. in Toronto's downtown eastside, June 14, 2014.

My selection of these topics structured whom I decided to ask for interviews. However, after selecting subjects who could speak to the above issues, I tried to ask open-ended questions once the interviews commenced to allow each person to articulate for themselves the issues most important to them. It was through this

methodology that I came to explore several topics central to the film, which include contemporary practices of police violence and Pride Toronto's contract with Trojan condoms that led them to ban other brands in all pride spaces. Each interview lasted approximately one to two hours, providing sufficient time for each subject to get comfortable speaking on camera as well as cover a range of topics.

When possible, I tried to recruit help for each interview shoot (either someone to shoot or record sound), but given that everyone on the crew was volunteering their time, that wasn't always possible. Thus, for many interviews, I was running sound and camera as well as conducting interviews, which many times resulted in overlooking various technical aspects and caused problems later. Having at least one other person in the room helped immensely, in particular if the person was running the camera (it was far easier to record sound and conduct the interviews at the same time, especially once I purchased a Tascam DR-60D, which allows for dual level audio recording and thus made it possible to worry less about peaking).

In addition to the interviews, my crew and I filmed more than a dozen events during World Pride. In total, we wound up shooting for 30 days or so in a five-week period between mid-June and mid-July. I also recorded few additional interviews later that summer, as well as the following spring (see Appendix A for the full production schedule). In the end, I wound up with approximately 40 hours of recorded footage to work with in post.

Post-production

This is where I have spent the bulk of my time working on the film. As a filmmaker who is often working with small or \$0 budgets, I usually have to do most of the post-production work myself. Big(ger) budget documentary films will often have a team of people working on post: an editor, sound editor/designer/mixer, graphic designer, color correction specialist, transcribers, captioning/subtitler, or even teams of people working in these areas. This gets very expensive, and for people who have the money, or don't have the skills to cover most of these areas, collaborating with others is usually the way to go. With my small budgets, I'm usually taking on all of it, except for the sound work. I'm just not skilled enough in that area.

With documentaries, one crucial component to being able to work with others is transcribing all of the interviews shot. On this film, I shot around 20 interviews, which totals around 30 hours of footage. Transcribing these would have been a gargantuan task for me individually, and there was no room in my budget to hire someone to do it. So, I began editing without transcripts. This made it near impossible to "hire" an editor or assistant editor, even if I was able to find people willing to donate their time, as communication between a director and editor on a documentary usually involves giving the editor marked transcripts, so that they know what material you want them to focus on. With around 40-45 hours of footage to go through (and that is on the small side for many documentaries of this length, which often shoot more than 100 hours of footage), I felt it would be too much to ask

someone else to sort through, not to mention they wouldn't necessarily know the things that I would be looking for.

So, I became a one-person editing team on this project. Here was my process.

The first stage was sorting and converting all the production footage. After each shoot, I would start by copying the video and audio files on to two backup drives. Because I shot on the Canon 7D, which records footage in the H.264 highly compressed codec, I had to transcode (convert) all of the footage into Apple ProRes files in order to be able to edit in Final Cut Pro (the other popular editing systems, Premiere and AVID, work better with these types of files, which can be an advantage to using them, but I prefer FCP). So once all the files were backed up, I used FCP's "log and transfer" function to transcode, saving the new files on my external hard drive specifically designated for editing this project. I would usually set this up before I went to bed, so that the conversions would happen overnight.

Once the converted video files and original audio files were copied onto the editing drive into their designated folders and imported into FCP, I began for syncing the separately recorded audio with the images. Luckily, there is lots of software that makes this easy today by matching the scratch (poor quality) audio recorded on the camera with the higher quality audio files from the external audio recorder. I used Plural Eyes, which creates a new sequence in FCP for each group of files with all of the footage and audio synced up.

Editing

With all of my footage transcoded and synced, I began watching the material that my crew and I had shot. I started with the interviews, selecting interesting clips and organizing them on timelines by topic. I wound up with five main assemblies: contemporary police violence towards trans and queer people; pinkwashing; the corporatization of pride events, focusing on Pride Toronto in particular; homonationalism; and early LGBT protest movements against police violence (Stonewall in New York City in 1969 and the bathhouse raids in Toronto in 1981). Later, when I conducted my last round of interviews almost a year after starting production on the film, I added a section on marriage.

From there, I adopted a similar methodology for approaching the completion of this large project as I had followed when writing my PhD dissertation: I started by working on one small topical segment at a time, not yet worrying about how each part fit in to the larger project. This process worked well, allowing me to do the bulk of the editing for the project relatively quickly until I was ready to start organizing the various sections into the final linear timeline.

Test Screenings

Once I had a completed rough cut at the end of July 2015, I scheduled an initial test screening to get feedback on the film. This first audience of five provided invaluable feedback, particularly around the pacing of the first half of the film (the consensus was it was too fast) and topical areas that needed further information

and development (such as expanding the section on pinkwashing and Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) to include the history of attempts to ban QuAIA from the Toronto pride parade).

I scheduled the second screening two weeks later after substantially revising the film. This feedback session was also immensely helpful, focusing on more nuanced aspects of the film such as clarity, organization, and representational politics.

After making numerous edits after the second screening, I sent out an online link to the film to numerous friends, colleagues, and local filmmakers to solicit further feedback as I refined the film towards picture locking.

Sound, Sound Editing, and Final Mix

As with most of my previous work (discussed in further detail below), I arranged my picture edit for *Pride Denied* entirely with the use of diegetic sound. Thus, at this point (prior to turning over the film to my sound designer), I've used little in the way of music or sound effects, with the exception of production sound of drumming at a protest featured in the intro and conclusion of the film, as well as brief segment on the Stonewall 45 performance, which features music and singing from the show.

I prefer minimalist soundtracks that eschew extra-diegetic sound effects and music (especially the latter, which is frequently over-used to cue emotional responses from the spectator). Chantal Akerman's work has influenced me greatly in

this regard, both in her narrative and documentary films (especially the 1999 documentary *Sud*, a film about the town of Jasper, Texas in the aftermath of the racially motivated murder of James Byrd), which frequently employs a minimalist aesthetic in an entirely diegetic soundscape that purposefully disrupts traditional spectatorial pleasure. For example, one of Akerman's earliest films, *Je Tu Il Elle*, features an extended, long take sex scene that is noticeably devoid of any of the sound design techniques typically deployed in Hollywood cinematic sex scenes, such as the swelling of extra-diegetic music. Instead, the soundscape for the scene in Akerman's film is comprised largely of the rustling of sheets.

In Akerman's work, her approach to sound design emphasizes the brutality and alienation of her symmetrical imagery and long takes. I utilize this approach in *Pride Denied* to similarly highlight the alienation of marginalized queer and trans subjects in the mainstream LGBT political sphere as well as emphasize the primacy of the role of discourse analysis in the film, rather than emotional identifications with the subjects.

INFLUENCES

In many ways, *Pride Denied* is a response to, rather than emulation of, recent trends in LGBT-themed documentary films. Numerous LGBT films have been released in the last decade, frequently to large acclaim, promoting same-sex marriage (*The Case Against 8*, *Edie & Thea: A Very Long Engagement*, *Bridegroom*) and LGBT inclusion in the military (*Ask Not*). *Pride Denied* focuses heavily on critiques of marriage and militarism, challenging the now mainstream LGBT establishment that has embraced these issues as their central causes.

However, at the same time, *Pride Denied* could be seen as situated squarely within a history of documentaries on queer activism, several of which have also been released in recent years that document radical, anti-assimilationist LGBT movements around HIV/AIDS activism (*How to Survive a Plague*, *United in Anger*). Léa Pool's *Pink Ribbons* (2011) takes up discourse analysis of corporate pinkwashing campaigns around breast cancer via interviews with academic experts as well as patients and survivors. In addition, older films such as *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1984), *Tongues Untied* (1989), and *A Place of Rage* (1991) have been hugely important in terms of their deployment intersectional analysis, anti-racism, and solidarity politics (in contrast to the narrow, single issue focus that has become so prevalent in LGBT politics today).

Jennifer Abbott and Mark Achbar's *The Corporation* (2004) has been influential in my editing process in a number of ways. *The Corporation's* structure first focuses describing what the modern corporation is and how it functions, as well

as tracing how it came into existence historically, before moving on to document various ways in which corporate practices cause harm to people and the environment broadly speaking (and with a selection of specific corporate case histories. But the film has perhaps been most influential for me in terms of how it is structured around telling the story of an idea, and then documents numerous ways in which this idea manifested in law, institutions, and practices to cause immense material harm to the bodies and lives of millions (or even billions).

Similar to *The Corporation*, *Pride Denied* focuses on a number of contemporary social issues and harms affecting queer and trans people, I refused to construct a film that centered around the lives and stories of one or a few individual subjects, a trend that has become increasingly common in documentary production in general. In fact, the film eschews entirely any personal narratives of trauma, purposefully drawing from almost 20 interviews that instead focus on political and social critique, as well as activist and artistic responses, to state violence and complicit mainstream LGBT organizations.

AUDIENCE

I intentionally structured *Pride Denied* to be similar to an introductory academic essay, as the primary intended audience is university instructors, particularly those in the humanities and social sciences, and undergraduate students. In addition, the strong blowback against the trailer of *Stonewall* (2015) indicates another potential audience for the film: queer and trans identified people who are tired of whitewashing, mainstreaming, and assimilationist LGBT politics, events, and cultural productions.

I have already secured non-exclusive distribution for the film at Vtape, which will handle institutional sales, booking, and some festival distribution. I will also be personally working to submit the film to select festivals that Vtape won't be covering with their distribution plan.

PREVIOUS WORK

Pride Denied is undoubtedly my most ambitious project to date. I've made around 20 short films since I entered film school as an undergraduate, 10 of which have screened at festivals and/or are represented by distributors, along with one longer documentary. While the film films range in genre—narrative, experimental, and documentary, or combinations thereof—most thematically take up issues of queer identity, politics, or sexuality. Many, especially my work in recent years, focus on social justice and center issues of race, racism, class, gender, violence, and trauma.

In 2006, with novelist Elizabeth Stark, I made the 50-minute *FtF: Female to Femme*, a film about queer femme cis-women and the ways in which their embodiment and practice of their gender identity challenges naturalizing tropes of femininity. The project could in many ways be described a documentary, as it employs talking head interviews and event footage, but the film also borders on (and at times outright crosses over into) parody and satire. Similarly to *Pride Denied*, the film was shot on a production budget of near \$0 on my personal MiniDV camera.

Pride Denied, however, has a much larger scope than *FtF* in terms of material and topics covered, and, as such, I probably shot almost four times as much footage. Where the tone of *FtF* is playful and campy, *Pride Denied* is more serious and angry. Where *FtF* centers a politics of identity and sexuality, *Pride Denied* focuses on a politics of social justice and solidarity. *Pride Denied* also makes much more extensive use of b-roll, and uses techniques like the split screen, which I have experimented

with in more recent work.

While in the process of editing *Pride Denied*, I took a course in “hybrid” film production with my supervisor, John Greyson. In the class, Prof. Greyson encouraged us to experiment with techniques that disrupt conventional modes of spectatorship, such as split screens (a tactic he uses frequently in his own work, such as in the documentary *Fig Trees* (2009)). As my final project, I produced the 13-minute short “bodies and pleasures” (2015), in which I orchestrated a two-camera shoot of a friend tying and suspending me in an erotic rope session. I synced the two cameras in post, and edited the entire film using the split screen technique.

The split screen effect works quite differently in “bodies and pleasures” versus *Pride Denied*, however. The split screen technique creates the illusion of simultaneity, and much of the final “bodies” edit was indeed synced (though I did fudge this a bit in the edit, with the goal of the hiding the cuts that were not in fact in sync). In *Pride Denied*, however, I bring together footage of events that occurred days, if not decades apart. In this sense, the use of split screen imagery is intentionally anachronistic, bringing historical archives into the present, or conversely bringing the present into the past, in order to put them in conversation with each other.

CONCLUSION

With *Pride Denied*, I have attempted to bring together my background as an academic scholar with my training as filmmaker to make an educational film that appeals to university and activist audiences. The film blends theoretical and discourse analysis with activist documentation and resistance, putting academics, artists, and organizers on a level playing field as “experts.” The film is also quite timely, as the US Supreme Court ruling on same-sex marriage in June 2015, as well as events such as the backlash against the upcoming film *Stonewall* have brought a number of issues addressed in the film into the mainstream media and LGBT press. In addition, the August 2015 Homeland Security raid of Rentboy.com, the result of a multi-year federal investigation of the site as an “internet brothel,” has resulted in a renewed chorus of queer and trans critiques of state violence and policing of public sex. I look forward to *Pride Denied* joining in these conversations.

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Tongues Untied. Dir. Marlon Riggs. California Newsreel, 1989.

Track Two. Dir. Harry Sutherland. 1981.

United In Anger. Dir. Jim Hubbard. 2012.

APPENDIX A: PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

| DATE | TYPE OF SHOOT | EVENT OR PERSON INTERVIEWED | LOCATION |
|----------------|---------------|---|----------|
| June 4, 2014 | Interview | Kalungi Kubaye | Skype |
| June 6, 2014 | Interview | Richard Lusimbo | Skype |
| June 12, 2014 | Event | Protest at Immigration Canada | Toronto |
| June 13, 2014 | Interviews | Tim McCaskell; Nicki Ward | Toronto |
| June 14, 2014 | Event | Sex worker rights protest at Allen Gardens | Toronto |
| June 16, 2014 | Event | Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) press conference/protest against the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) street sweeps | Toronto |
| June 17, 2014 | Interview | Monica Forrester | Toronto |
| June 18, 2014 | Interviews | Brian DeMatos; Akio Maroon | Toronto |
| June 20, 2014 | Event | World Pride opening ceremonies | Toronto |
| June 21, 2014 | Events | World Pride vendor booths on Church St.; the US Embassy; art opening at the Gladstone Hotel | Toronto |
| June 22, 2014 | Event | "Stonewall 45" performance | Toronto |
| June 23, 2014 | Events | The Night March; Rio Rodriguez's village walking tour | Toronto |
| June 24, 2014 | Events | QuAIA panel; Queer Ontario Sex Work panel | Toronto |
| June 27, 2014 | Events | Community organized Trans March; World Pride organized Trans March | Toronto |
| June 28, 2014 | Event | World Pride Dyke March | Toronto |
| June 29, 2014 | Event | World Pride Sunday Parade | Toronto |
| June 30, 2014 | Interview | Anna Rekhviashvili | Toronto |
| July 3, 2014 | Interview | Natalie Kouri-Towe | Toronto |
| July 4, 2014 | Interview | Craig Scott | Toronto |
| July 9, 2014 | Interview | Prabha Kosla | Toronto |
| July 10, 2014 | Interview | Gein Wong | Toronto |
| July 13, 2014 | Interview | Monica Forrester and Chanelle Gallant | Toronto |
| July 14, 2014 | Interview | Rio Rodriguez | Toronto |
| Aug 12, 2015 | Interviews | Kim Katrin Milan and Gein Wong | Toronto |
| April 30, 2015 | Interview | Dean Spade | Toronto |
| May 12, 2015 | Location | Stonewall Inn | NYC |

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| May 14, 2015 | Interviews | Jasbir Puar; Christina Hanhardt | NYC |
| June 3, 2015 | Interview | Ryan Conrad | Ottawa |