

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NEW YORK'S MOST INFLUENTIAL TRANS ACTIVIST GROUP EXCLUDED FROM WORLD PRIDE ORGANIZING

The Black and Latino activists of S.T.A.R.R. follow in the footsteps Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson – Challenging Gay Rights Leadership

New York City— JUNE 4th, 2019 — This letter will highlight the exclusion of Trans groups and Trans issues from the NYC Pride 2019 planning process, the lack of clear messaging from Heritage of Pride (HOP) to address the pattern of Trans murders emerging again this year, the monopolization of Pride events and opportunities, and the erasure and theft of Black/Latino Queer art and culture.

PROBLEMATIC HISTORY REPEATING

STARR calls on all who support Trans equality and civil rights, on all who support the right of Trans and Queer People Of Color's freedom of self-determination and the accurate portrayal Black/Latino TLGBQ history...to stand with us as we present Heritage Of Pride and NYC officials with a list of demands meant to correct inequities and promote social and financial reparations.

It is crucial that we (society, the “community”, the public) use World Pride as a way to highlight the murder of Trans individuals at a new and alarming rate and pace. If Trans people were included in the planning of Stonewall 50th, there would be substantially more messaging related to curbing anti Trans violence. This, STARR is certain of. But HOP has ignored our many attempts to play a meaningful role in the messaging and press materials being developed by HOP for the World Pride celebrations.

There is no one solution that STARR can suggest that would begin to address the recent spike in anti-Trans attacks; from non-lethal hate-crimes, to murder. The systems of justice in this country have never served us, and these brutal attacks and homicides seems to be a product of being devalued by society and the mainstream Gay rights movement alike for as long as this country and the Gay rights movement have existed respectively. What STARR does know, is that HOP, and large corporations could

be doing way more to promote justice and to deter violence. Where is the outrage from our Gay and Lesbian siblings, or the accountability on the part of corporations and public officials, concerning the many lives lost, snuffed out, because they were Trans. Where is the relentless Press coverage, or requests for comment by the 20 or so Democratic Presidential Candidate contenders? Certainly, more can be done, more money can be spent, to bring the World a Pride that finally puts the "T" first.

BARE CAPITALISM IS NOT PRIDE

Corporate donations towards reward funds set-up to promote the public help with identifying those wanted by law enforcement; ongoing corporate partnerships between Trans groups and communities to promote economic opportunities for Trans individuals, many of whom engage in survival sex work, placing themselves at increased risk for anti-Trans violence. Corporations can create initiatives to promote stronger hate-crime statutes where they are lacking and threaten to pull out of states with lax or nonexistent legal protections for Trans individuals. All are examples of what corporations can do to create a safer country for Trans and Gender Non-Conforming individuals. For the criminals with murderous motives and hate in their heart, there seems to be no consequence for taking a Trans life. State to state, county to county, these menaces, these savages seem willing to kill again and again (left to terrorize families and communities). Because up until now, no real emphasis has been placed on solving unsolved Trans cases, especially those involving Trans Women of Color.

Malaysia Booker (2019), Marsha P Johnson's (1992), even Ali Forney (1998). All Trans/GNC, all murdered, all names that the white-mainstream love to use as tokens or to raise money, and whose murders remain unsolved.

In contrast, when Matthew Shepherd was killed back in 1998 a movement lead by white, economically and academically privilege Gay men and Lesbians organize a coast to coast response that ignited a national debate about Hate crimes against Gays, with Federal legislation a product of this privilege and subsequent debate. Oh, and Matt's killers were arrested almost immediately.

CONTROLLING OUR NARRATIVE

As head of STARR, it has been almost a decade where my responsibilities including redirecting the mainstream Gay and Lesbian movements attention towards the violence plaguing Trans Americans. Sometimes through calling on my own community to memorialize the dead, other times bringing NYPD homicide detectives to meet with community elders who only come out to socialize once a year. Addressing rampant murder, chronic homelessness, and poverty have taken up much of STARR's time during Pride season for the past several years. Now, with a monster is in the White House systematic attacks on women's and Trans bodies, more Trans blood flowing in the streets than ever before, and the City of NY (with the help of HOP) throwing itself a 50th anniversary bash to commemorate a movement sparked by Trans individuals, STARR has been compelled to act.

We Trans People and Queer People of Color, must demand that the systems of justice and law enforcement be made to work for us, and we will use the international attention garnered by World Pride to elevate and amplify our voices and issues. STARR wants to use every opportunity for comment by celebs, every sound bite and press bit related to NYC World Pride, to address solving Trans murders and saving Trans lives. We will also demand the chance share the world stage with HOP and corporations in order to promote a message of justice, solidarity and progress. Only then (when Trans issues are mainstream) will those who may harm Trans individuals think twice before ending a life. Only when Trans murder finally becomes a kitchen table issue (just as the conversation about GLBTQ teens and their issues did when Matthew Shepherd was killed); only when cold cases are solved as often as there are actual attacks, will the violence subside. There is no reason to believe otherwise. One simple way to curb the violence is to elevate calls for justice. The media, law enforcement and community all have roles to play in solving Trans murders and saving Trans lives. It's not too late to harness the magnitude of this year's events as a strategy in seeking justice and a deterrent to further violence. #SolveTransMurder #SaveTransLives. If nothing else Stonewall has taught us that sometimes with and within a system, The System, can sometime be the best way to impact change.

TRANSFORMING PRIDE

In the direct aftermath of Stonewall STARR joined the larger movement for Civil Rights gripping the nation, and demanded representation, legislation and social inclusion at every point. The Trans rights movement had begun with a bang, and smoldered; leaving Trans people desperately fighting to get the attention and support of the mainstream media and even our own community, to no avail. Whether it be the first ever Pride rally/march or the work happening from NYC Albany to change New York's Liquor Laws and Penal Code to benefit Gay and Lesbian New Yorkers, STARR made every attempt to elevate Trans issues but was unsuccessful. Trans folk, our issues and STARR members specifically, were systematically excluded or expelled from the movement, and, STARR members and leadership were prevented from ever reaching the proverbial table for close to five decades. We have racism and Transphobia to thank for this, yes, but also poverty, and trauma. Today's Pride events are totally devoid of STARR's input, despite STARR's decades trying to convince the white, Gay and Lesbian, mainstream Pride planning powers-that-be that fact-based history entitles us to a permanent say-so in the planning of NYC Pride festivities. We have attempted to work within the system, and we are tired of the status quo. Enough. It's time the world heard STARR's requests, in the streets, in the press, or in the courts.

- 1. The Trans Community be granted two permanent seats with/in the NYC HOP Pride planning process**
- 2. The Black/Latino Community be granted a permanent seat with/in the NYC HOP Pride planning process**
- 3. All NYC Pride celebrations going forward place Trans and POC culture and Heritage as focal points of commercial and celebratory interest.**
- 4. TGL BQ Elders go first! No exceptions. Whatever logistics; No expenses spared. Elders who choose to, must be allowed to head the procession. This is a gesture that makes sense and is in keeping with African and Native traditions which date back thousands of years. The dead and elders always go first!**
- 5. Finally, because of Marsha's immeasurable contributions to American civil rights, New York and American history, and due to the gaping void created by Marsha's murder in**

1992, just after Pride, STARR is calling on HOP extend the entire official Pride season to July 6th, the day her body washed up on Pier 45. It would be fitting and appropriate to put a symbolic end to the Pride season that speaks of purpose and progress and not commercial enterprise and sexual frivolity.

The many groups who have issues with the Pride planning process and the events-controlled HOP have done a great job of carving out space for protest, and are planning valid alternative actions and events, including a Reclaim Pride parade set to occur as the main parade is taking place. However, none of these groups or factions have the legacy or heritage claims to demand a voice in planning Pride, which STARR enjoys. Not many groups can demand a co-equal seat at the Pride planning table.

STARR was founded during the aftermath of the events at Stonewall and is the oldest POC lead Trans organization in American history. Our founders were the descendants of Indigenous and Enslaved peoples. STARR was born from a spark; after Stormy bucked police brutality and corruption, and after Marsha's shot glass and Sylvia's fists shattered the silence and ignited the crowd. We were there! And as such, to deny STARR's existence, heritage and privilege would be blasphemous and would be an insult to the memory of all Trans activist and pioneers whose success is only possible, because of what STARR did on that hot summer night in 1969. Denying STARR's contemporary existence and refusing our input into the planning of the most symbolic of all of the Big Apple's parades, underscores the Racism, Transphobia, exclusion, and revisionist history, that Stormy, Marsha and Sylvia dedicated their lives to combating.

Pier's 45 and 46 must be central to any Pride festivities sanctioned by HOP moving forward. Period. Safe spaces for individuals who are Disabled; wish to remain sober; who are Senior or those who are too young to participate in Gay nightlife, with its heavy abuse of drugs and alcohol, must have multiple premier events or destinations to enjoy in NYC. And these events and destinations must be based on longstanding African American TGLBQ traditions and culture. Not what white gays think is "fun" or for everyone.

African American TLGBQ folk created whole new Pride traditions in the wake of Stonewall that are culturally valid, and which must be honored by NYC and Pride planning officials going forward. Systems of racial and class segregation are part of the story of New York's role in the TLGBQ movement and how these traditions have been devalued and appropriated. For decades mainstream white Gays and Lesbians. With the help of law enforcement and racist community stakeholders, successfully relegated Black and Latino Queer folk, the homeless and other undesirables to the waterfront of the West Village, away from the more popular 7th Ave, West 4th Street business districts. No stores, no food, drink, no power. Only a dilapidated waterfront. This area was dangerous by virtue of collapsing infrastructure and the need to cross the dangerous West Side Highway to access this space, but also because it was a no man's land. If police were there, it wasn't to protect or serve.

But, just as slaves in the Americas survived and thrived off the scraps of unwanted meats and pot liquor, the Black and Latino Queer folk literally marginalized by mainstream society made the best of things, and turned oppression into novel art, traditions and way of life. Modern Ballroom, with its worldwide fame, has its origins on "the Pier", now Hudson River Park.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

A meeting is scheduled for June 10, 2019 between STARR and HOP to discuss how the WHOLE community can move forward to address the issues outlined in this letter. Other LGBT leaders and elders have been invited as well, including the Executive Director of the Black LGBT Alliance of NY, Terri Smith-Caronia; Clergy from Unity Fellowship Church; Leaders from National Action Network, and the NYPD 6th Precinct Community Affairs Officer, Detective James Alberici.

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