"Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness:" The Question of Race and National Belonging in Safer Sex Education

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Abstract

Since the first wave of the ongoing AIDS crisis in the USA, there has been a variety of approaches in HIV prevention directed towards diverse audiences: women and men of multiple races and sexual orientations, teenagers, and drug users. However, since gay men's organizations have traditionally acquired the most funding in the HIV sector, the majority of promotional materials has been centering a representation of young, male, and white figures. This paper touches upon the emergence of the so called "nationalist" genre in safer sex advertising to tackle questions of race, sexuality, and national belonging. Drawing on close analysis of archival ephemera, the paper argues that the visual cultures of this genre correspond with the gradual rise of homonationalist politics in the early to mid-90s that has had a mission to support a creation of an obedient homosexual citizen–consumer. The paper supplements the study of homonationalism by suggesting that public health campaigns oriented towards homosexual audiences have also had a major role in supporting and advertising the politics of inclusion in a white heterosexist majority. When AIDS organizations were faced with inability to tackle the question of race in regards to high rates of HIV among populations of color, they turned to implementing multicultural politics to engage racial politics.

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-Masculinities-
A Journal of Culture and Society, Spring, 2020/13, 37-74

However, as the visual analysis of the campaigns shows, the representation of cultural difference merely replicates the visual politics of white gay male cultures, whose proximity to racial and gender normativity is expressed through appropriating the aesthetics of archetypal straight masculinity. Hence, the coinciding promotion of gay male citizenship in the HIV sector amid its attempt to animate the question of race, reflects the impossibility of the multicultural project: while AIDS organizations demonstrate their racial, gender, and ethnic sensibility by including diverse bodies in their HIV programming, they mobilize white male homosexual citizenship modeled upon traditional "heroic" masculinity. By its definition, such a model is not only exclusionary to racial and gender difference, but also beneficial for the maintenance of the U.S. nation-state and its racist, militant, and expansionary goals. The paper argues that multiculturalism in the HIV sector also appears in the service of homonationalism because instead of diminishing racial power hierarchies, it merely resignifies white middle class racial and gender normativity as "diversity." Incorporation of "cultural minorities" into state-sponsored health protection suggests that the question of race is only skin deep, hence ignoring the problem of political classification systems that produce racial inequalities on a systemic level. Drawing on the statistics that propose that Black communities have been most vulnerable to the virus since the early 1980s, the paper concludes that multiculturalism in the HIV sector is only one system of power that maintains Black death as a fundamental part of Black life and by that reproduces the power hierarchies that sustain status quo.

Keywords: HIV prevention, safer sex, multiculturalism, homonationalism, heroic masculinity, gay clones, anti-Black racism

“Yaşam, Özgürlük ve Mutluluk Arayışı”: Güvenli Cinsellik Eğitiminde Irk ve Ulusal Aidiyet Meselesi

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Öz:

ABD’de sürmekte olan AIDS krizinin ilk dalgasından bu yana, HIV’in önlenmesiyle ilgili farklı kitlelere – çeşitli ırklara ve cinsel yönelimlere sahip kadın ve erkeklere, ergenlere ve uyuşturucu kullananlara –yönelik çeşitli yaklaşımlar ortaya çıktı. Ancak HIV sektöründe en fazla fon elde eden çoğunlukla gey erkek örgütleri olduğundan, tanıtıcı materyallerin çoğunluğunda genç, erkek ve beyazlar merkezi konumda temsil edildi. Bu çalışma, ırk, cinsellik ve ulusal aidiyet meselelerini ele almak üzere, güvenli cinsellik reklamlarında “ulusal” tabir edilen türün ortaya çıkışına değinmektedir. Arşiv materyallerinin detaylı analizine dayalı bu çalışma, bu türün görsel kültürünün, itaatkâr bir eşcinsel yurttaş-tüketici yaratılmasını destekleme misyonuna sahip homomilliyetçi politikaların 1990’ların başı ila ortasında kademeli yükselişe geçişine denk düştüğünü ileri sürmektedir. Bu çalışma, eşcinsellere yönelik kamu sağlığı kampanyalarının onları beyaz heteroseksist bir çoğunluğa dâhil etme politikasını destekleme ve özendirme konusunda da önemli bir rolü olduğunu ortaya koymak suretiyle homomilliyetçilik çalışmalarına katkıda bulunmaktadır. AIDS ile ilgili çalışmalar yürüten örgütler farklı ırklardan gruplar arasındaki yüksek AIDS oranları ile bağlantılı ırk meselesini halledemedikleri noktada, ırk politikaları ile angaje olabilmek için çokkültürlülük politikalarına başvurdular. Ancak kampanyaların görsel analizi göstermektedir ki kültürel farkın

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temsili, ırk ve toplumsal cinsiyet alanlarında normatif olana yakınlığını arketip heteroseksüel erkeklik estetiğini sahiplenerek ortaya koyan beyaz gey erkek kültürünün görsel politikasının kopyası olmaktan ibarettir. Bu nedenle HIV sektöründeki gey eril yurttaşlığın özendirilmesi ile sektörün ırk sorununa eğilme çabasının bir araya gelmesi çokkültürlülük projesinin imkânsızlığının yansımasıdır: AIDS konusunda çalışan örgütler bir yandan HIV programlarına farklı bedenleri dâhil ederek ırk, cinsiyet ve etnik hassasiyetlerini ortaya koyarken, diğer yandan geleneksel "kahraman" erkekliği model alan beyaz eril homoseksüel yurttaşlığı tedavüle sokarlar. Böyle bir model, tanımı gereği hem ırk ve cinsiyet farklarına karşı dışlayıcıdır hem de Amerikan ulus devletinin ve onun ırkçı, savaşçı ve yayılmacı hedeflerinin devamını sağlar. Bu çalışma, HIV sektöründeki çokkültürlülüğün, ırk temelli iktidar ilişkilerini zayıflatmak yerine beyaz orta sınıf ırk ve cinsiyet normalliğini "farklılık" olarak yeniden kodlamanın ötesine geçmediği için, homomilliyetçiliğe de hizmet ettiğini savunmaktadır. "Kültürel azınlıkları" devlet destekli koruyucu sağlık programlarının bünyesine katmak ırk meselesinin ele alınışındaki yüzeyselliği, dolayısıyla da sistemik düzeyde ırk temelli eşitsizlik yaratan politik sınıflandırma sistemleri probleminin göz ardı edildiğini gösterir. 1980'lerin başından beri virüs karşısında en kırılgan grubun Siyahlar olduğunu ortaya koyan istatistiklere dayanan bu çalışma, HIV sektöründeki çokkültürlülüğün, Siyahların ölümünün Siyahların yaşamının asli unsuru olarak kalmasını sağlayan iktidar sistemlerinden yalnızca bir tanesi olduğu ve böylelikle de statükoyu sürdüren iktidar hiyerarşilerini yeniden ürettiği sonucuna varmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: HIV'in önlenmesi, güvenli cinsellik, çokkültürlülük, homomilliyetçilik, kahraman erkeklik, gey klonlar, Siyah-karşıtı ırkçılık

Introduction

The HIV prevention campaign "Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness" (1990), a collaborative effort between the San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF) and the Haight Ashbury Free Clinics takes a "bold and controversial" message to promote condoms to young gay men under 25 years of age (SFAF 1990). The billboards that were installed across bus shelters in San Francisco portray two bare-chested attractive men with a U.S. flag draped below their waste. Both gazing into the camera, one of them has an arm around the other. With his free hand, he holds a condom, gesturing to the spectator a safer sex practice (see fig. 1). The phrase from the Declaration of Independence (1776) that addressed the "unalienable rights" given to *all* human beings, in HIV prevention speaks to the audiences of young gay men, "a group which recent surveys suggest is practicing unsafe sex at a significantly high rate" (SFAF 1990). As Les Pappas, the SFAF Campaign Development Coordinator, explains, the campaign that relies on the American flag conveys an explicit safer sex message to the targeted audience, such as: "You are a valuable part of this community. You're entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (SFAF 1990). A portrayal of a healthy gay male body as a national body is a common occurrence in HIV prevention during the first wave of the AIDS crisis and its aftermaths. Hence, the questions: while promoting condoms to young gay men under 25 in the context of national belonging, why is the representation predominantly white? What can the visual cultures of safer sex campaigns tell us about larger socio-political climate they were made in?

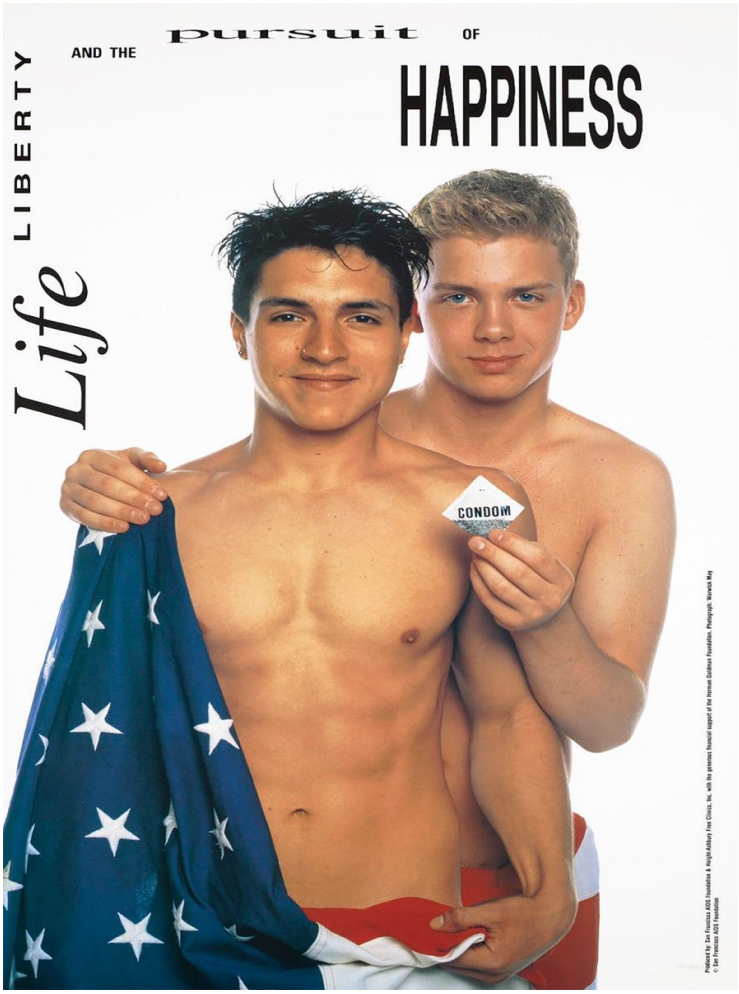

Figure 1. "Life, Liberty, & the Pursuit of Happiness" (1990). Color lithograph by Warwick May. Credit: Wellcome Collection. Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0)

Drawing on visual analysis of multiple HIV prevention campaigns, this paper touches upon the emergence of the so-called nationalist genre in HIV prevention and intertwines it with questions of race, sexuality, and national belonging. [1] Patriotism and its attachment to exclusively white male bodies appear in multiple HIV prevention campaigns and in a variety of cultural projects during the first wave of the AIDS crisis and continues in the era governed by biomedical HIV prevention PrEP, a pill

that successfully prevents the contraction of HIV when taken daily (Black AIDS Institute, 2016).[2] Beginning in the early 1990s, references to wars and emblems of nation-state were a strategic way of infiltrating gay men into the historical narrative of the U.S. nation-state, as well as being a reaction to the homophobic politics of the time. As we will see, the visual cultures that use figures from military and marine life do not only give gay men a space in the national history, but also place them in the role of heroes who conquered the disease and settled into "normalcy." Correspondingly, these archetypal masculine figures appear in public health campaigns in the service of enhancing white gay liberal politics.

Gay liberalism or homonormativity as a concept stands for a set of juridical rules that enables gays and lesbians to access the recognition of citizen rights, as scholar Lisa Duggan (2003) argues, however it does not contest dominant heteronormative institutions or the U.S.'s imperial agenda, but instead operates in tandem with them (p. 50). This marriage between gay populations and the nation-state represents the core of U.S. homonationalism. Drawing on scholar Jasbir Puar's (2007) study, such exclusionary "homonormative nationalism" or "homonationalism" consists of a variety of institutional processes that grant gay men and women freedom to consume goods, services, and relationships, such as marriage, in exchange for being complicit in perpetuating state violence in support of homeland security and nationalist values are in return granted (p. 2, 38). Homonationalism is not a new process and can be detected in different temporal eras within U.S. history.[3] What is common among all types of homonationalism in U.S. history is their reinforcement of whiteness and maleness.

This paper suggests that public health has had a major role in supporting this system of power, but also that homonationalism predates the AIDS crisis. Namely, a desire for heterosexual male figures, including sailors, marines, and soldiers has been a defining part of male homosexual cultures since before the development of homonationalist politics in the 1990s. Heterosexual masculine aesthetics were an intrinsic quality of so-called gay clone cultures that developed in the 1970s. During the post-Stonewall era, an archetypical gay clone

represented "a new kind of gay masculinity" that, according to scholars Martin P. Levine and Michael Kimmel (1998), challenged gay men's stigmatization as "sissies" and "failed men" (p. 5, 20). Since it was predicated on a white male ideal, it is not unusual that a "clone" followed protocols of racial exclusion and an adoption of the kind of racism and sexism that defines traditional heterosexual masculinity (Levine and Kimmel, 1998, p. 1).

Although "cloning" of a masculine norm, subsequently adopted in HIV prevention, has been applicable mostly to white men, the paper argues that the HIV sector also utilizes "cloning" as a strategy when attempting to solve the question of race. Specifically, cloning is related to implementation of multiculturalism in the HIV sector, and its focus on race as merely a skin deep category, instead of a larger cultural and political classification system.[4] Although initially multiculturalism had been tasked with establishing racial equality on the institutional level, this paper demonstrates that this policy merely re-created a hierarchy of acceptable differences that are measured based on an individual's proximity to racial, class, and national normativities (Ferguson, 2012; Hong, 2012; Melamed, 2006). Visual cultures geared towards bodies of color do expand problematic representation, but merely reinstate white male norm in the center at the same time; multiculturalism promotes white middle class values, while populations that do not exist in proximity to desired normativities continue to remain out of focus, as the statistics regarding health disparities among Black communities and communities of color in the U.S. testify.

A Note on Method: Visual Cultures "as" Performance

Multiculturalism and its "merely a skin deep" politics is only one of multiple visual strategies that (re)center white gay men's voices in the history of AIDS. Considering the immense value of safer sex archival ephemera, this paper is a part of a larger project that reimagines how one studies visual cultures of the disease. Geared towards undoing white gay men's primacy in AIDS studies, the project

analyzes HIV prevention programming in the context of so-called "medicinal" visual cultures. Given the efforts of historical AIDS activism to gain access to the treatments, as scholar Eli Manning (2014) argues, it is no surprise that HIV medications and prevention methods are prominent figures in the history of AIDS-related cultural production.[5] While there have been a myriad of cultural projects that set up the contours of what has come to be known as AIDS-related art and activism, it draws on critic Theodore (ted) Kerr's (2019) insight that "the bulk of AIDS cultural production lies far outside what currently will ever appear in most exhibitions about the epidemic," including state public health messaging and pharmaceutical advertising, fundraising calls, multiple reports, and archival correspondence that remain under-studied and under-theorized (Kerr 2019, p.16).[6] Correspondingly, this paper is a product of archival research about safer sex messaging that occurred across archives in New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as well as multiple digitalized archives across the Internet.[7]

Composed of staged erotic imagery that is paired with educational information, safer sex posters were initially directed towards sustaining health of queer communities amid the governmental negligence (Escoffier 1998). Following a performance studies approach to the visual cultures of HIV prevention, I analyze safer sex posters and banners "as" performance.[8] Although these visual objects are not a performance in its cultural definition, I follow scholar Joshua Chambers-Letson's (2013) suggestion that photographs represent "scenes of encounter [that] perform[] *for* the spectator, creating an affective relationship with the spectator that invites him or her to *perform in response* to the photograph" (p. 137).[9] A performance of safer sex posters lives in the dialogic relation among imagery, information, and the spectator's reaction, whether fear, anxiety, or sexual arousal (Cooter and Stein, 2010, p. 173). In addition, performativity of safer sex is also noted if we think of the set of techniques through their disciplinary character. Thinking about HIV prevention as an instance of disciplinary institutions, such as schools, hospitals, prisons, and the military, researchers Alain Giami and Christophe Perrey (2012) claim that individuals are called to

"abandon their "natural" or "spontaneous" behaviors and […] replac[e] them with behaviors guided by the imperatives of public health" (p. 355). Such calls are deeply connected with the liberal gay politics that promotes a certain kind of a gay men through visual cultures in public health.

Biopolitical Transition and "A New Gay Man"

Throughout the 1980s, governmental inaction reflected a necropolitical agenda directed towards gay men (Butler, 1995, p. 346). As scholar Achille Mbembe (2003) argues, necropolitics subjects life to the power of death (p. 39). Necropolitics interacts with philosopher Michel Foucault's (2003) notions "biopower" and biopolitics, a form of power which dictates who may live and who must die based on biological predispositions, and accordingly distributes people into a variety of populations and groups. In other words, necropolitics is a form of power that predisposes some factions of the population suitable for the reproduction of life, and other factions deemed for death. With the approval of successful HIV antiretroviral therapies in the mid-1990s, the production of homosexual death has been transformed into the protection of life. Following scholar Dagmawi Woubshet (2015), the success of antiretroviral therapy influenced the public perception of AIDS as a manageable condition, while the new discourses about the return to normalcy "displaced AIDS […] as a demarcated past against which a new normative gay identity could be forged" (23). This moment represents a biopolitical shift that not only enabled gay men's newly achieved "normalcy," but also engendered a new type of liberal gay politics and culture that was oriented towards celebrating the values of the heterosexist majority, including marriage, family, and military service. Correspondingly, this biopolitical shift has informed a prototype for "a new gay man" who fully participates in national life and the protection of the state.

For instance, the campaign "Condom Brigade" (1998) made by Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation features partially dressed white gay

men in national uniforms. While the two smaller images on the left portray affectionate semi-nude soldiers and marines, the central visual depicts two naked men embracing, while the U.S. flag covers their genitalia (see fig. 2). Similar intertwinement between HIV prevention and the imagery and language of war is seen in a poster "In the War On AIDS, Your Best Bet is to Take Cover" (undated) by the Michigan Department of Public Health AIDS Prevention Program. The messaging parallels AIDS with war, and condoms with weapons: "If war is hell, then AIDS is war. The good news is that you have a strong defense in the form of a correctly used latex condom. Like tough armor, consistent use of a condom can form a strong shield. And like camouflage, it can't be seen in the dark" (see fig. 3). This messaging is an instance of a so-called "military metaphor," quite a common practice in public health. While originally such metaphors equated the body's immune system as a defense against the invasion of alien bodies with warfare (Lupton, 1994, p. 65), in this case it uses the disease and prevention method to relate a safer sex message.

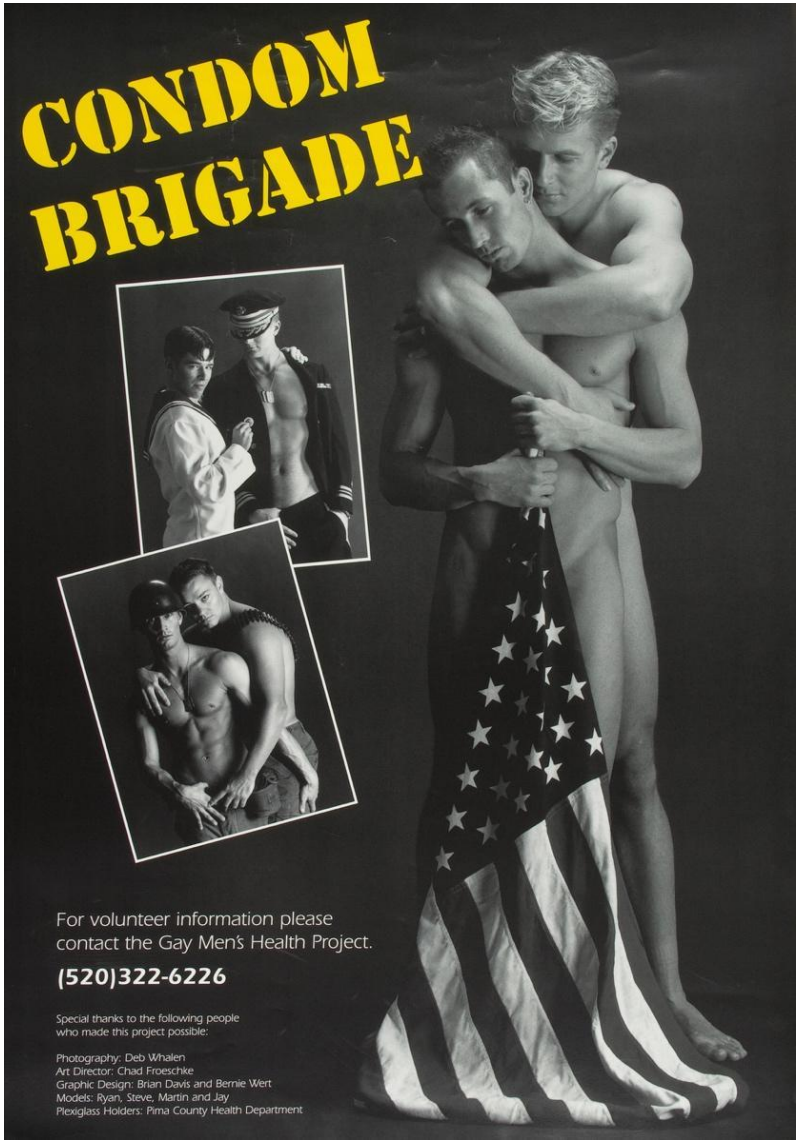

Figure 2. "Condom Brigade" (1998). Credit: AIDS Education Collection; Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation; River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester. Courtesy of Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation.

Figure 3. "In the War On AIDS, Your Best Bet is to Take Cover" (undated). Credit: AIDS Education Collection; Department of Rare Books, Special Collections, and Preservation; River Campus Libraries, University of Rochester. Courtesy of Michigan Department of Public Health AIDS Prevention Program.

Producing patriotic types of posters goes back to the World War I, when visual cultures had a task to warn soldiers and marines about the high rates of syphilis, gonorrhea, and tuberculosis (Helfand, 1990, p. 5; Lupton, 1994, p. 65; Sontag, 1990, pp. 98-99). As Helfand (1990) argues, "[p]atriotism, along with fear, was the chief theme used by artists in creating the earliest poster images that would be taken seriously by both servicemen and the general public" (p. 5). Unlike the posters at the time that were quite misogynist because they equated women with venereal infections, visual cultures geared towards gay men in the 1990s intertwine patriotism and sexed up male bodies. Although separated by several decades and by different targeted audiences, these two types of visual cultures have one major thing in common: they reinforce the aesthetics of healthy traditional masculinity.

Regarding homosexual imaginaries, replicating traditional masculinity has been redeployed prior to the first wave of the AIDS crisis. A so called "gay clone" subcultures that emerged during the post-Stonewall era in the 1970s drew on the aesthetics of heterosexual working class occupations and appearance, including mustaches, muscular bodies, right Levi's jeans, and leather boots (Dean, 2002; Levine and Kimmel 1998; Mercer 1994; Meyer 1995). Although they emerged with the liberal politics of the early 1990s, we could claim that post-Stonewall gay male cultures reflected the inception of contemporary homonationalist tendencies noted in the sexual fetishizing of heterosexual male aesthetics. In addition, whereas Levine and Kimmel (1998) suggest that may people abandoned clone culture with the proliferation of AIDS in the 1980s (p. 8), I argue that the crisis and its aftermaths were an occasion to create a new rendition of this gay male aesthetics. Unlike the gay clone that was sexually adventurous, "a new gay man" that emerged during the 1990s was an instance of a new(?) gay clone, an archetype of redemption for the "irresponsible" past. As scholar Dion Kagan (2018) argues, "a new gay man" is "a white, bourgeois, domesticated image of gayness [with a figure that] adopts a more palatable role as the best friend of heterosexual women and willing aid to the narrative priorities of reproductive futures" (p. 21, 46). Such a

figure does not represent a threat to the heterosexual majority, but instead embraces its values, including white masculinity, monogamy, family, and commitment to health.

Alongside soldiers and marines, superheroes have also been used in HIV prevention as archetypical figures to send out patriotic messages in the service of commitment to health and nation. For instance, SFAF's multimedia campaign "The Rubbermen" (1990) that began at the annual San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Parade and Celebration was comprised of bar cards that featured educational and flirtatious guidelines on how to "be a Rubberman," as well as a safer sex calendar for 1991. The Rubbermen calendar serves as a pledge: "As an Honorary Rubberman, I hereby commit to being a condom ambassador–using them [every time] I have sex and encouraging everyone I know to do the same" (SFAF 1990). The statement in the calendar defines the Rubbermen as a dedicated group of (new) gay men who have made a commitment to use condoms. This commitment "has the power to transform ordinary men into modern heroes…it has the power to save lives" (Rubbermen '91). The back of the calendar includes six photographs of predominantly white, average-looking, "family guy" type male volunteers who promoted the campaign while dressed in masks and capes would pass out condoms at bars and clubs across San Francisco. Posing for the camera during a volunteering event, each man is dressed in a white T-shirt with a large "R" in the middle, complemented by a cape (see fig. 4). The message is that anybody can be a superhero if they obey and nurture public health recommendations.

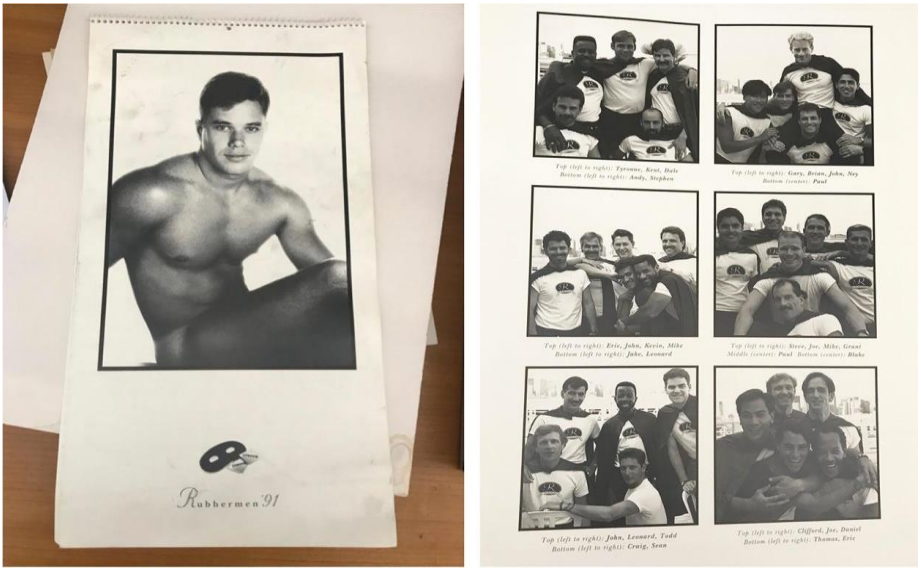

Figure 4. Safer sex calendar "The Rubbermen" (1990). Credit: Steve Speier – Chuck Frutchey Papers (1980-1993), GLBTQ Center, San Francisco Public Library. Courtesy of San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

"The Rubbermen" campaign is reminiscent of the visuals and discourses used in the campaign "PrEP Heroes" (2015) that promotes a pill that protects from HIV contraction. Made twenty-five years after "The Rubbermen," this campaign, organized by New York City's Housing Works Community Healthcare in 2015, represents a group of nine PrEP users who share their stories to raise awareness about HIV prevention. Photographed by celebrated photographer Mike Ruiz, a group of predominantly male models, with the exception of one trans model of color, are dressed in various costumes reminiscent of a sort of dystopian milieu. Covered in body paint and wearing props such as angel wings, satyr horns, football shoulder shields, and, spikes of silver armor, the models stand strong as if they are ready to take flight or go to battle (see fig. 5).

Figure 5. “PrEP Heroes” (2015). Courtesy of Mike Ruiz.

On the campaign’s website, there is a link to individual interviews with the models, who are all publicly known photographers, producers, porn actors, and dancers, “to highlight the heroism of those who protect themselves as well as their community from HIV exposure through diligent use of treatment and medications” (Housing Work 2016). Based on the statement that appears on the campaign’s website, PrEP Heroes are successfully protecting themselves and others from the virus by using “a secret weapon” as a “choice” and “commitment.” Although the visuals suggest comic-book superheroes, the text proposes that PrEP Heroes are simply “our friends, our co-workers, our partners, and our family members” who choose to become superheroes through their “diligent” use of a treatment that gives them a kind of power (Housing Work 2016). Their gym-toned and conventionally masculine bodies appear as if they were an effect of PrEP. Although divided by almost three decades, both “The Rubbermen” and “PrEP Heroes” rests upon the

aesthetic of traditional masculinity, the language of "personal responsibility," and "commitment;" all characteristics of proper citizenry and a driving force for gay liberalism.[10] As the phrases in the campaigns suggest, one can achieve a fit body and have sexual health under control by free will. While health is attributed to responsible citizens, illness is attributed to irresponsible people who get what they deserve, a division that comes down to the question of access to health care, socio-economic status, and race.

As literary figures, comic book superheroes were originally developed in response to social transformations brought about in the post-WWII era, while the genre has recently been revived amidst the rise of U.S. nationalism, followed by the 9/11 (Chambliss and Svitavsky, 2013, p. 17; Weltzien, 2005, p. 231; Hassler-Forest, 2012). Superheroes, just like warriors, soldiers, or marines, are usually an allegory of an "all-American" masculinity and heroic manhood–loyal, likeable patriots who fight the villains to protect American values, including truth, justice, and freedom. As scholars Julian C. Chambliss and William L. Svitavsky (2013) argue, the American superhero responded to a post-war American imagination that had been increasingly shaped by "an urban life amidst ethnic diversity and technological change" (p. 17). As at the time white masculinity was in crisis and the world was witnessing the subsequent rise of the civil rights movements, superheroes represent the symbol of strength and victory of white masculinity over "otherness" in the service of protecting so-called American values. Due to the larger implication that superheroes carry in the domain of preserving national pride, a gay male superhero that has transformed his lifestyle is in service of the U.S. nation-state, corresponds with the politics of homonationalism that is driven by inclusion in all-American, white, traditional values. Put differently, turn to superheroes genre corresponds with a homosexual biopolitical transition: these figures appear to be used in the service of constructing a new gay man who "conquered" AIDS and reestablished his heroic status, i.e. health and citizenry.

Only Skin Deep: Multiculturalism in HIV Prevention

The aesthetics of white heterosexual masculinity in the HIV sector reflects a glaring lack of diversity. When AIDS organizations were faced with a lack of services for people of color, including a lack of outreach to minorities, a lack of recruitment for employees and volunteers of color, as well as in overwhelmingly white board structures, they turned to the politic of multiculturalism. Paving the way for multiple AIDS organizations, San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SFAF) and the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC) were two of the first organizations that began implementing programs and policies in sexual education that accounted for "minorities." Starting in 1989, GMHC incorporated multiculturalism as a part of its "strategic plan" in an attempt to identify strategies that would assist in overcoming barriers based on inadequate programs oriented towards communities of color.

GMHC defined multiculturalism as "the understanding, sensitivity, respect and support for various cultures, through the implementation of […] programs, services, education, advocacy, internal and external communications, employment, volunteerism, technical assistance and all aspects of human resources" (Gay Men's Health Crisis). For example, as a response to GMHC's problematic lack of racial diversity in staff and volunteer structures, in November 1989 the organization formed the People of Color Resource Committee (POCRC) that would serve people of color at GMHC, and diminish racism and the overwhelmingly white structure of the organization. With similar aspiration, approximately in 1985 SFAF founded the Third World AIDS Advisory Task Force (TWAATF), the first organization in San Francisco to focus on the needs of people of color affected by AIDS. With a mission to tackle the problems of race in safer sex campaigns, TWAATF began challenging safer sex's consumer model of prevention oriented strictly towards white gay men (Brier, 2009, pp. 47-48).

Historian Jennifer Brier (2009) observes efforts to tackle the question of race undertaken by SFAF in the mid-to-late 1980s as "a

particular moment in the history of liberalism in the post-1960s era" (p. 48). Although practiced in the HIV sector since the late 1980s, the concept of multiculturalism has its roots in the post-World War II liberation movements. Scholar Grace Kyungwon Hong (2012) argues that including cultural minorities in state-sponsored programs through multiculturalism is a result of the decolonization, civil rights, and Black Power movements that posed challenges to a weakened post-war white masculinity. As a part of "the liberal race paradigm," multiculturalism recognizes racial inequality as a problem, and, as Melamed (2006) argues, ensures programs "for race reform centered in abstract equality" that gets "absorbed into U.S. governmentality" (p. 2). Minorities were integrated into mainstream society through programs that would enable them equal legal protections under the law.

Although through multiculturalism people of color gain institutional and representational access, as scholar Roderick Ferguson (2012) asserts, the emergence of "minority culture" was not an example of power receding, but of its redeployment: "the arrival of this new object did not usher in a season of unbridled liberation but provided the building blocks for a new way to regulate" (p. 111). Liberal U.S. state ideologies are invested in non-heteronormative formations so they could regulate, control, and capitalize on them. The state institutions saw post-World War II minority insurgence as "a site of calculation and strategy," as "positivities that could be part of their own "series of aims and objectives"" (Ferguson, 2012, p. 8). Following Ferguson, Hong (2012) suggests that "the affirmation of previously degraded forms of subjectivity became a part of the apparatus of power" (p. 94).

As an attempt to resolve the question of race, there have been numerous campaigns that have used multicultural aesthetics. For example, a brochure "Man to Man" (1988) comes in several "replicated" forms. On the front cover of each brochure, a black and white photograph portrays a smiling male face. Although designed in the same style, on each different front cover, there is a model of a different race. Within the brochure, next to information on how to prevent HIV

contraction, there is a picture of a model gleefully holding a condom, showing it to the viewer (see fig. 6).

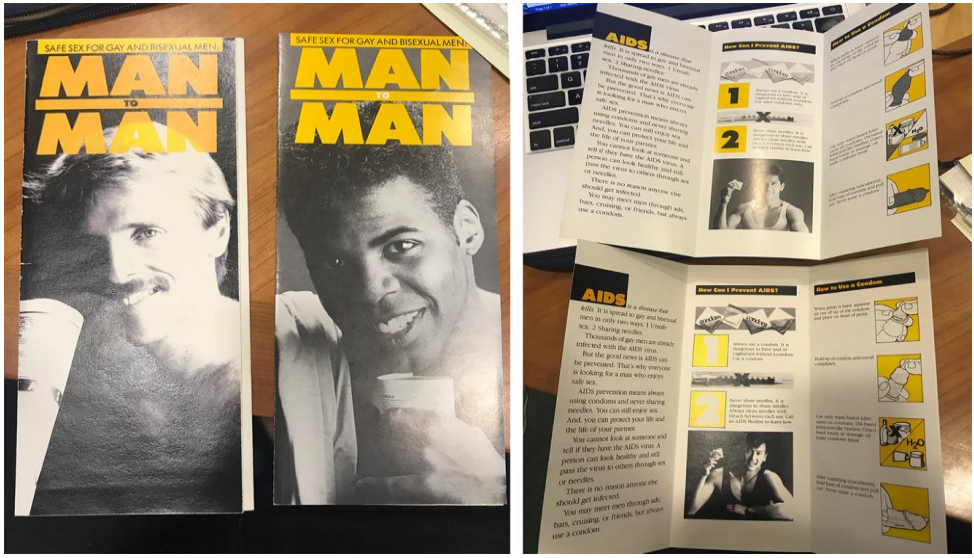

Figure 6. "Safe Sex for Gay and Bisexual Men: Man to Man" (1988). Credit: AIDS History Project — Ephemera Collection, 1973, 1981-2002, GLBTQ Center, San Francisco Public Library. Courtesy of San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

A similar visual politics was employed in GMHC's bilingual campaign "He Plays Hard… And He *Always* Uses Condoms!" (1992) that includes "hunkily multicultural guys in a locker room" (Span 1992). The posters gather three attractive men of different races dressed in tight sportswear, hanging out at the gym, an inevitable trope in the lifestyle of a young gay clone in the making. One of the men who seems to be sitting is turned away from the other two with a rather content expression of his face; he knows he is being watched and he approves their gaze. While the other two men behind him have obvious erotic interest, one of them whispers to the other's ear the poster's caption: "He Plays Hard… And He *Always* Uses Condoms!" (see fig. 7).

Figure 7. "He plays hard…" (1992). Courtesy of GMHC.

Comparably, earlier versions of such aesthetics are the posters by the Health Education Resource Organization (HERO), Baltimore titled "You won't believe what we like to wear in bed" (1986). Both posters portray two handsome men undressing, one taking his top off and the other gazing into the camera as he is unbuttoning his trousers. Identical tableau in both posters differs merely by men's racial background (see fig. 8). Although it was implemented at the time when condoms were a pivotal prevention tool, multiculturalism and cloning continue to be practiced in multiple campaigns that promote PrEP across the internet and social media platforms.

Figure 8. "You Won't Believe What We Like to Wear in Bed" (1986). Credit: National Library of Medicine Digital Collections. Courtesy of Jeff McElhaney.

While these safer sex campaigns deploy the imagery of diversity on one hand and the imagery of clone aesthetics on the other, the suggestion is that the problem of race is only skin deep. A letter debating the brochure "Safe Sex for Gay and Bisexual Men: Man to Man" (1988) sent to the Scientific Advisory Committee Members of the SFAF by Lyn Paleo, speaks to this point. The letter specifies, "There will be four different versions of this brochure. The text will remain the same, but the race of the models will be different in each" (Paleo, 1988). Such an approach, which does not account for culturally specific contexts, is a characteristic of multicultural politics that simultaneously places racial and cultural difference as its focus, but embraces a color-blind approach at the same time. Put differently, the theory of multiculturalism has been

used for nearly four decades to suggest that racism can be defied merely by visual representation.

Following scholar Ann DuCille (1996), in this type of advertising the world population's heterogeneity stops at the level of the skin. In DuCille's (1996) study on dolls with diversified complexions but white features, the scholar argues that "toymakers have got around the problem by making the other at once different and the same. In this sense, Mattel's play with mass-produced difference resembles the nation's uneasy play with a melting pot pluralism that both produces and denies difference" (p. 38). On the one hand, the cloning of racial difference has been made complementary to the goals of diversity that portrays the current system of power as benevolent, and on the other hand, the same system capitalizes on the inclusion of racial difference as a way of maintaining its power.

As we can see, the inclusion of race in HIV prevention geared towards men of color merely replicates the aesthetics of white gay male culture, who in turn appropriate or "clone" white heterosexual masculinity. Following scholar Laura Azzarito (2009) "multiculturalism's focus on 'difference,' its emphasis on acknowledging and celebrating diversity […] works as a form of regulation and discipline to the dominant norm, discourses of 'sameness'" (p. 192). Incorporation of "cultural minorities" into state-sponsored protection by appropriating white and male aesthetics suggests that "we are different but we are all the same" "implicitly maintain[ing] a colour-blind orientation that sets back to socio-educational, educational, economic, and racial struggle needed to pursue equality" (Azzarito, 2009, p. 192). Although multicultural politics allegedly deals with the question of race, copying racial and gender normativities appear in the service of maintaining a traditionally white and male standard. According to Azzarito (2009) "the Anglo-American culture becomes a superior bodily norm to other cultures, while represented "acontextual" and "taken-for-granted way of being human" (p. 186). An acontextual politics celebrates diversity, while at the same time producing and sustaining monocultural educational discourses that erase difference and homogenize diverse bodies

(Azzarito, 2009, p. 183). By intentionally omitting cultural context and history that shape the particularity of one's identity, multiculturalism deployed in these campaigns rewards proximity to racial and gender norms.

If the cultural context in these types of campaigns were more accurately depicted, multiculturalism would fail as a color-blind project: an approach that assumes that the problem of race can be solved through body politic erases the ongoing systemic racism that AIDS organizations were tasked with addressing. As Melamed (2006) argues, although multiculturalism was initially coined to enhance community-based racial reconstruction and signified a protest against white supremacy, this politics that promotes inclusion and diversity for justice on the part of historically marginalized groups has become a policy rubric for business, government, civil society, and education (p. 15). A turn to multiculturalism has not shifted the monopoly of white gay men in the overall AIDS project and certainly has not touched upon the socioeconomic problems that communities of color face. Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports often cite socioeconomic status as an underlying factor in the pervasive disparities in health observed for racial minority populations, little consideration is given to the social history and prevailing social climate that is covered in racial discrimination.

Instead of forging individual behaviors as an initial category that mediates the transmission of HIV, a focus on the racialized economic and political state violence would significantly shift our understanding of how the epidemic and the virus work (Geary, 2014; Gossett, 2014; Shavers and Shavers, 2006; Watkins-Hayes, 2014). Treating systemic impoverishment, racial segregation, and mass incarceration as conditions of possibility that "allowed the HIV virus to establish itself and emerge as an epidemic," Geary (2014) argues that "the state has structured the ways in which black Americans have been made vulnerable to HIV exposure and infection far beyond the capacity of any individual or community mitigation or control" (pp. 23, 2). Ignorance continues to reproduce the division between healthy and unhealthy

bodies, a binary in which health and disease are characterized as a personal choice. Narratives in campaigns that invite their targeted audiences to make a right choice or commit, disregard larger socio-economic systemic issues, which produce the conditions of one's vulnerability to HIV that go well beyond one's individual behavior. As scholar and archivist Che Gossett (2014) argues, the rhetoric of "individualizing neoliberal logic of choice and responsibility" that public health officials utilize in their reports on HIV rates forecloses the possibility of systemic analysis (p. 43). The focus on behaviors and narratives of choice is used against poor, gender non-conforming, and trans communities of color, including sex workers and drug users, who are not seen in any of the campaigns that promote multiculturalism.

AIDS, Anti-Blackness, and America

As this paper has shown, the incorporation of multiculturalism in safer sex advertising theoretically supports life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness of all, but at the same time operates on firmly set hierarchies between the less and more deserving of health. On a larger scale, the conditions that intentionally produce one's vulnerability to the virus partake in creating radical conditions of erasure. As statistics by CDC demonstrate, socioeconomically vulnerable communities of color have been continually exposed to disproportionate HIV rates.[11] Specifically, as during the early crisis years in the 1980s, poor Black populations continue to be deprived of basic health needs and medical protection today. Fostered by the U.S. nation-state and supported by the public health sector, and the pharmaceutical-industrial complex, the lack of care towards Black people's exposure to the conditions that create vulnerability to the virus as an ongoing necropolitical strategy.

Following Mbembe (2003), necropolitical agenda is seen in the state's production of death, reserved for those communities who do not comply with the demands of racial, gender, and national normativity. Structural inequalities that uphold high HIV rates among Black

communities are thus a part of a larger problem of anti-Blackness that has been present in legal, social, and political structures for decades. In other words, the public health system is only one example of the overall historical anti-Black sentiment in the USA, while other "anti-black enterprises" include, as Gossett (2014) argues, from "lynching, Jim Crow-era racial apartheid and terrorism, to contemporary militarized police violence against black people crystallizing in 'stop and frisk' orders and reminiscent of slave patrols [and] outright police assassination of black 'citizens' such as Amadou Diallo, Oscar Grant[, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Stephon Clark, Terence Crutcher, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Laquan McDonald, Breonna Taylor,] and so many others" (p. 32).

The lack of access and distribution of HIV treatments and prevention methods thus counts towards the conditions that manipulate the mobility, prosperity, and progress of Black people. As during the early crisis years, poor Black people continue to be deprived of basic health needs. In such conditions, the structural inequalities maintain Black death as an integral part of life. As scholar Rinaldo Walcott (2013) argues, whereby death is a universal outcome of life–ahead–everyday state violence as practiced by police forces and institutional anti-Black racism makes death as integral part of "black peoples' everyday livability" in the present (pp. 143-144). The ones predisposed for death are subjected to conditions of life bestowing upon them the status of "living dead" (Mbembe, 2003, p. 40). The current structural inequalities that uphold high HIV rates constitute what literary scholar and historian Saidiya Hartman (1997) calls "the aftermath of slavery"–the material residues of slavery present throughout legal, social, political and emotional structures that characterize the conditions under which Black life presently exists. These anti-Black institutional spaces work towards erasing a collective Black body from history and consciousness, while multiculturalism is an instance of a system that contributes to this intent.

Conclusion:
Multiculturalism in the Service of Homonationalism

To conclude, the turn to multiculturalism has not shifted the monopoly of white gay men's organizations in the overall AIDS project. White homosexual men have undergone the biopolitical transition and become an integral part that sustains a national life, while Black queer life is still exposed to socio-economic and cultural disparity, and struggle. As we have seen, although multiculturalism in the HIV sector has been deployed as a strategy to address these problems, this system purely re-centers whiteness and maleness; regardless of the "diverse" representation that is of immense importance in the HIV sector, the safer sex campaigns that cater to audiences of color rest merely upon proximity to gender and racial normativity. Similar to homosexual men, who signify "the most exemplary […] incorporation of previously despised subject formation" into the systems of power (Hong, 2012, p. 93), race has undergone similar principles of inclusion. In such a consideration, the alleged anti-racist commitment of AIDS organizations merely replicates the white standard, thus making the race and racial relations "the political unconscious of sexuality" (Reddy 2011: 17). To expand on such a claim, it could be said that the analyzed campaigns geared towards populations of color are examples of multiculturalism that exists in the service of national belonging. Put differently, campaigns that portray bodies of color while "cloning" a predominantly white standard represent a space where the two seemingly disparate missions of the AIDS organizations–multiculturalism and homonationalism–meet. Such a strategy has been used to erase cultural differences and to sustain the status quo, while writing over socioeconomically vulnerable bodies of color with lack of care, disregard, and exclusion.

Acknowledgements

A version of this paper was presented at the 2nd International Symposium on Men and Masculinities in Istanbul, Turkey (September, 2019) where it acquired helpful feedback incorporated across the pages here. I am grateful to Joshua Chambers-Letson for careful critical responses to multiple earlier iterations of this project. In addition, I would like to thank to the Sexualities Project at Northwestern (SPAN) for immense support of my work since its early beginnings. SPAN, as well as Performance Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, the Graduate School, and School of Communication at Northwestern enabled me to travel to special collections and archives where I conducted my preliminary research for this project. The institutions I visited include the GLBTQ Center at the San Francisco Public Library, the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives & Special Collections of the GLBT Historical Society, the Archives and Special Collections of the UC San Francisco Library, the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at USC Libraries, the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library, and NYU's Special Collections at the Fales Library. I would like to thank generous, kind, and patient archivists I had a pleasure to collaborate with at these venues. Finally, thank you, charlesryanlong, for the ongoing inspiration and encouragement. This paper is dedicated to the loving memory of José Esteban Muñoz.

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Endnotes

[1] In the U.S.-based HIV sector, there have been a variety of approaches in advertising protection from AIDS directed towards diverse "at-risk" audiences. However, since organizations oriented towards gay men have had acquired the most funding in the HIV prevention sector, majority of promotional materials has been dedicated to their sexual health (Román, 2000, pp. 7-8). Following Stonewall Riots in 1969, gay men acquired "a formidable store of cultural and social resources to use in the struggle to shape policies towards AIDS treatments, research, and prevention" (Escoffier, 1998, p. 2). Unlike the usual visual cultures of public health that would focus on danger and death, safer sex messaging geared to gay men promoted "a beautiful body" to "sex-up" life, instead of exposing its limitations (Cooter and Stein, 2010, p. 196; Gilman, 1995, pp. 115-172). Such visual cultures were replicating aesthetics of ads for gay saunas and sex clubs, found in publications targeted specifically to gay men (Brier, 2009; Fiahlo and Katz, 2013). As historian Jennifer Brier (2009) argues, eroticizing prevention methods has developed from gay men's initial resistance to the use of condoms, which were initially marketed for straight audiences. Accordingly, there was a need to incorporate condoms into existing gay men's practices and venues.

[2] Since its approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), PrEP has been sparking multiple controversies. As the Black AIDS Institute (2016) illustrates, socioeconomically vulnerable Black people do not have full access to information about or to the prophylaxis itself. Instead, the largest bulk of PrEP prescriptions between 2012 and 2014 occurred in urban neighborhoods populated by predominantly white middle class gay men.

[3] Whereas Puar (2007) argues that homonationalism is tied to the liberal gay agenda that developed with the post-9/11 re-emergence of American nationalism, scholar Scott Lauria Morgensen (2010) ties homonationalism to settler sexualities during Native American genocide. Scholar Hiram Pérez (2015) furthermore observes that colonization and cosmopolitanism are sites that precede homonationalism in the function of U.S. expansionist politics.

[4] Scholar Wende Elizabeth Marshall (2005) argues that limiting race to the skin level "works to efface the social production of health and shroud the relationship between capitalism, poverty, race and disease" (p. 2517). Scholar Dorothy Roberts (2013), argues that race was historically considered a scientific and biological fact to naturalize white supremacy: "[a]pplying taxonomic methodology to human bodies, eighteenth-century European naturalists classified human beings into races in order to make European conquest and enslavement of foreign peoples seem in line with nature" (Roberts, 2013, p. 151). As a taxonomic method, race was thus used to distinguish white bodies—the embodiment of rationality, self-containment, and health–from non-white bodies that were equated with disease, dysfunction, and pathology (Lupton, 1995, p. 11, 131; Marshall, 2005, p. 2517).

[5] Medicinal cultural production began with the proliferation of safer sex programming and protests to resist the greed of pharmaceutical companies in the late 1980s. For instance, safer sex campaigns that highlights the importance of having sex with condoms and of being on PrEP, includes posters, brochures, pamphlets, photography, pins, T-shirts, billboards, literary works, drawings, and installations modeled upon post-Stonewall gay and lesbian cultures. In addition, starting with protests by the collectives ACT UP and Gran Fury, the medicinal cultural production continues to the moment when the FDA released antiretroviral therapies (ART) in 1996, and PrEP in 2012.

[6] As collector William H. Helfand (1990) argues "many [safer sex] posters are worth keeping, either for their artistic qualities or for their timeliness as evidence of commercial or social attitudes. For those concerning health matters, particularly public health issues, they reflect problems of importance to governments or to private groups who provide posters as part of educational campaigns" (p. 1). Whereas in the 21st century posters are no longer a primary medium for distributing safer sex information, digital banners that appear across the world wide web are equally valuable visual documents. As curator Alex Fiahlo (2013) argues, "[w]hereas in the past a ubiquitous AIDS poster would be "plastered" across the city, nowadays an image […] can be equally ubiquitous online" (p. 30).

[7] As preliminary research for this project, I have visited the GLBTQ Center at the San Francisco Public Library, the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives & Special Collections of the GLBT Historical Society, the Archives and Special Collections of the UC San Francisco Library, the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at USC Libraries, the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library, and NYU's Special Collections at the Fales Library.

[8] Whereby performance in its cultural definition usually involves an audience and a stage, we can also think of "a wide range of representational and communicative behaviors" as performance (Chambers-Letson, 2013, p. 6). As approached by scholars in performance studies, performance can be an object of study, an analytic lens, and a method of inquiry and intervention (Fuentes, 2019, p. 11). According to scholar Richard Schechner (2013), while something "is" performance, a variety of objects can be analyzed "as" performance. Whereby something "is" a performance based on the definitions in cultural history (e.g. music, dance, or performance art), performance studies nurtures a tradition where visual cultural forms (e.g. a painting, a novel, a photograph) as well everyday political, economic, and social events (e.g. a protest) are conceptualized "as" performance. Schechner (2013) argues that "to treat any object, work, or product "as" performance […] means to investigate what the object does, how it interacts with other objects or beings, and how it relates to other objects or beings" (p. 30). Expanding on Schechner, scholar Diana Taylor (2003) lists civil disobedience, resistance, citizenship, gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity as examples of events that can be analyzed "as" performance (3).

[9] Chambers-Letson draws on philosopher Roland Barthes's study of a photograph. For Barthes (1981), two major elements of a photograph are "the studium" and "punctum." While the studium refers to a photograph's obvious meaning, available to everyone, punctum refers to the special effect that a photograph may have. The punctum emerges from a way of looking at a photograph that "rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces" the spectator (Barthes, 1981, pp. 26-27). In other words, the punctum denotes a spectator's intimate, affective attachment to the photograph. Drawing on Chambers-Letson's (2013) interpretation of the punctum as an element that makes the encounter with the image performative (p. 153), we may claim that

the erotic imagery of safer sex production has puncturing and thus performative effects.

[10] Rooted in consumption, this gay politics is part of the overall contemporary neoliberalism that creates an environment where citizens have an illusion of a free choice and authenticity (Lupton 1995). Neoliberal system has a dual function: on the one hand, it regulates bodies through more apparent forms of regulatory activities–carried out through administrative, legislative, and institutional means, and on the other hand, it regulates citizen-consumers through less apparent self-governing (Lupton, 1995, p. 9). Such rule of the neoliberal governance is not domineering, repressive or authoritarian, but rather a part of multiple institutions and agencies directed at enhancing personal freedoms and individual development (Lupton and Peterson, 1996, p. 12). As a result of such governance, the neoliberal subject has an impression of individuality and free choice, which is inexplicably also related to the possibility to consume. In public health, the rhetoric of personal responsibility places a focus on the individual's actions, who is then held accountable for utilizing the provided resources.

[11] Although comprising only 13 percent of the U.S. population, Black Americans have suffered 42 percent of 37,832 HIV diagnosis in 2018 (CDC 2020). Since the beginning of the epidemic in 1981, an estimated 270,726 Black people with AIDS have died, including an estimated 7,053 in 2017 (CDC 2015; CDC 2020).