

**WHAT  
IS THE  
TRUTH?**

**The Truth About  
AIDS**

**Evolution of  
an Epidemic**

**Archeion**

JOURNAL OF QUEER ARCHIVES  
STONEWALL NATIONAL MUSEUM & ARCHIVES



# Archeion

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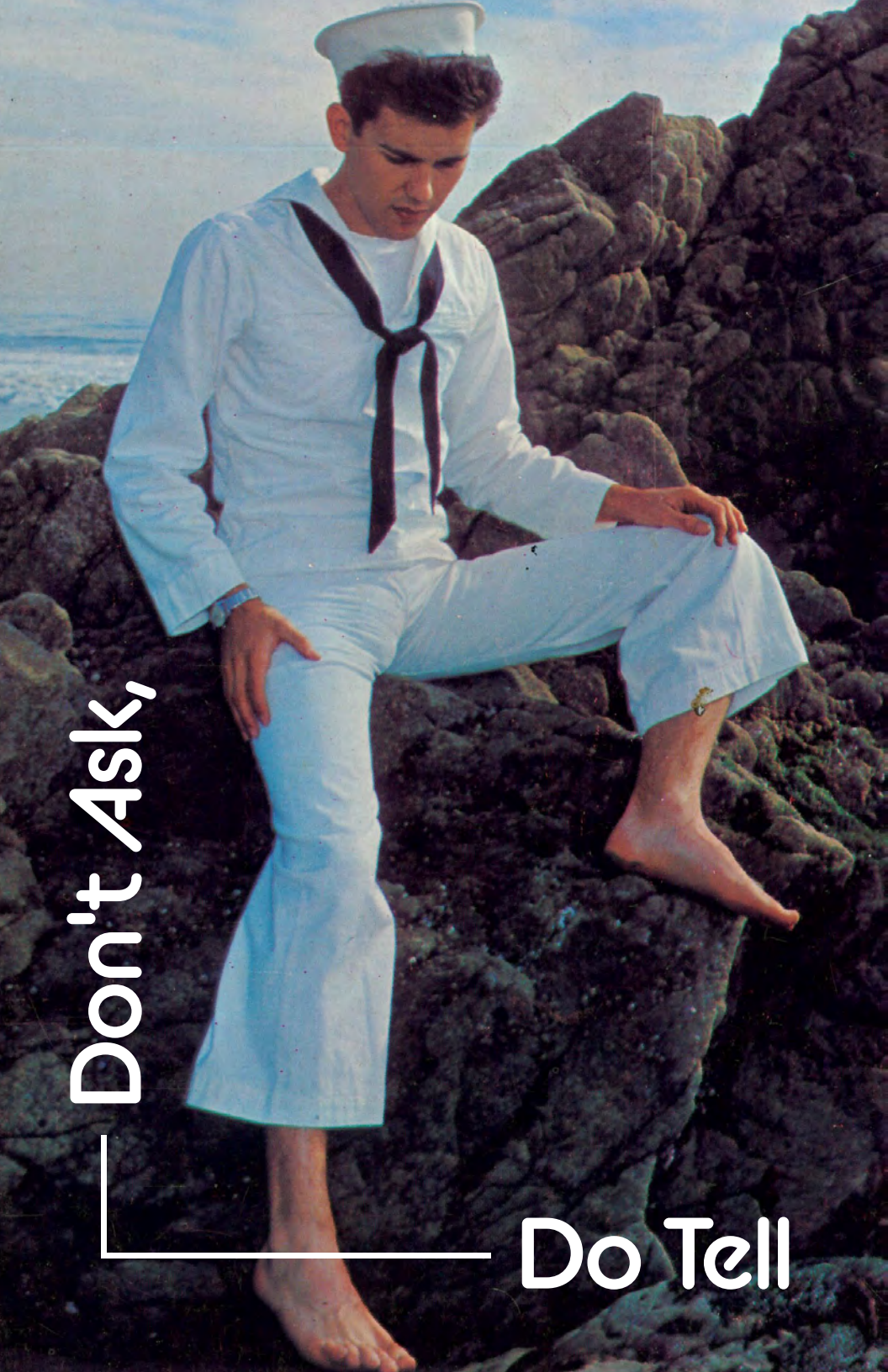
## Cover:

(Front): Detail from *The Truth About AIDS, Evolution of an Epidemic* by Ann Fettner and William Check. Published by Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1984.

(Back): Detail from *The Ladder*, Vol. 4, No. 2, November 1959.

# Table of Contents

- 6 **Don't Ask, Do Tell**  
▶ Curated by Hunter O'Hanian
- 14 **Don't Ask, Do Tell: Some Questions for Consideration**  
▶ Ryan Conrad
- 16 **Where Does Fetish Fit in Queer Activism?**  
▶ Andy Johnson
- 20 **Mis-Information**  
▶ Curated by Hunter O'Hanian
- 28 **'Stay away from those Winston boys': HIV and the Black Church in North Carolina's Triad**  
▶ William H. Mosley, III, Ph.D.
- 30 **My Dear, HIV**  
▶ Cea (Constantine Jones)
- 32 **Dispatches**
- 33 **S'Wall News**



Don't Ask,

Do Tell

While George Washington's right-hand man – openly gay Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben – helped shape America's military, the US government's relationship with LGBTQ soldiers has been overly complicated and mostly unwelcoming since its inception. Except for a brief period during Barack Obama's presidency, from 1778 to the day Donald J. Trump left office, the US government has openly and actively discriminated against gay, lesbian, and trans folks from serving in the military, despite their fitness and eagerness to serve.

Drawn from Stonewall's archives, *Don't Ask, Do Tell* examined the long history of institutional discrimination against members of the LGBTQ community by the US military and federal government. The exhibition not only focused on historical events that underscored such discrimination, and the effort to reverse such discrimination, but also the leaders who brought us to where we are today. As the notion of change continues to evolve for LGBTQ Americans in relationship to military service, one can only assume the future holds more change to come.

Prior to the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, sparse records offer proof of soldiers being disciplined or discharged due to their participation in same-sex activity. While some states in the country had anti-sodomy laws, no specific policy against sexual activity between men serving in the military existed on paper. While this leaves many unanswered questions about the military's official view on same-sex activity in the past, by 1916, the United States would, for the first time, add a section to its Articles of War in World War I that directly and explicitly targeted LGBTQ servicemembers. Article 93 stated that any person who committed an "assault" on another by committing sodomy with that person would be subject to court-martial and resulting penalties. Four years later, the language was amended by removing the word "assault." Simply the crime of sodomy was punished with mandatory jail time in a federal prison, even if the acts were fully consensual.

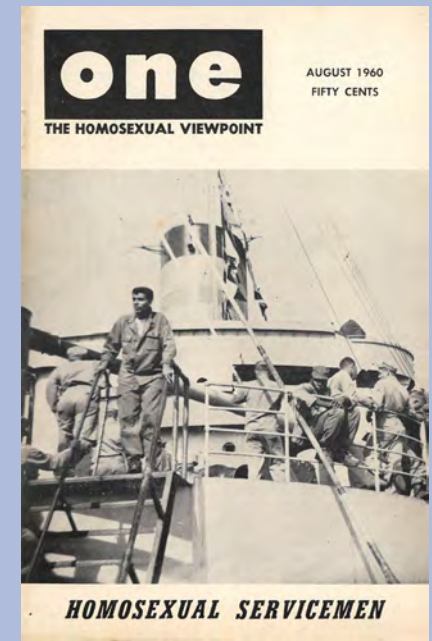
Subsequently, the military deployed sting operations in order to find and discipline soldiers participating in same-sex activity.

◀ Cover from serial *Drum*, No. 21, 1966.

In 1919, two sailors stationed at the Newport Naval Base in Rhode Island disclosed they had been having sex with other men at the local YMCA and art club. A scandal broke out and a full investigation followed. Under the direction of Assistant Secretary to the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, thirteen undercover agents, chosen for their youth and handsome looks, were used to entrap sailors participating in homosexual acts. As a result, fifteen sailors were arrested, tried, and convicted. They were sent to a naval prison in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Despite a declared distaste for the sexual actions between the men, local and national

press coverage was critical of Roosevelt and his colleagues for encouraging enlisted men to have sex with other men as a means of entrapment. A US Senate investigation followed. It referred to the entrapment techniques as “deplorable, disgraceful and most unnatural,” however no one involved in the investigation was disciplined, and Roosevelt was elected President of the United States in 1933.

Fast forward to World War II, due to the intensity of the military’s involvement, it became difficult to court-martial all known gays in the military. Accordingly, servicemen and women believed



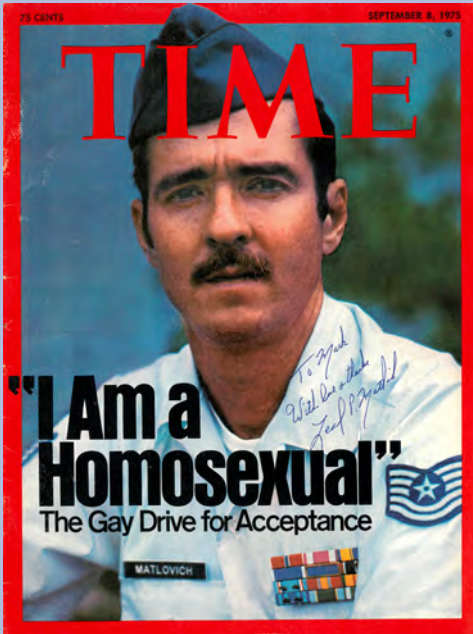
▲ (Left): Cover of Mattachine Review serial, October 1962; (Right): Cover of ONE serial; August 1960.



▲ (Left): Cover of The New Yorker, July 1937; (Right): Cover of The Queer Truth, 1993.

to have engaged in homosexual acts were given a “blue” discharge from the service that represented a “dishonorable” status and denied them access to GI Bill benefits and veterans’ services. In some instances, those who received blue discharges were committed to hospital psychiatric wards for indefinite periods of time. While the “blue” discharge classification was eliminated in 1947, known homosexuals were provided with a “general,” “undesirable,” or “dishonorable” discharge from the service and continued to face prison terms.

In 1957, four years after President Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10450 declaring homosexuals unfit to serve in the military or in any federal job due to the supposed high security risk they posed, the US Navy commissioned the Crittenden Report – the first official study on the impact of gays in the military. Although the report concluded that gays were not more likely to present security risks than their straight counterparts, it advocated anti-gay policies by concluding homosexuality was “a very bad thing,” “wrong,” “evil,” and “is an

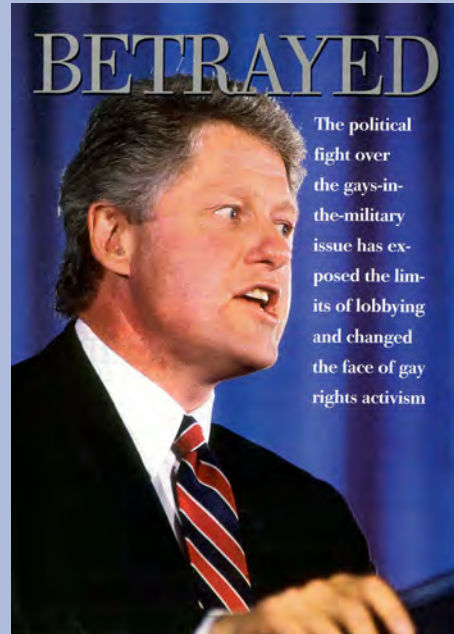


▲ (Left): TIME's iconic cover of Leonard Matlovich, September 1975; (Right): Newsweek's cover story "Gays and the Military" featuring Petty Officer Keith Meinhold, February 1993.

offense to all decent and law-abiding people." The report was kept secret from the public until 1976 when it was disclosed under a Freedom of Information Act request.

Pressure to reverse the military's ban on LGBTQ servicemembers gained momentum during the US's engagement in the Vietnam War, as the culture wars simultaneously raged on. The son of a career Air Force Sargent, Leonard Matlovich, a Vietnam War veteran who won the Purple Heart and Bronze Star, came out as gay as a means

to fight the military's ban on homosexuals. Due to his stellar military record, his coming out was reported widely in the press. The Air Force brought discharge proceedings against Matlovich in September 1975, and he was offered a plea deal: he could stay in the service and retain his pension and benefits if he signed a statement swearing he would never practice homosexuality again. He refused and was subsequently discharged. Although he sued the federal government to seek reinstatement, the case never concluded because he



▲ Spread featuring article on President Clinton's Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy; The Advocate, January 1994.

settled out of court for \$160,000. Matlovich died of AIDS in 1988. He was forty-five years old. Perhaps in response to changing mores and the Matlovich case, the federal government ended its ban on LGBTQ servicemembers as non-military civil servants. However, that was short lived. In 1981, as President Reagan was being sworn in, the Defense Department issued DOD 1332.14, which explicitly banned all LGBTQ people from military service.

The 1990s began to see the most sustained critique and challenge



to the federal government's stance on LGBTQ servicemembers in the military. Although Bill Clinton's 1992 campaign for president stated that he would end the ban against gays in the military, once in office he faced fierce opposition from both military and congressional leaders. Clinton capitulated and approved Defense Directive 1304.26, known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." The directive stated that military applicants were not to be asked about their sexual orientation by the government. However, if a service member made their

homosexuality known to others, or publicly stated they had engaged in homosexual acts, they could be discharged. One could be gay and a member of the military as long as it wasn't discussed or known. The directive was a political bargain – the government agreed that it would not ask or inquire about one's sexual orientation if individual soldiers kept their sexual orientation a secret, in essence reinforcing the walls of the closet.

It wasn't until the 2010s that we began to see a quick landslide of change against the federal government's long held position. In his 2008 campaign for president, Barack Obama promised to eliminate all bans on LGBTQ people serving in the military. In December 2010, President Barack Obama signed a congressional repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell into law. Carter Ash, Secretary of Defense under Obama, issued a directive that no service member shall be discharged solely on the basis of their gender identity. Thereafter, in 2016, Ash removed the ban on transgender people serving in the military.

Nonetheless, the push and pull of the government's position on LGBTQ servicemembers continues. In 2011, with the repeal

of the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, gay veterans could petition the Department of Defense to upgrade their discharge from undesirable to honorable, which would in effect grant them full benefits. In 2017, Obama officially repealed Eisenhower's Executive Order 10450. However, only a few months later, newly elected President Trump overturned Ash's directive regarding transgender service personnel. In 2021, within a month of taking office, President Biden again overturned Trump's discriminatory directive. Thus, the question remains: will the federal government's directives around LGBTQ servicemembers remain consistent, or will the continually changing political climate in the United States continue to throw LGBTQ protections into question?

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*Don't Ask, Do Tell* was on view at SNMA in Summer-Fall 2021.

## A CALL TO ARMS

**WE DEMAND IMMEDIATE REPEAL** of Department of Defense Directive 1332.14 without qualification or stipulation. We have waited long enough. **WE WILL NOT ACCEPT SEGREGATION** of troops or exclusion from any duty, post, or advancement. We will not be their lavender mascots. **WE WILL NOT STAY IN THE CLOSET** in exchange for a blind-eye policy. We are not fighting for our right to privacy. We are fighting for our right to be public. **WE WILL EXPECT FAIRNESS** in military regulations regarding spousal benefits, access to base housing and other tax-supported facilities. Our queer partners are as deserving as Mrs. Colin Powell. **WE WILL SET AN EXAMPLE FOR HETEROSEXUALS** in our compliance with a revised code of sexual conduct based not on archaic moral hypocrisy, but on military pragmatism. We will not imitate the Tailhook tactics of hetero perverts. **WE WILL REQUIRE TOLERANCE** from our hetero comrades-in-arms just as we have been required to tolerate them all our lives. Boot-camp should prepare recruits for battle, not fag-bashing. **WE WILL CONTINUE TO COMMIT SODOMY** with our queer lovers in direct violation of Article 125 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Love is not a crime. **REPEAL SODOMY LAWS NOW!**



▲ Advertisement included on the back of *The Queer Truth* featuring Queer Liberation Front's manifesto "A Call To Arms," 1993.

# Don't Ask, Do Tell: Some Questions for Consideration

What does it mean to introduce museum goers to an exhibition on queer and trans people's relationship to the US military by starting with a "gay" colonial soldier without considering the Indigenous two-spirit people who were dispossessed of their lands by said soldiers? The genocidal role played by the burgeoning US military in the colonial era, including the destruction of Indigenous gender/sexuality systems, reified our now taken for granted European gender/sexuality norms. The choice to leave Indigenous people out of US history projects, queer or otherwise, is not uncommon, but it nonetheless contributes to the ongoing erasure of Indigenous people from Turtle Island. In this particular instance, such decisions also presume an exclusively non-Indigenous museum audience.

What does contemporary scholarship, and by extension the exhibition, accomplish by projecting gay identity into the past by labelling von Steuben "openly gay" when conceptions of sexuality at the time did not align sexual behaviour with discrete

fully formed sexual identities? And what does the unusual sexual openness of von Steuben say about the privileges afforded to those advantaged by their class, race, and gender in America, both in the past and presently?

Furthermore, what absences exist in the archive from which the material in this exhibition is drawn? How does that limit which stories are told? Where are the queer draft dodgers that sought refuge in Canada during the Vietnam War? Where are the queer counter recruitment activists active during the first and second Gulf Wars? Where are the queer AIDS activists that demanded "Money for AIDS, Not for War!"? Where are the queer and trans voices who sought not to challenge DADT, but end the US war machine entirely?

Curators, historians, and archivists must examine these gaps in collections maintained by LGBT memory institutions as these absences hinder their ability to tell fuller, more complex stories about queer and trans life.

## Mike Hendricks: American Refugee Service, Montreal

Amnesty is not the vital issue of our exile. We went into exile because of a war we then thought, and continue to think immoral and illegal, and that war still goes on. Our exile will also go on, at least until the American war in Indochina finally and totally ends. Amnesty is a post-war issue still awaiting a post-war era.

We must first emphasize that we are here today not because we have chosen to make our return to the United States a topic of public discussion. However, it is an issue, without our urging, and it is an issue that involves our lives. We feel it is necessary to have our say.

The refugee movement to Canada and Europe those past eight war years has been primarily a human response to the inhuman destruction of Indochina and to a society that has allowed such destruction to go on. Men and women of our generation, brought up believing in the United States as the defender of freedom, could see no connection between that heritage and the realities of fire and death unleashed on innocent peoples in Indochina.

Nor has this war limited itself to destroying societies in Indochina. It has also very nearly destroyed the society of the United States. The American Dream we were all weaned on was exploded daily all over Indochina. Those of us who chose exile were adamantly refusing to lend our bodies and souls to such inhumane acts of our countrymen. Yet we were also declining to accept punishment in prison for positions regarding the war that the Pentagon Papers have now substantiated, and to which the Gallup Polls indicate the majority of the country now subscribes.

Jules Feiffer called it "premature morality"--why should we be considered criminals for thinking then what everyone thinks now?

Amnesty. The definition is "forgiveness" or "forgetfulness". We cannot accept such a term; we cannot be forgiven for taking morally correct stands against immoral acts of our government. And we do not intend to forget, nor should this country forget, what forced us into our exile.

We have no need of either forgiveness or forgetfulness. What we would seek--when the war in Indochina ends--is a totally non-punitive restoration of our civil liberties. That is, the right to return to our home nation without prosecution or recrimination. We feel that a withdrawal of civil or military charges for offences due to actions relating directly or indirectly to the Indochina war should be extended to all those in prisons, underground, or abroad.

That is what we would seek. The present legislation before the Senate--proposed by Senator Taft--is not at all what anyone honestly interested in the reconciliation of this nation would seek.

We are all aware of the features of Senator Taft's bill. It is punitive in requiring alternate service as the condition for our return, and, worse, it discriminates in favor of draft dodgers over deserters.

Deserters and draft dodgers have been united throughout our exile in opposition to the Indochina war. We see no difference whatsoever among us. However, people at home insist on viewing draft dodgers as middle-class, well-educated persons, and deserters as

working-class, less-educated persons. While this is statistically correct, its validity is distorted when social and economic class distinctions are related to levels of morality. Being born into a working-class home in no way disqualifies a man or woman from being morally repelled by the inhumanity of this war.

In truth, deserters as well as draft dodgers left because of opposition to the war and because of the malaise of a society that could create such a war.

The only real difference, then, between draft dodgers and deserters is a matter of when they became aware of their moral opposition and their inability to participate in such a war. A matter of timing. What possible rationale could there be for legislation that reduces a grave matter of morality and conscience to a mere matter of timing?

Senator Taft's proposed bill is clearly not a judicious or a well-intended solution to the unprecedented situation of mass numbers of refugees from America. A more reasonable approach would have to deal equally with all refugees regardless of their status at birth or their father's income. There is no escaping the fact that the American poor--rural and urban--have been forced to carry the worst burdens of the American war in Indochina. And it would be only perpetuating this cruelty to pass one more bill that discriminates against this class of citizens.

Whatever formula is finally accepted as a means of determining whether a deserter in fact deserted because of moral objections, let that formula apply equally to all refugees. For we would not want to be split from our brothers and sisters by an arbitrary decision made in the American Congress.

Allow us to conclude by stating one more time that the continuing war against the Indochinese peoples is immoral. It is now the responsibility of the American people to brand this war as immoral, and to deal with the destruction it has wrought not only in Indochina, but also here in America. Thereafter, it would be patently dishonest to continue prosecuting those Americans who knew this painful reality years ago.

--Michael Hendricks, for the American Refugee Service and the Montreal Council to Aid War Resisters.

The statement from the American Refugee Service and the Montreal Council to Aid War Objectors, incorporates the position taken by these two groups together with virtually all the exile counselling groups in Canada, plus Amex magazine editors, at the press conference held in Toronto last January 17.

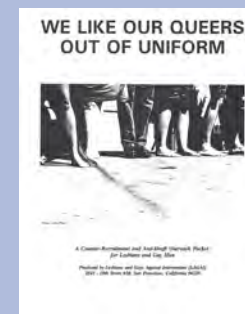


◀ (Left): Report by Michael Hendricks, a gay American draft dodger living in Montreal, for *Amex*→*Canada* Vol. 3, No. 3, March-April 1972.

(Bottom Left): Video still of ACT UP New York's "Day of Desperation" action in Grand Central Station from James Wentz's documentary *Fight Back, Fight AIDS: 15 Years of ACT UP*.

(Bottom Middle): A counter-recruitment packet created and disseminated by Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention (LAGAI) in the early '90s. [www.lagai.org](http://www.lagai.org)

(Bottom Right): Special issue cover of the digital journal *We Who Feel Differently*. Available at: <https://wewhofeeldifferently.info/journal.php?issue=2>.



**Ryan Conrad** is an artist, activist, and scholar born in Newport, RI to parents who worked in the military industrial complex. He currently resides in Canada where he teaches sexuality studies at Carleton University. You can find him online at [faggotz.org](http://faggotz.org).



# Where Does Fetish Fit in Queer Activism?



In my first editor's essay for the February 2021 issue of the newly relaunched *Archeion*, I wrote about the coexistence of critique and joy, that movement work—and the long, complicated history of queer activism—is only sustainable through a parallel commitment to pleasure, joy, desire, and love. That inextricable relationship is often messy, complex, at moments rather illogical, and yet sustaining. A quick glance at even the past fifty years of queer activism and politics underscores the relationship between the need to resist and the desire to release. Pleasure and the erotic are foundational pillars in the long arc of queer and trans political activism.

With that in mind, *Don't Ask, Do Tell* engendered a unique wedge between the role of politics and pleasure. How do we make sense of the relationship between LGBTQ communities and the United States military-industrial complex, held in contrast to, or at least in conversation with, the eroticization and fetishization of the military aesthetic in queer popular and visual culture? Artists such as Tom of Finland, Vincent Cianni, Alvin Baltrop, Samuel Steward, Bob Mizer, George Platt Lynes, and many more have explored the erotic masculine, military aesthetic in art. Beginning in the 20th century, as gay identity emerged as an identifiable, and often surveilled, social category, a particular visual language began to cohere around masculine military motifs of protruding, often glistening muscles, suggestive glances, loaded caresses, homosociality, and queer coded signifiers.

Tom of Finland's emerging hypermasculine aesthetic enticed the fantasies and desires of troves of gay men. Often depicted in uniforms of authority, the erotic submission to power became a lightning rod of desire as seen in a work such as *Untitled*, 1985 (page 16). Bob Mizer's photographs of homosociality and staged male nudes, with idealized musculature, established a canon of not only queer masculine iconography, but also uncovered a hidden world of homoerotic desire, the military being one of its most referenced subjects. Mizer's photography magazine *Physique Pictorial*, coded as a bodybuilding periodical, laid the groundwork for the ideal male—an aesthetic that is overwhelmingly white, cisgender, fit, masculine, and middle class.

◀ Tom of Finland (Touko Laaksonen, Finnish, 1920-1991), *Untitled*, 1985, graphite on paper.  
© 1985-2020, Tom of Finland Foundation.

Thus my inquiry into the role of fetish and the erotic in queer activism coalesces as a set of questions, not begging to be answered, but rather posed for collective consideration. Given the hostile and violent surveillance of LGBTQ communities by the US military, how do we make sense of the prevalence of military fantasies and the eroticization of militarized signifiers? Would one consider this an act of erotic subversion or willful complicity? How does one work towards the abolition and dissolution of the military-industrial complex while settling their own desire to roleplay militarized sexual fantasies? How do we hold space for critique and pleasure? Is this a zero sum game? Does a willful engagement and desire to fulfill one's own pleasure negate the ability to leverage an honest critique of, and dismantling of, the military-industrial complex? Is there room for resolution? Is finding

▼ Bob Mizer (American, 1922-1992), *Tony Rome and Ron Nichols (Airman and The Sailor)*, Los Angeles, c. 1971, chromogenic print. © Bob Mizer Foundation.



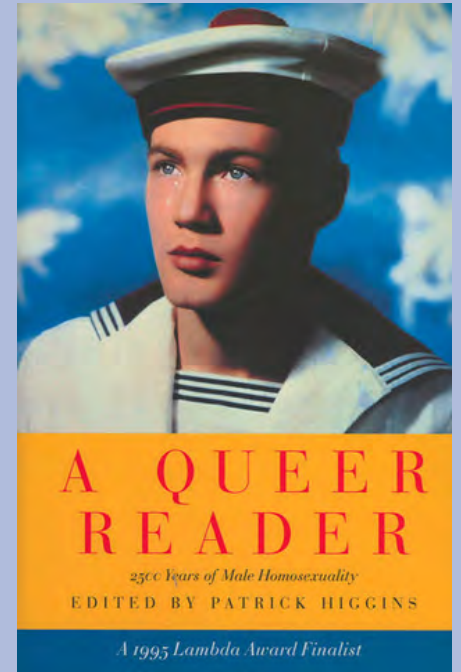
pleasure in military fantasies and fetish an automatic admittance of support? Where can we locate the erotic in such fantasies? The overt homosociality or pervasive nudity? Where and how does the violence of the military emerge in these fantasies? Could the relationship between the erotic and the military be imagined differently? How often does this argument assume that we lead monolithic lives? That our sources of attraction, pleasure, and desire are not messy, complicated, complex, and unorderly?

What much of this inquiry points to is the question I consistently return to: what role does politics play in our pleasure, and what role does our pleasure play in our politics?

**Andy Johnson** is the editor of *Archeion: Journal of Queer Archives*. He is a writer, editor, designer, and art historian based in Washington, D.C.

► (Top): Cover of *A Queer Reader*, edited by Patrick Higgins, 1995. Featuring Pierre et Gilles's *Le Marin*, 1985.

(Bottom): Cover of *Physique Pictorial*, No. 43, December 2017. © Bob Mizer Foundation.



# THE AIDS TIME BOMB

**Is it ticking away  
in you?**

**ARE THERE MILLIONS WITH AIDS AND OTHER DISEASES  
RELATED TO 'DIRTY' POLIO & OTHER VACCINES?**

## Mis- Information:

True and not-so-true early information about AIDS

As we near the two-year mark of the global Covid-19 pandemic, we face an adversary as dangerous as the virus itself: mis-information. The gap in our knowledge surrounding the virus – how to treat it, prevent it, and the everchanging landscape of its spread – has opened just enough space for baseless hypotheses, theories, myths, and alleged cures that proliferate and spread, much like the virus itself.

In this particular moment, the old adage “history repeats itself” rings stingingly true. For those who can reflect upon the height of the AIDS crisis, the scenario appears eerily similar.

While the medical community got many things correct, myths were rampant about the cause, transmission, and treatment of HIV/AIDS. *Mis-Information* transports us back to the 1980s and 1990s when AIDS was first brought to the public’s attention and examines the facts and falsehoods which shaped society’s ideas about who was at risk for AIDS, as well as its prevention and treatment. To examine the topic, the exhibition pulls from a collection of early AIDS cause/treatment books as well as newspaper, serial, and journal articles published at the time.

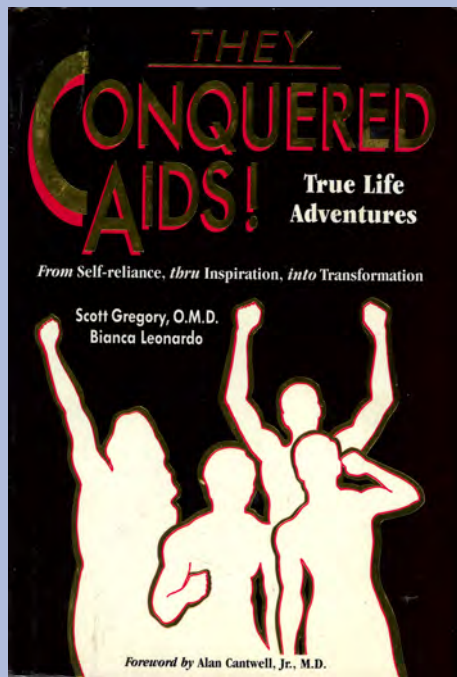
◀ Detail of the cover of *The AIDS Timebomb* by John West. Published by Veritas Press, 1988.

The first public news story about AIDS in the *New York Times*, published in July 1981, announced a mysterious illness affecting “homosexuals.” Shortly into the crisis, four distinct groups were found to bear the brunt of the disease: gay men, intravenous drug users, recently arrived immigrants from Haiti, and hemophiliacs. Early on, the most pressing question for communities became *how does it spread?* The sudden paranoia and attention

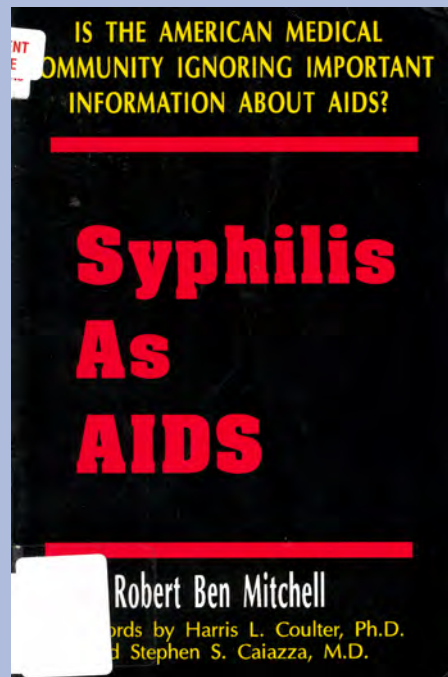
paid to one’s close contact with others begged further questions, such as: Can I sip from another’s cocktail? Can you get it from oral sex? Can my kids get it at school? Can the virus be tamed to prevent too much damage? Does everyone who gets AIDS die? At the time, the medical community recognized that AIDS was likely caused by a virus that weakened the immune system and thus exposed the individual to a host of other illnesses.

Common illnesses included: Pneumocystis pneumonia (chest infection), Kaposi’s sarcoma (rare skin cancer), Toxoplasmosis (central nervous disorder), an atypical form of tuberculosis, and fungus infections. By 1982, a few treatments began to circulate: plasmapheresis (a cleansing of the blood plasma), bone marrow transplants, interferon (a promising cancer treatment), nutrition and supplements, exercise, and a well-balanced diet.

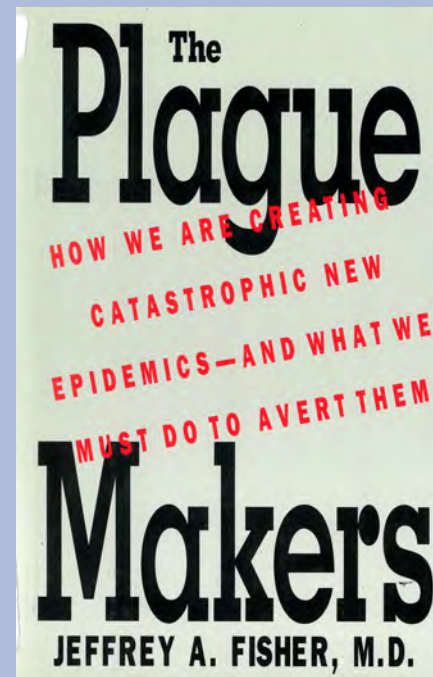
In addition to the somewhat confusing and contradictory messages published by the medical community, the proliferation of more marginal myths and beliefs grew and spread. These beliefs included: Sex with a virgin or animal can cure AIDS; you can tell if someone has AIDS by looking at them; AZT and retroviral drugs cause AIDS; AIDS is divine retribution for immoral behavior; multiple sexual partners and drug use cause AIDS; insects,



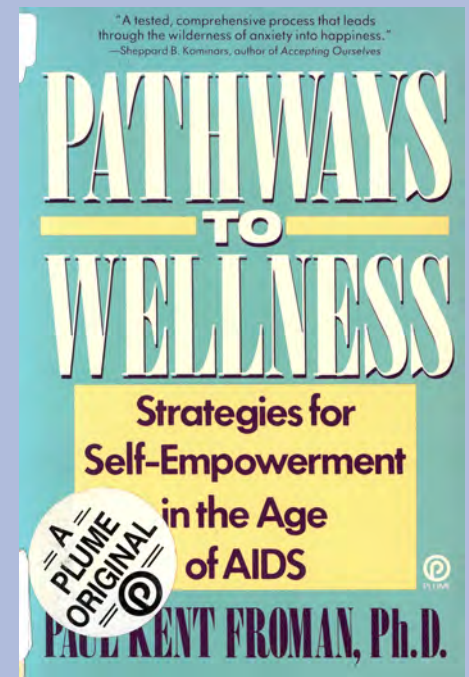
▲ Cover of *They Conquered AIDS* by Scott Gregory and Bianca Leonardo. Published by Tree of Life Publications, 1989.



▲ Cover of *Syphilis As AIDS* by Robert Ben Mitchell. Published by Banned Books, 1988.



▲ Cover of *The Plague Makers* by Jeffrey A. Fisher, M.D. Published by Simon & Schuster, 1994.



▲ Cover of *Pathways to Wellness* by Paul Kent Froman. Published by Plume, 1990.

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▲ Two-page advertisement for a product called Immunase. *David*; Vol. 10, No. 78; 1983.

like mosquitoes, can transmit HIV; women with AIDS cannot have children; alternative medicine can prevent AIDS; and many more.

Amongst the litany of literature and reports published in the 1980s and 1990s, we can organize the material into four (sometimes overlapping) categories: spiritual and/or religious-based opinions about the cause of AIDS, science-based research, alternative science and holistic (i.e., non-western) practices, and distinctly

political perspectives surrounding the origin of AIDS.

Religious and spiritual-based books came with a healthy dose of skepticism surrounding Western medical practices. *AIDS and the Health Within*, authored by Nick Bamforth and published by Amethyst Books in 1987, posited that AIDS was a "blessing" as the disease "will be a wonderful vehicle for change in your life." Bamforth's theory arose from the seven chakras which

evolve around energy wheels in one's body. In *They Conquered AIDS*, published by Tree of Life Publications in 1989, authors Scott Gregory and Bianca Leonardo expound upon the benefits of natural therapies and spiritual enlightenments that are "not only safe, but economical." With so few medical options at the time, the authors believed the best route to recovery was to seek healing outside of the medical establishment.

While more science-centered approaches certainly had flaws in their approach, their conclusions considered previously accepted scientific evidence. *Syphilis as AIDS*, authored by Robert Ben Mitchell and published by Banned Books in 1988, posited that the bacteria that caused AIDS was in fact syphilis and not HIV. Mitchell argued that most who came down with AIDS suffered from syphilis first, which allowed HIV to take hold within a weakened immune system. In *HIV*, author R.D. Westaway reviewed a decade's worth of potential cures that had been mostly discredited. Among the cures included AZT, leukocyte transfusions, and many more. Jeffry Fisher's book *The Plague Makers*, published in 1994 by Simon & Schuster, warned of the over usage of antibiotics and its effects on the immune system's ability to fight impending diseases including HIV and AIDS.

Holistic, more non-Western, medical practices were often considered either in tandem with Western medical remedies, or in place of, due to the lack of conclusive medical treatment at the time. John West's *The AIDS Timebomb*, published by Veritas Press in 1988, strongly encouraged large doses of Vitamin C. The author argued that due to the buildup of vaccines against polio, smallpox, measles, and more in our bodies, a "timebomb" ticked inside of us all, which led to AIDS. Paul Froman's *Pathways to Wellness*, published in 1990 by Plume, emphasized the importance of reducing stress – this included eating well, exercising, deep muscle massages, positive affirmations, and more. In volume 10, number 78 of *David*, published in 1983, a two-page advertisement ran for a product called Immunase, which consisted of mostly over-the-counter vitamins. The ad noted "if you can't change your lifestyle, you can give your body the tools it needs to keep you healthy." In 1983, the *Bay Area Reporter* ran a story about large doses of ascorbate, claiming that large amounts of ascorbic acid could help to fight off intercellular infections from viral and bacterial invaders.

Lastly, and most critically, the race to cure AIDS was undoubtedly slowed by a heavy dose of politics. Due to the fact that the majority

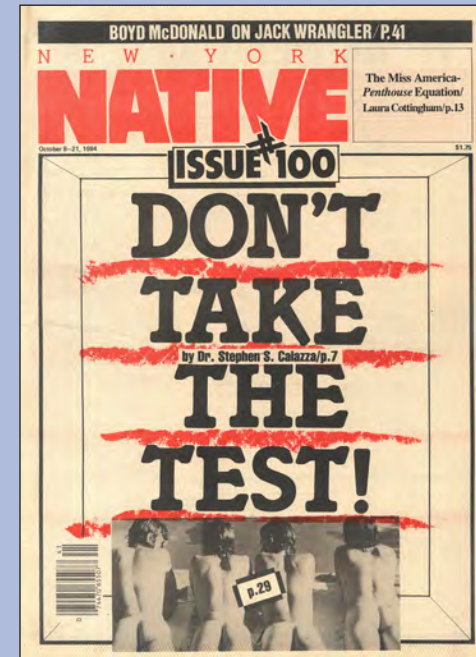
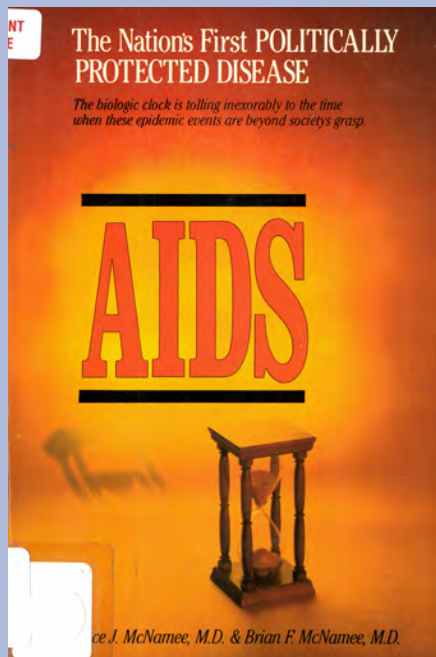
of populations and communities affected by HIV/AIDS came from marginal groups, the pressure to cure the disease and what that eventually meant in terms of advocating or approving of a particular lifestyle weighed heavy. In their book *AIDS – The Nation's First Politically Protected Disease*, published in 1988 by the National Medical Legal Publishing House, doctors Brian and Lawrence McNamee posit the theory that AIDS was created to forward a gay agenda. They write “[AIDS] has necessarily emasculated existing public health policies and effectively made AIDS the first politically protected disease in history. The result has been disastrous.”

J.B. Molaghan, in the January 1982 volume of *Gay Community News*, believed that calling AIDS an epidemic was “hardly justified” and argued that the disease was brought on by the particular lifestyle of individuals – multiple partners, prior infections, and the use of poppers. There was a similar notion posed in the 27<sup>th</sup> issue of the *New York Native*: “do poppers cause cancer?” A rather dismissive letter sent into *The Advocate* was quoted by their medical reporter Nathan Fain for their January 1984 issue. In it, the writer states “there is no such thing as AIDS Disease as it’s a phony disease dreamed up by the medical profession and drug industry to get more money out of people’s pockets.” Six months

later, Fain noted that “some forces, such as Anita Bryant’s tedious campaign, stressed some gays caused AIDS through their ‘immoral behavior’ getting people righteously exercised. Some might consider that ‘disco, drugs and dick’ are patently immunosuppressive, but the fact is that several thousand men continue to thrive on such a diet with no sign of ill health.” Medical professionals went so far as to direct individuals to avoid HIV tests. Dr. Stephen Caiazza, in the October 1984 issue of the *New York Native*, stressed that the “test helps no one, but hurts everyone.” His rationale was that positive results caused “inevitable anxiety” and “extremely grave problems of confidentiality.”

As with the height of the AIDS crisis in the 80s and 90s, only time will allow us to parse through what is fact and what is fiction. The Covid-19 global pandemic, intensified by social media channels and forms of communication that simply did not exist in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, serves to remind us of the deep human cost that comes with our proclivity to always seek answers and our fear of the unknown.

Mis-Information was on view at SNMA in Fall 2021.



◀ (Opposite Page Left): Cover of *AIDS – The Nation's First Politically Protected Disease* by Brian F. McNamee, M.D., and Lawrence J. McNamee, M.D. Published by National Medical Legal Publishing House, 1988.

(Opposite Page Right): Cover of issue 27 of the *New York Native*, 1981-1982.

(Left): Cover of issue 100 of the *New York Native*, 1984.

# 'Stay away from those Winston boys': HIV and the Black Church in North Carolina's Triad

The title quote comes from “M,” a Black gay elder of a church circuit located in the Triad region of North Carolina (the region includes the cities of Greensboro, High Point, and Winston-Salem). Historically, circuits connected multiple churches of a geographical area in which musicians, preachers, and other figures of a faith community travel and perform between two or more congregations. Since the 1980s, these religious networks have also functioned as spaces where gay/queer members can create community, cruise, and gossip.

As part of an oral history project I am conducting on lingering feelings of, to paraphrase American writer and academic Saidiya Hartman, the ‘afterlives’ of HIV/AIDS, I seek out elders who survive the overlapping pandemics of HIV and Covid-19. “You got to understand, the church world is almost like a family” which, M suggests, influenced the (mis)information about HIV (and later Covid-19), other gays of the circuit, and who may or may not be infected. “Certain churches had that stigma” due to whispers of lasciviousness or allegations

of illness plaguing certain cities. In the 80s and 90s, gossip was a critical form of communication for Black gay Christians, impacting the reputation of some churches in Winston-Salem and disrupting church circuits for decades.

The queer presence in the Black church is undeniable. Yet, in the absence of inclusive leadership, gossip and stigma were the brick and mortar used to build a network of safety measures by

the Black, gay, and faithful during the HIV crisis of the last century. Today, gay elders like M salute the church’s concerted effort to get ahead of Covid-19. But this win is bittersweet. For M, “the Black church should have been” this effective before scores were lost to HIV stigma. Accumulated quietly across overlapping pandemics, this feeling is an inheritance, a legacy silently bequeathed, yet whose reckoning is long overdue.

**William H. Mosley, III, PhD (he/they)** is an Afro-Salvadoran scholar-activist from Bridgeport, Connecticut. An Assistant Professor at Wake Forest University, Mosley’s work explores archives and digital and expressive cultures to imagine queer-inclusive Black radicality. Mosley’s first book, *Tenderness: The Work of Black Queer Expression*, examines how Black LGBTQ+ creative communities articulate and practice tenderness against regimes of anti-Blackness and queer antagonism. @willinthehaus

# My Dear, HIV

after Tory Dent

I been in the kitchen for days now trying to figure how to begin. This must be a love letter. It has to be. Every letter is, isn't it. On the phone T. asked if I could just get rid of you would I do it. Erase you completely from me. Pull you totally out of my body my blood my head my heart. Live without your weight in my gut. Forgive me, but I really didn't know, still don't really know how to answer, what to say – I think what I mean is I'm not sure. Forever is such a terrible word. It all oughta be so simple. Before you. Somewhere here is where I wanna get back to – before I ran myself down wondering where are you and which of my other beloveds have you touched without asking me first and just how long did you think you could get away with it. I'm on my phone all day and waiting – for what. No news from you. Rather no more news ever. I want the end of news. I want to throw my phone in the ocean most days except then how could I look for you. We'll make up anything though won't we, to believe our way out of tragedy. I guess if I could kid myself harder, I would. If I could make you tell the truth I'd pull all your petals myself. I know I was never gonna be your one and only. And I'm sorry, I know I can come off possessive some times. Long before we were us, I know there were others you held, who after a warm night together you left, always the same line: I love you, you're the only thing I need, I just can't hang around. Is any of this getting through. What else is there to say. It's a cruel thing, to promise forever and mean it.

Always & all ways  
xxC.

**Cea (Constantine Jones)** is an interdisciplinary Greek-American thingmaker. They are a member of the Artist+ Registry at Visual AIDS and part of the collective, What Would An HIV Doula Do?, They are the author of a novel, In Still Rooms (The Operating System 2020), and a collaborative chapbook with Portuguese visual artist Vicente Sampaio, BALEEN: A Poem In Twelve Days (Ursus Americanus 2021). Their work has been performed or exhibited at various venues across NYC & Tennessee.



# Dispatches

*Dispatches reflect notable moments and achievements within LGBTQ culture around the globe. With each issue, we feature important milestones in our collective story.*

- ▶ Sarah Schulman's *Let The Record Show* traces the evolution of ACT UP NY, one of the most pivotal activist movements in American history. "Based on more than two hundred interviews with ACT UP members and rich with lessons for today's activists, *Let the Record Show* is a revelatory exploration—and long-overdue reassessment—of the coalition's inner workings, conflicts, achievements, and ultimate fracture." Schulman, one of the most revered queer writers, provides the how and the why of ACT UP New York's origin and lifespan. SNMA will present a talk with Schulman on February 8, 2022.
- ▶ Jasper Johns, the gay American painter whose career spans nearly sixty-five years, currently has two solo exhibitions on view at the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. "Conceived as a whole but displayed in two distinct parts, the exhibition draws on the artist's lifelong fascination with mirroring and doubles, so that each half of the exhibition echoes and reflects the other." Both exhibitions trace Johns's enduring career, conjuring the interlocutors, lovers, and relationships that have defined his artistic practice. Both exhibitions are on view until February 13, 2022.
- ▶ In light of new research from the LEGO Group and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, LEGO will no longer sort its toys by gender, but instead by interest, underscoring the fact that gendered stereotypes in children's toys have an adverse affect on their creative potential. Surveying around 7,000 parents and children across the globe, the research illustrates the ways in which gender bias begins almost immediately in childhood development.
- ▶ Season three of *RuPaul's Drag Race UK* features the first cisgender woman drag queen, Victoria Scone. While trans women have competed on the show, including Kylie Sonique Love, winner of *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars Six*, Scone is the first ciswoman to compete, furthering our cultural definition of inclusive drag.

# S'Wall News

*S'Wall News highlights important updates, news, and achievements from within Stonewall National Museum & Archives.*

- ▶ Stonewall's outreach and programs continue to grow as we increase our donor base and followers. Last spring, we launched our first-ever membership drive and doubled our membership base. We recently held our annual gala and award presentation, recognizing the accomplishments of Karine Jean-Pierre (Diversity/Inclusion), Alix Ritchie (Philanthropy), and Stacey Ritter (Ally).
- ▶ We continue to present a virtual programming series, which has drawn a national audience of more than 40,000 attendees. Recent participants include Steven Vider, Beau McCall, Soleo, Rabih Alameddine, Amelia Jones, Lamar Peterson, and many others. To view all of our past talks and upcoming schedule, visit [Stonewall-Museum.org](http://Stonewall-Museum.org).
- ▶ In October 2021, Stonewall launched *In Plain Sight*, its new LGBTQ history timeline with more than 700 entries. It can be found at [StonewallNMA.org](http://StonewallNMA.org). News of the resource has spread around the globe from Taipei to Minneapolis and Boston to San Diego.
- ▶ Progress continues on our digitization efforts. We are presently processing items from the archive which are pre-Stonewall, LGBTQ culture unique to SNMA's archive, and records from Florida. Stay tuned for the digital release of these items this winter.
- ▶ We continue to connect to local and national organizations. Recently, we were featured at the Miami Book Fair, Southeast Florida Library Information Network, and the Corpus Christi Museum of Science and History.

## Support

SNMA receives support from the following institutions and donors like you.



Funding for this project is provided in part by the Board of County Commissioners of Broward County, Florida, as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council and Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau.



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## stonewall national museum & archives

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