

NOT THE FIRST NOT THE LAST

A History of
Queer and Trans
Resistance
Movements

*Armed Queers
Salt Lake City*



An Introduction

Despite the mass funding of police forces around the country who are said to 'protect and serve', Queer and Trans communities — especially Trans women of color — are continuously victimized and/or killed because of the cops. In the United States, where Queer, Trans, and racially oppressed people are systematically brutalized by the police, by the courts, by politicians, and by vigilantes, the only way to ensure our safety is to begin protecting ourselves and each other.

Our oppressors have military grade weapons at their disposal that they won't hesitate to use to suppress our movements. We cannot expect the police and the fascist United States to have our best interest in mind.

The only way to combat this is to engage in militant revolutionary struggle. Militancy is not just physical combat, but also includes organizing outside of the standard political and social systems that fail to support oppressed people. Armed struggle should not be the first method of resistance against injustice.

However, being armed, educating ourselves on defense tactics, and engaging in revolutionary study is the only way to ensure the protection and survival of Queer and Trans people in the midst of our oppression.

**"In order for
nonviolence to work,
your opponent must
have a conscience. The
United States has none."
-Kwame Ture**



A History of Armed Queers

Inspired by the 2020 uprisings, Armed Queers grew from the movement calling for police abolition and from the lack of genuine support from liberal organizations in Salt Lake City, Utah, such as LGBTQ non-profits. These organizations were, and continue to be, superficial in their work to support Queer and Trans people in Utah and fail to acknowledge capitalism, imperialism, and racism as the source of our oppression. LGBT nonprofits and corporations are fighting to be represented in a capitalist system that only values them when they're playing the game of the oppressor.

Organizers of what would soon become Armed Queers began by building connections with Queer and Trans community members with an emphasis on the need for community defense and revolutionary study. Teach-ins about Militant History and popular education were developed as a key part of the new organization's outreach. At the same time organizers were focused on their own political education and ideological framework, and studied past revolutionary struggles, like the Cuban Revolution and the Black Panther Party, that would serve as the influence for what would become Armed Queers.

Working from Marxist-Leninist principles, Armed Queers believes all working-class people must lead the restructuring of society, and create a new world that is run by, and works for, the working and oppressed. Armed Queers is not a political social club, but a dedicated organization that develops its members by teaching skills in political education, community organizing, and self-defense. This gives comrades of Armed Queers a chance to gain the competencies needed to become well-rounded, disciplined revolutionaries. While Armed Queers educates locally on the importance of militant organizing and armed struggle in revolutionary movements, the organization is also international in its reach. Armed Queers is a part of the National Network on Cuba, which helps to educate people on the history and current issues facing Cuba; the organization also plays an active role in the growing Palestinian struggle.



**We can only do our work because of the tenacious
organizers and movements that came before us. This zine
is an homage to militant Queer and Trans movements,
both at home and abroad, that have paved the way.**

Salt Lake City

Armed Queers



6 PRINCIPLES

1 THE ARMED AND MILITANT PROTECTION OF QUEER AND TRANS COMMUNITIES, AND ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE

2 THE END OF CAPITALISTIC OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION, MOVEMENT TOWARDS A SOCIALIST SOCIETY

3 TRANS LIBERATION FROM THE GENDER BINARY AND BIOLOGICAL ESSENTIALISM. NOT ASSIMILATION

4 HOUSING AS A HUMAN RIGHT AND BASIC NECESSITY NOT TO BE PROFITED OFF OF. PUT AN END TO LANDLORDSHIP

5 ABOLISH POLICE AND PRISONS, AS THEY SERVE AS NOTHING BUT OPPRESSORS

6 THE END OF BOURGEOIS, ASSIMILATIONIST, LGBT ORGANIZATIONS. THE START OF RADICAL QUEER AND TRANS ORGANIZING

Glossary

Armed Struggle: The use of weapons (guns, knives, stones, etc.) as a means of self-defense when faced with an equally or more heavily weaponized opponent.

Capitalism: The accumulation (or collection) of capital (money/property) to further the goals of the ruling class (i.e. rich people, celebrities, politicians) using the labor of the working class.

Community Organizing: A strategy of engaging with one's community members and neighbors to work towards a common issue, policy, or decision that is of interest or impact to them.

Fascism/Fascist: A capitalist political strategy that centers around a heavily militarized state and hegemonic values around class, race, religion, nation and/or identity. Those who speak out are ostracized or killed as they threaten the ruling class and its capitalist rule. Fascist regimes oppose communism, equality, and democracy as they interfere with the repression of people's struggles.

Marxist-Leninism: The application of Marx's theories of the economy (i.e., current capitalist production of labor is unfair to workers) and Lenin's theory of imperialism (i.e., rich nations can delay their ultimate demise by keeping poorer nations underdeveloped) and the worker's party (i.e., the redistribution of wealth and resources to working people). Advocates for revolutionary structural changes to create an economy and government that is run on the interest of the working class.

Militant: An organized and strategic approach to revolutionary movements that encourages using methods outside the norms of the current political system to enact change. Often seen as adjacent to armed struggle, but not necessarily always a matter of armed struggle.

Mutual Aid: A method for community organizing that uses the exchanging of resources, services, and labor to provide social, political, economic, and basic needs to a community.

Oppression: An institutional, political, social, or personal action that suppresses people's power, authority and/or freedoms.

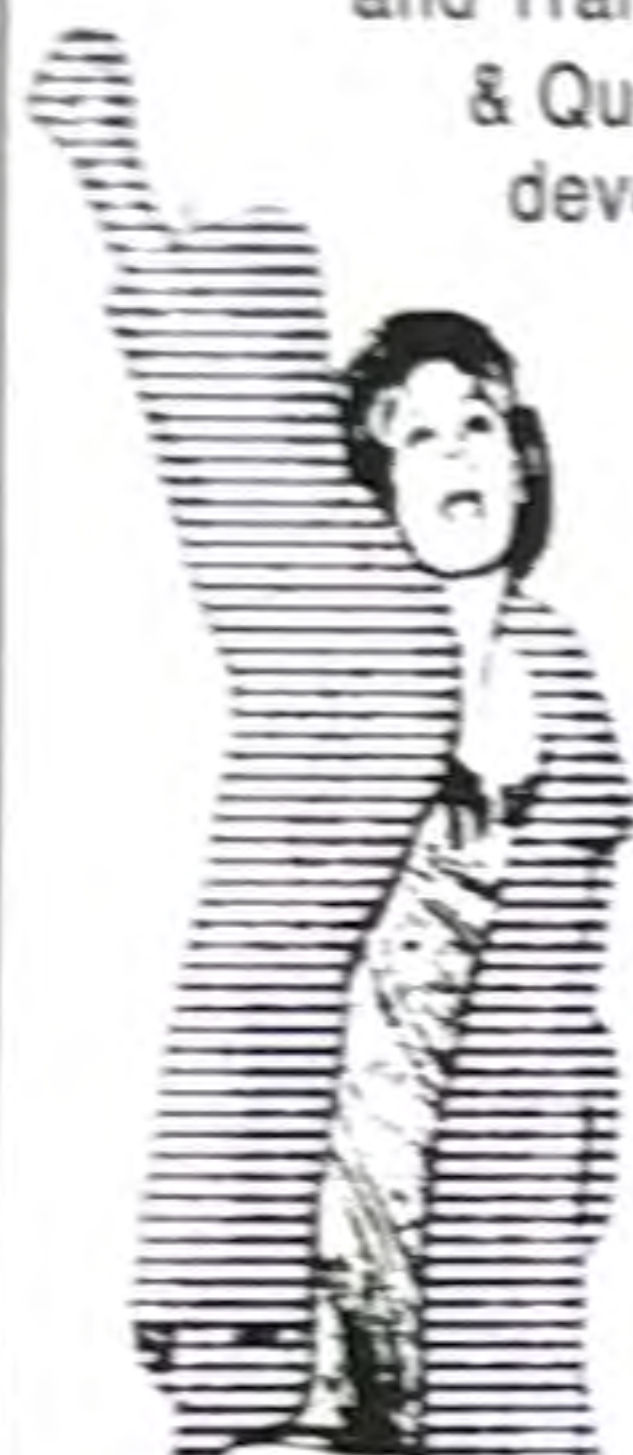
Queer: An umbrella term used to refer to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, gender non-conforming, asexual, and other non-cis, heteronormative identities. Once used as a slur, the term has been reclaimed by many LGBTQIA+ people as a more inclusive and radical label.

Check out our sources here



1960's Compton Cafeteria Riots

In San Francisco in 1966, the Tenderloin District was a heavily policed, red-light district largely made up of Queer and Trans people. Landlords exploited the poor and police harassed Queer and Trans people who frequented the area. In response, homeless & Queer youth created *Vanguard*, a local organization meant to develop community support and boost education about issues affecting youth of the Tenderloin District.



Gene Compton's Cafeteria was an all-night diner that was once a spot for locals, but leading up to the riots, had been applying high 'service charges' to Queer and Trans patrons and hired security guards to harass them. One night, a cop assaulted a Trans Woman leading her to throwing coffee in his face. This resulted in a riot at the Cafeteria, and one of the first examples of Queer Militant Resistance led by local communities. The aftermath led to an influx of community support and organizing groups, like *Vanguard*, to grow their impact and continue fighting for Queer and Trans Rights.

The Compton Cafeteria Riot shows the power and collective support that can come out of militant resistance against oppressive forces, like the police. Oppressed people are not victims that allow themselves to be exploited but are a powerful collective capable of fighting back.

Lastly, we cannot forget about the movement forged by the actions at the Stonewall Riots.



1960's ★ New People's Army ★

New People's Army (NPA), the militant wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), is an armed communist organization founded in 1968 by Jose Maria Sison.



BAGONG HUKBONG BAYAN

In the 1990's, CPP-NPA declared all Queer relationships to have the same rights and support as heterosexual relationships. These rights extended medical attention and mutual aid to women, Queers, and other oppressed peoples. The group has also engaged in study on Trans liberation as Queer and Trans fighters make up a significant aspect of the organization.



CPP-NPA aims to form a working-class led state, free of US and western imperialism.

CPP-NPA is a prime example of Queer and Trans communist militancy.

1970's **Gay Liberation Front (GLF)**

Founded just 30 days after the Stonewall Riots, the Gay Liberation Front represented a group of Queer activists dedicated to direct action and cultivating the political consciousness of Queer and Trans folks. As one of the blueprints for future Queer militant organizing, GLF's focus included creating community support systems, developing 'in your face' actions that centered around Queer and Trans visibility, and standing in solidarity with other resistance movements like the Black Panther Party. One of their most notable actions was the First Gay Pride March in New York City on June 28, 1970 and the opening of the first Gay Community Center which held GLF meetings and dances.



The Gay Liberation Front is an example of the power of collective organizing and Queer and Trans struggles incorporating class, race, disability, gender, incarceration and immigration status into their political line.

STAR:

Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries

Born out of the Stonewall Riots, STAR was the brainchild of Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, one of the leading organizers in the Queer and Trans Liberation movements of the 70's. STAR set out to develop housing, along with mentorship and family, to LGBT 'street queens' and became one of the first black and brown women-led, LGBT youth shelters in the United States. STAR served as an example of how important it is for community members to develop resources for each other, and engage in revolutionary organizing, as the police, companies, government entities, and non-profit corporations continue to repress LGBT people's liberation.



1980's **ACT UP**

HIV/AIDs ravaged the Queer community in the 1980s and 90s with little to zero support from the US government, namely the Reagan administration.

SILENCE=DEATH

Fear and stigma around gay sexual relationships led to untimely deaths due to a refusal to support the healthcare and needs of those who were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

On **March 12, 1987**, the AIDS Coalition — to announce their new militant efforts — shortened their name to ACT UP. It focused on "fighting corporate greed, lack of solidarity, and various forms of stigma and discrimination at home and abroad [related to HIV/AIDS]". Active still to this day, the group also acts as an important example of solidarity between the Queer and Disabled communities, particularly those disabled from AIDS, and still continues to work on bridging this gap.



One of ACT UP's most memorable actions was on the "Day of Desperation," where they overtook Grand Central with a banner that said "MONEY FOR AIDS NOT FOR WAR" after President Bush spent a billion dollars on the Gulf War while insisting there was no funding available to support AIDS programs and treatments. ACT UP is significant because, although their focus was not armed struggle, they engaged in militant protest and defense of their communities through mutual aid in the forms of food, healthcare, and donations.

ACT UP remains an important symbol for Queer resistance in the present. Their current initiatives include working to fight for Palestinian liberation and to hold neo-liberal LGBTQIA+ nonprofits accountable for their pinkwashing.

1990s The Role of Lesbians

Lesbians acted as an important anchor for the Queer and Trans communities in the 1990s as HIV/AIDS continued to cause mass-disabling and early-death.

Lesbian Avengers

Lesbian Avengers was a collective founded in New York City in 1992 with a **focus on direct action on lesbian related issues**. The collective represents an important militant group within the lesbian community and were the creators of the still ongoing "Dyke March," the theme for 2024 is "Dyke's Against Genocide" to reflect resistance of the multiple ongoing genocides aboard funded by U.S. tax dollars. The group initially included 6 members but has now expanded to 50 chapters worldwide in cities such as San Francisco and Denver.

Some of their most notable works are creating the "Rainbow Curriculum" in 1992 to teach elementary students about Queer and Trans issues. In a more militant act, the group engaged in fire eating and breathing to honor a lesbian and gay man, Hattie Mae Cohens and Brian Mock, who were burned to death. As they ate fire, they chanted: "The fire will not consume us. We take it and make it our own".

To honor the role lesbians played in the 1980s and 90s, supporting mainly gay men and generally those suffering in the AIDS crisis, **this was the time in which the 'L' started to come first in LGBTQIA+**. The shift in the order from the previously common GLBT signaled solidarity between all identities in the Queer and Trans communities, and a dedication to the fight against patriarchy.

The Pink Panthers

The Pink Panthers is another good example of a militant group dedicated to self-defense. They were based in Manhattan, NY, in the 1990s, and focused their lens on self-defense in the Queer community. Inspired by the Black Panther Party, they would patrol areas, where Queer folks were often assaulted or harassed, to provide self-defense.

Dyke March, June 2022



2000 - Present

Arm the Girls

Arm the Girls is located in the Bay area and is a mutual aid organization that centers itself on the defense and safety of black & brown Queer & Trans femmes. They do so by providing emergency funding support, health and wellness resources, self-defense classes, and offering free self-defense kits inside designer handbags.

Arm the Girls began during the Black Liberation movement of 2020, highlighting the epidemic of violence against black trans femmes.



CUBA'S FAMILY CODE



The passing of Cuba's family code marked the worlds most inclusionary family code in the world. Passed in September 2022, 67% of Cubans voted for equal marriage rights and adoption rights regardless of sexual orientation as well as the validation of the role of the mother and grandparents in the household among many other victories. This family code is not only important for protecting the rights of vulnerable communities, but it was also written by Queer and Trans activists around the country, highlighting how Queer liberation plays a key role in continuing the revolution that Cuba began in the 1950s.

We stand in solidarity with all Queer and Trans resistance groups who paved the way for our existence today.

The history of resistance is rooted in militancy, a necessary force against oppression. The common thread that binds us together is our commitment to struggle, and our unwavering determination to combat oppression and fight for liberation.

Our fight for Queer and Trans liberation knows no borders as it is an international movement. In the United States, Democratic Republic of Congo, Algeria, and Palestine, we rise as beacons of international solidarity, coming together to fight for a world where dignity and liberation prevail.

**In the words of Leila Khaled:
"No liberation is achieved
without resistance."**