

Queer Resistance to Carceral Solutions

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Two major social justice campaigns of LGBT organizations have included the decriminalization of sodomy and/or crossdressing laws and the institution of hate crimes that acknowledge the increased threat of violence that people of marginalized sexualities and genders face. These two campaigns found success in the United States in the first decade of the 2000s, with the federal overturn of sodomy legislation occurring in 2003 and the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Act of 2009. Mainstream LGBT organizations hailed both as equally important achievements, recognizing that a status within “hate crimes” symbolizes a nation’s priorities to protect its vulnerable populations. However, while one campaign aims to decrease surveillance and incarceration of a population, the other achieves the opposite. Rather than being a specific form of crime, a hate crime designation is solely intended to enact stricter retribution (or *payback*) on a perpetrator.

Queer justice, however, need neither include nor support this paradigm. Although there is a particular desire, a guttural cry for retribution when one of our siblings are hurt, queer people of color in particular know that increased police or ICE surveillance damages our communities more than it can ever help. Retribution does not support, heal, or positively change communities. Therefore, there are organizations and activists who openly oppose the use of police and prisons in responding to maltreatment. We acknowledge that carceral responses to violence only perpetuate violence.

Opposition to hate crimes legislation does not mean that we do not acknowledge the heightened threat of harm in our lives or to our queer bodies, it means that we duly acknowledge the *unparalleled* harm of the justice system to our black/brown and queer bodies, minds and hearts. This talk will focus on this intersection of racial justice, abolitionist ideology and queer organizing. I will highlight such intersectional praxis developing in cultural centers such as New York City and the ways in which organizing can enable communities to envision a world without prisons.