

Pride Denied: Homonationalism & the Future of Queer Politics

[Transcript]

INTRODUCTION

Text on screen: In June 2014, WorldPride came to North America for the first time since its inception in 2000. This film follows local artist and activist responses to WorldPride in Toronto, as well as to the proliferation of LGBT pride events internationally.

[Chanting]

Announcer: Happy WorldPride everyone. TD is a proud sponsor of WorldPride. We're a platinum sponsor and the official bank of WorldPride. We've been celebrating pride for 10 years as a sponsor. It's also our 10-year anniversary of our pride network at TD. And we're now proud to support over 42 pride festivals in Canada and the U.S. Happy pride everyone.

Speaker: I can talk openly about being a married woman to a woman with a baby because I live in Canada.

Protester: I'm here because lots of you here are like me, and we all need things that are not gay marriage. And we are all fighting for things that are not gay marriage.

Speaker: We are aware of how blessed we are, that Jane and I just travelled for 42 days around this province and we have been elected, and not once, not once, did anyone challenge us because we are lesbians. Not once.

Protester: Friday night I was walking on Church Street, and I was harassed by 4 guys. I couldn't believe it. It was happening. Take my word. There was a security guard around there, and he did not do anything, and I confronted him. Let's get together and support each other guys. Please.

[Chanting - Our pride is political!]

[Title Screen – Pride Denied: Homonationalism & the Future of Queer Politics]

Kim Katrin Milan: This past pride, in Toronto, it was WorldPride. And I think, for me, I had a lot of questions about what it meant that all of these people were intersecting our city.

Anna Rekhviashvili: Last evening, we were sitting in this park by Church Street, and we met this young gay man who was all like, this is my first pride, this is where I'm going to go. It felt like, how exciting experience it was for somebody, so this is the value, like, this is something, you know.

Sue Doster: During the next 10 days, 2 million people will participate in these events. These events that reflect and celebrate the diversity of all our communities.

Brian De Matos: The night marches, the march that happens the first day of pride week...
[Chanting – We’re here, we’re queer!]

De Matos: A group of us got together this year to organize it, and we really want to make it community focused.

Protester: My pride is political because, despite the fact that I go to one of the most trans friendly clinics in the city, I still have to lie and mislead to my doctor to get proper health care.

De Matos: This is about making space for those who historically their issues have been set aside because they’re not well funded and they’re not prioritized.

Protester: My pride is political because there are cops marching in the main parade, and yet we have TAVIS. We have programs like TAVIS, which are trying to clean up the east end with cops harassing and ticketing tons of people.

De Matos: It’s not going to be a pride event. It’s not going to be corporate sponsored. It’s going to be by the community for the community.

Protester: This is all bullshit. The system is all bullshit. We need a revolution. We do need a revolution.

De Matos: Organizing events like this gives people a chance to be part of something. It’s hard to be feel like you’re part of something when you’re in a parade of one million, of the majority of people are not actually from Toronto, or are actually queer themselves. They’re there to enjoy this big fabulous parade without having any historical reference why we’re having this parade.

STONEWALL

Christina Hanhardt: What we now understand to be a pride march initially began as a street protest. Unlike today, during the late 1960s lesbians, gay men and transgendered peoples’ lives were highly regulated by the state in very sort of every day ways that now many people take for granted. It was still illegal to sell alcohol to known homosexuals. It was also against the law for people to wear articles of clothing that did not conform to their given gender.

Nicki Ward: My understanding of the riots at Stonewall is that they were started by outliers. That means trans people. We didn’t use the term in those days, but genderqueer, freaks or whatever, people of color, fighting back and saying, “No, enough is enough.”

Protester: In 1969, there was a bar called Stonewall...

Milan: This year was Stonewall's 45th anniversary, and we wanted to find a way of really commemorating that.

Gein Wong: Stonewall is such a fundamental moment in the queer rights movement here in North America. One of the main goals of the performance was not only to get historical facts right, or to inform people of a historical event, but to get folks an opportunity to experience Stonewall as best we can. Make it a memory that's not only something that happened to people in the past but is part of us, that's within our bones.

[Chanting and singing]

Milan: Stonewall as an experience was different for so many different people depending on what their social location was. We wanted it to be something that was multilayered, that recognized that there were a diversity of different things happening, and all of them were true, all simultaneously.

Wong: With Stonewall, what we've highlighted is the fact that the people who started the riots, the trans folks, were the people who were not advocated for and gained the least actually from all of the queer rights movements. What I've noticed is that we have a core community that is aware of Stonewall, but the farther you get away from that, the less people know about that event. And I found often in talking about it, when I said Stonewall, people didn't really know what that was referring to exactly, so this was a wonderful opportunity to revisit that history.

Hanhardt: The Stonewall raid by the police happened in the early morning hours of June 28, 1969 and was part of a broader sort of crackdown on unwanted forms of social disorder. Prior to the 1960s, lesbians, gay men, trans people, were most associated with a range of other social outsiders. Be it those people who were itinerant due to poverty, people who exchanged sex for money, with drug users, and a range of other people who made their lives in the streets. That night, in the early morning hours of June 28, 1969, the police raided Stonewall and started to arrest those there for what often was actually understood to be disorderly conduct more generally. It led to not just people fighting back at the moment and at the scene of the raid but for a mobilization of local people in the neighborhood, LGTB people from around the region, and other allied activists and community members coming out for three days of sustained protest. In the aftermath of Stonewall, activists linked together with a wide range of people on the left but also those who fought back in a daily way the indignities and violence they had experienced on the street to sort of form what was very briefly lived an exciting coalition against state power, but also trying to theorize the relationship between state power and other forms of social regulation, be that the strictures of dominant gender roles, be that forms of racial and economic segregation in the city.

Natalie Kouri-Towe: Pride parades have their origins and histories in political march and demonstration. The first pride parades came out of marches and demonstrations against the Stonewall riots. In Toronto, the pride parade has like a really deep history to like the 1981 bath house raids.

Rio Rodriguez: Operation Soap was the largest mass arrest in Canadian history. And we often forget that sort of history of what was riots against the police and police brutality to now be turned into this like corporate masquerade of forgetting.

Tim McCaskell: The bath raids happened in February '81, which produced this huge community mobilization, all sorts of very intense demonstrations involving the police and standoffs and arrests and injuries and riots and all sorts of fun and games.

[Chanting]

Prabha Kosla: I was at the rallies on the bath raids. I was in my early 20s, and they were amazing. They were amazing, those mid-night demos. It was freezing. It was February. There were thousands of queers out in the street.

[Chanting]

McCaskell: A number of people at Gay Liberation Against the Right (GLARE) and Lesbians Against the Right (LAR), which is kind of an associated organization, decided that they wanted to produce something that would be a little more friendly to people who were not up to street fighting in the middle of the night. So it happened in the daylight but something that would still allow the community to talk about its issues but also celebrate the fact that it had survived this latest assault. And that pride in 1981 became the very first of the prides that continue today uninterrupted.

WORLD PRIDE IS NOT POLITICAL

Kouri-Towe: In Toronto, WorldPride was like pride times like hundred or something like that. We replaced our regular pride events and activities with a WorldPride version of it, which is kind of like a bolstered up, higher tourism, higher budgeted, more presenters, more performers, more programming version of Toronto pride. So even though pride has been institutionalized over the last, you know, 20 to 30 years, those kind of political origins of like taking to the streets and taking space, I think, is like very powerful and sometimes important. The visibility of queer bodies in the streets of the city, where the streets are often a place where people experience violence at the hands of police, I think that there's value in that public celebration.

But WorldPride is not pride. WorldPride doesn't come out of political demonstration or political march. There is no political history of WorldPride. WorldPride was introduced in 2000 as part of a new liberal project. It's about access to homogenous idea of sexuality and primarily access to a global marketing and global tourism. It's about gay tourists being able to travel and access cultural events and nightlife that they can consume and feel comfortable accessing. WorldPride assumes a kind of universal global idea of what sexuality is. And the history of WorldPride demonstrates that there is a complete disconnect between the political origins of pride and the

WorldPride festivities. WorldPride is just a world festival that aims to bring international tourism to different cities.

Hanhardt: The story of the ways in which the LGBT movement has become so increasing conservative and increasing normative since the 1960s, there's two ways in which I do like to complicate that. And one of them is to draw attention to the fact that, although more conservative efforts were happening, there were radical activists also refusing those terms all along.

McCaskell: Pride, I think, actually began to require more corporate funding towards the late '80s and into the '90s.

The first kind of blowout or criticism in the community happened, was it in either 91 or 92, about how much money that they were getting and what that meant for the parade and whether it was losing its politics and all of those kinds of questions.

Pride Toronto Board of Directors: 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Happy WorldPride!

Kosla: I have a concern like many activists, I think in Toronto, around the corporatization of pride. Partly because there was a time when it was ours, and it was an empowering thing for so many of us to get together. I feel like quite detached from pride generally. Even the dyke march, you know, I feel that it's not mine. It's being orchestrated somewhere else.

Ward: A lot people have told me, trans and non-trans alike, that the trans march is the only event that they will go to for the whole weekend because it's the only one that actually carries and embodies the spirit of what pride should be and was originally.

Kosla: I think that there is a serious problem in us as a community losing control. For example, then it becomes owned by TD Bank or Trojan.

De Matos: Pride Toronto has made a deal with Trojan condoms to be the sole condoms being distributed at Pride, meaning that if you're from another organization which has a mandate of getting safer sex tools to folks and teaching safer sex to communities, you are not allowed to distribute condoms unless it's Trojan based.

Kosla: Who decides, and how is it decided, that for the entire duration of the parade and wherever it goes, the only condom or the only whatever that is distributed is from that one corporation? Because, you know, that is public space. A parade is not private space.

De Matos: It's ridiculous that Pride Toronto would even agree to this.

Kosla: Do I want someone to have safe sex and be safe using whatever condom? Or I'm going to say, okay well, there's no Trojan condom so you have to have unsafe sex.

McCaskell: People who are negotiating these deals need to have a much more firm stance about what's acceptable and what's not acceptable in terms of what the community needs.

Ward: You don't need corporate support to get a bunch of people together to walk down the street. It's just not necessary. I resent the fact that the word "pride" has become branded because the corporations involved in squeezing the maximum value out of this brand have tainted it. The notion of pride to me is very, very important. Someone who formerly lived in shame, I think it's an important value. And the fact that it's now become a registered trademark is appalling to me.

[Commercial montage]

- Everyone works hard for a reason. Working together, we can help you prepare financially for when 2 becomes 3. Wells Fargo.

- Family is what you make it out to be.

- A life feels so much more meaningful as parents than it felt before. It's almost overwhelming, that kind of love.

- Sure, we still argue sometimes. We're just like any couple really.

- Become the world's most powerful fan.

- Where's Ben and Dave?

- Taco Bell anyone?

- Done.

- With your book?

- Nope. I just bought a Kindle Paperwhite. We should celebrate.

- My husband's bringing me a drink right now.

- So is mine.

- Now all our mistakes are behind us.

- Like your cargo shorts?

- Like your ex?

- What do you think of Burger King introducing the Proud Whopper.

- What?

PINKWASHING

McCaskell: This year, QuAIA decided to distribute condom packs because pride is always a site for doing safer sex information. And we're going to be distributing those, even though they're

not Trojan condoms, around the parade, at our events, and at a number of other events since I don't think there's such a thing as an illegal condom at pride. In it, it looks at why Israel is an apartheid state and what pinkwashing is, and the final lines are "Protect yourself from STIs. Use condoms. Protect yourself from pinkwashing. Keep informed."

Dean Spade: Pinkwashing is a term that mostly has been used to talk about an explicit campaign by the government of Israel to portray itself as an anti-homophobic country, an inclusive place that recognizes the civil rights of LGBT people by including them in the military, and through certain other elements, and by sort of marketing itself as like a gay tourism destination. Pinkwashing itself, or that kind of strategy on the part of Israel, is actually part of an offshoot of this broader project called Brand Israel that Israel launched to try and change its public image over a decade ago that is focused on making Israel seem like it's this modern, technologically innovative, green, diverse society and saying that it's the only one like it in its region so it's sort of got this anti-Arab, racist, Islamophobic thing wrapped around it. And one piece of that is this "hey, we're also gay-friendly so come for a tourism opportunity here."

McCaskell: Cabinet officials and several important ministries gathered together advertising executives, and it would determine that the problem was that people were associating Israel with conflict and war and bombings and all of this kind of stuff. And so what they needed to do was to shift the association. And it's a kind of modern advertising technique that you don't actually talk about your product so much anymore as you try to associate your product with something that people like.

Ido Aharoni: So our job, in the case of Israel's country positioning, is to make sure that we open other channels of communications through which Israel can be communicated to you that are relevant to you. So it can be music and the arts, it can be fashion, it can be energy and the environment, and it can be international aid programs and great sight-seeing, and great advancements in the field of technology and high tech, and you see here the PillCam and so on, and architecture, and the conflict too. The conflict is even at the very center of this mosaic of pictures, but the conflict cannot be the only thing defining Israel to the world.

McCaskell: Israel decided that what it needed to do was to concentrate on putting money into interventions in arts festivals and sending musicians and talking about science and all of those kinds of things. Part of that campaign, what they clicked onto, which was noted by an analyst called Jasbir Puar, was that they realized that gay rights and gay communities were seen as a symbol of the cutting edge of modernity. So that began the pinkwashing campaign.

Jasbir Puar: Pinkwashing as a term and as a practice has been attached to the state of Israel as a way that LGBTQ populations get mobilized into an affirmative vision of the state and a way of obscuring the human rights abuses and the ongoing status of settler colonialism that Israel inhabits.

Kouri-Towe: Pinkwashing is a practice that comes out of the context and conditions of homo nationalism. And basically pinkwashing is the use of gay rights as a way to detract attention, to distract and to obscure the nation states violation of human rights or other kinds of rights.

Puar: Pinkwashing is a kind of organic manifestation of gay and lesbian tourism. So as long as we – gays and lesbians – want to go somewhere where “we” want to feel “safe,” there will be pinkwashing.

The fantasy that Israel offers mobility to all is just so rife in the pinkwashing literature and in the pinkwashing documentation. There’s an ad campaign called Size Doesn’t Matter, which has pinkwashing advertising that says “Israel: Where Love Has No Boundaries.” It’s actually kind of shameless and deeply offensive and upsetting. The way that the transcendence of boundaries is constantly proffered and the idea of Israel and how it promotes itself.

Kouri-Towe: What gets distorted and presented is that Israel is a safe haven for gays, and Palestine is a dangerous and threatening place. And the reality is that there is no – I mean, one of the lines we used last year was, there’s no pink door in the apartheid wall, there’s no special get out of apartheid conditions, no get out of Gaza for free card because you’re gay.

Puar: In a context where by 80% of families right now in Gaza have no way to support themselves there’s a total resource deprivation, there’s no rebuilding happening because all of the materials are being held up by Israel or the UN for fear of those materials becoming new tunnels, and it’s just – the devastation is endless. So to point to not being able to be gay in Gaza is a complete misunderstanding of the biopolitical stakes of just life and death that are going on right now.

Kouri-Towe: The practice of pinkwashing are not exclusive to the Israeli state. There’s pinkwashing like in many other contexts and places. At the event that we held a few years ago, we had a panel where we had Sami King, who is a professor at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario talk about breast cancer campaigns and the initial way that pinkwashing was used, which is the way that breast cancer campaigns use the color pink, and corporations take on pink, as a way to support breast cancer while they’re also making products that are carcinogenic, that are causing cancer, and so she connected the pink ribbon campaigns to American foreign policy in the Middle East.

Announcer: That’s why Baker Hughes is doing our bit for the cure. Baker Hughes, supporting Susan G. Komen to end breast cancer forever.

Kouri-Towe: We have like a really great example of pinkwashing that happened with the tar sands.

Announcer: If you wouldn’t shop at a store that discriminates like this, then why would you buy your oil from countries that do? Where we get our oil matters. Visit OPECHatesGays.com.

Kouri-Towe: Jesse Grass wrote an article for the Dominion a couple of years ago that looked at the ways in which the marketing of the tar sands use all of these kinds of neo-liberal and homonational discourses of rights. And so a series of ads supporting the tar sands said things like, they had pictures juxtaposed to each other, so one of them was the picture of the Iranian teens being hung and then a picture of like gay pride something. And I'm pretty sure there's no gay pride in the tar sands, and I'm pretty sure we also don't in Canada get oil from Iran. Like, I'm pretty sure that these two things are not the case. But that's exactly how orientalism works. It obscures, it homogenizes, it produces like a fictional caricature of the Middle East, and it celebrates the west as, you know, equally homogenous in this way. So in the case of the Israeli state, pinkwashing occurs when the Israeli state and its supporters showcase and highlight gay rights and like celebrating the great gay nightlife and culture of Tel Aviv in particular as a cosmopolitan city, as a way to detract attention away from Palestinian human rights in particular.

McCaskell: And Israeli began to put money into getting floats in Pride in different parts of the world to try to in gay communities to associate Israeli with gay rights, and at the same time, conversely, Palestinians and Arabs in general as homophobic and vicious and misogynist and all that kind of stuff.

Kouri-Towe: The kind of context around pinkwashing aims to, on one hand, celebrate and focus gay lifestyle and gay rights through consumerism like in an easily digestible and recognizable gay subject that is affiliated and aligned with western subjectivity and in opposition to Palestinian society as somehow inherently homophobic.

Spade: Part of why pinkwashing is so important for us to think about is because we're living in a moment in which major institutions and governments are using the narratives of our freedom struggles and our, you know, different social movements to repackage themselves and to actually expand their terrifying work. So we all need to become more able to read propaganda and to, kind of, understand how that works. And so having people learn about like Brand Israel and the way pinkwashing works as a way of having people think about how propaganda works generally and how this kind of rebranding is working and how things like racism and colonialism operate today. They operate by telling you that they are including your community and that their sights of recognition and inclusion rather than operating through often the models people think of like explicit segregation in a space is a way that people think of. That's what racism looks like. Actually racism can look like these narratives of like multiculturalism and queer inclusion.

CENSORSHIP

[Chanting – Free Palestine!]

McCaskell: Israel has various strategies to attempt to justify or to maintain its position. One strategy is pinkwashing, but this other strategy of censorship is perhaps more pernicious.

Kouri-Towe: In 2009, QuAIA marched for the first time in its own contingent, and we had hundreds of supporters and people joining us to march in the parade. After the 2009 parade, lobbyists began to organize and work to get QuAIA banned from the pride parade.

McCaskell: This guy called Martin Gladstone followed us the entire way with a video camera. So first was this kind of political attack that tried to keep us out of the parade.

Gladstone: Queers Against Israeli Apartheid is a group that most people accept has become a hate group.

Anchor: Really?

Gladstone: Yeah. And I don't use the term lightly. You don't call someone a hate group lightly like that.

McCaskell: That winter, Gladstone edited this video, about kind of Nazis marching in the pride parade.

Woman in video: We've got people marching down the street wearing swastikas comparing Israel to Nazi Germany.

Kouri-Towe: He took obscure footage, an imagery of somebody wearing an anti-fascist t-shirt that had a kinda swastika cutout from it. Like a swastika with a cutout, like an ax out. Which is supposed to mean like, "No, no Nazi, no fascism." And found an angle and distorted the image so that it made it look like there was no cross out. It was just a swastika. And then used this as a pretense, making it seem like we were this hate group that was only out to seek evil.

McCaskell: Gladstone focused on this, and so the next thing we knew, it was being reported in the National Post that there were hordes of people wearing swastikas marching in the pride parade.

Kouri-Towe: By May, the Board of Directors had clearly been influenced by a significant amount of lobbying. And the Executive Director, who was Trace Sandalins at the time, and the Board of Directors announced in May that the words "Israeli Apartheid" would be banned from the parade. The public response to the censorship of the words "Israeli Apartheid" was quite extensive. There was huge public outcry about the censorship of political speech. Even people who didn't agree with QuAIA's message were shocked and opposed to the censorship. And a Coalition was formed called The Pride Coalition for Free Speech that organized in coalition with QuAIA and other groups to try and rescind the ban on Israeli Apartheid.

McCaskell: The Pride Coalition for Free Speech took off, and they held demonstrations at the pride offices and organized a press conference where people who had received awards from pride, Grand Marshals and Honored Dykes and this and that and the other for the past 20 years,

actually returned their awards. And the two Grand Marshals that year Alan Leek and Jane Farrow, both withdrew from being Grand Marshals in protest.

Jane Farrow: Limiting political speech does not make it safe for anyone. And we really encourage the Pride Committee of Toronto to sit down with the community who are now speaking in very big and very powerful voices, that this is not the way they want to continue with pride festivities.

Kouri-Towe: And those efforts actually worked. And a week before the parade in 2010, the ban was rescinded, and QuAIA was able to march under our name and messaging. The different thing that QuAIA is organizing around – and that, yes, we are organizing in solidarity with Queer Palestinians – but our primary object is not an identity category. So it's not that QuAIA is calling for the liberation of the Queer Palestinian subject as the basis of our solidarity, but rather that we're calling for a transformation of the Israeli State, its practices. That we're calling for a form of solidarity that is much wider. That's a solidarity with the Palestine liberation struggle. This is kind of what Jasbir Puar is talking about when she talks about Homonationalism. This appeal to inclusion in the nation state, combined with the state's mobilization of sexual rights discourses and the freedom of the "Gay Subject," are the new terms around which nationalism have been articulated at least in the last ten to fifteen years.

THE FICTION OF LIBERATION

Puar: For me, the easiest way to think about Homonationalism is that it is an analytic that historicizes, or helps us historicize, how is it that homosexuals become part of this equation, wherein which how you treat your homosexuals is an arbiter of whether or not you are capable of national sovereignty.

Spade: Hillary Clinton made this famous speech a few years ago, when she was Secretary of State, where she declared that "gay rights were human rights."

Hillary Clinton: This morning, back in Washington, President Obama put into place the first U.S. Government strategy dedicated to combating human rights abuses against LGBT persons abroad.

Spade: In the United States today, one of the biggest justifications for a military imperialism is like a false humanitarian justification. So it's like, what I felt she was announcing was like "the new reason we're going to bomb and intervene and take over other people's land and resources and lives is because they're homophobic."

Clinton: The President has directed all U.S. government agencies engaged overseas to combat the criminalization of LGBT status and conduct, to enhance efforts to protect vulnerable LGBT refugees and asylum seekers, to ensure that our foreign assistance promotes the protection of LGBT rights, to enlist international organizations in the fight against discrimination, and to respond swiftly to abuses against LGBT persons.

Puar: There is a field of reception within which whether you are a gay friendly location or a not gay friendly location matters.

Kouri-Towe: One of the things is that Homonationalism produces a fiction, and that fiction is that domestically within western nation states that liberation has been achieved.

Shelly Craig: The pride movement is a critical part of human rights work. We can now celebrate our sexual and gender minority identities when we once could not without the threat of violence and harassment. So we must remember that in many places around the world we still can't, so we have a lot of friends that we need to continue to fight for. Thank you.

Rekhviashvili: What I see a lot is how the success of gay movements in different countries is measured by having a pride or not having a pride. And how like having this pride is an essential part of the work you do always.

Gary Van Horn: But even as we celebrate great strides, we are reminded that there is still a lot of work to do. In 81 countries – 81 countries – being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender is a crime. And in 10 of those you can be punished by death. For some of you here, this will be your first time that you will be able to express who you are out loud and among friends.

Crowd member: And proud!

Van Horn: And proud!

Rekhviashvili: What really bothers me is this like unproblematic acceptance of this idea that there are these countries that are homophobic, and that homophobia is perfectly natural to those countries.

Craig Scott: What people don't really realize is that we still have on the books in Canada, in the Criminal Code, a provision that criminalizes anal intercourse. Section 159. We've actually been living with a hypocrisy for quite some time because we do criticize the criminalization of homosexual activity around the world and never once mentioned that it wasn't so long ago that we had this awful provision actively being enforced, and it's still the case that is sitting in the statute and has never been removed.

Kosla: A lot of people here do not have all the great rights. Just because we have legal rights as gay and lesbians – all have same sex marriage, all the right to marry – does not mean I can get a job in my profession. It doesn't mean that I'm getting equal pay for work of equal value. It does not mean that I have to work for \$10.25 or \$11 bucks an hour even though I cannot live on it or raise my family on it. So there are all those things and those are not seen. So as gays and lesbians, the other laws of Canada that are unequal also impact on how we can live here. And I felt that that whole thing was getting totally submerged around WorldPride, and it was all about how Canada is so great and we have a country of such equality.

THE POLICE

Spade: When laws change often times, like things on the ground don't really change. Legal reforms basically often just cement existing status quo conditions by putting like a new veneer of fairness on them that says, "That's illegal now so it must not be happening" and allow the worst conditions of white supremacy and settler colonialism to flourish.

[Chanting juxtaposed with cheers and applause]

Protester: So if the fucking over of Blockorama, the banning of QuAIA, bowing down to corporate sponsors was not enough to tell you that Pride Toronto has completely sold out, then I hope this event today, honoring the thugs who just beat the hell out of us this weekend, must surely prove that Pride Toronto has become a disgrace.

[Chanting – We want change!]

Spade: I think it has really been interesting to watch this moment of the Black Lives Matter movement and see how there is a broad-based understanding of policing as inherently racist and inherently anti-black. It's a really beautiful moment because it's juxtaposed against the kind of white gay rights establishment that has tried to like embrace the police, has tried to seek like LGBT police liaisons, and training for the cops about LGBT people. And all these ideas that you could make the police like protect gay people instead of targeting them, which is a fundamentally racist idea since the police are going to continue targeting black people and keep targeting lots of people of color.

Puar: There is nothing necessarily distinct about something like WorldPride in terms of the way it's handled as an event. It actually follows the pattern of, what can we get out of this in terms of creating the sanitized space that we want both before, during, and then after – remaining after – this event.

Monica Forrester: Well, the police are definitely around. They're everywhere. They're in packs of four, five or six on their bikes going through laneways and areas where they're looking for crime. Being very visible within the areas that sex workers work or homeless people hang. They are really there making sure people know that they're there and putting people in a very heightened fear of, you know, police checks.

Akia Maroon: I currently sit on the Board of NEVP, which is the Network for the Elimination of Police Violence. And we are strongly against TAVIS, which is this move to just before pride, actually the day that WorldPride was launched in Toronto, you know, Toronto police officers will be more out on the streets ticketing, carding.

Zoe Dodd: TAVIS, the Toronto Anti Violence Intervention Strategy starts their sweep from June 16th until September 8th. And we know that these sweeps, with increase of officers, what they really do is target people who are living in poverty, who are living on the streets.

De Matos: TAVIS is a police pilot project. Their goal is to “clean up the streets,” and I put that in quotes, just for WorldPride so Toronto can look good when it gets up to the world stage.

Maroon: It’s very, very troubling that with WorldPride coming and with the Pan-Am Games coming that, you know, things like TAVIS are even there, and we don't have more and more people fighting against it.

De Matos: The sweeping the streets have caused many people who are vulnerable to be pushed aside all for WorldPride.

Forrester: The police can’t be trusted. As much as they’ve said, “Oh, you know, we really want to help,” but are they? You know what I mean? I think sometimes I think it’s just a public relations stunt or a bridge that they are being inclusive to all members of the LGBTQ communities.

Butterfly: At Jane & Finch, we have been resisting TAVIS for more than 8 years. TAVIS comes in doing community gardens, doing bike races, having BBQs during the day. But at night, bear witness.

Maroon: We have TAVIS come in to say, “Hey, you can't be on the streets or the alleys or I'm going to ticket you, card you, get your ID, book you into our system,” which there's no telling how long you will be in the system for.

Dodd: Tickets are a way to harass people. Tickets are a way to target and bully people out of their communities. This is one person's tickets. This is \$1,100 worth of fines. This is what Toronto police do.

De Matos: What is not being addressed is what is happening to these folks who are marginalized already, who are being arrested, they are being harassed, and they are being put in more vulnerable situations.

Maroon: Whenever you find more police action in any state or any city anywhere, the people who are mostly affected are those that are underemployed, underhoused, people who are visible minorities, people who are on the streets for different reasons.

Forrester: There is a lot of violence that goes on with the police around ID checks. People that might have existing criminal records, are they going to be pulled in and held? People that may have some form of troubles with the law, are they going to be more targeted? So because of WorldPride, they are just doing their sweep to kinda clean up the area and incarcerating people that really shouldn’t be incarcerated.

De Matos: The cops don't want to feel like they're bullying LGBT people, but they are. But just not the rich ones that are predominantly of high class, male privileged, and also white.

Chanelle Gallant: I had decided that I wasn't going to be a part of WorldPride this year, and then we received this honor of being the year's Honored Femmes to be kicking off the Dyke March. And, you know, part of it was that I didn't want to be ungrateful, but at the same time I especially felt uncomfortable with the fact that WorldPride was being used as an excuse and a pretext for increased policing the Downtown Eastside.

Dodd: And while we think about WorldPride, we want people to remember that LGBT people also live in this community, also live on the streets, also are affected by homelessness and poverty.

Gallant: The "safety" of our community is actually being used as an excuse to attack other members of our community.

Milan: Even the people who are displaced for us to host the Dyke March, who call the park their home on a daily basis, who police have had to pick up in order for us to celebrate and be like resistant and radical and all of these sorts of things. But like my resistance cannot come at the expense of someone's home in a city where affordable housing does not exist or is under an enormous threat.

Rodriguez: We have some people whose movement in the world is being policed and punished and other people whose movement in the world is being facilitated, and it's being made so much easier for.

Gallant: So on the one hand, I'm their marching at the front of the Dyke March, and I'm being recognized for my work largely as a sex worker's rights activist. On the other hand, I'm horrified that this entire event, WorldPride, is being used to actually beef up policing of sex workers, and that's exactly what happened.

Dodd: So I want to talk about sex workers because sex workers are a community, are people in this neighborhood and other neighborhoods who are constantly under attack and living in fear of police.

Forrester: Today, as all you all know, I work at Maggie's Toronto. I have been a sex worker for 25 years. TAVIS, they're saying that they're gonna come after all people doing crime. So what does that mean? Sex workers are gonna be mostly targeted from this.

Kouri-Towe: I don't feel like mainstream pride reflects my values at all, and part of the reason for that is the gay and lesbian community's support for, and lack of resistance to, policing.

Police: For the very first time, the Toronto Police Services are having a float in the pride parade, which is big. This is just a day to bring our entire community together and, you know, to be able to express and be who we are.

Gallant: And so by day, we saw police marching in the Sunday pride march. And by evening, they're busting trans women sex workers. And to me, that is a very clear signal that police are actually valued more than the sex workers and trans women in our communities.

Rodriguez: I think one of the biggest things for me is that I would love to see our communities refusing to define safety in a way that leaves anybody behind and really truly practicing that politic that policing is never ever the answer. That policing is an act of violence.

BEYOND MARRIAGE

Spade: For queer and trans people, it's really interesting to think about how we got here. How we got to a place where the most visible queer politics are lesbian and gay politics in the United States today, and in some ways I think it impacts conversations globally because of U.S. imperialism. It is a conversation about access to marriage, and how that could happen when only a few decades ago the most visible conversations about queer and trans people were about police violence against us.

[White House video]

- I'm excited for everyone to finally be equal.
- What do you think?
- Marriage equality nationwide just means that people who love each other, people who have committed to each other like John and I did, have the ability to have that commitment, that love, recognized and honored by our government. And as citizens of the United States, we deserve that.

Ryan Conrad: In the U.S., there's national organizations like the Freedom to Marry, there's the National Gay and Lesbian Task Forces, there's the HRC. So there are organizations that are multi-issue but primarily do marriage or military stuff. And then there's these ones just focused on marriage. And these organizations have spent millions and millions and millions of dollars on these state-by-state campaigns or Supreme Court challenges.

Spade: In the United States, the campaign for same-sex marriage is called "Marriage Equality." Like, that is the name of the campaign, which is hilarious and sad because, of course, like marriage is all about inequality. Marriage is all about having the state choose a small set of relationships which get benefits and encourage people to live and thrive and have everybody else, kind of, not have what they need. So the idea that there could be any equality inside a system that distributes well-being like immigration status, health care, etc. through whether or not you've formed your family and sexual relationships right is, you know, absurd.

Puar: I really see the term equality as a kind of demand for the reinstatement of forms of white privilege that were lost with being not straight.

Conrad: In the Defense of Marriage Act case, Edith Windsor was sort of chosen as this ideal candidate because she's this very kind widow who appears very gentle and nice and appealing to the viewer. But what no one wanted to talk about is that she's really wealthy.

Yasmin Nair: The story of how she came to be at the center of what will no doubt become one of the most famous legal cases in LGBT history has a lot to do with how the gay movement strategically chose Windsor. Having carefully picked her out of a bevy of possible cases.

Justice Harvey Brownstone: These were two women that had been together 42 years. Normally a wedding is the beginning of something, but this was a culmination of a lifetime together.

Nair: Over the course of the publicity leading to the case, lawyers for Windsor, the gay media, much of the liberal progressive straight media, and gay marriage activists, lasciviously worked at keeping Windsor's actual life out of view.

Brownstone: No one could have predicted that Edie, following Thea's death, would be courageous enough to take on the entire same-sex marriage battle on her 83-year-old shoulders and face the Goliath of the Supreme Court and win.

Nair: Windsor's actual financial situation was almost never discussed. And she was often in fact implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, portrayed as a stereotypical little old lady, perhaps living somewhere in a darkened New York City apartment, barely able to keep her lights on as they flickered in the face of poverty.

Edith Windsor: When my beautiful sparkly Thea died 4 years ago, I was overcome with grief. In the midst of my grief, I realized that the federal government was treating us as strangers, and I paid a humongous estate tax. And it meant selling a lot of stuff to do it, and it wasn't easy. I live on a fixed income, and it wasn't easy.

Nair: Edith Windsor is in fact worth, by conservative estimates, in the region of \$7 million dollars.

Windsor: On a practical level, due to DOMA, I was taxed \$363,000 in Federal Estate Tax that I would not have had to pay if I had been married to a man named Theo.

Nair: The issue was not, ever, that Edith Windsor was unable to pay that amount because of, say, poverty. It is not as if she was incapable financially of paying over \$363,000. It is that she felt it was unfair that she should have to pay that amount.

Windsor: Even if I had met Theo just immediately before, marry him, and never even lived with him before he died, the tax would have been zero. So overwhelmed with a sense of injustice and unfairness, I decided to bring the lawsuit against the government to get my money back.

Nair: I emphasize this matter of Windsor's financial worth because she represents the ways in which the gay marriage fight has been understood and regurgitated as a grassroots struggle engaged upon by millions of lovelorn gays and lesbians. When, in fact, as our research shows, up against equality and gender just, it is a massively well-coordinated campaign which has cost again, overall, a few hundred million dollars.

Announcer: Now, across our country, we are standing together for the right of gay and lesbian Americans to marry the person they love. And with the start of victories for marriage, we've delivered a mandate for full equality. The wind is at our back, but our journey has just begun. Join us.

Nair: You might ask, "Why does all of this matter?" It matters because many of the central tenets on which gay marriage is being built as a movement towards equality are in fact benefits which only accrue to the wealthy few like Edith Windsor. So one of the biggest arguments around Windsor vs. DOMA was that this would positively affect all those gays and lesbians faced with estate taxes. But in fact, very few of them will ever have to owe those kinds of estate taxes, that's one. And two, is that if you have that kind of an estate, you really should in the interest of fairness to all be paying a certain percentage of your estate of taxes. And it is things like the estate taxes, after all, which also funds things like public school systems.

Conrad: I think what we are going through right now is a real misfortune because it's a total missed opportunity to have a conversation about comprehensive family law reform in this moment of a projected fight over gay marriage. Right? Because it could be an opportunity to create coalitional relationships with other groups of people, people on disability. Right? If you become a double-income family, your disability is reduced. If you get married, all sorts of different things happen if you're on social security income, if you have veteran's benefits and things like that. Like all these things that get reduced when you become a double-income family. So I think we could actually have a very broad-based social and economic justice movement that is actually really interesting and tries to build coalitions across different forms of articulations of family and how they relate to state benefits. And we're not doing that. We're simply clamoring for the things that hetero people have that we don't, and I think it's a huge missed opportunity to actually do real coalitional social and economic justice work.

Milan: The things that people will allow themselves to become fixated with around ideas of like homonormativity is about trying to find ways of how close we can approximate heterosexuality. And I'm like, heterosexuality is failing, y'all. Why are we trying to approximate a system that isn't even working for straight people?

Spade: This thread that is about mainstreamed consumption and the kind of aspirational goals of a small set of white wealthy queers to like perfect their white privilege by getting rid of like

the final tiny barriers in their lives, like you know being able to share their inheritance “just so,” or being able to share their health care “just so.” And then like the broader set of bigger, deeper critiques about the root causes of queer and trans suffering from a racial and economic justice centered grassroots that’s got bigger problems with the system, and isn’t just like ready to have a chorus sign on if it can mean that we can get to the next step towards these incredibly narrow reforms. And I think that pride is probably a great site to look at for understanding that to be.

CONCLUSION

(Music and chanting)

Nair: I feel a loss of an exchange of views and ideas and even just strategizing or organizing or “Where are we today?” or “What are we doing today?”

Spade: There's a lot of controversy around pride and what its content is. Like there is the San Francisco controversy about whether Chelsea Manning could be an honorary marshal and the kind of pushback around that. Or there was a controversy a few years before that at the Trans March in San Francisco about whether or not the prosecutor should be a speaker at the Trans March. It’s this question about whether we are engaging in a protest or parade, I think, is one of the ways of thinking about the question. Right? Is this a visibility project? In which, the more corporations we can get to sponsor us and the more fabulous the party can be, even if that party is so expensive that most people can't go, then that's kind of the goal that shows that we're kind of moving on up and that we're a site of celebration. Or are we actually contesting the conditions of homophobia and transphobia that harm people? In which case, you might want to have discernment about whether you want to ally with this corporation or with this prosecutor.

Hanhardt: The difference between protests and parades is a significant difference. While the first is about, again, political collectivity in the face of trying to fight for a better and different world and to transform and reject the sort of dominant terms, parades are often about celebrating a community that assumes that it knows who already belongs and who doesn't. That doesn't always recognize that some of those terms of belonging are deeply bound up in forms of exclusion. That risks celebrating things that have been gained without recognizing either the cost of those gains for some people or the need for so much more.

Ward: The distinction between a march and a parade is that one is community led and political, and the other one is a thing that you do to sell tickets to the circus. The parade on Sunday is quite literally a parade, and trans people who are rendered either exotic or invisible, I think, are tired of being paraded for profit.

(Rhythmic drumming and whistles)

Hanhardt: We have earlier generations of activists that provide wonderful examples of how protests, though, can also be about pleasure. I think some of the resistance people have to

critiques of pride and to the emphasis that “Pride once was a protest!” is they associate protest with negative affect. They associate protest with always being serious. They associate protest about naming all that is bad, and associate and love pride rightfully for the forms of happiness and opportunity and celebration. But the thing is, LGBT and queer activists have been the best at showing us for generations that protests and transformation can also be about pleasure, about pride, and about humor, and fun, and about celebrating what we have while asking for more, while looking for new friends and allies, and not assuming that we already know who will end up on our side.

(Rhythmic drumming and whistles)

[END]