Race, the Homosexual, and the Mattachine Society of Washington, 1961–1970

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The 1950s and 1960s in the United States were decades of social change and unrest marked by sustained efforts to challenge inequalities in the nation's political, economic, and social structures. Alongside movements advocating for the rights of African Americans and women, antiwar and antinuclear protests, and the rise of the New Left and countercultural groups, this period saw the beginning of a sustained movement to achieve social and legal equality of homosexuals.[1] Small numbers of dedicated members formed organizations like the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, both headquartered in California but with chapters throughout the country, which connected homosexuals and slowly erased the social isolation of being homosexual. This homophile movement began with an ideology of education and self-help to aid individuals in coping with same-sex desire in a homophobic society. It also cautiously began to counter prevailing stereotypes about the promiscuous and predatory nature of the homosexual by creating the image of the innocuous and respectable homosexual subject whom society was unfairly persecuting for her or his sexual orientation.

Historians have investigated the ideologies and personal stories behind the homophile movement while also paying particular attention to political, social, and regional developments and the role of gender conflict.[2] But

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[1] I use the somewhat clinical term "homosexual" as an umbrella term to include men and women in order to avoid the male-only connotation of "gay."

[2] The literature is too vast and well known to summarize here. The most important book on the homophile movement remains John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). For another example of gender conflict, see Marc Stein, *City of*

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historians of the homophile movement have remained mostly silent on the topic of race, rarely identifying the race of individuals or only doing so when it deviates from the norm of whiteness.[3] Despite Allen Drexel's 1997 call for historians to investigate "the legacy of the 'overwhelmingly white' bourgeois homophile organizations," we still know too little about the role of people of color in the early years of the movement.[4] While it is true that the homophile movement of the 1950s and 1960s was almost completely white, not interrogating this whiteness has created an inadequate understanding of why issues of race and a lack of racial diversity became a consistent problem in the movement after 1970.[5] In other words, we have only begun to comprehend how and why, in Allan Bérubé's words, "gay gets white [and] how it stays that way," and we need to pay more attention to the "whitening practices that daily construct, maintain, and fortify the idea that gay male means white."[6]

The movement's lack of racial diversity was especially apparent in the nation's capital, Washington, DC, one of the only major cities in the United States with a majority black population in 1960.[7] Founded in 1961, the

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Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945–1972 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 341–70.

[3] For example, there are only three people of color in the forty-nine biographies in Vern L. Bullough, ed., *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002). No people of color are mentioned in Kay Tobin and Randy Wicker, *The Gay Crusaders* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), and even D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* leaves the whiteness of the homophile movement largely unexplored.

[4] Allen Drexel, "Before Paris Burned: Race, Class, and Male Homosexuality on the Chicago South Side, 1935–1960," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Routledge, 1997), 119–44, 120.

[5] A noticeable percentage of works on the homosexual movement and communities consider race only when people of color are present. Examples of important exceptions include Genny Beemyn, *A Queer Capital: A History of Gay Life in Washington, D.C.* (New York: Routledge, 2015); Daneel Buring, *Lesbian and Gay Memphis: Building Communities behind the Magnolia Curtain* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997); Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993); John Loughery, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998); Marc Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Timothy Stewart-Winter, "Raids, Rights, and Rainbow Coalitions: Sexuality and Race in Chicago Politics, 1950–2000" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010); and Susan Stryker and Jim Van Buskirk, *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996).

[6] Allan Bérubé, "How Gay Stays White and What Kind of White It Stays," in *Privilege*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010), 179–210, 181.

[7] In 1960 the total Washington, DC, population of 763,956 included 345,263 whites and 411,737 blacks. See "Table 23. District of Columbia—Race and Hispanic Origin: 1800 to 1990," US Census Bureau, http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/tab23.pdf, accessed 21 April 2014.

ED: FYI, "District" not lowercased per Chicago's usual 8.50 rule because author had a strong preference to leave capitalized.

Mattachine Society of Washington (MSW) was the only organization in the District of Columbia "dedicated to improving the status of the homosexual minority in our nation," but the whiteness of its membership contrasted with the city's racial makeup and perplexed some MSW members.[8] While recognizing that race and racial diversity are not just about black and white, they were the overwhelmingly dominant colors in the District during the 1960s, and thus questions of race in the MSW involved only these two colors. For example, Paul Kuntzler, an active white MSW member, recalled in an interview that "there was always this debate about how do we get more African Americans" to join the MSW, and the MSW's membership committee held meetings on the topic "How Can We Bring the Negro into the Homophile Movement?"[9] Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, the frequent president of the MSW and also a white man, remembered habitually sitting in front of the MSW's monthly meeting and being puzzled by the fact that "in a city that was roughly two-thirds black" he almost always saw "a sea of white faces, entirely so," of courageous attendees.[10] Kameny did remember that the MSW had at least "some blacks" as members during the decade, but they were rarely active members. Indeed, Kuntzler recalled that when one African American male showed up at an MSW meeting during the 1960s, other attendees "thought he was infiltrating, that he was a government agent."[11]

Although membership in the MSW never surpassed one hundred people, and Kameny and Jack Nichols, another white man, did not found it until 1961, eleven years after the founding of the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles had marked the beginning of the homophile movement, the organization's leadership and members turned the MSW, which was not officially associated with the Los Angeles Mattachine Society, into a leader of the movement and dramatically changed its direction.[12] In contrast to other homophile groups, the MSW advocated the creation of a subject openly proud of the sexuality for which she or he was being oppressed. The MSW

[8] "To the Director of the U.S. Public Health Service 3 August 1962," in *Gay Is Good: The Life and Letters of Gay Rights Pioneer Franklin Kameny*, ed. Michael G. Long (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 43. The most complete narrative of the MSW's history is David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

[9] Paul Kuntzler, interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Rebecca C. Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC: Identity, Emotion, and Experience in Washington, DC's Social and Activist Communities (1961–1986)" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 2010), 102; and Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 193.

[10] Dr. Franklin Kameny, interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 102.

[11] Kameny, interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 103; and Paul Kuntzler, interview by the author, 24 March 2014. The lack of evidence about who these individuals were corroborates the oral accounts describing their relative absence.

[12] On membership numbers, see Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 193.

organized public demonstrations to advocate for policy reform that would recognize and protect this homosexual subject. In contrast to an earlier emphasis on self-help, this more militant strategy publicly and directly challenged the social and legal restrictions that prohibited homosexuals from enjoying fulfilling and safe lives.[13] The problem, MSW members insisted, was not with the homosexual but with the society he or she lived in. The MSW's location in the District of Columbia, which the US government directly governs, also meant that members targeted their campaigns exclusively at national rather than city politics, a fact that increased their ability to garner publicity beyond the local level.[14]

Despite these unique circumstances, the MSW provides a valuable lens into the question of how the American homosexual subject became associated with whiteness. The MSW tried to present itself as welcoming to nonwhites, and members did identify the organization's lack of racial diversity as a problem. This was not an easy stance to take in a country saturated with racism and where centuries of legalized racial segregation were only beginning to die a piecemeal death through court decisions and legislation. The District itself, as journalists Harry S. Jaffe and Tom Sherwood wrote, was a city "tormented or polarized by race, class, and power" like "no other city in America."[15] This became violently clear in 1968, when riots devastated several black commercial areas after the assassination of civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.[16] At the same time, the MSW existed in a strongly homophobic society where police entrapment of homosexuals, raids on homosexual bars, and the purging of homosexuals from the federal government's payroll would only slowly diminish during the decade. As I will demonstrate, the MSW's own rhetoric sometimes supported this atmosphere of racial segregation, and this homophobia limited MSW members' ability to achieve their goal of a membership that mirrored the District's population. Placing MSW members' rhetoric, their use of physical space, their membership policies and outreach activities, and their main initiatives into the broader social and political context of homophobia and racism in

[13] On these differences between homophile ideology, the MSW, and subsequent gay liberation organizations, see Toby Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

[14] The United States Constitution states that Congress has "exclusive Legislation" over the city. Calls for home rule began in the late 1940s, but the District did not obtain its own popularly elected mayor or city council until the passage of the 1973 Home Rule Act. Continuing to this day, however, Congress retains the ability to review and overturn District laws and final approval of the District's budget (United States Constitution, Article I, Section 8).

[15] Harry S. Jaffe and Tom Sherwood, *Dream City: Race, Power, and the Decline of Washington, DC* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 14.

[16] For accounts of the riots and their impact on black neighborhoods and race relations in the District, see Ben Gilbert, *Ten Blocks from the White House: Anatomy of the Washington Riots of 1968* (New York: Praeger, 1968); and Clay Risen, *A Nation on Fire: America in the Wake of the King Assassination* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

1960s Washington, DC, will demonstrate the combination of factors that led to the MSW's failure to gain a racially diverse membership and that aided, although unintentionally, in creating the equation of the homosexual with whiteness. This history reminds us that thinking about race in the American homosexual movement is not just about including people of color or thinking that race only affects persons of color. Instead, it requires a continual consciousness of how any skin color affects the lives of homosexuals and how they experience sexuality and discrimination, a fact histories of the American homosexual movement frequently underemphasize.

The racial inequality of African Americans was at the forefront of Americans' consciousness in the 1950s and 1960s. Although calls for racial equality were not new, African Americans and white allies organized to an unprecedented degree after World War II to dismantle legalized segregation; remove racial discrimination in hiring, voting, and housing practices; and reduce existing educational and economic inequalities between whites and blacks. Countering decades of academic, scientific, and popular thought, the civil rights movement argued that separate can never be equal, that it was social norms and government policy rather than "natural" inferiority that had produced the impoverished condition of most African Americans, and that the state needed to insure the civil rights of its minority citizens. In other words, civil rights activists emphasized that members of a minority faced discrimination solely because of one characteristic, their race, and they argued that this characteristic had no bearing on their abilities.[17]

This was the political atmosphere in which the MSW began its work in 1961, and a few examples demonstrate the organization's commitment to racial equality and the civil rights movement. Most importantly, the MSW's constitution welcomes "all persons of good will, twenty-one years of age or over, who subscribe to the purpose of this organization" and declares that "no person shall be denied membership because of sex, race, national origin, religious or political belief, or sexual orientation or preference."[18] The MSW reinforced this view by including verbatim quotes of these two parts of the constitution in letters it sent to potential members. At the behest of cofounder Jack Nichols, the MSW's constitution also mentioned the organization's intention to "cooperate with other minority organizations who are striving for the realization of full civil rights and liberties for all."[19] Kameny, Kuntzler, Nichols, and four other MSW members put this goal into action when they participated in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, most remembered today for King's "I Have a Dream" speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The seven did not carry signs

[17] For an overview of the civil rights movement, see Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).

[18] Article 3, Sections 1 and 2, MSW Constitution, folder 11, box 80, Kameny Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Hereafter cited as Kameny Papers.

[19] Article 2, Section 1, in ibid.

about discrimination of homosexuals and their connection to the MSW because they did not want to "take away from the [march's] central purpose" of highlighting the economic and political discrimination African Americans were facing.[20] The MSW also confirmed its commitment to racial equality in its report for the United States Civil Service Commission in 1965, where it stated the members' belief that "it is a proper role of our Government actively to combat prejudice and discrimination when these are directed against any group of its citizens."[21] In 1971 the MSW again made its views on racial equality publicly known, joining fourteen other organizations, including the recently formed Gay Activist Alliance and Gay Liberation Front—DC, to protest the "blatant racist policies" that tried to "exclude all black people from the Lost and Found," a new homosexual club in the District.[22]

Two examples from Kameny furnish additional evidence for his and the MSW's commitment to racial equality. First, in a 1967 letter, Kameny recalled that, while living in the still legally racially segregated 1950s South, he had "intentionally violated state statutes by sitting in the back of buses," where the law forced African Americans to sit; he had "defied the orders of bus drivers to move forward; and [he had] used Negro drinking fountains and rest rooms."[23] In the same year, the MSW was preparing to hold the National Planning Conference of Homophile Organizations and received a letter from a member of the South California Council on Religion and the Homophile, E. Casans, expressing concerns about the choice to hold the conference in Washington, DC. Casans worried about having the conference in a city "more than half Negro" because he had gone "through a 'Watts' in Los Angeles two years ago," a six-day riot in 1965 that had exposed racial and economic tensions in the nation's third largest city. The writer expressed sincere hope that "the conference will be held in the heart of an all-white section of the city" because "I would not want to go through [a riot] in a strange city."[24] Kameny's response forcefully spelled out that the MSW would not buy into a racist panic about blacks and violence: "Yes, Washington is well over 50% Negro. There is, of course, always the possibility of a disturbance, but I don't think there will be one here. I am not about to run from anyone or anything, or accept second best because of considerations having to do with race or similar matters. I feel that for

[20] J. Louis Campbell III, *Jack Nichols, Gay Pioneer: "Have You Heard My Message?"* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2007), 74.

[21] "Federal Employment of Homosexual American Citizens to Civil Service Commission," folder 9, MS 0764, series 1, Rainbow History Project Archives, Historical Society of Washington, DC. Hereafter cited as RHPA.

[22] "FELLOW GAY PEOPLE: WHY ARE WE PICKETING THE LOST AND FOUND?," folder 10, MS 0764, series 1, RHPA.

[23] "Kameny to William Scanlon, 27 July 1968," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 163.

[24] E. Casans to MSW, 1 August 1967, folder 2, box 81, Kameny Papers.

us to take into account the considerations mentioned in your letter would degrade us as individuals and would degrade our movement."[25]

Beyond simply declaring itself open to a mixed-race membership and supportive of the civil rights movement, the MSW also turned to that movement for inspiration and strategies to help build its own movement for homosexuals. Just as the civil rights movement had for African Americans, the MSW worked to create the very idea that the homosexual subject existed in American society; these individuals, both men and women, had formed social networks despite the fact that they were discriminated against exclusively because of their sexual orientation. Rhetorically creating the homosexual subject was a difficult and necessary task in an intensely homophobic society where few homosexuals were publicly proclaiming their same-sex desire and behavior as an identity. Nor did homosexuals share any other characteristic that easily identified a person as homosexual. To Kameny, "homosexuals are as totally heterogeneous (aside from their sexual preferences, in the narrowest sense) as are Negroes and Jews (aside from their skin color and their religious beliefs)."[26] There was a paradox in the MSW's creation of a minority group based solely upon sexual orientation, however. While requiring individuals to identify with being homosexual and emphasizing that members of the group faced prejudice purely because of their sexual orientation, the MSW's point was that sexuality should be irrelevant to one's morality or value in society. The MSW members' rhetorical strategies thus depicted sexuality as simultaneously noteworthy and trivial.

The MSW's rhetoric constantly emphasized that homosexuals shared no distinctive identifiers beyond their sexual orientation, and members often used no other descriptors to identify the homosexual minority beyond "homosexual." For the MSW, a "homosexual" was thus any "person who finds himself or herself emotionally and sexually attracted to members of the same sex regardless of the amount and nature of the sexual activity actually engaged in."[27] It is noteworthy that the MSW included both gender pronouns to indicate that both men and women could be homosexual, but it did not include race anywhere in the definition. Having welcomed people of all races into the MSW, activists implicitly defined the homosexual as existing in all skin colors.

The MSW never used racial signifiers to describe attendees of its meetings. Instead, MSW reports highlighted and emphasized gender difference. For example, press releases and MSW newsletter articles about the organizations' picketing events frequently classified participants by gender. A press

[25] Kameny response to Casans Letter, folder 4, box 68,Kameny Papers.

[26] "Kameny to William Mauldin, 29 September 1965" in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 108.

[27] "Federal Employment of Homosexual American Citizens: A Statement Prepared by the Mattachine Society of Washington . . . at the Request of the United States Civil Service Commission 15 November 1965," folder 9, MS 0764, series 1, RHPA.

release describing the 29 May 1965 picketing event, for example, stated that "thirteen homosexuals and supporters of their cause (10 men; 3 women) picketed the White House."[28] These events also underscored gender differences by enforcing mandatory dress codes on their participants, insisting upon "suits, white shirts, and ties, for men; [and] dresses for women."[29] Exactly why MSW members made the effort to so clearly emphasize gender is not clear, although it could have been a way to counter the idea of homosexuals as wanting to adopt behaviors and dress opposite from their physical body. The mandatory gendered dress codes were thus consistent with the homophile movement's tactic of presenting a respectable and nonthreatening homosexual subject.

The creation of the homosexual subject and the rhetoric of the persecuted minority were integral to the MSW's efforts to achieve the dual purpose of what the MSW's constitution explicitly described as "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" for all homosexuals and equalizing "the status and position of the homosexual with the status and position of the heterosexual by achieving equality under the law."[30] The organization was not focused on helping those with same-sex desire cope with living in a heteronormative world. Instead, the MSW proudly challenged that heteronormativity through its attempts to change American society's laws and attitudes about sexuality in general. As Kameny explained, "One can counsel the needy of this generation forever, and the next generation of homosexuals will have just as many problems. Change attitudes, laws, etc., and the problems of the next generation will be infinitely fewer."[31]

To legitimize and elucidate its strategy to others, the MSW most commonly compared homosexuals and the MSW with the most visible minority in America, African Americans, and the civil rights movement. This analogy constantly appears in the surviving correspondence and writings of the MSW, which define homosexuals as a "minority group in no way different, as such, from the Negroes."[32] MSW activists claimed that the homosexual minority, at fifteen million, was the second largest minority in the United States after the "Negro minority"; the intent was to demonstrate that large numbers of Americans experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation and

[28] Information bulletin, May 1965, folder 13, box 85, Kameny Papers.

[29] "Kameny to Daughters of Bilitis, 8 June 1965," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 97.

[30] Article 2, Section 1, MSW Constitution, folder 11, box 80, Kameny Papers. For an example of how others in the homophile movement disagreed with Kameny and the MSW's stance of having people identify themselves as a group defined by sexual orientation, see the comments of Richard Leitsch of the Mattachine Society of New York in Marotta, *The Politics of Homosexuality*, 60–65.

[31] "Kameny to Dick Michaels, *Los Angeles Advocate* cofounder, 20 July 1969," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 195.

[32] "Kameny to John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 15 May 1961," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 33.

that homosexuals were not alone in the world.[33] MSW members also made the comparison that, just as having dark skin was not a choice or biological defect, neither was sexual orientation a choice or thing that medicines or medical procedures could or should cure or control. In making this claim, MSW activists were arguing against other members of the homophile movement who were working to understand why individuals had homosexual desires, an effort that the MSW worried could lead to misguided attempts to cure homosexuality, attempts they believed were as ridiculous as trying to change skin color. As Kameny wrote to the Janus Society of Delaware Valley, another homophile organization, on 6 October 1962, "One does not remedy anti-Negro problems by studying the anthropological and genetic origins of the Negro and his dark skin . . . nor by approaching the bio-chemists for a means to bleach his skin."[34] Kameny similarly justified his opposition to the idea of curing homosexuality in a March 1963 letter to Dionysus, a homophile group in Orange County, California, arguing that just as a leading civil rights organization, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), "does not do research into the origin and nature of the color of the Negro's skin," the MSW would not promote research about the origin and nature of sexual desire, because this information could be used by scientists and doctors interested in "curing" homosexual desires.[35]

Sometimes the comparison was framed in antagonistic terms. For example, in an August 1962 press release, the MSW expressed frustration that "the homosexual, today, is where the Negro was in the 1920s."[36] The MSW pitted black and homosexual against each other in a 1965 letter sent to over a thousand clergy in the Washington, DC, area to complain about antihomosexual rhetoric in churches: "The homosexual finds himself discriminated against and denied basic civil liberties and social rights to a degree which, in many respects, far exceeds that encountered by the Negro."[37] Earlier, in 1963, the MSW had carped in a similar fashion to the Washington, DC, Advisory Committee of the United States Commission on Civil Rights about the committee's failure to include homosexuals at its "Equal Employment Opportunity Programs and Problems" conference. Kameny's scathing letter demanded the presence of a homosexual at the conference, sarcastically adding, "unless it has been decided that the role of second-class citizen must be filled by someone and that the homosexual is to replace the Negro in

[33] The MSW based this number on Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. For examples, see correspondence in boxes 80–83, Kameny Papers; and "Federal Employment of Homosexual American Citizens to Civil Service Commission," folder 9, MS 0764, series 1, RHPA.

[34] Folder 1, box 82, Kameny Papers.

[35] Letter to Dionysus, 9 March 1963, folder 3, box 81,Kameny Papers.

[36] "Press Release, 28 August 1962," quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 102.

[37] Letter to clergy, 15 February 1965, folder 10, box 104, Kameny Papers.

this capacity, now that the Negro is being officially raised."[38] In reference to the discrimination homosexuals faced in employment, Kameny wrote to Vice President Lyndon Johnson in 1963 that the MSW "represent[s] and speak[s] for a minority, the members of which . . . are excluded from employment . . . to a degree never dreamed of by the Negro in his worst nightmares."[39] These forceful and anger-filled comparisons made it appear as if a competition existed between the two communities, suggesting an antagonistic relationship of blacks and homosexuals.

Although the MSW did refer to other minority groups in its arguments about the place of homosexuals, it only did so in ways combined with references to African Americans. For instance, in its 1962 letter of introduction, which the MSW sent to each member of the United States Congress, cabinet member, Supreme Court justice, and other members of the executive branch of the federal government, the MSW explained: "We do not regard this question [of homosexuality] as a medical or psychiatric one, but primarily as one of civil rights and of prejudice, different in no essential aspect from the similar problems faced by the Negro, the Jew, the Catholic, and others."[40] Explaining which projects the MSW would fund to the Janus Society of the Delaware Valley, Kameny declared that "one does not attempt to remedy anti-Semitism by a study of Jewish theology and the origins of Judaism . . . nor by attempting to convert the Jews to Christianity," and he drove his point home by arguing that the black community was not trying to remedy racism through skin whitening.[41] In a third example, the MSW urged members of the United States Congress to add an amendment to the 1964 Federal Title on Discrimination in Employment that would add sexuality to the list of protected identities when it came to employment. MSW members believed that homosexuals should be treated like a minority on par with women and the racial and religious minorities protected by the title.[42] Similarly, the authors of the MSW's 1965 report to the United States Civil Service Commission, which oversaw the hiring and employment policies of the federal government, pointed out that while the "government will not indulge the anti-Semitism or anti-Catholicism [of citizens] . . . [or] defer to segregationist sentiment in its employment of Negro citizens," it was

[38] Letter to chairman, Subcommittee on Employment, DC Advisory Committee of US Civil Rights Commission, 13 January 1962, folder 2, box 83, Kameny Papers.

[39] "Kameny to Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson, 4 May 1963," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 50.

[40] Letter to Attorney General Robert Francis Kennedy, 28 August 1962, folder 2, box 82, Kameny Papers.

[41] Letter to Janus Society of Delaware Valley, 6 October 1962, folder 1, box 82, Kameny Papers.

[42] Letter to Senator Kenneth Keating, 15 June 1964, folder 2, box 82, Kameny Papers. "1964 Federal Title on Discrimination in Employment" is the name of the legislative act in the letter, although it probably refers to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

countenancing discrimination against homosexuals in the Civil Service even though there "morally" was no difference between any of these groups and their ability to do these jobs.[43]

The MSW made these comparisons not only to define homosexuals as a persecuted minority but also to communicate the strategies of the organization. As Kameny argued, "The homosexual community, in its justified impatience, has noted the successes achieved by the activism of the Negro movement. Having exhausted all other remedies—as, indeed the Negro had done—we now see ourselves at the cautious commencement of an attempt to emulate that activism."[44] Most significantly, just as blacks had to overcome stereotypes and dehumanizing treatment, the MSW had to counter the intense homophobia of the 1960s and the prevailing stereotypes of the homosexual as a depressed loner, a violent and oversexed psychopath, or a national security risk. It did so by affirming "Gay is Good." This slogan was a simple and powerful way to counter the real economic, psychological, and social consequences of homophobia. Kameny developed this new slogan for the homophile movement at the 1968 North American Conference of Homophile Organizations. As Kameny later recounted, he had created the slogan "in direct and precise parallel to Black is Beautiful," a common saying in the civil rights movement.[45] "Gay is Good" colloquially summed up the position that "homosexuality is not a sickness, disturbance, or other pathology in any sense" that the MSW adopted on 4 March 1965.[46] Before then, an editorial in the May 1964 issue of the Eastern Mattachine Magazine had explained that homosexuals needed this position because "before we can fight effectively, we, like the Negro, must affirm that we are just as good as anyone else and just as sane."[47]

The MSW most consistently perceived itself as the NAACP for the homosexual minority. The fact that the NAACP was based in the District of Columbia, had a mixed-race leadership, and was more likely to emphasize bourgeois respectability than other civil rights organizations also likely influenced the MSW's decision to consciously emulate its tactics. Like the NAACP, the MSW hoped to influence change through court cases, lobbying, and legislation. But it also turned to more public displays of protest and mass mobilization that civil rights leaders and organizations beyond the NAACP used to gain exposure, to garner public support, and to force the government into action. This most frequently meant public picketing

[43] "Federal Employment of Homosexual American Citizens to Civil Service Commission," folder 9, MS 0764, series 1, RHPA.

[44] Undated draft of editorial about White House Picketing, folder 7, box 126, Kameny Papers.

[45] Letter, 6 April 1969, folder 5, box 81, Kameny Papers.

[46] Policy 1, MSW Constitution, folder 11, box 80, Kameny Papers.

[47] Mattachine Society of New York, "Eastern Mattachine Magazine, volume 10, number 4," Rainbow History Project Digital Collections, http://rainbowhistory.omeka.net/items/show/4937926, 23, accessed 8 June 2015.

of government buildings, which Kameny called "the Washington equivalent to Birmingham."[48] While picketing in Washington, DC, and Philadelphia's Independence Hall, the site of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and United States Constitution, the MSW made the link between the civil rights and homophile movements clear by carrying signs reading "Discrimination Against Homosexuals Is as Immoral as Discrimination Against Negroes and Jews" and singing a protest song to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" that began "Mine eyes have seen the struggles of the Negroes and the Jews."[49]

Although sometimes antagonistic, the MSW's analogy that sexuality was an oppression like race gave credit and support to African Americans' struggles to gain legal and social equality with whites. However, for an organization attempting to gain a racially diverse membership, this strategy of comparison could also be read as an attempt to steal attention from the struggles of African Americans and to put the two groups in competition with each other. This comparison was especially problematic for those in the African American community who did not view homosexuality positively and who therefore believed that an immoral group of people was hijacking the civil rights movement.[50] An even more problematic side effect of the strategy was that the analogy could work to reinforce a racially homogeneous homosexual subject and minority. By establishing the idea of a homosexual subject and minority, the MSW was implying that all people with same-sex sexual desire share a core, authentic experience. As Kameny expounded, "THE battle is for THE homosexual."[51] Although the MSW's definition of the homosexual and the group's actions in support of racial equality made it clear that members believed homosexuals came in all colors, the constant comparison of blacks and homosexuals reinforced the image of the homosexual as white. It was inevitably read to mean that the two groups were entirely separate, that blacks could not be a part of the homosexual community, and that homosexuals could not be black. As scholar J. Todd Ormsbee asserts in his work on 1960s San Francisco, for homophile activists, "black was always other, never us," and this rhetorical comparison helped create

[48] Ibid. In April and May 1963 Birmingham, Alabama, was the site of many nonviolent civil rights protests that challenged the racial segregation of the city and culminated in police confrontations with water hoses and police attack dogs, images of which brought increased support to the civil rights movement.

[49] Information bulletin, May 1965, folder 13, box 85, Kameny Papers; and MSW newsletter, 1966, folder 1, box 86, Kameny Papers.

[50] For a variety of views on the connections between the civil rights movement and the homosexual movement, see Eric Brandt, ed., *Dangerous Liaisons: Blacks, Gays, and the Struggle for Equality* (New York: New Press, 1999); and Michael G. Long, *Martin Luther King, Jr., Homosexuality, and the Early Gay Rights Movement: Keeping the Dream Straight?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[51] "Kameny to Barbara Grier, 26 October 1969," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 208.

the "misrecognition of gay as white" to those both within and outside the homophile movement.[52]

Kameny's private writings help explain the MSW's conception of sexuality and the problematic nature of the homosexual subject that arose from the connections the organization made to larger discourses about race and gender. While Kameny certainly does not represent the views of all the members of the MSW, his outspokenness, his constant devotion to the MSW, and the leadership positions he held within the MSW often made it appear that he was expressing the views of the entire organization. Kameny believed that homosexual subjectivity had to be considered separately from all other categories of difference. "Those who belong to more than one [oppressed] group," he argued, "have multiple sets of problems" that "largely—MUST be considered separately," because each group struggled with "TOTALLY and UTTERLY separate problems."[53] They were so distinct that "the *gay* problems do not seem to be racially or gender related." Lesbians, for instance, are "homosexuals, first, and women only incidentally."[54] He elaborated that while "women, as women, have problems that men do not have . . . similarly with gay blacks . . . the basic problems of all gays—black and white, male and female—are identical."[55] Though all individuals could separate their identities and prioritize them as needed, Kameny insisted that all homosexuals, no matter their color or gender, shared a singular experience and set of interests. However, as Kameny lamented, the prioritization of identities presented a challenge for the homosexual movement: "Anyone in more than one of these minority groups must decide for him or herself where the priorities lie. Unfortunately, from my viewpoint, many gay women or blacks see their problems as being greater as blacks or women than as gays—or, for other reasons (including the fact that fighting racism or sexism is more easily done and is more 'respectable') they choose to fight the racism or the sexism."[56] Kameny thus failed to appreciate the historical and legal ways that discrimination on the basis of gender and race continued to influence the daily lives of people of color and women.

Others were quick to point out that Kameny's strategy ran the risk of silencing conversations about how racial and gender discrimination affected

[52] J. Todd Ormsbee, "Sexuality and Experience: Gay Male Publicity, Community, and Meaning in 1960s San Francisco" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2004); and Ormsbee, *The Meaning of Gay: Interaction, Publicity, and Community among Homosexual Men in 1960s San Francisco* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010). Quote is from "Sexuality and Experience," 210.

[53] First two quotes from "Kameny to Cade Ware, 25 February 1973," in Long, *Gay Is Good,* 260. Third quote from "Kameny to Barbara Grier 25 April 1969," in Long, *Gay Is Good,* 186.

[54] "Kameny to Cade Ware, 25 February 1973," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 260; and "Kameny to Barbara Grier, 25 April 1969," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 185.

[55] "Kameny to Cade Ware, 25 February 1973," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 260.

[56] Ibid.

how people of color and women experienced their sexuality. Women within the homosexual movement were at the forefront of voicing the critique that it was a fallacy to assume people could separate their identities into separate components. As Barbara Grier, editor of the Daughter of Bilitis's magazine the Ladder, put it in a 1969 response to Kameny: "I can no more separate being a Lesbian from being a woman than you can separate being a male homosexual from the fact you are a man. . . . [F]rom your viewpoint as a member of the current 'master race' [what you say] is logical, sensible, and wholly right. From my viewpoint as a second class citizen . . . the handicaps are dual and not separable."[57] In other words, Grier pointed out that as male and white, Kameny had the privilege of choosing which identity to highlight and separate from others; it was only because of his sexuality that he experienced injustice. Even if he did not realize it, Kameny's whiteness and maleness were characteristics, just like blackness and femaleness, that affected how he experienced sexuality. Thus, claiming one shared homosexual identity completely separate from gender and race erases the historical and structural realities of people of color and women that continue to produce inequalities. Grier's reference to the "master race" also implied that race is not just about blackness—that to act as if only those of black skin experience race is to deny the fact that whiteness is also a color.

None of this is to question Kameny's belief in the desirability of racial equality. Kameny never waivered from the view that race, just like sexuality, was a "superficial and meaningless . . . criterion" because it was irrelevant to one's "fitness for government or other employment," not to mention one's human value.[58] Race and sexuality, he believed, were all pointless classifications that segregated people into groups for no apparent reason. This is not to say that deploying rhetorical analogies to the black minority was unproductive but that the failure to accurately represent the complexity of people's lived realities silenced the voices of women and people of color in the movement and curtailed discussion of how gender and race—even the "master race"—have historically structured all homosexuals' lives. While Kameny and MSW members may have believed that their homosexual subject encompassed people of all colors, and debates about race within the homophile movement underlined the variety of individual experiences of homosexual desires, the organization's rhetoric often colored that subject white during the 1960s.

Still, one must understand Kameny's and the MSW's strategy of comparison and focus on just sexuality within the strongly homophobic world the organization and homosexuals called home, a world that hindered the MSW from obtaining and displaying a racially diverse membership. Before the 1960s, a small community and social world of homosexuals had developed

[57] "Barbara Grier to Kameny, 31 October 1969," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 211.

[58] "Kameny to Robert Martin Jr., 18 May 1968," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 154; and "To the Director of the U.S. Public Health Service, 3 August 1962," in Long, *Gay Is Good*, 43.

in private homes and a small number of bars and restaurants throughout the District of Columbia, even though the District strictly enforced laws against sodomy, and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) used a broad definition of "lewd acts" to justify raiding homosexual bars and public parks where gay men cruised for sex. As Cold War tensions rose during the 1950s and into the 1960s, Senator Joseph McCarthy and other homophobes in the State Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Congress bolstered the MPD's efforts and argued that homosexuals' vulnerability to blackmail made them national security risks, prompting the government to purge homosexuals from its payroll. On top of homosexuals' fears of the humiliation of arrest and the likelihood that muckraking journalists would make charges of homosexuality public, the new "lavender scare" of the Cold War era dramatically increased the danger that homosexuals would lose their jobs and be barred from future employment.[59]

Because of this climate, it took very courageous men and women, black or white, to be open about their homosexuality, and the act of being politically active on behalf of homosexuals was a risk that very few were willing to take. Members felt the need for some secrecy and fear of persecution, beginning with the MSW's first meeting in 1961, when an undercover police officer showed up uninvited.[60] After this incident, meetings were closed affairs; the organization only allowed members, probationary members, or friends of members interested in joining to attend. The dangers of their homophobic world motivated the MSW's leadership to draw up rules to make it difficult for outsiders to obtain access to names of those in the organization. For instance, the majority of members, including most of the executive board, used pseudonyms during meetings and in official correspondence and records, and the organization's constitution prohibited the secretary from reporting last names in meeting minutes whether persons used pseudonyms or not. The MSW never kept more than two sets of membership records and stored them in a locked, private location.[61]

It was also difficult for anyone to become a member of the organization. New members had to go through a three-step admission process that began with a paper application the organization destroyed at the end of the process. Second, the individual met with the MSW's executive board for a personal interview. The MSW's newsletter, the Insider, often included

[59] For a detailed exploration of homosexuals in Washington, DC, before 1960, see Brett Beemyn, "A Queer Capital: Race, Class, Gender, and the Changing Social Landscape of Washington's Gay Communities, 1940–1955," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Routledge, 1997), 183–210; and Johnson, *The Lavender Scare.*

[60] Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 183.

[61] Article 3, Sections 4, 5, and 6, MSW Constitution, folder 11, box 80, Kameny Papers. The MSW enforced these cautionary measures so strongly that many of the MSW members did not know other members' real names until they met at a reunion in 1986. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 184.

the date and time of when "the Executive Board will hold interviews for invitation to future membership meetings."[62] Third, the individual had a three-month probationary period during which the executive board would confirm the applicant's commitment to the organization and lack of ties to law enforcement.[63] While the MSW hoped these rules would secure the safety and secrecy of the heterogeneous membership it hoped to attract, the rules had the unfortunate side effect of making the MSW appear to be a secretive and unwelcoming group. This effect negatively impacted the recruitment of new members of any race, and it, along with the rules themselves, helps explain why the MSW membership never reached one hundred persons.[64]

MSW leaders consistently worried about the organization's small and stagnant or dwindling membership. They recognized that their security measures could never fully make some people comfortable with joining the MSW. As MSW president Robert King summed up in the March 1965 Eastern Mattachine Magazine, "Fear of disclosure is the great stumbling block encountered by the movement at every turn."[65] Two years earlier, the MSW's May 1963 newsletter had reported that a key agenda item of the organization's previous meeting had been "How Can the Society Safely Increase Its Membership?"[66] The report indicated that MSW members viewed safety and discretion as of paramount importance, and they vetoed the idea of holding public meetings, because some members still feared public exposure and police surveillance. Instead, they decided "the best approach for enlarging our membership would be for each member to incite interest in the society among his friends."[67] This policy of encouraging friends to join was the MSW's main method of recruitment throughout the 1960s, though at the end of the decade, the organization also produced recruitment flyers. Members posted in homosexual establishments, but the MSW also reminded them not to "forget to give copies to your friends."[68]

Concerns about the need for secrecy continued throughout the decade, although there are hints that at least some members became less fearful about exposure as the decade wore on. For example, the March 1966 monthly

[62] For examples, see the *Insider*, March 1966 and April 1966, folder 9, MS 0764, series 1, RHPA.

[63] Individuals who lived beyond a fifty-mile radius from Washington, DC, could join the MSW as associate members. They paid reduced dues and received newsletters but did not attend meetings and thus did not have to go through such strict membership vetting policies. See Article 3, Section 3, MSW Constitution and By-Laws, folder 11, box 80, Kameny Papers.

[64] Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 193.

[65] Mattachine Society of New York, "Eastern Mattachine Magazine, volume 10, number 3," Rainbow History Project Digital Collections, 22.

[66] MSW gazette/newsletter, May 1963, folder 2, box 86, Kameny Papers.

[67] MSW gazette/newsletter, May 1963, folder 2, box 86, Kameny Papers. The MSW would repeat this reasoning and call for new members in a flyer sent to members about the 1964 campaign for MSW president. See folder 6, box 80, Kameny Papers.

[68] Letter to MSW Membership, 4 April 1969, folder 3, box 85, Kameny Papers.

membership meeting discussed "MEMBERSHIP SECURITY: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?"[69] The fact that some of the members thought it was safe to start easing some of the requirements for attending meetings was also made clear in the April 1966 membership newsletter, the Insider, which advertised that the next meeting would be open and that "members may bring guests without the usual Executive Board interview."[70] The MSW still cautioned members to "bring ONLY friends you know well" and to remain mindful of security concerns.[71] Nonetheless, the reoccurring KNOW YOUR (MSW) CONSTITUTION column in the MSW's May 1969 newsletter highlighted the constitution's rules about who could and could not attend meetings, noting that "each time the membership votes to hold an open meeting it is violating the Constitution."[72] Until the end of the decade at least some of the MSW membership continued to fear making meetings public and argued that open meetings created possibilities for FBI or MPD infiltration.

If homophobia and the need for secrecy affected the MSW's ability to attract members of any color, homophobic attitudes within the separatist and integrationist factions of the civil rights movement further complicated the MSW's efforts to recruit black members.[73] Separatists in the Black Power movement, such as LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Eldridge Cleaver, and Nathan Hare, were particularly homophobic and argued for a return to an "authentic blackness" in ways that erased the historical acceptance of same-sex desire in some African cultures and pushed for a severely patriarchal black-only community grounded in heterosexual marriage.[74] This separatist ideology was a rejection of stereotypes of blacks as hypersexual individuals unable to form stable heterosexual families, and it was in part a reaction to what Siobhan Somerville has described as an equation of blackness with sexual deviance and nonheterosexual desire that had been common in American sexual science since the nineteenth century.[75] Followers of Black

[69] *Insider*, February 1966, folder 9, MS 0764, series 1, RHPA.

[70] *Insider*, April 1966, folder 9, MS 0764, series 1, RHPA.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Mattachine Society of Washington, "The Insider, 1969, number 5," Rainbow History Project Digital Collections, 3.

[73] On the variety of experiences of homosexuals and in each faction and views on homosexuality of each faction, see Jared E. Leighton, "Freedom Indivisible: Gays and Lesbians in the African American Civil Rights Movement" (PhD diss., University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 2013); and Glenda Sherouse, "The Politics of Homosexuality in the Twentieth Century Black Freedom Struggle" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2013).

[74] See Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 105. See also Delroy Constantine-Simms, ed., *The Greatest Taboo: Homosexuality in Black Communities* (Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 2000); and Horace L. Griffin, *Their Own Receive Them Not: African American Lesbians and Gays in Black Churches* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2006).

[75] Siobhan Somerville, *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

Power countered that homosexuality was actually unique to white society; they claimed that whites had infected blacks with the poison of homosexuality to curtail procreation, to prove blacks were oversexed and a danger to whites, and to weaken black men's manliness.[76] In other words, advocates of Black Power equated a tolerance for homosexuality with a continuation of white supremacy.

The integrationist ideology of the civil rights movement also viewed homosexuality as morally wrong and harmful to the black community. As Thaddeus Russell claims, part of the integrationist project of respectability essential for "attaining citizenship was constructed upon heterosexuality and in opposition to nonheteronormative behavior."[77] This meant the elimination of spaces like bars and drag balls where blacks had previously allowed semipublic performances of nonheterosexual (and more gender-fluid) expression. Respectability implied that the assimilation of blacks into American society could only be achieved if blacks uplifted themselves by adopting the sexual and gender norms of those in power—the white middle class. Separatists argued that this kind of assimilation failed to fully recognize, value, or celebrate the history or culture of African Americans as its own and equally valuable and possible way of life; whites were allowing blacks into society only on their terms. At its best, this integrationist ideology aimed to erase race as a factor that determined one's value to society, and it promoted the bourgeois separation of public and private spheres that, in theory, could allow for the presence of homosexual desire and sex as long as it was not made public. In contrast to the separationists' attempts to militantly divide homosexuality from black identity, the integrationists emphasized the strategy of suppression and silence. At their extremes, both strategies sought to devalue homosexuality and purge it from the black community.

The views of these two strands of the civil rights movement on homosexuality, however, do not represent the variety of opinions toward sexuality in the District's black community. After conducting many personal interviews with homosexuals about their experiences in the first decades after World War II, Genny Beemyn noted that "all of the African Americans with whom I spoke about that time reported that they were largely accepted by their relatives and peers."[78] In contrast, Carlene Cheatam, a black lesbian activist in Washington, DC, recalled that many black homosexuals in the 1960s and 1970s "live here with their families and can't be out or in the position where family may very well know."[79] Either way, for many black

[76] See Leighton, "Freedom Invisible," 287–88; and Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 105.

[77] Thaddeus Russell, "The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality," *American Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (2008): 101–28, quote on 103.

[78] Beemyn, *A Queer Capital*, 122.

[79] Carlene Cheatam, interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 148.

homosexuals in the District or elsewhere, the issue of acceptance by family was critical, because many lived their entire lives within their home communities. As bell hooks wrote in an oft-quoted essay, many blacks, gay or straight, retained strong ties to their home communities and continued to live there because of "sheer economic necessity and fierce white racism, as well as the joys of being there with the black folks known and loved."[80]

These strong attachments to black communities kept many homosexual African Americans at home despite the antihomosexual messages of the civil rights movement. A similar prioritization of racial belonging influenced other social movements. In her work on feminist organizing in the District, historian Anne M. Valk found that, in contrast to the emphasis on "solidarity based in shared sexual or gender identity" in white feminist movements, the motivation to fight racism was a primary concern for African American feminist women in the mid-twentieth century.[81] Beemyn also argues that many black homosexuals in the District "already had a 'political consciousness' and 'a sense of community' as black people," a fact that made them less inclined to seek involvement in other social movements, such as the MSW.[82] As Glenda Sherouse argues in reference to broader national developments, "the need for racial solidarity both kept queer African Americans engaged in black communities and prevented any meaningful development of independent queer black identity politics until the 1970s."[83]

The tendency of District blacks to remain close to their home communities contrasts with the experiences of white members of the MSW, most of whom had come alone to the District for employment or to distance themselves from their families.[84] This distance, along with the privilege of their whiteness, meant that sexual orientation became a primary aspect of their self-definitions and a means of forming new communities and friendships. While the US census provides no data on sexual identity, three statistical categories provide hints that whites had fewer direct kinship ties in the District than blacks: between 1955 and 1960 a larger percentage of whites than blacks moved to the District from a non-District address; and between 1960 and 1970 more single whites arrived, and more of them were "primary individuals"—in other words, they were not the head of

[80] bell hooks, "Homophobia in Black Communities," in Constantine-Simms, *The Greatest Taboo*, 67. For experiences of homosexual black men in the South, see E. Patrick Johnson in *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South: An Oral History*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

[81] Valk, *Radical Sisters*, 157.

[82] Beemyn, *A Queer Capital*, 107. See also Michels, "Where the Girls Were," 189; and Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC."

[83] Sherouse, "The Politics of Homosexuality," 3.

[84] Charlene Cheatam observed that "most of the white gays *didn't* grow up here . . . and their family never knew" (interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 148).

a family.[85] In both 1960 and 1970 whites were also more likely to live in what the census called "group quarters," places with six or more unrelated persons, like lodging and boarding houses, military barracks, and college dormitories, all places that could allow for a private life separate from original families and friends.[86] The 1960 census also notes that whites were far more likely to have moved from a different state since 1955 (22.9 percent compared to 10.2 percent of blacks).[87] These data suggest that during the 1960s there was a higher percentage of whites than blacks living far away from family and in residences where they were not related to the others living there, making it plausible to assume that white homosexuals were more detached from direct kinship networks than blacks.

While both blacks and whites lived in a homophobic society, they experienced this society differently, because race emphatically shaped the District's organization of physical space. One of the continuing legacies of racism and legal segregation in the District was an easily visible racial divide in the city's geography that was deeply entrenched in citizens' daily lives by the time of the MSW's founding in 1961.[88] By the twentieth century, the District's large African American population had created a vibrant and economically diverse community, and blacks had been peacefully and successfully challenging the District's legal and social racial segregation since the 1930s.[89] This had made the color line more porous and created relatively mixed neighborhoods in the southwestern and northwestern quadrants of the city, but the eastern

[85] For example, while 42.3 percent of all white heads of household were a primary individual in 1960, only 20.2 percent of blacks were. In 1970 the number of white primary individual heads of household had decreased, but their percentage of all heads of household noticeably increased to 56.8. Blacks saw a small rise to 27 percent. See US Bureau of the Census, "Table 18—Marital Status, by Color and Sex, for the District of Columbia: 1940 to 1960," and "Table 19—Household Relationship, by Color, for the District of Columbia: 1940 to 1960," in *U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Part 10, District of Columbia* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1963), 10-16, 10-17; and US Bureau of the Census, "Table 22. Household and Family Characteristics by Race: 1970," in *Census of Population: 1970, Vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Part 10, District of Columbia* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1973), 10-31–10-33.

[86] US Bureau of the Census, "Table 19—Household Relationship, by Color, for the District of Columbia: 1940 to 1960," in *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, 10-17; and "Table 22. Household and Family Characteristics by Race: 1970," in *Census of Population: 1970*, 10-31–10-33.

[87] See US Bureau of the Census, "Table 42—Residence Five Years Prior to Census Date, by Color, for the District of Columbia: 1960 and 1940," in *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, 10-30.

[88] For a historical overview of how the race divide shifted in the District from its founding to the twentieth century, see Jaffe and Sherwood, *Dream City*, chap. 1; and Constance McLaughlin Green, *Washington: A History of the Capital 1800–1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

[89] For discussion of these events, see Constance McLaughlin Green, *The Secret City: A History of Race Relations in the Nation's Capital* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).

half of the city remained predominantly black.[90] However, by the 1960s, realists saw that while the legal supports of segregation had crumbled in the halls of government, this did not solve the city's economic or social inequalities.[91] For example, even though the United States Supreme Court declared housing segregation unconstitutional in 1948, blacks who wanted to move into better, "whiter" areas of the city still confronted difficulties securing loans and harassment from white neighbors and neighborhood associations.[92] The optimism about racial integration that had flourished in the late 1940s and 1950s was gone by the 1960s.[93] While racist attitudes may have softened, enduring structural inequalities and the spatial color line, noticeable in housing arrangements, schools, and economic status, remained, with few easy solutions in sight. In fact, in 1965 the geographical distribution of whites and blacks in the District was more divided than it had been in the 1950s.[94]

Life for homosexuals in the District was no less influenced by this physical and social reality, and homosexual spaces and attitudes often mirrored the District's layout at large.[95] Plotting the known homosexual bars and restaurants of the decade on a map makes the spatial divide of black and white establishments within the District immediately visible,[96] since homosexual spaces were far more likely to be situated close to and in downtown Washington and other white residential and commercial areas of the city. Blacks were generally not welcomed in these white establishments. For example, in an interview with Brett (who is now Genny) Beemyn, a black

[90] The 1960 census does not break down figures by quadrant. In 1970 12,043 whites and 18,326 nonwhites resided in the southwestern quadrant, while 156,964 whites and 190,373 nonwhites lived in the northwestern quadrant. There were 16,159 white and 168,280 nonwhite residents of the northeastern quadrant, with 24,106 whites and 170,259 nonwhites living in the southwestern quadrant. See US Bureau of the Census, "Table 33. General Characteristics for Quadrants: 1970," *Census of Population: 1970*, 10-46.

[91] On discrimination in employment practices, see Green, *The Secret City*, 313–17.

[92] Beemyn, "A Queer Capital," 160.

[93] Green, *The Secret City*, 10.

[94] Green makes this conclusion based on evidence from the population in the District's schools (ibid., 7).

[95] See Kwame A. Holmes, "Chocolate to Rainbow City: The Dialectics of Black and Gay Community Formation in Postwar Washington, D.C., 1946–1978" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011).

[96] The names and places of institutions come from folder 2, box 86, and folder 5, box 134, Kameny Papers; and the Rainbow History Project, "Rainbow History Project Places and Spaces," https://www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?snapid=S1584907MATM, accessed 5 June 2015. On this list, certain spaces are designated as "African American" and were primarily located in black neighborhoods: either north or south of Howard University along 7th Street, NW, or a few blocks west along 14th Street, NW, in the Columbia Heights area. Establishments not designated as specifically "African American" clustered downtown near Lafayette Square and Lafayette Park or were located in primarily white sections of the city, including at least one establishment in each of the following areas: Adams Morgan, Dupont Circle, Georgetown, and Eastern Market.

homosexual man recalled visiting the Chicken Hut, a restaurant popular with male homosexuals, in the 1950s after public dining establishments could no longer legally segregate or deny service because of race. He found that "the management had put 'reserved' signs on the tables, so that if any African Americans came in, they could be told that there was no available seating."[97] A decade later, James "Juicy" Coleman, a black homosexual man who had attended Howard University (the preeminent historically black university in the United States) in the late 1960s remembered that "there was not a camaraderie between the white gay community and the black gay community" in the District.[98] When visiting white bars he got the feeling that "this was their club and they wanted it to stay that way and ours was over here."[99] Blacks' desire to escape white patrons' hostility to people of color and socialize with members of their own community drove them to congregate in bars closer to black neighborhoods; these bars were often not exclusively homosexual, although some black homosexual-specific bars did exist at this time.[100] This left the main homosexual establishments with an almost exclusively white clientele.

The racism they experienced in the white bars frequented by homosexuals and the homophobia of other establishments encouraged some black homosexuals to form private social clubs in the 1960s. Otis "Buddy" Sutson, a black homosexual man who helped found one of these clubs, explained that black homosexual men and black lesbians "didn't have outlets . . . of [their] own," so they formed social clubs, drawing on a tradition of house parties that white and black homosexuals had enjoyed in earlier decades.[101] House parties were a common substitute for bars for those who feared police raids or being recognized in public homosexual spaces and were particularly common for middle-class lesbians, since in the early half of the century social norms prohibited women from going to public establishments without a male escort, and women's bars that did exist tended to be frequented only by the working class.[102] But the house parties were also divided by race. As Deb Morris, a black lesbian, recounted: "These were primarily parties in black homes [with]

[97] Beemyn, "A Queer Capital," 187.

[98] James "Juicy" Coleman, interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 211–12.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Beemyn notes that African American bars were also divided by class and that "black lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals in cities like Washington did not frequent bars with a primarily gay clientele or socialize just with other gay people" (*A Queer Capital*, 107, see also 106; and Beemyn, "A Queer Capital," 188, 202–3).

[101] Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 211.

[102] MSW member Lilli Vincenz noted that the "first nice women's bar" did not open in the District until 1968, a veiled reference to its non-working-class clientele ("Rainbow History Project Places and Spaces: Jo-Anna's"). See Beemyn, *A Queer Capital*, 108–9; Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 210; and Kennedy and Davis, *Boots of Leather*, esp. 123–31, 375–76.

black friends. Maybe there would be one or two white people there, but very rarely."[103]

Members of the MSW also rarely crossed the District's physical color line in their social activities, and this spatial segregation strongly limited the organization's ability to gain a multiracial membership. Placing the known locations for MSW meetings and events on a map mirrors the racial division of the city as a whole, with MSW events being held almost exclusively in white areas of the city, either in members' homes or in white homosexual establishments.[104] Even if the MSW had expected blacks to come to these events, the color of their skin would have stood out far more than their easily hidden sexual orientation in these white neighborhoods. As Beemyn writes, unlike whites, blacks "did not have the luxury of remaining inconspicuous in a segregated neighborhood like Dupont Circle," a white neighborhood with several homosexual establishments where the MSW hosted several of its meetings in the early years.[105] It was certainly understandable that, given the prevalence of homophobia, MSW members preferred to gather in spaces they saw as safe, either their own private homes or familiar (white) homosexual establishments. But the inability of blacks to discreetly enter these areas and the less-than-inviting environment of (white) homosexual establishments discouraged them from attending the meetings and helped to keep the MSW almost exclusively white.

This racial divide of the city also critically affected the recruitment of blacks through friendship networks. The fact that whites and blacks had very different experiences with space and kinship often meant that MSW members had few black friendships. In all of the interviews Beemyn conducted with homosexuals who had lived in the District in the decades after World War II, "few of the white gay and bisexual men . . . knew any black gay people, much less had any black gay friends."[106] As the examples above suggest, there is little reason to think this changed much in the 1960s. MSW cofounder Jack Nichols's description of the 1960s homosexual social scene in the District also suggests the limited opportunities of (white) MSW members to meet those of a different race. He recalled how a night out would begin at a (white) homosexual bar and then continue at private after-hours parties. Invitations to these parties spread by word of mouth at

[103] Michels, "Where the Girls Were," 64.

[104] The MSW had an office at 1319 F Street, NW, from 1966 to 1968. Known meeting locations were Hay-Adams Hotel, 800 16th Street, NW, in 1961; 1900 Lamont Street, NW (November 1962); 1700 Harvard Street, NW (December 1963); 1526 17th Street, NW (May 1965); St. Mark's Episcopal Church at 301 A Street, SE (1967–70); 1843 S Street, NW (April 1969); and 1000 6th Street, SW (July 1969). The MSW also held an anniversary party (1966) and fundraiser (January 1968) at the Golden Calf, 113 14th Street, NW.

[105] Beemyn, "A Queer Capital," 197.

[106] Beemyn, *A Queer Capital*, 121, 122–24. "The only exceptions were white men . . . who specifically sought out black men as sexual partners," often not for any form of emotional relationship (ibid., 121).

the bar, which helped protect the secrecy of the parties and their attendees. This also limited opportunities to meet new (or nonwhite) individuals and created an almost insular community. As Nichols remarked, "Not infrequently we'd keep running into the same people."[107]

When cross-racial socializing did occur, it happened because blacks made the effort to cross the color line. Melinda Michels, in her study on "the geographies of lesbian experience" in the District, observed that even the small number of lesbian bars meant that some racial mixing did occur: "African American women speak about patronizing the predominately white lesbian bars and often being one of the few women of color; but many of the white women narrators did not even mention the black bars. Even those that did mention the bars often only knew of them and had not been to them."[108] The same was true for black homosexual men. One black homosexual man remembered: "You didn't see whites in Nob Hill," a black homosexual male bar.[109] These and other interviews of homosexuals who lived in Washington, DC, in the 1960s point to the strong possibility that MSW members had few chances to make friends with black homosexuals.[110]

The MSW's main initiatives against discrimination also failed to cross the color line, giving the impression that the organization was not concerned with issues that may have resonated more strongly with black homosexuals in the District. Large portions of the MSW's work involved fighting the federal government to remove homosexuality as a justification for job termination or failed applications for the security clearance necessary for many government positions.[111] Kameny himself had faced such discrimination, losing a prestigious job with the United States Army Map Service after his superiors learned about a previous arrest for homosexual behavior. Combating this termination was one reason Kameny began the MSW, and the organization's focus on employment in the civil service was not surprising in a city where so many residents worked for the federal government. MSW members also knew that since the federal government controlled the budget and laws of the District, any changes in laws to prevent discrimination would have to go through the halls of Congress, creating profound effects throughout the nation.

[107] Lige Clarke and Jack Nichols, *I Have More Fun with You than Anybody* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1972), 64–65.

[108] Michels, "Where the Girls Were," 76.

[109] James "Juicy" Coleman, interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 211–12.

[110] Michels, "Where the Girls Were," 251.

[111] Three examples: First, the MSW distributed a pamphlet titled *What to Do in Case of a Federal Interrogation* (Clarke and Nichols, *I Have More Fun*, 16). Second, in 1963 Kameny testified before the US Civil Rights Commission and presented an MSW-produced report titled "Discrimination against the Employment of Homosexuals" (Tobin and Wicker, *The Gay Crusaders*, 101). Third, Kameny was instrumental in persuading the American Civil Liberties Union to begin opposing the ban on hiring homosexuals in the federal government (Tobin and Wicker, *The Gay Crusaders*, 101).

While all civil servants who became involved with the MSW risked investigations into their sexual lives that could lead to their termination, these risks could be higher for African Americans. Government jobs had historically provided one of the few escapes from the relative poverty that still afflicted the majority of African Americans in the country.[112] Still, only 2.5 percent of employees at pay grade 9 (out of sixteen) or higher were black in 1965, and by 1969 83.5 percent of African Americans working for the federal government still remained in the bottom eight out of sixteen civil service pay grades. [113] Given discrimination in other sectors, the loss of employment could be devastating, making the risk of joining the MSW too much for some African Americans. The fact that blacks in the federal government were often in clerical or janitorial positions and departments where the government was less about a "lavender" menace could also mean that black employees did not experience or see government discrimination based on sexual orientation as seriously as white homosexuals connected to the MSW.[114] Both realities limited the appeal of the MSW to black homosexuals.

The MSW did make three significant attempts to cross the color line. For most of the second half of the 1960s, the MSW met at St. Mark's Episcopal Church on Capitol Hill, a more mixed-race area than where the MSW had previously held its meetings. As white MSW member Nancy Tucker recalled, though, the need to retain secrecy made the space quite unwelcoming: "We met in the sub-basement of the church. We went downstairs and you had to cross the dirt floor where the furnace was into a remote backroom with no windows and one door behind the furnace. And it made you feel like a criminal."[115] The MSW made a more direct attempt to cross the color line when it placed advertisements for events in the Washington Afro-American,

[112] Given that blacks were far more likely to work in blue-collar or clerical jobs, they tended to earn considerably less than whites in this era. Median incomes for blacks were $1,300 less than whites in 1959. While the upper income-earning brackets of over $25,000 were dominated by whites (8,796 whites compared to only 928 blacks in 1969), the lowest earners (those earning less than $2,000) were twice as likely to be black (32,368 blacks compared to 17,887 whites). See US Bureau of the Census, "Table 65—Income in 1959 of Families and Unrelated Individuals, by Color, for the District of Columbia: 1960," in *U.S. Census of Population: 1960*, 10-45; and US Bureau of the Census, "Table 192—Income in 1969 of Persons by Race and Sex: 1970," in *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, 10-401.

[113] See tables A3.8 and A3.11 in *Separate and Unequal: Black Americans and the US Federal Government*, by Desmond King (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 236, 238. King's numbers come from the entire federal government, not just the District.

[114] In 1965, 1966, and 1967 blacks held a small number of positions in departments such as those of the military, defense, and science (NASA and Atomic Energy) that required higher security clearances even if blacks held almost 50 percent of GS-1–4 positions at the State Department and had higher percentages in higher grades in the State Department compared to almost all other departments. See table A3.13 in King, *Separate and Unequal*, 240. See also Samuel Krislov, *The Negro in Federal Employment: The Quest for Equal Opportunity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), 103–5.

[115] Michels, "Where the Girls Were," 232.

the most respected newspaper directed at the city's black population and the only paper to cover the MSW's first picketing demonstration in 1965.[116] (In contrast, the Washington Post, the premier newspaper of the District, refused to print any advertisements from the organization.) But there is little evidence that the Afro-American advertisements directly produced any growth in the MSW's membership.[117]

In a final effort to attract black members, the MSW did some direct recruiting in the 1960s at black homosexual bars. David K. Johnson describes MSW "recruitment drives at the Nob Hill, an African American gay bar" and writes that, at least for some time in 1965, the MSW "began monthly efforts to recruit the [gay] bar crowd, including visits to . . . African American gay male bars."[118] Although specifics are sparse, Kameny remembered that "as early as 1962" the MSW distributed flyers "in the gay bars patronized predominantly by Blacks." He recalled printing "up a leaflet. . . . I remember they were on green paper, they said 'You are welcome,' and tersely described [the] Mattachine Society."[119] Kameny's memory likely refers to a flyer that exists in his papers at the Library of Congress titled "The Negro and the Homophile Movement."[120] This flyer unambiguously acknowledged the racial diversity present in the homosexual minority. It explicitly stated that "the white homosexual has only one burden. The Negro homosexual has two." Significantly, the flyer's writers consciously racialized both white and black homosexuals by using the descriptors black and white, but race affected only blacks, as only they had two "burdens." Conceding that race was an unfair burden for "Negro homosexual[s]," the goal of the flyer was to get blacks to "work with" whites in the effort to win legal and social equality for the homosexual, an identity that they shared. The use of the preposition "with" was a remarkable choice, because it set up a nonhierarchical arrangement where black and white would labor side by side even if the flyer did not explain how this would happen. If any doubt existed about the MSW needing both races to achieve its goals, the flyer provided the explanation that the homosexual movement was "composed of Negroes

[116] *Washington Afro-American* advertisement confirmation, 6 June 1963, folder 12, box 80, Kameny Papers. Other newspapers did print stories about the MSW, but this did not normally occur at the MSW's request. For example, in 1963 the MSW received an explosion of media coverage when Congress tried to revoke its nonprofit solicitation certificate. On the 1965 demonstration, see folder 14, box 85, Kameny Papers.

[117] On 14 December 1965 Kameny complained in a letter to Swetterman, publisher of the *Washington Post*, that while the paper "can stomach the John Birch Society's political viewpoints" and publish notices of its meetings, it would not publish advertisements of the MSW. See Long, *Gay Is Good*, 112.

[118] Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, 193, 194. Although some of these establishments had a mixed-gender clientele, the lack of a lesbian-only establishment in the first half of the 1960s meant these efforts were more likely to reach black gay men than black lesbians.

[119] Kameny, interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 103; and Franklin Kameny, "A Brief History," folder 9, box 126, Kameny Papers.

[120] Folder 3, box 85, Kameny Papers.

and whites . . . trying to improve the social status of the homosexual—of all homosexuals, black and white."[121]

But the flyer also conveyed a problematic message that implicitly contradicted the organization's stated goal to create mixed-race membership. By stating that black homosexuals had two "burdens," the MSW implied that sexuality existed separately from race and ignored the ways that race affected the lives of black homosexuals. There is a bigger problem, however. Highlighting the existence of both black and white homosexuals but arguing that only blackness was a burden leaves whiteness without a critique. Certainly whiteness is not a burden, in that white persons do not face economic inequalities or legal discrimination because of the color of their skin. However, the text of the flyer failed to recognize that being white, just like being black, affects how people live their lives and determines the ways that they are able to express their sexual desires.

The flyer was the most concerted MSW effort to rectify the lack of diversity within its membership, and Kameny recalled that its distribution brought in "a small number of black members."[122] But the MSW did not retain this minor success in achieving a racially diverse membership throughout the decade. By 1969 and 1970, the years with the most surviving records on the MSW's outreach, the MSW had limited its efforts to primarily white spaces.[123] The dearth of advertisements for black homosexual establishments in MSW newsletters throughout the 1960s suggests that the MSW lacked strong connections with them.[124] Throughout the 1960s the realities of racial segregation, the complexities of kinship and friend networks, and the homophobia that MSW members and all homosexuals in the District faced each day limited the effectiveness of all recruitment efforts, no matter whom they targeted. The fact that the MSW consistently deployed rhetoric that posited an analogy between homosexuals and African Americans also helped create the impression of an insurmountable divide between the two groups. Even if it had wanted to, the MSW could have done little to disrupt white privilege in 1960s America, and the group's strategies actually helped to solidify the equation of a political homosexual identity with whiteness.

It has not been my intention to devalue the courage and successes of the MSW members. Although the organization failed to create a racially diverse membership and contributed to the creation of a stereotype of the homosexual as always white, the MSW made great strides in convincing members of the homophile movement and other homosexuals

[121] All quotes from "The Negro and the Homophile Movement," folder 3, box 85, Kameny Papers.

[122] Kameny, interview by Rebecca Dolinsky, quoted in Dolinsky, "Lesbian and Gay DC," 103.

[123] MSW newsletters, 1969–70, box 86, Kameny Papers.

[124] See MSW newsletters in folders 1 and 2, box 86, Kameny Papers.

to feel pride in being homosexual. Their argument that it was society and not the homosexual who needed to change and their advocacy for homosexual rights in the halls of the federal government and America's streets gained them key legal victories over the course of the 1960s.[125] In particular, courts ruled that the federal government could not fire or ban individuals from employment because of arrests for homosexual behavior or being homosexual, and, after constant lobbying and protests from the MSW, the board of the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of medical disorders in 1973.[126] However, despite MSW members' recognition that the whiteness of the membership did not reflect the racial diversity of the city, they did not find an adequate response to the homophobia, racism, and racial segregation of the era. These obstacles continued within the District, exemplified by the variety of tactics several homosexual "megabars" that appeared in the early 1970s in predominantly black neighborhoods of the southeast (where privacy-seeking white homosexuals could avoid being recognized) used to keep out people of color (and women).[127] As the MSW faded in importance and gay liberation groups like Gay Liberation Front—DC and Gay Activists Alliance DC superseded it in the 1970s and 1980s, more blacks started participating in the homosexual movement. Still, the movement remained overwhelmingly white. This continued lack of racial diversity did not go unnoticed, as David Aiken, a District homosexual activist and correspondent for the homosexual newsmagazine the Advocate, wrote in 1977 that despite active efforts to recruit a more diverse membership, many "gay activist organizations" around the nation had "only small numbers of blacks."[128]

Two years later, Kameny recognized that racism remained "one of the chronic problems facing the Washington Gay Movement."[129] The solution for many black homosexuals was to create race-specific organizations.[130]

[125] For an overview, see "Timeline of DC LGBT History," http://rainbowhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/timeline.pdf, accessed 20 May 2015.

[126] See Beemyn, *A Queer Capital*, 186–93.

[127] Ibid., 204–5; and "Rainbow History Project Places and Spaces: Lost & Found." These bars implemented policies that were calculated to dissuade blacks from frequenting them: they insisted upon multiple pieces of identification for blacks but not for whites; they charged only blacks a cover charge and often refused them service; and they banned clothing more likely to be worn by blacks. Similar policies were used to discriminate against women and men in drag. See also Buring, *Lesbian and Gay Memphis*, chap. 5, esp. 100–104.

[128] Baltimore was the one outlier. Aiken remarked that the Baltimore Gay Alliance had always had an active and large number of blacks in the organization, and its first president was a black lesbian woman. David Aiken, document dated 22 February 1977, folder 16, MS 0764, series 2, RHPA.

[129] Franklin Kameny, "A Brief History of the Gay Movement in Washington, DC," 1979, folder 9, box 126, Kameny Papers.

[130] For a discussion of how this played out in the District, see Beemyn, *A Queer Capital*, chap. 5. For examples of similar developments elsewhere, see Julio Capo, Jr., "It's Not

For example, in 1986 the continual lack of diversity within the movement prompted the DC-area-based National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays (NCBLG) to argue that the homosexual movement was "an essentially white movement" that "has failed to embrace" African Americans.[131] Blacks survived only on "the fringe of the movement—relegated to 'color' supplements, minority task forces, and workshops on racism—rather than woven into its fabric."[132] By putting "black" into their name, the NCBLG and other race-specific organizations made the exclusionary whiteness of existing groups more visible and drew attention to the fact that overt racism was not the only problem. These race-specific groups questioned Kameny's contention that race and sexuality could be divided and revealed how the homosexual subject that the MSW claimed to represent was silently colored with the privileged norm of whiteness.

Following Allan Bérubé, then, we must acknowledge that "the hard work of . . . fighting racial discrimination and exclusion, critiquing the assumptions of whiteness, and racially integrating white gay worlds" is not a task that white activists can ignore or leave up to African Americans.[133] Nor is it enough just to recognize racism and racial segregation within the homosexual movement. This history of the MSW has demonstrated that a recognition that the homosexual subject comes in all colors did not protect the organization from the blinders of whiteness and the tendency to see "white (and male and middle-class) [as] the default categories" for the homosexual American citizen.[134] This tendency eliminates the voices and experiences of any homosexual who does not fit these categories, limiting the movement's ability to achieve a world where all homosexuals, of whatever color, can live their most livable lives. As the history of the MSW demonstrates, this is not easy work, and there are many deeply entrenched obstacles. Historians must remain focused on explaining the influence of these various identities and on demonstrating that movements trying to change society for the better are themselves confined by the social structures, norms, and prejudices that have created categories of difference. Yet we must also remain optimistic that the challenges these movements face, while tall, are not insurmountable.

Queer to Be Gay: Miami and the Emergence of the Gay Rights Movement, 1945–1995" (PhD diss., Florida International University, 2011); Horacio Roque Ramírez, "'That's *My* Place!': Negotiating Racial, Sexual, and Gender Politics in San Francisco's Gay Latino Alliance, 1975–1983," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12, no. 2 (2003): 224–58; and Eric C. Wat, *The Making of a Gay Asian Community: An Oral History of Pre-AIDS Los Angeles* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

[131] *Black/OUT*, Summer 1986, 2, P3746, Historical Society of Washington, DC.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Bérubé, "How Gay Stays White," 192.

[134] Ibid.

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