

# UC Berkeley

## UC Berkeley Previously Published Works

### Title

The Affective CommonsGay Shame, Queer Hate, and Other Collective Feelings

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/54m9f1db>

### Journal

GLQ A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 24(4)

### ISSN

1064-2684

### Author

Stanley, Eric

### Publication Date

2018

### DOI

10.1215/10642684-6957800

Peer reviewed

# THE AFFECTIVE COMMONS:

## Gay Shame, Queer Hate, and Other Collective Feelings

Eric Stanley

Love Trumps Hate  
—Human Rights Campaign

Queers Hate Techies  
—Gay Shame

The commons has reemerged in left organizing and study to name ways of coming together that disrupt racial capitalism's technologies of accumulation, extraction, and alienation. From mass resistance to austerity policies in the streets of London, and antituition book blocs in Montreal to insurgent mapping projects in Rio de Janeiro—the commons offers radical collectivity as a mode of living against the bounded present. As a place, a structure of feeling, and an idea, the commons provides refuge in the ruins of capital's totality, yet its liberatory promise is betrayed by the abstraction of indigenous land, which is to say the imposition of settler-sovereignty, that allows it to be imagined in the first instance. What, then, remains of the commons if we abandon it as an innocent object immune to the force of capital's colonial violence?<sup>1</sup>

As an experiment in common, Occupy Wall Street gathered at Zuccotti Park in New York City with the aim of expropriating land from the lethal machines of enclosure and its transformation into the commodity form. Through its encampments in US cities and beyond, Occupy provided material-semiotic zones where the economic order was rendered suspect by left critique. It was also an occasion for the speculative work of fashioning anti-authoritarian group infrastructure from below liberal democracy's mandates of privatization or state control (Mitropoulos 2012). However, the sign that assembled them, "We are the 99 percent," captured the trouble with the commons and the tensions that exceed the banality of

*GLQ* 24:4

DOI 10.1215/10642684-6957800

© 2018 by Duke University Press

the slogan. This movement of scale from the singular subject to the multiple “we” collapses difference through the quake of equivalence. Or put another way, this consolidation demands a repetitious flattening that unequally disappears those already on the edges of the “we.” For example, during my short time at Occupy Wall Street, I witnessed transphobic and antiblack violence that was confronted by a political education session on gender self-determination and trans liberation led by Reina Gossett of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project. Furthermore, at Occupy Oakland there was an attempt to rename the encampment “Decolonize Oakland”—an effort initiated by Indigenous organizers who argued that *occupation*, rather than a strategy of decolonization, is the methodology of the settler state.

I make this point not to rehearse the tragedy of the commons thesis (Hardin 1968), which argues collectivity comes undone because individuals will inevitably sacrifice the multitude in the service of their own interest.<sup>2</sup> To be clear, it was the state that choreographed paramilitary assaults against Occupy Wall Street and Occupy/Decolonize Oakland, and not internal turbulence that caused them to fall. Further, it is not that the commons must adhere to a cohesive, if not totalizing, inhabitation because difference is what animates its radical potential. However, the struggle to claim *Occupy* versus *Decolonize* Oakland exposed how forcing the incoherence of relationality into representation, or at least a language in common, while preserving the political order, traps us in a loop. Here the scene of Occupy dramatizes the incommensurability of a common desire when the possessed individual, the subject of liberal democracy, remains intact. This brutal figure, the universalizing author of settler-sovereignty, persists in its ability to claim the commons as object while negating the anticolonial praxis that is collective-determination. Or, when the commons is thought and lived through settler epistemologies, and not a world ending, which is to say world-making struggle, “the commons” like *Occupy* sutures the very disruption it claims to enact. Figuring decolonization as the end of the world—“a program of complete disorder,” as Frantz Fanon (2005: 36, 2) reminds us, “infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and new humanity.” Here, then, the destruction of settler-sovereignty—the end of the world—is not generativity’s conclusion but its anticolonial precondition (Gould et al. 2011).<sup>3</sup>

From Occupy/Decolonize to the differently intensified yet ongoing time of pressure for those held against the wall of white cisnormativity, the drive that finds form in the idea of the commons remains seductive. Following the True Levellers’ “Common Treasury” (Winstanley 1649), Karl Marx (1992: 877) wrote that “common land” offered peasants “pasture to their cattle, furnished them with timber, fire-wood, turf,” a pre- or para-capitalist resource outside the law of individual

possession held for communal use.<sup>4</sup> This “common land” is now the psychic and material reserve from which both a mythic past and a utopian future is forged in much anticapitalist analysis. Yet, thinking with Decolonize Oakland in the settler context, the commons endures through a repudiation of indigenous sovereignty in order to render “common land,” whether Zuccotti Park or Oscar Grant Plaza, anachronistic—a space outside relational time. This is to say that the forced removal of Native peoples, the theft of land and language—the ongoingness of settler colonialism—is what allows the commons to appear empty and available (Goeman 2009; Wolfe 2006; Coulthard 2014: 12).<sup>5</sup> As J. Kēhaulani Kauanui (2015) argues, “The concept of the commons is itself a historically racialized and gendered concept, as well as one implicated in colonial structures.”

Staying with the troubled concept, I am concerned with how affect, in particular disgust and hate, structures relation, even as nonrelation, in and through space. Specifically, I am interested in how negative affect, or bad feelings, produce psychic bonds and collective energies in the practice of queer worlding (Haraway 2008; Muñoz 2013)—an affective commons. I read these entanglements via the still-unfolding archive of Gay Shame, a trans/queer collective that instigates through its posters, stencils, and zines, as well as by staging theatrical direct actions. Working explicitly against the nonprofit model, the group holds open meetings, and it does not fund-raise or have an operating budget—supplies are scavenged or stolen—and whoever is present constitutes the group. In other words, there is no formalized membership structure; rather, a core number of people continue to show up each week, as some participants have been there from its inception and others come and go. This shifting terrain has transformed the composition of those active in the group from predominantly, but not exclusively, white to mostly trans/queer people of color.

In 2001 Gay Shame started organizing in San Francisco, a city that has been so radically transformed by capital’s upward consolidation of life chances that the term *hypergentrification* fails to capture the speed and scale of change (Tiku 2013). Since the early 1990s the accelerator of San Francisco’s transformation, evidenced by the massive accumulation for some, and ruthless dispossession for others, is the tech industry, with its newly settled ruling class of young, mostly white, cisgendered and male, millionaires and billionaires.<sup>6</sup>

Along with this sustained ambivalence toward the idea of the commons, here I am interested in how a city is “known viscerally” through the echo of geography’s affective registers (Tuan 2001: 162). Gentrification is imagined by both New Urbanists and antidisplacement activists as spatially and architecturally organized, felt indeed, but not constituted or attacked through the affective. Yet

the sensorium of displacement, or that which interrupts the idea of *home*, expands from the pronounced violence of mass houselessness—to the quotidian ways one’s connections are worn down by the closing of bookstores, evictions of neighbors, and policing of streets—the white noise of white return. The commons, then, is a limit and a door leading to both the irreducible friction of togetherness, the constriction of the “we,” and its transformative potentiality to open to another world.<sup>7</sup>

The affective commons for Lauren Berlant (2012: 77) tells us something about the “formation of structures of feelings” as the “unstated residue of collective life.” In particular, the residue of Gay Shame’s collectivity is evident in, which is to say lives beyond, the ephemera of their direct actions. For the group, the affective commons—a cosmology of feelings, a resource in common—names the methodology through which they hold the joined questions of space, difference, and conjuncture. Attention to the affective work of Gay Shame, and not simply its expressed critique, opens an analysis of the devastation of racial capitalism’s modes of extraction, which might better apprehend what slides alongside the properly political. To this end, if the political is constituted as the domain of settler-sovereignty—the world of the human—then centering the affective commons might help chart a politics after the political, or a way to survive the unsurvivable present, and remain beyond the end of the world.

### Runway as a Weapon

A wheat-pasted flyer on a light pole in the Tenderloin neighborhood asked us to “Prepare for the Exploitation Runway.” In 2002 Gavin Newsom was a San Francisco supervisor in the midst of a mayoral campaign that articulated a “clean up the city” ethic intended to return white capital, and its people, to San Francisco, much like similar programs across the United States. Central to his platform was Proposition N, “Care Not Cash,” which promised to reduce General Assistance checks from \$359 a month to \$59, the difference to be replaced with social services. However, this increased “care” was legislatively undefined and unfunded; the proposition functioned as a semiotic attack and punitive gesture that ensured poor people remained structured as phantom wards of normative civil society (see Coalition on Homelessness 2002).

Gay Shame’s response, “Prop N Stands for Nightmare,” called for people to directly confront Newsom in his Marina neighborhood, which is among the wealthiest and whitest districts in San Francisco. A flyer for the event read,

October 25th 5:30 pm at Webster and Chestnut Streets, San Francisco  
Gay Shame plans to take on Gavin Newsom’s Proposition N, misnamed “Care

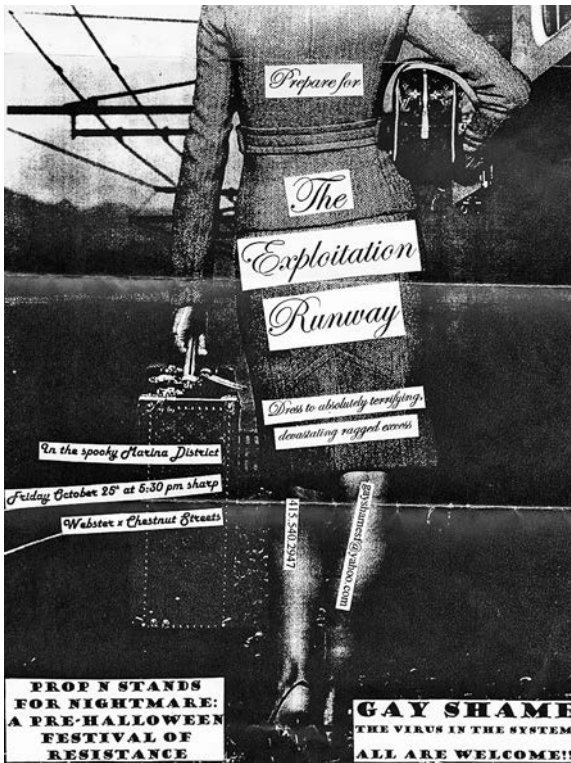


Figure 1. *Exploitation Runway* poster, Gay Shame, 2002

Not Cash,” in his home turf with a pre-Halloween Festival of Resistance in the Marina District. Events include an Exploitation Runway, a Gavin Newsom Look-Alike Contest, and food and music will be provided. Dress to ragged, stultifying, terrifying excess and join us in the Marina to defeat Prop N! (Gay Shame 2002)

Activists constructed a haunted city out of cardboard and found objects in order to block the entrance of his campaign headquarters as well as provide a backdrop for their festival of resistance. Along with the Gavin Newsom Look-Alike Contest promised on the flyer, the action ended with the Exploitation Runway, where “exploiters of the past, present, and future,” including Christopher Columbus and Senator Dianne Feinstein, walked the bloody runway in categories like Gentrification Realness (Old School and New School), Displacement Divas, and Eviction Couture. M. Lamar and Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore emceed as house music filled the streets from a PA system hitched to the back of a bike. Through camp sensibilities, the theatrics of humor, and duct tape, the runway—a motor of commodity fetishism—was temporarily repurposed as a barricade against Newsom’s claim to the city.<sup>8</sup>

After the energetic pulse of the event, Gay Shame continued targeting Newsom, and while the group did not endorse candidates or engage with electoral politics in an affirmative sense, it was clear in its opposition. Shortly after “Prop N stands for Nightmare,” a \$150-a-head “Hot Pink” fund-raiser for the newly constructed and already challenged San Francisco LGBT Community Center was announced, with Gavin Newsom and his wife, Kimberly Guilfoyle Newsom, as its guests of honor.<sup>9</sup>

Protesters gathered outside the center to greet attendees by handing them hot-pink bags of trash. These agitprops refracted the negative use-value of those unpropertied who are reduced into debris through the equation “Care Not Cash.” In an aesthetic assault, the trash bags dulled the shimmer of San Francisco liberalism, exposing the collaboration between antihomeless policy, capital investments, and mainstream LGBT politics. Many of the gala’s attendees had recently fought, and successfully blocked, the construction of a permanent trans/queer youth shelter in the Castro, citing the fear of stalled property appreciation as their reason for opposition.<sup>10</sup>

Gay Shame’s actions, like the Exploitation Runway, use the performativity of protest to incite cooperation—resistance in common. They break the circuits of spectatorship and audience that tend to divest those who show up from feeling connected to the event. Shortly after Gay Shame assembled, about two dozen cops suited in riot gear and state power formed a blue wall of revenge in front of the center’s glass doors. Newsom and his wife arrived and were smuggled in under armed guard, which signaled the locking of doors behind them by the center’s staff. Moments later, the police advanced toward those still assembled on the sidewalk and began beating people with batons, tackling others to the concrete, including myself, and leaving at least one person bleeding from head wounds with multiple missing teeth. While the attack raged, the center’s staff, straight politicians, and their gay best friends cheered the police on in celebration from the building’s rooftop bar and behind the safety of locked glass doors.

The night ended on the pavement with protesters receiving medical treatment and at least four arrests, including a Black Gay Shame protester who was held under felony lynching charges for breaking the fall of a victim of police violence. Here, the polemics of their analysis crashed into the absurd force of the real. Or put another way, Gay Shame’s critiques, specifically those targeting the constitution of LGBT politics as, and in service of, white normativity, manifested in incarceration and spilled blood for trans/queer people who were denied entrance to “gay space” (Read 2003).

The SF LGBT Center (2016) produces itself as the “heart, home and hands

of the San Francisco LGBT community.” Although it is owned and operated by a nonprofit and its board of directors, its affective appeal to “community” animates this imagined and shared vision, articulated through the historical and present exclusions of LGBT people from public and intuitional space. This is to say, it mobilizes the fantasy of a safe space—a common space in name—yet on the night of “Hot Pink,” it was both the place where, and the mechanism through which, a straight politician was protected and trans/queer activists were locked outside, beaten, and arrested. Rather than an anomaly, this bloody scene brings into relief the geometry of contemporary power that maintain its consistency under the twinned practices of liberal inclusion and brutal force.<sup>11</sup>

### Complaining Is Not a Luxury

Gay Shame formed in the late 1990s in Brooklyn in opposition to the corporatization and otherwise assimilatory grounding of mainstream LGBT politics. Its first events there, and a few years later in San Francisco, were offered as a DIY “alternative” to the massively commercialized Pride parade, where speakers, workshops, bands, and DJs assembled in an attempt to fuse partying with a radical queer analysis. Many of the early organizers were alienated by the austerity of left politics, which attended to sexuality, gender, disability, race, and aesthetics as an inconvenience (at best) to class struggle. While drawn to the collective potential of nightlife, they also wanted to confront the racism, classism, and transmisogyny of the gay party scene.<sup>12</sup>

Because Gay Shame is not legally or economically tied to legitimate and legitimating institutions, or perhaps because of the group’s bad attitudes, it continues to produce incendiary interventions that disturb across the political range. This nonalignment to a controlled platform, or the political as such, planned through an anarchist consensus model, has found the collective being charged as *divisive*, *negative*, and *disruptive*. In their 2017 zine, “Is there room for direct action divas?,” a how-to guide for horizontal organizing, between sections on building takeovers and wheat pasting is the “complaining is not a luxury” subheading that states,

People are often confused by the name “GAY SHAME.” The more people hate on our name the more we realize it’s working. People think that sarcasm is for people who are too scared to speak truth to power. But Bayard doesn’t know how bad it is now. No matter how outrageous the messaging of our actions is, it pales in comparison to the genocidal realities that



we're up against. Actually, our jokes are always about 8,000 steps behind how bad things actually are. We don't feel it's worth starting a conversation with Power™. We don't want to work within a shitty system that is already stacked against us. We complain. After all, our purpose is not to propose policy. We find community through expressing resistance. ALL ARE WELCOME. (Gay Shame 2017)

For Gay Shame complaining names forms of disruption made by those outside, which is to say those captured inside, the properly recognized, might include trolling politicians like Gavin Newsom, critiquing gay marriage, reading the ableism of much direct action organizing, and more. Complaining is the lower frequency of objection that vibrates in the same field and might be the method of expressing anger for those at the borders of the properly human. Rather than situate complaining as that which inhibits direct action, for Gay Shame it is a form of struggle in a long practice of interruption. Complaining reorders the political logic that demands the affective be exchanged for the pragmatism of legislative maturity and parliamentary participation. A politics against the political—they weaponize the negativity of critique in and against a world where the respectable modes of operation catch participants in the ruse of democracy. Yet this negativity is not aimed toward self-obliteration or a decomposition into the nihilism of finitude. By scavenging the remnants of the social, Gay Shame finds, or more precisely fashions, collectivity through the commons of hate.<sup>13</sup>

### **Brogrammers off the Block**

The question of space and the sense of displacement have mobilized many of Gay Shame's interventions for the last decade. Although the history of Silicon Valley as a site of technocapital (Suarez-Villa 2009) is much longer, the recent past has seen its massive expansion, with the headquarters of Google, Facebook, Uber, AirBnB, Salesforce, Twitter, and countless others erected in San Francisco or within a forty-mile radius. Those struggling to survive the city use the cutting terms *brogrammer* or *techie* to name the mostly young, white, cisgender male employee-owners of these massive corporations. Adorned with the casual confidence of their historical experience and uniform in logood hoodies and suburban fear, techies sleep in the city and are driven to work on "Google buses," the private buses that shuttle employees to work, ensuring that they are not inconvenienced by the *public* of transportation.

While the city actively supports these techies and the corporations for

which they work through tax incentives and the legalization of their illegal use of public bus stops, and countless other “private public partnerships,” many low-income residents, especially Latinx and Black communities, now find their own streets unrecognizable and increasingly hostile. The nightmare for those living under constant threat of displacement is scandalously inverted through the calculus of individuated risk and American ingenuity, which locates the gentrifier, and not the victim, in need of care. Justin Keller, a tech entrepreneur, in his open letter to Mayor Ed Lee proclaimed, “The wealthy working people have earned their right to live in the city. They went out, got an education, work hard, and earned it. I shouldn’t have to worry about being accosted. I shouldn’t have to see the pain, struggle, and despair of homeless people to and from my way to work every day” (quoted in Miller 2016).

The trespass, for Keller, is articulated at the level of the scopic, but he also offers a nonphenomenology, a theory of antirelationality against a practice of worlding. His treatise mobilizes a sterile individualism to argue cross-class contact is the symptom of a state that is failing to shield him from the very conditions he has created. For him, the offense is not that the unequal structuring of racial capitalism produces abject precarity but that he is subjected to observing “the pain,” which disturbs his ability to “not know.” As a proper subject of settler sovereignty, his analysis, by way of a counterreading, brings into view the secret betrayal that is liberal democracy—the anticommuns. In contrast to Gay Shame’s commons of hate, which works to destroy the logics of civil society, Keller’s revulsion confirms the subjugation of those banished by private property—normativities structuring drive. Keller’s recent arrival is mirrored by the closing of *Esta Noche*, the last queer Latinx bar in the city, and Marcus Books, the oldest Black-owned bookstore in the United States, along with countless other spaces, as luxury condos crowd the sky. Keller’s attack, which finds as its target homeless people, demands and is rewarded with increased policing, unmitigated condo development, and drip coffee (Crucchiola 2016).

While resistance to gentrification, including much of the organizing in San Francisco, rightfully narrates the most recent generation of those under threat of removal as having a claim to where they live, Gay Shame’s flyer from 2014 links the current gentrification of Latinx residents from the Mission to the longer and ongoing displacement of indigenous Ohlone people. Through a nonmimetic juxtaposition, the image places Spanish colonization in the field of vision with the Google buses turned Armada. This nonlinear image of “a new old course” arranges gentrification as a practice of spatial and temporal reordering, for both recent and older projects of de- and re-peopling, while “innovation,” the promise of technol-



Figure 2. *Gentrification and Colonization in the Mission* poster, Gay Shame, 2014

ogy from Marx to contemporary tech empires, is announced as the justification for occupation and exploitation, and not its remedy.

Without guarantees, Gay Shame's poster asks how we might apprehend the porous contours of gentrification, in perhaps its deadliest form—as a low-intensity battle waged in the affective materiality of the everyday, and not a single and always knowable moment in time and space. Here, the left orthodoxy that assumes “innovation” self-evidently builds toward horizontally distributed relief is necessarily jeopardized by reinserting San Francisco as Ohlone land. It also situates displacement as protracted, immanent, and nonteleological, which pushes against a settled story and the romance of the commons as its antidote. Or, the image asks how might we inhabit collective action against gentrification that does not reproduce the inevitability of settler colonization, or collapse the two?<sup>14</sup>

To further entrench the antagonism between displacement and its champions, for the past few years Gay Shame has stenciled “QUEERS HATE TECHIES” in pink and purple paint on sidewalks around the city. The text lays bare the resentment many of its organizers experience, and the critique, by way of opposition, affirms hate as the idiom through which queers, and many others, might organize collective life. The stencil also provokes the city to proclaim, through the cunning silence of policy, how it hates queers and all those who struggle against urban renewal as social cleaning. In the tradition of class warfare, the incivility of the



Figure 3. *Queers Hate Techies* sticker, Gay Shame

“Queers Hate Techies” message is rigorous and strategic.<sup>15</sup> Rather than a call for *dialogue*—the liberal technic of liquidation by other means—it is the desperate tonality of existing in a world where estrangement and dislocation are the condition of being. For Gay Shame, this sensorium of fear, anger, rage, and hate, felt in common, provides, at least momentarily, a respite from the isolation and exhaustion of living on in a vanishing city.

Against hate, everywhere in liberal and leftist rhetoric love is mobilized as the proper defense for marginalized people under threat. From Che Guevara’s (2003: 225) often-cited “the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love,” and the anarchist call to arms, “love and rage,” to the proclamation “Love Trumps Hate” currently dotting manicured lawns and city windows alike, love becomes tautologically cemented as the primary if not singular affect in which liberatory action might live. Put plainly, this instrumentalization of love is a liberal lockdown that wages an already lost war of maneuvers for recognition against what seeks nothing other than its elimination.<sup>16</sup>

Love is revolutionary, especially for those whose access to it has always been under siege, yet it is also the site of mass mobilization against trans/queer people of color in various forms. White nationalists, and their liberal simulacra, also cite love as their motivation, here for racist action, which clarifies its nonidentity. If the prohibition against hate maintains its strength, even in otherwise critical thought, then perhaps it is there, in the negative, that a queer affective commons builds, as much against bad objects as it does through bad

feeling. On Gay Shame's antitech stencils, a reporter echoed popular opinion, "And, the irony of a queer activist group promoting hate of any kind, or violence against an undesired group, is clearly lost on them" (Pershan 2015). The "irony" that this writer misnames is not that oppressed people hate their oppressors: it is that they do not always. This sentiment, which exists as gospel, renders the never-ending violence of displacement as inevitable, and its resistance unbearable. Here, then, it might be precisely through trans/queer hate that possibilities in the form of collectivity are organized against these normative mandates when love means self-annihilation.<sup>17</sup>

Recalling this deconstructive potentiality, Audre Lorde (2007: 127) exhumes, with demanding clarity, how anger is instrumentalized as a felt analytic of Black feminism in and against an antiblack and misogynist world. "Everything can be used / except what is wasteful / (you will need / to remember this when you are accused of destruction)." She anticipates the charge of being labeled destructive, which, like complaining, is gendered in a racist syntax that leaves the *real* work of objection to the rationality of the human—the proxies of white cis heteronormativity. Resisting the ways anger is argued to only destroy those who hold or express it, she states "that anger has eaten clefts into my living only when it remained unspoken, useless to anyone" (ibid.: 131). For Lorde, like in Gay Shame's zine, anger, and even hate, is a way to "find community through expressing resistance," an affective commons, built in part through negativity, but whose antisocial orientation is orchestrated toward ante-social life.<sup>18</sup>

### Decenter the Center

In the shadow of San Francisco's LGBT Center is a dead-end street, obscured by the wall of an adjacent building. Because of its relative shelter from moving traffic, houseless people have made their lives on the sidewalks and pavement of the cul-de-sac. Its proximity to a freeway underpass has defended it, to some degree, from the real estate speculation swallowing everything around it. Yet in an attempt to empty out those who find some protection there, it was turned into an "off the grid" food truck corral, where commerce and artisan tacos crowded out the tent homes of its residents. However, the food trucks disappeared each night and the street was reoccupied, intensifying the harassment experienced by those sleeping there from neighborhood groups intent on increasing the value of their newly purchased property. As remedy for the *problem* of people using public space outside, or perhaps beside legal exchange, the city turned the dead end into a public park. The people were removed, and the sloping hill was terraced, up-lit, and planted with

drought-tolerant succulents—markers of revitalization for some, signifier of life's end for others (Wenus 2015).

McCoppin Hub remained a public park for three years and was still used primarily by houseless and marginally housed people as a place to gather. Still, this use of the park by those placed under the sign of homelessness, most of whom were of color, was so intolerable to the owning class who now called this stretch of Valencia Street theirs, propertied residents demanded that Supervisor Jane Kim build a permanent fence around the park to ensure that it could only be used for official purposes under the keyed administration of the city.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to the commonly held land that Marx narrates, here making the land “common” was the durational mechanism that allowed it to no longer be accessed by specific publics, namely, those assumed to be homeless. This is of course a sustained practice of state land acquisition from settler accumulation to the forced removal of Native people from national parks (Burnham 2000) and the deracination of Black communities from what became New York's Central Park, in order to produce them as “natural”—that is to say, *unspoiled* by human inhabitation.<sup>20</sup>

The twelve-foot fence now circling the Hub is a form of “defensive architecture,” a cruel theory and practice in urban design that anticipates the way space might be reclaimed by, or used in opposition to, the intentions of its owners. The fence was erected the same week as the massive “No Ban No Wall” protests at San Francisco International and airports across the United States in protest of Trump's order to further restrict travel to the United States by people from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Yemen, and Somalia, which was deployed alongside his plan to build a wall between the United States and Mexico. Gay Shame dropped a banner on the new fence that read “NO WALLS NO FENCES NOT KIM'S NOR PENCE'S” to tie together the ways the atrocities of state violence are, under neoliberal common sense, imagined to be elsewhere. Or, the banner as pedagogy reads its viewers that might justifiably express outrage at Trump's Islamophobic and xenophobic policies but support antihomeless actions, like the building of fences, in their own neighborhoods.<sup>21</sup>

Ten years after the original scene of police brutality at the “Hot-Pink” riot, Gay Shame returned to the LGBT Center. Resisting the illusion of possible redress from an institution it understood to be foundationally dangerous, the group's demand was for the end of demands, by way of repurposing the center itself. Fearing that squatting the building would continue the ways it is already enclosed, after much debate the group took a different approach. Along with citing the violence of the action a decade earlier, Gay Shame diagnosed the center as a “non-profit vor-



Figure 4. *No Walls No Fence Not Kim's Nor Pence's* banner, Gay Shame, 2017

tex.” The center has no open, or even semipublic, space, and trans/queer youth of color are regularly removed from the property by force. One of the few times I have been inside the building, a uniformed and armed police officer who was acting as a receptionist confronted a friend and me, demanding that we leave the building because this was “the lobby of a business and not a meeting place.”

Gay Shame’s high-concept, low-resolution action included the clandestine hanging of a tarp from the building’s fourth floor that read, “the center sucks our . . . inspiration, potential, dreams, money, time, imagination.” Wrestling matches raged out front between recognizable and less recognizable nonprofiteers, including Human Rights Campaign canvassers, AIDS service organization executive directors, and gala attendees, all emceed by Sir Isaac Newton. The same glass doors that were, ten years earlier, locked tight to prevent trans/queer escape from police brutality were bolted open with bike U-locks. Under a forty-foot banner, protesters forced—to the point of collapse—the center’s affective scaffolding that allowed it to remain both an LGBT home and an anti-queer fortress.

The commons here serves as a limit concept through which we might better understand the conditions of space and its affective tempo as contingent and disjointed. Or, it operates as a reading practice that charts the structuring parameters of the social while inciting us to dream against the hard pragmatism of the present. The doors to the center, now locked open, were one such imagining, a revolt against neoliberal spacialization—the distance between the organization of common space and the materiality of enclosure, including national parks, dead-end streets, and LGBT centers.<sup>22</sup>

With ambivalence, the commons remains useful even as an object of critique, because it approximates the drive for, and the impossibility of, being together in difference, when these asymmetries disaggregate as much as they collect. What I have been calling the affective commons might more accurately be



named the affective commune, following Marx's (1993: 483) distinction: "The commune thus appears as a coming-together [Vereinigung], not as a being-together [Verein]." Here, the commune, or perhaps more precisely, communing, is a process of coming-together, and not instantiated as arrival or absolute being. On the obligation of coming-together, Jean-Luc Nancy (2010: 149) suggests that "communism, therefore, means the common condition of all the singularities of subjects, that is of all the exceptions, all the uncommon points whose network makes a world (a possibility of sense)." I take this to mean that communism, here again as an activity and not a location, is the placeholder for a communing that might bear, or perhaps account for, singularities and exceptions. Communing, then, serves as antidote, at least in aim, to the deadly individualism of Justin Keller's fantasy while sustaining the difference necessary to defend against the majoritarian weight of common rule.

Following Nancy, the affective commons, as commune, is the coming together of singularities and exceptions, toward a queer future, and against what disciplines us to love our oppressors while awaiting a freedom that never comes. This communing through affect gathers a nonidentity forged in joyful negation, a motley assemblage of outsiders, freaks, and queers, those disposed of and made disposable by latest capitalism. The affective commons, through the provocation of *Gay Shame*, builds not toward a reincorporation of the social but toward the total destruction of a world constituted through the vertically distributed violence of modernity. Under the banner of the affective commons, revolutionary love might set us free, but perhaps hate, too, grows freedom.<sup>23</sup>

## Notes

This article is indebted to all those who have organized and continue to organize with *Gay Shame* in an attempt to build cultures of resistance in hostile worlds.

1. I am here thinking with Cedric Robinson (2000) on the production of race as the precondition for capitalist modes production. Book blocs are a form of black-bloc organizing where shields are made out of large pieces of wood and painted as book covers. For an account, see Wojtek 2012.
2. For a critique of "The Tragedy of the Commons," see Harvey 2011.
3. Here I am suggesting that without destroying the fantasy and practice of modernity's possessed individual, which serves as a scaffolding of settler colonialism, "the commons" will reproduce the same violence it attempts to escape. Further, if taken seriously, this demands an end of the world as it currently exists, which is also an occasion to imagine alternative forms of sociality.



4. Here I am referencing John Locke's (1993) theory of possessive individualism as a settler epistemology.
5. See also Indian Country Today 2011.
6. I am referencing Donna Haraway's (2016) idea of "staying with the trouble" as a way to inhabit the contradictions of the political. For more on how queer worlding operates in the rub of political feelings, see Muñoz 2009. Also, much of my thinking here has been sharpened by his work and our many conversations about the queer and brown commons. A recent study (Nested 2017) found that San Francisco has the highest residential rents per square foot in the world. For an ethnographic account of space of affect, see Stewart 2007; Tiku 2013.
7. I am here also thinking with Delany 2001 on the question of the "affective registers" of gentrification, sex, and place. See also Muñoz 2013.
8. For a more detailed account of this action, and the early history of Gay Shame, see Bernstein Sycamore 2004 and Weiss 2008. Other insights into the structure and history of the group are from my experiences organizing with them.
9. Rather than endorse candidates, Gay Shame ran "Mary for Mayor," a performative candidacy whose platform included "compost the SFPD."
10. An example of how LGBT mainstream politics reproduces antihomeless violence was dramatized in the fight led by the Castro Business District association against a trans/queer homeless shelter proposed for the Castro; see Aviccolli-Mecca 2015.
11. For an excellent account of how "safe spaces" have and continue to be mobilized in the service of gentrification, see Hanhardt 2013.
12. Gay Shame continued to organize, meeting every Saturday for sixteen years in the back of Modern Times Bookstore in San Francisco's Mission District, until its eviction in 2016.
13. Here the queerness of negativity and the negativity of queerness are functioning as a kind of melancholic utopianism. In other words, I am not suggesting that Gay Shame is invested in an antisocial lockdown that forecloses pleasure. I see it creating a space for, or at least a mode of, joyful persistence that does not hinge on liberal enactments of hope. I am here thinking about how "the human" as a disciplinary category is deployed and withheld. For more on how Black feminist thought, trans theory, and some formations of posthumanism understands "the human" as a situated concept, see Weheliye 2014.
14. We could look at the recent prison abolitionists' pushback against police unions and antigentrification activists' critiques of white communal houses in neighborhoods of color for two other examples that point to the limit of collectivization. For more on the critique, see Remle 2017.
15. At least two of Gay Shame's organizers, both of whom are of color, have been recently evicted from their long-term homes in San Francisco.
16. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2011: 181) on the productivity of love affirm,

- “To say love is ontologically constitutive, then, simply means that it produces the common.”
17. On love and white nationalism, see Ahmed 2014. For more on the ways queers have used hate, see Anonymous 1990. See also Cobb 2005. For another example, see the ways love is mobilized through the discourse of “protecting women and children” (whom are always assumed, thus produced, as nontrans) in the most recent iteration of antitrans bathroom laws. Ngai’s (2007: 339) attentiveness to the uses of disgust as a self-preserving tactic is vital.
  18. I am using “ante-social life” as a way to point toward a melancholic utopian longing for complex relationality.
  19. For another example (in New York City) of how space is turned “public” in order to police it toward the goal of gentrification, see Manalansan 2005.
  20. Harney and Moten (2013: 65–t6) point us, in different terms, to the way “public and private” are reassembled.
  21. For more on Trump’s travel ban, see Merica 2017. For coverage of the “No Ban No Wall” protests, see Swartz 2017.
  22. Here I am thinking with Berlant (2016: 395) where she suggests, “the better power of the commons is to point to a way to view what’s broken in sociality, the difficulty of convening a world conjointly, although it is inconvenient and hard, and to offer incitements to imagining a livable provisional life.”
  23. Queerness is working as an assembly of the dispossessed, not unlike the formation that Cohen 1997 offers. *Latest capitalism* was a term Angela Davis used when I was a student in her Critical Theory Seminar in 2004 at the University of California, Santa Cruz. I read her use of the phrase as a kind of serious joke to show how “late capitalism” is ever transforming.

## References

- Ahmed, Sara. 2014. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Anonymous. 1990. “Queers Read This.” *Queer Resources Directory*, June. [www.qrd.org/qrd/misc/text/queers.read.this](http://www.qrd.org/qrd/misc/text/queers.read.this).
- Avicelli-Mecca, Tommi. 2015. “The End of the Dream.” [www.avicollimecca.com/the-end-of-the-dream/](http://www.avicollimecca.com/the-end-of-the-dream/).
- Berlant, Lauren. 2012. “Affect in the End Times: A Conversation with Lauren Berlant.” *Qui Parle* 20, no. 2: 71–90.
- . 2016. “The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 3: 393–419.
- Bernstein Sycamore, Mattilda. 2004. “Gay Shame: From Queer Autonomous Space to Direct Action Extravaganza.” In *That’s Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting*

- Assimilation*, edited by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, 237–62. Brooklyn: Soft Skull.
- Burnham, Philip. 2000. *Indian Country, God's Country: Native Americans and the National Parks*. Washington, DC: Island.
- Coalition on Homelessness. 2002. "The Thirteen Biggest Lies Prop. N Backers Are Telling San Francisco Voters." *Street Sheet Online*, September 1. [www.streetsheetsf.wordpress.com/2002/09/01/the-13-biggest-lies-prop-n-backers-are-telling-san-francisco-voters/](http://www.streetsheetsf.wordpress.com/2002/09/01/the-13-biggest-lies-prop-n-backers-are-telling-san-francisco-voters/).
- Cobb, Michael. 2005. "Uncivil Wrongs: Race, Religion, Hate and Incest in Queer Politics." *Social Text*, nos. 84–85: 251–74.
- Cohen, Cathy J. 1997. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3, no. 4: 437–65.
- Coulthard, Glen Sean. 2014. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Crucchiola, Jordan. 2016. "SF's Tech Bus Problem Isn't about Buses. It's about Housing." *WIRED*, February 17. [www.wired.com/2016/02/sfs-tech-bus-problem-isnt-about-buses-its-about-housing/](http://www.wired.com/2016/02/sfs-tech-bus-problem-isnt-about-buses-its-about-housing/).
- Delany, Samuel R. 2001. *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. New York: New York University Press.
- Gay Shame. 2002. "Proposition N Stands for Nightmare, a Pre-Halloween Festival of Resistance." *Indybay*, October 7. [www.indybay.org/newsitems/2002/10/07/15346391.php?show\\_comments=1](http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2002/10/07/15346391.php?show_comments=1).
- . 2017. "Is There Room for Direct Action Divas?" [www.bigdoorbrigade.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GayShame-DirectAction-Zine.pdf](http://www.bigdoorbrigade.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/GayShame-DirectAction-Zine.pdf).
- Goeman, Mishuana R. 2009. "Note towards a Native Feminism's Spatial Practice." *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2: 169–87.
- Gould, Corrina, Morning Star Gali, Krea Gomez, and Anita DeAsis. 2011. "Decolonize Oakland: Creating a More Radical Movement." *Decolonize Oakland*, December 3. [www.occupyoakland.org/2011/12/decolonize-oakland/](http://www.occupyoakland.org/2011/12/decolonize-oakland/).
- Guevara, Ernesto Che. 2003. In *The Che Guevara Reader: Writings on Politics and Revolution*, edited by David Deutschmann. Havana: Ocean.
- Hanhardt, Christina B. 2013. *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Haraway, Donna J. 2008. "Forward: Companion Species, Mis-recognition, and Queer Worlding." In *Queering the Non/Human*, edited by Myra J. Hird and Noreen Giffney. London: Routledge.
- . 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hardin, Garrett. 1968. "The Tragedy of the Commons." *Science* 162: 1243–48.
- Hardt, Michael, and Antonio Negri. 2011. *Commonwealth*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

- Harney, Stefano, and Fred Moten. 2013. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions.
- Harvey, David. 2011. "The Future of the Commons." *Radical History Review* 109: 101–7.
- Indian Country Today. 2011. "Indians Counter Occupy Wall Street Movement with Decolonize Wall Street." *Indian Country Media Network*, October 7. [www.indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/indians-counter-occupy-wall-street-movement-with-decolonize-wall-street/](http://www.indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/indians-counter-occupy-wall-street-movement-with-decolonize-wall-street/).
- Kauanui, J. Kēhaulani. 2015. "Nothing Common about 'the Commons': Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Difference." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Studies Association, Toronto, October 10.
- Locke, John. 1993. *Two Treatises of Government*. London: Everyman Paperback.
- Lorde, Audre. 2007. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Reprint, Berkeley, CA: Crossing.
- Manalansan, Martin F. 2005. "Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City." *Social Text*, nos. 84–85: 141–55.
- Marx, Karl. 1992. *Capital: Volume I: A Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin Classics.
- . 1993. *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. London: Penguin Classics.
- Merica, Dan. 2017. "Trump Signs Executive Order to Keep Out 'Radical Islamic Terrorists.'" *CNN*, January 27. [www.cnn.com/2017/01/27/politics/trump-plans-to-sign-executive-action-on-refugees-extreme-vetting/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/27/politics/trump-plans-to-sign-executive-action-on-refugees-extreme-vetting/index.html).
- Miller, Michael E. 2016. "S.F. 'Tech Bro' Writes Open Letter to Mayor: 'I Shouldn't Have to See the Pain, Struggle, and Despair of Homeless People,' 'Riff Raff.'" *Washington Post*, February 18. [www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/02/18/s-f-tech-bro-writes-open-letter-to-mayor-i-shouldnt-have-to-see-the-pain-struggle-and-despair-of-homeless-people/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2016/02/18/s-f-tech-bro-writes-open-letter-to-mayor-i-shouldnt-have-to-see-the-pain-struggle-and-despair-of-homeless-people/).
- Mitropoulos, Angela. 2012. *Contract and Contagion: From Biopolitics to Oikonomia*. Brooklyn: Minor Compositions.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. 2009. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press.
- . 2013. "The Brown Commons: The Sense of Wildness." Feminist Theory Workshop, May 8. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=huGN866GnZE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=huGN866GnZE).
- Nested. 2017. "Rental Affordability Index (2017)." Nextday Property Ltd. [www.nested.com/research/rental/2017/global/all](http://www.nested.com/research/rental/2017/global/all).
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2010. "Communism the Word." In *The Idea of Communism*, edited by Slavoj Žižek and Costas Douzinas, 145–54. London: Verso.
- Ngai, Sianne. 2007. *Ugly Feelings*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Pershan, Caleb. 2015. "Nihilist Gay Group Adds Threatening Anti-Tech Fliers to Divis, Was behind Last Crop in Mission." *SFist*, November 23. [www.sfist.com/2015/11/23/nihilist\\_protestors\\_add\\_anti-tech\\_f.php](http://www.sfist.com/2015/11/23/nihilist_protestors_add_anti-tech_f.php).

- Read, Kirk. 2003. "SF Street Theater: The Hot Pink Police Riot." *GayToday.com*, March 10. [www.gaytoday.com/viewpoint/031003vp.asp](http://www.gaytoday.com/viewpoint/031003vp.asp).
- Remle, Matt (Wakíŋyaŋ Waánataŋ). 2017. "Gentrification Is NOT the New Colonialism." *Last Real Indians*, December 5. [lastrealindians.com/gentrification-is-not-the-new-colonialism/](http://lastrealindians.com/gentrification-is-not-the-new-colonialism/).
- Robinson, Cedric J. 2000. *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- SF LGBT Center. 2016. "About | SF Center." [www.sfcenter.org/the-center/about](http://www.sfcenter.org/the-center/about).
- Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Suarez-Villa, Luis. 2009. *Technocapitalism: A Critical Perspective on Technological Innovation and Corporatism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Swartz, Jon. 2017. "About One Thousand Flood SFO to Protest Immigration Ban." *USA Today*, January 28. [www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/01/28/1000-flood-sfo-protest-immigration-ban/97200022/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2017/01/28/1000-flood-sfo-protest-immigration-ban/97200022/).
- Tiku, Nitasha. 2013. "Twitter Will Cause So Much Gentrification, They Invented a New Word." *Valleywag*, October 17. [www.valleywag.gawker.com/twitter-will-cause-so-much-gentrification-they-invente-1447346147](http://www.valleywag.gawker.com/twitter-will-cause-so-much-gentrification-they-invente-1447346147).
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 2001. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Weheliye, Alexander. 2014. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Weiss, Margot D. 2008. "Gay Shame and BDSM Pride: Neoliberalism, Privacy, and Sexual Politics." *Radical History Review* 100: 87–101.
- Wenus, Laura. 2015. "McCoppin Hub Will Be Fenced to Keep Out Homeless." *MissionLocal*, September 16. [www.missionlocal.org/2015/09/mccoppin-hub-will-be-fenced-to-keep-out-homeless/](http://www.missionlocal.org/2015/09/mccoppin-hub-will-be-fenced-to-keep-out-homeless/).
- Winstanley, Gerrard. 1649. "The True Levellers Standard Advanced by Gerrard Winstanley." *Marxists.org*. [www.marxists.org/reference/archive/winstanley/1649/levellers-standard.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/winstanley/1649/levellers-standard.htm).
- Wojtek. 2012. "A Book Bloc's Genealogy." *Libcom.org*, November 21. [libcom.org/library/book-bloc-s-genealogy](http://libcom.org/library/book-bloc-s-genealogy).
- Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4: 387–409.