

Intersections

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SYLVIA RIVERA LAW PROJECT

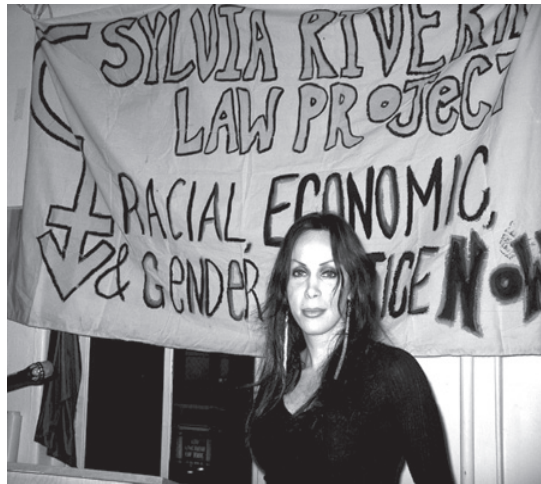
March 2008* Issue 11

'It's War In Here': A Report on the Treatment of Transgender and Intersex People in New York State Men's Prisons

SRLP is proud to announce the release of a groundbreaking publication. *It's War in Here*, written by D. Morgan Bassichis, draws on interviews with imprisoned transgender people and their advocates to document the widespread harassment, physical and sexual abuse, discrimination, and violence that transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people face inside state custody. *It's War in Here* illustrates the cycles of poverty and discrimination that result in so many transgender and gender non-conforming people being poor, homeless, and imprisoned, and is a valuable resource in educating policy-makers, attorneys, service providers, and community organizations about this urgent issue. This report will be distributed to all Superintendents of NY State Prisons. The full report can be downloaded for free at <http://www.srlp.org/documents/warinhere.pdf>

BECOME A PRISONER PEN PAL!

We have already received 30 pen pal applications as of this printing, and the list is growing quickly! We also encourage people to send letters of support and other correspondence even if they cannot commit to being a pen pal on a continual basis. Call 212-337-8550 x 307 and/or email Gael Guevara at gael@srlp.org. All interested pen pals will receive an orientation regarding the project which will include an overview of the program, boundaries, and time commitments.



Report Release Event

On January 31st, community members and allies of SRLP came together to celebrate the release of the report and to

learn more about our current prisoner rights work. We had a number of great speakers, including formerly incarcerated trans people who spoke about their experiences and the great need for continued support of this work. SRLP collective members spoke about the process of creating the report and about opportunities to get directly involved in supporting trans prisoners, such as the prisoner pen pal program. Current pen pal Kate Rood spoke about how

much the experience had enriched her own life and her belief that "some of the most important work we can do to support our community members behind bars is denying forced invisibility." Attendees also created valentine cards and donated a total of \$215 for care packages to be sent out to currently incarcerated clients of SRLP. All this with a soundtrack provided by DJ Imani Henry and a disco ball turning above! Many thanks to everyone who contributed food and drinks for the potluck!

This gathering was the first in a series of community building events that SRLP plans to host throughout the year. Our next event (this coming summer) will be a series of self-defense workshops and Know Your Rights information trainings for transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people, in collaboration with the Center for Anti-Violence Education Project.

Dear supporters and friends of SRLP,

Welcome to the 11th issue of *Intersections*, the official newsletter of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project! Since the release of the last newsletter, the Public Education Team (PET) has been busy!

We continue to sell and screen our documentary, *Toilet Training*, which addresses the persistent discrimination, harassment, and violence that people who transgress gender norms face in gender segregated bathrooms, to various audiences around the country. We are especially excited about a recent screening at the Osaka Human Rights Museum in Osaka, Japan. The Museum donated \$500 USD to SRLP for the screening of the film!

Coordinators of a previous screening at the Kansai Queer Film Festival were kind enough to subtitle the film in Japanese and share that copy with the Museum. Since our last newsletter, we've presented workshops at colleges including Sarah Lawrence, Antioch, Harvard, Rutgers, and University of Michigan, as well as the South Asian Awareness Network Conference and Hetrick Martin Institute's Trans Week. We've been spreading the word about our new report, "It's War In Here," which was featured in a cover story for the *New York Blade* and was the focal point of workshops given in February at the New York State LGBT POC health conference in Albany, NY and at the Creating Change conference in Detroit, MI. We've also created Spanish editions of our Trans Youth Healthcare brochure and our Immigration Rights brochure, both of which are now available in a printable PDF format on our website.

And the website itself is undergoing major changes. Over the winter, the website has been completely overhauled, including a redesign and an upgrade to the back-end that will allow collective members to plug in community alerts and announcements as they receive them. Keep your eye out for SRLP's new website in the next couple of months!

However, not everything the PET has to report is good news. In early February, we were deeply saddened to learn of the murder of Sanesha Stewart, a transgender woman of color who was also a member of our community. When the Daily News reported Sanesha's murder in a sensationalized way, we united with GLAAD to approach the Daily News and get them to comply with our demands to reconsider the way they

cover issues that pertain to trans and gender non-conforming communities. After the meeting, they accepted our writing guidelines and suggestions and agreed to circulate them throughout the news room, which was a great victory for the community.

We thank you for your continued support and urge you to keep donating to our important cause, fighting for racial, social, and economic justice for transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people.

— June Brown for the PET

PS: Watch for an upcoming 3-Day Media Training this July!

In Memory of Sanesha Stewart

SRLP is saddened by the loss of a strong, beautiful, and kind woman and member of our community. We extend our deepest sympathies to all of her family, friends, and loved ones.



SYLVIA RIVERA LAW PROJECT

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Newsletter editors, contributors and producers:

Shaiquan Alize, Gabriel Arkles, June Brown, Vincent Gardner, Gael Guevara, Emily Nepon, Dean Spade

The newsletter of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project is produced twice a year by the volunteers and staff of SRLP. It is distributed free of charge to members of our mailing list and supporters of SRLP. To get on our mailing list, write to:

SRLP
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New York, NY 10001
or visit our website at www.srlp.org

Violence and Punishment: Transforming Justice in Trans Communities

The recent tragic murders of Lawrence King and Sanesha Stewart have sparked many of the ongoing conversations in trans community spaces about how to respond to the violence we face. We wrestle with a tension between the desire to seek retribution through the criminal justice system and the recognition that trans people face an enormous amount of violence at the hands of that very system. Many people hope that penalty-enhancing hate crimes laws will provide justice to our murdered loved ones, forcing the state to recognize their humanity and the value of their lives through its laws. Others argue that the criminal justice system exists to warehouse and control people of color and poor people, and that state violence (especially from police and inside prisons) is the most common violence against trans people, so putting more power and resources into the hands of the criminal justice system does not save our lives but instead gives more tools to our oppressors. In moments of mourning, these conversations become very difficult as we realize how confining and coopting the legal remedies are.

These important conversations about violence, what it means to be safe, and how to strategize an approach to the criminal justice system were taken up this fall at a historic national event called Transforming Justice. In October, 2007, 200 people from 14 states around the country, 60% percent of whom were trans and gender non-conforming people who had at some point in their lives been in prison, jail, or juvenile or immigration detention, gathered in San Francisco to build shared analysis and strategize about trans imprisonment. Transforming Justice was the first gathering of its kind. Initiated by SRLP as an idea for a small roundtable gathering in 2006, the idea grew and expanded as a committee of co-organizers from around the country worked to plan the event. The planning process committed to prioritizing the leadership of currently and formerly imprisoned trans people with allies providing support and resources.



The two-day event provided facilitated discussions about the cycles of poverty and criminalization that result in high rates of imprisonment for trans people, the experiences of violence while in prison, the nature of the prison industrial complex, and the necessity of moving beyond reform models that can end up building the prison system. The sessions were

structured to maximize participation of all attendees and bring together information about the state of trans imprisonment issues in various regions. At the end of the second day, the group committed to continue working together and agreed to five points of unity:

1. We recognize cycles of poverty, criminalization and imprisonment as urgent human rights issues for transgender and gender non-conforming people.
2. We plan to organize, to build on and to expand a national movement to liberate all our communities and specifically transgender and gender non-conforming people from poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, racism, ageism, transphobia, classism, sexism, ableism, immigration discrimination, violence and the brutality of the prison industrial complex.
3. We commit to ending abuse and discrimination against transgender and gender non-conforming people in all aspects of society with the long term goal of ending the prison industrial complex.
4. We agree to continue to discuss with each other what it means to work towards ending the prison industrial complex while addressing immediate human rights crises.

Next steps for the group are already underway. Staff from SRLP, Critical Resistance and Queers for Economic Justice recently put out a call to begin a process to organize a Northeast Regional Transforming Justice Gathering. We are excited about bringing these

(continued p4)

TransJustice (continued from p3)

conversations to the regional level and moving towards increasing solidarity, awareness, resources for prisoners, and strategies for supporting currently imprisoned people, helping people when they get out, and dismantling the prison system. We are confident that it is this kind of work, building shared analysis and networks of support that are accountable to people targeted by the system, that will make trans people safer.

To get involved in organizing for the East Coast Regional Transforming Justice Gathering, contact Gael Guevara at 212-337-8550 x307 or gael@srlp.org, or join the listserv by going to yahoo groups and searching for transformingjustice_northeast.



Introducing the SRLP Prison Advisory Committee!

Sylvia Rivera Law Project is thrilled to announce our new Prisoner Advisory Committee (PAC).

We hold a strong belief that the people most affected by the systems of violence and oppression that we fight are the best people to be leading that fight. We also believe that social justice organizations must find ways to directly involve the members of our community who have been separated from us by the criminal injustice system. The PAC is one way to overcome the enormous state-created barriers to communication and political participation for the people who are most affected by the prison industrial complex.

The PAC currently has 15 amazing members who are enthusiastic about sharing their time, passion, and expertise with SRLP. So far, every member is a trans, intersex, or gender non-conforming person incarcerated somewhere in New York State. Members of PAC work

collaboratively with members of our collective to develop the structure of PAC's work. Already, PAC members have helped with a national position statement on transgender healthcare in correctional settings. They are developing creative ways to work on changing policies, building community, and sharing information and strategies.

We are grateful to have PAC join in SRLP's work and we look forward to more great things from PAC in the future!

Upcoming Events

This Summer: A series of **self-defense workshops** and **Know Your Rights information** trainings for transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people. These events will be a joint collaboration with the Center for Anti-Violence Education Project. For more information, contact gael@srlp.org or sign up for SRLP's listserv by emailing info@srlp.org

Watch the SRLP listserv for announcements about these events in coming months:

- Media Training Workshops
- Reception for SRLP's Legal Community
- House Party Fundraiser for SRLP's Academic Community
- and more!

Searching for Ways to Support SRLP?

On **Facebook**? Join our **Causes Page** and help spread the word and raise funds for us. In our first month, we've raised \$275! http://apps.facebook.com/causes/view_cause/65153

Make us your **Goodsearch** Group! Each search using www.goodsearch.com generates 1 penny for SRLP. We received \$45 from Goodsearching in 2007.

Do you sell things on eBay? SRLP is now listed with eBay's **MissionFish.org** to receive tax-deductible donations from eBay sales. Designate SRLP to receive a percentage of your sale amount at www.missionfish.org

Community Words

PRISONS AND PROJECTS

They're caging us in prisons and projects confining us on Indian reservations delaying

our progress entrapping us in concentration camps keeping us uneducated, poor and jobless

silencing us by confining us to prisons and projects.

They're planning our demise through platinum and diamonds filling our imagery with visions of grandeur enticing us to spend on clothes that cost beyond our means.

They're manipulating us like pawns in chess once a powerful nation we've somehow digressed into inmates and residents in prisons and projects.

They're killing us with lethal injections poisoning our minds with ill given directions coaching our daughters to accept disrespect training us to depend on food stamps and WIC checks.

They're distributing propaganda distorting the truth blatantly stunting the growth of our youth misinforming us with lies blinding us with ignorance deafening us with the noise of their own belligerence.

They are teaching our children to follow the same path of violence and hatred as their fathers and their father's father before them, equipping them to battle with the authorities.

As the powers that be infiltrate our neighborhood hunting us down like animals in the woods.

They're pumping drugs and guns on our streets, flooding sickness and disease into our communities protecting themselves with diplomatic immunity.

One may ask what exactly should we do with these institutions of unspoken indignities that are often referred to as prisons and projects.

Whose idea was it to create these identical complexes surrounded by gates affordable housing is the wolf in disguise which they use to mask their plan for our demise. You ever notice that we are raising generations in these institutions that hold back a nation of people.

Have you figured out yet that it's part of the plan that was master mind and carried out by the man to ensure that we would never escape our shackles every step forward is conquered and tackled. They're limiting our choices diminishing our prospects by keeping us caged in prisons and projects.

— Vincent Gardner

Volunteer Highlight

SRLP wants to recognize all the amazing hard work of Alejandra Guzman. Alejandra has been a long-time volunteer with SRLP, helping us in various ways including outreach, mailings, and community events.

Alejandra helped organize and outreach for the Trans Day of Action 2007. She also flew out to California and spoke at the Transforming Justice Conference, a gathering of former

trans prisoners and allied activists

working together for the rights of Trans Prisoners.

Alejandra also volunteered at the "It's War In Here" Prisoner Report

release party.

Alejandra is a strong voice for Trans communities in New York City and we are

honored to be able

to work with her. **Gracias Alejandra por todo lo que haces por el Sylvia Rivera Law Project!**



Liberation is a Collective Process! Volunteer with SRLP!

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer please fill out the volunteer application form, which you can find on our website online, or contact us at volunteer@srlp.org and request an application.



The Sylvia Rivera Law Project continues to grow in response to the great need facing our community. To finance our efforts, we rely on grassroots support from our community. Individual donors are an essential component of our existence. Our successful fundraising events and activities are made possible by volunteer energy and community support.

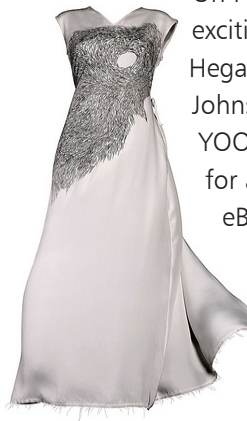
Bands Event

Our 3rd Annual Benefit Show on February 7th at Southpaw was a big hit. We raised over \$2,000 at the door, with many thanks to the spine-tingling band Electric Fiction, the soulful revolutionary sounds of Taína Asili y la Banda Rebelde, and the glamrocking group Inner Princess! MC's Peter Cramer and Jack Waters entertained the crowd, DJ Tikka Masala inspired a big dance party at the end of the night, and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence kept the crowd festive with their baskets of candy and other treats. Including the 6 Sisters, we had 20 volunteers at the event, plus Billy Keefe who volunteered graphic design for the palmcards! Thanks to everyone who came out to Brooklyn on a weeknight to make this such an excellent event!



Photo credit: Eileen Cheong

Antony's Valentine



On February 14th, SRLP received an exciting Valentine from Antony Hegarty of the band Antony and the Johnsons and the Italian company YOOX.com. The two joined together for an innovative collaboration: the eBay benefit sale of a gorgeous one-of-a-kind dress designed by Hegarty, handmade in coordination with the New Academy of Fine Arts – Milan. The sale ended on February 23rd

with a final bid of \$1,750 which will be donated in full to SRLP! Thank you to all who helped make this happen. The sale was listed on MTV.com, MTV.ca, NME Magazine, and Papermag's website as well as a number of other indie music and fashion sites.

Small Works for Big Change

In October 2007, SRLP held its 4th annual Small Works for Big Change. The event raised a spectacular \$10,300! This year, thirty-eight artists, including Emily Roysdon, Daphne Fitzpatrick, Allison



Smith, Miranda July, and Sadie Benning donated pieces or art for sale to benefit SRLP. The large crowd enjoyed performances by Kalup Linzy, Tara Mateik, Wu Ingrid Tsang, Collective Opera Company, and DJs Tikka Masala and Designer Imposter. Thanks also to the host committee: Naomi Beckwith, Casey Chanton, Dean Daderko, Jacob Robichaux, Jasmine Spacher, Amy Mackie, Kristin Poor, and Emily Roysdon. Sarah Meltzer Gallery donated the gorgeous space, Ilana Lobet made a generous donation of framing services, and Clifford Chance LLP sponsored the printing of the catalogue and postcards.



Board Fundraiser

On February 9th, the SRLP Board hosted a fundraising house party at the home of Jorge Irizarry. Thanks to Jorge, Lisa Kwock, Gabriel Arkles and Mickey Lambert for their organizing work, and thanks to everyone who gathered in the Bronx to celebrate and support the work of SRLP!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT SINCE OCTOBER:

Douglas Acosta, Rudolfo Aguirre, Anonymous, Thomas Alexander, Jack Aponte, Kyle Applegate, Joey Arbagey, Beau Archer, Gabriel Arkles, Linda Arkles, Kate Atkins and Ali Kronley, Miriam Barrere, Tab M. Battle, Rev. Pat Baumgardner, Jeannette Berkley, Molly Biklen, Richard Blum, Tyrone Boucher, Ginger Brooks Takahashi, Aisha Burnes, Matthew Carmody, Natalie Chin, Donna Chin-Ng, M. Samuel Choi, Yvette Choy, Leidy Churchman, Rachel Churner, CISPES, Naomi Clark, Community Health Project, Inc., Holly Delany Cole, Talia Cooper, Jane Cross & Paul Spector, Courtney Dailey, Julia Daniel, Ann Danoff, Megan Davidson & Shawn Onsgard, Carrie Davis, Radym Davis, Benjamin Dharlingue, Elise C. Dorr-Dorynek, Emily Drabinski, Celeste Dupuy-Spencer, Randall Ehrbar, Jesse Ehrensaft-Hawley, Alice Eisenberg, Elizabeth Flanagan, Kristine L. Fraklin and Sarah E. Chinn, Sarah From, Debra Roth & Elaine Freedgood, Denise Gaberman, Chitra Ganesh, Nadia Gareeb, David Crawford, Daniel Gillmor, David Gleason, Tierney Gleason, Joel Goldberg, Julie Goldscheid, Nick Gorton and Dan Gonsalves, Cindy Greenberg, Arnold Grossman, Holly Hatfield, Mitchel Hawkins, Emma Hedditch, Wylie Hembree, Darby Hickey, Julie Hollar, Charles King, Kiran Hudka, Talya Husbands-Hankin, Jorge Irizarry, Kate Jerman, Sara Johnson, David M. Jones, Jasmin Kahn, Sandor Katz, Nia King, Paige Kruza, Lisa Kwock, Mickey Lambert, Martha Langmuir, Matt Larsen, Andrea Lawlor & Bernadine Mellis, Colby Lenz, Betsy & Gail Leondar-Wright, Gary Levine & Maxine Mintzner, Donna Levinsohn, Jacob Lieberman, Emily Lindell, Elizabeth Lindsey, Cayden Lovejoy & Chelsea Ross Green, Perry Lowe, Bernard Lumpkin & Carmine Boccuzzi, Mathew Lyons & Virginia Claire Mcguire, Matthew Lyons, Nergis Mavalvala, Daniel McGee, Samuel Meals, Bryn Miller, Pooya Mohseni, Rusty Mae Moore, Ean Murphy, Raj Nayak, Marilyn Neimark & Alisa Solomon, Emily Nepon, Dick Neyhart, Outten & Golden, LLP, Camile Pahwa, Allison Palmer, Crystal Parikh, Mariette Pathy Allen, Allen Payne, Michael Petruzzi, Elizabeth Phillips, Maureen Phillips, Afi Phoebe, Richard Pleak, Kristin Poor, Ryan Pryor, J. Pultz, Lorraine Ramirez, Laura Reeds, Kenneth Reichel, Aisha Roberts, Carla Roldes, Katherine Rood, Lupe Rosales, Jules Rosskam, Emily Roysdon, Kate Rubin, David Russell, Jeremy Rye, Ingrid Sandberg & Gabriel

Rosenberg, Sara Jaye Sanford, Lisa Sbrana, Daniel Schaffer, Schere, Second Helpings, Benjamin Shepard, Sonja Shield, S'MAC, Jen Sinton & Shakti Jaising, Maxx Sizeler, Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP, Becki Smith, Mackenzie Smith, Seton Smith, Jasmine Spacher, Diane Steen, A. L. Steiner, Ahouva Steinhaus, Aleza Summit, Dean Spade, Rania & Katrina Spade, Mary Taft-McPhee, Michael Terrell, Polly Thistlethwaite, Susan Tipograph, Andy Toomajian, Wu Ingrid Tsang, Ilona Turner, Janis Walworth/Center for Gender Sanity, Mary Warner & Stacie Hendrix, Dava Weinstein, Erica Weinstein, Ben Weston, Randy Wicker & Julia Murray, Sam & Cass Williamson, Rachel Wofsy, John J. Won, Jason Wu **and thank you to the Foundations that support our work: Arcus Gay and Lesbian Fund, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, The Calamus Foundation, Funding Exchange, Gill Foundation, Hayward Burns Fellowship, Kicking Assets Fund of Tides Foundation, New York Foundation, The New York Women's Foundation, Open Society Institute, Paul Rapoport Foundation, Queer Youth Fund of the Liberty Hill Foundation, and Stonewall Community Foundation.**



SPECIAL GIFTS

In honor of:

Alison Aldrich; Nicole Avallone; Ray Carannante; Sue Deasy; Amy Dinnerman; Katie Douglass; Eric, Lisa, Sam & Max Davis; Herbert Davis; Karen Hutchison; Julie Johnson; Steven Keith & Roscoe Betsill

Emily Nepon

Amy Russell

Dean Spade

Jessie Spector

Alicia Virani

The wedding ceremonies of

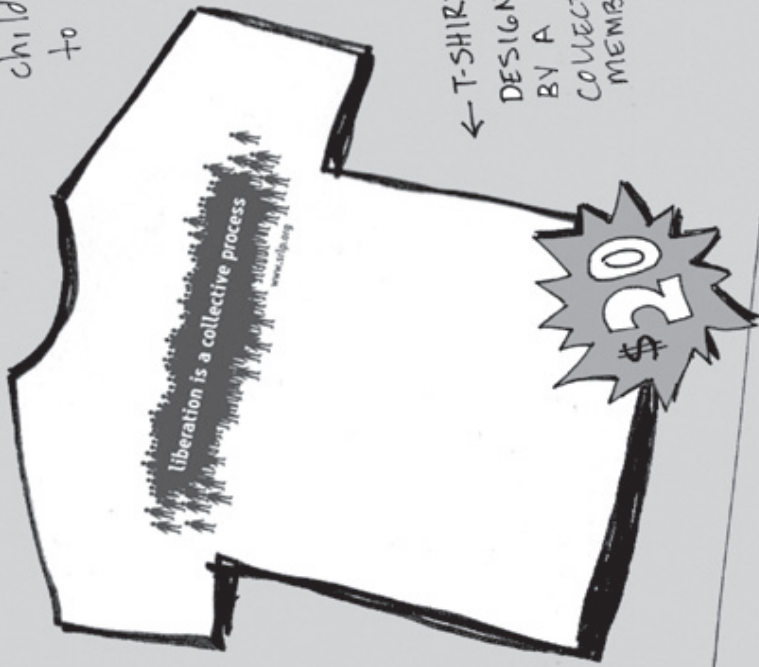
Reese Jimenez & Krissi Jimroglu

Marc Krupanski & Claire Hobden



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