SYLVIA RIVERA LAW PROJECT

This is not a place for hotel

2010-2011 ANNUAL REPORT
FROM THE COLLECTIVE

This year marks the tenth anniversary of transgender activist Sylvia Rivera’s passing from this life. At the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, we are continually reminded of and inspired by Sylvia Rivera’s work fighting for self determination and liberation for our trans communities. Sylvia was a tireless advocate for the rights of people of color and low-income queer and trans people. We are moved and inspired by her dedication to revolutionary change and promoting self determination.

Born in New York of Puerto Rican and Venezuelan descent in 1951, orphaned at the age of three and a homeless trans youth by age ten, Sylvia Rivera truly understood the intersections of racism, poverty and gender identity. In 1969, Sylvia played a pivotal part in the Stonewall Rebellion, a queer and trans uprising against the policing of our communities. After Stonewall, she dedicated her life to fighting for the survival of low-income trans and gender non-conforming people and trans and gender non-conforming people of color.

Sylvia helped organize the first annual Christopher Street Liberation March and fought for the inclusion of trans and gender non-conforming people in the burgeoning mainstream gay rights movement. This included advocating for trans inclusion in anti-discrimination legislation and protesting the gay movement’s refusal to mobilize around the life and death issues affecting LGBT people who were also low income people, people of color, people with HIV/AIDS, trans people and people with disabilities.

Sylvia Rivera, with fellow trans activists Marsha P. Johnson and Bubbles E. Lee, founded Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR), a revolutionary organization with a political analysis that centered gender self-determination and homeless trans people of color. Knowing that it wasn’t enough to convince gay & lesbian political formations to center radical politics, or convince revolutionary organizations to center trans people, STAR prioritized gender self-determination and liberation within the context of a radical social movement. Together, they formed STAR house in the East Village, a home and haven for “young street queens.” We draw deep inspiration from STAR and its centering of gender self determination and liberation within a context of radical social movement—a center current social justice and movement building organizations all too often fail to hold.

Until her death, Rivera continued to build a movement for the survival of poor trans and gender non-conforming people and trans and gender non conforming people of color. She supported trans people through sharing her home and organized around the deaths of Matthew Shephard and Amanda Milan. In protest of the gentrification of the pier in New York City’s West Village, she occupied the Christopher Street Pier in solidarity with homeless queer and trans people, fighting for the survival of all people who transgress gender and heterosexuality.

Her activism embodies the understanding that the people most affected by systems of violence and oppression are the best people to lead the fight against those systems. She understood the intersection of race, class and gender discrimination and knew that low-income and people of color who did not conform to gender were most marginalized at the intersection of these oppressions. As part of a collective that prioritizes the issues of those most affected by the intersection of racial, social, economic and gender oppression, we celebrate Sylvia’s lifelong activism.
The mission of SRLP is to guarantee that all people are free to self-determine their gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination, or violence. SRLP is a collective organization founded on the understanding that gender self-determination is inextricably intertwined with racial, social and economic justice. Therefore, we seek to increase the political voice and visibility of low-income people and people of color who are transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming. SRLP works to improve access to respectful and affirming social, health, and legal services for our communities. We believe that in order to create meaningful political participation and leadership, we must have access to basic means of survival and safety from violence.

“As a collective, we try to put into practice many of the principles that we seek to bring about in the world. In our daily operations, we encounter the particulars of transformative change that make it a difficult and unfamiliar, but ultimately rewarding road to travel.”

- Naomi Clark, SRLP Collective Member

SRLP COLLECTIVE MEMBERS 2010-2011

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SRLP prioritizes issues that disproportionately affect transgender people who are low income and/or people of color. Our work addresses both the root causes and effects of discrimination and violence on the basis of gender identity and expression. The right to self determine gender identity and expression and be free from violence is only one facet of a multi-issue movement for justice and self-determination of all people. We believe that justice does not trickle down, and that those who face the most severe consequences of violence and discrimination should be the priority of movements against discrimination. Accordingly, our agenda focuses on survival and self-determination for poor people and people of color, and justice for prisoners and immigrants. SRLP uses a multi-strategy approach to actualize change at every level of the system: we provide direct legal services to meet immediate needs; bring litigation and work on policy reform for systemic change; and utilize public education, leadership development and community organizing for long-term sustainable impact.

SRLP’s main goals are:

To address urgent unmet legal needs of transgender, gender non-conforming and intersex (TGNCI) people of color and low-income TGNCI people;

Change institutional policies and practices to eliminate discrimination and harassment in foster care, juvenile justice and criminal justice settings and improve access to identity documents, Medicaid and public assistance, housing, employment and education;

Develop the skills, leadership, and political power of community members;

Internally, increase the participation, decision-making and leadership of community members who are most impacted by SRLP’s work; and

Improve and maintain our infrastructure and the capacity for us to do our work in a sustainable and non-hierarchical way.

Each year, SRLP provides free, quality, respectful and affirming legal services. We assist clients who are being abused in the criminal justice system, clients who have been incorrectly placed in gender segregated facilities, clients who are mistreated in psychiatric hospitals, mental health services, emergency rooms, and drug treatment programs, clients who need assistance in obtaining legal immigration status, and clients who cannot apply for employment because their identity documents do not match their appearance. For most clients, the opportunity to access legal services in an environment where gender self-determination is valued and respected is a new and often transforming experience.
Whether it’s a birth certificate, a state ID, or a Benefits card, these documents are essential for accessing employment, education, benefits, and services. However, in order to access gender affirming ID, most transgender people have to rely on medical providers to certify their gender identity. At the same time, trans-affirming medical care is often inaccessible for low-income people due to discriminatory regulations. We believe that all people should be allowed to self-determine their gender regardless of medical intervention, so we work to ensure that low-income TGNC people and TGNC people of color can access services and entitlements in accordance with their gender identity and expression using existing medical standards while simultaneously working towards making those standards more accessible and less restrictive. Because gender self-determination and survival for trans people are so intertwined with medical treatment and medical affirmation, a large part of our work involves examining the intersection of medicalization, disability justice, and trans identity.

**SUMMER HEALTH SERIES**

In August 2011, we launched the Summer Health Series, three community skill-shares on emergency rooms, health care access in detention, and community health centers. A collaborative effort between SRLP’s Direct Services Team (DST) and Movement Building Team (MBT), these legal advocacy skill-shares provided a space for our community members to share their experiences navigating various health systems and learn new skills for self-advocacy in these contexts. Our first community conversation drew more than fifty participants! With facilitation in both English and Spanish, community members discussed their experiences, shared recommendations and strategized ways to combat systemic discrimination in accessing health care. Conversations like these both inform and strengthen SRLP’s ongoing policy advocacy and direct services.

**UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY**

On October 14, 2011, SRLP presented at the Unity Through Diversity LGBT People of Color Health Summit in Albany, New York. SRLP’s Pooja Gehi facilitated a workshop titled Trans Justice is Disability Justice, which aimed to deepen collaboration between trans justice and disability justice movements. The workshop explored how the medical industrial complex broadly pathologizes trans people as well as people with disabilities. Participants were pushed to think about how the trans justice movement has failed to integrate a disability justice analysis and moved participants to think about shared histories of oppression of trans communities, disability communities, and communities of color. This was an exciting moment for SRLP to continue to build the foundation for ongoing dialogues and ground all of our trans justice visioning within a disability justice framework.

**MOVEMENT BUILDING**

In 2011, the Movement Building Team (MBT) supported community members’ involvement in political action by hosting sign-making parties for the Trans Day of Action and for Occupy Wall Street. At Occupy Wall Street, we organized delegations for marches and held teach-ins to share trans organizing history and develop strategies to create a more trans-inclusive movement. MBT presented a Know Your Rights training called Transform the Occupation, where we distributed Participating in Direct Action: A Guide for Transgender People. SRLP published this guide with the National Center for Transgender Equality, Streetwise and Safe, and other activists to help further trans-inclusion in social justice movements.
The United States has the highest per-capita incarceration rate in the world, placing millions of people behind bars—most of them people of color. Because transgender and gender non-conforming people are disproportionately profiled and targeted by police for arrest, our communities are also overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Once inside, trans people, as well as people with intersex conditions, are often targeted for terrible violence, abuse, and mistreatment. Because of the violent, dehumanizing conditions they face, SRLP has made supporting trans, gender non-conforming, and intersex (TGNCI) people in detention one of our top priorities. In addition to providing direct legal services to improve conditions of confinement and decrease the number of individuals held in prison and jail, SRLP engages in systemic advocacy to build leadership of individuals in detention and create directives in local, state and federal facilities requiring safer classification and affirming medical and mental health care for transgender individuals.

SRLP is currently working to improve conditions for transgender prisoners by increasing access to gender-affirming health care. Like most correctional facilities across the US, the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) does not provide appropriate medical care for transgender prisoners. In 2008, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) amended their policy to allow TGNCI prisoners without a pre-incarceration diagnosis to receive treatment for “gender identity disorder” (GID), giving an increased number of TGNCI prisoners theoretical access to transition-related health care. Unfortunately, DOCCS continues to single out transgender individuals for the denial of care based on failure to document doctor prescribed care prior to incarceration. We have been involved in ongoing negotiations to end this discriminatory treatment. Should negotiations fail, we will continue fighting for a more just policy that includes treatment for all TGNCI individuals consistent with World Professional Association for Transgender Health standards (WPATH) of care and the recommendations of the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. Our Direct Services Team is currently working with individuals to prepare possible litigation and simultaneously developing other possible strategies with Prison Advisory Committee members.

In February, we released the 2012 edition of In Solidarity, a collaborative newsletter created by SRLP’s Prisoner Advisory Committee (PAC) members, SRLP staff, and volunteers. Together our words and collective efforts work against injustice to support trans, intersex & gender non-conforming people both inside and out of the prison industrial complex and build a movement for gender self determination for all. In Solidarity is a critical way for PAC members to connect with and inform each other and SRLP. Copies are available for download at: http://srlp.org/resources/publications/solidarity-2012

FORTUNE SOCIETY TRAININGS

SRLP partnered with the Fortune Society to provide trainings for Fortune Society staff designed to improve services for transgender communities. The Fortune Society is a social services and advocacy organization that provides alternatives to prison re-entry through an array of direct services to people who were formerly incarcerated.

Trainees learned how to make their services more welcoming and accessible to TGNCI people, how to spot issues related to gender identity in their cases and how to deal with these issues appropriately. Through interactive exercises, trainees examined how gender identity discrimination operates and how this discrimination impacts the ability of gender transgressive people to access social, medical and legal services.

Engaging Fortune Society members in Transgender Basics built the foundation for the organization to examine how gender-based discrimination perpetuates a cycle of survival crimes, incarceration and prison re-entry for TGNCI people. Understanding barriers to TGNCI survival will prepare the Fortune Society to better serve formerly incarcerated TGNCI people. We are so excited about building partnerships with critical allied organizations like the Fortune Society!
Communities are mobilizing across the nation in historic demonstrations for immigrant justice. SRLP has prioritized this important movement work for years. TGNCl people are already disproportionately targeted by state and government officials. For those who are also immigrants, this disproportionate targeting and its consequences are multiplied exponentially. With an increase in deportation efforts and growing cooperation between local law enforcement and Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE), transgender immigrants are currently experiencing increased violence, detention and deportation.

Immigrant justice has been identified as a key priority area in our work over the years because transgender immigrants are often excluded from different paths to obtaining status and are especially vulnerable to the dual policing of the criminal justice and immigration enforcement systems. Additionally, many immigration attorneys are not affirming to transgender clients and do not understand the unique experiences of transgender immigrants. SRLP has been working to fill this gap by providing transgender-specific services for immigrants. We also work in coalition on policy strategies to combat xenophobic laws and conditions that criminalize transgender immigrants, including fighting against the implementation of laws that mandate collaboration between local law enforcement and ICE and working to decrease the number of transgender individuals held in detention.

DIRECT SERVICES

SRLP works with TGNCl immigrants who are either seeking legally-recognized immigration status, adjusting to a different immigration status or in danger of losing their immigration status and facing deportation. We offer drop-in services in Spanish and Hindi to advocate on behalf of our immigrant clients as they struggle to navigate their way through immigration bureaucracy. We have also successfully helped clients change their name and gender on employment authorization documents and lawful permanent resident cards in order to access gender-affirming state ID.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS WORKSHOP

In collaboration with the Sex Workers’ Project, Staff Attorney Chase Strangio facilitated a workshop on navigating arrest and detention issues for trans women at the Queens Pride House’s Trans Latina Group Meeting in August 2011. The workshop provided basic Know Your Rights (KYR) information about contact with the police, arraignment and how to avoid being detained by immigration if arrested. Forty-five participants reviewed different SRLP KYR documents to assess their readability and ensure that SRLP’s recommendations are consistent with their experiences. This workshop continued our relationship building with trans Latina immigrants in Queens and helped SRLP identify this population’s key areas of concern. After this meeting, we developed training materials for public defenders serving members of the trans Latina immigrant community and hope to create an institutional support system to limit police and ICE contact.

GET INVOLVED WITH SRLP!

VOLUNTEER! Please fill out the application form online at www.srlp.org/support/volunteer, or contact us at volunteer@srlp.org. Volunteer Orientations are every 2nd Monday at 6pm.

JOIN US FOR MOVEMENT BUILDING EVENTS! We have ongoing skill-shares, discussions, workshops and community celebrations. For up-to-date information visit us at www.srlp.org, “like” us on Facebook, or contact Gabriel Foster at gabrielfoster@srlp.org or (212) 337-8550 ext. 309.

All events are FREE and refreshments and Metrocards are provided. Find out more at www.srlp.org
2011 Expenses

We are happy to share that between July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011, over 77% of our expenses were for Programs and Services.
SRLP is proud of the diverse income streams that make up our annual fundraising plan! Our Grassroots Fundraising Plan includes annual events such as house parties, Small Works for Big Change and the Summer Reception; individual donor campaigns; and earned income strategies including sales of our documentary video Toilet Training and workshop and speaking gig honoraria. These strategies build support for SRLP and raise community awareness about trans issues while bringing in crucial funds.

SMALL WORKS FOR BIG CHANGE!

On February 25, 2012 we held our 7th Annual Small Works for Big Change—an annual benefit featuring a silent art auction that brings together our creative community to support social justice. Over 70 artists generously donated their amazing work and over 400 people attended this year! Thank you to everyone who came and packed Jack Studios to the walls, and to MCs Glenn Marla and Kit Yan, DJ Shomi Noise, Madame Wantan, Lana Carroll of the Low and the Lonesome and the Rude Mechanical Orchestra for keeping the crowd moving. We raised over $20,000!

Major thanks to all those who donated art, volunteered, donated refreshments, framing, raffle prizes, printing costs, sound tech skills, and to Hey Queen! for hosting the fabulous after-party! Special thanks to the host committee for organizing this event and making it such a huge success. So many people helped to raise these funds to support SRLP’s work for racial, economic and gender justice!

Photos by Jonah Groeneboer and Syd London
Special thanks to all of the generous donors who helped keep us afloat in 2011!

SPECIAL GIFTS

In honor of:
The wedding of Emily Bennison & Michael Chameides, Kara Lynch, Ezra Berkley Nepon, Masha Rasnolnikov and Jennifer Tennant, and Dasha Snyder

In the name of:
Gabriel Arkles’ Students at NYU Law School; Drew Boisvert; Eric, Lisa, Sam & Max Davis; Herbert Davis; Steven Keith & Roscoe Betsill; Courtney Libon & David Ureha; Donna Pinto & Anna Moody; Sir Real; Jase Schwartz; Benjamin Shepard; Jennifer Tennant and Masha Raskolnikov and Pumpkin!

In memory of:
Emmanuel Aheto
Samantha Jane Dorsett
Norman Kipnis
Isaac Kwock
Hugh Russell
Dana Turner

FOUNDATION SUPPORT FY 2011 (JULY 10-JUNE 11)

Thank you to the foundations that support our work: Anonymous, Arcus Foundation, ARIA Foundation, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Equal Justice Works, Foundation to Promote Open Society, Gill Foundation, Kicking Assets Fund of Tides Foundation, Miller-Wehrle Family Foundation, New Prospect Foundation, New York Women’s Foundation, Third Wave Foundation, Tides Foundation’s State Equality Fund, a philanthropic partnership that includes the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, the Gill Foundation, and anonymous donors, and the Union Square Awards, a project of the Tides Center.

SRLP thanks our generous In Kind Donors (May 11- April 12):


HOW TO SUPPORT SRLP

Our work is made possible with support from donors like you! To make a tax-deductible donation, please use the envelope attached to this annual report to send a check made payable to the Sylvia Rivera Law Project. Or, you can donate easily online at http://srlp.org/support#donation

We also love in-kind donations! Our current wishlist includes: legal accordion files, a color copier, and food & beverage donations for events.

Other ways to support SRLP can be found at www.srlp.org/support, where you can:
• Join our mailing/email list,
• Fill out a volunteer form
• Join our Allied Attorney Network
• Find out more about making a donation of stock

You can purchase our Toilet Training documentary DVD at http://srlp.org/films/toilettraining

For more information, write to donate@srlp.org
SAVE THE DATE!

SRLP’s Annual Attorney Pride Reception
Tuesday, June 26, 2012 - 6:30 - 8:30PM
Venable LLP
1270 Avenue Americas, 25th Floor/NYC

Gather with us to celebrate these honorees for their Outstanding Service for New York’s Transgender Community

Honoring:
Judge Toko Serita
Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP

$20 - $100 sliding scale, but no one turned away. RSVP on Facebook.

Sponsorships
Platinum level - $5,000 (20 Tickets)
Gold - $2,500 to $3,000 (10)
Silver - $1,000 to $2,000 (8)
Bronze - $500 - $750 (5)

For more information email ola@srlp.org or call 212.337.8550 x300