

Intersections

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SYLVIA RIVERA LAW PROJECT

June 2009* Issue 12

40 Years After Stonewall: Honoring Sylvia Rivera



The Sylvia Rivera Law Project is named in honor of Puerto Rican civil rights pioneer Sylvia Rivera (1951-2002). Sylvia was a veteran of the 1969 Stonewall uprising and a long-time activist of the civil rights, anti-war, and feminist movements. She was also a part of the Young Lords and Black Panther Party. Sylvia was a tireless advocate for all of those who had been marginalized when the “gay rights” movement went mainstream.

Sylvia was a founding member of the Gay Liberation Front and later part of the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) where she consistently pushed for inclusion of the rights of drag queens, transvestites, and other gender non-conforming people despite the mainstream’s attempt to be “more acceptable”. She worked tirelessly within these organizations to promote a citywide gay anti-discrimination ordinance that also included protections for trans people, leaving GAA when they decided to exclude trans people from the legislation.

Sylvia lived on the streets from a very young age and became a passionate advocate for the rights of young trans and queer youth. Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. (Pay It No Mind) Johnson were co-founders of STAR: Street Transvestites Action

Revolutionaries in New York City in the 1970’s. Sylvia and Marsha were Mothers to many youth who would hang out in the Village and on the Piers, providing them with food and shelter at their house. Sylvia was an active member of the Metropolitan Community Church and volunteered her time in the food pantry bringing much needed food to the hungry. Sylvia’s Place, one of the few LGBTQ youth shelters in the city, is named in her honor.

Sylvia was a loud and persistent voice for the rights of people of color and low-income queers and trans people. SRLP hopes to continue the legacy of Sylvia’s work by centralizing issues and voices of people of color and low-income trans people. SRLP’s work is also based on the principle that trans liberation is inextricably connected to racial, social, and economic justice and therefore essential to how we do our work. SRLP works to guarantee that all people are free to self-determine gender identity and expression, regardless of income or race, and without facing harassment, discrimination or violence.

On the 40th Anniversary of Stonewall, we honor and remember the countless contributions that Sylvia Rivera made to our movement. We are blessed by her spirit and inspired by her selfless courage that reminds us of why we do the work everyday.

“I’m not missing a minute of this, it’s the revolution.”
- Sylvia Rivera

For more information about Sylvia Rivera, check out srlp.org/about/sylvia_rivera

Dear Friends,

We are happy to share with you that SRLP has recently completed our first Strategic Plan! With this new tool, we envision and map out a plan to deepen the resources we contribute to our communities over the next five years, while also strengthening our internal infrastructures. Some of the strategies for building our capacity:

*** Create more access points for people to become members of SRLP.** We recognize that our current collective structure requires a high time commitment and an interest in organizational development in order to be a collective member. Many members of our community are struggling with survival issues that make this level of involvement difficult. We've been working with allied organizations on a **collaborative research project**, interviewing about a dozen grassroots organizations to identify the power and pitfalls of their membership structures. Look for a community report in 2010!

*** Everyone asks us: how does staff supervision work in a collective, non-hierarchical structure?** The answer so far has been "well, we're working on it." Thanks to a Movement Resource grant from the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, we've been able to bring in consultant Joo-Hyun Kang to help us improve our mechanisms for staff support,

mutual accountability, and leadership development. We look forward to sharing the findings with our allied organizations.

Times are tough for funding grassroots movements as more and more of our supporters are out of work and Foundations are also facing shrinking resources. We know that SRLP has deep support within our community, and thanks to our incredible volunteers and in-kind donors we are able to do amazing work with a tight budget. But we've also made some cuts in order to ensure that we can maintain this work. Here's what we're doing this year:

- * We delayed our much-needed move to a bigger office
- * We implemented a salary freeze for staff
- * While we have had to cut some paid internships, thanks to a generous donor, we are able to continue providing four Racial Justice Internship stipends, enabling important leadership development and support for our programmatic work

Despite these cuts, it is an exciting time for SRLP as we strategize, and actualize our visions about deepening and strengthening our work. As we enter our seventh fiscal year, we continue our movement building with a commitment to creativity and sustainability. We look forward to working with all of you to put these visions to work!

In solidarity,
SRLP Board Team

SRLP 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

1. Address urgent unmet legal needs of community members.
2. Change institutional policies and practices. Consistently work to subvert rather than expand inherently oppressive systems.
3. Develop the skills, leadership, and political power of community members.
4. Increase the participation, decision-making and leadership of community members who seek services from SRLP and/or are most impacted by SRLP's work.
5. Improve and maintain our infrastructure and the capacity for us to do our work in a sustainable and non-hierarchical way.

SYLVIA RIVERA LAW PROJECT

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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
322 8th Avenue, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10001
or visit our website at www.srlp.org

New Trans Legal Clinics, Boston & LA

SRLP members have recently had the chance to collaborate with and support two emerging clinics for trans people facing legal hurdles. The recently-launched **Imprenta Transgender Law Project (ITLP)** in Los Angeles is a partnership between a community/arts space, Imprenta, and two law schools, Southwestern and UCLA. Wu Tsang, one of Imprenta's founders, took inspiration from SRLP's model and reached out to local law students and their schools to create a resource for trans people in LA. According to ITLP's mission statement, "Our goal is to create a center that connects pre-existing trans-friendly services, and develops a platform where free, quality, respectful, and affirming services for low-income transgender, intersex, and gender non-conforming people are an explicit priority. We are inspired by the conceptual framework of Sylvia Rivera Law Project that uses the law as a tool for building broader social justice initiatives. We share in the belief that the right to self-determine gender identity and expression and to be free from violence is only one facet of a multi-issue movement for justice and self-determination of all people." Imprenta is located next to the Silver Platter, a Latina trans bar that has been a flashpoint of performance, support, and community for 40 years. ITLP will begin offering free HIV testing in June 2009. (www.imprentala.org)

Another trans-focused law clinic has emerged in the Boston area. The clinic is sponsored by the AIDS Action Committee and the Massachusetts Trans Political Coalition. It is not affiliated with any law school, but students from Boston University Law School, Northeastern Law, Boston College Law and Harvard Law run the clinic, getting supervision and support from volunteer lawyers. The clinic specifically serves low-income trans and gender non-conforming people. In recent months, SRLP members have been consulting with the clinic about questions of governance and accountability, helping the students to develop ideas about how to ensure that the clinic's work will be governed by the community it serves. Such structures and commitments are still rare in legal services contexts of all kinds, and SRLP is excited to watch this clinic develop and to share our models!

Queer and Trans Seattlites Fight to Stop a New Jail

The City of Seattle currently rents jail space from King County and the County has announced that they are going to need to use all the jail space for their own arrestees and prisoners soon, and so Seattle and the other local jurisdictions who rent their space must find another option.

A coalition of organizations have proposed Initiative 100. If I-100 were to get on the ballot and pass, it would do four things: 1) force the City to engage in public negotiations with the County to try to find alternatives; 2) develop a strategy to address racial disparity in arrest and incarceration rates (black people make up 6% of the population and 36% of the jail population currently); 3) study ways to decrease incarceration including studying how investments in social services will lower crime and arrest rates; and 4) put the issue of building a new jail or not to a popular vote. In order to get I-100 on the ballot its supporters must gather 23,000 signatures of registered Seattle voters by early June.

The effort is being led by Real Change, an organization that publishes Seattle's homeless newspaper and organizes homeless vendors. Real Change has been a loud opposition to Mayor Nickels' increasing sweeps of homeless encampments and aggressive arrests of homeless people and people with psychiatric disabilities in the last few years. This new approach has also promoted the creation of a roaming tent city called "Nickelsville" that exposes the failure of the City to provide accessible housing while criminalizing homelessness.

Many queer and trans activists are canvassing local queer bars and events to gather signatures for I-100 and spread the word about the new jail and why queer and trans people should be concerned about it. Some of the activists have put together various posters and flyers, one of which outlines five reasons that queer and trans activists are opposing the new jail.

To find out more about this struggle, check out the full article at www.srlp.org/seattle.

Pen Pal Project Update



The SRLP Prisoner Pen Pal project continues to grow and we are now able to provide ongoing support through pen pals to over 70 trans and gender non-conforming people in New York State and some out of state prisons.

In March, Communication Coordinator Julienne Brown facilitated a pen pal project information session in the lovely Brooklyn home of Michelle O'Brien and Daniel Rose. SRLP also collaborated with Jesse Bayker, President of the LGBT Alliance of Brooklyn College, who has recently started organizing letter writing events there.

In May we helped organize a conference call that brought together grassroots pen pal projects from NC, Seattle, Philadelphia, CA, MA, New York and the U.K. Our goal is to exchange information about our work and help support each other, strengthening our projects as we continue to support more and more people in prison.

For more information on how to get involved in SRLP's Prisoner Pen Pal Project or to learn about how you can organize your own letter writing party, contact Gael Guevara, Organizing Support Coordinator at 212-337-8550 x 307 or gael@srlp.org

Trans Day of Action!

On Friday, June 26th SRLP will join up with Audre Lorde Project and many others for the Trans Day of Action! Trans and Gender Non Conforming People of Color and allies will take to the streets of NYC once again and demand justice to let the world know that on the 40th anniversary of Stonewall, the rebellion is not over and we will continue fighting for justice, raising our voices until we are heard.



Check out srlp.org/tdoa to read the Points of Unity.

Community Forum on Proposed Changes to NYPD Policy

On May 21st, SRLP and a number of community-based organizations and activists gathered at the Bronx Community Pride Center to present and gain support for proposed policy changes to the NYPD patrol guide in regards to the treatment of transgender people while in custody. Over 50 community members, allies, advocates and elected officials came to show their support at the event. The proposed changes, submitted just a few weeks earlier, urged the NYPD to adopt policies that could prevent profiling, harassment, and violence against transgender people under custody. As it stands now, the NYPD has no language in their patrol guide about how they should treat transgender people. The policy includes information such as: how to refer to an arrestee using the name and pronouns they prefer, never stopping or arresting someone because of their gender identity, and never doing strip searches of people in order to "determine their gender." We referenced much of the language that already exists in both the District of Columbia and San Francisco police department policies. The organizations and activists who are a part of pushing this policy forward came together about a year ago because they felt there was a need to create a united front on this issue after many years of false promises from the NYPD. The panelists included moderator Julienne Brown, Lourdes Hunter, Jennifer Ramirez, Gabriel Arkles and Andrea Ritchie who spoke about the history and organizing work behind this effort as well as what the policy actually means for folks impacted by police profiling.

In the past few years, six transgender women have sued the NYPD for violations of their constitutional rights. We also continue to collect signatures from supporters that endorse the proposed changes and who hope to bring pressure to the NYPD to do the right thing and make these changes in a timely manner. You can sign the petition online at the following link - spread the word!

www.ipetitions.com/petition/NYPDTransPolicy/

Know Your Rights Trainings

SRLP Organizing Intern Alejandra Guzman and Community Organizing Support Coordinator Gael Guevara organized a Know Your Rights workshop in Spanish on “How to Change Your Name



in New York City” at the transgender evening program at the AIDS Center of Queens County. There was a large representation of the Latin@ trans community of Queens in attendance, who benefited from useful self-advocacy tools and assistance with their legal needs. SRLP provides free Know Your Rights workshops to community-based organizations that organize or provide services for transgender or gender non-conforming communities. If you would like more information on how you can collaborate with SRLP to bring a Know Your Rights workshop to your community-based group, please contact info@srlp.org

Bronx Legal Clinics, Third Mondays

We’ve been holding these monthly clinics since last Fall, and they have been packed - we have seen 26 clients there, 22 new to SRLP! We’re also happy to report that the Bronx clinic has seen a high level of youth turnout, and that Citywide Harm Reduction has been bringing a trans group to the clinic to access legal services. This is an exciting addition to our outreach work because it not only increases our accessibility to clients who live in the Bronx, it also provides us an excellent opportunity to deepen our connections and collaboration with the clinic host, Bronx Community Pride Center (BCPC). In March, we presented a Know Your Rights Workshop at BCPC on Police Interaction and NY Human Rights Law, and we also participated in their April trans awareness training. Stay tuned for news of our upcoming clinic opening soon in Queens!

Movement Building Partnership

SRLP is excited to announce that this past May we were invited for the first time by Astraea Foundation to attend the Multi-year Movement Building Grantee Partner Convening. The convening was hosted by the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in San Antonio, Texas and brought together a number of amazing organizations across the country involved in progressive movement-building work in LGBT communities. Participants from the Sylvia Rivera Law Project who attended included Pooja Gehi, staff attorney, Gael Guevara, Community Organizing Support Coordinator and our newest Staff Attorney (and longtime Collective Member), Elana Redfield. The weekend was full of exciting conversations about future collaborations and plans for important movement-building work needed to make our voices heard and our collective work more powerful.



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, or contact us at volunteer@srlp.org

Follow SRLP on Twitter! @tweetsrlp

YOUR SUPPORT KEEPS US AFLOAT!

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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.



The Get Down!

On March 5th, SRLP and Audre Lorde Project brought the house down with our first joint fundraiser, **The Get Down**. A line-up of artists who work to liberate, agitate and ignite the fight for queers and trans folks was the hottest place to be. Acts including Novice Theory, Climbing Poetry, Invincible, Ganessa James, Mahina Movement, JODA and The Audre Lorde Project's very own Step Team made us get up and dance and connect. Lyrics and melodies talked about home, family, reproductive rights, justice, love and building community - linking struggles at home and abroad. Held at the Judson Memorial Church, an amazing \$5,000 was raised to support both organizations' critical litigation, services and organizing. The Get Down lived up to its name and then some! Special thanks to co-organizer Lucia Leandro Gimeno.

get down photos: amandamorgan.com

Reception & Award Ceremony

This just in! On June 2nd, SRLP was honored to present awards to inspiring activist Andrea Ritchie of INCITE! and Sex Workers Project, and courageous firm Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP for their incredible pro bono work in support of NY's transgender community. A great crowd of progressive lawyers and activists gathered at the William Bennett Gallery amidst rare Salvador Dali prints. Thanks to ticket sales, Firm sponsorships, and program ads purchased by our organizational allies, we were able to raise almost \$9,700. Thank you to all our supporters and volunteers!

Glitter in the Garden

On May 16th, The Imperial Court of New York (ICNY) held a **Glitter in the Garden** party in our honor, stretched across three magical wooded backyards in Brooklyn. There were over a dozen performances from the second floor porch and garden stage by our fine-feathered friends. Artists and performers included the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, ICNY Monarchs and Courtiers, Natalie from Trans Empowerment of NY, glam/electro/glitterfabulous band She-Dick, and our friend Diana Taylor. SRLP would like to thank all of the artists and our hosts Countess Audra Fox and Kevin Green for hosting such a fantastic event. And for the attendees, thank you for coming out and helping us raise \$2,000 to support SRLP!

glittergarden photos: hellfirepress.com

SRLP thanks these generous in-kind donors that have strengthened us immensely through their contributions:

10 Grand Press & Marina
Artforum International
Asahi Beer Co, USA & Yoshiaki Okahara
Chelsea Frames
Cinereach. Ltd.
Ilana Lobet, Framing Studio
Izze Sparkling Juice & Eileen O'Dowd
Leslie/Lohman Gay Art Foundation
The Translation Department & Tom Léger
William Bennett Gallery

& all of the artists who donated their work to Small Works for Big Change

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT SINCE DECEMBER:

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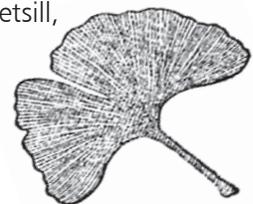
and thank you to all the Foundations that support our work: Arcus Foundation, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, The Calamus Foundation, Gill Foundation, Kicking Assets Fund of Tides Foundation, Miller-Wehrle Family Foundation, New Prospect Foundation, New York Women's Foundation, Open Society Institute, Paul Rapoport Foundation, Queer Youth Fund of the Liberty Hill Foundation, Rainbow Endowment, Stonewall Community Fund, and Union Square Awards, a project of the Tides Center.



SPECIAL GIFTS

In honor of: Naomi Clark, Carrie Davis, Herbert Davis, The Davis Family, Sue Deasy, Kate Geronemus, Alesdair Henry D. Ittelson, Lynne Miller, Dean Spade, Franklin Romeo, Julie Johnson, Bridge Joyce, Steven Keith & Roscoe Betsill, Moira & Sean, The Moody Family, Emily Nepon, SirReal

In memory of: Bob Kohler, Duanna Johnson



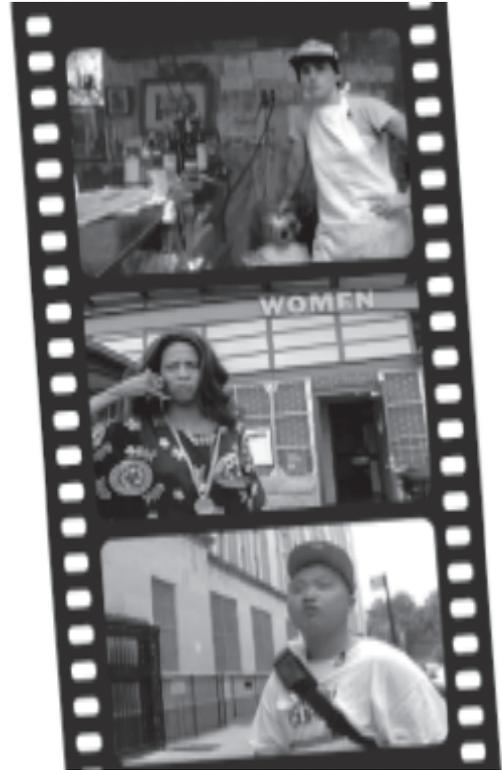
TOILET TRAINING

A documentary film made by Tara Mateik and SRLP which addresses the persistent discrimination, harassment, and violence that **people who**

transgress gender norms face in **gender segregated bathrooms**.

This race, age, ability and gender diverse documentary is a **great teaching and activist tool** for those who want to struggle for gender self-determination and **bathroom liberation for all people** starting with local communities and institutions. Comes with a Companion Guide for Activists and Educators!

check out
<http://srlp.org/films/toilettraining>
for more info on how to order a copy!



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