

# **WE WHO FEEL DIFFERENTLY JOURNAL**



**ISSUE 2, SPRING 2012**

**DISASTROUS INCLUSION:  
CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON  
THE LEGACY OF DADT**

## CREDITS

### **WE WHO FEEL DIFFERENTLY JOURNAL**

is a sporadic online publication that addresses critical issues of queer culture. It features in depth analyses and critiques of international Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex politics from queer perspectives.

The journal is part of the project *We Who Feel Differently*, a database documentary by Carlos Motta that presents interviews with dozens of queer academics, activists, artists, legislators, lobbyists, medical professionals, etc. in Colombia, Norway, South Korea and the United States. *We Who Feel Differently* investigates the history and development of LGBTQI politics and discusses the notions of difference, equality, citizenship and democracy in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.  
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### GUEST EDITOR: RYAN CONRAD

# CONTENTS

## **DISASTROUS INCLUSION: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE LEGACY OF DADT** 5

By Ryan Conrad

## **“COMMUNITY SPIRIT”: THE NEW GAY PATRIOT AND THE RIGHT TO FIGHT IN UNJUST WARS** 7

By Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

## **I WAS WRONG ABOUT DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL** 13

By Ian Finkenbinder

## **WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, HOW** 18

By Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention (LAGAI)

## **WHY I OPPOSE REPEALING DADT & PASSAGE OF THE DREAM ACT** 22

By Tamara K. Nopper

## **THE END OF DADT, STATE VIOLENCE AND NATIONAL BELONGING** 29

By Karma Chávez

# DISASTROUS INCLUSION: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE LEGACY OF DADT

By Ryan Conrad\*, Guest Editor

In the fall of 2011, Don't Ask, Don't Tell, the United States military policy of banning out gays and lesbians from serving in the armed forces, was relegated to the dustbin of history. While many homos and their hetero allies celebrated this policy change as significant progress for gay and lesbian rights, queers from the anti-war movement have been scratching our heads in wonder. How did extending the opportunity for more people to join the US war machine become a progressive goal?

Disastrous Inclusion: Critical Reflections on the Legacy of DADT, the journal's second issue, features a combination of five new and archival texts reflecting on gay and lesbian investments in militarism in the United States from the early days of DADT to the present moment in the Spring of 2012.

While compiling the pieces for this journal I wanted to be thoughtful about moving beyond reductive LGBT and anti-war frameworks that simply claim, “discrimination is wrong” or “war is bad” in order to address the intricacies of how heterosupremacy and militarization impacts our everyday queer lives. Whether that be through the normalization of militarized public schools, police departments, and border guards or the economics of war that perpetuate the poverty draft, the underfunding of social safety nets, and the neocolonial project of U.S. corporations exploiting nations that are occupied by the U.S. military in the name of democracy and human rights.

In Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore's piece, **“Community Spirit”: The New Gay Patriot and the Right to Fight in Unjust Wars**, she shares her personal experiences and reflections about growing up queer at a time when AIDS and anti-war activism coincided. She then contrasts this earlier time with the emerging militarized gay and lesbian identities that exist today and the complicity of the broader Left in allowing these fervently pro-war gay voices to go unchallenged.

**I Was Wrong About Don't Ask, Don't Tell** by Ian Finkenbinder is a recent U.S. war veteran's musings about his previous involvement to help overturn DADT and his current activist work with the broader Occupy movement. After humbly admitting he was wrong to fight for the expansion of the U.S. military he thoughtfully asks what his actions did and who benefited.

\*Ryan Conrad is an outlaw artist, terrorist academic, and petty thief from a mill town in central Maine. Conrad works through visual culture and performance to rupture the queer here and now in hopes of making time and space to imagine the most fantastic queer futures. His visual work is archived at faggotz.org. He is also one of the founding member of Against Equality, a North American based digital archive, publishing, and arts collective focused on critiquing mainstream gay and lesbian politics. As part of the collective Conrad edited two recent anthologies, *Against Equality: Queer Critiques of Gay Marriage* (2010) and *Against Equality: Don't Ask to Fight Their Wars* (2011). He can be reached at rconrad@meca.edu



Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention (LAGAI) produced a counter-recruitment packet in 1992 during the first Gulf War titled *Queers Out of Uniform*. The introductory essay, **Who, What, Why, When, Where, How**, describes the links between the imperialist wars abroad and the racist, anti-poor war at home. In addition to this essay, a digitized version of the entire counter-recruitment packet is available for downloading as well.

In **Why I Oppose Repealing DADT & Passage of the DREAM Act** Tamara K. Nopper examines how both the repeal of DADT and passing the DREAM Act will increase the size and power of the U.S. Department of Defense. She challenges the ethics of military inclusion for gays and lesbians and/or undocumented young people in exchange for certain rights that are tenuous at best in a homophobic, white supremacist society.

Karma Chávez's **The end of DADT, State Violence and National Belonging** questions how the emerging "gay rights as human rights" discourse is being deployed in the service of U.S. militarism. She also details the human rights abuses and unfettered violence against women, queers, and people of color that permeates all aspects of the military apparatus, suggesting that LGBT people, of all people, should be at the forefront of opposing military expansion.

These five essays complicate the simple logic of equality and challenge the narrow vision of what counts as LGBT issues as championed by mainstream gay and lesbian rights organizations. These writers demand we understand poverty, citizenship, immigration, incarceration, education, ability, racism, sexism, colonialism, neoliberalism, the so called war on terror, amongst others things, as explicitly queer issues. While the urgency of talking about and challenging the drive to overturn DADT has passed, it is critical to continue reflecting on its legacy and the continued normalizing of the militarization of our everyday lives that DADT's passing has further enabled.

## "COMMUNITY SPIRIT": THE NEW GAY PATRIOT AND THE RIGHT TO FIGHT IN UNJUST WARS

By Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore\*

reprinted from *Against Equality: Don't Ask to Fight Their Wars*, AE Press, 2011

I remember when the U.S. started bombing Iraq under the first President Bush. I was a senior in high school, studying for exams at the American University student center. For some reason, that's where disaffected outlaw kids at Washington, DC private schools went to study, maybe because you could smoke inside, and you could buy alcohol without ID, and I guess our schools were right nearby, but I had to drive a half hour to get there: I was trying really hard to fit in at not fitting in. I looked up at one of the TV screens flashing news updates, and the bombs were going off. That's how I remember it, anyway. My whole body went hot and then cold — I couldn't possibly study anymore; there was no point.



Photo: Vera Rogriguez  
[verarodriguez.com](http://verarodriguez.com)

\*Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore is most recently the editor of *Why Are Faggots So Afraid of Faggots?: Flaming Challenges to Masculinity, Objectification, and the Desire to Conform*. Mattilda is the author of two novels, most recently *So Many Ways to Sleep Badly* (City Lights 2008), and the editor of four additional nonfiction anthologies, including *Nobody Passes: Rejecting the Rules of Gender and Conformity* (Seal 2007) and an expanded second edition of *That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation* (Soft Skull 2008). Mattilda's first memoir, *The End of San Francisco*, will devastate the world soon. Mattilda loves feedback and propositions, so always feel free to contact her via [mattildabernsteinsycamore.com](http://mattildabernsteinsycamore.com).

I went to the big antiwar demos in DC, enthralled by the possibilities of public protest, studying the pageantry and anger of the banners and costumes, designing my own handmade signs, taking pictures of my sister and a friend holding up their fingers to make peace in front of cops in riot gear. I watched the protests in other cities on the news, keeping track of the places with the most people out in the street. This was one of the first times that San Francisco entered my world view — there were as many people protesting there as in New York, even though I knew San Francisco was a tenth of the size.

Soon yellow ribbons appeared inside the avowedly liberal school in affluent Northwest DC that I had attended since second grade — I couldn't believe the hypocrisy. How could you support the troops if you opposed the war? To me, every soldier was a cold-blooded killer. Later, once I realized it was poor and working class people, many of them people of color, sent around the world as cannon fodder, I would modify this stance to welcome deserters, those who came back from fighting to piece together their lives as antiwar activists, and anyone trying desperately to get out of the U.S. killing machine. Nevertheless, the pro-military antiwar agenda eagerly trumpeted in every left media outlet still leaves quite a bit to be desired: how will we ever end vicious wars of aggression if most of the experts we hear from aren't antiwar at all, but only speaking about why this particular war is unjust or badly organized?

I ended up in San Francisco sooner than I expected, after a year at the elite university I'd spent my whole life working towards, a place where everything I learned I discovered outside of class. I learned how to call myself queer, how to build a protest movement for racial and economic justice at a so-called liberal institution that still officially denied entrance to students based on their inability to pay. I helped to organize a building takeover that led to hundreds of arrests, months of protests, and national news. This was the culmination of years of student activism, but still it led to no tangible change because the administration didn't really care, and that's where I learned the most.



source: [http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr\\_krfq9hGde1qz8887o1\\_500.jpg](http://24.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_krfq9hGde1qz8887o1_500.jpg)

I left college to find what I really needed— radical queers, runaways, dropouts, anarchists, vegans, addicts, incest survivors, freaks, sluts, whores, and direct action activists trying desperately to piece together a culture of resistance. Soon after arriving in San Francisco, I went to an anti-Bush protest where I brought a sign that said “Break Down the American First Family,” and maybe something using the word “assassinate,” which didn't go over well

with the Secret Service. I was detained for several hours in a Lincoln Town Car with tinted windows — hello FBI file. This was the early '90s in San Francisco, and everywhere queers were dying of AIDS and drug addiction and suicide, but also there was an oppositional queer culture that I could finally grasp, become a part of, hold onto. For me that culture centered around ACT UP, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. ACT UP meant fighting AIDS because everyone was dying, and it also meant making connections — between government neglect of people with AIDS and structural homophobia and racism; between the ever-increasing military budget and the lack of funding for healthcare; between misogyny and the absence of resources for women with AIDS; between the war on drugs and the abandonment of HIV-positive drug addicts and prisoners.

In 1993, I went with ACT UP to the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights (transgender inclusion was not yet on the table). ACT UP was planning a mass civil disobedience for universal healthcare at the Capitol, but, unlike at past national mobilizations, only several dozen people joined us in getting arrested. Our action took place on the same weekend as the largest gay march in history, which struck me as a sea of uniformity — white gays in white T-shirts applying for Community Spirit credit cards and rallying for the newly-elected President Clinton to follow through on his campaign promise to allow gays to openly serve in the US military. I had never seen anything like it — a million gay people, on the streets of the city where I grew up feeling alone, broken, hopeless for any possibility of self-expression. A million gay people, gathered together to fight for inclusion in the most blatant institution of US imperialism.

A day or two later, after the gay tide had subsided and no change was noticeable on DC streets except for piles of trash, I was making out with the person who would become my first boyfriend, outside the 24-hour restaurant where I used to go late at night in high school.



Source: C-SPAN

Two white frat types came right up to us and said: what are you doing? Kissing, I said, and went back to it. They sprayed something directly into my eyes from a few inches away, and all I could feel was a searing pain like my whole face was on fire — when I went inside the restaurant to splash cold water on my face it looked like my skin was covered in red spray paint. The manager or someone told me to take this outside. Eventually I got a cab to the hospital, where they said it was pepper spray, and they pumped saline into my eyes for close to an hour, to make sure that I didn't lose my vision. The next day I met my parents for dinner, who unwittingly echoed the gay movement when they asked: why do you have to be so overt?



Getting bashed right after the March on Washington cemented my feelings that the assimilationist gay agenda would never make visible queers safer. In fact, by trumpeting a masculinist, pro-military agenda the gay establishment makes poor people all over the world more vulnerable to U.S. military aggression. It also creates value where there is none, rejecting decades of left opposition to the U.S. military in favor of the smiling, happy, proud, and pumped-up face of the new gay patriot.

It is no coincidence that the obsession with gay inclusion in the U.S. military emerged from the AIDS crisis. In the late-'80s and early-'90s, facing the deaths of lovers, friends, and sometimes entire social networks due not just to a new disease, but the old diseases of government neglect and structural homophobia, queers built systems of care that were breathtaking in their immediacy, shared vision, intimacy, and effectiveness. Out of rage and hopelessness came not just the brilliance of ACT UP, but a generation of incendiary art and brave visions for community-building.



Source: <http://www.examiner.com/article/is-the-end-of-don-t-ask-don-t-tell-near>

As a 19-year-old queer activist surrounded by grieving, loneliness, desperation and visionary world-making in 1993, I'll admit that I held some hope that universal healthcare might become a central issue for queer struggle. What could have built more beautiful and far-reaching alliances, what could have held a greater impact not just for queers, but for everyone in this country? My hopes for a broad struggle based on universal needs were dashed at the March on Washington, which felt more like a circuit party than a protest: a circuit party with a military theme. Except that this wasn't just drug-fueled bacchanalia or straight-acting role play — brushing aside the ashes of dead lovers, the gay movement battled for the right to do its own killing.

The effects of this new gay militarism can be seen in all segments of the movement now pronounced "LGBT." As marriage entered the fray as the dominant gay issue, the stars and stripes began to eclipse even the empty symbolism of the sweatshop-produced nylon rainbow flag: gay (and "gay-friendly") people everywhere draped themselves in the U.S. flag

at virtually every pro-marriage demonstration as the U.S. obliterated Iraq and Afghanistan, occupied Haiti, and funded the Israeli war on the Palestinians. Then there's the law-and-order message intrinsic to the fight for hate crimes legislation — that's right, the way to keep queer people safe is to put more power in the hands of a notoriously racist, classist, misogynist, homophobic and transphobic system, right? Kill those criminals twice, and then they won't be around to engage in more violence.



source: <http://mpetrelis.blogspot.com/2011/07/act-up-doc-united-in-anger-preview-at.html>

But the effects of the pro-military gay agenda do not end there. Corporate-friendly, media-savvy gay lobbying groups have developed a stranglehold on popular representations of what it means to be queer, making sure that everyone knows that the only way to be "pro-LGBT" is to support marriage "equality," military inclusion, and hate crimes legislation. Maybe with the rest of our time we can fight for ordination into the priesthood while demanding gay and lesbian parental rights without talking about autonomy for children. Even when these gays in suits do talk about issues that matter, like nondiscrimination in housing or employment, the rhetoric prioritizes the most privileged while fucking over everyone else — sure, it's a great idea to protect people who already have housing or jobs, but what about the rest of us?

Unfortunately, the left is complicit in this silencing agenda. The left has never done its work to address structural homophobia, so now that the gays have Ellen (and Rachel Maddow!), left pundits are eager to prove themselves as gay-friendly as your average P-FLAG soccer mom. And so, ironically, what we see, over and over, are conservative gay media hacks welcome in allegedly liberal, progressive, and even radical media venues, spouting off on the importance of gays in the military on antiwar programs, talking about marriage inclusion with straight radio hosts who are veterans of the '60s and made the conscious political choice never to get married, and foaming at the mouth about making anti-gay or anti-trans murderers pay for their crimes in the same pages where the injustices of the prison industrial complex are highlighted.

Occasionally a queer critique of the gay establishment appears on the left (including some of the pieces reprinted in this book). In 2010, I had the rare opportunity to appear on Democracy Now, a show I watch pretty much every day, to debate Lieutenant Dan Choi, a cover model for patriotic gays everywhere. On the show, he declared, with rare clarity: “War is a force that gives us meaning.”

What, exactly, is the meaning of the U.S. obliterating Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan? What is the meaning of soldiers pressing buttons in Nevada to destroy villages halfway around the world? What is the meaning of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan establishing a “kill team” in order to murder innocent civilians, pose for photographs with the dead bodies, and cut off fingers as souvenirs? The U.S. is involved in overt and covert wars all over the world, in order to plunder indigenous resources for corporate profit. And the meaning of the fight for gays in the military is that the gay establishment will do anything to become part of the status quo. But nothing could be more hypocritical than a movement centering around the right to go abroad to kill people and get away with it. If that is a “civil rights” struggle, as we are led to believe, there is a problem with civil rights.

On September 20, 2011, the ban on gay soldiers serving openly in the U.S. military ended, and over 100 celebrations were planned in cities across the U.S. and around the world. How many antiwar demonstrations were planned on the same day? What if 18 years of fighting for gays in the military were spent fighting against the U.S. military?

Support for the U.S. military in this day and age always comes at the cost of social programs and social justice. A movement that should be about gender, sexual, social, political and cultural self-determination, not just for queers in this country, but for everyone in this country and around the world is instead centered around accessing dominant systems of oppression. As a queer teenager growing up in an abusive family and a homophobic world, I believed there were people like me but I didn’t believe that I would ever find them. When I rejected the world that had made me — its homophobia, transphobia, racism, classism, misogyny, ableism, and all other forms of oppression and hierarchy, I never imagined there was a parallel violence on the other side of coming out, a gay establishment that believed in the right to fight in unjust wars. As long as war is a force that gives us meaning, there will never be hope for meaning anything else.

# I WAS WRONG ABOUT DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL

By Ian Finkenbinder\*  
reprinted from Hivster.com

## Getting Fired, Giving Some Interviews, Taking Action

Before Occupy and all its myriad (and at times catastrophic) effects on my life, I was a one-trick pony of sorts. My focus in activism was a narrow one, born from personal experience and thrust onto the national stage.

In 2004, after one tour in Iraq and staring another one in the face, I made a decision to come out of the closet. I marched into my Commanding Officer’s office and delivered a carefully prepared statement (already vetted by a lawyer) to his desk declaring: “I will return to serve in Iraq but I will do so as an openly gay soldier.” Surprise (not really)! Ian is gay.

Predictably, I did not return to Iraq. I got drummed under the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell policy, and since my job was a mission-critical position (Arabic translator) it instantly became news.

After making the rounds in the Advocate, Instinct Magazine, Anderson Cooper and others, I got tired of refuting John McCain’s asinine comments about the dangers of perverts in the Armed Forces and retired from activism for a few years in order to do things like be 22, do massive amounts of drugs, and catch HIV. Let’s admit it. Talking to reporters is boring and the people who were excited to get my story in the public eye felt that the end-all and be-all of activism was press statements. Spending thousands on cocaine seemed a lot more fun.

Finally, in my late 20s, a certain troublemaker named Dan Choi popped up and I snapped out of my self-obsessed desire to destroy myself and realized that activism didn’t necessarily end at giving interviews to Wolf Blitzer. It could be about chaining yourself to things. It could be getting arrested! It could be exciting.

\* Ian Finkenbinder is a longtime activist, previously engaged in work against Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. He is currently involved in activism with Occupy Seattle and is also a columnist and editor at [www.hivster.com](http://www.hivster.com). You can contact Ian by email, [ianfinkenbinder@gmail.com](mailto:ianfinkenbinder@gmail.com)



So then this happened:



On November 15th, 2010, I handcuffed myself with Dan Choi and 11 other friends to the White House fence in protest of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. A month later, it was repealed.

While that landmark legislation was the result of years of hard work on the part of legislators, advocates, and other pissed off people, I like to think that my participation in that protest brought enough focus on the issue that it was thrust into the limelight and acted on quickly. For a couple years, I have been proud of the fact that the direct action that put my face in Newsweek might have changed the country for the better.

Here's the thing: I was wrong. I shouldn't have done it.

### **I. Hate. Being. Wrong.**

Before you write me off as crazy, hear me out. It's not getting arrested for a cause that I object to. Since I was very young my elders had impressed upon me that if I felt strongly enough about something, I should be willing to go to jail in order to bring about the change I wanted to see. That's not the problem.

The problem also isn't that LGBs are now free to join the military and be honest about who they are. That's great! Playing the "pronoun" game and fearing getting fired on the basis of your sexual orientation is stressful and tiresome. I see this picture: ... and it pleases me!



When I came home from Iraq, my mother and a boy I was dating were waiting for me when I got off the plane. I hugged my mom and awkwardly shook the hand of my "friend." If I had been able to do what the gents above could do... that would be awesome!

So what's the problem?

The problem isn't that gay soldiers are now free to be as gay as they want in the military. The problem is that gay soldiers are now joining the military without hesitation. I helped to make that happen. I encouraged people to support the military industrial complex, an industry so large and so profitable that wars are seemingly now fought in order to award high-yield contracts to weapons manufacturers and private security operations like Blackwater.

I. Was. Wrong.

### **Who Did I Help?**

When I handcuffed myself to that fence, it seemed clear whom I was helping. LGBs in the military! Cut and dry! Freedom to serve their country! Sounds great, right? What I didn't consider was whom I was harming. I had no thought that the cause I was supporting was the wrong one.

Everyone knows that the military is a huge resource drain. We spend hundreds of billions of dollars annually supporting this vast war machine which gets used for corrupt and imperialistic purposes (any surprise we have the most expensive military... and are also the richest country on Earth? Hmmmm...). The most recent and glaring example may be the war in Iraq, which was started on false pretenses and seemed to benefit no one other than defense contractors and the politicians who hired them. You know. The war I was in.

I went to Iraq thinking I was going to be helping people form a better democracy. Instead, in the aftermath of our military action and the instability the invasion brought to Iraq, thousands were killed in a violent insurgency and a war that seemed to last forever suddenly became very murky. After a while, the only people who really understood why they were there were the military contractors (to make a buck), and I understood that what I did there didn't help many people.

Ask the LGBT population of Iraq. Since our military action and the instability it brought, openly gay Iraqis have been slain in droves.

You can imagine how that made me feel. I still never know how I forgot how upset this made me when I leaped at the chance to chain myself to the fence.

Goodbye, Friend. Stay Safe. Stay Sane.

Since I left the military I have struggled with mental issues. A classic sufferer of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), I have terrible nightmares, am frightened by loud noises, and am plagued with panic attacks when reliving the details of my time in Iraq. Those profound months that I spent invading a foreign country had affected me in ways that it took me years to understand.



Last fall a friend bought me a US Army pin. I immediately affixed it to my coat and wore it for months.



Some have mistaken my purpose for wearing it, and I didn't understand myself at the time. The circles I run in don't exactly love the military. I'm surrounded by people who have been pressured to join because it was the only way they could get college money (ha, that was totally me), people of color who have seen their friends and family members enlist only to be sent to go kill other people of color, peaceniks, and people with the empathy to realize there is no such thing as "the Enemy." People have taken my wearing of the pin to symbolize that I supported the Army, which baffled me. When I put it on, I didn't feel proud. I felt regret, something I couldn't admit to myself at the time.

You see, I killed people while I was in Iraq. Well. I'm almost certain I did. I fired an artillery piece. It blew up a building. If there were people in that building, I killed them. Me.

Why did I do that? I won't go into it. You're not my therapist. But when people see me wearing that pin, they don't realize it's not me proudly displaying my service: I'm admitting to something. I'm sort of like Hester Prynne in that this pin is my scarlet letter and I'm admitting the sin of murder. Of imperialism. I'm admitting a mistake.

A friend of mine just joined the Army, active duty. He is a fey young thing, a little foolish but a good person. He is a member of the local chapter of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and a self-identified gay man. Because of the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, he can consider signing away his life (figuratively, I certainly hope not literally) for four years without hesitation due to a discriminatory policy.

Will he have his own scarlet letter someday?

### **Getting Pepper Sprayed Is Better Than Supporting Imperialism. Trust Me On That.**

In the end I don't think that what I did on November 15th, 2010 was an act of prime evil. I know now that I look back and say "oops." I know that I feel like I have honed my empathy and my political understanding to the point where I think more carefully about what I'm going to have to bear on my conscience later on.

Honestly, this is less about me, and less about my friend, and more about the fact that war, frankly, is wrong. War is waged so that the privileged elite can give the impoverished masses guns and then send them to kill other poor people because they're pissed off at the privileged elite over there.

The reason I'm wrong isn't because gay people shouldn't join the Army. It's because no one should join the Army. No one should go kill people so that Blackwater can line its pockets.

Will we ever exist without war? I... well, probably not in my lifetime. It's something to work toward. We need to start thinking, as a society and as a human race, not about how to kill each other better or more fairly but how to prevent each other from killing each other at all.

One year to the day after my arrest in Washington DC, I marched with Occupy Seattle. I don't even remember what the march was about, but we took to the streets and the police responded by pepper spraying us. One of the people hit that day was Dorli Rainey, the 84-year old woman whose face then circled the globe as evidence of police brutality.

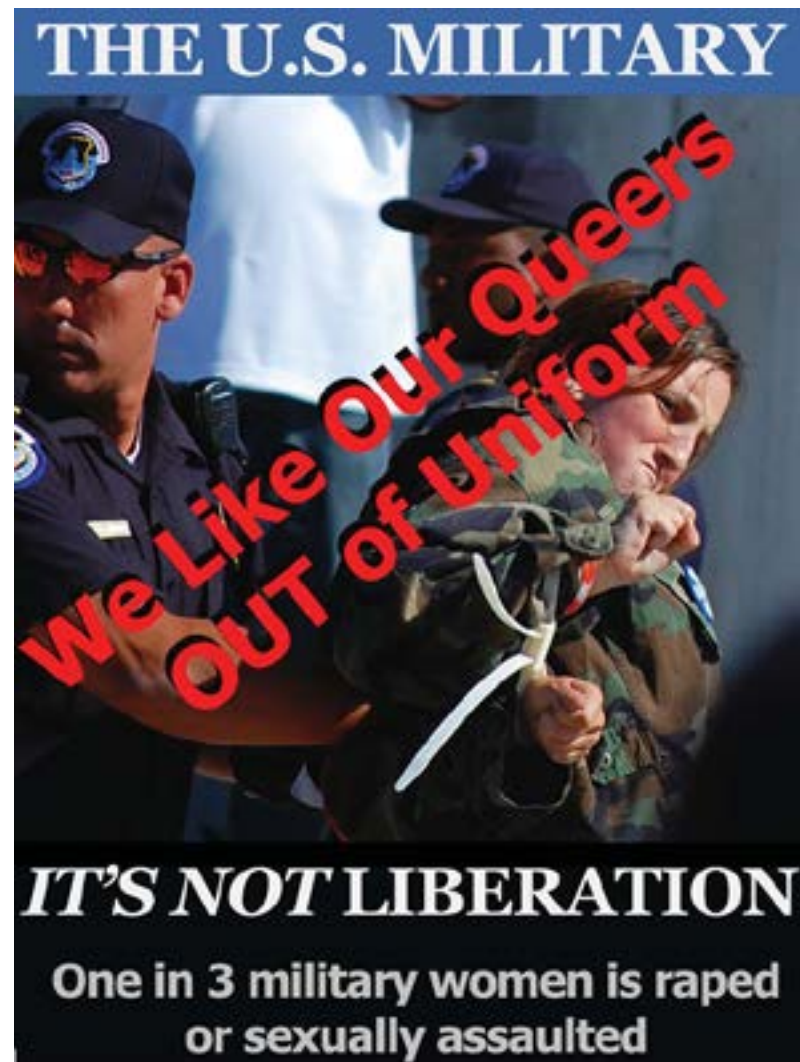


I was pepper sprayed that day too. I am far more proud of that.

# WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHEN, WHERE, HOW

By LAGAI \*

reprinted from We Like Our Queers Out of Uniform, June 1992



All images by LAGAI

\* Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention (LAGAI) was started in 1982 as a Central American solidarity group. We have since taken on a more general gay liberation focus, although we still do a lot of anti-intervention, anti-imperialism work. We also do a lot of AIDS work, and work against racism, sexism, union-busting, and other oppressions, as well as trying to put a more gay liberation perspective into the gay community and into the left. We are, and always have been a group of independent gay leftists, of the anarchist or anarcho-communist type, and we look forward to making a revolution soon, so we can have considerably more fun than we're having now. We are not affiliated with any left sectarian group, and frankly we doubt that they would want to be affiliated with us.

In November of 1990, hundreds of thousands of women and men from the U.S. and other countries waited, armed to the teeth, in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the middle east to attack Iraq. The U.S. was clear that there would be no negotiated settlement. No one, except the highest levels of the U.S. government, had any idea that two months after the "war" began, it would be over, leaving maybe 200,000 Iraqis dead. Less than 200 Americans were killed in that war, over half from mistakes or "friendly fire."

In November 1990, we in LAGAI were trying to build an anti-war movement. At the same time, the issue of lesbians and gays in the military had taken the center stage in the gay community. A high-ranking military official was outed. A military spokesperson stated that lesbians and gay men would be sent to the Gulf, and when they came back, they'd be thrown out. A week later it was clarified. Lesbians and gay men wouldn't be sent to the Gulf, the military declared (choosing to ignore that thousands had already gone). Assimilationist gay "leaders" demanded our right to be in the military. Meanwhile conscientious objectors were taken in chains to the Gulf, or jailed.

There also seemed a strong possibility that if a protracted ground war developed, a draft might be instituted, at least for medical personnel. LAGAI decided to prepare to do draft and counter-recruitment counseling for lesbian and gay men. We attended a training put on by the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCCO). While the training was very thorough about people's rights versus the draft and military recruiters, the material available for lesbians and gay men was pretty sparse.

Like many other anti-war activists, we spent October 1990 through May 1991 demonstrating against the massive slaughter of the Iraqi people, and then against the terror the government of Kuwait inflicted on the Palestinian population after "liberation." At that point, we decided that we would continue with our counter-recruitment work in the lesbian/gay community. Frustrated with the lack of literature for lesbian and gay youth, we decided to put together this packet.

Young lesbians and gay men join the military for a lot of the same reasons other people do, to get out of Stockton. Or Dubuque. Or Weed, Bend, Indianapolis, Columbus, or even San Francisco or New York City. They join the military because there are very few options for young people who don't come from the middle class, especially if they're people of color. They join the military to get to somewhere where there will be other queers, or to get away from their families.

If the lesbians and gay men who join the military are lucky, they end up on a base with a gay counterculture. If they are unlucky, they may get caught up in a military with-hunt, and may be thrown in jail or dishonorably discharged. All of them live with the constant fear of discovery. Some of their stories are included in this packet. We in LAGAI strongly oppose the harassment, intimidation, violence and terror that the military inflicts on lesbian and gay service people.

But the military isn't a job program for young people. It's the muscle behind U.S. imperialism. The function of every single person in the military is to enable the U.S. government to send as many armed people as it wants anywhere in the world to enforce its policies. Without this massive and totally frightening force, the U.S. wouldn't be allowed to use 60% of the world's resources.





In May of 1992, the show of military force (this year's invasion) was in Los Angeles, where thousands of U.S. marines and soldiers were sent to put down the rebellion after the Rodney King verdict. That wasn't the first time troops have been used as a police force in this country. The army was called out against riots in African-American communities in the 1960s, against the anti-war demonstrators in the 1960s and 1970s. The army and National Guard have often been used against strikers including the Hormel strike in 1986 and the post office strike in 1970.

Not only are the military used as police, but the police are being militarized. Big city police now have tanks, assault weapons, and SWAT teams. Although gay people may not be allowed to be open in the military, they are recruited by the police force in some big cities, including San Francisco. We don't believe "cop" is an appropriate or desirable occupation for lesbians or gay men. This packet includes a flier we wrote to put that out to our community.

This packet includes articles from a gay man who was kicked out of the military for being gay, and a lesbian who left. There are articles on the persecution of lesbians and gay men at Parris Island and elsewhere, and on the persecution of Gulf war resisters. There are articles from a Vietnam era draft-dodging drag queen and a gay Vietnam veteran. There is a flyer from the American Friends Service Committee, which lists training programs and scholarships and some general counter recruitment material, including information about how to get out of delayed entry programs. There are some LAGAI fliers and articles about gays in the military.

We hope groups in other communities will find this helpful doing counter-recruitment or anti-draft outreach to youth. We have done some tabling in the Polk District [San Francisco], an area where a lot of queer youth hang out, and have had pretty good response. We recommend having condoms, bleach and safer sex information to give out at your table, as well as this kind of literature. Please contact us if we can help you in doing this work.

We chose the packet format because it gives us, and you, flexibility. Please add material about local resources, or about what your group is doing, or thinking. We are open to including new articles in the packet, so send them to us.



# WHY I OPPOSE REPEALING DADT & PASSAGE OF THE DREAM ACT

By Tamara K. Nopper \*

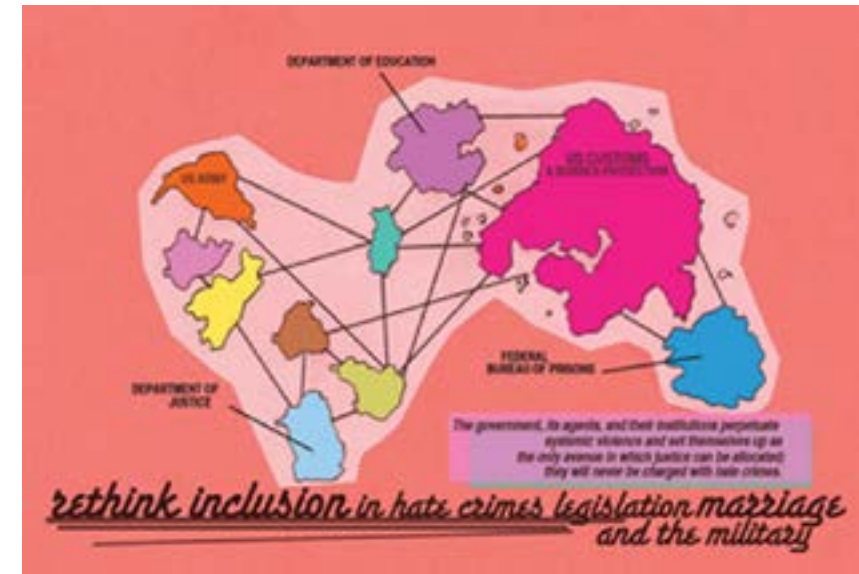
September 19, 2010—

One of the first books I read about Asian American feminism was the anthology *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire*. In one of the essays, author Juliana Pegues describes scenes from a “radical Asian women’s movement.” One such scene involves lesbian and bisexual Asian and Pacific Islanders marching at Gay Pride with signs reading “Gay white soldiers in Asia? Not my liberation!” and “ends with the absence of all soldiers, gay and straight, from any imperialist army.”

Although it has been over a decade since I read this passage, I return to this “scene” as I watch far too many liberals and progressives praise the possible repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT) as well as the possible passage of the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act).

In some ways, I understand why people are supportive of such gestures. The idea that certain identities and status categories, such as gay or lesbian or (undocumented) immigrants are either outlawed or treated as social problems has rightfully generated a great deal of sympathy. And the very real ways that people experience marginalization or discrimination — ranging from a lack of certain rights to violence, including death — certainly indicates that solutions are needed. Further, far too many non-whites have experienced disproportionate disadvantages, surveillance, and discipline from both DADT and anti-immigrant legislation. For example, Black women, some of whom are not lesbians, have been disproportionately discharged from the U.S. military under DADT. And anti-

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Against Equality

immigrant legislation, policing measures, and vigilante xenophobic racism is motivated by and reinforces white supremacy and white nationalism.

Yet both the repeal of DADT and the passage of the DREAM Act will increase the size and power of the U.S. military and the Department of Defense, which is already the largest U.S. employer. Repealing DADT will make it easier for gays and lesbians to openly serve and the Dream Act in its present incarnation may provide a pathway to legal residency and possibly citizenship for some undocumented immigrant young people if they serve two years in the U.S. military or spend an equal amount of time in college.

Unsurprisingly, the latter, being pushed by Democrats, is getting support from “many with close ties to the military and higher education.” As the Wall Street Times reports:

“Pentagon officials support the Dream Act. In its strategic plan for fiscal years 2010-2012, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness cited the Dream Act as a ‘smart’ way to attract quality recruits to the all-volunteer force... ‘Passage of the Dream Act would be extremely beneficial to the U.S. military and the country as a whole,’ said Margaret Stock, a retired West Point professor who studies immigrants in the military. She said it made ‘perfect’ sense to attach it to the defense-authorization bill. Louis Caldera, secretary of the Army under President Bill Clinton, said that as they struggled to meet recruiting goals, ‘recruiters at stations were telling me it would be extremely valuable for these patriotic people to be allowed to serve our country.’”

Additionally, in a 2009 Department of Defense strategic plan report, the second strategic goal, “Shape and maintain a mission-ready All Volunteer Force,” lists the DREAM Act as a possible recruitment tool under one of the “performance objectives”:

“Recruit the All-Volunteer Force by finding smart ways to sustain quality assurance even as we expand markets to fill manning at controlled costs as demonstrated by achieving quarterly recruiting quality and quantity goals, and through expansion of the Military Accessions Vital to the National Interest (MAVNI) program and the once-medically restricted populations, as well as the DREAM initiative.”

What concerns me is that far too many liberals and progressives, including those who serve as professional commentators on cable news and/or progressive publications (and some



Against Equality

with a seemingly deep affinity for the Democratic Party) have been praising the passage of the DREAM Act. Unsurprising is that many of the same people support the repeal of DADT. While a sincere concern about discrimination may unite both gestures, so too does a lack of critical perspective regarding the U.S. military as one of the main vehicles in the expansion and enforcement of U.S. imperialism, heterosexuality, white supremacy, capitalism, patriarchy, and repression against political dissent and people's movements in the United States and abroad. Far too many liberals and progressives, including those critical of policies or the squashing of political dissent, take an ambivalent stance on the U.S. military. It is unclear what makes some of these folks unwilling to openly oppose the military state. Perhaps it's easier than dealing with the backlash from a variety of people, including the many people of color and/or women who are now building long-term careers in the military. Or maybe it's more amenable to building careers as pundits in both corporate and progressive media, both of which may be critical of some defense spending or "wasted" (read unsuccessful) military efforts but not necessarily of U.S. militarism.

Whatever the case, the inclusion of more gays and lesbians and/or undocumented immigrant youth in the U.S. military is not an ethical project given that both gestures are willing to have our communities serve as mercenaries in exchange for certain rights, some of which are never fully guaranteed in a homophobic and white supremacist country. Nor is it pragmatic. By supporting the diversification of the U.S. military we undermine radical democratic possibilities by giving the military state more people, many of whom will ultimately die in combat or develop PTSD and health issues and/or continue nurturing long-term relationships with the U.S. military, including a political affinity with its culture

and goals. We will also have a more difficult time challenging projects of privatization, the incurring of huge amounts of debt, and the erosion of rights and protections in other countries — efforts buttressed by the threat of military action—which ultimately affects people in the United States.

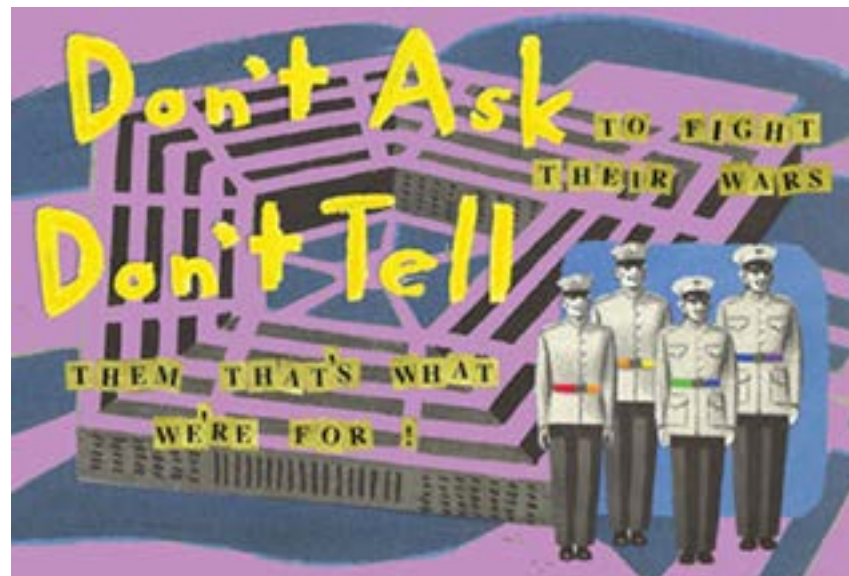
Of course I am not the first person to raise these concerns. There are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender folks, many of them non-white and non-middle class, who promote a queer politic that challenges the heteronormative desires of mainstream movements, including that pushed by some LGBT organizations and their purported "allies" within the Democratic party and heteronormative people of color organizations. Some of these folks organize for better economic opportunities, access to housing, and safer existences in the civilian sector for poor and working-class LGBTs. And some also openly oppose military recruitment or challenge the push for gays and lesbians to (openly) serve in the military by countering with "Don't serve" as a slogan. For example, Cecilia Lucas, who grew up in a military family, writes in a 2010 CounterPunch article:

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell is bad policy. It encourages deceit and, specifically, staying in the closet, which contributes to internalized as well as public homophobia, thus perpetuating discrimination and violence against LGBT people. Banning gay people from serving in the military, however, is something I support. Not because I'm anti-gay, nope, I'm one of those queer folks myself. I'm also a woman and would support a law against women serving in the military. Not because I think women are less capable. I would support laws against any group of people serving in the military: people of color, tall people, people between the ages of 25 and 53, white men, poor people, people who have children, people who vote for Democrats — however you draw the boundaries of a group, I would support a law banning them from military service. Because I support outlawing the military. And until that has happened, I support downsizing it by any means necessary, including, in this one particular arena, sacrificing civil rights in the interest of human rights...

It is tricky to write an essay that accepts discrimination as a means to an end. In what remains a homophobic, racist, sexist society, I fear enabling a slippery slope of arguments for identity-based discrimination. Although, of course, the entire notion of citizens who are "protected" by a military discriminates against people based on the identity factor of nationality. Hence my point about human rights trumping civil rights. My argument that we should be fighting against, not for, gay people's inclusion in the military is not actually about gay people at all. Nor is it about wanting others to do our dirty work for us. As I said, I think everyone should be banned from military service. But if the goal is demilitarization, fighting for even more people to have the right to join the military makes no sense. There are plenty of other civil rights denied gay people for which we still need to fight — civil rights that do not trample on others' human rights."

As Lucas's comments reveal, opposing LGBT folks from serving openly in the military is not to condone the harassment and unfair surveillance that they experience; nor is it meant to support a culture that suggests they should stay in the closet in the name of military stability and national security. Rather, it is to discourage the attractiveness of military enlistment as well as martial citizenship, a process that provides marginalized groups a "pathway to citizenship" via military service. More, opposition to people serving in the military is also grounded in an understanding that the military negatively impacts practically everyone in the world (including those in the United States), and in particular people of color and/or women and/or gays and lesbians, and not just those who are discriminated against while serving or who are expected to serve as pathways to citizenship or access to education.





Against Equality

Along with folks like Lucas, there are immigrants and their allies challenging us to rethink the possible passage of the DREAM Act because of its pro-military provision and for basically “making a pool of young, bilingual, U.S.-educated, high-achieving students available to the recruiters.” Some have withdrawn their support for the current version of the act in objection to its terms. For example, a letter from one such person, Raúl Al-qaraz Ochoa, states:

“Passage of the DREAM Act would definitely be a step forward in the struggle for Migrant Justice. Yet the politicians in Washington have hijacked this struggle from its original essence and turned dreams into ugly political nightmares. I refuse to be a part of anything that turns us into political pawns of dirty Washington politics. I want my people to be “legalized” but at what cost? We all want it bad. I hear it. I’ve lived it. But I think it’s a matter of how much we’re willing to compromise in order to win victories or crumbs...So if I support the DREAM Act, does this mean I am okay with our people being used as political pawns? Does this mean that my hands will be smeared with the same bloodshed the U.S. spills all over the world? Does this mean I am okay with blaming my mother and my father for migrating “illegally” to the U.S.? Am I willing to surrender to all that in exchange for a benefit? Maybe it’s easier for me to say that “I can” because I have papers, right? I’d like to think that it’s because my political principles will not allow me to do so, regardless of my citizenship status or personal benefit at stake. Strong movements that achieve greater victories are those that stand in solidarity with all oppressed people of the world and never gain access to rights at the expense of other oppressed groups.

I have come to a deeply painful decision: I can no longer in good political conscience support the DREAM Act because the essence of a beautiful dream has been detained by a colonial nightmare seeking to fund and fuel the U.S. empire machine.”

Unfortunately, the willingness of folks like Lucas and Al-qaraz Ochoa as well as others to critically engage military diversification or the passage of the DREAM Act given its military provisions have gotten less air time or attention among liberal and progressives actively pushing for both measures. In terms of repealing DADT, it is unfortunately not surprising that the rejection of military inclusion by LGBT folks has gotten minimal attention from professional progressives, some of whom are straight. Too many straight people who profess to be LGBT allies tend to align themselves with the liberal professional wings of

LGBT politics given shared bourgeois notions of “respectable” (i.e., not offensive to straight people) gay politics that also promotes a middle-class notion of democracy — and supports the Democratic Party. Additionally, it’s more time efficient to find out what professional LGBT organizations think, since they are more likely to have resources to make it easier to learn their agendas without as much effort as learning from those who politically labor in the margins of the margins, given their critical stances toward the political mainstream. Yet given the tendency for many professional progressives to be on the internet and social media sites, it is a bit telling that many have supported DADT without addressing the critical stances of some LGBT folks against the military state that are easily available on the internet. This noticeable lack of engagement raises some questions: Why is it that the straight progressives are more willing to have gays and lesbians serve in the U.S. military (or get married) than, let’s say, breaking bread with and seriously considering the political views of LGBT folks who take radical political stances against the military state (as well as engage in non-middle-class aesthetics)? And why do many straight progressives fight for LGBT folks to openly serve in the military — one of the most dangerous employment sites that requires its laborers to kill and control others, including non-whites and/or LGBTs, in the name of empire — but rarely discuss how working-class, poor, and/or of color LGBTs are treated and politically organize for opportunities in the civilian sector job market where they are also expected to remain closeted, subject to homophobic harassment and surveillance, or excluded altogether?

Also concerning is the willingness of many progressives to support the DREAM Act, despite it possibly being tied up to a defense-authorization bill and having support from a diverse group of people united by a commitment to military recruitment. While some support is due to a righteous critique of white supremacy that shapes pathways to citizenship, some (also) support the DREAM Act because it serves as a form of “reparations” for foreign policies and colonialism toward third world or developing countries once called home to many of the immigrant youth or their families targeted by the legislation. That is, the famous quote “We’re here because you were there” seems to be the underlying mantra of some pushing for the act’s passage. Yet if “being there” involved the U.S. military, it is unclear how a resolution to this issue, ethically or pragmatically, calls for immigrant youth to serve for the same U.S. military that devastated, disrupted, undermined, and still controls many of the policies and everyday life of the immigrants’ homelands.



Mr. Fish





Mr. Fish

Partially to blame for the uncritical support of the DREAM Act are different factions of the immigrant rights movement, as well as funders and some progressive media, that have pushed for an uncritical embrace of the immigrant rights movement among progressives. It is difficult to raise critical views of the (diverse) immigrant rights movement, even when making it clear that one rejects the white supremacy and white nationalism of the right wing (as well as white-run progressive media and progressive institutions, such as some labor unions) without experiencing some backlash from other progressives, particularly people of color. In turn, critical questions about how immigrant rights movements may support, rather than undermine U.S. hegemony or white supremacy, have been taken off the table at most progressive gatherings, large and small. Subsequently, while some may express concern about the DREAM Act being part of a defense-authorization bill, there are probably fewer who will openly take stands against the bill, given the threat of being labeled xenophobic by some progressives unwilling to reject the U.S. military state or interrogate the politics of immigration from an anti-racist and anti-capitalist perspective. In the process, the military may end up getting easier access to immigrant youth who may have difficulty going to college.

As the passage from *Dragon Ladies* shows, some take into account the complexity of identities and political realities as well as maintain oppositional stances against those apparatuses that are largely responsible for the limited choices far too many people have. Many of us are looking for ways to mediate the very real vulnerabilities and lack of job security, as well as forms of social rejection that causes the stress, fear, and physical consequences experienced before and especially during this recession. And given the recent upsurge in explicit gestures of white supremacy and white nationalism as demonstrated by the growing strength of the Tea Party, it may be the most expedient to play up on the shared support of the U.S. military among a broad spectrum of people in order to secure, at least on paper, some basic rights to which straight and/or white people have gotten access. But progressives who support the repeal of DADT and passage of the DREAM Act might instead consider other political possibilities explored by some of those who are the subjects of such policy debates; these folks, some of whom are desperately in need of protection, job security, and safety, encourage us to resist the urge for quick resolutions that ultimately serve to stabilize the military state and instead explore more humane options — for those targeted by DADT and the DREAM Act as well as the rest of the world.

## THE END OF DADT, STATE VIOLENCE AND NATIONAL BELONGING

By Karma R. Chávez\*

In anticipation of the end of Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT), then President of the Human Rights Campaign, Joe Solomnese remarked: "Tomorrow is a historic day for gay and lesbian service members and our nation as a whole. 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' was a stain on our nation – not only did it damage our military readiness and national security, but it sent a message that discrimination based upon sexual orientation was acceptable. We know that not to be the case – discrimination accomplishes nothing and tears at the fabric of our country's strength."

The promotion of the DADT repeal, and the celebrations that followed the September 20, 2011 end date, including the spreading of memes like this image of a lesbian sailor kissing her girlfriend upon her return home, have troubled many of us anti-imperialism, anti-war types for a long time. Yet, even some progressives, including good friends of mine lauded the DADT repeal insisting that we should be able to separate the question of militarism and U.S. imperialism from the fact that the repeal reflects the end of one form of systemic discrimination. I vehemently disagree with this position. Instead, the DADT repeal, the activism before it, and the celebration after it, reflect LGBT people's tacit acceptance and



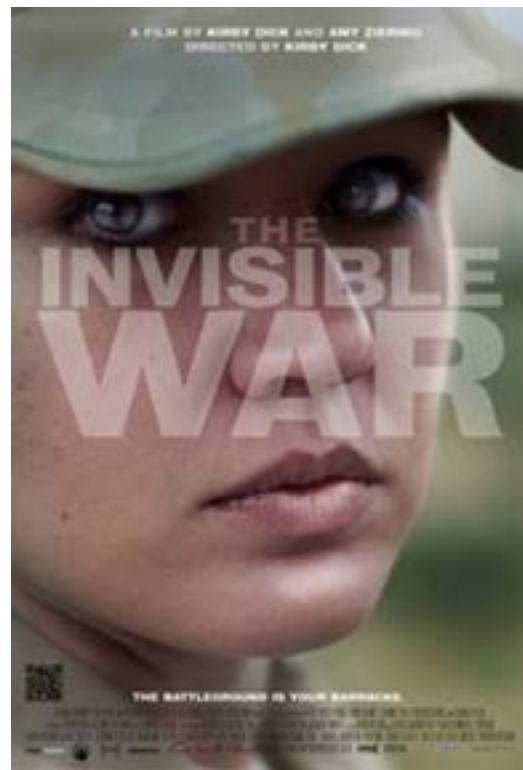
\*Karma Chavez Karma R. Chávez is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and co-founder of the Queer Migration Research Network. She writes about immigration, feminism, queer theory and social movements and is finishing a book titled, *Queer/Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities*. Many of her academic articles can be freely accessed at: <http://wisc.academia.edu/KarmaChavez/Papers>

active promotion of militarism as a mechanism for national belonging. Not only does this then put LGBT citizens in the position of accepting state violence as the conduit for their belonging, but it also reinforces the ways in which certain gay and queer subjectivities are taken up in the name of imperialisms. Furthermore, LGBT celebration of the DADT repeal offers credence to how other groups, namely immigrants, are only able to belong by participating in the state's violence through militarism.

### The Complexity of Military State Violence

When Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore debated First Lieutenant Dan Choi on Democracy Now! in 2010, she focused directly on the U.S. military as the promoter of state violence, both within and outside the state, and particularly in relation to people of color. Choi quietly responded, “we all do not think that when we join the military we’re just going to kill people of color. I certainly did not think that as a person of color. And as my mom is an orphan of the war, she certainly told me that your job in the military is not to create havoc, but it is to do everything that you can, possibly, at least theoretically, to create peace, to some extent. And that is — I know this is going to sound like fingernails on the chalkboard to some of your viewers, but war is a force that gives us meaning.”

Choi's remarks reflect the typical coding that advocates of the DADT repeal used to divert attention from the relationship between the military and violence. But the military, as the disciplinary arm of the national body reflects the ultimate junction of what Foucault calls biopower and Mbembe refers to as necropolitics—the site that functions to produce, discipline and maintain some lives, while relegating others to death and abjection. Both functions of the military, its' life giving and life taking, are enactments of state violence.



source: <http://www.iceposter.com>

This violence, both before and after the DADT is deep and complex. I'll share a number of examples of such violence to highlight this point.

For example, the 2012 Sundance US Documentary Audience Award went to “The Invisible War.” This film, made by Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering, uncovers the horrors of the tens of thousands of service women and men who are raped, mostly by fellow servicemen, and often superiors who are treated with impunity.

In October 2010, the mainstream news media reported stories of an epidemic of gay bullying that has led to the suicides of several young, mostly white and middle-class gay male youth. Alison Buckholtz, the wife of a naval officer asked why there's no “It Gets Better” project for military service members, whose suicide rates exceed the civilian rate.

On June 30, 2009, Black, gay Navy Seaman August Provost was shot several times while on duty and then his body was burned to apparently conceal the evidence. Fellow sailor, Petty Officer Jonathan Campos who was accused of the murder along with 16 other criminal offenses, committed suicide in his jail cell less than a month later.

In January 2012, a Youtube video showing U.S. Marines laughing as they urinate on the dead bodies of three Taliban fighters went viral. The Obama administration condemned the actions, but offered no concrete plan for punishment. Several conservatives suggested no punishment is necessary for these “kids” and “sons of America.”

July 3, 2011, a day before U.S. Independence Day, The Guardian reported that Bradley Manning, accused of releasing secret diplomatic cables to Wikileaks told a friend that he was the victim of bullying by fellow soldiers because he was gay. The Obama administration held Manning in solitary confinement in deplorable conditions without trial for almost a year, and he continues to be incarcerated without due process.



October 3, 2011, 19-year old Army private Danny Chen was reported to have committed suicide while serving in Afghanistan. Chen, the son of Chinese immigrants, was regularly subjected to fellow soldiers' racist insults as they spoke to him with exaggerated accents



and called him “Jackie Chan.” He also faced daily physical abuse from fellow soldiers. Eight of those soldiers were later charged with crimes ranging from involuntary manslaughter and negligent homicide to dereliction of duty. The cases will be tried in Afghanistan against the wishes of Chen’s family, who want the case tried on U.S. soil so they can have access to it.

While one would hope that Solomnese and other military promoters might think of these not-so-isolated instances of violence as the real “stains on our nation,” they instead beg to belong to the institution that fosters the violence. Moreover, the repeal of DADT didn’t happen in seclusion. Instead, it is a part of a broader and more global push to use certain gay and queer subjectivities in the service of nationalism and imperialism. Thus, DADT needs to be read in relation to two other phenomena: homonationalism and “gay rights as human rights” discourse.

Homonationalism, a term coined by Jasbir Puar, refers to the practice of including certain gay and lesbian subjects in order to justify nation and empire-building foreign policies. Usually, in the name of modernity and tolerance, the nation wants to protect the good citizen gay from the dangerous Muslim other. This can be seen when the U.S. uses the supposed intolerance towards gays and lesbians as one of the reasons to invade Muslim countries. Homonationalism has more or less been adopted as state policy in Hillary Clinton’s pronouncement that “gay rights are human rights,” during a December 2011 speech to the United Nations. Undoubtedly, and as we are already seeing in subtle ways, this proclamation will be used to justify a host of foreign policy initiatives and actions against those countries who do not espouse this logic in precisely the way Western countries imagine it. In putting these phenomena in conversation with the DADT repeal and the celebration surrounding it, it becomes clear that gays and lesbians have not only become active members of the state’s violent arm, but they have also become a willful participant in a far-reaching logic and ideology of U.S. imperialism.

But the implications of supporting and promoting the DADT repeal extend further. The repeal and subsequent gay and lesbian celebrations actually function to bolster militarism and state violence as the most appropriate mechanism for immigrant belonging in the United States.

### **DREAM Act to ARMS Act**

Those supporting the DADT repeal on the basis that this is a matter of righting a discriminatory wrong, find good company among those who advocate for the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act on the premise that undocumented young people deserve access to citizenship since they are now discriminated against based on being in a situation that is not their fault. In fact, DADT and DREAM activists regularly offered their support for each other’s causes. The DREAM Act would provide a pathway to conditional residency and eventual citizenship for young undocumented immigrants, provided they meet a host of criteria and serve either two years in the military or obtain two years of college education within six years of the Act’s implementation. After candidate Barack Obama indicated his support for DREAM Act in 2008, undocumented immigrant youth and young adults took action to galvanize more support for the legislation. Critics of the DREAM Act rightly note, not only that roughly 62% of age-eligible youth will not qualify for the DREAM, but that most who would qualify would be required to take the military “option,” given that the act includes no financial aid for undocumented students. When faced with this critique, DREAM advocates often use their personal experience to insist that many will be able to go to college, or they respond like Jose Ruiz did during a 2010



source: <http://washingtonindependent.com/98206/dream-act-and-dont-ask-dont-tell-repeal-derail-defense-bill-vote>

Democracy Now! Interview, saying, “I don’t believe in military. I don’t believe in wars. But at the same time, you know, there’s people who are willing to go, and they’re — they love it.” In other words, for both DADT repeal and DREAM Act proponents, gays and lesbians/immigrants are discriminated against, and they should be able to have the option to use the military as a mechanism for full national belonging should they so choose it.

In late January 2012, Representative David Rivera (R – FL, District 25) proposed HR 3823, the Adjusted Residency for Military Service (ARMS) Act, which according to the bill’s summary, would “authorize the cancellation of removal and adjustment of status of certain aliens who are long-term United States residents and who entered the United States as children, and for other purposes.” Supporters of the DREAM Act were, almost literally, up in arms. They lamented feeling betrayed by Republicans, and asked that their lives not be given up as “cannon fodder.”

Their outrage is surprising considering that in supporting the DREAM Act, advocates already endorse military pathways to citizenship. Moreover, whether used as an incentive to obtain citizenship or a mechanism to promote cultural assimilation, immigrants have been an active part of the U.S. armed forces since the War of 1812. And at least for the past two decades, documented immigrants have been actively recruited by the U.S. government. For example, in 2002 President Bush issued an executive order declaring that any immigrant who served one day of active military service would be put on a fast track to citizenship.[1]

The ARMS Act removes the “option” logic that has been so central to those advocating for both the DADT repeal and the passage of the DREAM Act. Many gays have accepted these conditions for belonging because most affluent gays will never have to serve in the military and so they see this only as a matter of identity-based discrimination. Many immigrants have accepted these conditions for their belonging because they assumed they would get a pass from that kind of service through the educational provision of the DREAM Act. The ARMS Act does not follow the option-logic of these other two laws; instead, it clearly espouses militarism as the mechanism for national belonging. When militarism becomes



the only “option,” it is apparently startling, but support for both the DADT repeal and the DREAM Act smooth the pathway for ARMS and a broader discourse of military state violence as an appropriate and logical modality for national belonging. Basically, supporting the DADT repeal and the DREAM Act reinforces the belief that some lives are livable and others are expendable. ARMS just overtly affirms that this is, in fact, the case.



source: [http://www.indybay.org/uploads/2010/02/19/640\\_do\\_ask\\_dont\\_kill.jpg](http://www.indybay.org/uploads/2010/02/19/640_do_ask_dont_kill.jpg)

Given that gay rights are used in the service of imperialism, that violence against women, queers, and people of color continues to permeate all aspects of the military apparatus, progressive LGBT people should be the first to be ever vigilant and opposed to any expansion of the military industrial complex. If we are not opposed, to call upon a famous book by Cynthia Enloe from nearly 30 years ago, the khaki very well may not only become us, but consume us.

[1] Fernanda Santos, “After the War, a New Battle to Become Citizens,” New York Times, February 24 2008. Perhaps not surprisingly, many waited months or years, and some died waiting. The ARMS Act is not even the first of its kind. In 2010, Representative Charles Djou (R-HI, District 1) introduced HR 6327 designed to do the same thing.