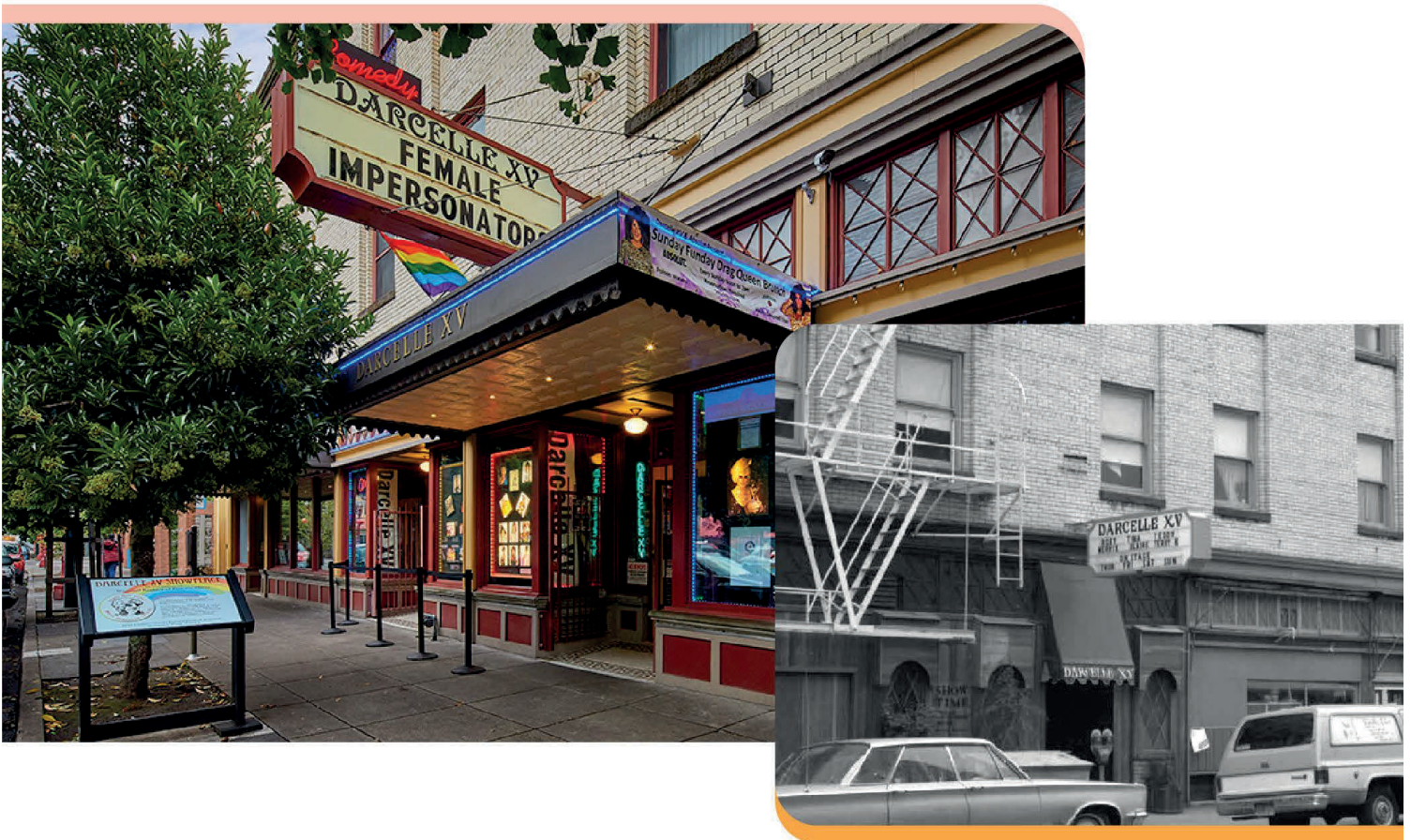


# LGBTQ+ History in Portland, Oregon

## A Historic Context Statement



Historic Context Statement Prepared by Cayla McGrail  
for City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

October 2024

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## About the Author

Cayla McGrail (they/she) is a former Associate Planner in the City of Portland's Historic Resources Program and former Associate Project Manager of the LGBTQ+ Historic Sites Project. They hold a Master of Science in Historic Preservation with a focus on queer preservation and a Bachelor of Arts in History and Anthropology. Cayla's lived, academic, and professional experience related to LGBTQ+ history and historic preservation informed the authorship of this historic context statement.

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## About City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) develops creative and practical solutions to enhance Portland's livability, preserve distinctive places, and plan for a resilient future.

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## LGBTQ+ Politics and Policing

On June 20, 1992, rainbow flags fluttered and banners reading "For Love and Justice: A Walk Against Hate" and "From Eugene to Portland in Support of Lesbian and Gay Rights" filled the air with vibrancy and a spirit of political defiance. Marchers crossed Portland's Burnside Bridge, converging with the Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade and Rally along Portland's Waterfront Park, amplifying the city's LGBTQ+ presence.<sup>482</sup> Activist Anne Galisky proposed a walk through the Willamette Valley as a powerful act of resistance against Ballot Measure 9 ("Amends Constitution: Government Cannot Facilitate, Must Discourage Homosexuality, Other 'Behaviors'").<sup>483</sup> Named the Walk for Love and Justice, Galisky, activists, and other supporters embarked on foot from Eugene, Oregon on June 7, 1992 "to build bridges and to promote an end to oppression and hatred in all its forms."<sup>484</sup> Months later, on November 3, 1992, Oregon voters defeated the ballot measure by a 12% margin, marking a significant victory in the ongoing battle for LGBTQ+ civil rights.<sup>485</sup>

Opposition to 1992's Ballot Measure 9 spurred multifaceted and diverse responses, including the Walk for Love and Justice; door to door campaigning; a Nirvana benefit concert at the Portland Meadows (1001 N Schmeer Rd., since demolished); satirical artwork; and coalition building.<sup>486</sup> The various anti-Ballot Measure 9 campaigns from LGBTQ+, BIPOC, labor, political, artistic, rural, and religious organizations reflected the crystallization of political and legal power by and for LGBTQ+ Oregonians, which gained strong momentum in the 1970s. With many LGBTQ+ Portlanders at the forefront, Oregonians united throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century to fight for LGBTQ+ lives.

"LGBTQ+ Politics and Policing" explores various anti-LGBTQ+ political movements and efforts for LGBTQ+ civil rights during the 1905–1994 period.<sup>487</sup> Oregon's state-sanctioned oppression of diverse peoples provided a foundation for legal and social discrimination towards LGBTQ+ Portlanders

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<sup>482</sup> The 1992 Portland Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade and Rally theme of "A Simple Matter of Justice" drew inspiration from a Harvey Milk speech to "optimize the fight [Oregonians] face with the Oregon Citizens Alliance." 1992's Pride counted 9,000 marching and 15,000 attending the rally, marking the largest turnout to date. See Renée LaChance, "Back on the Waterfront," *Just Out*, June 1, 1992, 13; "The early years of Lesbian and Gay Pride in Portland," *Just Out*, July 1, 1992, 2.

<sup>483</sup> Oral history interview with Anne, Galisky, by Dave Anderson and Emily Craft, 2013 February 27, SR 11369, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.; "Ballot Measure 9," *The Stories, No on 9 Remembered*, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/ballot-measure-9/>.

<sup>484</sup> Supporters included The Lesbian Community Project, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), and up to 70 religious organizations. See "Walk for Love and Justice," *The Stories, No on 9 Remembered*, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/24-walk-for-love-justice/>; Barbara Bernstein, "Forging bonds," *Just Out*, July 1, 1992, 26.

<sup>485</sup> William Schultz, "The Rise and Fall of 'No Special Rights,'" 24.

<sup>486</sup> Renée LaChance, "Bop til you drop," *Just Out*, October 1, 1992, 31.; See various examples of opposition strategies on *The Stories, No on 9 Remembered*, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/>.

<sup>487</sup> While various anti-discrimination legislation based on sexuality and gender were introduced throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it would not be until 2007 that a state-wide anti-discrimination bill would be passed as the Oregon Equality Act. In 2014, Oregon achieved marriage equality with the overturning of 2004's Measure 36 which had banned LGBTQ+ marriage with an amendment of the Oregon constitution. In 2017, Oregon passed the first "standalone statewide transgender justice bill." These examples showcase that political and legal advocacy and activism is still needed for LGBTQ+ Oregonians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For additional history, see "Our History," *About Us, Basic Rights Oregon*, <https://www.basicrights.org/history>.

throughout the 1900s. Anti-vice campaigns in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and “no special rights” campaigns in the latter half of the century sought to marginalize and criminalize queer identities, spaces, and livelihoods. Even among LGBTQ+ Portlanders, divisions and exclusions arose based on race, gender, sexuality, age, and ability. These frictions placed on and within Portland’s queer communities prompted coalition building and legal strategizing to end forms of oppression in Portland and across Oregon.

## Everyday Life as Political Battlegrounds

The struggle for one to freely express themselves, have relationships, and make a living resonates with the feminist mantra “the personal is political” and has significance in Portland’s political ethos. Portlanders’ everyday lives were shaped by concurrent civil rights movements, civil rights “denied, fought for, fought against, won, lost, won again, and threatened.”<sup>488</sup>

Through the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Oregon was no exception to phrases such as “crime against nature” and “the crime which could not be named” and commonly used these in criminal charges to reinforce negative views towards nonnormative sexual activities.<sup>489</sup> “For several centuries, official disapproval of homosexual acts stemmed primarily from Judeo-Christian religious doctrine upon which secular laws proscribing ‘offenses against nature’ were based,” scholar Jennifer Terry explains in *American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society*, and continues that “religion and law constituted the principal authoritative discourses through which homosexuality was understood.”<sup>490</sup> Other charges, such as “immoral acts,” disorderly conduct, and vagrancy were broad and vague enough to apply to a range of supposed criminal activity. For instance, in April 1913, laborer Grover King was arrested in the Fairmount Hotel (formerly W. Burnside St. and 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.) and charged with vagrancy, though police caught him engaging in sodomy.<sup>491</sup> Portland police also charged Pacific Northwest gender non-conforming individual Harry Allen (also known as Harry Livingston) with vagrancy due to Oregon state’s lack of laws that specifically criminalized the act of wearing attire deemed inappropriate for an individual.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Megan E. Springate, “LGBTQ Civil Rights in America,” in *LGBTQ+ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History*, edited by Megan E. Springate (National Park Foundation, 2016), 18-2.

<sup>489</sup> Peter Boag’s study of same-sex affairs in the Pacific Northwest during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century cites various cases where these phrases were used. See Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 52, 78, 125 193.; Lawrence W. Murphy, “Defining the Crime Against Nature: Sodomy in the United States Appeals courts, 1810-1940,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 19, no. 1 (1990): 55-58.

<sup>490</sup> Jennifer Terry, *American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society* (University of Chicago Press, 1999), 40.

<sup>491</sup> Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 45, 48.

<sup>492</sup> Other cities, including San Francisco and New York, passed anti-Masquerade / anti-cross-dressing ordinances to “regulate multiple gender offenses, including those of feminist dress reformers, ‘fast young women’ who dressed as men for a night on the town, female impersonators, and people whose gender identification did not match their anatomy in legally acceptable ways.” For additional history, see Clare Sears, *Arresting Dress: Cross-Dressing, Law, and Fascination in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Duke University Press, 2015), 62.; William N. Eskridge, Jr., *Gaylaw: Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet*, (Harvard University Press, 1997).

Allen's arrest in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Portland reveals the complex dynamics between how queer individuals understood their own lives versus how authorities and society perceived them. Allen was born in 1882 and moved with his family to Washington in the 1890s. According to historian Peter Boag's research, Allen "traveled constantly around Washington and Oregon in search of employment," taking on bartending, longshoring, and other physical work.<sup>493</sup> At some point in the early 1900s, Allen met, courted, and eloped with Seattleite Isabell Maxwell.<sup>494</sup> By 1912, Allen settled in Portland and sent a telegram requesting his wife to join him. Police, who reportedly had been surveilling the couple for some time, raided the lower eastside house (no address) where the two were staying and arrested them. Authorities viewed the telegram as evidence of illegal activity, suspecting that Maxwell *posed* as Allen's wife and was "transported . . . across state lines for immoral purposes" such as paid sex work, ultimately leading to Allen's arrest for violating the Mann Act (also known as the White-Slave Traffic Act of 1910).<sup>495</sup>

However, after interrogations, Allen supposedly broke down and shared information about his identity, resulting in local charges and sentencing for vagrancy to punish his gender expression. According to Boag, "the shocking revelation [of Allen's identity] dumbfounded the local arresting authorities . . . [and] Portland newspapers had a field day."<sup>496</sup> The *Morning Oregonian's* June 4, 1912 headline read "woman posing as husband" and dismissed the married couple's relationship.<sup>497</sup> The article, as well as others from across the nation that publicized information on Allen, used stigmatizing language such "masquerading" and "impersonation"; such terms suggested that Allen was merely pretending. Worse, terms like "man-woman" further marginalized Allen's identity.<sup>498</sup> Despite local and national portrayals reflecting confusion regarding Allen's identity, Allen countered the narratives and spoke of his "change of sex"—a declaration that can be understood as an expression of a trans identity.<sup>499</sup>

While Allen and Maxwell garnered attention for their relationship, authorities heavily policed other diverse relationships throughout the early 1900s. Peter Boag's *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* examines intersections of race, ethnicity, and class. He finds that "urban police forces in [Portland's] Northwest purposely concentrated their surveillance of male-male sexual activities in the transient working-class neighborhoods. In doing so, the local authorities clearly utilized laws against same-sex sexual activities as only one part of a larger middle-class campaign to

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<sup>493</sup> Peter Boag, "Past as Prologue: Harry Allen in the Northwest And The Slow History of Trans Acceptance," Northwest Public Broadcasting News, February 5, 2021, <https://www.nwpb.org/2021/02/05/past-as-prologue-harry-allen-in-the-northwest-and-the-slow-history-of-trans-acceptance/>. Also see "Stealing Horses & Hearts: Trans Vagabonds of the Wild West," History is Gay, September 16, 2020, <https://www.historyisgaypodcast.com/notes/2020/09/15/episode-32-stealing-horses-and-hearts>.

<sup>494</sup> "Police Get Woman Posing As Husband," *Morning Oregonian*, June 4, 1912, 12.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.; Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past*, 23.; White slavery was a contemporary term for sex trafficking and forced prostitution. For additional information, see Jessica R. Pliley, *Policing Sexuality: The Mann Act and the Making of the FBI* (Harvard University Press, 2014).; Eric Weiner, "The Long, Colorful History of the Mann Act," All Things Considered, NPR, March 11, 2008, <https://www.npr.org/2008/03/11/88104308/the-long-colorful-history-of-the-mann-act>.

<sup>496</sup> Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past*, 25.

<sup>497</sup> "Police Get Woman Posing As Husband."

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.; Boag, *Re-Dressing America's Frontier Past*, 29.

persecute working-class men of racial and ethnic minority backgrounds.”<sup>500</sup> Police surveilled area venues like the Monte Carlo Pool Hall and Paris House (formerly on NW Davis St. and NW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave., closed in 1907) and arrested many on vagrancy, disorderly conduct, “immoral acts,” or other broad charges.<sup>501</sup>

In November 1912, Portland police arrested up to 68 individuals, several of them affluent white men, for their connection to same-sex sexual activities. Boag’s *Same-Sex Affairs* contended these arrests, referred to as the “Vice Clique” arrest, would shape the Pacific Northwest’s responses to LGBTQ+ life “for at least the next half century.”<sup>502</sup> For instance, this scandal significantly influenced Oregon’s laws related to sexuality. Prior to the 1910s, individuals across the country charged with sodomy argued existing criminal definitions of sodomy did not apply to certain sexual acts and thus were not indictable under sodomy statutes; Portlander Harry A. Start supposedly viewed Oregon’s sodomy law the same way, as one informant during his 1912 trial testified Start was not concerned about charges because “there isn’t anything covering [oral sex] and they can’t do anything with me or you or any of the rest of them.”<sup>503</sup> Within months of the “Vice Clique” trials, on January 31, 1913, Oregon Legislature enacted Oregon House Bill 145, expanding the 1853 criminal definition of sodomy to encompass any form or practice of “sexual perversity” and tripled the maximum prison sentence to 15 years.<sup>504</sup>

The “Vice Clique” revealed and publicized the various places where intimacies occurred, and arrests campaigns throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century targeted these known spaces. Downtown streets and parks were notoriously risky spaces for citation and arrest, whether for jaywalking or the charge of “disorderly conduct involving morals.”<sup>505</sup> Portland officials undertook a more extreme measure to control activities in the 1920s when they formally segregated the Plaza blocks of Lowndale and Chapman Squares (adjacent to SW 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Main St) based on assumed gender and age (Lowndale exclusively for men, Chapman

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<sup>500</sup> Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 46-47.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>503</sup> Cases in Texas (1873), Montana (1915), and Idaho (1916) also used the same defense argument. Ibid, 202.; *Oregon State v. Harry A. Start*, Trial Transcripts, 262, 296, 319.

<sup>504</sup> The 1853 sodomy code was defined as: “Every person who shall commit sodomy, or the crime against nature, either with mankind or any beast, shall, on conviction, be punished[.]” The 1913 sodomy prohibition greatly expanded: “If any person shall commit sodomy or the crime against nature, or any act or practice of sexual perversity, either with mankind or beast, or sustain osculatory relations with the private parts of any man, woman or child, or permit such relations to be sustained with his or her private parts, such person shall upon conviction thereof, be punished by imprisonment in the penitentiary not less than one year nor more than fifteen years.” Boag found that the broad definition of “sexual perversity” was used to prosecute later cases, like a 1928 case of an individual who manually masturbated a teenage boy. See General Laws of Oregon 1913, page 56, enacted Jan. 31, 1913, quoted in George Painter, “Oregon Sodomy Law,” Oregon Queer History Collective, <https://www.glapn.org/6070sodomylaw.html?query=sodomy%20laws&case=&whole=&phrase=>; Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 203-205.

<sup>505</sup> For examples, see “Morals Count Faced,” *The Oregonian*, April 26, 1953.; “Men Arrested,” *The Oregonian*, September 6, 1955, 23.

exclusively for women and children) until the 1990s.<sup>506</sup> In 1953, 1956, and the 1970s, Portland police performed weekly patrols and entrapped several gay men in Lownsdale Square.<sup>507</sup>

Between the 1940s and 1960s, mainstream society conflated diverse queer identities as deviant threats to national security and challenges to hetero- and cisnormativity. As a result, many exerted a hypervigilant effort at policing suspected queer individuals and shielding children from queerness in the name of a national project of security, patriotism, and hetero- and cisnormativity. For instance, in 1950, Portland Police Sergeant Earl Bigg released a pamphlet titled “How to Protect Your Child From the Sexual Criminal,” which drew on Bigg’s professional experience and recently published sexuality studies.<sup>508</sup> *The Oregonian* and *Oregon Journal* also headlined articles in 1956 like “Homosexual Ring Nipped” and “Deviate Ring Broken” among its coverage of sex crimes.<sup>509</sup> Following other states, Oregon prohibited those convicted of sodomy from being a public school teacher in 1957 as another effort many believed would protect children.<sup>510</sup>

During this mid-century period, some LGBTQ+ organizations adopted and promoted a conformist stance in appearance, dress, and behavior not only to gain acceptance but also deter further harassment.<sup>511</sup> These organizations presented representations that the homophile (or variant, as preferred by Daughters of Bilitis) were like everyone else who conformed to traditional ideals. Historian Elizabeth Armstrong illuminates in *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950–1994*, how the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis “were particularly interested in the education of elite heterosexual groups . . . The names and goals of these organizations suggest that homophile organizations were not centrally concerned with building a public identity, but instead with seeking rights

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<sup>506</sup> Cook and Painter, “1999 Portland Gay History Walking Tour.”; “Lownsdale Square,” Find a Park, Parks and Recreation, Portland.gov, <https://www.portland.gov/parks/lownsdale-square>; Devon Haskins, “In the early 1900s, Lownsdale Square was for men and Chapman Square was only for women and children. Here’s why,” KGW 8, May 9, 2024, <https://www.kgw.com/article/travel/whats-in-a-name/portland-lownsdale-chapman-squares-segregated-gender/283-5955e4de-756e-44ff-8bff-cc408df115b4>.

<sup>507</sup> “Could be Muggers,” *Northwest Gay Review*, September 1974, 15.; Jann Mitchell, “Gays Claim Harassment; Police Deny ‘Crusade,’” *Oregon Journal*, June 22, 1976.; “The System: Vice Square on New Ramage,” *Northwest Gay Review*, March 1976, 4.

<sup>508</sup> Though Biggs’ discussion of “abnormality” included LGBTQ+ identities, he opposed the broad application of sodomy laws that implicated consenting adults. Bigg’s became instrumental in reforming Oregon sex crime laws. After his publications, Biggs spoke at the Kinsey Institute and collaborated with famed sexologist Alfred Kinsey. Earl R. Biggs Papers, Library, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, <https://scua.uoregon.edu/repositories/2/resources/747>.

<sup>509</sup> “Homosexual Ring Nipped,” *Oregon Journal*, January 1, 1956.; “Deviate Ring Broken,” *Oregonian*, January 20, 1956.

<sup>510</sup> California was the first state to enact the public teacher probation. “Oregon Gay History Timeline,” Oregon Queer History Collective, <https://www.glapn.org/6020timeline.html>.

<sup>511</sup> The belief and practice of marginalized individuals adopting and conforming that what is deemed respectable or appropriate by mainstream society is respectability politics. Respectability politics have varied in LGBTQ+ history. In addition to the 1950s homophile era, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century push for marriage equality adopted similar strategies: both periods had some activists emphasizing LGBTQ+ people where just like everyone else who conformed to traditional ideals of monogamy, family life, and middle-class respectability. For additional history, see Emily Skidmore, “Constructing the ‘Good Transsexual’: Christine Jorgensen, Whiteness, and Heteronormativity in the Mid-Twentieth-Century Press,” *Feminist Studies*, 37 no. 2 Race and Transgender Studies (Summer 2011):270-300.; Colin P. Ashley, “Gay Liberation: How a Once Radical Movement Got Married and Settled Down,” *New Labor Forum* 24 no. 3 (Fall 2015):28-32.

and improving public opinion . . . Homophile organizations rarely included sexual identity terminology in their names.”<sup>512</sup>

Yet, harmful perception against LGBTQ+ individuals, especially as supposed dangers to children, continued through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, in 1992, political organization Oregon Christian Alliance (OCA) published a flyer titled “Homosexuality, the Classroom and Your Children: Why every Oregon Parent and Grandparent should Vote ‘Yes’ on Measure 9,” the OCA-sponsored ballot measure to amend the constitution to outlaw homosexuality. According to local historian Pat Young, over 700,000 flyers were printed and distributed across two Oregon counties.<sup>513</sup> One OCA supporter expressed their view that Oregonians “need to vote ‘yes’ on 9 to help stop unwholesome, unhealthy, bad habits being taught through the school system.”<sup>514</sup>

This discriminatory perspective of LGBTQ+ people shaped how some LGBTQ+ organizations interacted with youth. For instance, in “‘There is No Place in the City:’ Queer Youth, the Counterculture, and Portland’s Early Gay Rights Movement, 1968 – 1974,” scholar Jayden Dirk explains in the early 1970s, LGBTQ+ organization Second Foundation of Oregon “maintained a degree of reluctance and distance when it came to queer youth under eighteen, fearing accusations of predatory behavior.”<sup>515</sup> The group withheld membership from youths due to the “nature of our organization . . . [a] veiled reference . . . to the fact that it was an openly gay organization” which could be labeled as predatory.<sup>516</sup> As a result, underage queer Portlanders in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century often felt stuck in the closet with no support from queer and non-queer society, until they made their own organizations such as Windfire and Bridge Group.<sup>517</sup>

Despite harmful perceptions of and discrimination towards LGBTQ+ individuals in employment, housing, the press, and society at large during the mid and late 20<sup>th</sup> century, civil rights activism across the country began achieving legislative wins that would advance queer equity. For instance, in 1971, the American Civil Liberties Union advocated for the Oregon Criminal Law Revision Commission to decriminalize

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<sup>512</sup> Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994*, 19.

<sup>513</sup> Patricia Jean Young, “Measure 9: Oregon’s 1992 Anti-Gay Initiative,” (M.A. thesis, Portland State University, 1997), 45.; Brian T. Meehan and Bill Graves, “OCA stirs emotions with its 2<sup>nd</sup> flier,” *Oregonian*, September 25, 1992, D1.

<sup>514</sup> Marilyn Matheny, letter, *Medford Mail Tribune*, October 30, 1992, 14A.

<sup>515</sup> Dirk, “‘There is No Place in the City.’”

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Windfire was formed in 1982 as a “peer support and social group for gay and bisexual adolescents. . . giv[ing] gay youth — from 14 to 19 — the same opportunities for an association of peers as heterosexual kids have. Windfire provides a forum where gay and bisexual youths can meet, listen to scheduled speakers, get information or advice, and discuss whatever is on their mind.” Bridge Group “spawned” from Windfire to continue supporting LGBTQ+ Portlanders age 18 to 29. Though these groups existed, an 18-month study in the early 1990s and subsequent 1991 report entitled *Oregon’s Sexual Minority Youth: An At-Risk Population* illuminated that many young LGBTQ+ Oregonians’ “feel confused or ashamed when they begin to discover their sexual identities. When they seek support, or unbiased information, its usually not there.” For perspectives from Portland’s youth and discussion on these issues, see W.C. McCrae, “Where are we to go? The Dilemma of being young in Portland,” *Just Out*, October 1, 1985, 9.; Celia Floren, “Gay youth: a forgotten minority?,” *Just Out*, March 1, 1988, 8.; Wendy L. Wernsing, “The Problem with youth programs,” *Just Out*, August 1, 1989, 14.; Inga Sorensen, “Sexual Minority youth task force completes report,” *Just Out*, September 1, 1991, 19.; Dandi Baunach, Melissa Kilby, and Pamela Mullins, “Windfire: One of the few places where queer youth can go to be themselves and have fun,” *Just Out*, September 1, 1991, 15.; Resources, *Just Out*, May 15, 1998, 29.



sodomy, among its various code revision changes. The commission recognized that “any sexual conduct engaged in between consenting adults whether of a heterosexual or homosexual nature” should not be subject to legal sanction.<sup>518</sup> Taking effect in 1972, Oregon became the fourth state to decriminalize sodomy.<sup>519</sup>

Starting in the early 1970s, several LGBTQ+ Portlanders also initiated political organizations, committees, and alliances to advance and obtain the legal protections long since denied to them. This new era of LGBTQ+ activism rooted in Gay Liberation took shape across the nation as groups like Gay Liberation Front, Gay Activist Alliance, and Gay People’s Alliance publicly declared their diverse sexuality and demanded “complete sexual liberation for all people . . . reject[ing] society’s attempt to impose sexual roles and definitions of our nature.”<sup>520</sup> Nationwide and in Portland, “zapping” or direct public confrontation of anti-LGBTQ+ events and individuals, became a popular strategy for this new era of LGBTQ+ activism. For instance, in 1973, Gay People’s Alliance at Portland State University zapped a PSU Human Sexuality course that presented anti-gay rhetoric. Demonstrators held signs reading “Gay Pride,” “Gay Liberation Now,” and “Support Gay Rights.”<sup>521</sup>

In addition to these activist groups, LGBTQ+ organization Second Foundation of Oregon immersed itself in politics, ranging from drafting legislation to fundraising, testifying, lobbying, and more. For instance, in 1972, members surveyed Oregon Primary candidates on their support for sexual orientation protection in anti-discrimination legislation; this survey was the first of its kind to question candidates on LGBTQ+ topics.<sup>522</sup> Further, this survey identified potential allies who could support and advance local and statewide policies through the next decades. By the next year, Second Foundation, other activists, and identified allies collaborated to introduce Oregon House Bill 2930 during the 1973 legislative session. HB 2930 marked a watershed moment: the first Oregon bill aimed at prohibiting “discrimination in employment and certain real property transactions” based on sexual orientation.<sup>523</sup> Though it garnered significant support from numerous state Representatives, Senators, and organizations, HB 2930 and subsequent statewide LGBTQ+ civil rights bills failed to pass through Oregon Legislature until 2007.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> George Painter, “Oregon Sodomy Law,” Oregon Queer History Collective, <https://www.glapn.org/6070sodomylaw.html>.

<sup>519</sup> Randy Shilts, “Candy Jar Politics- the Oregon Gay Rights Story,” *The Advocate*, August 13, 1975, 11, 14.

<sup>520</sup> Gay Liberation Front’s statement of purpose, quoted in Geoffrey W. Batmen, “Gay Liberation Front,” GLBTQ Archive, [http://www.glbqtarchive.com/ssh/gay\\_liberation\\_front\\_S.pdf](http://www.glbqtarchive.com/ssh/gay_liberation_front_S.pdf).

<sup>521</sup> “PSU Gay People Confront Sexuality Class,” *The Fountain*, March 1973, 11.

<sup>522</sup> “George Oberg,” Queer Heroes Northwest 2015, Oregon Queer History Collective, <https://www.glapn.org/6526GeorgeObert.html>.

<sup>523</sup> Eliza Canty-Jones, “HB 2930, Anti-Discrimination Bill,” Oregon History Project, Oregon Historical Society, <https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/hb-2930-anti-discrimination-bill/>.

<sup>524</sup> The bill was co-sponsored by representatives Vera Katz, Stephen Kafoury, Margaret U. Deleri, Ralph Groener, Lloyd C. Kinsey, William McCoy, Mary Wendy Roberts, Keith D. Skelton, Pat Whiting, and Howard Willits and senators Keith Burns, Edward N. Fadeley, Keith A. Burbridge, Ted Hallock, Betty Roberts, and Bill Stevenson. Additional supporters included the Portland chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW), the Portland Metropolitan Human Relations Commission (MHRC), the Oregon Federation of Teachers, The Oregon Women’s Political Caucus (OWPC), the Oregon American Psychiatric Association (APA), and many individuals. Additional LGBTQ+ civil rights bills included House Bill 2637 (1975), House Bill 2288 (1975), House Bill 2704

Locally, Portland City Council struggled to unanimously recognize and support LGBTQ+ Portlanders during the 1970s. At this time, “the city of Portland [had] neither a civil rights ordinance nor a contract compliance clause.”<sup>525</sup> Through “systemic effort on the part of City Commissioner[s] Mildred Schwab and Francis Ivancie] to prevent gay people from ever achieving equal rights status,” language on sexual orientation was removed from a developing 1974 resolution protecting municipal employees from discrimination, and these commissioners pushed for perpetual tabling of the resolution.<sup>526</sup> Over the next two years, these commissioners heavily criticized the Counseling Center for Sexual Minorities’ (CCSM) funding requests to support LGBTQ+ Portlanders; Ivancie even publicized his opposition in *The Oregon Journal* under the title “No Dating Center.”<sup>527</sup> On the other side, City Commissioners Connie McCready, Charles Jordan, and Mayor Neil Goldschmidt supported queer political and social initiatives, as evidenced by Commissioner McCready sponsoring Resolution 31510, Portland’s first sexual orientation resolution protecting city employees, and Mayor Goldschmidt’s later declaration of June 25, 1977 as “Gay Pride Day.”<sup>528</sup>

Reportedly, Portland City Council’s 1974 debates over sexual orientation anti-discrimination protection inspired Portlander Larry Copeland to steer the “loosely knit network of gay businesses” and individuals of Portland Town Council (PTC) to become politically active.<sup>529</sup> Quickly, the organization organized lobbying efforts for state bills, established an office (initially at 320 SW Stark St., room 303, later room 506), hired Jerry Weller as the first Executive Director (1976 – 1983), added Susie Shepherd as paid staff, published the newsletter *Gay Rights '77 / Oregon Gay Rights Report*, and much more. As a result of all

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(1981), Senate Bill 319 (1983). See George T. Nicola, “Early Attempts at Oregon Gay Civil Rights,” Oregon Queer History Collective, Last Updated October 22, 2010, <https://www.glapn.org/6110earlyattempts.html>.; Greg Wasson, “Gay Rights Bill sparks legislative discussion,” *Oregon Daily Emerald*, March 16, 1981, 3.; “Senate defeats gay rights bill,” *Oregon Daily Emerald*, April 12, 1983, 4.; George T. Nicola, “Milestones in Oregon LGBTQ Law,” Oregon Queer History Collective, Last Updated June 16, 2015, <https://glapn.org/6012MilestonesLGBTQLaw.html>.

<sup>525</sup> “The Buck Stops Nowhere,” *Northwest Gay Review*, February 1973, 6.

<sup>526</sup> “Back In,” *Northwest Gay Review*, September 1974, 6.; “Tabling for infinity,” *Northwest Gay Review*, November 1974, no page number.

<sup>527</sup> In the 1970s, Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) funds were influential in supporting various social organizations largely created by feminist and LGBTQ+ activists. Starting in May 1975, the Counseling Center for Sexual Minorities (CCSM) sought CETA Funds from Portland City Council to hire staff and expand their work supporting LGBTQ+ Portlanders. Commissioner Schwab particularly “object to CETA funds being used for fundraising and for legislative lobbying [that would] perpetuate the agency” (read as homosexuality). Such objection was based on misperceptions of the center; Secretary Charles Fantz explained the center was not involved in any fundraising or lobbying. See BJ Noles, “City Council Balks over Job Funds,” *Oregonian*, August 7, 1975, 12. See also Huntly Collins, “Job funds ‘given to lobby groups,’” *Oregonian*, August 13, 1975, 33; Charles Fantz, “Sexual Minorities,” *Oregonian*, August 25, 1975, 20.; Francis J Ivancie, “No Dating Center,” *Oregon Journal*, August 30, 1975, 4. The Counseling Center for Sexual Minorities is discussed further in the theme “LGBTQ+ Health.”

<sup>528</sup> LGBTQ+ activists and the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission urged Mayor Goldschmidt to issue such declaration starting in 1974. When the mayor finally made the declaration, there was intense backlash. That weekend, 200 people joined a protest at Laurelhurst Park (SE Cesar E Chavez Blvd and Stark St.), opposition letters were published in local press, and phone calls threatened murder. See Nelson Pickett, “Goldschmidt Urged to Recognize ‘Gay Rights’ In Portland,” *Oregon Journal*, June 20, 1974, 2M.; “‘Gay Pride Week’ Mayor Ignores,” *Oregon Journal*, June 24, 1974, 4M.; “Gays join ranks in support of rights,” *Oregonian*, June 26, 1977, 1.; “An Open letter to Mayor Neil Goldschmidt,” *Oregon Journal*, June 30, 1977, 18.; Steve Jenning, “Goldschmidt Threatened in Phone Call,” *Oregonian*, November 28, 1978, 4M.

<sup>529</sup> George Nicola, “Larry Copeland,” Queer Heroes Northwest 2012, Oregon Queer History Collective, <https://glapn.org/6326PortlandTownCouncil.html>.

PTC's organizing, PTC and its members became influential pillars of Oregon's LGBTQ+ political organizing.<sup>530</sup> For instance, in 1977, Weller organized PTC-Political Action Committee (PAC) as the second gay political action committee in the nation at this time, paving the way for Weller and other PTC members— John Baker, Terry Bean, Keeston Lowery, and Dana Weinstien— to co-found the Right to Privacy (RTP) political action committee in 1982. RTP quickly became "one of Oregon's largest group of politically active" LGBTQ+ Oregonians "dedicated to harnessing the financial clout of the gay and lesbian community to support our friends and defeat our enemies in elective office in Oregon."<sup>531</sup> Among Right to Privacy PAC's various organizing activities was the annual Hart Dinner fundraising dinner first held on October 9, 1982; later dinners were held at Portland Hilton (921 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.), Benson Hotel (309 SW Broadway), Oregon Convention Center (777 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd), and other large-scale venues to hold the growing attendance.<sup>532</sup> These dinners were important not just for the massive funding amounts (more than \$50,000 raised in 1988 for instance), but "also for its program" of acknowledging local activists through honoree awards and attendance of Oregon politicians, including Neil Goldschmidt, Vera Katz, and Barbara Roberts. The increasing numbers of attending politicians was "a testament to the growing support for gay rights."<sup>533</sup> With PTC focusing on other activities (it became LGBTQ+ counseling center Phoenix Rising in 1983), Right to Privacy PAC and its later Right to Privacy Inc. became Oregon's leading political LGBTQ+ hub.

While some queer activists were proudly claiming their LGBTQ+ identities and coming out of the closet, Portland's queer community reflected a microcosm of Oregon's exclusionary environment and thus was not immune from prejudice and discriminatory views towards others; LGBTQ+ organizations and spaces often marginalized and excluded LGBTQ+ Portlanders with intersectional identities. Portlander Rupert Kinnard reflected in 1986 that he didn't think the "the gay community [was] any different in its racism from the community at large."<sup>534</sup> Primary sources from BIPOC LGBTQ+ overwhelmingly speak to experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and threats of intimidating violence.

**I tried to get involved with the community, joined the board of LCP [the Lesbian Community Project]. With the lesbian and gay community in general, there was some marginalization of Asian Pacific Islander (API) folks back then. There wasn't always the welcome mat. A group of us started Asian**

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<sup>530</sup> According to Susie Shepherd, Jerry Weller served as "a co-chair of the finance committee for Eugene's No on 51 campaign with Terry Bean. Jerry coordinated Portland's fundraising effort, raising over \$60,000— an unheard of amount for a ballot measure in those days." Susie Shepherd, "Jerry Weller," Queer Heroes Northwest 2012, Oregon Queer History Collective, <https://glapn.org/6326PortlandTownCouncil.html>.

<sup>531</sup> "Right to Privacy, PAC earns Community Service Award," *Just Out*, January 20, 1984, 3.; Right to Privacy Political Action Committee Political Endorsement ad, *Just Out*, May 1, 1988, 36.

<sup>532</sup> This dinner was named for Alan Hart and became the focus of local activists, including Candice Hellen Brown, who opposed the use of Alan's birth name in the name. She summarized in 1995 that the dinner should remove Alan's birth name because she and others felt that "part of our transsexual history...has been stolen from us" by not recognizing Hart as trans. For further discussion of the Hart dinner, see Inga Sorensen, "Fringe no more: The Transsexual community takes RTP to task for perceived exclusionism," *Just Out*, December 1, 1995, 14.

<sup>533</sup> Pat Young, "A Past to Be Proud of," *Just Out*, June 4, 1999, 4.

<sup>534</sup> Dennis Peterson, "Unlearning Racism: New Attempts to Understand Old Attitudes," *Just Out*, January 6, 1986, 7.

**Pacific Islander Lesbian & Gays (APLG) so we could have buddies, a sense of community. Part of my being involved came from that experience with the larger community— I felt a little left out. We are constantly overlooked. None of our issues ever gets addressed.**

— Lynn Nakamoto reflecting on the 1990s formation of Asian Pacific Islander Lesbian & Gays (APLG) <sup>535</sup>

**I've noticed this group of racists that frequent the bars. Sometimes they will surround me or come up to the person I'm dancing with. A couple of them at the Cell were making a noose out of their leather straps. One night I was at the baths and this guy said to me as I was walking into my room, 'KKK.' Later he took an aerosol can and sprayed it in his room as if to rid the room of my odor.**

— M. speaking to *Just Out* writer Dennis Peterson, 1986 <sup>536</sup>

One instance that profoundly shaped LGBTQ+ Portlanders reckoning with racism was the 1983 “Aunt Jemima” incident at Waterfront Park (98 NW Naito Pwky), occurring during that year’s Lesbian and Gay Pride Week. Portlander Cliff Jones recalled the incident in 2012: “a white man came to our Lesbian and Gay Pride dressed in black face as Aunt Jemima. Some people approached him and asked him to leave — and he wouldn’t leave — so confrontation erupted and a number of us surrounded him.”<sup>537</sup> Eventually, BIPOC LGBTQ+ Portlanders were able to get the man to leave, though Jones noted “many people were upset that we had done that. They felt like we were excluding him.”<sup>538</sup> The incident continued to play out in the local gay press and a group of men “threatened to come en masse in blackface” to the next Pride.<sup>539</sup> Rupert Kinnard summarized the racist letters as “prime examples of unenlightened attitudes . . . [and] the need for education and awareness in this community.”<sup>540</sup> Heinously, “the Black lesbian who had originally . . . confronted this man started getting death threats . . . [and] the FBI got involved.”<sup>541</sup> This incident spurred other responses for Portlanders: in October 1983, the Lesbian and Gay Pride (L/GP) Steering Committee’s meeting at Dahl and Penne’s back room (121 SW Morrison St., demolished) was devoted to addressing the incident and by April 1984, L/GP Steering Committee adopted guidelines to deter similar activity from occurring with an Anti-Racist Brigade marching in the 1984 parade to further “stop our oppression of each other.”<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> “Asian Americans Oppose 9,” *The Stories, No on 9 Remembered*, Western States Center, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/17-asian-americans-oppose-9/>.

<sup>536</sup> Peterson, “Unlearning Racism: New Attempts to Understand Old Attitudes,” 7.

<sup>537</sup> Oral history interview with Cliff Jones, by Richard Lidzbarski and Rebecca Fessenden, 2012 May 14, SR 11478, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>540</sup> Rupert Kinnard, Black Lesbians and Gays United Report column, *Just Out*, December 9, 1983, 7.

<sup>541</sup> Oral history interview with Cliff Jones.

<sup>542</sup> Marcia Cutler, Catherine Smith, Steve Fredrick, Maureen Carrsyn, “Anti-Aunt Jemima,” *Just Out*, May 11, 1984, 3.; “An open letter,” *Just Out*, June 8, 1984, 5.

Despite LGBTQ+ political efforts to critique society and internal structures, LGBTQ+ oppression did not cease into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Oregon's contentious political and social battlegrounds primarily centered around Oregon Citizens Alliance's unrelenting sponsorship of various anti-LGBTQ+ bills under Ballot Measure 8 (1988), Ballot Measure 9 (1992), and Ballot Measure 13 (1994). During this period, "many people believe[d] that homosexuals [were] protected by the United States constitution. And that [was] not the case. . . A person [could] be fired from their job for being gay, [could] be refused service in a restaurant simply for being gay."<sup>543</sup> This fostered an environment where many Oregonians believed LGBTQ+ Oregonians sought *special rights* instead of *equal rights*.<sup>544</sup> Activist Kathleen Saadat stressed in 1992 that OCA's actions were "worse than the McCarthy-era in some ways, because they're taking not just peoples' jobs but they're encouraging the violent element in our society to physically attack people."<sup>545</sup> The offices of the Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon (1847 E Burnside St.), The HIV Day Center (2941 NE Ainsworth St.) *Just Out* (address not published) and Metropolitan Community Church (2400 NE Broadway) were just a few of the locations burglarized and vandalized, and the Portland Police Department Bias Crimes Division documented a 22% increase in hate crimes following petition signatures for Ballot Measure 9.<sup>546</sup> Even within queer organizing against these measures, Saadat also noted "The problems of racism within the campaign were the same as outside the campaign."<sup>547</sup>

There is no denying the painful experiences of Oregonians facing everyday political battles between 1905 and 1994. Nonetheless, these political efforts, especially during the late 1980s and early 1990s, provided a foundation for contemporary LGBTQ+ political activism in the region. LGBTQ+ Portlanders like Saadat and Lowery were among the many activist - government employees working to pass important LGBTQ+ civil rights protections, such as Portland Resolution No. 34945 in 1991, which expanded Portland's early civil rights resolution to protect all Portlanders.<sup>548</sup> Oregon's late 20<sup>th</sup> century activism was also "strengthened by people and organizations all over the state who were not directly affiliated. . . but were determined to do the difficult and loving work of trying to educate ordinary people about a group of ordinary citizens within their midst, those who call themselves lesbian and gay," as No on 9 press officer Suzanne Pharr outlined in 1993 and which was reflected by groups such as Bigot Busters, People of Faith Against Bigotry, and Republicans Against Prejudice.<sup>549</sup> From the seedbeds of the 1994 No on 13 Committee and Support Our Communities Political Action Committee sprouted Basic Rights Oregon,

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<sup>543</sup> Quoted in *Fighting for Our Lives*, directed by Elaine Velazquez and Barbara Bernstein, (1992, Portland: Feather and Fin Productions, 1992), Videotape.

<sup>544</sup> Schultz, "The Rise and Fall of 'No Special Rights,'" *Oregon History Quarterly* 122 no. 1 (Spring 2021): 6-37.

<sup>545</sup> Kathleen Saadat, Quoted in *Fighting for Our Lives*, directed by Elaine Velazquez and Barbara Bernstein, (1992, Portland: Feather and Fin Productions, 1992), Videotape.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.; Ellen Hansen, "Hate Strikes," *Just Out*, July 1, 1992, 15.; "Hate Crimes Surge," The Stories, No on 9 Remembered, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/7-hate-crimes-surge/>.

<sup>547</sup> "African Americans Voting No on 9," The Stories, No on 9 Remembered, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/6-african-americans-voting-no-on-9/>.

<sup>548</sup> Cathy Kiyomura, "Gay Rights Law Enacted," *Oregonian*, October 4, 1991, A1.

<sup>549</sup> Pharr quoted in "Straight by Not Narrow," The Stories, No on 9 Remembered, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/25-straight-but-not-narrow/>. Additional groups included the Rural Organizing Project, The Lesbian Community Project, various unions, business allies, and more. See The Stories, No on 9 Remembered for more.

specifically formed as a “long-term, year-round operation whose mission is to ‘build a movement to advance and protect democratic freedoms, and civil and human rights; build the broadest possible coalition to counter activities of groups such as the Oregon Citizens Alliance; [and] defeat attempts to deny basic rights through the electoral process.”<sup>550</sup> By 1994, Oregon shifted from its “hotbed of homophobia” reputation to a leader in queer politics “with at least eight openly gay, lesbian or bisexual candidates up for election— a national record” at that point.<sup>551</sup>

## Social Venues as Political Battlegrounds

In *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970*, LGBTQ+ historian John D’Emilio detailed early gay bars’ pivotal role as “seedbeds for a collective consciousness that might one day flower politically.”<sup>552</sup> As burgeoning visibility of queerness met harassment nationwide during the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, it facilitated bar-based organizing leading to the Homophile Movement in the 1950s and 1960s and the Gay Liberation Movement in the 1970s.<sup>553</sup> Importantly, bars and other queer social venues emerged not just as social hubs but also as political venues where activism and advocacy came together. This enduring tradition of activism in queer social spaces persisted through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, underscoring the significance of venues as both targets of oppression and centers of empowerment.

## Targets of Oppression

By the late 1940s, in response to increasing visibility of queer individuals and networks, “American political leaders engaged in an ambitious campaign of demonizing and purging homosexuals from public life.”<sup>554</sup> In Portland, Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee 1949 to 1952 campaign aimed make the “city as wholesome as possible” which ensnared LGBTQ+ venues under criminal establishments and included LGBTQ+ individuals in efforts to combat supposed ‘sex deviates’.<sup>555</sup> Beginning on February 9, 1949, two Women’s Protective Division undercover officers frequented The Music Hall (413 SW Stark St, demolished) hoping to make arrests of queer patrons following an earlier report that “women attempt their pick up at the Music Hall.”<sup>556</sup> While officers Sybil Plumlee and Edna Trout failed to make any contacts, they filed reports on “lewd jokes and behavior” during impersonators’ “suggestive and disgusting performances.”<sup>557</sup> This

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<sup>550</sup> Inga Sorensen, “Time not Right,” *Just Out*, August 18, 1995, 14.

<sup>551</sup> Pamela Lyons, “Oregon’s Political Coming Out,” *Just Out*, May 6, 1994, 13.

<sup>552</sup> John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (University of Chicago Press, 1983), 33.

<sup>553</sup> Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (University of California Press, 2003), 147.

<sup>554</sup> Eskridge, *Dishonorable Passions*, 88-91.

<sup>555</sup> “City Studies Act to Curb Sex Crimes,” *Oregonian*, February 25, 1952, 1.; “City Committee Named to Recommend Action to Curb Sex Offenders,” *Oregonian*, February 26, 1, 13; “Group Forms in Sex Cases,” *Oregonian*, February 27, 1952, 13.; “Pervert Curb on Plan List,” *Oregonian*, February 29, 1952, 1, 12.

<sup>556</sup> Police report quoted in Boag, “Does Portland Need a Homophile Society?,” 13.

<sup>557</sup> Council Documents, Item no. 1117, March 16, 1950, City of Portland Archives and Records Center.

report influenced Lee and the Portland City Council to further investigate the venue, force the impersonation acts to cease, and ultimately shut down the Music Hall altogether by 1950.<sup>558</sup>

Following the end of Lee's administration in 1952, the Portland Police Department varied its approach to policing and controlling LGBTQ+ venues and individuals. An informal hands-off strategy during the mid-1950s allowed a few queer venues to operate in a concentrated area downtown. Officers viewed this strategy as an easy way to manage queer people instead of closing bars that would have individuals "scatter to various places, which would compound the problem" of control.<sup>559</sup> Despite its status as Portland's only restricted venue for service people for its supposed vice connections, officers permitted the Harbor Club (736 SW 1<sup>st</sup> Ave., currently 65 SW Yamhill) under this policy and resisted City Commissioner Stanley Earl's attempts to shut the venue down.<sup>560</sup> Though a few places were purposely left open, LGBTQ+ individuals nevertheless endured harassment, entrapment, and arrests throughout the mid- and late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Reflecting in 2000 on Portland during the mid-century, Norm Costa recalled example incidents at the Half Moon Tavern (first at 72 SW Morrison Street) where police would "roust [individuals] once in a while [and would forcibly remove patrons from barstools]. They weren't friendly."<sup>561</sup>

Terry Schruck, Portland mayor from 1957 to 1972, initiated a new era of political targeting against queer venues and life starting in the early 1960s.<sup>562</sup> Within two years of his election, Schruck reestablished Portland's Committee for Decent Literature and Films with goals to eliminate publicly available indecent materials supposedly flooding Portland and physical locations where such materials could be obtained.<sup>563</sup> Though not initially focused on queer content, the fallout from a sensational 1963 *Oregonian* exposé on a purported "statewide homosexual ring" which utilized "hundreds of magazines of the homosexual type

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<sup>558</sup> The *Oregon Journal's* March 17, 1950, front page cover included a photograph of an impersonation troupe with the caption: "NOT IN PORTLAND, BOYS—Never more, Mayor Dorthy McCullough Lee said Thursday, many these female impersonators impersonate in Portland if night club owner wants council recommendation for liquor license renewal. Act, which played many months at Music Hall, no longer is featured there, proprietor says. Swishy stuff shan't sully city, says mayor." "Council Takes Rap at Impersonators," *Oregon Journal*, March 17, 1950, 1.

<sup>559</sup> Council Item 4629, December 3, 1964.; *Oregon Journal*, June 29, 1964.; "Hangouts for Homosexuals," December 22, 1964.; "OLCC Overrides Ban On 6 Taverns," December 18, 1964.; "Homosexuals" newspaper clipping file, OHS Research Library; *Oregonian*, December 4, 1964, 21. Boag, "Does Portland Need a Homophile Society?," 30.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid.

<sup>561</sup> Oral history interview with Norm Costa, by Stephanie Munly and Ruben Reynaga, SR 4143, Oregon Historical Society Research Library.

<sup>562</sup> See Smith, "Gay Bars, Vice, and Reform in Portland, 1948-1965," 84-129, for further discussion on Terry Schruck's reform efforts.

<sup>563</sup> In the 1910s, Portland City Council proposed, created, and passed several boards, committees, and ordinances related to content review. Although these earlier instances did not specify any review of LGBTQ+ content, these earlier censorship controls established precedents of limiting materials based on "the interest of moral life" and social hygiene that would later be used in anti-LGBTQ+ campaigns. See Mary P. Erickson, "'In the Interest of the Moral Life of Our City:' The Beginning of Motion Picture Censorship in Portland, Oregon," *Film History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 148-169.; "Sound Approach on Obscenity Fight," *Oregon Journal*, November 12, 1959, 27.; "Community Action Against Obscenity," *Oregon Journal*, December 10, 1959, 53.; "Obscenity Ban Voted," *Oregon Journal*, March 11, 1960, 23.; Rolla J. Crick, "Smut Books Flood City," *Oregon Journal*, March 18, 1963, 1, 9.; "'Anti-Smut' Drive Asked," *Oregonian*, November 7, 1963.

. . . to encourage homosexual acts” fueled efforts to attack queer publications in the following years.<sup>564</sup> The committee and law enforcement encouraged bookstores, newspaper stands, and Portlanders to participate in the campaign by eliminating materials available for purchase and reporting any obscene content.<sup>565</sup>

**. . . Decent Literature Committee work . . . has been stepped up during the past months, due partly to the distribution of magazines and books which cater to the pervert. We have been aware . . . that there is a definite correlation between the availability of this printed poison and the percentage of increase in homo-sexual activity.**

— Mayor Schrunk to Mr. Virgil L Shipley, December 10, 1964 <sup>566</sup>

**Isn't there something that Portland can do to stop this infiltration of filth before it penetrates this city deeper than it already has?**

— Portlander Joanne Lilleoren to Mayor Schrunk, August 12, 1965 <sup>567</sup>

In 1964, Portland City Council attempted to solve “the perplexing social problem of what to do about taverns and bars where homosexuals and other ‘undesirable characters’ allegedly” gathered.<sup>568</sup> Mayor Schrunk determined that Portland was “attracting people of the so-called gay crowd who [were] being run out of San Francisco and Los Angeles” due to intensified policing in those cities.<sup>569</sup> In an “abrupt change in the city’s own policy” which previously allowed many LGBTQ+ venues to operate unimpeded, in the winter of 1964 Portland Council denied liquor license renewals for various reportedly queer venues in attempts to stifle Portland’s increasing LGBTQ+ population.<sup>570</sup> This included the Half Moon Tavern (122 SW Yamhill St.), Mama Bernice’s (1228 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.), the Harbor Club (736 SW 1<sup>st</sup> Ave., also known as Harbor Inn), Derek’s Tavern (820 SW Oak St.), Milwaukie Tavern (1535 W Burnside St.) and the Model Inn (1536 SW 1<sup>st</sup> Ave.).<sup>571</sup> The Harbor Club ultimately closed in early 1965 due to Portland Council refusing to issue it a food license, therefore making it “impossible for that bar to serve the food necessary to fulfill the requirements” of its liquor license.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> “Smut Magazine, Sex Ring Tie Brings Warning From Mayor,” *Oregon Journal*, Friday October 25, 1963, 1, 4.; “Police Say Arrest of Two Portlanders Exposed Statewide Homosexual Ring Activities,” *Oregonian*, October 25, 1963, 1.; “Grand Jury Decries Smut on Newsstands,” *Oregon Journal*, February 29, 1964, 1.; “Maury Lauds Smut Mill Crackdown, Raps ‘Fuzzy Thinking’ on Books,” *Oregon Journal*, January 28, 1965, 2.; “Jury Links Sex Crimes with Lewd Magazines,” *Oregonian*, March 1, 1964.

<sup>565</sup> Cook and Painter, “1999 Portland Gay History Walking Tour.”; “‘Anti-Smut’ Drive Asked.”; Four Men Charged in Obscene Book Sales: Indictments Name 5 Shops in City Center,” *Oregon Journal*, January 28, 1965, 1.

<sup>566</sup> Letter from Mayor Terry Schrunk, December 10, 1964, Mss 1497, Box 1, Oregon Historical Society, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>567</sup> Joanne Lilleoren to Terry Schrunk, August 12, 1965, Terry Schrunk Collection, Oregon Historical Society.

<sup>568</sup> “Council Mulls Treatment of Bars Where Unsavory Characters Gather,” *Oregonian*, December 4, 1964, 21.

<sup>569</sup> “Police Say California Sex Deviates Coming to Portland,” *Oregon Journal*, December 4, 1964, 3.

<sup>570</sup> “Hangouts for Homosexuals,” *Oregon Journal*, December 22, 1964, 10J.

<sup>571</sup> “Council Mulls Treatment of Bars Where Unsavory Characters Gather.”

<sup>572</sup> Boag, “Does Portland Need a Homophile Society?,” 34.



Concurrently to Council addressing bars, Portland Police carried on campaigns against queer literature. In 1965, Third Avenue Smoke Shop (830 SW 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.), Rich's Cigar Store (734 SW Alder St.), 300 Smoke Shop (300 SW Washington St.), and Tony's Smoke Shop (614 SW 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.) "were targeted explicitly because they sold magazines and novels that dealt with 'lesbianism'"; employees were arrested on charges of "disseminating obscene paperback books in which the central characters are homosexuals or lesbians."<sup>573</sup> This misdemeanor charge carried a six month jail sentence, a \$1,000 fine, or both. The perception against obscene materials across the state influenced local and statewide effort to introduce new legislation that would make the charge "a felony misdemeanor . . . with the penalty to be determined by the sentencing judge upon conviction."<sup>574</sup> Of the individuals arrested, one was charged a \$500 fine, and another was convicted for 90 days in jail.<sup>575</sup>

Discourse over obscene materials continued through the late 20<sup>th</sup> century with heteronormative and homophobic ideologies guiding what activities, venues, and individuals were considered deviant. Scholar Elizabeth Morehead found in "Public Policy and Sexual Geography in Portland, Oregon, 1970-2010" that Portland Police, the City Attorney, City Council, and the Portland Planning Bureau (currently Bureau of Planning and Sustainability) "attempted numerous times to use public policies and land decisions" to shape this discourse and related sexual geography of where venues could be located.<sup>576</sup> For instance, in 1981, the Planning Commission proposed Ordinance No. 153062 to prohibit adult theaters and bookstores from operating in residentially zoned areas or within 500 feet of a residential zone or any school.<sup>577</sup> With this ordinance, venues such as the Oregon Theater (3530 SE Division St., currently Tomorrow Theater) were required to close or relocate within 12 months to comply.<sup>578</sup>

The longstanding concern and homophobic attitudes among elected officials and mainstream society against LGBTQ+ individuals being around and interacting with children influenced policing of all-ages LGBTQ+ spaces like the Stairs Down (615 SE Alder St.), Mildred's Palace (918 SW Yamhill St.), and The City Nightclub (13 NW 13<sup>th</sup> Ave.). On March 17, 1974, the Portland Police Bureau's Women's Protective Division and other uniformed police officers removed 23 people from Stairs Down on curfew violations (a measure to specifically punish youth) and incarcerated nine in juvenile hall; these individuals were later released.<sup>579</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Over 400 books were confiscated by police. The specific titles used to charge the employees included *Dance-Hall Dyke*, *Her Raging Needs*, *The Pleasures We Know*, *A Kind of Marriage*, and *Lesbian Roommates*. See "5 Arrested Here in Crackdown on 'Downtown Smut Mills,'" *The Oregon Journal*, Thursday, January 28, 1965, 2.; "Four Men Charged in Obscene Book Sales.;" Dirk, "In a garden of deviant roses," 152-155.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid.

<sup>575</sup> Ibid.

<sup>576</sup> Elizabeth Morehead, "Public Policy and Sexual Geography in Portland, Oregon, 1970-2010," 13.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid, 108.; Portland City Council, Ordinance No. 153062, City of Portland Archives, Portland, Oregon.

<sup>578</sup> Laurel Slater, "Adult Theatres may be forced to move under new ordinance," *Vanguard*, February 5, 1982; Spencer Heinz, "City Hall draws bead on 'juice bar' nudity," *Oregonian*, December 6, 1983.

<sup>579</sup> "Better Here," *Northwest Gay Review*, May 1974, 14.

Mildred's Palace owner Lanny Swerdlow also recalled police waiting outside the venue to arrest LGBTQ+ youth on the same charge.<sup>580</sup>

The City Nightclub, an all-ages venture Swerdlow opened in 1983, faced increasingly severe treatment from City authorities over several years. Swerdlow recounted an incident in 1989 where the club was subjected to what he described as an "illegal raid" by Portland Police, Fire Marshals, the Bureau of Buildings, and the Oregon Liquor Control Commission.<sup>581</sup> In 1992, Swerdlow and then-Police Chief Tom Potter reached a "precedent setting" agreement to address the various issues plaguing the club, including alleged drug use, sexual activities, and violence.<sup>582</sup> However, following Potter's resignation from the bureau in 1993, Swerdlow understood that the police failed to uphold their agreement to partner in addressing criminal activity thereby enabling the police to cite the Specified Crime Property Ordinance (also known as the "drug house" ordinance) in efforts to close the club in the mid-1990s.<sup>583</sup> In December 1995, Senior Deputy City Attorney Nancy E. Ayres filed a civil suit against the building owner to force The City Nightclub to permanently close. Struggling to resolve these challenges, the long-time youth venue ultimately closed two years later.<sup>584</sup>

Many LGBTQ+ Portlanders endured discrimination and physical violence in addition to City-sanctioned closures when going out. For instance, in 1984, fundamentalist picketers brandished intense hate signs and confronted attendees of a Portland Gay Men's Chorus (PGMC) concert at Benson High School (546 NE 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.), which was the first time in the history of the PGMC that such an incidence had occurred.<sup>585</sup> In 1991, Portland photographer and activist Catherine Stauffer attended an Oregon Citizen Alliance meeting at Foursquare Church (1303 SE Ankeny St.), where she suffered an assault by OCA Communications Director Scott Lively.<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> George T. Nicola, "A History of Oregon's Major LGBTQ Equality Organizations, excerpt in Robin Will, "Portland's Legendary Youth Clubs, 1977-1998."

<sup>581</sup> Inga Sorensen, "The Short Goodbye," *Just Out*, November 15, 1996, 14.

<sup>582</sup> Tom Potter, a strong advocate and ally for LGBTQ+ equity, was appointed Police Chief in 1990. In 1991, he became the first Chief of Police to march in Portland's Gay Pride parade. The Potter family gained national attention following their 'coming out' articles in *Just Out* and the *Oregonian*. In 2004, he was elected Portland Mayor and continued his advocacy of LGBTQ+ equity and inclusion. See Anndee Hochman, "Potter stresses equality," *Just Out*, volume 8, number 7, May 1991.; "Tom and Katie Potter," *Queer Heroes Northwest 2017, Oregon Queer History Collective*, <https://www.glapn.org/6571Tom%20&%20Katie%20Potter.html>.; "Tom and Katie Potter," *The Stories, No on 9 Remembered*, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/16-tom-katie-potter/>.

<sup>583</sup> Ariel Waterwoman, "Portland to lose visionary leader," *Just Out*, April 1, 1993, 8.

<sup>584</sup> Sorensen, "The Short Goodbye."; Sorensen, "Lanny Revisited," *Just Out*, January 7, 2000, 1, 8, 9.

<sup>585</sup> Fortunately, Steve Fulmer said the picket galvanized even more people to purchase tickets. "Fundamentalist pickets confront concertgoers," *Just Out*, March 30, 1984, 4.

<sup>586</sup> Stauffer "maintained friendly contact with OCA" starting in the early 1990s. She received an invitation to this event. Stauffer sued the OCA, ultimately shutting down the OCA by the early 2000s. Catherine Stauffer, "Knock down, drag out with the OCA," *Just Out*, November 1, 1991, 8.; Inga Sorensen, "OCA Watch," *Just Out*, December 1, 1991, 10.; David Batterson, "She Won!," *Just Out*, November 1, 1992, 14.; "The Lawsuit that Shuts down the OCA,," *The Stories, No on 9 Remembered*, <https://noon9remembered.org/stories/29-the-lawsuit-that-shut-down-the-oca/>.

## Centers of Empowerment

Despite concerted efforts during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to eradicate LGBTQ+ visibility from cities like Portland using various legal and political tactics, numerous LGBTQ+ individuals and allies united to resist oppressive measures aimed at curtailing LGBTQ+ civil rights and spaces.

During Mayor Schruck's 1964 political campaign attempting to close six bars associated with LGBTQ+ clientele, bar owners resisted with newfound support. The owners retained local attorneys James Damis and W.F. Whitely to defend the bars under the recently enacted Civil Rights Act which prohibited discrimination in public places.

**It [was] clear that this recommendation from the city [was] not because of any activity that was going on at the bar . . . It [was] simply because gay people congregate[d] there. And that's not constitutionally permissible.**

— Attorney James Damis, 2018 <sup>587</sup>

Despite Council's persistent refusal to approve these bars' liquor renewals, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) opted to renew all the bars' licenses, agreeing that the bars had not committed any legal violations and thus finding no valid justification for denying their renewals. This OLCC decision marked their first divergence from City Council recommendations and a significant triumph for LGBTQ+ Portlanders to gather freely in downtown queer venues.

In the years following, political activism shifted towards advocating for and supporting statewide legislation to protect LGBTQ+ individuals in addition to access to bars. There was a feeling among some Portlanders in the 1970s that "things were great because unlike other places, the City of Portland didn't hassle" LGBTQ+ for some time.<sup>588</sup> In 1971, Portland activist George Nicola noted in a *Fountain* article how "for a long time Portland gays have sat back, securely and comfortably, bragging about what they thought was an ideal situation in this city— no police harassment and lots of fun nightlife."<sup>589</sup> Second Foundation of Oregon secretary Carol Brefford compared her experiences in Portland to California in a 1973 KBOO radio interview with Lanny Swerdlow, feeling that queer people "weren't harassed up here . . . we're kind of pushed aside and not so much acknowledged."<sup>590</sup> This feeling among some Portlanders made getting support for bar-based political organizing challenging compared to other cities. Nicola questioned if Portlanders were "sitting on a powder keg" with this environment.<sup>591</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Zach Dundas, "In 1964, Portland Tried to Crack Down on the City's Gay Scene. Here's What Happened.," Features, News & City Life, Portland Monthly, May 22 2018, <https://www.pdxmonthly.com/news-and-city-life/2018/05/in-1964-portland-tried-to-crack-down-on-the-city-s-gay-scene-here-s-what-happened>.

<sup>588</sup> George Nicola, "Viewpoint," *The Fountain*, September 1971, 18.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid.

<sup>590</sup> It is important to note that Nicola's and Brefford's experiences are not representative of all Portlanders during this period. Intersections of class, race, age, and ability could impact how policed or "hassled" one was.

<sup>591</sup> "Viewpoint," *The Fountain*, September 1971, 18.

**The fact is that as long as homosexuals are proscribed in any manner by the law, as long as they have to live in a society where discrimination and prejudice run rampant and are even justified by professionals who call us “sick.” Then we will never really be free from the whims of self-seeking politicians out to win the next election by stirring up the groundless fears of the voting public. But those changes can only come about from a mass-based gay rights movement. And such movements do not come from behind oak panelled closet doors. Wake up Portlanders before it is too late!**

— George Nicola “Viewpoint,” 1971 <sup>592</sup>

Nonetheless, members of emerging LGBTQ+ political organizations significantly recognized queer social venues as prominent recruiting and fundraising spaces for legislative measures from the mid-1970s through the late 1990s. For instance, in 1973, Nicola convened the first Oregon Gay Political Caucus at the newly opened Gay Community Center (258 SW Alder St., demolished). The Caucus aimed to coordinate activities of Oregon’s flourishing gay rights groups who could mobilize statewide resources and political power toward effecting legal reforms.<sup>593</sup> Other political benefits and events were hosted at a variety of spaces, including Zorba The Greek (626 SW Park Ave.), Koinoina House (633 SW Morrison St.), and Montgomery Park (2701 NW Vaughn St).<sup>594</sup>

**There were people who went out to the bars, sold buttons, talked, asked for donations, invite[d] people to meetings and all of that. We had a series of something called courtyard follies, which was out behind a bar . . . we’d bring in bales of hay and things . . . it’s like let’s have a show, [we] did [a] talent show and people would sing and dance, or whatever they were doing . . . And those things would raise \$100 or \$200 at a time.**

— Portland LGBTQ+ activist Larry Copeland <sup>595</sup>

While bars secured their safety, local LGBTQ+ youth and activists sought out political support to protect queer youth and venues from policing. In the 1970s, Mildred’s Palace owner Lanny Swerdlow attempted numerous times to ensure there was a safe space for queer youth. First, Swerdlow approached LGBTQ+ organization Portland Town Council (PTC) for support against police entering the club and arresting queer youth. PTC provided a recommendation for local attorney Craig Colby who argued with the City Attorney against illegal police entry of a private establishment and curfew violation.<sup>596</sup> The police began to wait for

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<sup>592</sup> Ibid.

<sup>593</sup> “Gay Political Caucus to Meet,” *The Fountain*, January 1973, 3; “Oregon Gay Political Caucus Holds Meeting,” *The Fountain*, March 1973.

<sup>594</sup> “Courtyard Follies to Open,” *Oregonian*, June 22, 1979, E12.; Oral history interview with Susie Shepherd.; Oral history interview with Larry S. Copeland, by Emily Bowen and Kenty Truong, SR 11233, Oregon Historical Society Research Library. “No on 9 Thanks and acknowledgements,” *Just Out*, November 15, 1992, 24.

<sup>595</sup> Oral history interview with Larry S. Copeland.

<sup>596</sup> Nicola, excerpt in Will, “Portland’s Legendary Youth Clubs, 1977-1998.”

queer youth to exit before making arrests which only influenced individuals to stay at the club all night.<sup>597</sup> Swerdlow then approached Portland City Commissioner Charles Jordan for assistance; under Jordan's leadership, Portland Police left Mildred's alone. By the 1990s, the scrutiny of Swerdlow's all-ages club The City Nightclub energized activism to protect the venue, though it would close by 1997.<sup>598</sup>

## LGBTQ+ Politics and Policing Summary

From 1905 to 1994, LGBTQ+ Portlanders and allies advocated for transformative changes in queer visibility, rights, and social acceptance. Criminalization, policing, and stigmatization gradually shifted to recognition and greater legal protections. A spectrum of Portland places from bars to City Hall, apartments to streets, offered environments where LGBTQ+ Portlanders could strategize actions to disrupt oppressive structures. Starting in the 1970s and onward, LGBTQ+ Portlanders actively championed protections from discrimination in employment, housing, family law, and public accommodations. LGBTQ+ politics and civil rights played a crucial role in achieving greater legal and social acceptance for all Portlanders.

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<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

<sup>598</sup> On March 18, 1996, over 400 individuals marched from The City Nightclub to City Hall changing "Save the City!" with various signs. The battle over the club even drew attention from MTV news. See Cleopatraproductions1, "The City Nightclub Documentary 1996 from MTV," YouTube, 4:21, October 1, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-y0dErbJHPg>.