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### Outside/In: Crossing Queer and Latino Boundaries

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## Outside/In

### Crossing Queer<sup>1</sup> and Latino Boundaries

Luis Aponte-Parès

Beware of saying to them that sometimes different cities follow one another on the same site and under the same name, born and dying without knowing one another, without communication among themselves.<sup>2</sup>

During an early evening “round” of Parque Zamora in Veracruz during December 1997, two Mexican men signaled me. As I approached them, they asked, “¿Qué busca?” And I answered, “Maricones.” Like so many other places throughout Latin America and elsewhere, Zamora Park in Veracruz is one of the many “furtive night landscapes”<sup>3</sup> or “queerscapes”<sup>4</sup> that gay men have invested with meaning and historically used to contest urban narratives. It has been a project of mine to decipher the way in which Latinos and Latino queers have invested with meaning the spaces of everyday life because “space has no natural character, no inherent meaning, no intrinsic status as public or private.”<sup>5</sup> We do not live in a void but “inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.”<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the “class, gender, cultural, religious, and political differentiation in conceptions of time and space frequently become arenas of social conflict.”<sup>7</sup> My interest has been to examine how these transgressions, “arenas of social conflict,” have developed in *el Norte*, the northern cities, where so many of us have come to reside; perhaps producing what Foucault has called *heterotopias*, “counter-sites” that “are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”<sup>8</sup> How do Latino queers construct their spaces outside and inside the spaces of the perceived other twice over, locales perceived by some in both the Latino and white communities to threaten the heteronormative status quo? To be sure, these new locales still remain “largely unstable, vulnerable, ‘nomadic.’”<sup>9</sup>

In this essay, I posit that to fully grasp the degree to which Latinos have latinized New York City's landscapes, the role Latino queers play in this process merits examination.<sup>10</sup> Latino queers have begun to challenge queer institutions. They also aim to be coproducers of a queer imaginary and appropriate places of queer culture, thus Latinizing queer culture. They also claim a role in the coproduction of a Latino imaginary. By adding sexual orientation to this identity, queers indeed "queer," mariconear, decenter heteronormative Latino culture, perhaps producing a new "conception of 'identity,' which lives with and through, not despite, difference," but "by *hybridity*."<sup>11</sup> In a city where queers play a significant role in politics, economics, culture, and the construction of its "imagined environment," Latino queers increasingly have a role to play, a role emerging primarily from the dynamics of their dual Latino and gay identities, increased numbers, and an activism that challenges marginalization by virtue of their being *outsiders* to both communities. If one wants to be outside/in, move from periphery to center, one cannot latinize the queer community without queering the Latino community, *la comunidad*, and vice versa.

Population increases and expanded political activism of Latino queers have intersected cultural changes transforming the landscapes of certain districts in U.S. cities into what Gómez-Peña calls a "huge border zone," a "borderless society."<sup>12</sup> When cultural changes brought about by queers in the United States are considered, new possibilities become apparent, creating opportunities for Latino queers to transgress and transform the boundaries of the Latino and gay communities. By building their own organizations and networks, Latino queers have created spaces in which to build community, resulting in greater visibility and political activism.<sup>13</sup> As these organizations have matured, Latino queer activists have challenged their dual oppression in both communities with a discourse aimed at debunking and subverting the stereotypical views that queers hold of Latinos and that Latinos hold of queers, a "demand for *respeto*" being central to their full "cultural citizenship" within both communities.<sup>14</sup> This new discourse enables Latino queers to work on the deconstruction of the diasporic/immigrant imaginary of Latino/Latin American queers by offering a new one in which queer and Latino are not exclusive categories.

As Latinos disperse throughout the New York metro area, many neighborhoods in the city have been appropriated culturally by both Puerto Ricans and other immigrant Latino communities, transforming them into diasporic/immigrant enclaves, where they build places that "look like them," those "discrete if 'elastic' areas in which settings for the constitution of social relations are located and with which people can identify."<sup>15</sup> Latino gay men and women have also claimed spaces in both communities by challenging and collaborating with traditional organizations in the Latino community by breaching the boundaries and "queering" traditional Latino social and cultural organizations and events while appropriating and reter-

ritorializing white queer spaces and institutions as well as countless gay bars in Manhattan and Queens. This bodes well for the latinization of New York City: the representation of Latino sensibilities and imaginary on the city's imagined environment, which includes Latino queers. How and where Latinos are appropriating spaces is the focus of this work.

#### APPROPRIATING SPACES AND PLACES

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau provides clues on where and how to identify the actions of people as they go about producing their everyday lives. He differentiates between strategies and tactics. A *strategy*, he argues, is “the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power . . . can be isolated. It postulates a *place* that can be determined as its *own* and serves as the base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats . . . can be managed.”<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, *tactics* are calculated actions “determined by the absence of a proper locus. . . . The space of a tactic is the space of the other.”<sup>17</sup> For example, opening a gay bar and establishing a Latino gay organization are strategies, whereas marching as queers in the Puerto Rican Day Parade is a tactic, a site-specific intervention. In the first instance, Latino queers have the power to delimit their own place; in the second, Latino queers take advantage of opportunities. It depends on them how to build up their own position and plan raids.<sup>18</sup>

I set about a research agenda to examine the way Latino queers devised their strategies and tactics in queering the Latino community and latinizing the queer community. As a Puerto Rican/Latino queer activist and founding member of two groups, I was unable to disassociate my activism from my research. Owing to my relationship with these groups, I have gathered materials produced by them as well as maintained friendships with many of their members. Thus, the work presented here is not detached, and the boundaries between researcher and activist will always remain ambiguous. I am also cognizant that my choice to recover the recent history of Latino queers and how we have chosen to represent ourselves is a political act. Moreover, I aim to minimize the dichotomy present in the larger queer community, where there is a marked difference between the discourse of activists and academics. This dichotomy separating theory from praxis is a luxury that Puerto Ricans/Latinos may not be able to afford. Our ranks are too thin, our resources are too limited, and our needs are too great not to join our efforts in a common discourse and coalesce around common agendas for action.

I conducted over thirty in-depth and open-ended interviews with activists and nonactivists in New York City.<sup>19</sup> All informants articulated the difficulties they have had with both their communities, queer and Latino,

on an individual, family, and institutional basis. A majority come from middle- and working-class families, and they represent a full range of occupations, with a large number working in human services, the arts, and other professional jobs. They are not a representative group of Latino gay men in New York City. A good number of them have worked or volunteered for AIDS organizations. They ranged in age from the early twenties through the late forties. Of those who visited queer bars regularly, most went to both mixed and Latino bars. Many others opted to visit other queer sites, including gyms, theaters, the Lesbian and Gay Center, and other places of queer culture. However, most preferred to socialize at private parties.

#### CHANGING URBAN LANDSCAPES AND REPRESENTATIONS OF IDENTITY

We live in times “where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.”<sup>20</sup> Suppressed voices have come forward to claim spaces and a place in U.S. urban narratives. However, Latino urban history, particularly the history of Puerto Ricans in New York City, has been poorly documented. As a result, Puerto Ricans and Latinos are absent from most accounts of the history of the city and remain generally invisible. The spaces and places created by the settlement of Puerto Ricans for the past century have been all but destroyed with an attendant loss of memory: a community deterritorialized.<sup>21</sup> This loss compounds the view that Latinos are all immigrants, that they have not contributed to the development of New York City, and that somehow Latinos do not have a place in the city’s history.<sup>22</sup> However, the demographic explosion of Latinos in New York City and their increased political activism have made it all but impossible to keep them invisible anymore. Increased Latino presence intersects profound changes to the landscapes of U.S. cities.

The descriptive terms *theme park*, *global city*, *fortress city*, *informational city*, *analogous city*, *virtual city*, *edge city*, *exopolis*, and *megalopolis*, to name a few, attempt to describe the way changing economic, political, and cultural forces of the global economy are being articulated in U.S. cities. These changes stem from the restructuring of international capital and labor markets; a global economy that increasingly relies on the growth of international financial markets; an expansive service sector, along with a global network of factories; and the concentration of financial centers in a select number of global cities.<sup>23</sup> Edward Soja and others add that the process also entails deindustrialization and reindustrialization resulting in the loss of jobs, the lowering of wages and the quality of life in certain centers.<sup>24</sup> These forces have brought about profound transformations of urban landscapes during the second half of the twentieth century, namely, suburbanization and class- and ethnic-specific segregation of residential districts, with the



poor and people of color isolated in distressed neighborhoods while the wealthy converge in well-appointed and protected enclaves. The privatization and subsequent loss of public space, with the concomitant exclusion of the poor and people of color from it and the increased employment of “stage set” concocted environments or “theme park” architecture and urban design solutions are utilized to revitalize cities.<sup>25</sup>

Peter Marcuse has specified these changes by using a wall metaphor, suggesting deep social divisions that characterize the postmodern city.<sup>26</sup> He argues that the apparent chaos of postmodern cities may indeed “cloak” the “visible (and visual) anarchy” in “an increasingly pervasive and obtrusive order” that covers an “increasingly pervasive pattern of hierarchical relationships among people.”<sup>27</sup> He also identifies five distinctive types of residential quarters: the controlling city, the city of advanced services, the city of direct production, the city of unskilled work and the informal economy, and the residual city.<sup>28</sup> People of color, Latinos in particular, are residents in the last two and visitors to the first three quarters.

Latino barrios are scattered throughout the city, and certain neighborhoods have become closely identified with them. Latino barrios, however, differ greatly. Some, such as East Harlem and the Lower East Side, have been devastated by disinvestment (in the former) and gentrification (in the latter), resulting in the displacement of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos from their historical homelands for most of the century. For over two decades now, Mexicans and Dominicans, however, have begun to repopulate East Harlem and to appropriate West Harlem and Washington Heights, juxtaposing borderlands with the traditional ghetto. In Queens, Jackson Heights, Elmhurst, Woodside, and Corona, there are other borderlands where new immigrants congregate. The neighborhoods have become important places for unskilled work and the informal economy. Images emerging from these enclaves are dissonant from those produced by the culture industries, so essential to the image of the city, the “imagined environment,” which increasingly relies on the symbolic economy, i.e., the utilization of culture as a means of redeveloping the image of the city. For sure, those at the top, the elites, including wealthy gay men, continue to establish “their identity as a patrician class, [to] build the majestic art museums, parks, and architectural complexes” to represent New York as a world-class city.<sup>29</sup> Latinos in general, and Puerto Ricans in particular, remain at the bottom of the social and economic ladder in New York City, residing in neighborhoods labeled by some the “lumpengeography of capital.”<sup>30</sup> This has not deterred them from mapping their identities in the cultural geography of the city. Indeed, their ability to imprint their identity in space remains a primary area of contention, as “power struggles over mapping (. . . no matter if these are maps of so-called ‘real’ or metaphorical spaces) are therefore fundamental moments in the production of discourses.”<sup>31</sup>

Generally, Latino queers reside in Marcuse's cities of unskilled work and the informal economy and the residual city and are visitors to queer neighborhoods, which are usually located in the city of advanced services. Like other people of color and immigrants, Latino queers are not part of queer-centered neighborhoods such as Chelsea and Greenwich Village in Manhattan, where street life has clear signs and representations of queer culture, spaces "where production and consumption of gay identity and gay community is visualized and made possible on many levels."<sup>32</sup> However, "there are many 'invisible' bodies on Christopher Street. The lesbian body and bodies of color only nominally appear in the storefront aesthetics and the heart of the street life."<sup>33</sup> Yet while walking Christopher Street on any night, the presence of people of color is felt on many corners, particularly the waterfront landscapes, where Latino queers have carved their own spaces.<sup>34</sup> Visiting the city of advanced services, however, can be dangerous. Excluded from many bars, watched as criminals by store owners, or harassed by policemen, Latino queers know that every visit to Chelsea or the Village is an act of courage. Visiting these neighborhoods, although usually framed in terms of "going to the land of queers" by many informants, can also be construed as a political act. To some, for example, visiting these neighborhoods means that they have to divest themselves from their ethnicity by "acting white." To others it is the only place in the city they can be themselves, that is, they can be as queer as they want, a "free fag" like one of the characters in Jaime Manrique's novel.<sup>35</sup>

Feeling unwelcome in the white queerscapes of the Village and Chelsea, many Latino queers have produced their own places in the locales of the other, such as the South Bronx, Washington Heights, Woodside, and Jackson Heights. Although historically communities of color have been gay unfriendly, Latino queers have also begun appropriating places in their own neighborhoods. By "acting gay" in their own communities, Latino queers challenge the community's conception of itself. Latino and Latin American queers from Colombia, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Central America, and elsewhere have greatly increased their visibility in Woodside and Jackson Heights. Lining Roosevelt Avenue, for example, and almost undistinguishable from other storefronts, are a number of gay bars such as Friends, Luchos, and Zodiac, which intermix with storefront churches; Colombian, Peruvian, and Korean restaurants; and other immigrant sites. Located along main streets, these bars are more visible than previous ones, such as the old La Escuelita, which was sited in the garment district in Manhattan, with no outside signage, and which required patrons to go "down into the darkness of basements without windows outside the view of the outside view."<sup>36</sup> The streets are clear sites of the informal economy, of cultural displacement, and the reterritorialization of urban narratives. Latino queers are adding a new element to this process of reterritorialization by producing Latino queerscapes.



## LATINO QUEER ORGANIZATIONS AND LATINO QUEERSCAPES

Latino queer institution building has been a struggle.<sup>37</sup> Individual acts of courage occur every day and are fundamental in the development of personal identity and survival. Queer organizations have played a major role in the development of this identity, particularly in queering the Latino community and latinizing the queer community at the institutional level. Organizing has provided Latino queers a foundation, a place of their own, and a base from which relations with their other two communities can be managed. To understand this role, the way these groups developed their agendas through time, and the spaces they have created, one needs to review the story of Latino queer organizations in New York City.

I propose four stages in the post-Stonewall period.<sup>38</sup> The Pioneering stage spans between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s, when activists such as Sylvia Rivera and others attempted to be part of the movement and were turned away by racism. In the Puerto Rican/Latino community, those who attempted to come out within political organizations were shunned or expelled by the radicals of the period. Those who remained active were sent back to the closet. The Foundation stage spans between the early 1970s and the mid-1980s, when groups began the difficult enterprise of bringing together those activists concerned with the way the gay movement had ignored Latino issues as well as the way the Latino community had dismissed gay issues.<sup>39</sup> During this period many who remained closeted became militants in radical groups in the Latino community and had to “prioritize their struggles,” as Juanita Ramos has suggested.<sup>40</sup> The Developmental stage began in the mid-1980s and lasted through the early 1990s.<sup>41</sup> This stage brought to the forefront new queer leaders who had been activists in housing, the arts, health, and so forth who came out of the closet and expanded the working agenda to deal with both the Latino and gay communities. How to envision their two identities, Latino and gay, was central to all groups leading to a “construction project”: “inventing themselves” with the formulation of a Latino queer imaginary “fashioned creatively on the basis of shared memory and desire, congruent histories, and meshing utopias.”<sup>42</sup>

With the founding of Latinos Latinas de Ambiente New York (LLANY), Puerto Rican Initiative to Develop Empowerment (PRIDE), the Colombian Lesbian and Gay Organization (COLEGA), and Mano a Mano, for example, a new stage characterized by collective work, coalition building, and greater militancy as well as a new and younger generation of activists has begun. Some groups have become not-for-profit corporations, giving them the added stability that previous organizations lacked. This added formality has provided members with a predictability missing in earlier organizing as well as a long-term commitment to institutionalize.<sup>43</sup> Missing, however, is an intense discussion of the complex issues that surround Latino gay identity: class, national cultures, sexualities, and race.<sup>44</sup>

Gay men with different histories, cultures, time of arrival, and conceptions of homosexualities find themselves grouped and identified as Latinos by the receiving society. Furthermore, differences between Puerto Ricans and other Latinos, and particularly between those Puerto Ricans born on the island and those born in New York City, intersect social class and racial/ethnic issues revealed when better-off Latinos resent the minority status of Puerto Ricans. This has led to a dual strategy of organizing around the broader concept of Latino queers as well as nation-specific groups like COLEGA, *Latitud Cero* (Gay and Lesbian Ecuadorean Movement), *Colectivo Mexicano*, the Gay and Lesbian Association of Cuban Exiles, the Venezuelan Gay and Lesbian Association, and many others. This suggests that a fixed identity as a Latino gay man remains elusive. How each member of that larger imagined community identifies with it differs and remains a work in progress. I should note that both Latino<sup>45</sup> and queer remain contested identities.<sup>46</sup>

When I speak in this essay of a *Latino community*, both in the general and queer sense, I am referring to a group using a “negotiated identity,” in which the “Latino ‘experience,’ the group’s demonstrable reality and existence, includes but is not coterminous with its self-consciousness” and “the way it thinks, conceives of, imagines itself.”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, identifiers such as *queer community* and *gay and lesbian community* also require specification because there is no agreement on what they constitute and who they purport to represent. Although identity politics has been severely criticized as divisive, by playing on their Latino queer identity, Latino queers perhaps see its use as “strategic provisionality,” an identity that can “become a site of contest and revision”<sup>48</sup> in both communities. It is also important to note that although the Latino gay movement has never ceased to be political, always linking its struggle with other struggles, the mainstream gay movement has always had difficulties linking with other struggles and has most recently moved, like the rest of society, to more conservative positions. In the mainstream gay and lesbian community, the recent debate between Sex Panic! and major queer activists such as Michelangelo Signorile and Gabriel Rotello around issues of liberation versus assimilation is exemplified by a recent essay by Frank Browning in which he summarizes the debate as one where liberation and “the pursuit of sexual pleasure as a legitimate social concern has disappeared from the movement’s public agenda. In its place has come the right to participate in war, the right to marry, the right to adopt children, and so on.”<sup>49</sup>

#### QUEERING LA COMUNIDAD /LATINIZING LOS BLANCOS

Difficulties encountered by Latino gays and lesbians working with white queer organizations have remained central to Latino queer organizing.

Furthermore, Latino queers individually suffer on a daily basis from the exclusion from commercial, social, institutional, and other places under the control of whites. Similarly, there have been countless difficulties in working with the Latino community. Owing to the complexity of issues confronting them, Latino queers have vacillated in their priorities as to what to do first: to confront and transform homophobia in the Latino community or to challenge racism in the white queer community and gain a space in the movement. At times, Latino queers create alliances with white queers to challenge the Latino community. The opposite, however, has been more difficult. In this essay I examine a few examples that illustrate the strategies and tactics utilized by Latino queer organizations to address both communities. I have chosen examples in two areas: co-producing an imaginary, and transgressing boundaries.<sup>50</sup>

### Coproducing an Imaginary

How do white queers view Latino queers? How does the Latino community view its queers? How do Latino queers want to be viewed and represented in both communities? How does one engage in the production of a new imaginary that is inclusive? Stuart Hall reminds us that cultural identity is a “production” always “constituted within, not outside, representation.”<sup>51</sup> The production of Latino identity in general and Latino queers in particular can be found in the social sciences and the arts, particularly in literature.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, there are two important sites in the production of imaginaries: mass cultural forms such as the media and social/cultural and political institutions. To queers, the media is part of an array of mass cultural forms that highlight “certain questions about the circulation of representations and, specifically, the positions occupied by lesbians and gay men within public discourse.”<sup>53</sup> The debate a few years back about the cancellation of the TV show *Ellen* suggests that at the national level the portrayal of gays and lesbians remains problematic.

Generally, Latino queers are absent from gay media. Viewing the pages of *The Advocate* or *Out*, two nationally distributed gay magazines, reveals that gay men are still portrayed as white and middle class. Institutional inclusion or exclusion also provide the bases by which representations of a particular group are portrayed. The ongoing debate in the school systems of the nation, where conservatives do not want to include any positive representations of gays or lesbians for fear that young minds could fall into sin, is a case in point. Thus, how society portrays queers in the public eye remains critical in understanding them. For example, two recent references to Latino queers appeared in New York City:

*La especie no necesita de homosexuales para su mantenimiento. He aquí la desgracia de ser homosexual: el amor erótico por el*

propio sexo no puede reproducirse; es híbrido; no puede engendrar naturalmente ni criar a un hijo dándole todas las opciones de identificación.<sup>54</sup>

The Male Room Presents. *Sucking off Puerto Rican Drug Dealers in the bathroom contest*. Hosted by Your “connection” Mark Allen. Contest at 12 Unless we get busted. Wednesday, January 11, 1995 at Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. NYC.<sup>55</sup>

The above quotes summon the stereotypes used by Latinos and white gays when referring to Latino gays, i.e., *una desgracia*, a disgrace, and drug addicts, “street people.”

“*Una desgracia*.” The first quote comes from a guest essay in *El Diario* and is symptomatic of the uneasiness that the principal Spanish daily for Latino New Yorkers had in dealing with gay and lesbian issues and specifically of its homophobic leanings during the early nineties. It also conjured painful images, using the negative language with which Latino gays had been portrayed in their countries of origin. Many of my informants characterized themselves as “sexiles,” as Manolo Guzmán calls them, that is, men and women who felt that they could not develop their identities in full within the cultural constraints of their country of origin. In June 1991, a protest letter was sent by community leaders to Fernando Moreno, then editor of the daily.<sup>56</sup> A few months later, *El Diario* answered the letter with an editorial entitled “Homophobic Violence,” castigating homophobia by referring to the Julio Rivera assassination and quoting statistics from the Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project (AVP), information that had been included in the referred letter. However, the editors failed to endorse an antibias bill pending for many years in Albany. The editorial, nevertheless, signaled that the daily was willing to entertain changing its view of Latino homosexuals. Changing *El Diario*’s editorial orientation was the goal, and the editorial was a clear tactical success, particularly given the daily’s historical role in producing a Puerto Rican and Latino imaginary for all New Yorkers. Most importantly, although challenging *El Diario* was a major endeavor, the organizations had grown secure enough to plan their strategies in response. As one member of the group that met with the daily states:

Ya estábamos cansados. Cuando vimos el artículo inmediatamente llamamos a una reunión. We decided to approach *El Diario* with a range of political and health organizations. We planned our agenda, sent them a letter, and finally they called for a meeting. They called us back for a meeting. I believe that they were not expecting people from so

many different organizations. From that day on I believe *El Diario* changed their view of us.<sup>57</sup>

Such was the impact that for the past five years *El Diario* has both increased and produced positive images of gays and lesbians. This has taken place through the publication of articles and op-ed essays friendly to queers. During the recent past, the daily has published gay-friendly essays examining an aspect of Latino queer life the day before the Gay and Lesbian Pride March every June. Although positive portrayals have a ways to go, the editors' willingness to hire openly gay queer activists such as Juan Méndez as part of their editorial staff (he serves as opinion editor) and publish the work of Gonzalo Aburto, a queer Mexican journalist who writes a weekly Latin Rock column, bodes well for the future.

*"Puerto Rican drug dealers and street people."* The second quote purported to represent an erotic image of Latino men, specifically Puerto Ricans. Like African American men, Puerto Rican men have been portrayed as dangerous. As colonial people, Puerto Ricans, particularly Puerto Rican men, have been construed as "degenerate types on the basis of racial origin."<sup>58</sup> Like African Americans, Puerto Ricans are pictured by many white gays as sexually uninhibited and passionate: "they want to be dominated by this dark man with this humongous dick."<sup>59</sup> Soon after the despicable ad appeared, the Latino queer community came together to challenge the promoters and the magazine that printed the ad. Under the leadership of Frank Guzmán, a young queer activist and founding member of LLANY and PRIDE, a major campaign was organized with three purposes: to get the event canceled, to get both the promoters of the event and *HX* magazine to print an apology in its next edition, and to alert the Latino queer community to the threat to their dignity that was being perpetuated on them. As Frank Guzmán, the protest organizer puts it:

We started faxing Latino organizations, both gay and straight. I called a meeting and almost all organizations contacted came. We set out a plan of action and chose to picket on the night of the "party." That night 75 to 100 Latino and non Latino queers (mostly people of color) picketed the entrance for several hours demanding an apology in writing. We demanded *HX* to print an apology and to guarantee us that they would never again print or accept commercial ads for events like that one.<sup>60</sup>

The overall strategy went beyond producing positive images or contesting stereotypes. It went on to "constitute and sustain discursive and institutional networks" by gaining access to the same media channels that whites had.<sup>61</sup> Organizing the protest also provided Latino gays the tools to



examine their own understanding, demystify the historical depiction of Latinos, and join forces with other nongay Latinos and others in a common project: deconstructing the images of Latinos in general as well as of Latino gays in particular. What brought about this examination was that one of the promoters was a Latino. As Guzmán also states:

He had no excuse. In fact, it came to my mind that he must really be a self-hating Latino in order to be part of such despicable action. The other promoter was a white guy who thought of the idea. The Latino promoter had the courtesy to send me an apology. The white promoter restated that he was from Iowa and he had heard that a lot of Puerto Ricans were drug dealers. Can you believe that?<sup>62</sup>

Self-hating Latino queers has been a deep concern and was an issue that had been debated earlier by other groups. However, to the new generation of activists it was difficult to fathom. After all, it was 1995, and possibly one in four queers in New York City was a Latino; many had hoped that old stereotypes had faded away.

The protest was a success. By utilizing Latino gay and nongay organizations and networks, organizers felt they had the strength and were in control of the event. When the interviewer from Gay Network filming the protest asked the organizers, "Why have there not been more demonstrations?" a protester replied, "Perhaps with the AIDS crisis our community was involved in self-healing. But we never lost sight that like the rest of society, many gays and lesbians are racists. This is a warning to those who think that they can get away with business as usual. No more." Another protester stated, "All clubs are exploitative. If I did not participate in anything racist or anything derogatory towards the Spanish, I would not participate in anything."<sup>63</sup> In other words, racism is expected by most Latinos as they go about in their everyday living, and many just get used to it. Another protester commented that Mark Allen, the event promoter, had said that "he was not aware that Puerto Ricans were activists." The question would resonate in some of the protesters' heads. It summoned a sense of powerlessness for Latinos to control their own images and the abysmal lack of knowledge the white queer movement had about Latino queers and their organizations.

One significant result of the event was that Gay Network TV aired the protest and invited a number of speakers to comment on the need of the white gay community to examine its racism and the stereotypes it uses to represent Latino men. It was a recognition that Latinos were increasingly more vocal and would challenge the white community in its own places, its bars, and on its own terms. Refusing to remain invisible and to accept the stereotyping without a fight signaled that Latino queers were ready to trans-



gress white spaces collectively. Organizers thought the days of referring to Puerto Ricans/Latinos as *street people*, a common term utilized historically to refer to working-class people of color, were over. However, recent publication of negative stereotypes of Puerto Rican/Latino gay men suggests that many other media outlets are still portraying them as dangerous. In a 1998 issue of *Next*, a gay weekly, Latinos were listed among “five types of men that cannot be trusted” and portrayed as “romantic, but most of them are alcoholics—not to mention those explosive hot tempers.” Banjee boys (usually Latino or African American) were portrayed by the same author as “fierce” and having “ended up stealing all [his] designer gowns.”<sup>64</sup>

### Crossing Boundaries

Boundaries are either visible or imaginary, physical or symbolic. Some boundaries are delineated by walls, “tangible or intangible, physically effective or physically symbolic of social and economic barriers.”<sup>65</sup> Frequently, boundaries emerge to provide protection and perhaps cohesion and solidarity, such as those erected symbolically or territorially by immigrants as they go about building their enclaves. Other boundaries become walls, such as those defining ghettos and places of confinement.<sup>66</sup> Others delineate private from public space. Socially, boundaries can be erected by class distinctions, cultural differences, or areas of interest. For gays and lesbians, “environmental activism has been constrained by a host of unresolved issues concerning the entitlement of sexual minorities to public space in patriarchal and heteronormative contexts.”<sup>67</sup> Latino queers, like other queers everywhere, have been walled in by social mores that establish “compulsory heterosexuality” as the “original, the true, the authentic”<sup>68</sup> sexual expression in all societies. In Latin America and the Caribbean, these mores remain powerful reminders of supremacy of the macho imaginary. To break the compulsory boundaries imposed by society such as those of the closet, Latino queers must cross over to the site of the other and make it their own. For the past decade Latino queers in New York City have been transgressing boundaries. Many times these transgressions stem from deliberate strategies chosen by groups as ways to expand their influence.

*El Desfile*. Perhaps an event that has addressed and crossed the boundaries most in both the Latino and gay communities has been the participation of Latino queers in the Puerto Rican Day Parade, *El Desfile*.<sup>69</sup> *El Desfile* is perhaps the most important event of the Puerto Rican community, the day when Puerto Rican identity, its imaginary, *la comunidad puertorriqueña*, is manifested in its most conspicuous way in New York City. *El Desfile* itself is an act of transgression of New York City’s landscapes by all Puerto Ricans. Once a year, Puerto Ricans appropriate, map, and decenter privileged sites such as Fifth Avenue if only for six hours: reterritorializing Man-

hattan, the symbolic center of the city, home to the controlling city and the city of advanced services, where the privileged other lives. Some observers estimate that close to one million people either participate in or observe El Desfile. These numbers suggest that the event may be one of those rare occasions in New York City where many social classes come together to share a common experience. The open participation of Latino queers in El Desfile becomes a double transgression: Latino queers overrun the traditional boundaries of the Puerto Rican/Latino community, which, by appropriating Fifth Avenue that day, is transgressing the boundaries of the privileged other.

In 1989, Boricua Gay and Lesbian Forum (BGLF) brought together a large contingent of queers from several organizations to transgress the Puerto Rican Day Parade. The goal was to open up the march and expand the definition of what is Puerto Rican. As one activist remembers:

Once we decided to go to El Desfile, we called a coalition that included both men and women, Latino and non-Latino organizations. We then applied for a permit and it was denied. We challenged the denial, and after the intervention of Dinkins's Gay and Lesbian Liaison, we got the go-ahead.<sup>70</sup>

Every year since then, organizers have permitted Latino queers to be a regular contingent in the march. Although it has not been easy, opening this major space has provided countless queers with the energy to deal with their own sexualities. After all, performing one's queerness in front of one million people can be intimidating as well as exhilarating.

I don't particularly like to expose my sexuality in front of others. You know, it is a very personal thing. However, I believe that I am as Puerto Rican as everyone else in the parade. Why can't they just understand that we are familia. What I don't like is the looks I get from some of the people watching the parade. But at the same time, it feels good when so many also give us a thumbs-up. It just feels good and is worth the aggravation.<sup>71</sup>

Of all ethnic parades or marches in the city, El Desfile is the only one where queers have gained the right to establish a beachhead of sorts. By invading the space of the heterosexual other, Latino queers have effectively built a countersite where their sexual identity is in the open. By joining other Puerto Ricans in reterritorializing Fifth Avenue, Latino queers begin to reimagine Puerto Rican identity in New York City.

*Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs.* Collaborating with gay-friendly Latino organizations has provided many Latino queers with the

grounds to expand their influence. In 1993 the executive director of the Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs (PRACA) asked Richard Irizarry and me to help her in an endeavor.<sup>72</sup> As an agency dealing with foster parents, its staff was aware of problems arising from the adoption of gay children by straight Puerto Rican/Latino parents. These parents needed guidance in dealing with gay and lesbian youth. The result of the meeting was that PRACA agreed to bring George Ayala, then director of Hettrick Martin Institute, to provide their board, staff, and parents with training on how to deal with queer issues. The request was emblematic of the changing landscapes of Puerto Rican/Latino agencies making attempts at adding sexual identity to their service paradigm. This technical assistance provided by Hettrick Martin was a sign that a progressive gay organization was willing to recognize the importance of working with the Latino community.

Between 1995 and 1999, a number of Latino queer organizations were able to utilize the offices of PRACA. Due to their relative newness, most of the groups are unable to stand on their own, i.e., they lack office space, telephones, computers, and so forth. Latino Gay Men of New York (LGMNY), LLANY, PRIDE, and other groups share offices in PRACA's headquarters. As the agency's executive director stated recently in an informal exchange with me, "After a while, by having gays and lesbians share the same offices with our regular staff, even the most homophobic has been sensitized, and I believe that a climate of mutual respect has been achieved." A good number of my informants have visited PRACA for meetings, mailings, etc., or know about the agency's support for Latino queers. Some of these new organizations could not have survived without the support they have received from the agency. The most common comment I heard my informants make was "gracias a PRACA mi organización existe" (thanks to PRACA, my organization exists). In fact, one organization member went as far as to state that when they started their organization, which centers on providing drugs for people with AIDS and HIV in Latin America, they first went to Gay Men's Health Crisis and were denied space. But PRACA provided them with desks and computer access and permitted them to put together a program that is now serving countless men and women in Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia who would have never had access to these drugs.

The amount of support that PRACA has offered queer and AIDS organizations raised a question in my mind: how come these groups had such an easy entry into one of the oldest and most important Puerto Rican/Latino social service organizations? Why couldn't they have had the same support from their queer brothers and sisters? One Latino gay activist, Louis Ortiz, has suggested that in "dealing with the Latino community, there is only one major issue, gayness. We share all other issues, problems, cultural bonding, etc. However, in the gay community there are differences in culture, economic status, language, religion, education, etc." He further stated:

The Latino community is willing to accept issues of the lesbian and gay community, but they must be brought to their attention by proven Latino activists. In other words, they feel more comfortable with long-term activists who have a proven record in other community issues. The fact that I worked in ASPIRA and PRACA helped a lot to bring about changes.

When I asked him where he saw the boundaries between each community, he also added:

The only boundaries I see are in people's minds. I think that the Latino community is already dealing with the broader picture. As long as we, those who still have internalized our homophobia, don't confront it, it will remain preventing us from having a greater impact in the community. The example of what I am saying is the response of the Puerto Rican community to us in the Puerto Rican Day Parade. That experience is overwhelmingly positive. Those boundaries are internalized. They are more internalized within the Latino gay community than with the straight community.<sup>73</sup>

*State senate race in East Harlem.* Perhaps one case could illustrate the way Latino queers have both latinized the queer community and queered the Latino community, transgressing one (Latino) while collaborating with the other (queer). In 1992, playwright Richard Irizarry ran for state senator for East Harlem and Washington Heights against Olga Méndez.<sup>74</sup> The campaign was emblematic of the schism between the Puerto Rican and gay communities: both communities had been invisible to the other. Gay elected officials such as Tom Duane and Deborah Glick, for example, represented districts in the controlling city and the city of advanced services. All Latino elected officials represented people from the residual city and the city of unskilled work and the informal economy. The political constituents of Puerto Rican/Latino and gay elected officials differed in their needs, their politics, and the kinds of agendas that represented their views. Although all Latino and gay elected officials were members of the Democratic Party, their political prisms differed greatly. One group did not see the other unless party affiliation was called upon for political expediency. And an openly gay Latino man running in a Latino district was a new species.

As the campaign developed, a number of issues began to emerge. Irizarry ran on a progressive platform and allied his campaign across racial, ethnic, and class boundaries. Furthermore, many of the traditional allies of Ms. Méndez provided the campaign with resources and support. Some Latino elected officials privately commented on the need for leadership change and welcomed Irizarry. Most, however, could not openly support Irizarry

but were willing to remain neutral. (In politics, *remaining neutral* usually means “not supporting the incumbent.”) Ms. Méndez ran on her record. The problem was that her record was challenged by many, including *El Diario* and the *New York Times*, both of which endorsed Irizarry. Feeling threatened by the loss of endorsement by those newspapers and by the neutrality of some of her previous political allies, Méndez’s campaign shifted gears and focused on two issues: that Irizarry was gay and HIV positive and that he was possibly not Puerto Rican but Cuban, a certain kiss of death in a Puerto Rican community.

Late in the campaign, a candidates’ night was sponsored by many community organizations from East Harlem. During the evening, an exchange took place between Irizarry and Méndez: “The gay agenda is harmful to the Puerto Rican agenda,” sputtered Senator Méndez, while Irizarry answered, “Olga, there are gays in the Puerto Rican community. I am Puerto Rican and gay. My agenda is a Puerto Rican and gay agenda.” What struck the audience most about the exchange between candidates was Irizarry’s fearlessness as he queered the event in opposition to the homophobic comments of his opponent. Community leaders admired Irizarry’s campaign as a model of the politics of inclusion; his campaign brought together Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, blacks, whites, gays and lesbians, and straights from uptown and downtown, from among the poor and the well-to-do. The campaign headquarters, a dingy storefront, was located on 112th Street, and its immediate neighbors, working-class and poor Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, adopted the campaign. Some commented that in all the years they had lived on the street, nobody of importance, particularly a political candidate, had ever visited them and listened to their issues. A second campaign office was located in Washington Heights and fully supported by Dominicans. This Upper Manhattan office provided an ample example that the community was willing to accept a queer son who addressed their needs.

The whole leadership of LGMNY became involved in the campaign, and scores of the group’s members worked on a daily basis from doing errands to fund raising. The support that Irizarry received from gay political clubs, Pride Agenda, and Tom Duane, the first openly gay elected official in New York City, pointed towards a recognition by the downtown gay political machinery that there *were* Latino gays and that Latinos were going to increase their visibility in both communities. Irizarry lost the campaign because he could neither raise the money nor put together the political machinery that the Méndez dynasty could. Irizarry’s campaign, nevertheless, opened a space never before opened in the Puerto Rican and gay communities: an openly gay and HIV-positive candidate who claimed both identities.<sup>75</sup> Perhaps the recent victory of Margarita López in the Lower East Side of Manhattan could in some ways be attributed to the space created by Irizarry’s campaign.



## CONCLUSION

Although Latino queers remain marginalized from mainstream queer and Latino organizations in New York City and although the agenda for Latino queer organizations remains long and complex, the advances made in the last decade have been significant. Latino queers are increasingly present in boards of queer organizations, and their presence in major events such as the Pride March during the month of June has increased their visibility. In the Latino community, Latino queers are also increasingly able to come out of the closet and be part of organizations, perhaps the best example being the work of a number of Latino queers in *El Diario*. Issues of race, class, and nationality among Latino queers remain unresolved. The dual strategy of organizing as Latinos and as nation-specific groups represents a challenge in the development of a political agenda. Problems faced by a Colombian queer differ from those of a Dominican or a Puerto Rican queer, and visions of homosexuality may also differ because there is no one Latin American homosexuality. Nation-specific organizing, on the other hand, is perhaps a form of resistance to homogenization.

Last Fall, as I went for an evening “round” on Roosevelt Avenue in Jackson Heights, Corona, and Elmhurst, I recalled my travels in Mexico and the furtive night landscapes of Parque Zamora in Veracruz. Walking to Friends or perhaps Zodiac, I feel that the streets of New York are increasingly being invested with meaning by Latino queers and that the streets of many neighborhoods in Queens will never be the same.

## NOTES

1. Although the term *queer* is not commonly utilized by Latino gays and lesbians, I am using it as shorthand to refer to gay, lesbian, transsexual, and other homosexualities. I am aware that the term connotes a number of problematic issues. For a very thorough discussion of the term *queer* and queer theory, please see Michael Warner, *Fear of Queer Planet. Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
2. Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 30–31.
3. Gordon Brent Ingram, “Marginality and the Landscapes of Erotic Alien(n)ations,” in *Queers in Space: Communities/Public Places/Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 43.
4. *Ibid.*, 29.
5. George Chauncey, “Privacy Could Only Be Had in Public,” in *Stud. Architectures of Masculinity*, ed. Joel Sanders (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996), 224.
6. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” in *Diacritics* (Spring 1986): 23.
7. David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 225.



8. Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 24.
9. Ingram, "Marginality," 50.
10. Owing to self-imposed limits, I have focused my research primarily on Latino gay men. Latina lesbians have been pioneers in the queering of Latino institutions as well as in challenging traditional gay and lesbian institutions. Indeed, most significant transgressions into mainstream Latino institutions were spearheaded by women. For example, the decision of Boricua Gay and Lesbian Forum (BGLF) to breach the Somos Unos conference in Albany was the work of both men and women in the organization, particularly Brunilda Vega, a BGLF founder. Furthermore, it was also BGLF that organized the first consistent presence of queers in the Desfile Puertorriqueño in 1989, with Las Buenas Amigas being the largest and most visible contingent. However, due to my involvement with Latino gay men's organizations that provided me full access to their meetings, data, and other documents, I found that at this stage of my research, documenting Latino men would be most appropriate. This in no way means that the work and struggles of Latina lesbians are less important. It is my expectation that Latina women will find their own voices and meet Latino men in documenting the important role they have had in the development of queer organizations and their leadership in transgressing/transforming, queering, and tropicalizing/latinizing mainstream institutions.
11. Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Padmini Mongia (London: Arnold, 1996), 120.
12. Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Beyond the Tortilla Curtain. Welcome to the Borderless Society," *Utne Reader*, January-February 1995, 38.
13. For a more detailed analysis of the early Latino queer movement in New York City, see Luis Aponte-Parés and Jorge Merced, "Páginas Omitidas. The Gay and Lesbian Presence," in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, ed. Andrés Torres and José Velázquez (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).
14. Renato Rosaldo, "Cultural Citizenship, Inequality, and Multiculturalism," in *Latino Cultural Citizenship. Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights*, ed. William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997), 38.
15. John Agnew, *Representing Space* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 263.
16. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) 35-36.
17. *Ibid.*, 36-37.
18. *Ibid.*
19. My sample is not a scientific sample. There were two kinds of informants: activists and nonactivists. I interviewed around fifty activists during a period of two years, between 1996 and 1998. Nonactivists were also interviewed during the same period. Activists were members, founders, and/or leaders in the development of a Latino gay organization. They were out to their peers and willing to be spokespersons for their causes. They were selected among key members of these organizations. Nonactivists were selected more at random. Many were self-selected in various social and cultural meetings in places such as the Lesbian and Gay Community Center. Others were casual encounters at bars and other places queers congregate. Material developed through these interviews has been utilized in several other articles on the

subject. Over 50 percent of them were Puerto Rican, and the rest were Dominican, Cuban, Colombian, Mexican American, Venezuelan, and other nationalities. About half were born in New York City, whereas others were born in the Caribbean, Latin America, or elsewhere in the United States. Many date only Latino men, whereas others did not have a particular choice. Two-thirds were Latino activists and were members or had some relationship with an organization. About half had been activists in nongay organizations, such as community agencies or political parties, whereas others were new to social activism.

20. Homi Bhabha, "Introduction. Locations of Culture," in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 1.
21. See Luis Aponte-Parés, "What's Yellow and White and Has Land All Around It: Appropriating Place in Puerto Rican Barrios," in *The Latino Studies Reader: Culture, Economy and Society*, ed. Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres (New York: Blackwell, 1997).
22. See, for example, the special section "Then and Now, 100 Years of New York City," in the *Sunday New York Times*, January 25, 1998. If one were to understand the presence of Puerto Ricans and other Latinos in the history of New York from this document, their history seems to begin in the 1980s rather than the 1890s.
23. Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).
24. Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989).
25. Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Noonday, 1992).
26. Peter Marcuse, "Not Chaos, but Walls: Postmodernism and the Partitioned City," in *Post Modern Cities and Spaces*, ed. Sophie Watson, and Katherine Gibson (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1995).
27. *Ibid.*, 243.
28. *Ibid.*, 247.
29. Sharon Zukin, *The Culture of Cities* (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 7–8.
30. Richard Walker, "Two Sources of Uneven Development Under Advanced Capitalism: Spatial Differentiation and Capital Mobility." *Review of Radical Political Economy* 10, no. 3 (1978): XX.
31. Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*, 112.
32. James Polchin, "Having Something to Wear: The Landscape of Identity on Christopher Street," in *Queers in Space: Communities/Public Spaces/Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 383.
33. *Ibid.*, 387.
34. During the past decade the increased presence of young queers of color on the streets of Greenwich Village has threatened many white queers, particularly store owners. In early 1992 many of our members in Latino Gay Men of New York (LGMNY) complained of police harassment when they visited Christopher St.

35. Jaime Manrique, *Latin Moon in Manhattan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 45.
36. Manolo Guzmán, "'Pa'La Escuelita con Mucho Cuida'o y por la Orillita': A Journey Through the Contested Terrains of the Nation and Sexual Orientation," in *Puerto Rican Jam. Rethinking Colonialism and Nationalism*, ed. Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). Since publication of his article, a new bar, La Nueva Escuelita, has opened at the same site. The new one differs greatly from the old one in the use of the space as well as the quality of the environment. No longer is La Escuelita dirty or smelly, and neither does going there feel like slumming. The most striking difference, however, is that the entrance has been changed to 39th Street, and it now has an awning announcing it. No longer is La Escuelita hidden from view.
37. Elsewhere I have examined the barriers encountered by Latino queers as they conceive and build their own institutions (Aponte-Parés and Merced, "Páginas Omitidas").
38. Research on the pre-Stonewall period has been lacking. My proposal is tentative and needs further development.
39. Groups such as the Comité Homosexual Latino Americano (COHLA), Hispanos Unidos Gay Liberados (HUGL), and others were founded during this period. For a historical sketch of these groups see Aponte-Parés and Merced, "Páginas Omitidas."
40. Juanita Ramos, ed. *Compañeras: antología lesbiana Latina* (New York: Latin Lesbian History Project, 1984), 96.
41. Some of the groups founded during this period were a new HUGL (Hispanic United Gays and Lesbians); BGLF; Las Buenas Amigas; ACT UP Latino; and in 1991, Latino Gay Men of New York.
42. Juan Flores, "The Latino Imaginary: Dimensions of Community and Identity," in *Tropicalizations. Transcultural Representations of Latinidad*, ed. Frances R. Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1997), 188.
43. It is too early to know if institutionalization will bring long-term benefits. One of the best characteristics of previous organizing efforts was that the voluntary nature of their commitment was very genuine. However, in this day and age, with most Latino queers holding jobs that do not give them flexibility and not being bearers of great personal wealth, this strategy may be the most logical and beneficial.
44. This issue was raised in a Christmas 1999 letter by Andrés Duque, the cyber connector of Mano a Mano, a coalition of several Latino lesbian and gay groups.
45. Latino community is a complex label, a bridge identity for a number of people sharing common heritage but who differ by class, ethnic composition, race, nationality, and time of arrival in the United States. In 1990 the distribution of Latinos was the following: 49.5 percent Puerto Rican, 19.1 percent Dominican, 4.9 percent Colombian, 4.5 percent Ecuadorean, 3.3 percent Cuban, 3.2 percent Mexican, 1.4 percent El Salvadorian, 1.3 percent Peruvian, 1.3 percent Honduran, and 0.5 percent Nicaraguan. Among Latinos, furthermore, social and economic indicators differ greatly.

46. It is beyond the scope of this work to enter into the debate around identities. The literature on Latino, queer, gay, and lesbian identity is extensive. We have argued elsewhere (Aponte-Parés and Merced, "Páginas Omitidas") that Latino gay identity remains an elusive identity, and is also a bridge identity. Nevertheless, all informants in this study identified themselves as Latino gays while maintaining the national identity as well.
47. Flores, "The Latino Imaginary," 185.
48. Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *inside/out. Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 19.
49. Frank Browning, "Sex, Pride, and Desire," *The Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 33.
50. In a longer version of this essay, I examine the development of Latino gay bars in Queens and the Bronx. Bars remain a major site of cultural representation in the Latino queer community.
51. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 110.
52. There is a vast literature on the cultural identity of Latino queers, and commenting on it lies beyond the scope of this paper. For two recent compilations, see David W. Foster, *Gay and Lesbian Themes in Latin American Writing* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991); and Emille L. Bergmann and Paul J. Smith, eds., *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995). For the past decade the production by Latino gay artists in the United States has increased significantly. At the national level there is Luis Alfaro, and in New York City there are many artists such as Jorge Merced, Arthur Aviles, Janet Astor, and so on who have chosen to integrate their artistic production with their gayness.
53. Martha Gever, "The Names We Give Ourselves," in *Out There. Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, ed. Richard Ferguson, Marta Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 192.
54. Orlando García, "Homosexuales en marcha," *El Diario/La Prensa*, 21 de marzo de 1991, p. 37. Bold added by author.
55. Words of an ad that appeared in the January 1995 edition of *HX* magazine. I do not have copies of the original but rather a reproduction that was utilized by Latino queers in their flyer calling for a demonstration on that same night.
56. The letter was signed by the executive director of the Hispanic AIDS Forum, Las Buenas Amigas, Latino Gay Men of New York, the NYC Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project (AVP), the editor of SIDAhora, and the Spanish Communications Committee of ACT UP. It was a major milestone. Those who signed were not always in agreement over many issues in both Latino and gay communities. However, the blatant homophobic leanings of *El Diario* led to a rare coalition of forces from the Latino gay, lesbian, and AIDS community leadership.
57. Subject 1 (name withheld), interview by the author, San Juan, Puerto Rico, January 8, 1998.
58. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 70.
59. Joe DeMarco, "Gay Racism," in *Black Men White Men*, ed. Michael J. Smith (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1983), 113.

60. Frank Gúzman, interview by the author, New York City, July 8 and 9, 1998.
61. Cornel West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," in *Out There. Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, ed. Richard Ferguson, Marta Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 29.
62. Gúzman, interview.
63. Videotape of Gay Network program, n.d.
64. Miss Guy, "Five Types of Men That Cannot Be Trusted," *Next*, February 13, 1998. The reaction to this latest publication of stereotypes has been well managed. Mano a Mano, a coalition of queer groups, has engaged in a concerted effort to eradicate the use of Latino stereotypes. After initial attempts to get the editors of the publication to publish an apology, Mano a Mano was able to get *LGNY*, a gay weekly, to publish their letter and pressure their white brothers to react. If *Next* continues to ignore the Latino queer community, Mano a Mano is ready to begin a boycott of commercial establishments that advertise in the weekly.
65. Marcuse, "Not Chaos, but Walls," 249.
66. *Ibid.*, 248.
67. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter, "Lost in Space: Queer Theory and Community Activism at the Fin-de-Millénaire," in *Queers in Space: Communities/Public Places/Sites of Resistance*, ed. Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette, and Yolanda Retter (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), 14.
68. Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," 20.
69. In 1972 COHLA attempted to march in the Puerto Rican Day Parade. Although unsuccessful, this attempt positioned the early *movimiento* into strategies and tactics to challenge for years to come the imagined community that Puerto Ricans and other Latinos held of themselves, as well as challenging the gay movement to link their struggle with the issues of people of color.
70. Louis Ortíz, interview by the author, New York City, August 12–14, 1998.
71. Arnaldo Meléndez, telephone interview by the author, September 11, 1998.
72. The Puerto Rican Association for Community Affairs is one of the oldest social service organizations of the Puerto Rican community. It is a multiservice agency serving all Latinos throughout New York City.
73. Ortíz, interview.
74. I am completing research on an essay to record this campaign for an essay, "Challenging Puerto Rican Politics: Richard Irizarry's 1992 Campaign for State Senate."
75. During that same summer there were three other gay Latino candidates running for office: Pedro Velázquez (a policeman and chairman of Gay Officers Action League), Antonio Pagán (who was outed by the *Village Voice*), and Joe Franco (a former Hispanic AIDS Forum employee). Except for Irizarry and Franco, none of the other candidates chose to link both identities in their public postures.

