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totaling an estimated $8000 (New York Times. February 15, 1976, Sunday, p 51 col 1).
23. Woodard & Mastin, 2005.
24. Glamour, Dec 2009.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Woodard & Mastin assert that the mammy's mother-work is rendered to the white family at a direct loss to the black family, specifically black children. As the *Vogue*, March 2009 article reveals, Mrs. Obama is concerned with ensuring that her girls make a seamless transition into their new life. To achieve this objective, she enlists the aid of her own mother Mrs. Marian Robinson (see *Essence*, May 2009).
29. Battle 2002: 654.
30. Ibid 658.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ulysee, 2009.
34. Gibbs, 2008.

RACE, HOMOSEXUALITY AND URBAN BOUNDARIES IN CHICAGO

A SHORT HISTORY OF BLACK HOMOSEXUALITY ON CHICAGO'S SOUTH SIDE, 1920-1985

Tristan Cabello
PhD Candidate, History
Northwestern University

Based on the on-line exhibit published by *Outhistory*[1] in June 2009 and my paper delivered at the conference "Gender and Sexuality" at DePaul University in January 2010,[2] this essay examines the history of African American homosexuals on Chicago's South Side from the end of the Great Migration to the early days of the AIDS epidemic. I seek to understand why, in spite of its visibility and political organization, Chicago's African American gay subculture transformed from a tolerated, racially-mixed culture into a group persecuted in both Chicago's African American community and white-dominated gay circles, evolving exclusively in racially and sexually segregated spaces beyond the urban boundaries of its "home" cultures. I will argue that Chicago's African American homosexuals constructed their own culture, sexual regimes, language, spaces and identity, within but in opposition to Chicago's mainstream African American community and white-dominated gay environments, which gave rise to tensions between these three entities.

The Emergence of Queer Networks in Bronzeville, 1920-1940

In 1920s Bronzeville, Chicago's African American neighborhood, a visible and well-accepted queer subculture emerged. From State Street to Cottage Grove Avenue, along 43rd and 47th Street, Bronzeville's commercialized and jazz-influenced urban culture offered African American gays and lesbians several venues where homosexuals and heterosexuals interacted across the color line (the Plantation Café, the Pleasure Inn, the Cabin Inn, Club DeLisa and Joe's Deluxe), yearly popular Halloween "Drag Balls" popularized by black gay hustler Alfred Finnie, semi-safe locations (the Wabash YMCA, The First Church of Deliverance, Washington Park, Jackson Park), and a "vice

district" which facilitated prostitution. Homosexuality was quietly accommodated. Bronzeville's most powerful inhabitants (Reverend Clarence Cobb, Reverend Mary G. Evans, and possibly Louise Smith Collier) and its most famous musicians (Tony Jackson, Rudy Richardson, Sippie Wallace, Frankie "Half-Pint" Jaxon, and George Hannah) were homosexuals. On the streets, working-class African American queers were also tolerated. Amateur drag entertainers were indeed respected because of their relatively well-paying jobs, which often enabled them to provide for their families' needs.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the activities of African-American homosexuals, major characters in the neighborhood's social and cultural life, had been discussed by sexologists, sociologists, academics, and journalists, all of whom described meticulously well-organized homosexual "communities." German sexologist Magnus Hirschfield was the first to discuss his encounters with African-American homosexuals in Chicago, in his numerous studies on homosexuality in American cities. In his book *Homosexuality in Men and Women*, the product of his research carried out in 1893, the sexologist discussed "an encounter with a Negro girl" who "turned out to be a male prostitute," thus establishing the first proof of queer life in Chicago's black community.[3] In the 1920s, Bronzeville counted a number of black newspapers such as *The Chicago Bee*, the *Chicago Whip* or the *Chicago Defender*,[4] which all often commented on homosexuals' presence in the Stroll, the main street of Bronzeville. The *Chicago Whip* column "Nosey Sees All Knows All," written under the pen name "Nosey," often discussed the lives of Bronzeville's homosexuals. In November 1919, Nosey, who was "out on Halloween Eve," had seen "the mother of six children," who "had on a pair of men's trousers, face covered with powder, with hair cut just like a woman."[5] While these descriptions attest to the visibility of queers on Chicago's South Side, and their relative acceptance; the writer does not appear to show hostility toward the people he described.

During the Great Migration, Bronzeville's homosexual population grew rapidly.[6] Like the millions of African-Americans who left behind the poverty and racism in the South for a more

stable life in the North, black homosexuals traveled to urban centers to find better-paying jobs, but also to take advantage of the opportunities for homosexual encounters, which they knew were often abundant in large cites. In an environment of relative sexual freedom, African-Americans in Bronzeville could establish relationships with members of the same sex, and these relationships were often accepted by the neighborhood authorities and by its residents. The anonymous nature of a large city allowed for discretion in regards to one's sexual life. The American urban reformers at the turn of the century were very much aware of how such anonymity allowed for the growth of "illicit sexual outlets." Chicago's "Chicago Vice Commission", a committee of urban moralists, issued a vice report in 1902 which delineated this problem:

> Although sexual behavior could be controlled in a small community, the situation is more difficult in a city the size of Chicago. Here an individual may, if he chooses, live any life he pleases, so far as his personal habits are concerned, and no one be the wiser.[7]

The "Vice District," at the intersection of 35th Street and State Street, had also motivated the migrants to move to Bronzeville.[8] Conrad Bentzen, a graduate student in Sociology at the University of Chicago, noted that blacks he interviewed for his research on homosexuals living in the "Vice District" "began gambling and visiting whorehouses," explaining that "the community in which they lived was infested with brothels, whorehouses, gambling, alcohol and drugs," which, according to the student, contributed to the emergence of non normative sexual preferences among young black boys. In this study, Bentzen concluded that Bronzeville's inhabitants were able to essentially "live the life they wished."[9]

Blues pianist Antony Jackson was one of the many homosexual migrants who left their native South to take advantage of Chicago's freedom. Born in New Orleans in 1876, Jackson spent his youth in saloons, gambling halls, and brothels in the black neighborhood of Storyville. Despite his great popularity as a musician, Jackson often complained about the tough homosexual life in New Orleans. In search of a place of residence more receptive to his music and sexual orientation, the

musician migrated to Chicago in 1908. Blues singer Jelly Roll Morton, a friend of the pianist, claimed that Jackson had migrated to Chicago because "he happened to be one of those gentlemen that a lot of people call [...] lady or sissy." According to Morton, Jackson "liked his freedom in Chicago," a freedom that included the ability to work full time in Bronzeville's most renowned cabarets, theaters, and cafés, as well as the possibility of encounters with men of similar sexual orientations.[10] In moving to Chicago, Tony Jackson transformed the work of other blues musicians who surrounded him, and as many homosexuals before and after him, the culture and social life of the neighborhood. Nonetheless, Jackson never discussed his own homosexuality publicly.

Along with several gay blues singers, masculine female blues singers enjoyed a great popularity in Bronzeville's cabarets in the twenties and thirties. Blues singers, such as Gladys Bentley, Alberta Hunter, and 'Ma' Rainey, often performed in Chicago and had recorded numerous sexually explicit songs that included descriptions of homosexual acts. The sissies and "bulldaggers" mentioned in the blues were ridiculed for their cross gender behavior, but neither shunned nor hated. In the famous tune "Boy in the Boat" for example, the author counseled, "When you see two women walking hand in hand, just shake your head and try to understand." In fact, the casualness toward sexuality, so common in the blues, sometimes extended to homosexual behavior. In "Sissy Man Blues," a traditional tune recorded by numerous male blues singers, the singer demanded, "If you can't bring a woman, bring me a sissy man." The blues reflected a culture that accepted sexuality, including homosexual behavior and identities, as a natural part of life.[11]

Many historians have analyzed the different "sexual systems" competing at the beginning of the twentieth century. In *Gay New York*, Historian George Chauncey argues that adherence to normative gender roles, more than the choice of actual female sexual partners, was the practice from which men derived their sense of masculine integrity during this period. Referring to the "fairies" and "pansies" who populated the streets of New York's working class in the first decades of the century, Chauncey claimed:

> The determinative criterion in the identification of men as fairies was not the extent of their same sex desire or activity, but rather the gender persona and status they assumed. It was only the men who assumed the sexual and other cultural roles ascribed to women who identified themselves and were identified by others as fairies... The fundamental division of male sexual actors, then, was not between "heterosexual" and "Homosexual" men, but between conventionally masculine males, who were regarded as men, and effeminate males, known as fairies or pansies, who were regarded as men as virtual women, or, more precisely, as members of a third sex that combined element of the male and female.[12]

Chauncey claimed also that "the transition from one sexual regime to the next was an uneven process," appearing first in the middle class and then "in much of European-American and African-American working class culture" - the transition from the system based on gender identities to the system opposing homosexual and heterosexual identities was not achieved until the mid-twentieth century.[13] Situated between these two sexual systems, Chicago's South Side queer population illustrated the dynamics and tensions of the transition process, allowing queer individuals and varied sexual desires to express themselves, and often to compete. In the South Side's black neighborhood, the transition between these two classifications did not follow a linear progression; the creation of new identities and sexual desires was intertwined with racial and class identities.

By the 1930s, black effeminate men had become a fixture of Chicago urban life and a legitimate subject for sociology research[14] University of Chicago Sociology Professor Ernest Burgess encouraged his students to incorporate homosexuals into their analyses of urban life. Student papers described frequent, casual encounters with African American gay men in the city. In an interview with a University of Chicago sociologist, Leo, a black homosexual, reported having read that "men who desired men were often effeminate." When introduced to Chicago's queer world, he claimed to have seen "boys dance together," calling each other "husband and wife" and several of them were "arguing about men." The terms that Leo used to

describe homosexuals – "Sissy" or "Nelly" - described gender characteristics.[15] This mix of gender identities crossed sexual orientations, often creating confusion. For example, Chicago journalist Frank Davis noted that female impersonator Mae West confused her fans because her feminine accessories did not allow one to forget her body built like a "boxer or football player." In a similar tone, Clarenz, a female impersonator at 101 Ranch, married Alberta Anderson. This confusion between sexual and gender identities confirms the tensions between the two competing systems. For some, gender identity was independent from sexual orientations, and for others they were connected.

The Making of an African American Gay Culture, 1940-1955

The Second World War's led to the emergence of a segregated African American queer subculture in Bronzeville. The migration of homosexuals to Chicago gave rise to an increase of North Side gay bars from which blacks were often excluded. Therefore, by the mid-forties, most of Bronzeville's former homo-friendly nightclubs had become exclusively African American gay clubs (example: The Kitty Kat Club). However, Bronzeville's upper class, seeking to improve the collective fate of African Americans by inculcating middle-class values among them led many gays and lesbians to be careful about acting on their sexuality. For example, Reverend Cobb was known to be gay and had sexual partners in many cities, but never publicly revealed his homosexuality. Working-class African American started to be ridiculed in the press and harassed in bars for their transgression of gender roles, rambunctious house parties and participation in public sex

In the forties, African-American queers took advantage of the freedom of expression they found in the South Side's cabarets, epicenters of non-normative sexual practices such as interracial relations, prostitution and homosexual relations. These cabarets, known as "black and Tans," naturally accommodated same-sex relations. As early as 1926, Jessie Binford, director of the Juvenile Protective Association, had spotted a group of homosexuals on the dance floor at the Plantation Café, a mainly heterosexual cabaret.[16] Racial mixing in these cabarets was

unexpected, as Chicago authorities, more alarmed by interracial sexual relations than homosexuality, carefully monitored such places. Police authorities, for example, requested that "the owners of black saloons [did] not allow whites to enter their saloons and that the owners of white saloons prevent[ed] black men from entering their establishments." Bronzeville's African-Americans were also particularly wary of interactions with whites. Races appeared to mix more freely in places where homosexuals were present. However, the North Siders who traveled to the South Side did so for very short periods of time. At the Pleasure Inn, on 505 East 31st Street, whites would come to hear Gloria Swanson until "the sun would hurt their eyes," and then "they would rush to take a taxi home."[17] This pseudo racial integration, which occurred within the framework of limited interactions between the two races in Bronzeville's cabarets, did not encourage communication and contact between the white and black homosexual networks. White homosexuals did not come to the South side out of solidarity for their African-American counterparts.

From the early 1920s to the late 1960s, the most visible queer individuals - female impersonators, effeminate men, and masculine lesbians - were also the neighborhood's most popular artists and entertainers. Female impersonators, for example, enjoyed a great popularity due to the "Drag Balls" organized every Halloween and New Year's Eve.[18] The official "approval" was made possible by the fact that the events regularly took place on Halloween and New Year's Eve, and thus for official purposes were able to pass as conventional masquerade balls. The first Chicago balls were also racially integrated, a fact frequently remarked upon by those who attended or wrote about them. Sociology student Myles Vollmer observed:

> Physically, all types are there. Homosexuals thin and wasted, others slender and with womanish curves, others overfed and lustfully fat. Most of the younger homosexuals have pallid complexions with rather thin hair, due, perhaps, to overindulgence. There is a preponderance of Jews and the Latin Nationalities, although homosexuality is no respecter of races. Many of the men are of Polish blood. Negros mingle freely with

> whites. There seemingly is not race distinction between them.[19]

One document describing a "Drag Ball" held by the "Goblins" at the Coliseum Annex on October 30, 1932, confirms that the crowd in attendance was quite diverse. Among the nearly 1,000 attendees, between 600 or 700 were mere spectators. Of the 100 attendees in costume, 25 were identified as lesbians. Of the 15 "colored" people, 10 were in costume. Female impersonators often held long careers in cabarets where they earned a good living. "Drag Balls," extremely popular on the South Side, were held in the neighborhood every Halloween and New Year's Eve.

The most famous of these Drag Balls were the first Finnie's balls, the first of which occurred in 1935, and were organized by a black gay street hustler and gambler named Alfred Finnie, in the basement of a tavern on the corner of 38th street and Michigan Avenue. Guests of the ball paid twenty-five cents to attend. Nancy Kelly, who went to his first Finnie's Ball in 1935, recalled that the event in its first years was relatively small. Until 1943, the ball was held up to five times annually at a number of different venues. As a famous female impersonator Nancy Kelly remembered, "they'd just pick out a random little shack you know. Decorate it, put up some balloons... and stuff like that. It was more homey."[20]

"Petite Swanson," a member of Valda Gray's famous troupe of female impersonators, was one of the numerous South Side queers who took advantage of the performance of her identity to achieve stardom. Swanson had made a name for herself in Chicago, where she did not hide her ambitions to "become a star." When Billboard announced in 1937 that Swanson had just been signed to the Sunbeam label, it put her on the road to fame. Yet she never compromised her identity as a female impersonator as the author of the Billboard article acknowledged that Swanson was "a fem impersonator whose real name (was) Alphonso Horsley." By clearly embracing her transgender identity (Marl Young, Sunbeam's owner, printed Swanson's real name right on the record label), Swanson - and many other drag queens - lived comfortably thanks to the night-lounge business and entertainment. During the Depression, professional drag entertainers like Lorenzo Banyard and Jacques

Cristion indeed stood out thanks to their relatively well-paying jobs. At Joe's Deluxe, female impersonators would be paid "$50 for a seven-day week and were assured of steady year-round work."[21] Nancy Kelly could earn up to forty dollars a night as a club dancer, compared to the mere twelve dollars a week he brought home from his job as a dishwasher at the Wabash YMCA.[22] In Bronzeville, female impersonators were very respected as entertainers. Theodore Jones, for instance, hired Valda Gray's troupe for an "honoring party" in October of 1938 and the Chicago Defender often cited them in articles, as legitimate entertainers beside musicians or dancers.[23] Many middle-class African-American heterosexuals saw the potential for financial reward in the presentation of black homosexuality.[24] The case of Joe Hughes, founder and director of Joe's Deluxe, illustrates this trend. In the late twenties, Hughes quit his job as a fur salesman and opened a tavern on Chicago's West Side with his cousin. A decade later, after witnessing the popularity of Chicago's Drag Balls, Hughes invested in a new venue at 5524 South State Street with the idea of staging a review of female impersonators.[25] "Joe's Deluxe" opened its doors in 1938 and enabled Hughes to preside over forty employees and soon to own the entire building in which the club operated. As a proof of Hughes' respectability, *Ebony Magazine* stated that they were friends with the Eddie 'Rochester' Andersons and Joe Louis, along with other celebrities, proving that black queer entertainment was recognized as financially rewarding but also a way to access the upper class. Several prominent upper-class African-Americans decided it was not disgraceful to sponsor homo-friendly events and make money from them, and Hughes, taking advantage of the powerful status that cabaret-owning had conferred him, had no problem advertising in the *Chicago Defender* and *Ebony Magazine*.[26]

Joe's Deluxe therefore quickly became Bronzeville's most popular homo-friendly nightclub in the late forties and early fifties, as DeLisa and the Cabin Inn declined in popularity and eventually closed. Famous female impersonators in the circuit, including "Petite Swanson" (Alphonso Hersley), "Dixie Lee" (Robert Beck), "Sandra" (Chester P. Frederick) and "Nancy Kelly" (Lorenzo Banyard) performed in this "impersonator's mecca," as a Chicago

Defender journalist claimed.[27] Valda Gray, the 1940s pioneer of drag shows on the South Side, served as producer of the popular review of four impersonation shows—all introduced by gay comedian Calla Donia—that were presented per night. As white northsiders visited the club less and less frequently, the crowd consisted mainly of black working-class and middle-class women and men. Heterosexuals attended the female impersonators' performances en masse but still outnumbered black queers in the audience.[28] Joe's success in the homo-friendly circuit allowed him to rise to the top of Bronzeville's hierarchy by being elected "Mayor of Bronzeville" in 1941, easily winning the election with 231,000 votes to 166,800 votes for his opponent, Mr. Roosevelt Phillips. By holding his "coming inaugural" at Joe's Deluxe, and presenting a female impersonator review that night, several members of the upper class enjoyed a homo-friendly event, drawing a new crowd to the club.[29]

While working-class homosexuals were fairly visible in the neighborhood, upper-class African American gays remained closeted. Commonly called "Preacher," Reverend Clarence Cobbs was the leader of the First Church of Deliverance, the most popular church in Bronzeville. While he never publicly revealed or discussed his homosexuality, neither did he hide it actively. Cobb's homosexuality was well known within the Bronzeville community: historian Timuel black claimed that "Cobbs was gay," adding that "everybody knew about it."[30] Bronzeville old-timers remember a choir filled with gay men and vacation trips that Cobb would take with his male "assistant;" which led historians such as Wallace Best to claim that Cobb "lived openly, yet silently." As Pearly Mae noted, the man was "more powerful that Harold Washington," as "he could bring the votes," and "politicians always spoke of him favorably."[31] Mary Evans, second pastor of the Cosmopolitan Community Church was also rumored to be a lesbian because of her relationship choices. Evans never married but had two long-term relationships with other women.

Civil Rights and Gay Identities in Bronzeville, 1955-1970

During the Civil Rights movement, African American gay men participated in several organizations that tolerated their sexuality if they were closeted, while African American lesbians who participated in several women's organization were accepted on the basis of their sexuality. Some black gay males had responsibilities in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Community and the Congress of Racial Equality. Many lesbians participated in the Chicago Women's Liberation Movement. Several male artists such as musician Billy Strayhorn or writer Williard Motley lived closeted lives. However, Lorraine Hansberry and Gwendolyn Brookes were more open about their sexuality. This discrimination led many African American gay men to migrate to the North Side while many African American lesbians remained on the South Side, explaining the development of African American lesbian bars, such as Maxine's, in the 1960s.

After 1950, the general discourse on homosexuality shifted in Chicago's black community. While homosexuals were accepted before 1950, they started to be ridiculed in the fifties. The articles published by the major black magazines, such as those produced by the Johnson Publishing Company, perfectly illustrated this trend. John Johnson had launched *Ebony Magazine* in 1945, a magazine that reached to all segments of the black population. Most of the stories relating to same sex sexuality in *Ebony Magazine* focused on Drag Balls, and were mostly laudatory, before 1950. In March 1948, *Ebony* wrote of the Drag Balls:

> The men who don silks, satins and laces for the yearly masquerades are as style-conscious as the women of a social club planning an annual charity affair or a society dowager selecting a debutante gown for her favorite daughter. Many of the men, some of whom are dress designers by profession, spend months and hundreds of dollars readying wardrobes for the one-night appearances before the public.

As the civil rights movement became popular in the 1950s, a campaign to regulate the sexuality of the working class was launched with the publication in *Ebony* of an article by Adam

Clayton Powell Jr, U.S. Congressman, entitled "Sex in the Church." Nine months after Powell's article, *Ebony* shifted its views on homosexuality with an article on Gladys Bentley. This article, titled "I am woman again," read that "like a great number of lost souls, Bentley inhabited the half shadow no-man's land which exists between the boundaries of the two sexes, she was a sad and lonely person and that she had found the love of real man."[32] From that moment on, *Ebony Magazine* and *Jet Magazine* replaced their articles on the Drag Balls with a "Family" section. John Johnson recalled that his decision to "play down sensationalism and sex" was compelled by the emergence of a new race consciousness. "The world was changing, and people wanted Ebony to be more serious" he remembered.[33]

The *Chicago Defender* soon followed the same trend. In 1957, the *Chicago Defender* announced that it would publish a series of articles on the "third sex," which cast aside its longstanding relationship with Bronzeville's queer community and female impersonators, and redefined the notion of homosexuality, describing it as a medical phenomenon that was both obscure and illegal. Edited by Alfred Duckett, these articles were published over a four-week period, beginning with the February 16th edition.[34] The aim was to provide "objective" information on homosexual culture, which was emerging in the United States during the 1950's, so as to help *Chicago Defender* readers form their own opinions. Duckett's research, which was the product of several weeks' devotion to the subject, focused on, according to him, "the tomes, volumes, books, studies, reports, surveys, and Biblical passages"[35] dealing with homosexuality. Duckett interviewed "psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, anthropologists, priests, and doctors,"[36] while closely examining the works of Freud, Proust, Kraft-Ebling, and Kinsey, as well as by "other boys, who, throughout history, had attempted to explain" homosexuality.[37]

The first article of the series appears to have forgotten the newspaper's long and historic relationship with the Bronzeville queer and female impersonator community, as well as the multitude of articles on African American drag queens from New York, Chicago, and Detroit that had appeared in the publication since its creation. This article relayed the first incidence of

homosexuality throughout history. Following a brief discussion of the Biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, the article focused on Greek and Roman history.[38] The following week, the *Chicago Defender* published the second article in the series, in which it defined homosexuality as a psychological condition exclusive to the white community.[39] The article concentrated mainly on homosexual personalities and reiterated the idea of homosexuality as an obscure notion. The main example, Oscar Wilde, was used to support Duckett's theory of a psychological disease. According to him, Wilde had become a homosexual only after the age of 35, following an unhappy marriage, and Wilde had attempted to escape the domination of his overbearing mother throughout his entire life.[40] Duckett saw this factor as the defining event in the formation of a homosexual identity, which was described as an exclusively white phenomenon, as no African American would fit this description. The *Chicago Defender* ignored the many artists it had supported during the previous decades, like Gladys Bentley, Alberta Hunter, Rudi Richardson, and George Hanna.

Gay Liberation and AIDS in Bronzeville, 1970-1985

In the sixties and the seventies, African American gays and lesbians had shaped a well-defined community with distinct spaces, codes, and language.[41] In Chicago, the neighborhood of Hyde Park, the South Shore, and the southern part of Grant Park became queer enclaves.[42] Clubs such as the "Kabbutz," or the "Jeffrey Pub," were staples in Chicago's African American gay bar culture.[43] Third World Studios of Chicago distributed a magazine devoted to African American gay males. Homosexuals had access to the local black media. As early as February 1978, talk show host Ouinda Lindsey, interviewed two black gay men about the challenges of being African American and gay, in her successful WFLD prime time talk show.[44]

African American and white gays and lesbians had however started to work in different political directions. Inspired by the Stonewall riots, a University of Chicago student named Henry Weimhoff, led the University of Chicago Gay Liberation Front. In February 1970, this campus organization had become

the Chicago Gay Liberation, organized a dance, and created Chicago's first Gay Pride Parade. The Chicago Gay Liberation movement had gained cultural exposure in spite of on-going tensions between blacks and whites. A black Caucus, which later became The Third World Gay Revolution, formed within the Chicago Gay Liberation to address the specific concerns of African American lesbians and gay men. By the early 1980s, three African American gay groups had developed: National Coalition of black Gays – Chicago Chapter (NCBG), Gentle Waves (Chicago's black Lesbian group) and the Committee of black Gay Men.

This activist split translated geographically and culturally. white gay communities and black gay communities did not mix as liberally as they had in the fifties and sixties, and evolved in different spaces, sometimes in strong opposition. Because of on-going racial tension, many LGBT organizations disappeared. When in 1983, the Gay and Lesbian Metropolitan Coalition of Chicago, an association regrouping LGBT community clubs, business organizations and religious groups, took up the issue of racial discrimination in gay bars, several representatives of gay businesses withdrew from the coalition. As a result, gay activists increasingly focused their energy on white gay racism.

Many African American LGBTs claimed that South Side activists did not respond to the early HIV epidemic. The historic reality is however different. Upon the Chicago black Gay Christian Conference, on December 10th 1982, David Wright, president of the Chicago Chapter of the National Coalition for black Gays, began offering HTLV education and prevention to Chicago's African American gay community. As early as September 1983, South Side activist Max Smith, launched an AIDS information program on the South Side of Chicago, organizing meetings dubbed "Health in the Gay Community" at Martin's Den, a black Gay bar, on 5600 South State street every Saturday afternoons. On Saturday September 10th, while 30 African American gay men and lesbians were present, an individual disclosed that he had been diagnosed with AIDS. A week late, another African American gay man, revealed he was infected with the HTLV virus; both took over these health workshops on the South Side, relating their experiences. This

small but strong grassroots support and activist system provided safe spaces available for AIDS patient to disclose their sexuality and their status, showing that gay activists had taken the epidemic seriously.

Mainstream local African American media had not wished, at first, to be involved in the fight against the AIDS epidemic. The *Chicago defender* and the *Chicago Metro News* refused to print news releases about the workshops, which led Jesse Jackson's Operation Push, NCBG and the Chicago Department of Health to present a case of discrimination against lesbians and gays by the local media.[45] This revealed to be a successful campaign. In September 1983, the African American radio network WVON broadcasted a five part series on AIDS, which featured an interview with a Howard Brown MD who explained the causes of HIV infection. The network also interviewed Tom Buscato, a man living with AIDS, who talked on HIV transmission risk to women from bisexual men and partners who abuse IV drugs.[46]

While grassroots gay activists were vocal at the beginning of the epidemic, non-affected segments of the community remained silent. In official obituaries, only the opportunistic infection AIDS patients died of was mentioned as the cause of their death; and many family members would keep the disease a secret. Ball dancer, Tommy Avant Guarde remembered that, in December 1984, when his best friend Corey died of an AIDS-related illness, his mother asked all of his friends not to disclose he had died of disease because "his father thought he had ancer."[47] This silence contributed to the rise of several rumors concerning people who were, or were not, infected with the virus in the neighborhood. In many ways, AIDS was the first tool to stigmatize LGBT individuals on the South Side of Chicago. One gay man remembers that "it was only after the AIDS that people were pointing at [him] in the streets, something changed at that time; many of my friend left for the North Side."[48] Other interviewees remember that some of their fellow churchgoers were thought to have the "package," a term used instead of the acronym AIDS.[49] The passing of several artists who were fixtures in the local African American gay community in the early eighties amplified this silent accommodation. While many Gay South

Siders knew choreographer Joseph Holmes or disco singer Keith Barrow had died of AIDS, their status was not revealed at the time of their deaths.

Conclusion

While the AIDS epidemic symbolized the last step in the marginalization process of LGBT individuals on the South Side, it also created a sense of division in Chicago's gay African American community. This was most relevant in the story of the Kupona Network group, an AIDS organization that worked with black institutions such as churches or schools in order to prevent HIV infection. In 1986, the Kupona Network divided into two factions, one merging with larger North Side white-dominated organizations and another one remaining on the South Side, to help African Americans infected with the virus. A member of the South Side division declared in the gay newspaper the *Windy City Times* that "larger gay agencies [would] never reach the black community because blacks [were] not a functioning part of these organizations and agencies and because most [were] located on the North Side, away from the majority of the black community."[50]

While queers were quietly accommodated in Bronzeville until the late forties, they gradually became more persecuted as their organization and visibility increased, to the point of being actively discriminated against in both white-dominated gay circles and in the African American community at large. The Civil Rights movement, the Gay Liberation Movement and the AIDS epidemic, the major events that fueled this progressive marginalization, led African Americans LGBTs to evolve beyond the urban boundaries of their home cultures in the 1980s, but also to segment their own community, either by aligning with larger North Side organizations or remaining on the South Side of Chicago, with their African American heterosexual counterparts.

Notes

1. See Tristan Cabello, "Queer Bronzeville," Outhistory.org, available at http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Queer_Bronzeville:An_Overview
2. "Gender and Sexuality: a one-day interdisciplinary workshop," DePaul University, January 29, 2010, Chicago, IL.
3. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Homosexuality in Men and Women* (New York : Prometheus Book, 1914) ; Jonathan Ned Katz, *Gay American History : Lesbians and Gay Men in the USA* (1972, New York: Meridan, 1992) 48.
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