

Surveilling Sylvia:

*histories of policing gender and
sexuality through the life of
sylvia rivera*



Sylvia Rivera at Christopher
Street Liberation Day, 1973.

Nicky Manlove (they/she)
nicky.manlove@gmail.com



photo by valerie schaff, 2000.

Sylvia Rivera (1951–2002)

“i still continue the struggle. i will struggle til the day i die and my main struggle right now is that my community will seek the rights that are justly ours... after all these years, the trans community is still at the back of the bus.”

— Sylvia Rivera,
speaking to the Latino Gay Men of New York (LGMNY), 2001.

**Police & prisons
violently enforce
homogenized
gender and sexual
expression by:**

terrorizing
non-normativity
in incarceration

EXPLICIT

criminalizing
non-normative
gender
expression

excluding
from legal
economies

IMPLICIT

endorsing
assimilationist
LGBT agendas

Exclusion from Legal Economies

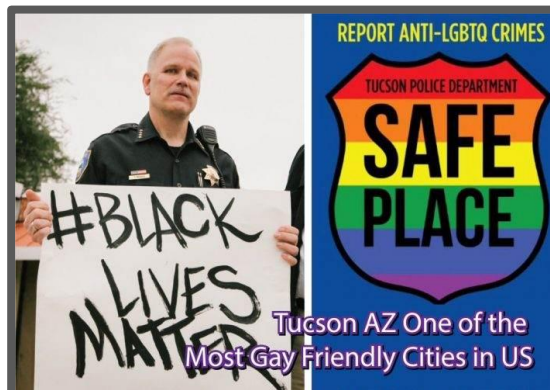


“Sylvia Rivera in front of fountain”
photo by kay tobin, new york
public library digital collections
(1970)

“before trans people sign on to what looks good about being recognized by law in ways that seem desirable (e.g., being added to anti-discrimination and hate crime laws), we have to strongly consider why those laws have failed to provide the change that many have hoped for”

— Dean Spade
in *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of the Law*

Endorsing Assimilationist LGBT Agendas I



Tucson AZ One of the Most Gay Friendly Cities in US

Endorsing Assimilationist LGBT Agendas II



Image by Micah Bazant; deanspade.net/projects/pinkwashing-exposed/

Criminalizing Non-normative Gender Expression



Terrorizing Non-Normativity in Incarceration

“As a non-op trans woman new to the carceral system... I imagined that after hearing me out, the officers, being of sound mind and judgement, would see the error of their ways and simply let me go. Instead, I was placed in community custody for twenty days. Community custody, according to one of the guards, was reserved for sex offenders, the mentally ill, and those with special needs.”

— Kalaniopua Young

**“From a Native *Trans* Daughter: Carceral Refusal, Settler Colonialism,
Re-routing the Roots of an Indigenous Abolitionist Imaginary,”
in *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*
(2015)**

Surveilling Sylvia:

*histories of policing gender and
sexuality through the life of
sylvia rivera*



Sylvia Rivera at Christopher
Street Liberation Day, 1973.

Nicky Manlove
nicky.manlove@gmail.com