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The Queerly Disadvantaged and the Making of San Francisco's War on Poverty, 1964–1967

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The sudden availability of funds through President Johnson's War on Poverty disrupted established social movements and urban politics; the very definition of minority changed as a result. In San Francisco, agitation for federal monies challenged existing understandings of who was or was not "disadvantaged" and hence eligible for assistance. Initially, the San Francisco Equal Opportunity Council defined disadvantage in terms of the ethnic minority status of certain neighborhoods, but organizers in the Tenderloin and South of Market areas fought for equal eligibility for their own constituencies, including white people disadvantaged by both poverty and their sexual orientation and gender identities. As a consequence, the geographic definition of minority groups was mapped anew. Among residents of these San Francisco neighborhoods, affinity groups who previously had not yet been considered minorities coalesced into a true minority constituency that for the first time was recognized as such by an entity of the state.

Key words: *poverty knowledge, San Francisco, sexuality, gender, race, community organizing*

"Something For All At Street Fair," proclaimed a June 1967 headline from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. According to the article that followed,

The street fair, which ended in a blast of electronic rock yesterday, was probably the only one in the city's history where a curious booth-goer could learn where to get a VD check-up, chat openly and without snickering about homosexuality, meet the neighborhood policeman, make plans for parenthood, eat barbecued chicken and ribs, find out what to do when you're arrested, watch kids finger-paint, read peace poetry by

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schoolchildren, shake hands with politicians, and end up dancing in the street.¹

This gathering of such disparate groups as homosexuals, children, public health workers, and police was not a spontaneous 1960s “happening” in Golden Gate Park. Rather, this was the Central City Street Fair, an all-day festival staged in the gritty blocks south of Market Street in San Francisco. The festival, moreover, was a culmination of several years of activity among ministers, gay activists, social workers, and community members who worked to draw attention to and propose remedies for the unique problems faced by residents of San Francisco’s Central City—a large area consisting of the neighborhood north of Market Street better known as the Tenderloin and the grid of streets in the mixed residential-industrial area south of Market Street.

The street fair was sponsored by the Central City Target Area, a neighborhood anti-poverty program funded through President Lyndon Johnson’s Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). The Central City Target Area, the subject of this article, was established in late May 1966 after a sometimes bruising contest that pitted insurgent community organizers in Central City against the city’s recently established anti-poverty and civil rights leadership. The process of agitating for the creation of a new local War on Poverty outpost inspired community organizers to examine the nature of disadvantage in San Francisco’s Central City, produce a new discourse explaining the origins of poverty and disadvantage among the denizens of that area of the city, and, through public pressure, coalition building, and applied research, convince a broad swath of the city’s leadership of the validity of their claims and the legitimacy of their ideas. The new poverty knowledge and the discourse it created emerged as the federal government made available to cities hundreds of millions of dollars to combat poverty—San Francisco gained access to \$3.5 million in the program’s first full year.² In San Francisco, as in other cities, the maneuvering and

1. Bob Graham, “Something For All At Street Fair,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 26, 1967.

2. “Community Action Means Opportunity,” Application to the Office of Economic Opportunity for funding under Title II-A of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (1965–1966 Federal Fiscal Year) by the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Inc., 1965, Government Documents, San Francisco Main Public Library (hereafter SF Main Library).

outright agitation for federal monies stirred some to speak who had previously remained silent, and a few of those voices offered compelling, challenging new ideas. As a result of this community organizing effort, a new understanding of poverty's origins and urban minority group identity was articulated and, to a large extent, ratified at the height of the Great Society, a critical juncture in the transformation of the U.S. welfare state.

The San Francisco Economic Opportunity Council (SFEOC), the local non-profit corporation chartered by the city and county of San Francisco to administer federal OEO funds, was established in September 1964, after the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act one month earlier.³ SFEOC leaders initially identified four impoverished areas of the city to receive the vast majority of the city's anti-poverty monies: the Western Addition, Hunter's Point, the Mission District, and Chinatown. Although the Central City neighborhoods of the Tenderloin and South of Market suffered from comparatively high incidences of unemployment, substandard housing, poor health indices, and families living below the poverty line, these two neighborhoods were not named "target areas" when the program began in 1964 and thus were not eligible for funds.⁴ Moreover, subsequent efforts in 1965 and early 1966 by community organizers in Central City to gain recognition and funds were rebuffed or rejected. Area organizer Rev. Edward Hansen remembered the exclusion "was wrong, unjust, that this Central City area had not been included as a target area for the anti-poverty program." Hansen, echoing a sentiment shared by many of his colleagues, concluded that "it was essential for the Central City area to be organized, to have a voice, to be able to

3. On the War on Poverty and other federal programs in San Francisco, see Ralph Kramer, *Participation of the Poor: Comparative Case Studies in the War on Poverty* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969); Frederick Wirt, *Power in the City: Decision-Making in San Francisco* (Berkeley, 1974); Allen Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York, 1984), 260–262; and John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, N.J., 1983). For a fascinating, if bombastic, account of power politics in San Francisco's War on Poverty, see Tom Wolfe, "Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers," in Wolfe, *Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (New York, 1970).

4. Although Central City residents and denizens would not benefit directly from Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) funds, some would have been able to receive services from already established providers, such as the Salvation Army and from the less well-funded city-wide anti-poverty programs. The bulk of OEO funds, however, went to the four target areas, leaving Central City underserved.

say, ‘Hey, there’s problems here too that need to be addressed.’”⁵ This article details the movement by Hansen and his fellow community organizers to create the Central City Target Area and to win official recognition for the area by the SFEOC. The community organizers managed to achieve this goal through an approach that included the related tasks of first drafting a new chapter in the history of poverty knowledge and a unique narrative explaining how and why Central City denizens were disadvantaged and subsequently agitating for recognition of the area by building relationships with the city’s political elite and inspiring neighborhood denizens to demand equal treatment by the anti-poverty establishment.⁶

The historical record points to several reasons why Central City was not included in the original group of four anti-poverty target areas. First, SFEOC leaders in San Francisco defined poverty as primarily race-based. The four neighborhoods initially designated as target areas were also the city’s widely recognized ethno-racial “ghettos.” Central City, by contrast, was almost entirely white and thus did not fit within the reigning racial definition of poverty. Second, the four original target areas had already been the site of a great deal of organizing; the community leaders in those neighborhoods had built organizations, established connections with civic leaders, and learned how to apply pressure to get what they wanted. The two neighborhoods comprising what became known as Central City were, by comparison, disorganized and without political connections. Third, additional poverty areas likely would have meant less funding for the original target areas. Finally, it was well known throughout San Francisco that not only was the race of the poor in Central City unlike the ethno-racial ghettos, but the social qualities of the poor too were distinct. In particular, many of the city’s homosexuals, impoverished elderly, abusers of drugs and alcohol, and young runaways and cast-outs made their homes there. These factors said to many in the anti-poverty establishment that people in the Tenderloin and South of Market, as victims of their own vices, did not deserve the same efforts made to assist

5. Rev. Ed Hansen interviewed by Martin Meeker, Aug. 4, 2009, Regional Oral History Office (hereafter ROHO), University of California, Berkeley.

6. In this article, I employ the term “denizen” to account for those who socialize, regularly visit, and/or work within the Central City area, in addition to those whom the census would count as official residents of the area.

those living in poverty due to a combination of racial discrimination and structural economic factors.

Discourses on urban poverty dominant at the beginning of the Great Society ran through and helped justify the exclusion of Central City by the anti-poverty establishment. Perhaps the most influential of these was Oscar Lewis's "culture of poverty" thesis.⁷ As presented in his book *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (1959), Lewis attributed the intractable persistence of poverty among racial minorities to the inculcation of a set of negative values "by the time slum children are age six or seven."⁸ Placing poverty so early in the life cycle of "slum children," Lewis's theory nearly essentialized poverty among racial minorities, arguing for the difficulty in breaking out of the cycle of poverty in which one grew up. When Daniel Patrick Moynihan popularized Lewis's thesis in his famous study *The Negro Family: A Case for Action* (1965), he also proposed that, if racial minority families incubated poverty, those same families must be fundamentally changed before the cycle could end. Addressing the black family in particular, Moynihan argued that the culture of poverty might be shattered and the attainment of middle-class status made more likely if such families took the form of cohesive, heterosexual units with male breadwinners and female homemakers. In San Francisco, the leaders of the SFEOC drew upon these and other ideas when identifying only neighborhoods in which ethno-racial minority families dominated, as opposed to all impoverished areas of the city. By excluding the areas of the city known not only for a majority white population but also for a substantial population of homosexuals and others who lived outside conventional nuclear families (and hence without a large percentage of conventional families that might be shored up or reformed), the framers of the SFEOC conformed in their thinking to a racialized poverty knowledge and

7. For more on poverty discourse and anti-poverty movements, see especially Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth Century U.S. History* (Princeton, N.J., 2001); O'Connor rightly points out that, while the "culture of poverty" thesis was influential, other—sometimes competing, sometimes compatible—ideas informed the public and professional poverty discourse in the early and mid-1960s. Also see James Patterson, *America's Struggle against Poverty, 1900–1980* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981).

8. Oscar Lewis quoted in William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago, 1987), 137.

proposed ameliorative programs strictly within a conventionally gendered, heterosexualized framework.

Whatever the reasons that establishment figures initially excluded and later rejected the naming of Central City as a target area (a full examination of those reasons is beyond the scope of this article), I argue that community organizers in Central City used this exclusion as an opportunity to study and then explain the unique form that disadvantage took in the Tenderloin and South of Market.⁹ The architects of Central City's bid for inclusion pioneered a new discourse on the origins of poverty that blended the culture of poverty thesis with earlier ideas, such as moral uplift, and newer ones, including the sociology of deviance and community-organizing approaches developed by Saul Alinsky.

The coalition of liberal ministers, gay activists, and Central City residents who worked together to produce a new poverty knowledge focused less on racial discrimination and cross-generational poverty, but much more on social isolation and its causes. Their ideas anticipated those developed by sociologist William Julius Wilson in *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987). Wilson sought to explain why poverty persisted and, in fact, worsened among urban African Americans even after the ameliorative programs of the 1960s and 1970s. Taking a critical view of Lewis's culture of poverty thesis, Wilson proposed "social isolation" as the central explanation for the persistence of poverty in the United States. Defining social isolation as a long-term "lack of contact or of sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent mainstream society," Wilson highlighted social and geographic isolation as preventing access to

9. This article joins with recent scholarship on Great Society liberalism that moves beyond an evaluation of the relative successes and failures of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. For examples of the success-or-failure approach, see Noel Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (Albany, N.Y., 2007); Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*; Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty* (New York, 1970); and Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York, 1994). For scholarship that moves beyond this analytic frame, see Robyn Muncy, "Coal-Fired Reforms: Social Citizenship, Dissident Miners, and the Great Society," *Journal of American History*, 96 (2009), 72–98; William Clayton, "The Barrios and the Ghettos Have Organized! Community Action, Political Acrimony, and the War on Poverty in San Antonio," *Journal of Urban History*, 28 (2002), 158–183; Nancy Naples, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work, and the War on Poverty* (New York, 1998); and Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East L.A.* (Norman, Okla., 2008).

quality education, good jobs, decent housing, and, importantly, role models who had access to all of the above.¹⁰ Wilson described those stuck in poverty due to social isolation as the “truly disadvantaged.”

As Central City’s advocates contended, many of the area’s residents had experienced profound discrimination due to their non-normative sexual and gender identities, often at the hands of families who rejected their children and forced them to fend for themselves; once rejected, they became refugees from the suburbs, accepted only in urban vice districts such as San Francisco’s Tenderloin. Although not disadvantaged because of the color of their skin, these social outcasts were nevertheless sequestered in urban slums where a lack of jobs, substandard housing, poor health indices, and isolation from family support and succor made them *queerly disadvantaged*. When the SFEOC acquiesced to the demands of community organizers and named Central City an anti-poverty target area, it endorsed this new conception of poverty, which identified the rejection of people with non-normative sexual and gender identities as one important factor in their isolation from the opportunities available to the citizenry at large.

The fact that federal dollars went to stage a counter-culture street fair in 1967 fits well within what scholars already know about the War on Poverty’s controversial Community Action Program, which in some cities was led by proponents of Black Power and other radical ideologies.¹¹ But the Central City Target Area reveals not merely another example of local activists pushing the boundaries of civil rights and social justice in the heady mid-1960s. Rather, the formation of the Central City Target Area offers a case study of how grass-roots activists and complicit local bureaucrats marshaled resources to garner federal support for programs that conflicted with the well-established gendered politics of the welfare state that prioritized male breadwinners, female dependents, and normative heterosexuality.¹²

10. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, 60. William Julius Wilson argued, further, that social isolation was primarily the result of large-scale economic processes, such as the migration of well-paying entry-level jobs from the inner cities to the suburbs. He placed greater emphasis on structural factors than did the organizers in the Tenderloin, who tended to see isolation as immediate and situational, having yet to clearly articulate ideas such as institutionalized homophobia.

11. Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*, 48–50.

12. On the development of gendered welfare policy in the United States, see Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890–1935*

Home to many of San Francisco's homosexuals, unattached elderly, and young runaways and cast-outs (many of whom were homosexual, transsexual, drug addicts, prostitutes, or some combination thereof), the population of Central City represented the polar opposite of the heterosexual nuclear family that politicians and activists across the spectrum of politics and race idealized. Nevertheless, the SFEOC came to fund programs directed at assisting this population to adapt to their circumstances rather than conform to mainstream norms and provided a broader civic legitimacy for the needs of these groups. Thus, the establishment of the Central City Target Area represents one of the first moments in which homosexuals and those who occupied a shared cultural terrain received benefits from the welfare state based on the factors that made them different from other citizens.

Historian Margot Canaday persuasively argued that from the time in the early twentieth century when the federal government began recognizing homosexuals and others who did not abide by sexual and gendered norms, bureaucrats simultaneously sought to limit their access to citizenship rights and responsibilities by, for example, barring them from entering the country or deeming them ineligible for military service.¹³ This establishment of a "straight state," in Canaday's words, was fully achieved during World War II. As soon as the straight state was established, however, activists sought to bend it by finding a way for non-heterosexual Americans to participate fully as citizens. A movement along these lines began in the 1940s as gays and lesbians who served in the armed forces challenged the Pentagon's punitive discharges. The effort twenty years later by community organizers in Central City to gain recognition reveals one important, albeit localized, chapter in this long effort to bend the straight state and award full

(Cambridge, Mass., 1994), and Barbara Nelson, "The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State," in Linda Gordon, ed., *Women, the State, and Welfare* (Madison, Wisc., 1990), 123–151; on gender in the War on Poverty, see Naples, *Grassroots Warriors*. On the importance of local politics to the broader context of national public policy and political culture, see Thomas Sugrue, "All Politics is Local: The Persistence of Localism in Twentieth-Century America," in Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton, N.J., 2003), 301–326.

13. See Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J., 2009), and David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago, 2004).

citizenship rights to those seen as queer. For half a century homosexuals, or people tainted by the brush of perversion or deviance, had been excluded from the civic sphere—including the responsibility to serve in the military, along with access to a host of rights such as Social Security survivor benefits. By mid-1966, then, the funds given to and administered by the Central City Target Area signaled an important moment in the movement to establish the viability and legitimacy of social relations within the welfare state beyond the conventionally gendered, heterosexual family norm.

Early advocacy among the queerly disadvantaged in San Francisco

The making of the Central City Target Area is a tale of a diverse group of individuals exploring the barriers they faced and articulating an understanding of why they suffered from poverty, chronic unemployment, and other ills such as alcoholism and drug abuse. In articulating the contours of disadvantage in Central City, these individuals produced new knowledge that at once cast poverty in non-racial terms and also explained that specific groups were disadvantaged not as individuals *per se* but, in part, because of their membership in groups isolated from the middle class and the mainstream, the adequately employed and the well-housed. The steps leading to this new understanding had local antecedents dating at least to the early 1950s when a fledgling gay rights movement established itself in San Francisco. That movement addressed the needs of men and women marginalized because of sexual and gender identities deemed pathological, sinful, or otherwise problematic by the population at large.¹⁴ The best-known organization of this era was the Mattachine Society,

14. On activism in the Tenderloin before 1966, see John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970* (Chicago, 1983), 193–195; Nan Alamilla Boyd, *Wide Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley, 2003); Martin Meeker, “Behind the Mask of Respectability: The Mattachine Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s–1960s,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10 (2001), 78–116; Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society, “MTF Transgender Activism in the Tenderloin and Beyond: Commentary and Interview with Elliot Blackstone,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 4 (1998), 349–372; James Sears, *Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation* (New York, 2006); and Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman, dirs., “Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria” (Independent Television Service/KQED-TV, 2005).

founded in Los Angeles in the early 1950s; it soon moved to San Francisco where it published a magazine, the *Mattachine Review*, and opened an office south of Market Street. Shortly after opening to the public, Mattachine Society leaders were inundated with pleas for help from a variety of people in San Francisco and beyond who were not adequately served by extant social, legal, and religious organizations. Mattachine employees and volunteers received letters from individuals incarcerated for violating obscenity statutes or running afoul of lewd-vagrancy laws. They fielded telephone calls from lonely homosexual men and women seeking a sympathetic minister or psychologist to help alleviate guilt or possibly nurture a sense of self-respect. They received visits from gay men and lesbians in search of landlords or employers who would not discriminate against homosexual tenants or employees.¹⁵

The Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, a lesbian organization based in San Francisco, espoused similar agendas and sought to improve the situation of homosexuals by creating change in the political sphere.¹⁶ Leaders of these organizations approached the principal voice of San Francisco's emerging liberal Democratic regime, Phillip Burton, and lobbied for public attention to the problems faced by homosexuals. Burton demurred initially, telling the activists that it would be political suicide to propose a gay rights agenda at that point—it was the early 1960s, and California still banned sexual relations between two members of the same sex. He did suggest, however, that the activists cultivate the clergy as an ally, much as the NAACP had done in the South during the 1940s and 1950s. The activists thought this an unrealistic notion at first, but they were willing to try, and, besides, the ranks of the ordained were changing markedly.¹⁷

Simultaneously, a progressive young minister named Ted McIlvenna was invited to join the staff of Glide Methodist Church

15. "Calling Shots," *Mattachine Review*, Jan. 1959, pp. 27–28. For more on the social service function on the Mattachine Society, see Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s–1970s* (Chicago, 2006), 68–76.

16. On the Daughters of Bilitis, see Marcia Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York, 2006).

17. Phyllis Lyon interviewed by Martin Meeker, Feb. 23, 2005, ROHO. On Phillip Burton and the gay community, see John Jacobs, *A Rage for Justice: The Passion and Politics of Phillip Burton* (Berkeley, 1995).

in the heart of the city's Tenderloin district.¹⁸ Under the leadership of Rev. Lewis Durham, Glide was undergoing a transformation from a dying inner-city white Protestant church to an activist congregation that would welcome marginalized people.¹⁹ While exploring the streets around the church, McIlvenna discovered the presence of a large number of young people, many homosexuals and some runaways, prostitutes, drug addicts, and those whom we might today call transgender.²⁰ To minister to and address the needs of this population, McIlvenna established the Young Adult Project at Glide Urban Center, the social service arm of the church. Recognizing that many Tenderloin denizens he encountered were homosexual, he also reached out to the leaders of the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis. As a result of these early conversations, McIlvenna played an instrumental role in convening a group of homosexual activists and Protestant clergy for a weekend-long "consultation," or conference, on the topic of homosexuality and the church.²¹

The consultation took place primarily in Marin County, north of San Francisco, late in May 1964, but it began with a Saturday evening tour of gay bars in San Francisco during which most of the attending clergy made their first forays into these central institutions of the gay world.²² The organizers wanted to initiate

18. See Hansen interviewed by Meeker, and Rev. Ted McIlvenna interviewed by Paul Gabriel, Sept. 26, 1996, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society (hereafter GLBT Historical Society).

19. Shortly after recruiting Rev. McIlvenna, Glide hired civil rights minister Cecil Williams, a native of Texas and graduate of the Southern Methodist University school of theology; Williams would go on to become a vocal proponent of liberal Christianity. See Cecil Williams, *I'm Alive: An Autobiography* (San Francisco, 1980).

20. The early and mid-1960s were a key moment in the historical consolidation of transsexual and transgender identities. While few of the youth in the Tenderloin would have called themselves "trans" at this point, some did identify as "hair fairies" or with other terms that linked homosexual orientation with non-normative gender behavior and presentation. For a key document produced during this shift and that helped further it, see Harry Benjamin, *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (New York, 1966); also see Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002).

21. On the weekend "consultation" and the subsequent establishment of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, see the document-packed website: LGBT Religious Archives Network, "Exhibit: The Council on Religion and the Homosexual," online at <http://www.lgbtran.org/Exhibits/CRH/Exhibit.aspx>, accessed May 15, 2011.

22. See Mill Valley retreat agenda, box 18, Lyon and Martin Papers, GLBT Historical Society, and Rev. Robert Cromeey interviewed by Martin Meeker, Feb. 12, March 13, 2007, ROHO.

a productive dialog between homosexuals and ministers leading, perhaps, to formal cooperation in the future. That formal relationship came with the establishment of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH) in early July 1964.²³ With the CRH operating out of the Glide Urban Center, the stage was set by the summer of 1964 for continued attention to civil and social problems faced by homosexuals, especially those who lived in or frequented the Central City area where the CRH and Glide, as well as several other homosexual organizations, focused their energies.

Race, ethnicity, and geography in San Francisco's War on Poverty

If one back story to the establishment of the Central City Target Area begins with "homophile" activists in the 1950s, the story proper dates to August 1964 when President Johnson signed the Economic Opportunity Act. Under Title II, the act called for the creation of Community Action Programs, or CAPS, to provide "services, assistance, and other activities of sufficient scope and size to give promise of progress toward the elimination of poverty."²⁴ Within a month, the Democratic mayor of San Francisco and former labor leader, John "Jack" Shelley, established the San Francisco Economic Opportunity Council (SFEOC) as the city's CAP, the non-profit corporation that would submit funding proposals and locally administer federal disbursements. In an effort to get community members involved directly in decision making about the use of War on Poverty funds and to adhere to program guidelines calling for the "maximum feasible participation" of the poor, the SFEOC proposed a geographic approach to disbursement of authority and, hence, monies.²⁵ The SFEOC's application to the OEO explained:

Billions of dollars of Federal, State, City and private monies have gone and continue to be used toward eliminating the social and economic

23. Minutes, box 9, Don Lucas Papers, GLBT Historical Society; also see "Clergy Shatter Another Taboo," *Christian Century*, Dec. 23, 1964, p. 1581.

24. "Economic Opportunity Act of 1964," *Pub.L.* 88-452, 78 *Stat.* 508, 42 U.S.C. § 2701.

25. Everett Brandon interviewed by Martin Meeker, Feb. 15, 2008, ROHO, and "Statement of Basic Principles of The Council of Economic Opportunity of San Francisco," Sept. 18, 1964, box 14, San Francisco Labor Council Records (hereafter Labor Council Records), Labor Archives and Research Center (hereafter Labor Archives).

conditions of poverty. The traditional methods of expending these funds have not been successful in their goal, and it is the firm belief of the [San Francisco] Economic Opportunity Council that the reason for lack of success . . . is the lack of real and meaningful participation of the recipients of these services in the determination of service programs and their implementation.²⁶

According to the SFEOC, then, the solution to this quandary, and the way to attain “maximum feasible participation,” was to create an “Area Development Program” with neighborhood-based outposts where most programs would be created and managed.²⁷

Although aimed at facilitating the maximum feasible participation by the poor, professional staff created these outposts and established the parameters in which the poor might participate in the programs.²⁸ In determining what sections of the city would be identified as poverty target areas, the SFEOC program administrators looked to census figures mapping income in San Francisco, but they also drew upon common sense and, ultimately, race-based notions of where the city’s poor were concentrated. An SFEOC report noted that initial studies identified eight “poverty pockets, consisting of over one-half of the census tracts where 33% or more of the families had incomes of less than \$4,000” or in which individuals had incomes of less than \$2,000 per annum—one federal definition of poverty.²⁹ But, according to civil rights leader and first SFEOC executive director Everett Brandon, a less precise conception of poverty also guided the administrators. He recalled that they based the creation of the target areas on

26. “Community Action Means Opportunity,” Application to the Office of Economic Opportunity for funding under Title II-A of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (1965–1966 Federal Fiscal Year) by the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Inc., 1965, Government Documents, SF Main Library.

27. *Ibid.* A geographic approach to combatting poverty was not an innovation of the 1960s, as precedents include, for example, the settlement house movement (see Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* [1910]), the Ford Foundation’s Gray Areas Program from the mid-1950s, and the subsequent federal Area Redevelopment Act of 1961. See Alice O’Connor, “Community Action, Urban Reform, and the Fight Against Poverty: The Ford Foundation’s Gray Areas Program,” *Journal of Urban History*, 22 (1996), 586–625.

28. Brandon interviewed by Meeker, and “Statement of Basic Principles of The Council of Economic Opportunity of San Francisco.”

29. “A Report to the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco on the Social and Economic Conditions in the Present Target Areas and on Designation of Prospective Target Areas,” Nov. 29, 1965, Government Documents, SF Main Library.

an understanding as to where the two black communities were [the Western Addition and Hunter's Point]. The Latino community was in [the] Mission, the Asian community was in the Chinatown area. So that was just a natural configuration. . . . And so it was pretty much established in the minds, I think, of public San Franciscans that these were the poverty target areas. I think it just was something that we naturally felt was the right nomenclature for identifying our places.³⁰

Historians continue to debate the degree to which Lyndon Johnson established the War on Poverty to provide economic opportunity for African Americans almost exclusively or whether the goal of the program was to combat poverty in a colorblind fashion. Scholars who argue for the latter look back to the program's origins in the administration of John F. Kennedy and his expressed interest in helping poor whites in Appalachia. Those who claim the program was intended mainly for African Americans point to Johnson's desire to defuse urban racial tensions.³¹ But the debate over the program's intended beneficiaries is beside the point, as the history of how various groups—black, white, Asian, Latino, urban, and rural—who engaged in sometimes vociferous, always contentious battles for funding clearly shows. Many African Americans believed the program was established to assist them in their goals, while other groups thought the program would help all ethno-racial minorities or, more broadly, all impoverished Americans, regardless of racial background.

This larger national debate occurred in San Francisco too. Yet, because of San Francisco's multiracial demographics, along with additional factors such as "deviant" sexuality and gender, the resulting discourse took a different form than in cities where the discussion was very clearly racially polarized. Due to the additional

30. Brandon interviewed by Meeker.

31. On origins of the program in the Kennedy administration, see Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, 1965), and Muncy, "Coal-Fired Reforms"; many cite the influence of Michael Harrington's study of Appalachian poverty, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York, 1962), on John F. Kennedy's thinking as well. On the War on Poverty as a program designed primarily to address black/white inequality, see Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*; Gareth Davies, *From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism* (Lawrence, Kans., 1996); and Clayson, "The Barrios and the Ghettos Have Organized!" The Ford Foundation "Gray Areas" program, which addressed both economic and racial inequality, was yet another source for the War on Poverty; see O'Connor, "Community Action, Urban Reform, and the Fight Against Poverty."

factors, what happened in San Francisco foreshadowed the multi-polar world that today defines urban politics. Still, in 1964 the combination of economic and ethno-racial factors at the base of the SFEOC's definition of poverty seemed like a "natural configuration," as did the determination of who would be considered poor and where poverty zones would be established. After all, African Americans knew from experience that residential segregation and employment discrimination were as real in San Francisco as in other cities. The ideal of a colorblind approach to addressing economic inequality, moreover, came in for scrutiny during the mass protests contesting the hiring practices of auto dealerships and hotels in San Francisco throughout 1963. These protests played a role in the appointment of the first African American to public office in the city and brought about the establishment of the city's Human Rights Commission. These gains demonstrated the relative power and cohesion of the city's black community and positioned leaders of that community to guide the poverty program come 1964.³² When Mayor Shelley appointed civil rights activists Everett Brandon as SFEOC executive director and Dr. Arthur Coleman as board chair, many in the city's black community considered the poverty program theirs.

But San Francisco had been a multiracial city from its inception as an instant metropolis during the Gold Rush, and other ethno-racial groups, particularly Mexican Americans and Chinese Americans, had also experienced historic patterns of residential and employment discrimination in the city. Very soon after it became apparent that the SFEOC was considering focusing primarily on the Western Addition, Hunter's Point, and, to a lesser extent, the Mission, community and religious leaders from Chinatown stepped forward and demanded inclusion in the program with their neighborhood recognized as an official target area too.³³

32. On the protests and the consequent establishment of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, see Daniel Crowe, *Prophets of Rage: The Black Freedom Struggle in San Francisco, 1945–1969* (New York, 2000). In addition, the majority of voters statewide sought to repeal fair housing legislation with the passage of the notorious Proposition 14 in 1964, leaving many black and anti-racist Californians convinced of the intransigence of white racism. On Proposition 14 in the San Francisco Bay Area, see Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J., 2003), 260–265.

33. On the Western Addition, Hunter's Point, and the Mission as the original target areas—to the exclusion of Chinatown—see "Statement of Basic Principles of

The process by which Chinatown gained inclusion appears to have been relatively quick and simple, accomplished between the circulation of SFEOC's initial statement in September 1964 and the submission of an application for a demonstration project in late December 1964.³⁴

The final grant application for the first funding year included four "poverty pockets," the aforementioned target areas of the Western Addition, Hunter's Point, the Mission, and Chinatown. Alongside statistics on income, racial and ethnic data dominated the official rationale provided for the establishment of each target area. The ethno-racial descriptions and demographic data largely followed what sociologist John Skrentny called the "official minority" categorization scheme of "Negro, Spanish American, American Indian, and Oriental" that was a standard feature of federal surveys and documents by the mid-1950s.³⁵ For example, the application noted that Chinatown was "described by the Census Bureau as 91% 'other non-white.' These individuals, 8465 in number, consisted principally of Chinese and Filipino citizens and aliens seeking citizenship status."³⁶ The same document characterized Hunter's Point as "a social island located [apart] from the mainstream of San Francisco by the confines of race, income, and location. Virtually all of its residents are Negro."³⁷ The document described the Western Addition in

The Council of Economic Opportunity of San Francisco." Also see Calvin Colt interviewed by Martin Meeker, July 8, 2009, ROHO.

34. See "Statement of Basic Principles of The Council of Economic Opportunity of San Francisco" and "Application for a Subcontract from the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco Under the Manpower Development and Training Act with Special Emphasis on Minority Group and Other Disadvantaged Applicants," Dec. 28, 1964, box 13, Labor Council Records.

35. See John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 85–142.

36. "Rationale for the Chinatown-North Beach Area Development Program Administration Budget," included in "Community Action Means Opportunity," Application to the Office of Economic Opportunity. The application noted that "the population served contains an extraordinarily large number of persons who have an additional barrier, that of non-fluency in English, to handicap them in their quest for employment and for the social services to which they are legally entitled"; it is apparent that non-fluency is a "handicap," in addition to non-white racial identity. On Chinatown, see Victor Nee, *Longtime Californ: A Documentary Study of an American Chinatown* (New York, 1981).

37. "Sociological Perspective on Hunters Point," in "Community Action Means Opportunity." On Hunter's Point, see Arthur Hippler, *Hunter's Point: A Black Ghetto* (New York, 1974).

racial but curiously middle-class terms as “the oldest Negro community in the City. Most Negro-owned and operated restaurants, businesses, and offices of professional people are located there.”³⁸ Only the Mission target area broke the direct race-to-place parallel by which the other neighborhoods were described while still defining the area in terms of its non-white ethno-racial diversity. The application noted that in the Mission “Spanish-speakers” predominated, with American Indians, Negroes, Filipinos, and Samoans also residing there.³⁹ Thus, SFEEOC administrators defined poverty through income but also foregrounded non-white racial identity as a key factor in the composition of a disadvantaged neighborhood. Among the areas studied by the SFEEOC, but excluded from the CAP applications, were four census tracts south of Market Street and five tracts in the Tenderloin in which a large percentage of the population lived below the poverty line but were also mostly white.⁴⁰ For many denizens of San Francisco’s Tenderloin and South of Market neighborhoods, this official exclusion from the target areas in 1964 felt like malign neglect—or, as Rev. Hansen put it, “wrong, unjust.” In response to this perceived neglect, the spirit of community organizing soon caught fire in what would become known as Central City.

Poverty research and community organizing in the Tenderloin

A diverse and rather unlikely mix of individuals representing a variety of groups collaborated to get their part of town recognized as a target area. Located in the heart of the Tenderloin, Glide Church was the locus of a good deal of organizing. Undergoing a period of radical change that included the recruiting of McIlvenna and

38. “The History and Description of the Western Addition Target Area,” in “Community Action Means Opportunity.” On the Western Addition, see Crowe, *Prophets of Rage*.

39. “Rationale for Budget Application for July 66 to Feb 67, the Mission Area Community Action Program,” Application to the Office of Economic Opportunity. On the Mission District, also see Tomás Francisco Sandoval, Jr., “Mission Stories, Latino Lives: The Making of San Francisco’s Latino Identity, 1945–1970” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2002).

40. Of the other three census areas not initially recognized as poverty zones, most areas were closely adjacent to the established target areas, and thus residents could obtain services within the established zones; it was anticipated that the original areas would expand into these neighboring areas, as Hunter’s Point soon included the Bayview District. Because of its geographic isolation and demographic differences, however, Central City advocates had good reason to fear it would remain unorganized and thus not served.

assisting in the founding of the gay rights organization Council on Religion and the Homosexual in 1964, Glide proved to be a key institution for individuals interested in combatting the problem of social marginalization. Rev. Fred Bird, Rev. Edward Hansen, and Mark Forrester worked alongside Durham and McIlvenna at Glide. All three men, who became active as Central City advocates, were white. Forrester was also a poor but politically active gay man who lived in a Central City residential hotel. Forrester's most notable achievement up to 1966 was his role in drafting "The Brief of Injustices"—a prescient 1965 document that enumerated ten "injustices" faced by homosexuals, including systematic employment discrimination and police harassment, and that, by extension, hypothesized a homosexual minority on a par with and in many ways comparable to ethno-racial minorities.⁴¹ Forrester also subscribed to Saul Alinsky's approach to community organizing and deserves credit as among the most vocal advocates of the Tenderloin in the 1960s.⁴² By the fall of 1965 Hansen, Bird, and Forrester were researching the problems faced by youth, young adults, and elderly who socialized on the streets and lived in the residential hotels of the Tenderloin.

These advocates quickly learned—or already knew—that the problem of poverty manifested neither in a broadly colorblind or a narrowly race-based fashion. These poverty researchers and community organizers studied the same census documents used by the SFEOC, along with reports authored by that group, and they found that the Tenderloin suffered from economic factors similar to and in some cases worse than the four established target areas. For example, a report produced in November 1965 stated that the number of families in the Tenderloin with income below the poverty line stood at 37 percent, and adult unemployment was at least 9 percent. These figures made the Tenderloin comparable to each of the four established target areas.⁴³ Even more striking,

41. The Brief is available in its entirety at: <http://www.lgbttrn.org/Exhibits/CRH/Room.aspx?RID=5&CID=24&AID=79&P=14>, accessed May 15, 2011.

42. On Mark Forrester, see Hansen interviewed by Meeker; Colt interviewed by Meeker.

43. These statistics and those that follow were drawn from the 1960 census and presented in "A Report to the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco on the Social and Economic Conditions in the Present Target Areas and on Designation of Prospective Target Areas" (Nov. 29, 1965), Documents Department, SF Main Library. For more on demographics in Central City, see "Central City Target Area Statistical Profile," Lucas Papers.

26 percent of Tenderloin residents were over the age of sixty-five, double the percentage in Chinatown, the target area statistically closest to the Tenderloin. Yet the report also made clear that only 6 percent of the Tenderloin population were members of ethno-racial minority groups, making the area lily white compared to the original four target areas, each of which, except the Mission, had minority populations of at least 70 percent. Moreover, numbers on family composition revealed the Tenderloin as a statistical outlier. For example, only 14 percent of the population lived within a family unit in the Tenderloin, in contrast to the four established target areas where an average of 23 percent of the population did.

Furthermore, only 2 percent of the permanent resident population was under the age of eighteen and a full 49 percent of those youth did not live with both parents. By contrast, in Hunter's Point 49 percent of the population was under eighteen, but 72 percent lived with both parents. These statistics charted something that the professionals working in the Tenderloin already knew: Although fewer children resided in the area, a large percentage of those who did live there did not have the support of traditional nuclear families. Critically, the census statistics largely missed the street youth who were transient and did not permanently reside in the area, as well as the presumably large number who had arrived in the socially volatile five years since the 1960 census. The statistics showed a neighborhood in need, but the area's organizers knew the statistics told only part of the story. The real nature of disadvantage in the Tenderloin required more research.

This research first appeared in a report circulated in late fall 1965 called "The White Ghetto," but, when published by Glide in February 1966, the title became *The Tenderloin Ghetto: The Young Reject in Our Society*. Notably, the report described the nature of disadvantage in the Tenderloin in a manner quite different from the ethno-racial terms used by the SFEOC to portray poverty in the original four target areas. The report began:

The Tenderloin . . . is notorious for prostitution, drunkenness, news-stands selling trashy pulp magazines, pimping, pill pushing, robbing and rolling, shoplifting, and other misbehavior. Within its borders are hamburger stands, numerous restaurants, bars (some of them "gay"), businesses, seedy hotels, and a few churches. . . . The clamor drowns out the distinctive

human sounds of individual persons. One is easily lost into anonymity—into loneliness—in the midst of crowds.⁴⁴

According to the report, once night fell, individual voices became audible and the distinctive human landscape of the area came into clear relief. The report revealed that the area housed “a community of some 30,000 people, among them a very large group of youth and young adults between the ages of 12 and 25 years, of every race, religion, creed and situation in life.” It further noted that many of these young people did not actually reside in the area, but instead arrived for the weekends, when they populated the streets by the thousands. Residents and visitors alike, the report claimed, were “mostly males” who “form a sub-culture that is generally ignored or condemned by middle-class oriented society”—a lightly veiled reference to homosexuals.⁴⁵

Illuminating what the statistical accounting of the area revealed, the authors contended, “The young person in the Tenderloin invariably comes from a deprived family background. A poor relationship with father or mother, a broken home, or no home at all is the rule rather than the exception.” The authors argued that one main reason for the shattered bond between parent and child was the latter’s sexual identity. Arguing that “sexual identification is also a major problem for the youth of the Tenderloin” and that “homosexual behavior is the most prominent,” the authors nevertheless found that their problems lay less in the fact of their sexuality but much more in the familial and societal rejection because of it.⁴⁶ As a result of this rejection, the youth turned to unhealthy pursuits, such as drugs, and they sought acceptance from their similarly troubled peers and from “Johns” who paid for their company.⁴⁷ Forrester, Hansen, and Bird—the authors of the report—concluded that, along with social workers and ministers willing to meet youth on their own terms, a

44. Rev. Edward Hansen, Mark Forrester, and Rev. Fred Bird, *The Tenderloin Ghetto: The Young Reject in Our Society* (San Francisco, 1966), 1. Also see Hansen’s short first-person account of making the rounds in the Tenderloin with “night minister” Rev. Don Stuart in fall 1965; “Night Ministry in the Tenderloin,” in the Ed Hansen Papers, GLBT Historical Society.

45. Hansen, Forrester, and Bird, *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, 1–2.

46. *Ibid.*, 3, 6.

47. Although the report directed attention to the problems of young, mostly homosexual men, it also briefly addressed female prostitution, “the young lesbian,” and “the single adult.”

larger service apparatus, including health, education, and legal services, was necessary. As refugees from abuse and broken homes, the youth also needed housing and assistance in finding jobs. The authors highlighted their needs with the observation that “for those youth who are not arrested there are essentially no services available which appeal to them.” The authors argued, “We are convinced that there is an urgent need for some sort of program directed toward helping these outcasts of society. . . . So we are working for the establishment of new programs which will utilize community resources to deal with the pressing problems encountered by the young people living in or frequenting the Tenderloin.” In phrasing likely designed to appeal to SFEOC administrators working under the dictum “maximum feasible participation,” the authors asserted, “As much as possible, the youth and young adults of the Tenderloin must be enabled to become spokesmen for their own needs; they must be intimately involved in the mechanics of proposing solutions and designing programs which meet their needs.”⁴⁸ With the publication of the *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, a stark picture of social isolation emerged, making the case for the legitimacy of need and for the creation of a fifth anti-poverty target area.

The research conducted by the SFEOC and the Tenderloin organizers offered comparable descriptions of economic marginalization in Central City and the four established target areas. The data also confirmed that the nature of poverty differed from one neighborhood to the next, both for those advocating for recognition of Central City as well as those opposed to it. The SFEOC’s organizing rationale for the four established areas posited that poverty came from a history of racial discrimination, recent immigrant status, and the costs associated with raising and educating children. To the advocates of Central City, the statistics demonstrated that poverty resulted largely from isolation from the economic and emotional support of a family and/or cohesive ethno-racial group. In other words, in the four established target areas, poverty took hold the more closely one was linked to a non-white ethno-racial minority group; in Central City, poverty became more pronounced the further one was isolated from the family and/or social group into which one was born.

48. Hansen, Forrester, and Bird, *The Tenderloin Ghetto*, 16, 2–3, 17.

Considering the importance placed on ethno-racial factors in determining the location of the original four target areas, one might expect that the residents and professionals fighting to get Central City recognized as the fifth target area would have directly challenged the race-based definition of poverty employed by the SFEOC. After all, a strictly colorblind approach using only income and employment statistics would have easily qualified Central City as a target area and would have placed the SFEOC in compliance with OEO program guidelines. But this did not happen. Instead, Central City activists took another approach—one that would have important repercussions not only for San Francisco's anti-poverty program but also for the articulation of urban minority politics in that city for decades to come. Rather than seeking to minimize the role of ethno-racial factors in defining poverty, activists in the Tenderloin and South of Market introduced social marginalization and individual isolation as key factors in the disadvantage of population groups, thus augmenting the mix of economic and ethno-racial factors already in play. By articulating the way in which the denizens of Central City too were disadvantaged, despite the white racial identity of the majority of the poor there, the activists also initiated a dialog on whether membership in a minority group was in fact the best way to determine who might be eligible for the ameliorative programs of the welfare state. The activists asked: Should not the impoverished, socially isolated, queerly disadvantaged denizens of Central City be eligible for government assistance too?

Creating the Central City Target Area

A cohort of community advocates and residents in the South of Market area attempted to gain access to SFEOC monies too. Unlike the Tenderloin, some small amount of SFEOC funds had been expended exploring the needs of South of Market residents. Calvin Colt, a white schoolteacher and lifelong San Francisco resident, was the first staff member and the interim director of the Mission Target Area. While serving in this position in mid-1965, Colt began examining problems in South of Market, the area he considered "San Francisco's oldest slum and its most impoverished area."⁴⁹ Colt connected with others serving this population,

49. Colt interviewed by Meeker.

including Sergeant Davey of the Salvation Army and Phyllis Edwards, the first ordained Episcopal “deaconess” in the United States. Together with a group of mostly elderly area residents, Colt, Davey, and Edwards began to develop plans to address the needs of South of Market residents with the notion that monies from the adjacent Mission Target Area would fund these projects. But, as Colt contended in an interview, activists from groups such as the Mexican American Political Association soon gained power in the Mission Target Area and replaced Colt with Latino former parole officer Alex Zermano as area director, based in part on their objections to Colt’s work among the largely white elderly population South of Market.

Recognizing their common cause, by early 1966 the community advocates in the Tenderloin, led by Forrester, joined forces with those in South of Market, led by Colt, to fight for the combined poverty area that was then named Central City. This group of ministers, social workers, and Tenderloin and South of Market residents worked intensely for about six months, fighting to right what they perceived to be a gross wrong: the exclusion of Central City from the War on Poverty. They first articulated this goal formally to the SFEOC executive committee on the evening of February 16, 1966. The advocates wanted the executive committee to accept their proposal and bring it before the full SFEOC board for a vote. But, as the *San Francisco Examiner* reported the following day, “The executive committee, somewhat taken aback by the proposal, decline to act immediately” and instead sent the proposal to the research subcommittee scheduled to report back in March with recommendations.⁵⁰ Central City advocates saw this as a stalling tactic and feared their work fated to a silent bureaucratic death. Not willing to sit quietly aside, they stepped up their community organizing efforts and sought to prove to the SFEOC leaders both that their cause was just and that they too could muster the kind of community pressure exerted by civil rights activists in the city-wide protests two years earlier.

50. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Feb. 16, 1966, Labor Council Records. For media coverage of the meeting, see Harry Johanesen, “Tenderloin Becomes a Target,” *San Francisco Examiner*, Feb. 16, 1966, and Johanesen, “Enlargement of S.F. Poverty War Urged,” in *ibid.*, Feb. 17, 1966, clippings from box 10, Mayor John Shelley Papers, Labor Archives. Also see Rev. Hansen to [?], Feb. 26, 1966, Hansen Papers.

Complicating their efforts, the *San Francisco Chronicle* printed an above-the-masthead headline roaring, “NEON SEX JUNGLE!” This article, along with several others, picked up on the sensational story of youth in the Tenderloin presented in the Glide report, albeit not necessarily in the manner the authors hoped.⁵¹ In language lifted from tabloid exposés, the front-page article began: “The Tenderloin district is teeming with boy and girl prostitutes to an extent that makes the Left Bank of Paris look like a Midwestern picnic ground.” Quoting both Glide’s *Tenderloin Ghetto* report and interviews with its authors, the *Chronicle* article aimed primarily to shock—to tell not only about the presence of male prostitutes, but also how young and numerous they were. The article did, however, communicate the report’s call for help, noting that it “strongly urged a more tolerant attitude from authorities” and advocated proposals for new services to assist the youth. A follow-up article contained interviews with a few of the young male prostitutes and, while still sensational, the second piece gave a human voice to the boys on the street too. It also made explicit what was more implicit in the Glide report and the first *Chronicle* article: The reason these young men were outsiders was that they were homosexual and, as a consequence, rejected by families and society at large. For example, nineteen-year-old Dan’s parents “know he is ‘gay.’” “‘My mother and father are ashamed of me,’ he said. ‘When I phoned them I was coming home they said, ‘Wear something decent—don’t come in looking like a fag.’”⁵² Yet, even as these articles

51. Donovan Bess, “Tenderloin’s Exiles of Sin,” in *San Francisco Chronicle*, Feb. 24, 1966, pp. 1, 14. See the follow-up coverage by Bess, “Stories of ‘Boys for Sale,’” in *ibid.*, March 2, 1966, p. 5. These articles were part of a frenzy of attention directed at the Tenderloin in 1965 and 1966. The Rev. Don Stuart, a Presbyterian minister, had been practicing for about six months as a night minister, largely working with and listening to homosexuals and others in the Tenderloin, when media reports began to circulate of this unique ministry that drew attention to the problems of the city’s “night people.” On Stuart’s night ministry, see James Hoffman, “Night Watch in San Francisco,” *Presbyterian Life*, Feb. 1, 1966, pp. 5–10; Sam Tamashiro, “The Night Minister,” *World Outlook*, clippings from the Night Minister Records, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, San Francisco. KRON-TV, the local NBC affiliate, aired a segment on the night minister’s work in the Tenderloin on March 14, 1966. Also see the memoir, Don Stuart, *I’m Listening as Fast as I Can: The Night Ministry in San Francisco* (Claremont, Calif., 2003).

52. Bess, “Stories of ‘Boys for Sale.’” Although the causes of poverty in the Tenderloin, along with the demographics of its poor, were much broader than homosexuality alone, at this point in the 1960s homosexuality was seen by the populace, and reflected by the media, as the most visible and pronounced manifestation of queerness. In other words, the foregrounding of homosexuality in this article merely follows the

raised awareness of social despair in the Tenderloin, the publicity also resulted in a police crackdown on the very youth whom the authors of the report wanted to help.⁵³

Although most articles failed to make the direct connection between the problems in Central City and the efforts to make it the fifth target area, other coverage reveals that the report and publicity campaign began to have the desired effect. In late February 1966, the *Chronicle* reported that powerful police chief Thomas Cahill backed the Central City cause, claiming that the police department was “really strapped” for personnel and, besides, was not adequately equipped to address the unique needs of the Tenderloin denizens. This time the newspaper reported that Hansen and his colleagues were prepared to “call on Mayor John F. Shelley today to seek his support for their campaign to get a fifth anti-poverty district established.”⁵⁴ A series of televised press conferences followed, and the proponents again emphasized their push to create a fifth target area.⁵⁵

The plan to enlist the mayor’s support made political sense, but it also was risky, considering Mayor Shelley’s strained relationship with SFEOC board members.⁵⁶ When Shelley established the SFEOC in August 1964, he created a nonprofit corporation that would have fifty board members, all of whom he would appoint. Although he made what he thought were astute political moves by appointing well-regarded African Americans to chair the board and to serve as its employed executive director, he wanted downtown businessmen well represented on the board too, arguing that such well-connected individuals could best create jobs for the city’s

dominant pattern in the 1960s whereby male homosexuals would often stand in for a much broader range of urban “deviance” including, but not limited to, lesbians, prostitutes, drug addicts, and those who today would be labeled transgender. On the representation of homosexuality in this era, see Meeker, *Contacts Desired*, esp. section II.

53. See “Cops, Vice and the Sorry Tenderloin,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, undated clipping [c. spring 1966] in the Hansen Papers. Police harassment of street youth continued, apparently unabated, for the duration of the 1960s; see, for example, George Gilbert, “Poverty Aide Rips into Blake’s Vice Campaign,” in *ibid.*, Aug. 25, 1967, and Stryker and Silverman, dirs., “Screaming Queens.”

54. Donovan Bess, “The Cops vs. City’s Sin Jungle,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Feb. 25, 1966, pp. 1, 24.

55. Hansen to [?], Feb. 26, 1966.

56. My account draws upon dozens of articles from the *Chronicle* and *Examiner* as well as that provided by Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*; also see Willie Thompson, *Enemy of the Poor: The Struggle of the War on Poverty in San Francisco* (San Francisco, 1965).

poor. Upon the heels of these appointments, however, an opposition group formed challenging Shelley's plans for keeping control of the program under the gilded dome of city hall. Calling themselves Citizens United Against Poverty (CUAP), this group consisted largely of the same black ministers and civil rights activists who had led the protests against hotels and auto dealerships in 1963. These activists demanded greater representation of the poor on the SFEOC board to ensure, according to a sociologist who studied the group, "the right of target area residents to review and veto programs; employment policies that would not exclude those lacking formal education and professional training; and majority representation of the poor on the executive committee of the EOC."⁵⁷ Cities across the country experienced such battles for control over War on Poverty boards and funds, but the strength of CUAP and the relative weakness of Shelley meant that, after a protracted battle, the mayor eventually capitulated in San Francisco.

When the board was reorganized in September 1965, the mayor had twenty-three appointees, and the original four target areas elected a majority with twenty-four board members; the target areas also received majority representation on the board's executive committee. With this change, the CUAP activists emerged victorious, and the mayor's reputation suffered a severe blow. Although impossible to determine precisely from the vantage of today, the mayor was probably primed to support the Central City insurgents because they too had been rebuffed by the powerful CUAP-affiliated leaders on the SFEOC board. So, when the mayor met with Hansen and his colleagues and verbally gave support to the creation of the Central City Target Area, the mayor likely had his eye on creating a new power bloc on the SFEOC board rather than on endorsing the legitimacy of claims made by those who were queerly disadvantaged in San Francisco. The effect, however, was the same: With this move, a big city mayor implicitly acknowledged that the disadvantaged in the Tenderloin and South of Market—including homosexuals, prostitutes, addicts, and the elderly—deserved anti-poverty aid and recognition as residents of a target area on a par with African Americans, Latinos, and Asians.

57. Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*, 29; on John Shelley's support for a new target area, also see Hansen to [?], Feb. 26, 1966.

Inspired to act by the findings of the Glide report and by the SFEOC's continued refusal to expand their working definition of poverty and to name Central City a target area, Forrester and Colt, along with dozens of supporters, formed two advocacy organizations in March 1966, the Tenderloin Committee and the Central City Citizens Council.⁵⁸ The relationship between these organizations was fluid and evolving, but clearly they shared many members and had a common agenda: namely, the establishment of the Central City Target Area. Its members envisioned the Central City Citizens Council (CCCC) as the administrative model for a future target area; in fact, its chairman, Colt, was hired as the area's first director once it was established that summer. The Tenderloin Committee, in contrast, focused more on the problems associated with the Tenderloin and sought to develop programs that might one day be funded by the SFEOC.

Between mid-February and late May advocates for the creation a new target area and those hoping to prevent it waged a contentious, vociferous, and lively battle, animated further by the ringside reporting of journalists feeding on images of Tenderloin denizens mau-mauing the anti-poverty establishment. Money, or lack thereof, motivated both sides. The residents and activists in Central City wanted what they considered a fair share of federal funds to fight poverty as it manifested in the Tenderloin and South of Market, but representatives of the established target areas resisted dividing a pie into five slices that previously had been divided into quarters. Although the SFEOC budget was increasing at this point, a fifth target area would mean a smaller percentage of funds would go to each area. Moreover, fiscal challenges were brewing as the escalation of the war in Vietnam corralled monies that might instead have gone to the other war—the War on Poverty.⁵⁹

58. On these two entities, see files in the series "Anti-Poverty Programs, 1962–1976," Lucas Papers; also see Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*, 54, 60. The Central City Citizens Council was initially called the North and South of Market Target Area Committee. Calvin Colt insisted that the name Central City Citizens Council was chosen for its alliterative qualities, not as an allusion to the racist white citizens councils in southern states; Colt interviewed by Meeker and Hansen interviewed by Meeker.

59. The public was aware of the likelihood of decreasing poverty funds; see "War on Poverty Funds Cut," *San Francisco Sun Reporter*, March 19, 1966, p. 7. Still, Colt and others argued that it was possible for additional funds to be secured to offset the decline in funds going to the four target areas should a fifth one be created. Fear of

Noticeably absent from this debate, as evidenced in newspaper accounts and meeting minutes of the day and oral history interviews since then, was a pronounced ideological dimension. Scholars have identified battles over different anti-poverty ideologies and community organizing strategies at the center of many similar debates within War on Poverty programs. However, in this debate, the record remained profoundly mute on ideology but rife with debates about the allocation of resources, focusing instead on who should have access to those resources, not on what might be done with resources once allocated. Thus, very little evidence suggests that leaders of the established poverty areas objected to Central City's community organizing model as a basis for rejecting their claims to resources.⁶⁰ In addition to the strict funding question, the more intractable and complex questions remained: Who constituted "the poor," what were the sources of disadvantage, and how should the SFEOC define poverty? By addressing these questions in *The Tenderloin Ghetto* report and in public forums thereafter, members and leaders of the Tenderloin Committee and the CCCC made their arguments supporting the creation of a fifth target area.

In early March George Choppelas, chair of the research committee of the SFEOC, reviewed arguments for the creation of a fifth target area. He presented his findings to the board's executive committee on March 16, recommending the "designation of the South of Market and East of Van Ness [the Tenderloin] as a fifth target area of the EOC," noting that his committee's recommendation was unanimous.⁶¹ The executive committee concurred that the recommendation would be presented to the full board the

smaller pieces of the pie, not to mention a shrinking pie itself, however, dominated the discussion. The foreseen cuts became a reality by mid-1966; see Harry Johanesen, "U.S. Slashes Poverty War Fund in City," *San Francisco Examiner*, July 20, 1966, and "A Storm Over S.F.'s Poverty War Cutback," in *ibid.*, Dec. 6, 1966, clippings found in box 10, Shelley Papers.

60. This is not to say that ideology, or at least ideologically infused language, was absent from battles within San Francisco's War on Poverty. The difference is that ideological discourse seemed to appear once funds were allocated for a target area, and then the debate raged about which faction best represented the area's poor residents. See Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*.

61. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, March 16, 1966, Labor Council Records. Also see SFEOC Committee on Research, "Recommendations for Definition of Target Area Boundaries and Expansion of the EOC Program to Include Additional Areas of the City," March 16,

following week. At this point, the decision became a time-sensitive matter, since March 31 was the deadline to seek new federal funding for target areas.⁶² Aware of this tight timetable, members of the Tenderloin Committee and the CCCC took their plans directly to the reigning boards of other decision-making bodies, especially soliciting the support of the original target area leaders. The board of the Mission Target Area voted unanimously to recommend Central City as a fifth target area immediately after a speech endorsing the idea by powerful Assemblyman John Burton.⁶³ In letters to the chairs of the Mission and Chinatown Target Area boards, Colt thanked those boards, noting, "Your support of the designation of the North and South of Market as a new target area . . . demonstrates to attackers of the San Francisco anti-poverty program that there is unity among the city's poor." He added, "Be assured that this [Central City Citizens] Council will demonstrate similar good neighborliness and concern for your problems and will support your efforts to overcome poverty."⁶⁴ In advance of the late March SFEOC board meeting, the advocates for Central City finally took their proposal to the powerful Western Addition Target Area board. Rev. Ed Hansen, who helped make the presentation, reported tersely soon after the meeting, "They didn't support us."⁶⁵

Even with support from the Mission and Chinatown Target Areas and from politicians from the moderate Mayor Shelley to the liberal Assemblyman John Burton, Central City advocates remained concerned that the SFEOC board would not vote in their favor. The Western Addition board had already made its opposition known, and the Hunter's Point board usually voted with the Western Addition. In preparation for the meeting, Colt informed his colleagues in Central City that "the constant opposition to funds from E.O.C. to the Tenderloin area is based on the

1966, box 14, in *ibid.* At this meeting, a letter from the Methodist United San Francisco Team was read endorsing the creation of the fifth target area too.

62. "Poverty Report Offered on S.F. Neighborhoods," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 3, 1966, box 10, Shelley Papers.

63. "Anti-Poverty Board Urges Joint Target," *San Francisco Examiner*, March 9, 1966, in *ibid.*; this article notes that Ed Anderson, "the Mission board's newly installed permanent chairman and a former resident of the Western Addition's poverty target area, tried to delay a vote on the resolution but was voted down."

64. Colt to Edward Anderson and Colt to Joseph Wong, March 18, 1966, both in Lucas Papers.

65. Rev. Ed Hansen to "Mom and Dad," March 27, 1966, Hansen Papers.

supposition that this area has no ‘numbers’ or ‘muscle.’” He encouraged all Central City advocates to attend the March SFEOC board meeting in a show of strength.⁶⁶ Colt specifically asked impoverished area residents to attend and to prepare protest signs with phrases such as “The Poor Are Rising in America” and “Stop Greed in EOC” in order to nudge and cajole the board to decide in their favor.⁶⁷

Despite the coalition building and the preparations for protest, the efforts failed. At the March meeting, the SFEOC board voted to reject the creation of a fifth anti-poverty target area. One reporter noted that “the council was so wary of the report, which contained the recommendation to create what would have been the City’s fifth official poverty target area, that it voted only to ‘receive’ [the report] rather than ‘accept’ it.”⁶⁸ Joseph Arington, SFEOC’s deputy director, attributed the vote largely to economics: “Because of the increasing costs of the war in Vietnam,” he explained, “War on Poverty allocations are expected to be held to present levels during the next fiscal year.”⁶⁹ But the racial and sexual dimensions were difficult to miss for anyone involved in the program or, especially, who attended the meeting. In his account of the board meeting, Hansen wrote, “We had nearly 100 residents of the area present for the total Economic Opportunities [*sic*] Council meeting in City Hall in [an] effort to push for a favorable vote on designation of our area for poverty funds. We knew that we had little chance of getting what we wanted and so we had also come prepared to demonstrate.” He added, “This council is controlled by the Negro

66. Minutes of the Tenderloin Committee, March 21, 1966, Lucas Papers. For an interesting take on gendered power politics in the SFEOC, which offers one reason why gay and transgender poverty “warriors” might have been sidelined, see Wolfe, “Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers.”

67. Minutes of the Tenderloin Committee, March 21, 1966. Rev. Hansen expanded on this notion: “The rest of the city, the elected representatives, members of the economic opportunities [*sic*] council concerned directly with human poverty, and all the others turn backs on these people [Tenderloin residents] and say ‘You haven’t got any political muscle so we will ignore you.’ Over and over again our pleas for immediate action to help these people are sneered at, our concern described as if we were foolish people who hadn’t learned to shut up when told to.” “Rev. Hansen Speaks on Redevelopment,” *Vector*, April 1966, pp. 7–8.

68. Harry Johanesen, “2 S.F. Areas Lose Poverty ‘Target’ Fight,” *San Francisco Examiner*, March 24, 1966, box 10, Shelley Papers.

69. *Ibid.*; also see “Tenderloin Loses—No Extension of Target Areas,” *San Francisco Sun-Reporter*, April 2, 1966, p. 3.

leadership of San Francisco, and they are very fearful of losing control so this works against us.”⁷⁰ Another observer remarked that Central City was rejected “because these were outcasts.”⁷¹ A journalist from the *Sun Reporter*, the most prestigious African American newspaper in the Bay Area, remarked on these factors too, noting that the demographic composition of Central City was at play, particularly with what were called the “peculiar problems which need specialized attention.” Rather primly, the reporter observed, “The teenage problems differ from other portions of the city because of the commercialism attached to the sexual relations in which teenagers engage.”⁷²

Just after the defeat, a group of mostly white Central City residents marched out of City Hall and protested the SFEOC vote with picket signs while singing “We Shall Overcome.” Rev. Hansen reported, “The Negro people sat quietly and watched us leave singing *their* song.”⁷³ The *Sun Reporter* noted that an hour after the adjournment of the meeting “the leaders of the downtown poor led their charges in a line which shuffled back and forth in front of the City Hall.”⁷⁴ The reporter speculated that the marchers were waiting for television news crews to appear, but the media apparently never showed, and the prospects for Central City appeared dim. The white racial composition of the area, combined with the non-normative sexual practices and gender identities of its residents, prevented many from viewing Central City as analogous to the neighborhoods populated by ethno-racial minorities—even as the denizens of Central City were thought by many, including some African American leaders, as disadvantaged. But the nature of disadvantage in Central City was seen as qualitatively and perhaps quantitatively different—both by Central City’s advocates and opponents—from that found in the ethno-racial “ghettos” already recognized as target areas. The difference was that the homosexuals and addicts, the youth and the elderly, were seen as *queerly disadvantaged*.

70. Hansen to “Mom and Dad,” March 27, 1966, and Hansen interviewed by Meeker.

71. Judge Herb Donaldson interview by Martin Meeker, Nov. 29, 2007, ROHO.

72. “Tenderloin Loses—No Extension of Target Areas.”

73. Hansen to “Mom and Dad,” March 27, 1966; emphasis in original. Also see Colt interviewed by Meeker.

74. “Tenderloin Loses—No Extension of Target Areas.”

Persistent, even zealous Central City advocates viewed the March rejection by the SFEOC board less as a defeat and more as a temporary setback. In an open letter following the vote, Colt declared, "We, the members of the Central City Citizens Council, protest and disavow the action of the SFEOC's Executive Committee." Colt asked why the SFEOC refused to recognize as poor these most impoverished San Francisco neighborhoods, questioning, "Is [the SFEOC] for all the poor, or is it simply to fund the political action of power groups? Is this a program which enables all the poor to lift themselves out of poverty, or is this program which further isolates men from one another in blocks of power built on hatred?"⁷⁵ In addition to direct appeals to the SFEOC, the CCCC appealed to the people of San Francisco and to the state and federal OEO offices. The Central City advocates also pursued alternative plans in the event that the SFEOC continued to refuse to establish a fifth target area. Forrester and others initiated non-profit incorporation for the Tenderloin Committee so that it could apply for government and foundation funding independent of the SFEOC.⁷⁶ The spirit of community organizing was clearly ignited in Central City, regardless of whether the local anti-poverty agency would recognize that community as such. Even more to the point, the organizations continued to pressure those in power and remarkably succeeded in lining up new support from within and outside the SFEOC.

Within days of the March meeting, board chairman Coleman, under continued pressure from the supporters of Central City, convened a closed-door meeting with Colt, Brandon, and Choppelas. At the meeting, the SFEOC leadership started to show signs of wavering by suggesting that Central City might be eligible for federal funds as a demonstration project, but the leaders stopped short of indicating that it would be made an official target area or that area leaders would be awarded seats on the SFEOC board. The CCCC recognized this as merely the offer of funds without the power to administer them. So Brandon reported back to the executive committee that the CCCC would not compromise and thus "not shift from their position demanding representation on the Council."⁷⁷ The two sides

75. Colt to the San Francisco Economic Opportunity Council, April 29, 1966, Lucas Papers.

76. Hansen to "Mom and Dad," April 28, 1966, Hansen Papers.

77. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, March 30, 1966, Labor Council Archives.

had reached an impasse, so Colt, Forrester, and their colleagues continued their organizing efforts. Colt called upon Harry Bridges, the renowned leader of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union with whom he had worked while in the Mission, for support. Colt remembered that Bridges supported the Central City organizing efforts largely because they were combatting entrenched interests and, in general, “giving them hell out there.”⁷⁸ They also continued to work with representatives from Chinatown and the Mission, as well as elected officials on the city Board of Supervisors. Beyond the reach of Colt and Forrester, internal strife in the Western Addition and Hunter’s Point distracted the leading opponents of Central City. Wilfred Ussery, the Western Addition area director, continued to have trouble maintaining control over his target area—a situation that developed in part due to the unprecedented investment he made in wages for community organizers.⁷⁹ In addition, Brandon fired Ussery’s lieutenant, Kenneth Simmons, on charges of “incompetence, abuse of professional trust, and undermining staff morale,” leading to further stress between headquarters and the Western Addition.⁸⁰

In this quickly changing landscape, with mounting pressure from forces external to the SFEOC and quickly diminishing internal cohesion among Central City’s opponents, the proposal again came up for a vote. On May 25, 1966, the multifarious tactics finally succeeded, and the SFEOC board voted in favor of establishing Central City as the fifth anti-poverty target area with votes from mayoral appointees and representatives from the Mission and Chinatown target areas. Harry Bridges, who attended the meeting, spoke soon after the vote and commended the board on its move.⁸¹ Standing against Central City and, by extension, the revised definition of poverty being presented, were representatives

78. Colt interviewed by Meeker; “S.F. Poverty Warriors Open Downtown Front,” *San Francisco Examiner*, May 26, 1966, box 10, Shelley Papers.

79. On conflicts within the Western Addition, see Ella Leffland, “Western Addition Official Fired,” *San Francisco Sun-Reporter*, May 14, 1966, p. 2; also see Natalie Becker and Marjorie Myhill, “Power and Participation in the San Francisco Community Action Program, 1964–1967,” Institute for Urban and Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley (Dec. 1967).

80. Brandon quoted in Becker and Myhill, “Power and Participation in the San Francisco Community Action Program,” 64. Also see “Shelley’s Anti-Poverty Programs” *The Spokesman* [Hunter’s Point], May 14, 1966, p. 1.

81. Minutes of the Meeting of the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, Inc., May 25, 1966, Labor Council Records. One week earlier the SFEOC executive committee had officially endorsed the move to establish Central City as the fifth target

from the Western Addition and Hunter's Point.⁸² Soon after the victory, Hansen wrote:

May 25th was really an exciting day for me this year. Besides being my birthday, it was the day the Economic Opportunity Council of S.F. decided to designate the Central City area of S.F. as the 5th target area for this poverty program in S.F. For months we had been working to get this to happen, and for months we had met delay after delay, and then finally . . . we received: designation as a target area, \$125,000 for area development, the go-ahead for an Interim Area Board, and the approval of no less than \$100,000 for future service programs.⁸³

Soon Colt was named first area director and Forrester was hired as a community organizer. The community-organizing process took nearly a year, but the unlikely coalition of Central City denizens finally showed that they did have muscle and numbers. Thus, they were able to reap the first harvests of the movement begun in the 1950s to direct attention to those in society who were queerly disadvantaged. In gaining recognition, the queerly disadvantaged denizens of Central City saw their movement and their understanding of poverty's origins in some manner legitimized by the state. Many of the same activists later built upon this tenuously held conception and sought further legitimization of the notion that disadvantaged groups need not all be defined as ethno-racial minorities.⁸⁴

Conclusion: The Central City Target Area

A full accounting of the projects undertaken by the Central City Target Area beginning in the second half of 1966 goes beyond the scope of this essay, but it is worth mentioning that, under

area. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, May 18, 1966, in *ibid.*

82. "S.F. Poverty Warriors Open Downtown Front," and Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*, 60. Kramer noted that the vote to designate Central City a target area was very close and split between the black-dominated boards and the Latino- and Asian-dominated boards.

83. Hansen to "Folks," May 30, 1966, Hansen Papers.

84. Evidence further suggests that this movement among Central City denizens opened the door for other groups to request their share of monies from the then-expanded welfare state. A *San Francisco Examiner* reporter added that once Central City had been established, others too stood up, including "Richard McKenzie, the Indian member of the EOC, to complain that the city's thousands of poverty-stricken Indians could not get jobs on the EOC staff" either. "S.F. Poverty Warriors Open Downtown Front."

the directorship of Colt and, later, Don Lucas, a gay man and former leader of the Mattachine Society, the target area pursued an agenda similar to that of the Mission and Chinatown, which emphasized both community organizing and the provision of services. This approach differed from Hunter's Point and, especially, the Western Addition, where nearly the entire budgets went to salaries for community organizers.⁸⁵ In keeping with OEO and SFEOC requirements, Central City achieved majority representation of the poor on its board, thus meeting the baseline "maximum feasible participation" goal of War on Poverty programs. Colt recruited a number of non-profit agency professionals to the board as well. Its main projects included the establishment of a Multi-Service Center as the clearinghouse for services and the administrative center for the target area; the funding of the Hospitality House in the Tenderloin, a twenty-four-hour drop-in service center for runaways and street youth, which exists to this day; and the purchase of a mobile health van, operated by "hippie doctor" Joel Fort, which brought medical services and education to the street.⁸⁶ Community empowerment was the touchstone of a few programs sponsored by Central City or developed in this context. One of the more visible was called Vanguard and was run by youth, mostly gay male, lesbian, transgender, or some mix thereof. Described by historian Susan Stryker as the nation's first gay liberation organization because of its militancy and adoption of New Left rhetoric, Vanguard also fit well within the framework of community action.⁸⁷ Not only did its publication provide a voice for a previously silent group of "outcasts," but it established a base from which that group could begin to agitate for rights and respect.

After the establishment of the Central City Target Area, the SFEOC vastly expanded the geographic footprint of the original four target areas so that about half of the city of San Francisco was covered within the five target areas by the end of 1966. For Central City, this meant that the entire South of Market area became part of the Central City Target Area. This factor meant that the

85. On the distribution of funds in the Western Addition, see Crowe, *Prophets of Rage*, 168–174, and Kramer, *Participation of the Poor*, 37–41.

86. See Joel Fort, M.D., interviewed by Caroline Crawford, 1991, 1992, and 1993, ROHO.

87. On Susan Stryker's reasoning, see Elizabeth Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950–1994* (Chicago, 2002), 62–63.

community served by Central City wound up vastly broader and more diverse than the homosexuals, elderly, and other “social outcasts” who had been at the center of the struggle to gain recognition in the first place. In particular, while the Tenderloin had a majority white population, the residential alleyways south of Market Street also housed Filipino families, and the small South Park neighborhood far from Market Street was largely African American.⁸⁸ Moreover, as two of the historic gateway neighborhoods in San Francisco, the Tenderloin and South of Market received much of the new wave of immigrants who arrived beginning in 1968 as a result of the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.⁸⁹ This meant that, in addition to groups like Vanguard and centers such as the Hospitality House targeting those who might be deemed queerly disadvantaged, Central City also eventually funded initiatives such as the South of Market Pappas Club, a social club and organizing base for Filipino youth. It was with this unlikely mix of Tenderloin and South of Market denizens, then, that we finally see all the diverse elements that went into staging the unique event that began this article, the Central City Street Fair of June 1967.

The Central City Target Area and the SFEOC unquestionably failed to solve the problem of poverty and social marginalization in the Tenderloin.⁹⁰ However, the movement to establish an anti-poverty outpost in San Francisco’s Central City was remarkable productive in other ways. Through the research and advocacy conducted by organizers such as Rev. Hansen and Mark Forrester, a new understanding of the origins of poverty emerged, which demonstrated that homosexuals and other social outcasts were disadvantaged not because they were sinners, criminals, or

88. For a brief introduction to the history of Filipinos in San Francisco, see James Sobredo, “From Manila Bay to Daly City: Filipinos in San Francisco” in James Brook, Chris Carlsson, and Nancy J. Peters, eds., *Reclaiming San Francisco: History, Politics, Culture* (San Francisco, 1998), 273–286.

89. On the origins and impact of this act, see Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, N.J., 2004), esp. 227–270.

90. On the Tenderloin in the 1970s, see the Tenderloin Ethnographic Research Project [authors Clark Taylor, Jr., and Toby Marotta], *Final Report of the Tenderloin Ethnographic Research Project* (San Francisco, 1977); on the neighborhood more recently, see Rob Waters and Wade Hudson, “The Tenderloin: What Makes a Neighborhood,” in Brook, Carlsson, and Peters, eds., *Reclaiming San Francisco*, 301–316; and Meredith Minkler, Sheryl Franz, and Robin Wechsler, “Social Support and Social Action Organizing in a ‘Grey Ghetto’: The Tenderloin Experience,” *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 25 (2005–2006), 49–61.

psychopaths—or, alternatively, members of a group that had experienced generations of racial discrimination. Rather, these individuals were sent into a life of disadvantage, often after being rejected by white, middle-class families, because of the unconventional sexual and gender identities and behaviors they adopted. The knowledge produced by community organizers showed that the rejected made their way into urban vice districts where they found tenuous acceptance from others like themselves, escape in the form of drugs and alcohol, and monetary support through the trade in sex and drugs. The organizers did not propose to shore up the conventional family, as was attempted in other contexts, but, rather, to facilitate the pursuit of new lives by the youth and young adults, away from disapproving families but also independent of the dangerous influences found on the streets and in the hotels of Central City.

The creation of the target area, moreover, was remarkably productive in helping to explain how city residents, community activists, and the clergy prepared San Francisco for the next phase of urban minority-group politics in which newly emergent groups would make claims on public resources and protections based on categories other than race, ethnicity, or religion. In San Francisco, they achieved remarkable success in gaining acceptance for such claims.⁹¹ This account of Central City provides the necessary background to understand, for example, why San Francisco, through its Board of Supervisors and Human Rights Commission, became the first city in the United States to pass a robust and enforceable ordinance banning discrimination on the basis of sex and sexual orientation as it did in 1972. After all, when the SFEOC bowed to pressure and named Central City a poverty zone on a par with the race-based target areas, it also gave a measure of legitimacy to the notion that other factors, such as sexuality, gender, and age, constituted a nexus of disadvantage and that those factors might even go into the making of minority identities and urban communities. Moreover, the story of the Central City Target Area provides insight into how transsexuals, a group just then coalescing around

91. On sexual orientation and the Human Rights Commission, see Martin Meeker, "Sexual Minorities, Rights Claims, and the San Francisco Human Rights Commission, 1964–1978," paper presented at the "Diversity in an International Context" Conference, Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California, Berkeley, Nov. 2, 2006.

non-normative gender identity, would also gain recognition as a minority group deserving of protection. As Susan Stryker has argued, a riot of transsexuals, street youth, and “hair fairies” in the Tenderloin in the summer of 1966, shortly after the establishment of Central City Target Area, provides evidence for how this process not only encouraged the urban power structure to recognize unconventional sources of disadvantage and the legitimacy of new groups, but how it helped members of those groups recognize their own legitimacy in the process.⁹²

The events of 1965 and 1966 demonstrate a key phase in the process by which impoverished groups not only sought to understand the nature of their disadvantage but also to establish their own legitimacy as groups deserving the welfare state’s protections. Yet embedded within this movement to seek state assistance is a cautionary tale that gets to the heart of not only what was accomplished during the War on Poverty but also the instances of misunderstanding that it bred. The San Francisco example demonstrates that many African Americans considered the War on Poverty theirs. Nevertheless, the dominant language of the War on Poverty was a race-neutral one that referred broadly to economic opportunity, not racial equality or uplift. The fact that other groups, including non-white ethno-racial minorities such as Chinese immigrants, as well as those I call the queerly disadvantaged, considered the War on Poverty theirs too should in retrospect come as no surprise. Thus, the initial focus on African American neighborhoods—the Western Addition and Hunter’s Point—to the exclusion of Chinatown, the Tenderloin, and South of Market fits well within what we know about Johnson’s program. Moreover, the fight waged by groups in those initially excluded areas for inclusion might also be expected.

What then comes as a surprise are the successful movements among non-black disadvantaged groups to gain inclusion in programs led by African Americans. Clearly, the Central City advocates achieved their success not by arguing for a direct analogy between racial minorities and other groups. Yes, the Central City advocates did make the case that the residents of the Tenderloin and South of Market were disadvantaged, but they also pointed out

92. See Gay and Lesbian Historical Society, “MTF Transgender Activism in the Tenderloin and Beyond.”

the ways in which the nature of that disadvantage differed.⁹³ The effort in Central City, featuring white homosexuals and transgenders, old-age pensioners and street youth, demonstrated that, quite unlike the racially disadvantaged people in the Western Addition and Hunter's Point, these people were queerly disadvantaged due to their isolation from the communities in which they were born; that despite their racial identities, these people found that middle-class status and white privilege were tenuous and might well be lost if they were cast out from their families and thus from middle-class America. The competition for OEO monies, then, brought differences among the poor into sharper contrast and shifted the discourse on poverty, the nature of disadvantage, and the scope of groups considered legitimate targets for the ameliorative programs of the welfare state in era of the Great Society.

93. This conclusion was also reached by the Urban League in the fall of 1966 when that organization issued guidelines for addressing different forms of poverty in each target area; see Dick Meister, "The Four Kinds of Poverty in S.F.," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Oct. 10, 1966, box 10, Shelley Papers. One might even find some application of this story to current debates considering the analogy between the black civil rights movement and the fight for homosexual equality, especially in relation to same-sex marriage and military service. On one hand, many have expressed frustration with the analogy, with some arguing that homosexuals "choose" their identity and thus the racial analogy does not apply, while others claim that the history of black enslavement and oppression makes their fight for equality different and more profound in most regards. On the other hand, many activists point out that homosexuals too have long suffered both *de facto* and *de jure* forms of discrimination and that the civil rights metaphor is meaningful historically and thus useful currently. I think that the history of the anti-poverty program in San Francisco serves to remind us that, while not all minority groups are disadvantaged in the same way, different forms of disadvantage nevertheless may result in very real patterns of social isolation, poverty, and discrimination that are equally worthy of ameliorative efforts.