

Being Gay in the KDP: Politics in a Filipino American Revolutionary Organization (1973 to 1986)

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“We were not extraordinary individuals, but rather,
we were individuals who lived during extraordinary times.”

—Bruce Occena
KDP National Executive Board

IT WAS 1978, AND 24-YEAR-OLD JAIME GEAGA was leading a planning meeting in Los Angeles for his organization’s annual demonstration commemorating Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos’s 1972 declaration of martial law. Every year on September 22nd, the KDP (*Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino* or the Union of Democratic Filipinos) held demonstrations at Philippine consulates across the United States to educate the public and pressure officials to denounce Marcos’s ongoing human rights violations.

Geaga’s political awareness had grown over the years. After moving to California from the Philippines when he was 11 years old, Geaga watched the Watts Riots on TV. He observed the growing politicization of his older brother and sister who joined anti-war protests and the Black Power movement, and his mother who took on leadership roles in the Filipina/o American community center, FACLA (Filipino American Community of Los Angeles). Before Geaga joined KDP in 1974, he had already been part of numerous Filipino American initiatives, including SIPA (Search to Involve Pilipino Americans) and the Far West Convention. By the time of the meeting, Geaga had returned to his hometown after two years on KDP’s Bay Area-based National Executive Board (NEB) and was back to head its Southern California Regional Executive Board.

As a young person in his early twenties, Geaga was also beginning to explore his sexuality. He recalls a poignant moment when his political responsibilities in KDP were interrupted by his emerging gay identity:

An activist who was in the regional executive board with me, [and I] were discussing planning for the September 22 anti-martial law demonstration in front of the consulate. You know, all of the details for the demonstration. The placards, the leafleting...And I was supposed to be leading that meeting. And she came up to me and said, “You did terrible leading this meeting. It’s like you were totally out of it.”... “Yeah, I was thinking about which bars I was going [to] tonight (laughs).”...So I think after that meeting, she called the NEB and made the recommendation—maybe Jaime would be better off in the Bay Area. I was already thinking of the PA [physician’s assistant] program, and I said, “Oh that’s perfect.” So I was strategizing myself.

According to KDP NEB leader Bruce Occena, there were many reasons that someone with Geaga’s experience and capabilities would be needed back in the Bay Area. Thus, KDP as an organization took Geaga’s sexual curiosity into account and offered him the chance to transfer back to the Bay Area chapter. By the 1970s, many young LGBT people moved to San Francisco, drawn to its promise of community. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to help Geaga explore his gay identity while enabling him to fulfill his responsibilities as a leader in KDP. If sent back to the Bay Area, Geaga would be able to return to school to pursue a physician’s assistant program. Like many of his comrades in the Left, Geaga had dropped out of college. Many thought the country was on the brink of revolution, and thus, pursuits of higher education fell second to the urgent demands of the time.

The fact that LGBT people could hold leadership positions in KDP was unique compared to other revolutionary nationalist organizations in the Third World Left, as it was the only Asian American organization in the 1970s that allowed gay or lesbian members. (Ordon 2000, 79) These gay and lesbian KDP members were as diverse as they were numerous, disrupting binary framings of LGBT people of color being forced to choose between their racial and sexual identities in 1970s revolutionary organizations. Though it is true that many activists in the Third World Left felt compelled to choose between these identities, Geaga did not. His story contradicts narratives of “martyrdom” that strip activists of agency and complex navigations in their decisions to “serve the people.”

This essay honors lesbian, gay, and bisexual¹ members of KDP by exploring how they thought about, negotiated, and expressed these emerging identities while maintaining political commitments in the KDP. It is this emotional labor that I argue propelled the KDP and their other organizations forward.² This essay also reveals how KDP members responded individually and organizationally and changed over time. While the AIDS crisis ultimately forced the KDP/Line of March to revise its thinking about sexuality’s relationship to Marxism, in assertive and subtle ways, LGBT Filipina/os in the KDP pushed its boundaries, challenging heteropatriarchy that pervaded the Third World Left and the conservative homophobia of the New Right.

Makibaka! Huwag Matakot!

On September 21, 1972, the president of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos, signed Proclamation 1081, declaring martial law. Leading up to his declaration were decades of rising mass discontent. Students, teachers, religious clergy, factory and office workers, and peasants protested Marcos’s corruption and role in the nation’s economic crisis. Under the banner of “national democracy,” the program of the new Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), established in 1968, pushed for the country’s freedom from foreign, particularly American, influences and economic control.

Martial law authorized the military and police to utilize tactics of torture, incarceration, and disappearances to quell any opposition. (McCoy 1999) With a total population of about 42 and 48 million between 1975-1980, scholars estimate that Marcos’s fourteen-year dictatorship led to over 3,000 extra-judicial killings, 35,000 torture victims, 70,000 incarcerated, and at least 750 activists who have not yet been found. (Philippine Statistics Authority 1983; McCoy 1999) Filipina/o revolutionaries creatively countered Marcos’s systematic control of the media and people, while Marcos painted protest and dissent as “threats to ‘peace and order.’”³ Under the rallying cry “*Makibaka! Huwag matakot!*” (“Struggle! Don’t be afraid!” in Filipino), self-proclaimed revolutionaries who sought to overthrow Marcos refused to let fear thwart their visions for justice. Even when forced to organize “underground,” their actions were vibrant and robust.⁴

The dangerous climate led an undetermined number of young activists to move to the United States in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵ Once there, Filipina/o immigrant activists did not leave behind their political convictions. They united with other concerned Filipina/o Americans and non-Filipina/os to create organizations like KDP.

Marcos’ martial law politicized most of KDP’s Filipina/o “nationals” (those born and raised in the Philippines). KDP members who were born and/or grew up in the United States learned the language of revolution in other ways. Through their participation in the anti-Vietnam War movement, the Third World Liberation Front’s demand for Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University), the Black, Brown, Red, and Yellow Power Movements; and exposure to anti-imperialist



Coalition Against the Marcos Dictatorship (Seattle, WA)
Photo courtesy of la Rodriguez

liberation struggles in Africa, Latin America, and other parts of Asia, future KDP members developed a consciousness against social injustice.

Many of KDP's American-born members were children of working class immigrant Filipina/o agricultural and salmon cannery workers, and World War II veterans, who had moved to the U.S. in the 1930s to 1950s and raised families in Hawaii, California, and Washington.⁶ While most of their parents held "cautious and conservative" political views, some were fiercely radical. Both responses arose from decades of exposure to racism, labor exploitation, as well as successful trade union organizing.

KDP: A Brief History (1973-1986)

The Kalayaan Collective

In 1971, a group of Filipina/o American radicals and immigrant activists from the Philippines founded the Kalayaan Collective in San Francisco. (Cruz et al. 2017, 8) Kalayaan through its newspaper, "*Kalayaan*" "articulated the antiracist and anti-imperialist perspectives of the [Filipino] identity movement and called on Filipino Americans to support the revolutionary armed struggle in the Philippines." (Cruz et al. 2017, 8) Amidst "growing political tensions in the Philippines, heightened further by Marcos's suspension of the writ of habeas corpus," Kalayaan organized a conference in San Francisco in 1972 to establish a national anti-imperialist network. Unbeknownst to the group, Marcos would declare martial law just as the conference was beginning.

National Committee for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines (NCRCLP)

The conference positioned Kalayaan and its allies to efficiently launch what they named the National Committee for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines (NCRCLP), with chapters in major cities across the country. Most of the NCRCLP saw the need to consolidate an anti-Marcos Left, which differentiated itself from the anti-communist anti-Marcos movement.⁷ According to Rene Ciria Cruz, one of the founding and national leaders of the KDP, NCRCLP's activists consulted with key leaders of the Philippine Left underground and moved to "lay the groundwork for a national revolutionary organization that would bring together, train, and guide the most progressive and militant elements of the Filipino community."⁸ (Cruz et al. 2017, 9) And so, the KDP was founded in July of 1973 in the Santa Cruz Mountains, almost one year after Marcos had declared martial law.

Leadership Structure

In thirteen years, KDP built nine chapters in cities across the United States, from New York City to Guam to Chicago. At the helm of its centralized leadership structure was a nine-member National Council, whose National Executive Board based in the Bay Area, provided day-to-day leadership. Other leaders headed Regional and Chapter Executive Boards. Like other leftist groups, the KDP practiced democratic centralism, which allowed them to facilitate a sustained, productive, and organized flow of political activity.⁹

Theoretical Training

One of the cornerstones to KDP's work was its theoretical training, led by its National Education Commission, which planned and coordinated theoretical studies and summer schools for activists. KDP's newspaper *Ang Katipunan* and cultural group *Sining Bayan*'s frequent and nationally toured theatrical productions created the illusion that KDP's membership was much higher than its actual 150-200 total active membership.¹⁰ KDP created and facilitated numerous solidarity groups, including IAFP (International Association of Filipino Patriots), its Canadian counterpart with chapters in Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto.¹¹ It also sought to align theory with practice, with some of its members living in housing collectives and implementing a shared childcare system.

The KDP utilized what it called a “dual line” approach. Its objectives were to promote socialism in the United States, which guided KDP’s local campaigns, and to support the movement for national democracy in the Philippines. After facilitating the creation of an anti-martial law coordinating committee at a conference in Chicago in 1974, the KDP led the formation of the Anti-Martial Law Coalition (AMLC), which launched in 1975. (Gaerlan 2003) In coordination with other groups in the AMLC, the KDP educated the American public about the ongoing situation in the Philippines and worked with Friends of the Filipino People (FFP) to pressure the U.S. government to end its aid to the Marcos government.¹² After the KDP split with FFP in 1980, KDP established its own lobbying initiatives under the Philippine Solidarity Network (PSN) and Congress Task Force (CTF), starting in 1980. (National Coordinator 1980)

Labor, Housing, Education Struggles in the U.S.

Among its campaigns, KDP, alongside other groups, fought for bilingual education in schools and labor reforms for Filipina/o medical professionals at risk for deportation.¹³ Its Chicago chapter spearheaded a justice campaign for Filipina Narciso and Leonora Perez, two Filipina immigrant nurses accused of murder in Michigan. The Seattle chapter fought for labor reforms for Filipino, Black, and Native American cannery workers (many of its members were part of the Alaska Cannery Workers Association Local 37). In San Francisco, KDP was one of many groups who led an almost decade-long fight, from 1968 to 1977, to stop forced evictions of elderly Asian Americans living in the International Hotel. (Choy 2003; Domingo 2010; Habal 2007)

Justice for Domingo and Viernes

KDP’s work was both dynamic and sobering. Like other organizations, KDP experienced heavy state surveillance by the U.S. and Philippine governments. On June 1, 1981, these risks took on new meaning when two of their members were murdered. Gene Viernes and Silme Domingo, both 29 years old, were shot to death in broad daylight in downtown Seattle.¹⁴ The KDP quickly sprung to action and organized the Committee for Justice for Domingo and Viernes (CJDV). The CJDV argued that the men were killed in retaliation for their anti-Marcos and international labor organizing.¹⁵ In 1989, a federal jury agreed and found Marcos guilty.¹⁶ It was a landmark case, and the first time that a foreign head of state had been tried in a U.S. court and found responsible for the assassination of U.S. citizens.¹⁷

KDP Dissolves

By the time KDP formally dissolved, it had already transferred many of its members to the Line of March, a multi-racial pre-party Marxist-Leninist formation that sought to rectify the mistakes of the Communist Party USA.¹⁸ Its protracted split with the Philippine Left, which happened formally in 1986, impacted KDP’s ability to continue its Philippines solidarity work.¹⁹ After the end of the Vietnam War came what Cruz calls Reagan’s “counterrevolution” against civil rights reforms, and the decline of the U.S. Left as the fall of socialism in the Soviet Union approached. Cruz contends, “Alienated from the main body of the Philippine Left and unmoored by the collapse for the socialist paradigm, the remaining members of the KDP finally voted to disband the organization in 1986.”²⁰ After Marcos was ousted in 1986, many members continued Philippines [solidarity] work through KDP’s coalition group CAMDI (Coalition to Advance the Movement for Democracy and Independence).²¹

By the time the KDP formed in 1973, a gay liberation and “sexual identity” movement had also emerged. In 1966, the Compton’s Cafeteria riot, which Susan Stryker refers to as “the first collective, organized queer resistance to police harassment in U.S. history,” occurred in San Francisco. (2008, 64-65) Three years later, the Stonewall riots in New York’s Greenwich Village erupted in response to a police raid that targeted trans patrons of color, leading to the formation of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). (Hobson 2016, 25-26)

Meanwhile, “a small but growing number of men” had begun linking their anti-war and gay identities. (Hobson 2016, 28) Using the Vietnam War draft lottery, the U.S. government had conducted mass discrimination against any men suspected of homosexual tendencies. (Hobson 2016, 28) They utilized tactics similar to those employed by U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s. Known as the “Lavender Scare,” McCarthy hunted down and fired government employees suspected of being gay under the pretense of anti-communism during the Cold War. (Hobson 2016, 29; Johnson 2004)

At the time, the Gay Liberation Movement was still primarily white and focused on issues of police harassment, anti-gay laws, and military inclusion.²² As most future LGBT members of KDP were not out yet, the racial and class politics of the Third World Left attracted them instead. Further complicating their relationship to homosexuality was a pervasive message in the Third World Left: that homosexuality was a “social pathology” reflecting “left-over bourgeois decadence.” (Ordone 2000, 88-89)

In the Third World Left: Homosexuality as “Bourgeois Decadence”

In her ground breaking dissertation, “Coming out Together: An Ethnohistory of the Asian and Pacific Islander Queer Women’s and Transgendered People’s Movement of San Francisco,” Trinity Ordone explains that most radicals of color were drawn to Maoist thought in the 1960s and 1970s. During the Cultural Revolution, the Communist Party of China viewed homosexuality as “bourgeois decadence,” and according to Mao, “Like prostitution and pornography, [homosexuality] would disappear with the advance of socialism.” (Ordone 2000, 88)

Many gay and straight radicals of the Third World Left adopted this thinking. One of Ordone’s interviewees, Sylvia (Syl) Savellano, remembers living a “double life” in the late 1960s. According to Ordone, Savellano was “heterosexual in the Asian American Movement during the day and a ‘deviant’ at night in dance clubs.” (2000, 92) Contrary to stereotypes of homophobic immigrant households, it was easier for Savellano to come out to her Filipina/o immigrant family than to her friends in the Asian American Movement. After Savellano’s trip to Cuba on the Venceremos Brigade in 1970, her fears of coming out worsened:

It was isolating. It was a quiet thing. I could not tell anybody. Any inclinations, I had to can it. I had to dance with a guy and yet be attracted to a woman. ‘Looky-loo, but not speak.’ You could see, but not use your hands or mouth... (Ordone 2000, 92)

The Cuban Revolution’s position on homosexuality also greatly influenced the Third World Left. The first Venceremos (We Shall Overcome) Brigades, which began in 1969, politicized many of KDP’s future members. While the Brigade offered activists experience of socialism in practice, it also exposed them to a revolutionary paradigm that stigmatized homosexuality. The Cuban Revolution had earlier forced homosexual and effeminate men into special “work camps,” which it later shut down due to their brutality. (Jay and Young 1972, 246-247) Even after their closure, homosexuals were not allowed to join the Communist Party and were excluded from contact with youth and positions of authority. (Jay and Young 1972, 246-247) In line with these politics, the Brigade banned gay and lesbian participants from 1970 through the early 1980s, arguing that gay liberation was part of “a cultural imperialist offensive against the Cuban Revolution.”²³ (Brigada, 1972)

Like Mao’s reading of homosexuality as “bourgeois decadence,” the Cuban *maricón* (the Spanish pejorative of homosexual), was considered weak and thus a threat to national security.²⁴ Male revolutionary

identity hinged upon traditional concepts of masculinity. One could be a revolutionary only if one was cisgender male and heterosexual.²⁵ The Cuban Revolution labeled gays as “subjective” because they deviated from the “material conditions” of maleness, and thus lacked clarity and directedness. On the other hand, they rendered female same sex desire virtually invisible. While the Cuban government later changed its policy on homosexuality in 1979, its previous position on homosexuality had profound impacts on gay people far beyond its shores.²⁶

John Silva, a future gay KDP member, admits that his appreciation for the Cuban Revolution made him deny his homosexuality as a Brigadista:

When I went to Cuba in 1972, I was already out [in the Philippines and U.S.]— gay, gay, gay, and then I get to Cuba and the second day or the third day, a *compañero* says to me, “*Tú eres homosexual, John?*” I said, “No! Of course not!” Just like that. But when I get back to the States, I’m homosexual. So there was an inconsistency. Or Fidel and the Cuban Revolution meant so much to me that I was willing to say, “So what about being gay?”

Silva’s self-censoring appeared to be a small price for a larger cause.²⁷ Cuba’s revolution and the idea that the Philippines was on the cusp of its own liberation was alluring to many gay and lesbian radicals of color like Silva.²⁸

By 1970, the Third World Left was beginning to shift. By the end of the summer, Huey Newton, co-founder of the Black Panther Party, made a series of statements in solidarity with gay people. Among various ideas, he stated that “even a homosexual can be a revolutionary,” that gay people were “oppressed because of the bourgeois mentality and the bourgeois treachery that exists in this country that tries to legislate sexual activity,” and that the Panthers “would like to have unity with the homosexual groups who are also politically conscious.” (Newton 1970)²⁹ The Panthers’ changing position foreshadowed the eventual direction of KDP, though it would take more than a decade for its leaders to publicly voice these politics.

“Serve the People”: “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” and “Lose Your Sexuality”

According to Ordoná, since KDP’s inception, there was a general understanding that homosexuals were allowed in the group. (2000, 93) Not long after she helped found it, Melanie Santos,³⁰ a member of the KDP’s NEB, began a same-sex relationship with another female KDP member. Fellow comrades in the KDP’s National Council were generally supportive of her changed personal situation. The sister of another KDP NEB leader, Cynthia Maglaya, was a lesbian, so Maglaya too likely set a tone of tolerance for homosexuality within KDP.

Still, the NEB did not openly discuss Santos’s sexual orientation beyond the group. Its leaders feared that the Right and Left would use homosexuality to discredit the KDP and decided that Santos should not be public about her homosexuality. (Ordoná 2000, 94) Looking back, Ermena Vinluan of the KDP’s National Secretariat and National Cultural Group, thinks that the KDP was then seeking to build a culture of solidarity and family, and may have also been distracted by a different unrelated internal struggle. She adds, “We were too clueless to be actively, rampantly homophobic. We simply carried on with the movement.”³¹ Vinluan suggests that the silence may have been a passive act of solidarity with Santos, as the group had just formed. The members were young, inexperienced, and finding their way, probably with other pressing issues to discuss aside from Santos’s homosexuality.

Thus, KDP’s allowance of gay and lesbian members often came with silence about sexuality, particularly in its early years. Gay Filipino American Gil Mangaoang, descendant of revered Filipino labor leader and cannery worker Ernesto Mangaoang, describes it as “an operative sexual code of conduct akin to the old U.S. military policy of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell.’” (Cruz et al. 2017, 116) It was a code sprung out of pragmatism.

I suggest that “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” might have also been a cultural reflection of the KDP members’ Filipina/o backgrounds. Anthropologist Joana Palomar notes that in the Philippines, some middle class and wealthy Filipina/o families ostracize their gay and lesbian children, the result of the internalization of what comparative literature scholar J. Neil Garcia states are “Western (specifically, American) [perverse] notions of gender and sexuality by means of academic instruction in English, and the Americanization of all aspects of government and the mass media [in the Philippines].”³² (Garcia 2008, 167)

In contrast, many working class Filipina/os in the Philippines are accepting of their children’s homo-sexuality, but will not openly discuss it as long as the child can help to financially support the family. Some KDP members recollect treatment that mirrors this productivist dynamic. Mangaoang reflected that, “Although there was not explicit support for my lifestyle, there was no opposition to it.” (1994, 40) Sandy Aguila,³³ a local leader in the Bay Area chapter of KDP who now identifies as bisexual, similarly remembered, “We didn’t care who was between the sheets. As long as you came to work on time, so to speak. And did your duties...then you’re okay.”³⁴

Other political organizations held deep respect for KDP, which likely impacted LGBT members’ choices to hide their sexualities. Ordone interviewed people outside of the KDP to better understand KDP’s public reputation. (2000) According to one Japanese American lesbian who was not able to come out in another San Francisco Asian American organization in the 1970s:

I do remember hearing bits and pieces about Katipunan [KDP], about all the people in KDP being gay. I used to laugh, because I did not believe it. I did not know who they were talking about... I couldn’t tell who was gay and who wasn’t. Nobody would ever “laugh” at the KDP because it was a very important organization... I just thought it was a big rumor. (Ordone 2000, 95-96)

KDP’s stature, and rampant homophobia in the Asian American Movement, led to heavy pressures for leaders to maintain their reputation of being exceptionally “grim and determined.”³⁵ Consequently, it was common to allow oneself to become buried in the work, and as Aguila puts it, “lose your sexuality.” For Bruce Occena, who did not consider himself bisexual until many years later, “Even though there was no explicit homophobia, there was still a pressure.” He goes on, “Well, coming out is never easy. When you’re in a very intense, demanding situation and you hold a position of leadership, this was always the joke— ‘Okay, you can come out, but you’re not going to have time to find a boyfriend or girlfriend’ (laughs).” The Maoist motto of “serving the people” was the guiding force behind KDP’s drive as exceptional activists. Gay or straight, personal relationships took a backburner to political work. However, this hardworking and selfless ethic created a double-edged sword for Filipina/o activists exploring their sexual identities.

For Asian lesbians, it was especially difficult to come out in radical political organizations. Ordone notes that the Radical Women/Freedom Socialist Party was the only political group that allowed Asian lesbians to come out in the late 1970s. (2000, 79) However, because Radical Women did not maintain continuous work in the Asian American community, Asian American lesbians who wished to organize within their ethnic communities felt they had to hide their sexual identities in their organizations.

Gay men like Mangaoang had a similar experience in the Gay Liberation Movement. He recalls:

In the 1970s there were few gay organizations to join and those that existed were dominated by white males. Minorities who were members of these gay organizations were generally seen as subordinates reflecting the dominant racist attitudes in society. The experience was very isolating. (1994, 41)

For some members, internalized homophobia and social-political fragmentation were unbearable. Cecilia Gonzalez,³⁶ a Filipina lesbian immigrant and member of IAFP³⁷ also recalls using political work as a distraction from her sexuality:

I was a force all by myself. I did a lot of things. And you never think about what you needed... I think that's also part of that homophobia. The internalized part. You cannot really talk about yourself, you're just constantly doing something. Until it hit me in the face. When your relationship falls apart, because that relationship was secondary to the political work. And when you think about it, how could it survive when you're never there?

Gonzalez refers to the struggles of political work while maintaining a secret relationship with her lesbian lover. When faced with the choice between political work and romantic relationships, the political work usually won, leaving her same-sex relationships to disintegrate. When one found time to pursue a romantic relationship, societal expectations of heterosexuality were strong. Both Gonzalez and Mangaoang married *kasamas* (comrades in Filipino) of the opposite sex in their organizations before separating from them later on.³⁸

Despite organizational ambivalence toward its own LGBT members, KDP worked with gay comrades from other groups. The Solidarity Committee of the Bay Area Gay Liberation (BAGL) joined KDP's International Hotel (I-Hotel) Support Committee and "volunteered in its security detail and attended protests with banners bearing the BAGL name." (Hobson 2016, 81-82) According to KDP member and Asian American Studies scholar Estella Habal, "the KDP was sympathetic to gay rights, and gays and lesbians were members and leaders of the organization, so working with the BAGL and other such groups posed no conflict." (2007, 113) While straight radicals sometimes resisted BAGL, its collaboration with KDP and the I-Hotel Support Committee displays an important moment of solidarity between the Gay Liberation and Asian American movements.

Class as Primary Contradiction

For John Silva, "losing his sexuality" was not an option. Silva had long been out to his family since he was only 11 years old. Silva had also been a member of LaSalle University's *Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan* (Democratic Youth Association), a national democratic student organization in the Philippines. After a difficult breakup with his boyfriend, Silva moved to the United States around 1971 to finish college at UC Berkeley and learned about the revolution in Cuba. Upon his arrival to the Bay Area, Silva joined the Kalayaan Collective. After graduation, he remained at Berkeley and worked as a lecturer in Filipino Studies while organizing in KDP. Though he assumed that some of KDP's members were gay when the group formed, the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" nature meant that no one else, including Melanie Santos, claimed a gay or lesbian identity. Thus, Silva identifies himself as one of KDP's first "out" members.

Silva remembers it being a challenging experience. Echoing the leftist rhetoric of the time, he recalls KDP leaders who encouraged him to "subsume" his sexuality under the "primary contradiction" of "proletariat vs. the ruling class." Silva did not want to live his "gay life" separately from KDP. He thought, "If you can't respect me, then how could I respect this revolution?"³⁹ For these reasons, after internally "struggling" with the leadership, Silva eventually decided to leave KDP around 1975.

Just three years prior, Silva had chosen to hide his sexuality during his experience on the Venceremos Brigade. Why was he unable to make a similar "sacrifice" in the United States? Was it because he was willing to abide by the "rules" in someone else's revolution, while he considered KDP his "turf"? Did Silva change his thinking and develop an analysis that considered gay liberation as inseparable from class war? When I asked Silva how he formed this perspective, he said that feminist and gay and lesbian journals at UC Berkeley had exposed him to these emergent ideas. Though it did not arise in our interview, Silva's thinking may have also been sparked by gay radicals of color forming their own groups in the Bay Area and New York City. By 1975, a Third World Gay Caucus (TWGC) had formed in San Francisco. Like the Gay Latino Alliance (GALA) and Gente, a lesbian of color group, TWGC "explicitly challenged the divide between gay and people of color identities."⁴⁰ (3rd World Gay Caucus 1975, "Gays Speak out Against Racism" n.d.; "BAGL Bulletin" 1975; Roque Ramírez 2003)

I surmise that Silva might have felt he could be assertive about his sexuality because of his class position. Working class gays and lesbians in the United States could not afford to risk losing their jobs by merging their political and personal views. If fired, Silva could rely on the emotional and financial support of his parents (in the Philippines), and especially his mother, who came from a land-owning family. Silva's class status, combined with his position on gay liberation, may also have furthered criticism of Silva for committing so-called "bourgeois perversion."

Before I left my interview with Silva in 2016, I thanked him for helping to pave the way for Filipina/o American working class kasamas to express their sexuality.

Patriarchy, Homophobia, and Bourgeois Individualism

KDP was an important organization because it was the only Asian American radical organization in which gays and lesbians could come out within the organization and organize around ethnic and nationalist politics. Nevertheless, homophobia impacted gay men and lesbian women in KDP differently. Gay members had to navigate expectations of revolutionary heterosexual machismo in the broader U.S. Left, plus racism in predominantly white Gay Liberation Movement groups. Lesbian members on the other hand sometimes faced judgments from male kasamas for not following patriarchal heterosexist scripts of femininity and womanhood. Cecilia Gonzalez describes a time around 1978 when male leaders of KDP/IAFP chastised her:

My ex-girlfriend [who was not in KDP] decided she wants us to go traveling to Europe for three and a half months. So that means I was seeking time [off from]...my political work. Okay? I did not ask permission. It never occurred to me that I should be asking permission? And one of the male leaders in my group, in Vancouver where I was, was aghast. His reaction was like "I don't even want to think about that" when he realized that I was going to go traveling with my "friend." Of course, [he calls her] my "friend" [and not my girlfriend]. So without saying it, it's like "What (laughs)!? Traveling!" So that totally implied being a lesbian "thing." I became a persona non grata because I did something on my own. You can't be an individualistic person in the movement.

This story is an entry point for understanding how homophobia and sexism intersected with the political culture of the time. Gonzalez probably provoked notions of gay bourgeois decadence, combined with internalized heteropatriarchy in the minds of the straight male leaders, that she, a female comrade, was so brazen to take a vacation with her female lover, did not ask for permission *and* discussed it openly.

Gays and Lesbians Taking and Making Space

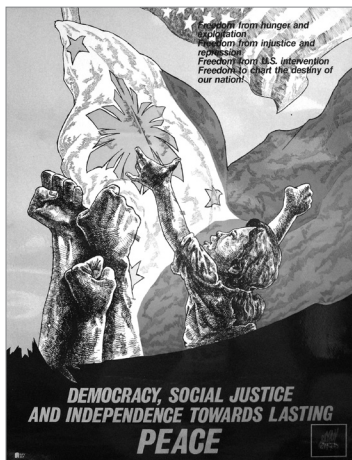
With few public spaces for lesbians to comfortably congregate during that time, one could understand why Gonzalez would wish to take a trip with her girlfriend. After years of "closeting" and burrowing herself in political work, and a culture that encouraged being "married to the movement," the trip took on greater meaning. Sandy Aguila describes the importance of the social sphere in helping LGBT members explore and maintain their identities:

Part of our own identity had to come out. Jeanette, Melanie, myself, and a few others had to come out. Gil. There's something that we need that you don't have that can comfort us, and that's a body. That's [a] personal touch. Another human being to be with. Or to relate to... I go to meetings, but at night I crawl into the women's bar. Okay after a meeting. In the IH [International Hotel], I'd sneak out and go to San Francisco—because that was thriving!

LGBT kasamas were necessary supporters of each other. Straight comrade allies did not always know how to support their gay kasamas in times of need. For example, when Gil Mangaoang's lover died, he remembers most of his kasamas not knowing what to do because it was not his girlfriend or spouse. According to Ermena Vinluan, "It was so new to all of us. The...thing that bothered me was I was so ignorant and not

more helpful in a tangible way. But no one knew anything about gay history, gay biology, gay anything.” Indeed, sexual discourse was changing, and those who did not belong to gay and lesbian communities lacked the language to think about and discuss homosexuality.

Coming out was also challenging for those who were bisexual, as bisexuality was still gaining mainstream understanding and legitimacy. Still, Jaime Geaga’s experience from the opening of this essay illustrates that straight leaders were sometimes allies to their LGBT kasamas. Silva expressed his gratitude towards Ermena Vinluan, his roommate, for offering him support. “She was more I felt [a] cultural type. And she couldn’t be bound too much by the ideology.” Cecilia Gonzalez also named straight allies like Cynthia Maglaya and Sorcy Apostol. She recalls, “They were more open to me talking about it. So it made me feel as if I was out! You have somebody that you can relate to. Even if I’m not out.”



PEACE Poster, circa 1982
Produced by BAYAN, Philippines
Graphic courtesy of Enrique de la Cruz

The Influence of the Communist Party of the Philippines on KDP

The KDP did not take direct commands from the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), but its culture influenced KDP members in its early years. The CPP trained some of KDP’s key leaders and maintained communication until their split in 1986.

In 2016, I interviewed several CPP leaders and former members about how they remembered the Party’s views on homosexuality in the 1970s. Unlike the Third World and Cuban Lefts, LGBT radicals were allowed in the CPP. Sydney Renato,⁴¹ a gay man no longer active in the Party, recounted “active involvement” of gays in the Party in the ‘70s and ‘80s. National Democratic Front leader and MAKIBAKA International representative, Coni Ledesma, praised LGBT kasamas for their contributions and recalled, “[Gay artists, like filmmaker] Lino Brocka who was sympathetic to the ideas of the Communist Party, and Party member Behn Cervantes excelled so much in their field, so it was hard to discriminate against them.”⁴²

Still, Ledesma admits there were stereotypes, “Gays (*bakla*) were laughed at. More male homosexuals than lesbians. There was the opinion that lesbians were good NPAs because they were physically stronger than other women.” Senior CPP leader Bonifacio Toledo⁴³ also recalled how some Party members interpreted homosexuality:

There were some who thought if you go to the countryside, you will not find gays because the people involved are deeply involved in production. It’s only when the petty bourgeoisie became isolated from production that these ideas involved a fear...but there were also some who said these are the most subjective people in the world. God created men and women...materially they are men. So why would they think that they are women when they are men?

Toledo outlines a common Party view that homosexuality is a product of bourgeois leisure. That is, the “true proletariat” does not have time or interest in homosexuality. Another common perspective queries, “Why would men think that they are women when they are men?” It is assumed that because a person presents as male, fornication is only “natural” between him and a woman. Such perspectives are the product of colonial Spanish Catholic values and modern European and U.S. sexology, which U.S. colonial education introduced to the Philippines during the first half of the 20th century.⁴⁴ (Garcia 2008, 165) Further, just like in the Cuban Left, some CPP members saw gays as “subjective,” and thus untrustworthy because of their sexual desires.

Such qualities compromised the character of a “good” comrade, which trickled down into rules for gays organizing in rural areas. According to Bonifacio, “The policy of the movement (laughs) on

relationships [was] very strict. And somebody said, ‘*Mag-sistrict sa pagkasimbahan*’—they are stricter than [the Catholic Church].”

Toledo explains that the Party knew that it was wrong to humiliate gays and lesbians. Nonetheless, it restricted gay comrades from entering same sex relationships, based on the assumption that peasant families would not entrust the Party with their children otherwise.

Toledo and his wife Gabriela⁴⁵ directed me to an internal paper written by the CPP in 1974 entitled, “On the Relation of the Sexes.”⁴⁶ The paper outlines the rules and regulations of sexual relations among kasamas. While all comrades were expected to follow it, the rules and regulations explicitly refers only to male-female relations. Thus, even while the Party challenged religious dogma, it refashioned internalized Catholic codes of morality as rigid expectations of conduct. The outcome was similar to the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and “lose your sexuality” climate that KDP maintained.

According to the CPP’s official newspaper *Ang Bayan*, the CPP added a provision to its “Rules and Guidelines on Marriage within the Party” in March 1998 in accordance with a decision by the Central Committee’s 10th Plenum. The amendment, featured in a 2014 issue of *Ang Bayan* called “On same-sex relationship” states:

The Party recognizes and respects the right of individual Party members to choose their gender. The basic principles and rules on marriage within the Party are applicable in their case. The party does not close its doors on gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transgenders who wish to join it. Whatever his or her gender preference (sic), anyone who is ready to embrace and advance Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and the constitution of the Communist Party of the Philippines can become a member. The New People’s Army has a similar rule recognizing the right of Red fighters to choose their gender.⁴⁷ (Communist Party of the Philippines 2014, 5)

The Communist Party of the Philippines approved of gay marriage before the U.S. repealed the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013—while gay marriage remains illegal in the Philippines. Even though it is not evident that there have been changes in the Party’s political framework beyond a politics of inclusion, these changes nonetheless show progress—the result of decades of “struggle” initiated by LGBT comrades in the CPP.

The AIDS Crisis: New Sexual Theorization in KDP/Line of March

By the late 1970s, KDP members remember feeling more publicly expressive about their sexuality. Bolstering their coming out processes was exposure to other gays in allied organizations, the growing prominence of the LGBT Movement in response to the New Right, the influence of the Third World Women’s Alliance, and the popularity of gay and lesbian cultural workers in the Left, like Holly Near.⁴⁸ But the most impactful event shaping changes to KDP/Line of March (LOM) was the 1980s AIDS crisis.⁴⁹ It hit the KDP personally, as several members had been diagnosed HIV-positive. Thus, in the early 1980s, KDP members took its first steps to theorize gay and lesbian struggles through LOM. And after many conversations, LOM formed an official Lesbian/Gay Commission in the mid-1980s.

In the late 1970s, the New Right launched a series of offensives on the LGBT community, which pushed gay and lesbian concerns to the center of national debate. Anita Bryant’s 1977 “Save our Children” campaign and California senator John Briggs’ Proposition 6 initiative in 1978 led straight leftists to take seriously “the radical gay and lesbian arguments that sexual politics were interconnected with other structures of power.” (Hobson 2016, 88) Indeed, the AIDS epidemic was transformative for reshaping the ways that activists, including those with the KDP/LOM, were positioning their sexual identities.

Given this context, it was relatively easy for Filipina immigrant Ia Rodriguez to come out as a lesbian around 1979 to KDP in Seattle. She recalls:

Well, it's not hard to come out within the organization because there were a lot of lesbians that were already out. Not many, but maybe a couple. Plus there is a big groupings of Caucasian lesbians that are involved in CAMD (Coalition Against the Marcos Dictatorship) at that time... We were really trying to form a broader coalition, not only of Filipinos but also Americans, and so that's how the movement came about here in Seattle...that's how I met my partner. She got involved with Philippine work, and her friends joined the support for the movement for Philippine issues...

Unlike John Silva, it was a more difficult experience for Rodriguez to come out to her family in the Philippines than it was for her to reveal her sexuality in the KDP.

Nevertheless, people's behaviors do not simply change overnight. Up until he left KDP in 1988, Gil Mangaoang chose to "sequester" his gay identity throughout his entire KDP tenure. Despite a more "open" organizational and societal atmosphere for gays and lesbians, Mangaoang feared "rejection and didn't want to be the cause of damaging the progress of the KDP's political work in the Filipino community." (Cruz et al. 2017, 270-271) It is also possible that it was easier for some immigrant members to come out in the United States compared to American-born Filipina/os like Mangaoang. They did not have to contend with judgmental families on the other side of the world.

New Directions for Gay and Lesbian KDP Members

Some LGBT members left to seek emotional support they were unable to find within KDP. When I asked Sandy Aguila why she left KDP in the late 1970s, she responded:

I couldn't make a living on the movement stuff, I had to work. So those were all important BASIC things, I had to go back to basics... You get burned out, you need a job, you need to make money, you need to—well, try this [new same sex] relationship, see if that works out. So those are the basics.

LGBT members were not alone. Straight kasamas also made choices that momentarily centered their personal lives, which leaders also criticized as bourgeois individualism. In hindsight, Bruce Occena admits that the Movement's inattention to people's psychological well-being was a mistake of the broader Left.



San Francisco Pride Parade (June 29, 1986)
Photo courtesy of Jaime Geaga

Other LGBT people departed KDP and Line of March as Asian and Pacific Islander American AIDS work became more central to their lives. When the CPP and KDP formally split in 1986, Ia Rodriguez's re-evaluations led her to focus on helping people with AIDS, especially the Asian/Pacific Islander and Filipina/o community, in Seattle. Gil Mangaoang, Jaime Geaga, and John Silva began their AIDS activism around the same time in 1985. For Mangaoang, the fall of the Soviet Union, combined with the loss of his political mentor, led to disillusionment and his eventual departure from KDP in 1988.⁵⁰ (Cruz et al. 2017, 268, 110)

In 1984, Jaime Geaga learned he was HIV-positive. After graduating from his physician's assistant program, he became the PA clinical coordinator for the UC Berkeley Epidemiology Study of HIV and AIDS, and the clinic coordinator for the San Francisco Men's Health Study around 1985. Both jobs fortuitously positioned him to be at the forefront of AIDS research and treatment. According to Geaga, "At that time being HIV-positive was such a—like a death sentence... Doing this work really led me to be in the midst of the cutting edge research that was being done around HIV and AIDS." Geaga not only survived the AIDS crisis, but he became a stalwart in the gay community and AIDS movement.⁵¹ Ultimately, Geaga's career path, being gay, and the AIDS crisis all took him in a direction away from KDP. He recalls:

“I think I felt living in San Francisco, being a part of the gay community, seeing these statistics, and having ties with the Filipino gay groups in San Francisco...I was the only one kind of...if I didn’t do anything, nothing would happen.”⁵² AIDS activists like Geaga, Gil Mangaoang, and Ia Rodriguez used the tools they learned in KDP to strategize in their future work.

KDP’s LGBT members were among the “unsung heroes” of the Left, pushing its boundaries and laying the groundwork for the AIDS Movement. While KDP was unique for its tolerance of gay and lesbian members, its starting point was imperfect, a reflection of the homophobic era that shaped it. Yet, it evolved. Understanding reasons for intra-movement homophobia in the 1970s can help to better understand the hetero-patriarchy that continues in current day organizing in the Filipina/o community and beyond. By recognizing the forces that shaped KDP’s evolution, we find hope that people and movements can and do change.

This article is dedicated to Ermena Marlene Vinluan (1949-2018), as this article would not have been written without her generosity and encouragement. The author also thanks the editors and reviewers for their feedback and hard work, as well as the activists featured for sharing their time and stories.

Correction: An earlier version of this article included a typographical error on pg. 36 inferring that Cynthia Maglaya was also a lesbian. The author was only referring to Cynthia’s sister. The editor, Russell Leong, apologizes for this error.

Notes

1. In this essay, I refer to members of KDP as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, as these were the terms they used to refer to themselves. They also use the terms “LGBT” instead of “queer.” Some bisexual members identified as “straight” in the 1970s because they were not out and/or the term “bisexual” was not in common use. I was told about one former member who identifies today as trans, but I did not have the opportunity to interview them. Other KDP members were unaware of trans members, but suggested that trans members may have joined after they left the organization. I build on the writing of former KDP activists, Trinity Ordoná and Gil Mangaoang. See Ordoná. 2000. “Coming Out Together: An Ethnohistory of the Asian and Pacific Islander Queer Women’s and Transgendered People’s Movement of San Francisco,” Ph.D. Dissertation. UC Santa Cruz; Gil Mangaoang. 1994. “From the 1970s to the 1990s: Perspective of a Gay Filipino American Activist,” *Amerasia Journal* 20:1, 33-44.
2. I draw on Arlie Hochschild’s work on emotional labor to define invisible labor as contributions that are routinely erased and devalued. See Arlie Russell Hochschild. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Oakland: University of California Press.
3. In the first week of martial law, Marcos issued Letter of Instruction No. 1, authorizing the military to take over the assets of major media outlets across the country. See Ferdinand C. Llanes. 2012. *Tibak Rising: Activism in the Days of Martial Law*. Manila: Ateneo de Manila University, 1; Alfred McCoy. 1999. *Closer Than Brothers: Manhood at the Philippine Military Academy*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Philippine Statistics Authority. 1983. “Urban Population of the Philippines By Category, By Region, Province, and City/Municipality, and by Barangay: 1970, 1975, and 1980,” *Philippine Statistics Authority*.
4. Llanes, vii. “Underground” was a term used to refer to clandestine organizing that was a product of both the fascism under which they were living and the style of revolutionary organizing they had inherited from the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, or the old Communist Party of the Philippines.
5. Some were deported by the Philippine government, while some, after being identified by the military, fled to escape arrest. Others had protective parents who either tricked or pressured their activist children to leave the country.
6. Since the turn of the century, from the late 1910s through the 1920s and 1930s, asparagus growers and salmon canneries in California and Alaska respectively targeted Filipina/os working in Hawaii canefields as “cheap” labor. As historian Dawn Mabalon shows, the entry of American monopoly capital following the Philippine-American War decentralized the agricultural economy for the majority of Filipina/os. (2013, 59) Combined with the allure of America’s promises of “milk and honey,” it compelled a wave of Filipina/os to migrate to the U.S. as agricultural workers. See Dawn Bohulano Mabalon. 2013. *Little Manila is in the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o American Community in Stockton, California*. Durham: Duke University Press.
7. This anti-communist Left would later consolidate with exiled former government officials and prominent politicians who joined the Movement for a Free Philippines, led by former senator Raul Manglapus. See Jose Fuentesilla. 2013. *Fighting From a Distance: How Filipino Exiles Helped Topple a Dictator*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
8. Not all members of NCRCLP agreed. The LA chapter was the only NCRCLP chapter in the country that did not transition to KDP.

9. KDP elected members to leadership boards and entrusted them to collectively make decisions, by which members agreed to abide in unity.
10. At the height of its existence.
11. KDP members distributed *Ang Katipunan* in churches, stores, and other places where Filipina/o Americans frequented. Its National Cultural Commission organized KDP's cultural group *Sining Bayan*, which produced skits, one-act plays, and full theatrical productions that toured the country.
12. See Barbara Gaerlan. 2003. "The Movement in the United States to Oppose Martial Law in the Philippines, 1972-1991: An Overview." Unpublished; National Coordinator, "Re: Plans for Changing the Name, Internal Memo," August 26, 1980. Cindy Domingo 5651-003, Box 3, Folder 33, University of Washington Special Collections. Personal Interview with Walden Bello 2015. Also, despite KDP's pronounced dual line, some Filipina/o American activists were angry at what they felt was an interruption of momentum, and shift in focus and resources away, from a growing Filipino civil rights movement and toward the Philippines and anti-Marcos movement.
13. Other groups include Filipino Youth Activities in Seattle. For more information about KDP's campaigns, see Catherine Ceniza Choy. 2003. *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History*. Durham: Duke University Press; Estella Habal. 2007. *San Francisco's International Hotel: Mobilizing the Filipino American Community in the Anti-Eviction Movement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Ligaya Rene Domingo. 2010. "Building a Movement: Filipino American Union and Community Organizing in Seattle in the 1970s." Ph.D. Dissertation. UC Berkeley.
14. Viernes and Domingo were both officers and reformers in a local Seattle union—Local 37 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU)—elected on a platform to end the union's corruption and bribery. The murders led to the arrests of local gang members and Tony Baruso, the president of Local 37. The murders were originally thought to be an isolated act of violence for Viernes and Domingo's reform work, and Baruso's friends and relatives still believe this to be true today. However, friends and family of Viernes and Domingo suspected that the Marcos government was responsible.
15. Only two months prior, Viernes had met with anti-Marcos opposition leaders, including members of the May First Movement (Kilusang Mayo Uno, or KMU), a federation of anti-Marcos trade unions, in the Philippines. Directly after the trip, Viernes met Domingo in Honolulu at an International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) International Convention where they convinced members to pass a resolution to send an ILWU team to investigate labor conditions in the Philippines. According to Terri Mast, "This action was a direct threat to the Marcos dictatorship because the labor movement was the one area where he had little support because of his brutal attacks on labor and because of the no-strike decree that he had created that was part of his regime... The support of the ILWU for the KMU, the largest trade union federation in the Philippines, had just been sealed. And any disruptions of cargo into or out of the Philippines would have a major economic impact on the country." (Chew 2012, 32) Furthermore, according to Cruz:

Through the Freedom of Information Act files, the KDP confirmed that U.S. government agencies such as the FBI and U.S. Naval Intelligence conducted secret surveillance of KDP activists, and coordinating information gathering with Manila. The Reagan administration and the Marcos regime also attempted to push through an extradition treaty, in which Marcos named key opposition leaders among moderates, elite exiles, and the KDP as prime targets (Cruz et al. 2017, 15).

See Ron Chew. 2012. *Remembering Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes*. Seattle: University of Washington Press; Rene Ciria Cruz, Cindy Domingo, and Bruce Occena. 2017. *A Time to Rise: Collective Memoirs of the Union of Democratic Filipinos (KDP)*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

16. The families of Viernes and Domingo won \$23.3 million in damages in the wrongful death suit against the Marcos estate and other defendants. (Cruz et al 2017, 15)
17. The case has been used as a precedent for other trials against foreign dictators who have assassinated Americans in the U.S., such as the Pinochet regime in Chile.
18. During the mid to late 1970s, the KDP began to reconsider its ideological positioning. Its leaders' reconceptualization of Maoism would strain its relationship with the Philippine Left, with whom it would formally split in 1986, the year of Marcos's ousting. The KDP continued to work in solidarity with the Philippine struggle for self-determination as best as it could until KDP's disbandment in 1986. Most KDP members have continued their social justice work individually, and through informal groupings, since then and hold reunions every few years.
19. See Rene Ciria Cruz's introduction to *A Time to Rise*.
20. Cruz et al., 19.
21. CAMDI was formerly CAMD (Coalition Against the Marcos Dictatorship) and the AMLC (Anti-Martial Law Coalition) during martial law.
22. Emily Hobson thoroughly documents the anti-imperialist and anti-racist politics of some parts of the gay and lesbian Left. For further historical context, see Emily K. Hobson. 2016. *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian Left*. Oakland: University of California Press; Susan Stryker. 2008. *Transgender History*. Berkeley: Seal Press; David Johnson. 2004. *The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

23. "Brigada Venceremos Policy on Gay Recruitment." 1972. Race-Class Articles folder, Gearhart Papers, GLBT Historical Society.
24. See Jafari Allen. 2011. *¿Venceremos? The Erotics of Black Self-making in Cuba*. Durham: Duke University Press. For additional context see Karla Jay and Allen Young, eds. 1972. *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*. New York: Douglas/Links; Allen cogently explains how Cuban revolutionaries understood homosexuality during this time:

At the triumph of the revolution, male homosexuality...was seen as an artifact of capitalist bourgeois decadence. Not only is the *maricón*, or homosexual, said to be effeminate and unmanly, but he is also a coward and untrustworthy. A *maricón*, therefore, cannot be a revolutionary. Homosexual men were not thought of as "healthy" or robust, physically or mentally.
25. Cisgender male, meaning that one's gender identity matched the male sex they were assigned at birth.
26. In 2010, Fidel Castro apologized for the treatment of LGBT people during the Cuban Revolution, admitting that UMAP, the labor camps used to ostensibly rehabilitate homosexuals and other supposed threats to the Cuban revolution, was a "great injustice." (Allen 2011, 72-73).
27. See Sandibel Borges's research which argues that "coming out" is a Western concept. Sandibel Borges. 2015. "Not Coming Out, but Building Home: An Oral History in Re-conceptualizing a Queer Migrant Home," in *Dialogo* 18:2, 119-130.
28. It would later ban out gay and lesbian participants through the early 1980s. See Ian K. Lekus, "Queer Harvests: Homosexuality, the U.S. New Left, and the Venceremos Brigades to Cuba," *Radical History Review* 89 (Spring 2004): 57-91.
29. Huey Newton in discussion with Elsa Knight Tompson. August 11, 1970. KP 020, Freedom Archives, San Francisco.
30. The activist does not wish to disclose her real name. "Melanie Santos" is a pseudonym.
31. Ermena Vinluan in discussion with the author. New York, NY, July 17, 2017.
32. Joana Palomar in discussion with the author, Queens, NY, December 11, 2016. See J. Neil Garcia. 1996. *Philippine Gay Culture: The Last Thirty Years*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press.
33. "Sandy Aguila" in discussion with the author, Alameda, CA, December 2015. Sandy Aguila is a pseudonym.
34. Aguila was born in the United States to working class Filipina/o immigrant parents and was politicized in the era of Black Power, joined a Chicana/o theater group after high school, and was a member of one of the original Venceremos Brigades.
35. Bruce Occena. April 13, 2017. Personal Interview. Portland to Bay Area phone call.
36. "Cecilia" Gonzalez. March 2016. Personal Interview. Berkeley, CA. The activist chose "Cecilia" Gonzalez as a pseudonym.
37. At this time, IAFP was under the control of KDP.
38. The literal translation for *kasamas* is companion or "to be together or included" and can be used to refer to one's life partner. In the Philippine revolutionary movement, *kasamas* became a word used for comrade, while also infusing sentiments of family, friendship, and love. Anti-Marcos activists in the Philippines and Filipina/o diaspora commonly referred to one another as *kasamas*.
39. Like the Black Feminists of the Combahee River Collective (1974), Silva was applying an "intersectional" politic that recognizes multiple oppressions as interlocking and connected before Kimberlé Crenshaw formally coined the term in 1989. See Combahee River Collective. 1981. "A Black Feminist Statement," in C. Moraga and G. Anzaldúa, eds, *This Bridge Called My Back*. Watertown, MA: Persephone, pp. 210-218; Kimberlé Crenshaw. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. 1989, no. 1: 139-167.
40. See "3rd World Gay Caucus," flier, November 1975, Ephemera- Organizations (BAGL), GLBT Historical Society; "Gays Speak Out Against Racism," n.d., Third World Committee of Bay Area Gay Liberation, Ephemera- Organizations (BAGL), GLBT Historical Society; "BAGL Bulletin," November 1975, 1:7, Ephemera- Organizations (BAGL), GLBT Historical Society; Roque Ramírez, Horacio. April 2003. "'That's My Place!': Negotiating Racial, Sexual, and Gender Politics in San Francisco's Gay Latino Alliance, 1975-1983," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12:2, 225, 228.
41. "Sydney Renato" in discussion with the author, Manila, Philippines, July 2016. Sydney Renato is a pseudonym, as he asked that I protect his identity.
42. Coni Ledesma in discussion with the author and Luis Jalandoni, Utrecht, Netherlands, October 3, 2016.
43. "Bonifacio Toledo" in discussion with the author and "Gabriela Toledo," Utrecht, Netherlands, October 3, 2016. Bonifacio Toledo is a pseudonym.
44. According to J. Neil Garcia, modern Western studies of sexology deepened the elite classes' understanding of homosexuality as perversion, blurred the boundaries of gender and sexuality, and imposed a "homo/hetero" distinction onto sexuality. (2008)
45. "Gabriela Toledo" is a pseudonym. See "On the Relation of Sexes," Internal Paper from the Women's Bureau, February 22, 1974. Cindy Domingo remembers reading the paper in KDP. I found it in her papers at the University of Washington Special Collections.

46. The paper is stamped February 22, 1974.
47. From the context of the document, it is assumed that “gender” refers to preference of gender in a sexual partnership, rather than one’s own gender identity. Communist Party of the Philippines. March 1998. “Rules and Guidelines on Marriage within the Party.” See Communist Party of the Philippines’ June 21, 2014 *Ang Bayan* issue for its article, “Gays and Lesbians: Two Interviews.”
48. Ermena Vinluan. August 2017. Personal Interview. New York, NY.
49. Ethnic Studies scholar Gustavo Licón has also established the AIDS crisis as a turning point in the Chicana/o Movement’s attention to LGBT concerns.
50. Gil Mangaoang is currently writing a book on his family and life. After he left KDP in 1988, he moved to LA to be with his life partner, Juan Lombard. He graduated from Loyola Marymount University and continued his AIDS activism. (Cruz et al, 2017)
51. Geaga was frequently asked to do education work and be a guest speaker at events, as Filipina/os held the highest incidence of HIV rates among Asian and Pacific Islander subgroups at the time. He and his friends formed the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA) and its HIV Committee in 1986; the Filipino Task Force on AIDS in San Francisco in 1987 where he was executive director; and *Tambayan*, a prevention program targeted to Filipino gays to discuss safe sex and HIV. He also became a board member of the National Minority AIDS Council, which still exists today, and earned his Masters in Public Health at UC Berkeley.
52. Geaga left KDP on friendly terms and remained in contact with several KDP and LOM members. He moved back to LA in 1996 to mainly be with family, thinking he only had a few months to live, but survived due to the efficiency of HIV therapy. He attended culinary school and now owns and manages Sanborn House, a guesthouse in Silver Lake, Los Angeles, with his partner Gary. He continues to be active politically in various social justice issues and electoral politics. I interviewed Geaga in 2016.

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Members of *Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino* (KDP)
Photo courtesy of Florante Ibanez