

NYC’s LGBTQIA Community Has Organized, Against Death, Again

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An injury to one is an injury to all. A service to one is a service to all. During the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, New York City’s LGBTQIA community has banded together to form an online mutual aid community called “The End Is Queer.” They did this amidst mass layoffs and dangerous working conditions to plant their feet and punch back to build the social and economic infrastructure that their communities need to thrive.

Louis, the founder of “The End is Queer” said, “This isn’t the first time a president of the United States tried to kill us through neglect and incompetence using a virus. But our response to such full system failure in leadership on a federal, state and citywide level is to ban together, to protect ourselves and each other. We walk in the steps of a whole generation slaughtered by AIDS, and we are radically determined to survive for everyone who couldn’t. We will honor the dead and fight like hell for the living.” For Lars, a moderator, this fight is especially important because it is the most vulnerable members of queer communities, the indigenous

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and black people of color, disabled and undocumented queer and trans folks who have been most effected by “disaster responses which line the pockets of capitalists and corporations while our bodies and lives are deemed disposable and our labor is dangerously exploited.”

COVID-19 has ripped through the fabric of New York City’s social networks leaving fear, uncertainty, isolation, and instability in its wake. “People need stability and comradery and safety” says Sarah, a moderator of the online community “The End Is Queer” where strangers have volunteered to shop for, check in on, and even drive their neighbors to their jobs in essential industries. The community is a space for people to “get immediate physical and financial needs met, seek and offer support, access information and resources, to organize, mobilize against the devastation of city, state, and federal leaderships’ handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.” said Lars, a volunteer moderator.

Social distancing mandates have placed immense focus on individual/family responsibility and private property. Individuals and families who are financially able to have isolated themselves in their private homes, effectively removing themselves from the social fabric of daily life. These measures have undoubtedly slowed the spread of COVID-19 through communities. They have also left many people cut off from their routines and support networks. That’s where online communities like “The End is Queer” come in. “The End is Queer” operates on multiple platforms and actively works to build in access, including access for people new to online platforms like queer elders.

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The New York City LGBTQIA mutual aid group “The End is Queer” is the dual inheritance of queer defiance of death and disease joyful connection between LGBTQIA New Yorkers as it connects members across the city with one another. Queer people are old hands at mutual aid. Online groups and brick and mortar community centers are a bedrock of LGBTQIA communities across the United States. Lars learned of the community

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“The End is Queer,” from an online trans group they are part of. The dearth of positive representation of queer identities and voices has forced queer people to form their own spaces to do mutual aid: ask questions, provide emotional and material assistance, and bear witness. “We’re here in this horrible late stage capitalist system. The least I can do is throw myself into protecting my community. There are desperate needs and the resources don’t exist or don’t exist in abundance” said Sarah. To that end, the members and moderators have worked diligently to protect the mental health of members as well as their own health. Referring to the immense emotional toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sarah remarked, “mental health is so important” they emphasized that the fight for survival was for the mental health “not just physical survival” of the entire community.

Sarah hopes that the online community and the world that community members are building will continue to thrive long after the crisis has passed. From the looks of things, it will.

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