## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Securing Pride: Sexuality, Security and the Post-Apartheid State

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This paper explores the contestation that emerges between state security providers and communities in hybrid security situations. Rather than focusing on the failures of the state, the article explores how communities use contested (in)securities to create forms of security for themselves. The article argues for Soweto Pride as an example of vernacular security for black LGBT+ populations in Johannesburg. Ultimately, what is enivisioned is an expansive concept of security that considers cultural practices, space making, and communal formations as central to its formation.

## Introduction

In 2016, the City of Johannesburg and the South African Police Service (SAPS) would not grant the organizers of one of the largest queer Pride events in Africa authority to host their 12th annual event. Soweto Pride, which is about advocating for and celebrating achievements in the attainment of equal rights, was determined by the security forces to pose a potential physical security threat to citizens. This step exemplified the complex and contested relationships that exist between the state security providers and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) community in South Africa.[1]

In this article, the 2015 Soweto Pride is offered as a case study in vernacular security. Drawing on Bubandt's (2004 and 2005) concept of vernacular security, this article explores the repertoire of strategies that participants at the 2015 Soweto Pride deployed to negotiate issues of safety and freedom

in their appropriation of public space. Vernacular security encompasses not only the argument that security is discursively and socially constructed, but also the idea that solutions to (in)security lie in communal formations and responses (Jarvis and Lister 2013; Luckham and Kirk 2013). The 2015 Soweto Pride itself functioned as a practice of security in its effort to provide spaces of safety, freedom, acceptance, and affirmation for the performance and expression of black LGBT+ identities. The strategies by which the 2015 Soweto Pride worked to accomplish this suggests that scholars might decentralize state-level conceptions and practices of security and instead begin to shift analytical focus towards the everyday practices and strategies by which vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as black LGBT+ South Africans, deploy their own conceptions and practices of security. Such an approach is needed to illuminate the semiotic, discursive, and social fields which nurture and provide space for black LGBT+ identity formation and performance. In demonstrating how black LGBT+ people construct Soweto

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Pride as a form of security configured and deployed around specific symbolic, social, and geographic concerns, the agency and creativity of black LGBT+ South Africans in developing and enacting their own strategies of security is highlighted.

## Approach and methodology

Since the spread of the human security concept in the late 1990s, there has been increased recognition of the centrality of the individual, as opposed to the state, as a referent in security analyses. This article approaches understanding the security challenges of a vulnerable and minority social group, not by focusing on the risks they face as potential victims, but rather by understanding the agency and strategies of such communities in circumscribing, producing, and managing their own identities.

The events of Soweto Pride represent a locally configured form of security as the event organizers appropriate spaces that allow participants to perform and explore their identities in a safe and affirming manner. Thus, beyond the visible measures of protection, some of which engage state actors and some that do not, Soweto Pride itself is a strategic deployment of security to allow the safe performance, expression, production, and reproduction of black LGBT+ identities. Black LGBT+ South Africans engage in everyday mechanisms to help create a sense of safety and security for themselves – warning each other about dangerous areas, prescribing certain dress codes for certain areas, and recommending appropriate response during and after homophobic violence. Since there are no exclusively and geographically-based black LGBT+ communities, there is nothing analogous to a neighborhood watch. Thus, Soweto Pride constitutes its own temporary geographic neighborhood that functions to provide a type of policing within its geographical and temporal borders.

### Soweto Pride as Performance

The methodology deployed for this study centered on performance ethnography, a type of situated participant-observation and informal interviewing that draws attention to how my body as a self-identifying black queer man shaped my relation to my field sites and my reception in these sites (Madison 2011). My body facilitated my myriad and diverse experiences, even as my shared subjectivity was impacted by my foreign nationality and status as a researcher.

The events of the 2015 Soweto Pride serve as an example of what I refer to as 'making space'. Throughout my scholarship on black queer South African life, I developed the concept of 'making space' to theorize how black queer people, living under multiple forms of disempowerment and marginalization, strategically labor to delineate discursive, practical, and geographic spaces that are at once liberating and affirmative, while at the same time, afford a type of visibility for their lives and their identities (see Livermon 2012 and 2014). My concept of 'making space' as it relates to black queer life goes beyond physical geography because it foregrounds how black queer people and communities strategically activate geographies – whether a church, night club, or neighborhood – to delineate a field of discourse and social praxis that is both meaningful to those who are engaged in its production, and protected from exogenous threats.

While my concept of 'making space' depends upon a geographical specificity – whether it be a neighborhood or a nation-state – I deploy space to theorize the discursive, social, and cultural delineations that black queer people make as they negotiate their own desires amidst intrusions and threats, both physical and discursive, to their personhood and collective citizenship. Resistance, identity, and geography have been central notions in queer scholarship, especially in the scholarship on queer South African life (see Msibi 2012; Matebeni 2011 and 2013). As agents in the creation of their own spaces, my ethnographic research illuminates how black queer South Africans deploy vernacular security to maintain the boundaries – both real and imagined, discursive and physical — of their space and to protect it from perceived threats. My observations and

analysis draw attention to the ways in which the events of the 2015 Soweto Pride provide examples of the ways in which black queer South Africans engage, disengage, circumvent, reject, and reconfigure the types of the security that the South African government makes available to its black and queer citizens. In the ethnographic descriptions and discussion that follow, it is important that we not simply see black queer South Africans as victims of insecurity; rather, we should view them as producers of their own notions of security who strategically negotiate, challenge, and critique the securities made available to them by the South African state.

## Securing South Africa

In contemporary South Africa, security has emerged as a key word in the post-apartheid state. Insecurity was a marked feature of the declining years of the National Party (NP) government, particularly from the late 1980s to the 1994 election. Near revolutionary conditions created by internal dissent fueled different forms of state reprisal and repression (Wolpe 1990). These forms of state repression, while not new, took on a different interpretative character as South Africa was positioned internationally as a pariah state that could no longer claim moral authority in relation to state sponsored violence both within and outside its borders (Vale and Taylor 1999; Pfister 2005). Its last gasp of international legitimacy as the bulwark against communism ceased to be a sufficient cause for racial oppression post-1989.

By the late 1980s, the NP, rocked by internal dissent and increasingly unable to govern, began seeking a negotiated settlement. The technocratic elites within the NP, influenced by neoliberal ideologies and seeking to maintain the operations of global and local capital, realized that political representation of the black majority had become an obstacle to achieving this goal. Importantly, this approach was in line with consumer business interests in South Africa that had long pressed for a relaxation of apartheid laws in order to nurture a black middle class that would buy its products and

expand transnationally to exploit a growing African middle class.

Key to the settlement negotiation was the idea that the post-apartheid majority government, stewarded by the African National Congress (ANC), would ensure security in a post-transition South Africa. While adopting a rhetorical rights-based approach to safety and security in the Constitution and key legislation, this has not translated into improved security for all South Africans. What has largely remained unresolved (or unchanged), is for whom the state guarantees safety and security. Critical theorists would suggest that safety and security has been achieved for the machinations of global capital, thus leaving the majority of South Africans living in constant insecurity (see Bond 2014). Hence, the ANC government can paradoxically claim that it is representing the interests of South Africa while also using deadly force, for example, to repress worker dissidence as happened at Marikana in August 2012. The ANC has struggled to balance the needs of global capital with those of social transformation and maintaining investor confidence has become tied to its ability to manage labor, and by proxy the black majority population. The use of violence and coercion to manage exploitative labor practices has long been near the heart of racial inequality in South Africa.

Many activists and scholars do not see the actions of the state as justifiable; instead, they suggest that the state has been captured by corporate capital and guarantees the safety and security of those interests above all others (see Chinguno 2013; Bond 2013). The tension inherent in how security is defined and by whom is a central debate in discussions of legitimacy and authority in South Africa. While at a macro-level in South African society, this security debate can be defined by race and class with white people and wealthy people more able to access security (and not necessarily through the state). However, there is little consideration for how these divides manifest along other societal fault lines and how other groups and sub-groups within society are affected.

With respect to queer rights, the post-apartheid state has taken significant steps to guarantee and safeguard the rights of the LGBT+ community. What Thomas Boellstorff (2005) describes as 'political homophobia' has not been a central tenet of the post-apartheid state and South Africa seems to have escaped the transnational development and flow of homophobic discourse that has come to characterize queer issues on the continent. Weiss and Botha (2013) argue that transnational spread of homophobic discourse has produced similar, if not sometimes even identical, political vocabularies around issues of sexual difference. In the South African case, the state suggests that far from punishing and disciplining its queer population, it would rather prefer to act as guarantor and protector.

However, LGBT+ life in South Africa is far from ideal. According to a 2017 report from Centre for Risk Analysis at the South African Institute of Race Relations, four out of ten LGBT South Africans know of someone who has been murdered for being or suspected of being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Black LGBT+ people are twice as likely (49%) as white respondents (26%) to know someone who was murdered for these reasons. What framework for analyzing security might be helpful in this case, and how might that framework inform our discussions concerning LGBT+ rights continent wide? Rather than focus solely on the failures of the state, it is equally useful to investigate how communities affected by (in)security create their own forms of securitization. Considering securing and security responses to the Soweto Pride provides fertile ground to further explore these issues.

## Presenting Soweto Pride

Soweto Pride is a series of events centered around LGBT+ affirmation, culture, and community organizing that takes place annually in Soweto – the South West Townships of Johannesburg. Soweto has a population of nearly 1.3 million people, more than 98% of whom identify as black South Africans.[2]

Created in 1927, in response to legislation separating 'natives' from white areas of the city and to cater for the thousands of laborers flocking to the vibrant gold economy, Soweto is still home to 30–40% of the city's population, many of whom still live in conditions of extreme deprivation.

During the months of September and October, there are Pride celebrations in and around Johannesburg. Pride functions as a unique combination of politics and commerce as well as offering geographies of visibility and spaces of pleasure. The multiple Pride celebrations attract slightly different crowds but there is an overlap in constituencies and communities served. Importantly, the Pride events tend to combine a march/parade celebration, and a political element. Participants must be willing to enter into the space as political sexual subjects. Peripheral events not attached to the official Pride parade – such as house parties and after-parties – tend to attract a more diverse and larger crowd of people, who want to participate in celebratory spaces with LGBT+ people, but who might eschew public political identification as a member of the community.

In the spirit of grassroots activism and communal support, Soweto Pride encouraged participants to bring their own drinks, food, and music to the first event in 2004. Over the years, the event has grown from a relatively small local gathering to a major social calendar event featuring numerous official, and unofficial, corollary events. Despite this growth, the event has maintained its grassroots accessibility and has eschewed commercial sponsorship.

## Soweto Pride as Vernacular Security

From its very inception, Soweto Pride was oriented toward producing forms of vernacular security that responded to and resisted the types of (in)security offered by the South African state. The Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) started Soweto Pride in 2004. FEW was organized by black lesbians and gender non-conforming women to address the issues surrounding

violence against black lesbian women in township areas. Numerous high-profile cases around the country, including in the Johannesburg area, revealed the intersecting vulnerabilities of black lesbian and gender non-conforming women particularly in township spaces, where most lived and socialized. From 2000–2014, there had been at least 31 murders linked with female sexual preferences and an average of 10 lesbians had been raped per week to "correct" their sexual preferences (Strudwick 2014).

### Creating safe spaces

Soweto Pride was about providing safe spaces for black LGBT+ visibility (especially for black LGBT+ women) in township areas as well as creating forms of political visibility for black LGBT+ citizens in black communities. Soweto Pride was a combination of a demand for visibility, the recognition of the humanity of black queer people, and a call to the community to acknowledge the right to safety and security as black LGBT individuals (particularly black LGBT women) navigated social space. Central to the endeavors of the Pride celebration was also the call to create political pressure on what was considered indifferent or hostile police prosecution of numerous crimes committed against black LGBT+ individuals. The political praxis of FEW fostered the idea that because the violence against black lesbian and gender non-conforming women was explicitly gendered, the political response to that violence needed to be gendered. The formation of FEW also tacitly recognized that the already existing women's organizations and LGBT organizations possessed insufficient capacity to deal with this problem of gendered, sexualized, and racial violence. Women's organizations did not seem to fully address sexuality, while LGBT organizations were unwilling to sufficiently address racialized gender.[3]

The creation of Soweto Pride was a process of space making for members of South Africa's black LGBT+ community, especially those who reside in townships. Prior to Soweto Pride, there were no sustained

annual Pride events held in majority black spaces in South Africa. To attend queer Pride events, one had to enter predominantly white spaces in the wealthier, and traditionally white, northern suburbs. As discussed elsewhere (see Livermon 2014), the lack of explicit black queer space in the townships of Johannesburg did not mean that black LGBT+ populations were absent. Rather, black LGBT+ populations found creative ways to repurpose or reuse heterosexual space; and in so doing, revealed how township space is specifically inhabited and marked as black and heterosexual.

### Political claims to safe space

Soweto Pride was about making a political claim to space – specifically, a right to the township space for black LGBT+ people. As a claim to a right to exist in place, Soweto Pride was not, therefore, about the racialization of the white queer space, the queering of black heterosexual space, or the racialized, sexualization of white heterosexual space. It was instead about creating a specific black queer space articulated to portions of the city that are materially and representationally coded as black. If the township is coded as the space of insecurity for black queers (particularly black queer women), what might it mean for black queer women to publicly declare their sexuality and gender non-conformity on the streets of Soweto? What discursive and political work do such public declarations and claiming of spaces accomplish?

The 2015 edition of Pride was a renewal to a call for political action. Beginning in Credo Mutwa Park in 2004, the Pride celebration had shifted to various locations around Soweto. Due to renovations at the Credo Mutwa facility, the event returned to Meadowlands Park Zone 2, near the Meadowlands Police Station in 2015. The location was symbolic: in July 2007, Sizakele Sigasa and Salome Masooa were raped, tortured and murdered in Meadowlands in one of the many unresolved attacks on lesbian women. It is important to note that FEW's security concerns were related to the state

requirements for event security as well as to the larger issues of townships insecurity. In a journalistic account, the advocacy coordinator for FEW, Siphokazi Nombande, claimed that the return to Meadowlands was meant to place renewed pressure on the police to solve the murders and bring additional attention to sexuality based hate crimes in South Africa (Mamba 2015).

A large march was held through the main streets of Soweto, along with a political program that was based on the theme of "Our Lives Matter: Safety, Justice, and Freedom Are Our Rights." The Pride celebration itself was highly accessible, located in a park that did not charge admission. Participants were encouraged to bring lawn chairs, picnic baskets and coolers for their own drinks. Most of the booths featured non-governmental and governmental organizations handing out information, along with a few small business owners and entrepreneurs selling various gay Pride merchandise, ranging from stickers to t-shirts. Absent in the space were commercial vendors representing larger corporations. Held during the day, the event was heavily attended by young black women, who made up the majority of the crowd.

The key component to Soweto Pride was the march through the main streets of Soweto and the political program/picnic in Meadowlands Park. Both events were significant for the way in which they reimagined the township space for a few hours as a space of vernacular security for queer men and women. Much of the violence experienced by black queers is explicitly gendered in that black gender non-conforming and black lesbian women remove their bodies from certain prescriptions of masculine control, while black gender non-conforming queer men reveal the artifice and construction of masculinity. Much of the violence experienced by black queer women, then, is an attempt by black men to reassert masculine control and patriarchal privilege over women who dare to explicitly perform their gender and sexuality in ways that mark their bodies as unavailable for male pleasure. On the other hand, black gender non-conforming men are

punished for violating the codes of prescriptive masculinity.

### Entering safe spaces

What does it mean for a few hours, on a bright and warm Saturday afternoon, for black queers to have the safety and security of space in the township? As black queers march through Soweto demanding justice for lost lives, they are escorted by a police patrol. For once, the state ensures their safety and security. Black queers were safe at the park next to the police station. The municipality had employed minders to observe the proceedings and ensure the flow of participants in and out of the space, but next to the police station the black LGBT population could safely gather. As thousands of predominantly young black queers, representing a diverse array of stylistic presentations of gender and sexuality, congregated in the park next to the police station, they took pleasure in one another's visibility. They watched black queer women give speeches and perform, they received information about available services they could access from other black queer women, they watched feminine black queer men twist and twirl on stage. They formed and participated in community. Importantly, this was a space that, because of its central public location and daytime activity, was open and available for black queer youth.

As I entered the space I was struck at how the space skewed toward black queer women and their presence in space. While queer spaces tend to be divided by gender, Soweto Pride has increasingly become a space that accommodates female bodies and non-gender conforming spaces. I was quickly reminded of how urban space is constantly fraught for women and that rarity of black women occupying public space. I saw young, carefree black women engaging one another in socially intimate ways: kissing, holding hands publicly, and smiling, flirting with each other. Expressing their sexuality and sexual desire publicly as any other young person might on a warm spring afternoon in a public park. Knowing how rare this occurrence

was, I experienced the space as welcoming and accepting of difference, accommodating of all different kinds of black LGBT bodies. As a result, black queer men were there as well in all their difference, but unlike other Pride events, they did not dominate the space. While the queer space of Johannesburg is often divided by gender, I saw this predominantly woman-centered space was capable of accommodating men as an experience of possibility and solidarity. Safety and security was predicated on the creation of space that could accommodate difference, particularly differently sexualized and gendered black women. Importantly, the state offered both explicit and less explicit markers of support for the forms of security present. And yet within the securitized space of Pride, a vernacular security was created that emphasized belonging, hospitality and liberty as identified by Jarvis and Lister (2013) as being among central pillars of vernacular security in everyday experience.

### Exploring the made spaces

Contrary to the first Soweto Pride, where the after-party events were held in local homes and black LGBT+ people migrated to nearby taverns, several targeted after-party events have since emerged. These events attempt in various ways to capture the "Pink Rand"[4] and to commodify black LGBT+ identity in township space. In the absence of a regularly operated black gay/lesbian club in Soweto, the rise of these after-parties requires a nuanced and complex engagement with understanding what kinds of politics can and do emerge from being recognized as a market.

### The official after party

Research revealed that the spaces of after-parties provided a more heightened sense of the forms of vernacular security that function in township spaces. This is illustrated well by the "official" after-party of Soweto Pride, which was hosted at the 'Rock', located in the local neighborhood of Moroka. In the early 2000s, the Rock had emerged as a key site of nighttime conviviality where mixtures of Sowetan citizens, accompanied by white

hipsters and foreign tourists, mingled in an upscale Soweto nightclub. As discussed elsewhere (see Livermon 2006), the Rock also allowed black LGBT+ South Africans to claim and repurpose heterosexualized space. Hence, the Rock was known as a place of fluid sexuality and contact between black heterosexual and black queer South Africans as well as between black and white South Africans and between South Africans and foreigners. Over the years, the club had ceased to operate on a regular basis and now functioned only to host special events. One of those special events was the official after-party of Soweto Pride.

Tickets for the party sold for between 50 and 80 ZAR (approximately 4–6 USD). These prices were in keeping with admission prices at many clubs and bars in Johannesburg. While not exorbitant, the entry fee would be beyond the reach of someone without regular employment or a parental allowance. What also must be factored in is that there is little nighttime transportation in Soweto, so nightlife for those without a car or access to a ride is always a negotiation. Many young people will arrange carpools or walk home in groups to provide some form of security after a night of partying. The ability to walk home from a nightclub space, though, is heavily gendered as women rarely take the risk of walking home, even when accompanied by males. Hence, the location, the timing, the cover charge, as well as the price for drinks, would be among various factors for those considering attending this party.

Because of the parameters described above, it is no surprise that the crowd skewed older and better resourced, and yet it was still predominantly comprised of women appearing to be in their 20s and 30s. They were a fashionable and well-dressed crowd, certainly better attired than many of the young people who earlier at the park had been in casual dress. There were two forms of security. First, there were security car guards who watched over the parking lot and made sure that the attendee's cars were safe and undisturbed by potential thieves. While not officially part of their job description, they also kept

an eye on the general security in the parking lot areas outside the club. The Rock also has a long history of informal partying that occurs outside the club itself. With individuals barbecuing and others pumping music out of the sound systems of their cars, the outdoor space surrounding the club was just as festive, if not more so, on some occasions as the inside of the club. The vibrant outdoor area means that people can bring their own drinks to an area in proximity to the club and avoid having to buy more expensive drinks from inside the club. This established pattern was salient on this evening, with an informal party occurring outside the venue and those outside extended the black queer space created by the venue to the surrounding streets and parking lot around the club. The parking lot attendants (all of whom were men) were responsible for managing the outdoor festivities.

Secondly, there was security that determined who would be allowed admission, and these men generally kept an eye on happenings inside the club. In a mirror to the day's earlier events, the non-state security actors provided their services for the protection and enhancement of safety and security for black LGBT+ South Africans. An important difference, however, was the commodified nature of the arrangement. While security was no longer provided by the state, private security created a sense of safety for the attendees. There was also perhaps the psychological impact of safety by numbers, in that the large constellation of black queer women demarcated the space and made the violation of that space and the temporary safety it provided, impossible.

The nightclub space as a venue allows for large groups of strangers to come together, while also delineating the public that might constitute its space. In this sense, it functions as a public-private venue. Nightlife itself is a space where people are often performing alternative versions of the self, taking pleasure in the escape from the everyday. Yet it also is a space where various forms of social arrangements can be made and remade – everything from finding a tailor for your next dress to a lead on a government job can be procured in nightlife space (Grazian 2008) (Hunter 2010). Hence, it allows for a laxity of strict social mores. The pleasure of nightlife is in pushing boundaries and in building community.

For many of the women in the space, the after-party might be one of the few 'safe spaces' where they can experience and express public desire for other women, free from the gaze of heterosexual men. While belonging, hospitality, and liberty were all part of the space, there was also a sense of equality, a sense of being able to experience the same rights of pleasure and sensual communion that heterosexuals routinely experience in their youth. Black queer women rarely get this opportunity in public space. On this night, in this space, in this moment, black queer women defined sensuality and pleasure for themselves.

### Unofficial and appropriated spaces

Spaces temporarily appropriated as 'queer' for Pride events illuminate some of the most engaging productions of vernacular security. A bar located in Mapetla, a towship within Soweto with less middle class roots than Moroka, is typical of Sowetan *shebeens* – local informal taverns. What differentiated the Mapetla *shebeen* from the official after party was that the crowd seemed to be entirely comprised of black queer men. The comparatives in locations reproduced some of the social divides existent in the Johannesburg black LGBT+ community more broadly. A local health organization was advertising its services and handing out packages of condoms and lubricant, which suggested that the party and venue was a known part of community life, and that local health organizations saw the party as an opportunity to reach men who have sex with men.[5]

However, gender was not the only significant difference from the previous party space. Class differences were apparent, given the more casual dress (that in many ways replicated the attire from earlier

in the day), the lack of cover charge, and the cheaper drink prices. It also could be said that security, such that it existed, was less visible. There were no guards patrolling the parked cars, the club had no dedicated parking spaces, and patrons parked on the streets surrounding the club in typical township fashion. And yet there were few cars there in relation to the numbers of people inside. By my own estimation, the number of cars was less than a fourth of the number of cars at the Rock. This is not to suggest black queer women are more economically resourced than black queer men. Instead, the classed locations of the clubs themselves serviced different kinds of black queer people. It is also important to point out that, in general, black queer women (even those of the middle class) have fewer women-dominated spaces to congregate, and the Soweto Pride after-party would be a more important event on the social calendar for black queer women than similarly situated events occurring for black queer men.

The only security was a search performed by a guard before one could be permitted into the entry area of the club. After being searched and once inside though, the politics of joy that encapsulated much of the day were on display here in this space. This politics centered on a privileging of freely performative sexuality, and a pleasure around a sense of community and belonging in their own township landscape. The joy and pleasure of being able to participate in a Pride celebration in their own communities (something that would not be true if they participated in the larger, more publicized Johannesburg Pride) was a source of Pride, pleasure, and joy, as township space could be temporarily appropriated for the affirmation and celebration of LGBT+ community formation. Importantly, this was a space that younger, less well-resourced black queer men could access given both its location and prices. Perhaps the lack of security was in recognition of the materiality of the space and the lack of material wealth present, and the favoring of free expression.

The Pride Parade and its subsequent after-parties mark an important instance of space making with both racialized and sexualized dimensions. Pride events are important forms of cultural labor that are politicized due to the invisibility and indifference with which black LGBT+ people must navigate their daily lives. Important sociopolitical events such as those described above, reframe everyday forms of violence and invisibility. This practice of space making is a form of vernacular security in which geographic space may be temporarily appropriated to provide a geographic, symbolic, and discursive space for the formation, performance, and expression of LGBT+ identity. Space making, then, is a crucial form of labor in which black LGBT+ South Africans engage to articulate their own concepts and strategies of security.

## Securing Pride Spaces

The controversy over the cancelation of the 2016 Soweto Pride highlighted the collisions that can occur between vernacular securities and state-level security. These collisions illuminate the vulnerability of black LGBT+ people to broader social dynamics and to their institutional and civic allies.

According to the organizers, the 2016 Pride was cancelled due to state coercion enforced by the South African Police Service (SAPS) and backed by Emergency Medical Services, Disaster Management, Johannesburg Metro Police, and Public Order Police. From FEW's perspective, the coercion took two forms. First, the event was upgraded to a higher risk category, from low risk to medium risk. This required the organizers to hire more police and security details, despite the fact that SAPS could not cite specifically the forms of disruption and unruliness that required this upgrade. For FEW, the upgraded risk category would mean an additional 22 Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) officers, 300 marshalls, and 80 security guards at a prohibitive cost of 146,000 Rand. Secondly, SAPS also suggested that the group orient the Pride away from its inclusive measures that I have outlined above, which

included holding the Pride in accessible space during the day (while transport is still running), not charging admission, and allowing community members to bring their own provisions into the space. Authorities had demanded that FEW charge an entrance fee as a means of crowd control, obtain a liquor license for alcohol to be sold at the venue. The organization pointed out that these conditions go against the ethos of accessibility. The authorities wanted to ban cooler boxes in order to limit the intake of alcohol and thus minimize the 'risk of chaos' (see Forum for the Empowerment of Women 2016).

For their own part, FEW points to the increasing state distrust and attempts to manage protest and dissent as being at the heart of these measures (De Barros 2016). By imposing impossible-to-meet conditions, the South African police service ensures that the event cannot happen, and thus its attendant politics struggle to gain grounding. Furthermore, for the organizers, this was not just a matter of finances; this was also about controlling the extent to which Black queer life submits to state management and control. I would also like to add that there was perhaps a discomfort at the symbolic and material nature of Black queer bodies, occupying space, particularly in large numbers (as the event has increased in popularity). Perhaps it is the Black queer body, particularly Black queer women and gender non-conforming subjects, that are the unruly subjects. Their sheer existence and desire to claim space and critique the state make the event and its participants unruly and disruptive.

### Race, sexuality and security
Looking at the relationship between Soweto Pride and other Pride events helps to further illuminate negotiations of vernacular security as they relate more boldly to issues of race. In 2016, the white male, elite-dominated Johannesburg (Jo'burg) Pride was held in Melrose Arch, an exclusive, up-market development. While admission was free, food and drinks needed to be purchased in that space. Since these were night-time

events, transportation was also an issue. Twitter commentary from a variety of attendees remarked that the event felt like attending a European Pride event, making some black attendees feel like strangers in their own land. Excluded from Jo'burg Pride, black queer people, who are not privileged with means, are now also left without the Soweto Pride festivities.

Ironically, the decision made by Jo'burg Pride to hold the event in Melrose Arch was a result of the same constraints placed on the Soweto Pride organizers by the City of Johannesburg, Emergency Services and SAPS. Jo'burg Pride organizers specifically cited the untenable costs of hosting open air accessible Prides as the reason for the relocation to Melrose Arch instead of other venues, such as Mary Fitzgerald Square in the more centrally located Newtown (Mamba 2016). While Soweto Pride organizers resisted the commodification and coercive practices of the state, the Jo'burg Pride organizers appear to have capitulated in the name of safety and leisure. But important questions must be asked: For which queer bodies was this safety of greatest concern? Who has the right of pleasure and leisure in certain spaces? It seems that when queer bodies are visible as consumers, they can be managed as upscale subjects they are both visible and protected by the state. In this way, the state uses the apparatus of security to produce acceptable LGBT citizenship (up-scale, predominantly white, male and consumptive) and police more unruly forms of LGBT citizenship (poor/working class, predominantly black and female).

In 2017, the organizers of Soweto Pride reached a compromise with SAPS about the categorization of risk for the event. This compromise allowed the event to resume after its 2016 cancellation. According to Nombande, "Because last year the event was cancelled, we felt that we still want to be able to organize our Pride without the state imposing some of the things on us…This year, we had to negotiate with them…because we need Pride, especially in the townships, so they re-categorized us to a low-risk event if we

agreed to stop allowing people to bring their own alcohol…Pride is a protest, it is a march which will claim the streets of Soweto. We are hoping people can come in numbers to attend the march and claim their streets" (van Niekerk, 2017). For FEW, having the event necessitated compromising on allowing attendees to bring their own alcohol. However, FEW refused to compromise on an admission fee, it was clear that their Pride event was embedded in the politics of claiming and making space. In the process of making space, (in)security from the state and community is reconfigured into a valuable form of vernacular security for black LGBT South Africans.

## Conclusion

Three conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing discussion. First, we must consider security not as an already given set of conditions but rather as a set of concerns that animate a specific set of strategies. The strategies are negotiated by various actors within a social, economic, and political field. While state-level practices of security are often assumed to be the most effective, the above case study suggests that even when state-level concerns intersect with more local concerns, the broader political economy shaping these strategies, and they ways in which these strategies are enacted, may differ significantly. If security is taken to mean a set of concerns rather than a fixed set of conditions, then our understanding of the agency, creativity, and specificity of the strategies deployed by local communities to navigate these concerns, is enriched.

Second, understandings of security must go beyond a focus on physical bodies to interrogate how black queer South Africans must be provided a sense of security to have the freedom, safety, and affirmation to form, re-form, develop, and evolve. While the securitization of the physical body may be a precursor, our notion of security cannot stop there, for security must account for the symbolic and discursive as well as practical. For example, the consideration of black LGBT+ security must consider questions of

engagement in cultural practices as opportunities for expressions of vernacular security.

Third, this case study highlights that when understanding security for minority and/or vulnerable populations, like black and LGBT+ communities, we must decentralize notions of security as such communities do not always have access to the protections that states provide or choose not to access such protections. Black and LGBTQ+ people often navigate a set of locally and socially-specific concerns that require that they must be resourceful and strategic. If we do not understand these local strategies of adaptation, we fail to fully recognize the agency and resourcefulness that such communities display when responding to shifting political, economic and social relations.

Questions abound as to what effective and inclusive justice and security service provision could look like in South Africa. While advances have been made in rights and representation across the racial divide in South Africa, there remain crucial fault lines, deeply embedded in government practices and social norms, that continue to delineate between male and female, black and white and heterosexual and queer spaces. Across the African continent, it might be best to see forms of state recognition as necessary, but hardly sufficient, condition for effective and inclusive security. Perhaps more controversially, Tushabe (2013) finds in their forthcoming work that state recognition does little to help the most vulnerable gender and sexuality non-conforming Africans. Instead, such recognition simply adds additional state regulation to intimate practices, and privileges some African LGBT+ individuals (those whose practices allow them to be visible as 'gay' or 'lesbian') to the exclusion of other African queer folks, whose practices and ways of knowing fail to conform to the global LGBT model. Ossome (2013) argues that contemporary African LGBT+ organizing, and the forms of state recognition that emerge from it, are simply class-based movements benefiting a small cisgender male elite, able to obtain and manipulate the forms of visibility required by the state for their benefit. We

might see the cancellation of 2016 Soweto Pride within the twin concerns raised by Tushabe (2013) and Ossome (2013), that the state recognizes a particular kind of LGBT subjectivity, while suppressing another.

## Notes

[1] In this essay the term "queer" popular in academic circles is used as an all encompassing term for gender and sexual non-conformity. I use it interchangeably with the term LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, plus) a term more popular in NGO and governmental circles. The + suggests the inclusivity of a range of identities such as Intersex, Queer, and Questioning which might exist on the gender and sexuality spectrum. My use of both of the terms is meant to express the lack of consensus regarding which term(s) best describe the LGBT+ community and create the conditions to make change.

[2] Basic data taken from Wikipedia based on the 2011 census data.

[3] While it is common in many areas of the world to have women specific LGBT organizations it is true that across Africa this has tended to be less common. However, cleavages between women and men, trans and non-trans LGBT constituencies do exist outside of South Africa and cannot be said to be produced primarily by a history of racialization, although that is an important factor to consider in LGBT organizing that makes South Africa distinct from other countries. Cisgender gay and bisexual men are more visible in the movement but the reasons for this visibility seem to be more about economic access and patriarchal notions of women's sexuality (Ossome 2013; Mbugua 2013; Makahamadze and Murungi 2013).

[4] The "Pink Rand," like the "Pink Pound" or the "Pink Dollar" is meant to refer to the imagined spending power possessed by members of the LGBT+ community in South Africa. It is often classed and raced in a way that excludes all but the most privileged members of the black LGBT+ community.

[5] MSM (men who have sex with men) is often used in public health to describe potentially at risk populations for HIV without resorting to identity markers such as gay or bisexual since it is acknowledged that a significant percentage of men who have sex with men that could potentially be at risk do not identity as gay or bisexual.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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