

**En La Vida: A Glimpse into the Life of Queer Latine Folks in Chicago during the 1990s**

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**Senior Honors Thesis**



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## Introduction

¿Estamos terminando nuestro primer año de existencia y que hemos actualizado? Y también es un buen punto para preguntarnos “¿A donde vamos?” Este año ha sido uno de gran significancia para nuestra comunidad. Una publicación que refleja los pensamientos y deseos de la comunidad lesbian, gay y transexual latina de Chicago ha nacido.<sup>1</sup>

(We are finishing our first year of existence and what have we accomplished? And, it is also a good point to ask ourselves “Where are we going?” This year has been a momentous one for our community. A publication that reflects the thoughts and desires of the Latino lesbian, gay and transsexual community in Chicago has been born.)

— Edgar Arrendondo, *Opiniones* columnist of *En La Vida*

Gay press in Chicago has exerted a prolific career over time. Formed due to the negative depiction and reporting of queer folk in non-queer newspapers, queer publications began to form in the 1950s and 1960s. After the 1969 Stonewall uprising in New York City, queer press proliferated in the 1970s and the variety of newspapers that arose began to specialize in serving different subsets or issues in the queer community, from focusing on specific identities or focusing on publishing only news stories to publishing entertainment stories. In Chicago during the 1980s, the most prominent queer magazine was *GayLife Magazine*. *GayLife* covered local, national, and international news along with entertainment and sports in Chicago. However, due to the publisher Chuck Renslow’s role as a business owner and leader of a Democratic gay organization, many believed Renslow wielded too much influence over the community.<sup>2</sup>

The queer newspaper *Windy City Times* arose as an alternative to *GayLife*. Founded the sales manager of *GayLife* Bob Bearden, a part-time reporter for *GayLife* and Bearden’s partner Jeff McCourt, and managing editor of *GayLife* Tracy Baim, *Windy City Times* was launched on September 26, 1985.<sup>3</sup> However, conflict of ownership arose again, specifically between McCourt

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<sup>1</sup> Edgar Arrendondo. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 14, August 1997: *Where are we going?*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045187](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045187).

<sup>2</sup> Tracy Baim “Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 33: Windy City Times, edited by William B. Kelley, Jorjet Harper and Tracy Baim.” 2012 Chicago, IL: Prairie Avenue Productions. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044934](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044934).



and Baim. Baim claimed that McCourt did not have a journalism background, only had previously written gossip and entertainment news.<sup>3</sup> This conflict over news coverage was expressed when McCourt and Baim wrote separate endorsement editorials endorsing different candidates for the 1987 Chicago aldermanic campaign.<sup>4</sup> After Bearden left the publication due to his AIDS diagnosis and struggle with the disease, Baim attempted to buy McCourt out of the publication.<sup>5</sup> McCourt refused and Tracy Baim went on to start the newsletter *Outlines* in 1987.<sup>6</sup> After a lengthy “newspaper war” between the dominant queer publications of Chicago, Baim’s publication company Lambda Publications, went on to buy *Windy City Times* in 2000 and merge it with *Outlines*.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Lambda Publications furthered their publication interests and published other newspapers that served different subgroups of the queer community, such as *BLACKlines* and *En La Vida*.<sup>8</sup> Baim appeared to be following in her mother Joy Darrow’s footsteps, a Chicagoan reporter with a lengthy career in journalism, and she was the managing editor of the Chicago Defender, the country’s only Black daily newspaper, from 1972-1984.<sup>9</sup> Baim and Darrow are both white Chicagoans.

As part of Tracy Baim’s publishing empire in Chicago, the newspaper *En La Vida* offers a revealing window into the distinctive preoccupations and concerns of this subgroup of the queer community it aimed to serve, illuminating how Latine members of the queer community were defining themselves. *En La Vida: voces de lesbianas, gays, bisexuales y transgéneros*

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<sup>3</sup> Baim “Gay Press, Gay Power”

<sup>4</sup> Baim “Gay Press, Gay Power”

<sup>5</sup> Baim “Gay Press, Gay Power”

<sup>6</sup> Baim “Gay Press, Gay Power”

<sup>7</sup> NLGJA | The Association of LGBTQ Journalists, “Tracy Baim,” NLGJA | The Association of LGBTQ Journalists, last modified August 21, 2014, <https://www.nlgja.org/blog/2014/08/tracy-baim/>.

<sup>8</sup> Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, “TRACY BAIM,” Chicago LGBT Hall of Fame, accessed October 9, 2022, <https://chicagolgbthalloffame.org/baim-tracy/>.

<sup>9</sup> “Joy Darrow, 2018,” Chicago Women’s Journalism Hall of Fame, last modified August 15, 2018, <https://cwjhof.org/inductees/joy-darrow-2018/>.



*latinos* was a Chicagoan queer Latine newspaper published by Lambda Publications from 1996 to 2002. The English-Spanish language newspaper aimed to serve Chicago's queer Latine community by printing newspaper content, from news to op-eds to features, important and relevant to the queer Latine community in Chicago. While the main geographical focus of the newspaper was Chicago, *En La Vida* also featured national and international news. In *la primera edición* (the first edition) of *En La Vida* published in July 1996, the newspaper contextualized the need for its existence in a note entitled *bienvenidos* note penned by the publisher and editor Tracy Baim which read:

“Why yet another separate publication? In meetings with Latino gays and lesbians, the majority of people said there was a need for increased coverage of issues, news and features specifically about Latino/a issues within the lesbian community. A mainstream gay and lesbian publication can only dedicate a small amount of space to the specific needs of any sub-group within the community.”<sup>10</sup>

As stated, the newspaper aimed to serve the Latine community by writing and publishing content that is important to the Latine community as such content was not often provided by mainstream white queer publications. The frequent exclusion of “marginal” groups from these white queer spaces was nothing new, however, and in response, queer Latine Chicagoans had created culturally based queer associations. During the seventies and eighties, bars were a large part of queer culture as they provided spaces for queer folk to express themselves and meet other queer folks in a safe space outside of a non queer Chicago.<sup>11</sup> Popular nightlife places queer Latine people would frequent in Chicago included La Cueva, a popular Latine club located in the Mexican enclave of La Villita, and Circuito, a Latin Night held at Circuit Night Club in Boystown.<sup>12</sup> For those who were less interested in the nightlife scene, several organizations had

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<sup>10</sup> Tracy Baim, “En La Vida, no. 1, July 1996: *bienvenidos*” 1996., edited by Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044998](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044998).

<sup>11</sup> Jacob Pieczynski, “Disappeared: Chicago's Lost Lesbian Bars,” Jacob Pieczynski, accessed October 9, 2022, <https://www.jacobpieczynski.com/disappeared-chicago-s-lost-lesbian->.



also been founded to create space for queer Latine people. In particular, queer Latinas became an active social force as seen through organizations such as Latina lesbians en nuestro ambiente (LLENA). Founded in Chicago in 1988, LLENA aimed to create a space for Latine lesbians who were often left out of white, middle-class lesbian spaces in Chicago from 1988 to 1992.<sup>12</sup> Other organizations that were active during the publication period of *En La Vida* were Amigas Latinas, founded in 1995 and still in existence today, a Latina lesbian, bisexual, and transgender advocacy organization, and the Association of Latino Men for Action (ALMA), founded in 1989 and still in existence today, that aimed to provide a safe space and advocate for gay, bisexual, queer, and questioning Latino men.<sup>13</sup> *En La Vida* is situated as another alternative space for queer Latine people in Chicago. As such, analysis of this newspaper will aid in answering questions such as: What was it like to be a queer Latine person living in Chicago during the 1990s? How did the queer Latine community relate with larger queer communities? What were the queer Latine community's values, interests, beliefs, and struggles?

Notable historians that touch upon these questions and have contributed to the history of the queer Latine Chicagoan community include Lourdes Torres and Ramon H. Rivera Severa. Most relevantly, Torres has written about the work of queer Latine organizing in Chicago, and Severa has written about queer Latine artistic performance and nightlife across North America.<sup>14</sup>

In "Compañeras in the Middle Toward a History of Latina Lesbian Organizing in Chicago,"

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<sup>12</sup> Yasmin Nair, "'Out at CHM' Looks at Queer Latinos - Windy City Times News," Windy City Times, last modified March 10, 2010, <https://windycitytimes.com/m/APPreirect.php?AID=25776>.

<sup>13</sup> Lourdes Torres. "Compañeras in the Middle: Toward a History of Latina Lesbian Organizing in Chicago"

(GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies. 2014) 20. 42. 10.1215/10642684-2370360. ; <https://www.almachicago.org/about-alma>

<sup>14</sup> Vocolo Radio 91.1FM, "How Professor Lourdes Torres is Rewriting Latinx Narratives...", Vocolo Radio 91.1FM, last modified March 23, 2022, <https://vocalo.org/chi-sounds-like-lourdes-torres/>; The University of Texas at Austin College of Fine Arts, "Ramon H. Rivera Severa," The University of Texas at Austin College of Fine Arts, <https://finearts.utexas.edu/about/people/rivera-servera-ramon-h#:~:text=Dr.-,Ram%C3%B3n%20H.,University%20of%20Texas%20at%20Austin.>



Torres highlights how scholarship on lesbian organizing in the Midwest neglects to engage with the history of Latina lesbian organizing.<sup>15</sup> Torres then explores the role of Latina lesbians as agents of change in a “multiracial history of grassroots organizing that has yet to be written.”<sup>16</sup> In “History in Drag: Latina/o Queer Affective Circuits in Chicago,” Servera wrote about the development of a queer Latine public in Chicago with the role of the bar La Cueva and drag queen Miss Ketty.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, he highlights how “performances of queer Latinidad and their limited circulation through non-Latina/o Chicago LGBT circles as an example of Latina/o history’s general marginalization within larger mainstream projects that memorialize and remember queer, mostly white, lives in Chicago, the Midwest, and beyond.”<sup>18</sup>

A key work the two historians wrote along with Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, was a chapter entitled “Toward An Archive of Latina/o Queer Chicago: Art, Politics and Performance” published in the book *Out in Chicago: LGBT History At The Crossroads*. In this work, the scholars provide a thorough analysis of the queer Latine community, and state that “hidden behind the unassumable facades of marginal geographies rendered mute by the LBGT mainstream, the history Latina/o queer Chicago often recedes into the realm of invisibility.”<sup>19</sup> The historians lament a lack of recognition by queer historians of queer Latine people. Moreover, they point out how in the limited scholarship that does cover the queer Latine community, the Midwest is overlooked as well. “When accounts have focused specifically on queer Latinos/as, they’ve rarely landed in Chicago, offering us instead a bicoastal map that almost exclusively focuses on the well-rehearsed triumvirate of Latino/a queer mythology: New York, Los Angeles,

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<sup>15</sup> Torres. “Compañeras in the Middle” p. 42

<sup>16</sup> Torres. “Compañeras in the Middle” p. 42

<sup>17</sup> Rivera-Servera, “History in Drag,” *The Latina/o Midwest Reader*, 185

<sup>18</sup> Rivera-Servera, “History in Drag,” *The Latina/o Midwest Reader*, 185

<sup>19</sup> Lourdes Torres, Ramon H. Rivera Severa, and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, “Toward An Archive of Latina/o Queer Chicago: Art, Politics and Performance,” in *Out in Chicago: LGBT History at the Crossroads*, ed. Jill Austin and Jennifer Briers (Chicago: Chicago History Museum, 2011), 130



and San Francisco.”<sup>20</sup> In this work, the scholars provide an introduction into various queer Latine organizations and people who have made a significant impact in the community to “circulate this archival knowledge to new generations who seek the wisdom of the past to reimagine their queer futures.”<sup>21</sup> Notably, they make a brief reference to Baim’s work with the queer community in Chicago through publishing, and include a photo of the newspaper *En La Vida*, but don’t delve any deeper. These scholars have laid the groundwork for this study by conducting extensive oral interviews and archival research to illuminate queer Latine activism and expression through art. I aim to build upon this extensive existing scholarship and explore what this previously neglected publication *En La Vida* can tell us about the lived experiences of the diverse community of queer Latine folk in Chicago from 1996 to 2002.

In total there were 68 issues of *En La Vida* published from 1996 to 2002. Issues of *En La Vida* were published monthly, except for the month of February 1997 and the month of May 1999 which didn’t publish issues. In selecting which parts of the newspaper to analyze for this study, I decided to focus my attention on the content that appeared most frequently and for the longest duration as these types of stories presumably were the most important, and the longevity allows for an analysis of change over time in terms of the newspaper’s content. Based on these criteria, the advertisements and columns stand out. In particular, the *Opiniones* column, and the *Tierras Distantes* column devoted to international news stood out. The evidence found in these columns provided the information necessary to understand questions of queer Latine folk’s experiences, how the queer Latine community was situated in the larger mainstream

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<sup>20</sup> Lourdes Torres, Ramon H. Rivera Severa, and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, "Toward An Archive of Latina/o Queer Chicago: Art, Politics and Performance," 127

<sup>21</sup> Lourdes Torres, Ramon H. Rivera Severa, and Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes, "Toward An Archive of Latina/o Queer Chicago: Art, Politics and Performance," 150



predominantly white queer Chicago community, and what the queer Latine community's interests, desires and needs were.

Chapter 1: Incomplete Queer Latine Geographies through the placement of Advertisements, argues that *En La Vida* negotiated its financial interest through the selected advertisements, and how this complicates an understanding of the publication's role of serving the queer Latine Chicagoan community solely. Chapter 2: Voices from the Queer Latine Community Speak Out, argues that the *Opiniones* column best demonstrated the perspectives of those from the queer Latine community as it granted a platform for queer Latine community members to express themselves through writing, providing the best insight into *En La Vida*'s role of supporting the community through publishing this content. Chapter 3: The Complications of Making International Queer Connections in Latin America, argues that the international new column *Tierras Distantes* attempted to connect the histories of queer Latine Chicagoans and queer Latin Americans by publishing about Latin American countries, but Wockner's control over the column also complicated how relevant and helpful the news in *Tierras Distantes* was for local readers. Together, these sections of the newspaper, illuminate how *En La Vida*'s role in serving the queer Latine community was not clear-cut and imperfect, the need for the publication to maintain its finances through advertisements and the publication granting space to the community in the *Tierras Distantes* column demonstrated how compromises could be potentially harmful to the queer Latine community and failed to accurately capture the needs through the content published. Yet when *En La Vida* succeeded in serving the community by granting a platform for queer Latine voices through the *Opiniones* column, it uplifted itself as a great resource for the queer Latine community in Chicago from 1996 to 2002.

## **Chapter 1:**



## **Incomplete Queer Latine Geographies through the placement of Advertisements**

The advertisements examined in this chapter and published in *En La Vida* can be placed into four categories: Personals/Classifieds, Community Advertisements, Health Services, and Immigration. Together these advertisements captured aspects of the queer Latine community in Chicago between 1996 and 2002 and appeared most frequently in the entire run of *En La Vida*. This chapter argues that while *En La Vida*'s intended audience was queer Latine Chicagoans, financial interests, as reflected in the changes to advertisement content over time, complicate any straightforward understanding of the publication as serving the queer Latine Chicagoan community solely.

Though advertisements published (and sold) in *En La Vida* reflect the publisher's assessment of Latine people's wants, needs, and value structures, it is possible to analyze the personals, classifieds, and general advertisements to understand the lived experiences of Chicagoans across the intersections of race, class, gender and sexual identity. Personals offer insights into the sexual desires of the queer Latine community through partners sought. Classified and general advertisements hint at queer Latine spaces in the community, the connections formed by local businesses and organizations, and the need for health services due to the AIDS crisis. Such evidence of a queer Latine community in Chicago is complicated, however, by the editorial decisions of the newspaper that restricted sexually explicit content to the Personals/Classifieds, limited advertisements to businesses that were profitable national or non-queer Latine businesses, promoted the health services of controversial figures, and advertised resources that were inaccessible to the queer Latine community.

As seen through the advertisement rates and low yearly subscription costs, *En La Vida* likely gained most of its revenue from advertising with further financial support from its parent



company Lambda Publications. In *En La Vida*'s founding year, advertising revenue in queer publications had risen significantly. A study by Mulryan/Nash, an agency in New York that "specializes in marketing to homosexuals," found that spending from April 1, 1995, through March 31, 1996, rose from \$73.7 \$61.6 million to \$73.7 million.<sup>22</sup> This increase in advertisement revenue stemmed from national businesses catering to queer consumers, which was more of a business tactic rather than a political one.<sup>23</sup> The increase in national business advertisements led to a slight decrease in personal, classified, and local business advertisements in regional queer publications. A company that played a role in facilitating the placement of national advertisements in local queer publications was Rivendell Media, described at the time as the nation's leading LGBT media-placement firm.<sup>24</sup> *En La Vida* publisher Tracy Baim forged a connection with the company and was a strong supporter of the aid that it brought to her publications.<sup>25</sup> Baim's most successful publication *Windy City Times* (formerly known as *OUTLINES*), was part of Rivendell's National Gay Newspaper Guild, a group of the nation's most widely read regional gay publications. On Rivendell Media, Baim stated, "Their success is our success. When they experience weaker periods, it affects gay media significantly."<sup>26</sup> Overall, Baim has described advertisements as a "wise business decision" as it helps strengthen queer newspapers.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Stuart Elliott. "Ad Spending Rises in Gay Publications." *New York Times*, Aug 22, 1996, Late Edition (East Coast). <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/ad-spending-rises-gay-publications/docview/430641097/se-2>.

<sup>23</sup> William M. O'Barr, "Niche Markets: Gay Consumers," Project MUSE, accessed March 19, 2023, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/468054>.

<sup>24</sup> Chuck Colbert. 2012. *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 34: Advertising: The Business of Newspapers*, edited by William B. Kelley, Jorjet Harper and Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Prairie Avenue Productions. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044936](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044936).

<sup>25</sup> Colbert. 2012. *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 34: Advertising: The Business of Newspapers*

<sup>26</sup> Colbert. 2012. *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 34: Advertising: The Business of Newspapers*

<sup>27</sup> Colbert. 2012. *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 34: Advertising: The Business of Newspapers*



*En La Vida's* most expensive advertisement was a full pager that cost \$200. The least expensive was a 1/12 page advertisement that cost \$30.<sup>28</sup> Advertisements likely raked in the most money for the publication as *En La Vida* had the lowest yearly subscription prices out of all Lambda Publications.<sup>29</sup> An annual subscription cost \$10 from 1996 to 1997, dropped to \$8 for a “special rate” from 1998 to 2000, and then rose to \$10 from 2001 to 2002.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, Lambda Publication’s founding newspaper, *OUTLINES*, had a \$32 yearly subscription cost in 1996. In 2002 when the publication was renamed the *Windy City Times*, it boasted an annual subscription rate of \$89.<sup>31</sup> Other Lambda Publications, such as *OUTLINES/Windy City Times*, were often advertised in *En La Vida*, likely to promote the publication conglomerate and to point readers toward the company’s more lucrative publications.

Advertising representatives decided on the ad content for *En La Vida*. The Índice (Index) of each issue of *En La Vida* listed those who worked on that issue, indicating a significant turnover among advertising representatives.<sup>32</sup> Only Terri S. Klinsky was the exception. Klinsky worked as an advertising representative from the inception of the paper until August 2001, when she replaced Mona Noreiga as assistant editor.<sup>33</sup> As an advertising representative for *En La Vida*, Klinsky was also the advertising representative for *OUTLINES* and *BLACKlines*. On occasion, she reported news for *OUTLINES*.<sup>34</sup> As Klinsky played the leading role in coordinating advertising and had

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<sup>28</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: Ad2 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044998](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044998).

<sup>29</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: Ad2 1996.

<sup>30</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: Ad2 1996.,

<sup>31</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 68, February 2002: Ad2 2002., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046933](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046933).

<sup>32</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: [Frontmatter] 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044998](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044998).

<sup>33</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 62, August 2001: Ad2 2001., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046738](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046738).

<sup>34</sup> Klinsky, Terri, Israel Wright, and Tracy Baim. 1999. *OUTLINES the Weekly Voice of the Gay, Lesbian, Bi & Trans Community Serving the Community since 1987 June 30, 1999: 300,000 at PRIDE 1999 Sun Breaks through in Time*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2635449](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2635449).



strong ties to the publication company, this also suggests that advertisements in *En La Vida* were a part of the more extensive corporate workings of Lambda Publications.

### *Personals Ads/Classifieds*

The Personals were often located near the back of each issue and took up about half a page; the other half were Classified Advertisements. The Personals featured advertisements placed by individuals seeking to find and reconnect with specific individuals or to make new connections with people for companionship – whether for sex, romance or friendship. The Personals was the briefest advertisement section in *En La Vida*. The nature of advertisements sold in the Personals section -- and the publication's method of monetizing advertisements by word count -- may have made these advertisements less lucrative than others. The first 20 words of Personals were free, with each additional word costing 25 cents.<sup>35</sup> *En La Vida* also offered advertisers the choice of soliciting and receiving reader responses in written form, by mail, or by voicemail. A fee was attached to each service, with charges varying depending on the amount of mail or voicemails received.<sup>36</sup>

An increase in national business advertisements in the 1990s led to a slight decrease in personal classifieds and local business advertisements in regional queer publications. Yet before *En La Vida*'s publication run, personals and classifieds were primary sources of advertising income for queer newspapers.<sup>37</sup> On the utility of personals and classified advertisements in illuminating the desires of the queer Latine community, some scholars state that studies focused

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<sup>35</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 26, August 1996: Ad2 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045602](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045602).

<sup>36</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 26, August 1996: Ad2 1996

<sup>37</sup> O'Barr, "Niche Markets: Gay Consumers"



on personal advertisements are limited due to the potential selection bias of those who choose to advertise, yet patterns do emerge.<sup>38</sup>

*En La Vida* published Personals categorized as Men, Women, and Mix & Match. Each section included advertisements for those looking for Men, Women and those from multiple genders, respectively. *En La Vida*'s ad policy statement regulated the placement and content of personal ads in this publication. It was made clear that individuals should not solicit sex in Personals, and cautioned both advertisers and readers to be careful when sharing personal information and meeting new people. Most editions also included this legal disclaimer: "Chicago Police vice officers sometimes respond to suspect ads to uncover illegal activity. Please note: sex -for-money- agreements (even if no sex occurs) are illegal."<sup>39</sup>

Those who took out ads explicitly sought sex and detailed their sexual desires for readers. The May 1997 edition illustrates the structure, language, and nature of the sexualized requests published in *En La Vida*.

GWM, 30, 6'2'', 180, wants to get together with black/hispanic men, 18-30, for sex only

GWM 35 hairy latino passionate top, hung, friendly, masculine looking to meet BM for friendship, dating. Plus for light skinned very tall hung heavy cummer, BM. Plus looking for most hairy bear in Chicagoland.<sup>40</sup>

Most Personals followed the format above. They began with the self-identification of those searching and concluded with desired characteristics of prospective partners. The Personal ads utilized abbreviations such as GWM (Gay, white, male) and SBHW (Single, Bisexual, Hispanic,

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<sup>38</sup> Sánchez FJ, Greenberg ST, Liu WM, Vilain E. Reported Effects of Masculine Ideals on Gay Men. *Psychol Men Masc.* 2009 Jan;10(1):73-87. doi: 10.1037/a0013513. PMID: 20628534; PMCID: PMC2902177.

<sup>39</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 2, August 1996: Ad5 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045396](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045396).

<sup>40</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 11, May 1997: Ad9 1997., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045092](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045092).



Woman).<sup>41</sup> Nowhere in *En La Vida* were abbreviations explained. This meant active readers of the Personals were either already familiar with the coded language or left to make assumptions about one's sexual needs and wants.

Personals were often explicit about linking race and sexual desire. Many white individuals in the Men section actively sought queer Hispanic and Black men. In contrast, the Women's ads were less racialized and rarely provided demographic details. Instead, many opened with humorous ledes such as "Ugly Bitch psych! Get your attention?" or "Tired of cheaters, airheads?"<sup>42</sup> Other Personals in the women's section sought less sexualized relationships:

A sensitive, spiritually developed, well-educated woman, capable of profound levels of joy; drawn by a coherent exchange of ideas and the lucid beauty of a curious mind ... Maturity is important; age and race are not."<sup>43</sup>

Do you dream of rushing home from work, opening the front door and saying, "Honey, I'm home"? Me too! GWF 30's n/s, long hair ISO a n/s lipstick lesbian. ISO relationship.<sup>44</sup>

The Mix/Match section was the briefest and sometimes non-existent, possibly due to low submissions of those seeking multiple types of people or due to stigma towards transgender folks. Most editions of *En La Vida* did not even feature of Mix/Match section within the Personals.

Many advertisers identified themselves as white. Few Latine people submitted advertisements that desired the companionship of other Latine people. Even fewer ads were in

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<sup>41</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 11, May 1997: Ad9 1997.

<sup>42</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 11, May 1997: Ad9 1997.

<sup>43</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 54, December 2000: Ad6 2000., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046496](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046496).

<sup>44</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 56, February 2001: Ad5 2001., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046547](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046547).



Spanish, with Personals consisting of only a few or even no Spanish-language ads in each issue.<sup>45</sup> The Spanish-language Personals were similar to those in English, and they followed the same structure and expressed similar desires. For example,

Busco Mi Otra Mitad Soy Mexicano Guapo, 31 anos pelo Negro, Chiva, Vigote Tu Entre 24 y 38 anos Hispano, Italiano.<sup>46</sup> [Looking for my other half I'm a handsome Mexican. 31 years old black hair, Goat Vigote you between 24 and 38 years Hispano, Italian].

Aver Que Muchachas, Moyer Latina, 24 anos, gordita y bonita, buscando latinas feminitas 25-35 para amistad.<sup>47</sup> [Let's see what girls, Latina women, 24 years old, chubby and pretty, looking for feminine Latinas 25-35 for friendship].

The presence of so many white advertisers with adequate financial means within a predominantly queer Latine audience complicates any understanding of *En La Vida* as solely serving the queer Latine community in Chicago. Those who submitted Personals indicate that some in the queer community explicitly racialized queer Latine people while others still turned to *En La Vida* to fulfill their desire to find a queer Latine companion. Though the Personals were a small segment, they explicitly documented people's sexual desires. When read alongside the Women's sections and Personals in Spanish, we can see the range of queer people's desires.

Finally, it is noteworthy that nearly every Personals section included a small advertisement for "Explosive Erotic Fantasies" placed by the business Eruption.<sup>48</sup> It is unclear whether Eruption only wanted to pay for a small-sized ad or if *En La Vida* did not want to advertise their services on their main pages for legal or public relations reasons. For the duration of the publication's

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<sup>45</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 15, September 1997: Ad5 1997., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045221](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045221).

<sup>46</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 63, September 2001: Ad4 2001., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046794](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046794).

<sup>47</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 61, July 2001: Ad6 2001., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046732](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046732).

<sup>48</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 12, June 1997: Ad6 1997., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045124](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045124).



existence, Eruptions's advertisements only appeared in the section of *En La Vida* devoted to readers' sexual desires.

### *Classifieds: Work Advertisements*

On the same page as the Personals were the Classifieds which also sent out calls for people. Unlike Personals, Classifieds were not advertisements from individuals but rather from businesses. Classifieds had a word count of 30, and the rate for a classified ad of thirty words was \$10.<sup>49</sup> There was also a discounted rate to be featured in three issues for \$27 instead of the list price of \$30.<sup>50</sup> The Classifieds in *En La Vida* almost solely featured white-collar job opportunities and calls for research participants. These often highlighted the need for bilingual services or the lack of people of color in their field of study. In the July 1997 issue, the Classifieds advertisements included: "Disability Consultants, Inc., a Hispanic-Owned Corporation, currently has two Administrative Assistant positions available. Both positions require bilingual (English/Spanish)" and "Women's Health and Life Experience Study. LESBIANS!! Earn \$20-25 by participating in a university study on health/life experiences. If any ONE of the following describes you – earn \$10,000/yr or less OR H.S. education or less OR age 18-23 or over 50 OR a woman of color, please call."<sup>51</sup> These presented opportunities for queer Latine people, especially those seeking to diversify their fields.

Classifieds in newspapers often feature content similar to what is expressed in the Personals. It is unclear why *En La Vida* separated these sections. Perhaps, Lambda Publications wanted to aid in providing opportunities but did not want to publish *too many* sex-related advertisements, instead filling their pages with more "respectable" advertisements. For other queer

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<sup>49</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: Ad2 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045000](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045000).

<sup>50</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: Ad2 1996.,

<sup>51</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 12, June 1997: Ad6



publications nationwide, a shift to more “respectable” advertisements was connected to increasing advertisement revenue that catered to queer consumers. According to Rivendell Media, as more businesses were willing to advertise in queer publications, many queer publications attempted to appeal to a wider audience to gain further advertising. In doing so, the publications moved away from sexually explicit and political subject matter.<sup>52</sup> Publisher Baim also stated that national businesses expressed concern about where their advertisements appeared in the paper and that for these businesses, “sex ads were also a turnoff, even though many non-gay alternative papers also ran highly sexual images.”<sup>53</sup>

The confinement of sexually explicit content to the Personals section and the advertising of white-collar job opportunities in the Classifieds paralleled a national shift that saw a decrease in the advertisement of sexually explicit Personals ads in favor of more financially lucrative promotions. Also, the advent of the internet during the 1990s opened doors to the burgeoning concept of online dating, with queer people utilizing America Online (AOL) chatrooms as an outlet to anonymously connect with other queer folks.<sup>54</sup> Yet, this shift in *En La Vida* from sexually explicit content to other advertisement revenue demonstrates how *En La Vida* conformed to general trends that favored more lucrative business advertising. Baim’s ties with Rivendell Media further supported viewing this advertisement shift as a business-motivated venture. *En La Vida* had to compromise aspects of connecting queer folks to maintain profitability from mainstream investors, demonstrating the limitations of understanding the expression of queer Latine folks’ desires in these Personal advertisements.

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<sup>52</sup> “Lesbian Publications Struggle for Survival in a Market Dominated by Gay Males.: MEDIA: MAGAZINES.” New York Times Company, last modified Dec 23.

<sup>53</sup> Colbert. 2012. *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 34: Advertising: The Business of Newspapers*

<sup>54</sup> Christian Grov et al., “Gay and Bisexual Men’s Use of the Internet: Research from the 1990s through 2013,” *The Journal of Sex Research* 51, no. 4 (2014):, doi:10.1080/00224499.2013.871626.



### *Ads from the Community*

Advertisements from the queer Latine Chicagoan community were the most varied. Businesses' and organizations' advertisements were scattered throughout the edition and ranged in size. The business advertisements selected for analysis in this chapter appeared most frequently in the publication, and some include businesses promoted in other community advertisements.

As a result of queer Latine people's multiple marginalized identities, many felt they must carve out spaces to create communities that foster safe spaces for their identities. This led to the creation of local queer Latine businesses and queer Latine-led organizations. In Chicago during the 1990s, this creation of spaces was seen through the emergence of one of the oldest Latine drag clubs in the country, La Cueva in Chicago, along with the founding of queer Latine organizations such as Amigas Latinas and the Association of Latinxs Motivating Action (ALMA). According to Urban Studies scholar Maryam Lashkari, queer spaces provided a platform to resist the different forms of oppression against queer identity. "Queer identities rely on the visibility of the queer subject in urban public space for their construction. Moreover, the presence of queer identities has transformed urban space." Queer Latine spaces aided in forming social and political networks throughout the city, creating queer geography of the landscape. Advertisements of such spaces, therefore, alerted readers to those establishments that would welcome and support the Queer Latine Chicagoans<sup>55</sup>

The community advertisements in *En La Vida* can be divided into those that offer "daytime" and "nighttime" services. Businesses offering daytime services include places such as Tania's, a Spanish and Cuban restaurant, and People Like Us, an exclusively gay and lesbian

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<sup>55</sup> Georgia State University Library, Special Collections & Archives, "Publications – Out in the Archives," Online Exhibits – Georgia State University Library, Special Collections & Archives, accessed March 19, 2023, <https://exhibits.library.gsu.edu/out-in-the-archives/finding-community/publications/>.



bookstore. These advertisements were straightforward, listing their services and contact information. Daytime services appeared less frequently than nighttime services. Yet, notably, daytime businesses not only appeared in their advertisements but were also mentioned in queer Latine organizations' advertisements for their events, demonstrating their role as gathering places for the community. An ad for the Association of Latin Men for Action's Annual Leadership Recognition Banquet noted that the April 1997 banquet would be held at Tania's Restaurant.<sup>56</sup> The following month, both Tania's Restaurant and People Like Us were listed as hosts to La Asociación de Hombres Latinos Motivando Accion's Gala.<sup>57</sup>

Businesses offering nighttime services, including bars and clubs, operated as social gathering spaces for queer people to meet and build community. Notably, the majority of the clubs that advertised their business highlight a Latin or Salsa Night.<sup>58</sup> Queer Latine people were often marginalized from predominately white clubs and bars in Chicago, as these places repeatedly refused to play requested Latin music.<sup>59</sup> When Bars and clubs advertised in *En La Vida*, they emphasized their inclusivity by highlighting the diversity of their entertainment programming.



<sup>56</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 10, April 1997: Ad6 1997., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045060](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045060).

<sup>57</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 11, May 1997: Front Cover 1997., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045063](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045063).

<sup>58</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 3, September 1996: Ad 1 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045729](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045729).

<sup>59</sup> Torres, "Compañeras in the Middle: Toward a History of Latina Lesbian Organizing in Chicago," 49



The frequent club advertisers Paris Dance, The Rainbow Room, and Madrigal, for instance, would highlight how they hosted, respectively, “Salsa Night Every Friday Night,” “Hot Salsa Every Saturday Night,” and “Los Más Caliente Bailadores De Chicago ... Domingo Bailadores 100% Latino” (The hottest dancers of Chicago ... Sunday Dancers 100% Latino).<sup>60</sup>

Another “daytime service” that is notable is Buenavida Immigration Services, which ran the same ad in almost every issue from July 1996 to June 1998, and it advertised legal counsel for Latine immigrants. The English headline read “Buenavida Immigration Services,” and the Spanish-language ad stated “Atendemos Casos de: Peticiones de residencia permanente, proceso de visa a través de Consulado O Bajo Solicitud in Chicago, Solicitud de Sostenimiento, Huellas Digitales, Notario Publico, Traducciones.” (We assist cases of: Permanent Residency, visa processing through the Consulate or Upon Request in Chicago, Affidavit Support, Fingerprints, Public Notary, and Translations).<sup>61</sup> A Spanish-language advertisement for immigration services reflected an increase in the number of Latin American immigrants locally and nationally. In the 1990s, 44% of all U.S. immigrants were of Latin American origin.<sup>62</sup> In Chicago, 39% of all immigrants were Latin American.<sup>63</sup> This advertisement was aimed at the Latine identity of queer Latine people, whose dual identities were often at the intersection of other advertisements.

These community advertisements aid the most in painting a picture of the queer Latine scene in 1990s Chicago. For queer Latine organizations to advertise themselves to those in the

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<sup>60</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 3, September 1996: Ad 1

<sup>61</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 6, December 1996: Ad2 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046641](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046641).

<sup>62</sup> Wallace E. Huffman, "Immigration in the U.S. Midwest During the 1990s: A Decade of Rapid Change -- Wallace E. Huffman - Changing Face | Migration Dialogue," Migration Dialogue, accessed December 5, 2022, <https://migration.ucdavis.edu/cf/more.php?id=11>.

<sup>63</sup> Huffman, "Immigration in the U.S. Midwest During the 1990s"



queer Latine community, instead of those outside of the community promoting their services, portrayed more accurately the community's desires and the social and political networking that formed among significant figures. Yet, who can advertise and who cannot? Purchasing advertisements was possibly too costly for some queer Latine businesses and organizations active in Chicago, especially grassroots ones. As a result, larger queer Latine organizations often did not advertise as they were already well-known and established in the community. Rather, they only advertised their galas and banquets, which were parties or benefit fundraisers that one often needed to pay to attend.<sup>64</sup> Consequently, more prominent organizations and businesses dominated *En La Vida*'s pages with their messages. The lack of advertisements demonstrated the need for queer Latine visibility in Chicago's public spaces and support Lashkari's assessment that queer public spaces were an outlet for resistance against the marginalization of queer people of color's identities as local people utilized these spaces for forming connections, and organizations utilized these spaces for meetings and fundraisers. Ultimately, these advertisements highlight those businesses in Chicago that were supportive and inclusive of queer Latine folk.

### *Advertisement of Health Services*

Advertisements that often took a full page – and even more than two pages – included health corporations such as healthcare centers and pharmaceutical companies. These advertisements occupied the most eye-catching placements, such as near the front of the issue or on the back cover. The advertisements that will be analyzed below appeared most frequently, notably during the period from 1998 to 2002, during the persisting AIDS epidemic and when the annual subscription price for *En La Vida* notably dropped.

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<sup>64</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 22, April 1998: ALMA's annual Noche de Gala set for Saturday, April 25 1998., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045476](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045476).



In the 1990s, AIDS was ravaging the queer community. According to *The Chicago Tribune's* 1996 article on World AIDS day in Chicago, there were 18,315 reported cases of AIDS since 1981 in Illinois. A total of 11,919 people in the state died of the disease from 1981 to 1996.<sup>65</sup> According to historian Timothy Stewart-Winter, "the politics of AIDS often came down to money and access to resources." In Chicago, existing segregation patterns worsened inequities in the availability of resources to combat AIDS. Moreover, Stewart-Winter argued that the conflict over AIDS funding was a source of friction between Mayor Richard M. Daley and queer activists.

One of the most prominent health advertisements was for Howard Brown Health Center, an LGBTQ+ organization that provides healthcare and social services. The Howard Brown Health Center purchased an ad for almost every single issue of *En La Vida*. The first ad, featured in *En La Vida's* 1996 primera edition, essentially served to introduce the health center to Chicago's queer Latine community. A photo of Howard Brown Health Center representative Luis de Jesus is placed next to the following text:

"Para mí, Proveer Servicios Sociales en Howard Brown es más que un trabajo. Es mis compromiso coma persona el ayudar a al comunidad homosexual y bisexual y a mis clientes a vivir una vida larga, digna y saludable. Es importante para mi honrar a aquellos que ya no están con nosotros, especialmente a mis seres queridos. ... Cuidado Total de La Salud Para Nuestra Comunidad." (For me, to provide social services in Howard Brown is more than a job. It's my commitment to help the gay and bisexual community and help my clients live a long, dignified and healthy life. It's important for me to honor those who are no longer with us, especially my loved ones. Total Health Care for Our Community)<sup>66</sup>

This is an incredibly important advertisement as the Howard Brown Health Center was considered one of the most important AIDS service organizations in Chicago.<sup>67</sup> Yet, there were medical

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<sup>65</sup> Tara Gruzen, Tribune Staff Writer. Tribune news services contributed to this report. "MILLIONS MARK WORLD AIDS DAY CHICAGOANS PARTICIPATE IN GLOBAL OBSERVANCE: [NORTH SPORTS FINAL EDITION]." *Chicago Tribune (Pre-1997 Fulltext)*, Dec 02, 1996. <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/millions-mark-world-aids-day-chicagoans/docview/291198386/se-2>.

<sup>66</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: Ad3 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045000](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045000).

<sup>67</sup> Timothy Stewart-Winter, "Disease Is Not Welcome," in *Queer Clout* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 195, doi:10.9783/9780812292459



disparities in Chicago with more medical services, such as Howard Brown Health Center, located in Chicago's North Side than the South Side and West Side which were home to Black and Latine neighborhoods.<sup>68</sup> Additionally, Howard Brown Health didn't receive much funding or aid from the city.<sup>69</sup> "Howard Brown found itself stretched thin even as it expanded to respond to an increasingly expensive crisis."<sup>70</sup> This advertisement appears to be attempting to alleviate the health disparity by providing the queer Latine community with resource knowledge. The use of Spanish and the mention of lost loved ones appears to acknowledge that Latine people, along with other communities of color, were disproportionately impacted and faced a lack of resources. Although it is unclear whether this was impactful in granting the queer Latine community more health care, advertisements such as these highlight the various efforts made to redress medical disparities in the face of systemic racism.

Another frequent advertiser is the Chicago Public Health Department, co-signed by Mayor Richard M Daley. The Health Department would purchase a full-page ad, with the same ad repeated in multiple issues, highlighting "no-cost" HIV counseling, anonymous testing services, and confidential referral at several Chicago clinics.<sup>71</sup> The advertisement also shared that those interested can receive more information regarding HIV by contacting the Chicago Public Health Department.<sup>72</sup> Significantly, in 2001, the Chicago Public Health Department's advertisements in *En La Vida* shifted to a much harsher and arguably more condemnatory message. One of the new ads read "Si tú te INFECTAS, Todos en tú familia son afectados. Sexo con condon para un mejor

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<sup>68</sup> Stewart-Winter, "Disease Is Not Welcome," p. 195

<sup>69</sup> Stewart-Winter, "Disease Is Not Welcome," p. 205

<sup>70</sup> Timothy Stewart-Winter. "4. AIDS and the Urban Crisis: Stigma, Cost, and the Persistence of Racism in Chicago, 1981–1996" In *Beyond the Politics of the Closet: Gay Rights and the American State Since the 1970s* edited by Jonathan Bell, 92. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812296723-005>

<sup>71</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: Back Cover 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045022](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045022).

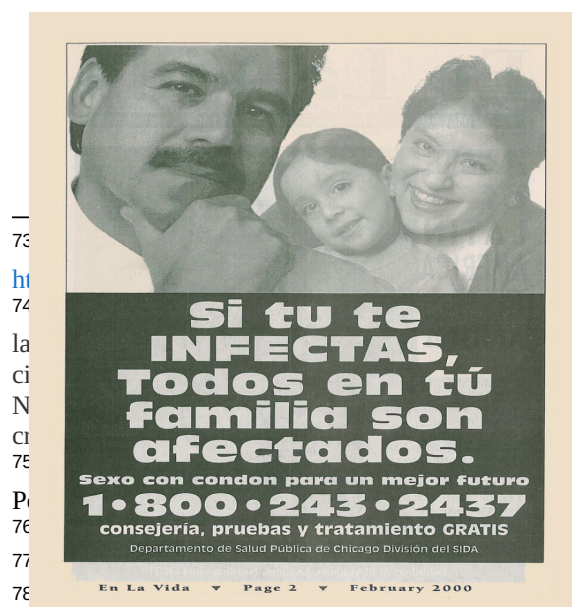
<sup>72</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: Back Cover 1996.



futuro.” (If you are INFECTED, Everyone in your family is affected. Have sex with a condom for a better future).<sup>73</sup> This ad did not mention any services and was run by the Departamento de Salud Pública de Chicago División del Sida (Chicago Public Health Department’s AIDS division). It was also published *after* Daley won re-election in 1999, in contrast to the advertisement about bolstering services the Daley administration supported that was published before his re-election. Daley was likely trying to court queer voters, and once he won re-election, the harsher advertisements manifested.

In particular, this advertisement is likely highlighting Illinois’s 1989 HIV criminalization law, which stated it was “illegal for a person living with HIV to have condomless sex without first disclosing their HIV status to their sexual partners (In 2021, this law was repealed).<sup>74</sup> The harsh message reflects the queer community’s contentious relationship with the Chicago Public Health Department, which scholar Timothy Stewart-Winter describes as “the biggest failure at the local level.”<sup>75</sup> Mayor Daley appointed leaders who often perpetuated damaging myths concerning the spread of AIDS and refused to use what have been deemed sexually explicit words in their messages.<sup>76</sup> Queer activists also highlighted that there was inadequate AIDS funding.<sup>77</sup> The

chairman of Howard Brown Health publicly expressed that he believed the city did not want to spend money on gay organizations.<sup>78</sup> Queer Latine



ed by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[raphic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046190.](#)

Illinois's Criminal HIV Transmission Law," Injustice Watch,  
[ch.org/longreads/2021/illinois-hiv-criminalization-law-the-](#)  
 ne The First State In 27 Years To Repeal HIV Exposure Laws,"  
[g/2021/06/08/1004494025/illinois-poised-to-end-](#)

Muscle," in *Queer Clout* (Philadelphia: University of  
 812292459

p. 199

p. 219



activist Danny Sotomayor was a member of the national political organization of activists committed to ending the AIDS pandemic called ACT UP. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Sotomayor actively and angrily protest the mayor and his policies regarding AIDS. He did so during mayoral press conferences and ACT UP demonstrations.<sup>79</sup> When Sotomayor passed away due to complications from AIDS in 1992, Daley attempted to present Sotomayor with a posthumous award celebrating his activism.<sup>80</sup> Sotomayor's friends and fellow activists protested this presentation, along with Daley's upcoming proposed city budget that provided inadequate funding for AIDS-related healthcare.<sup>81</sup> Sotomayor and Daley represent the contentious relationship between grassroots AIDS activists of color and the local administration. As such, it is questionable that *En La Vida* would advertise due to this negative relationship. It was likely solely a business venture as health advertisements appear to have been the most lucrative for the publication, but did promoting this message contribute to the harm the department was spreading in the community?

Simultaneously, pharmaceutical advertisements for medication such as Sustiva (Efavirenz) and Viracept (Nelfinavir) began appearing on *En La Vida's* pages in 1998. These nascent antiviral prescription medications were utilized to treat HIV symptoms.<sup>82</sup> These advertisements are only in Spanish and take up two pages. The first page was dedicated to an eye-catching slogan and a general overview of the drug, and the second page was dedicated to questions and side effects. Advertisements promoting Viracept took up three entire pages at a time, with one of the pages devoted to images of powerful animals to play up the strength of the potential drug-taker.<sup>83</sup> These

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<sup>79</sup> <https://chicagoreader.com/news-politics/the-angriest-queer/>

<sup>80</sup> <https://chicagoreader.com/news-politics/in-honor-of-danny-sotomayor/>

<sup>81</sup> Achy Obejas, "In Honor of Danny Sotomayor," Chicago Reader, last modified August 20, 2021, <https://chicagoreader.com/news-politics/in-honor-of-danny-sotomayor/>.

<sup>82</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 33, March 1999: Ad1 1999., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045855](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045855); *En La Vida*, no. 33, March 1999: Ad3



advertisements document the emergence and widespread promotion of antiviral drugs during a period in which the subscription price rates for *En La Vida* dropped significantly. These multi-page advertisements likely aided in bringing in more revenue for the paper and were the main reason such drugs were advertised. While the AIDS crisis disproportionately impacted the queer Latine community, it is important to remember that many readers of *En La Vida* would have been unable to even obtain these antiviral drugs due to racial medical disparities.

According to Stewart-Winter, “even as the discovery of protease inhibitors in 1996 finally began to abate the toll of suffering and death caused by AIDS in the United States, racial and economic disparities in access to health care remained perhaps the most notable feature of the AIDS-specific medical landscape.”<sup>83</sup>

As seen through the advertisements described, Stewart-Winter’s argument that conflict over AIDS funding was a source of friction between the Daley administration and queer activists is heavily supported. The advertisement for Howard Brown demonstrated how the health clinic aimed to aid the community, yet funding prevented the organization from doing so to the best of its ability. The shift in the Daley administration advertisements’ messages from promoting healthcare services to those of harsh messages with the language of the Illinois HIV criminalization law aids in demonstrating how many in the queer Latine community looked down on the Daley administration. The choice to run these advertisements is questionable. While these health advertisements provided significant financial support for the paper, this led to the promotion of a harmful message from an entity that had a troubled relationship with the queer Latine community. Moreover, running lucrative pharmaceutical advertisements despite most in the community not having access to such medical resources shows a lack of foresight.

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<sup>83</sup>Stewart-Winter "4. AIDS and the Urban Crisis: Stigma, Cost, and the Persistence of Racism in Chicago, 1981–1996" In *Beyond the Politics of the Closet: Gay Rights and the American State Since the 1970s*



## Conclusion

The personal, classified, and general advertisements published in *En La Vida* between 1996 and 2002 provided the Latine community in Chicago with much information about queer life in the city. The Personals provided insight into the white queer advertisers' desires for queer Latine people in Chicago. The advertisements from the community highlighted notable queer Latine businesses, and these businesses provided a space for queer Latine people to meet others as queer Latine organizations utilized these spaces for parties and fundraisers (which often came with a price to attend). The health advertisements shed light on the ongoing AIDS crisis and its disproportionate impact on Black and Latine Chicagoans which led to a contentious relationship with the Daley administration. However, because of *En La Vida*'s monetary interests and the cost of advertisements, the paper remains an incomplete portrayal of the queer Latine community's wants, needs and desires. So while companies such as Rivendell professionalized the gay press and advertising revenue provided queer publications with the necessary financial support, the publication did not solely serve the interests of the queer Latine Chicagoan community. Understandably, financial interests and supporting local businesses catering to the queer Latine community were important. In 2012, Baim reflected on the newspaper *En La Vida* and *BLACKlines* stating that "the economics couldn't support these papers after 10 years of publishing," these newspapers didn't have the financial means to sustain themselves which further allows for these financial interests to be made understandable from a publisher's standpoint.<sup>84</sup> However, on occasion, and as the advertisements about AIDS published in *En La Vida* show, this led to harmful messaging that put profit over the people the paper intended to serve. Yet, other aspects of the

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<sup>84</sup> Tracy Baim et al., "The Long Haul," in *Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of Lgbt Community Newspapers in America, Color* (Scotts Valley: Createspace Independent Pub, 2012), xx.



newspaper, such as the Opiniones column, demonstrated ways the newspaper supported the community.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Voices from the Queer Latine Community Speak Out**

*Opiniones* was a section in *En La Vida* that consisted of articles that featured writers' opinions on a variety of topics, from community news to queer identity to politics. The *Opiniones* section appeared after news stories in *En La Vida*. It ran from July 1996 to December 1998. In total, forty-two individual opinion pieces were published.<sup>85</sup> The subjects most frequently in these

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<sup>85</sup> Joe Anthony Perez. *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: *OPINIONES Latinophile* 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044996](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044996).; Luz Chavez. *En La Vida*, no. 30, December 1998: *OPINIONES Traffic and Autonomy in the world's largest city*. 1998., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045770](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045770).



*Opiniones* columns discussed queer familial relations, commentary about the queer Latine community, and contemporary sexual politics locally and nationally. Often written as direct action responses to a particular event, *Opiniones* articles shed light on the local contours of the queer community in Chicago. Regularly including these articles provided an essential space in *En La Vida* for marginalized queer and Latine voices that speak to the diversity of opinion among queer Latine Chicagoans. This chapter argues that the *Opiniones* column demonstrated one of the most accurate depictions of the queer Latine community as the column granted members of the community an opportunity to speak on their own experiences, perspectives and issues they faced, rather than be spoken at or written about by those outside of the community. This allowed for a more accurate depiction of the community and how it responded to larger trends and themes related to the topics the writers discussed that were ongoing and affected those in the queer Latine community from 1996 to 1998. This demonstrated how *En La Vida* provided a platform for queer Latine expression and fulfilled its role to serve the community through this column.

*Contributors to Opiniones* were listed as “editorial contributors” in the Indice of each issue.<sup>86</sup> Most *Opiniones* writers were not regular staff writers like those who reported the news or took photographs. , which meant that the *Opiniones* section featured a diverse set of voices. Yet there were frequent contributors. Edgar Arredondo, Lillian Gomez, and Miguel Ayala were the most frequent contributors to *Opiniones* between 1996 and 1998. All readers knew about those who shared their opinions in *En La Vida* was based on an author’s decision to publicly “out” themselves in print. Each *Opiniones* was followed by some combination of the following: a photograph, a short biography, and/or their contact information. Only rarely did an author provide no details about themselves to readers. The authors of the *Opiniones* analyzed here offered some

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<sup>86</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 1, July 1996: [Frontmatter] 1996., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044996](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044996).



details about their identity. Arredondo - “a Latino de Chicago” - included a photo, and so did Gomez and Luz Chavez. Ayala provided both a picture and biographic details. Richard A. Rivera shared a brief biography.<sup>87</sup> Only those who wrote just one *Opiniones* -- Alejandro Lezadi and Johnny Colón -- provided no personal information.<sup>88</sup> It is unknown whether those who chose not to include a picture or biography used their real name. It is impossible to know the personal, professional, and political reasons why *Opiniones*’ authors presented themselves as they did. Lezadi and Colón, for example, wrote about personal familial relations that were shaped by his queer identity and Colón wrote a politically charged article on AIDS by analyzing the colonial roots of disease. It seems likely that whether or not an author was “out” at work or with their family shaped their self-fashioning in *En La Vida* AND their opinions.

The nature of queer familial relations was a frequent consideration of *Opiniones*. Pieces provide insight into how understandings of queer parenting and family life were changing among queer Latine folks in the late 1990s. Because of increased political attention on queer folk among non-queer spaces, this led to more non-queer people’s awareness of queer families and queer

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<sup>87</sup> Lillian Gomez. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 12, June 1997: *Idealized Parenting Scares Me!*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045118](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045118).; Luz Chavez. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 28, October 1998: *Opiniones: After A Summer of Pride*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045430](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045430).; Miguel Ayala. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: *Opiniones: Not The Oddest in the Crowd*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2047069](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2047069).; Richard A. Rivera. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 10, April 1997: *Opiniones: Nuestro Reflejo: La Guerra Virtual*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045057](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045057).

<sup>88</sup> Alejandro Lezadi. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 18, December 1997: *Opiniones: Feliz Navidad*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045319](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045319).; Colón, Johnny. 1996. *En La Vida*, no. 3, September 1996: *Opinion: Puerto Rican Week, Puerto Rican Pride, Puerto Rican Reality: Poison Under the Parade*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045752](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045752).



people and queer parents were seen as not conforming to the non-queer societal norm of heterosexuality.<sup>89</sup> When *Opiniones* commented on Chicago's queer community, they did so to highlight the exclusion of queer Latine folks from predominately white spaces, revealing both the tensions provoked by gentrification and *En La Vida*'s inclusion of queer *and* Latine opinions. Those *Opiniones* on the AIDS crisis draw attention to the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS within the Latine community that has yet to be fully understood by historians. Those queer Latine voices in *Opiniones* demonstrate that within the queer Latine community, there existed a diversity of opinions and commentary on AIDS that took an anti-colonial and systemic view of the impact of the AIDS crisis on their community. The regular but short-lived *Opiniones* printed in *En La Vida* amplified, archived, and supported queer Latine voices, perspectives, and opinions. Often these went against the predominate thought of white Chicago and may have provoked controversy, aiding in fulfilling its role to serve the queer Latine community. As such, *Opiniones* provide an opportunity to center queer Latine voices within queer historical scholarship that cites this notable omission.

### *Queer Familial Relations*

*Opiniones* pieces about queer familial relations were often written in response to direct experiences or issues that a writer faced, which led to them writing an article about the topic. These articles provided an intimate insight into queer Latine folk's lived experiences reflecting larger trends. While queer folks were facing more stigma due to fear of AIDS, a more significant political awareness of the queer community was also underway.<sup>90</sup> With books such as Achy Obejas's, *We*

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<sup>89</sup> Diana D. Van Bergen et al., "Parental Responses to Coming out by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Pansexual, or Two Spirited People across Three Age Cohorts," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 83, no. 4 (2020): xx, doi:10.1111/jomf.12731.

<sup>90</sup> Diana D. Van Bergen et al., "Parental Responses to Coming out by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Pansexual, or Two Spirited People across Three Age Cohorts"



*Came All the Way from Cuba so That You Could Dress Like This?* released in 1996, ideas of queer Latine familial relations, in particular, began to enter the conversation.<sup>91</sup> Researcher Sandra Marie Loughrin states that since the 1980s, “research on the everyday family lives of same-sex Latino couples is virtually non-existent” and that “previous literature that has examined queer Latinos has primarily focused on familial responses to sexuality as a result of Latino familism.”<sup>92</sup> Lillian Gomez’s, Alejandro Lezadi and Ramon A. Rivera’s pieces demonstrated how each respective writer provided their ideas of having children to conform to non-queer societal norms, familial relationships impacted by one’s queer identity, and the unfairness of government constructions of same-sex unions respectively. These ideas provided important perspectives of these ideas, which were made in argument against non-queer representations of queer families and relations.

Frequent contributor, and eventual columnist, Lillian Gomez wrote several articles centered on lesbian identity, motherhood, and the intersection of both. Her first contribution was in the March 1997 issue of *En La Vida* and was titled “Lesbian, the ‘Other’ Gender.”<sup>93</sup> The piece recounts her experience attempting to donate her eggs to those undergoing artificial insemination. Gomez detailed the process to begin donating, which abruptly ended when she answered a question about being abstinent by stating she was a lesbian. Gomez then poses the central question to her piece:

is a woman a woman or should she be excluded on the basis of her sexuality? Can

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<sup>91</sup> Sara Cooper, "Queering Family: Achy Obejas's 'We Came All the Way from Cuba so That You Could Dress like This?'," *Chasqui* 32, no. 2 (2003): xx, doi:10.2307/29741805.

<sup>92</sup> Sandra M. Loughrin, "Queer Chicano Families: The Importance of Converging Literature on Queer Families, Chicano Families, and Chicano Queers," *Sociology Compass* 9, no. 3 (2015): xx, doi:10.1111/soc4.12244.

<sup>93</sup> Lillian Gomez. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: Lesbian, the Other Gender, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

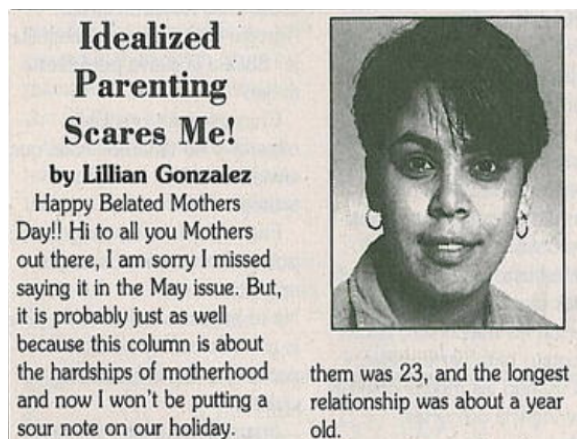
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2047069](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2047069).



we extend the definition of gender to include sexuality? Is homosexuality genetic?<sup>94</sup>

These questions that Gomez raised are progressive views that question the time's ideas of sexuality and gender. Due to the clinic's idea that lesbian donors should not be able to donate eggs due to their sexuality, Gomez's outrage demonstrated that those in the queer community did not agree with these policies in place. Gomez also questioned if this sexuality-based can be deemed discrimination, as the clinic was denying her eggs solely based on her sexuality. The article concludes by sharing a possible resource for individuals facing similar problems, advertising an upcoming seminar at the Howard Brown Health Center on "Lesbian Alternative Insemination."<sup>95</sup> This article may have been both a response to the experience she described and inspired by an interest in promoting an event in the community that concerned an issue that Gomez faced. Gomez highlighted the issue and then provided a resource for others who may face similar experiences.

Gomez's article in the June 1997 issue demonstrates the writer's focus on lesbian motherhood in a piece titled "Idealized Parenting Scares Me!" Gomez opened by explaining why



this motherhood piece didn't make it in the previous May issue for Mother's Day, suggesting that her future articles in *En La Vida* will focus solely on motherhood. She affirmed, "this column is about the hardships of motherhood, and now I won't be putting a sour note on a holiday."<sup>96</sup> Gomez discussed how the "Ricki Lake" talk show

featured gay and lesbian couples who were interested in having kids.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Gomez. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: Lesbian, the Other Gender

<sup>95</sup> Gomez. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: Lesbian, the Other Gender

<sup>96</sup> Gomez. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 12, June 1997: *Idealized Parenting Scares Me!*

<sup>97</sup> Gomez 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 12, June 1997: *Idealized Parenting Scares Me!*



As states increasingly allowed same-sex couples to adopt, this reflected a wider struggle to make queer parenthood normalized in non-queer spaces. However, Gomez criticized the sensationalization of the show by pointing out that the couples “are practically kids,” with the oldest being 23 years old.<sup>98</sup> Gomez criticized how the panel focused on how raising kids in a queer household would affect the children. Gomez shared her worry that this show would promote the ideal for young queer couples to have kids simply to fit in with non-queer society, and Gomez then underscored how parenting is a life-long commitment.<sup>99</sup>

A lesbian mother herself, Gomez provided her opinion on how the queer family is beginning to be represented in non-queer media; this article can even be seen as an attempt to provide mentorship to potential parents. Gomez’s articles are the most narrative-based out of all the *Opiniones* pieces in *En La Vida* and relate her personal experiences. Gomez’s articles and column provide nuanced, mundane descriptions of queer parenthood that chronicle the broader trend of burgeoning ideas of queer parenting across the United States. Moreover, Gomez’s recounts and ideas of queer motherhood and family provided a much-needed perspective on everyday experiences of queer Latine parenting that is missing from current scholarship on 1990s queer Latine family ideas.

The December 1997 issue of *En La Vida* fittingly featured a holiday *Opiniones* piece. Alejandro Lezadi, who wrote in both Spanish and English (the Spanish version was first while the English version followed), observed that Christmas was not a happy holiday “for gay, lesbian or simply single people.”<sup>100</sup> Lezadi’s experience as a queer Latine within a Latine family shares much with what Sandra Loughrin has found in their work on Latine familism that put “the collective needs of the family over individual needs as well as through a more traditional patriarchal family

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<sup>98</sup> Gomez 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 12, June 1997: *Idealized Parenting Scares Me!*

<sup>99</sup> Gomez.1997. *En La Vida*, no. 12, June 1997: *Idealized Parenting Scares Me!*

<sup>100</sup> Alejandro Lezadi. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 18, December 1997: *Opiniones: Feliz Navidad*



structure.”<sup>101</sup> In “Feliz Navidad / Merry (?) Christmas,” Lezadi explained that he has nothing against the historic or religious events at the holiday’s origins. However, after living in the United States for thirty years, he became alienated from the holiday because of patriarchal overtones that clashed with his values.

Even for those of us who can share our lifestyle with the family, these celebrations are for Them – the heterosexual couples, for parents and children. If we’re allowed to be present, it’s better to not be too ‘obvious.’ It’s better to not bring along a date or a lover, better to not speak of gay ‘things,’ and better to not provoke the men of the family with behavior too feminine for men or too masculine for women. We have to strengthen the patriarchal paradigm, the basis of a stable Christian family.<sup>102</sup>

Lezadi described suppressing - as an adult man - the *queerer* aspects of his identity at family gatherings. Lezadi may have been able to *share* his “lifestyle” with his Latine family, but it was best not to be too “obvious” about it.

Lezadi underscored that he is not being resentful. Rather, he is simply tired and affirms that Americans have strayed from the holiday’s true meaning of “love and goodwill towards others, no matter if they are gay, lesbian, single, Hispanic, poor or sick.”<sup>103</sup> Lezadi’s precaution is likely because his words are being published and circulated. Moreover, Loughrin also detailed that queer Latine people who strongly believe in familism are less likely to engage in risky behaviors at risk of shaming their family.<sup>104</sup> This provides a reason why Lezadi is one of the writers that did not share personal information outside of the article, as he directly discussed his family and his contentious relationship with them. The holiday season led Lezadi to write a piece expressing a sentiment he has felt for many holidays, and the *Opiniones* section provided Lezadi with an important space to discuss experiences that he has faced and that other queer folk likely faced as

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<sup>101</sup> Loughrin, “Queer Chicano Families”

<sup>102</sup> Lezadi. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 18, December 1997: *Opiniones: Feliz Navidad*

<sup>103</sup> Lezadi. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 18, December 1997: *Opiniones: Feliz Navidad*

<sup>104</sup> Loughrin, “Queer Chicano Families”



well. It aids in revealing perceptions of queer Latine children's relationships with their parents and their family, providing more evidence for the scholarship of familism in queer Latine culture.

In the July 1997 issue, Richard A. Rivera wrote "Our Unions Recognized ... When Convenient for Government." In this bilingual English and Spanish language article, Rivera discusses how queer folk who have AIDS and live with their partner face systemic issues in receiving government aid. During the time of publication, there were insurance restrictions nationwide aimed at AIDS cases, and civil rights lawyers charged that coverage is often denied to men who are not married or who have jobs that are stereotypically associated with gay and bisexual men.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, Rivera stressed how having a domestic partner who had an income is "a disqualifying condition" for those on disability or Medicaid, and he decried how such governmental policies force those who are sick often live by themselves, which places them in unsafe conditions. Rivera wrote, "you must reduce yourself to the lowest level of wretchedness in order to qualify for benefits you have been paying taxes all your life for. And when it comes to receiving any form of assistance, Hispanics are at a disadvantage in many ways."<sup>106</sup> Rivera ended the article with a call to action to "exist as citizens" and be politically active in enacting new policy. This suggested that queer Latine folk must exercise the rights that they were entitled to, rather than be relegated to second-class citizens due to marginalization. However, there was a curious line in which Rivera urged that those in the queer Latine community must become "legal citizens or [help] those of us who are not, become one."<sup>107</sup> This seemed to overlook the many hardships and barriers to becoming a citizen. Rivera did share at the end of the article that he could be contacted via email

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<sup>105</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/08/07/us/aids-insurance-coverage-is-increasingly-hard-to-get.html>

<sup>106</sup> Richard A. Rivera 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 13, July 1997: *El Gobierno Reconoce Nuestras Uniones...Cuando Les Conviene*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045156](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045156).

<sup>107</sup> Rivera 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 13, July 1997: *El Gobierno Reconoce Nuestras Uniones...Cuando Les Conviene*



for comments, which demonstrates that he may have been anticipating responses or disagreements. Voter registration did drop in 1996, according to the Census Bureau, while the AIDS epidemic continued to increase, which may have informed Rivera's decision to write that line about political engagement through voting.<sup>108</sup> Overall, Rivera's piece provided insight into the unjust legal qualifications relating to queer marital unions, and how the government views such partnerships affect accessibility to healthcare. In Rivera's decry, it portrays a new perspective of queer marital unions, as one that shouldn't be decided by the government and must be changed through active political engagement.

The *Opiniones* pieces on ideas of queer family demonstrated how *En La Vida* created a platform for queer Latine people to voice their perspectives through this column. In doing so, this allowed for these ideas of queer parenthood, patriarchal holiday traditions, and government definitions of marital status to be shared. This is important as scholarship cites a lack of writing on the everyday lives of queer families. Moreover, it demonstrated *En La Vida*'s capacity to express the voices of the queer Latine community.

### *Queer Latine Community Commentary*

*Opiniones* pieces also tackled issues relating to the queer Latine community: how it functioned, and the difficulties of finding a place at the intersection of both identities. The pieces were often written in response to specific community events that are backdropped by larger political trends shaping queer Latine identity. This is best exemplified in Luz Chavez's piece entitled "After A Summer of Pride" from the October 1998 issue. Chavez revealed her thoughts on how the queer scene in Chicago functioned, and how it was often exclusive and didn't provide

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<sup>108</sup> Census Bureau, "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 1996," Census.gov, accessed March 20, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/1998/demo/p20-504.pdf>.



a space for queer people of color. Notably, in 1998 the city of Chicago sponsored a “\$3.2 million gay-themed streetscape renovation project completed in 1998 in the North Side’s East Lakeview district, whose commercial strip was by then known as ‘Boystown’.”<sup>109</sup> As scholar Stewart-Winter states, this “epitomized the symbolic use of public funds to promote tourism by a means that, like any public project, benefited lawyers and contractors working for the city.” As queer people of color were fighting for funding for AIDS healthcare, the city was funding this project and this demonstrated the uneven economic development of the affluent predominately white North Side and lower-income Black and brown South Side neighborhoods.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, in the South and West Side, neighborhoods like Humboldt Park were being “cleaned up” by the city and families were displaced.<sup>111</sup> Stewart Winter argued that this created “tensions over policing and programming, and the AIDS crisis worsened those tensions by overlaying them with conflicts about respectability.”<sup>112</sup> This tension is expressed in Chavez’s piece and supports Stewart-Winter’s scholarship on the Halstead Street project that the project itself and its allocation of funds created tensions, and that the project linked gayness and whiteness. Chavez also continues to explore exclusion from predominantly white queer spaces, demonstrating how *En La Vida* provided a space for these perspectives to be circulated.

In “After A Summer of Pride,” Chavez set the scene that it is now the aftermath of pride month, and how “with this rising commercialization of Halstead Street, there conveniently seems to be this newfound myth going around town that lesbians, gay, bisexuals and transgenders are economically better off than most heterosexuals.”<sup>113</sup> Chavez recollected that other newspapers

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<sup>109</sup> Stewart-Winter, “Queer Clout,” 8

<sup>110</sup> Stewart-Winter, “Queer Clout,” 8

<sup>111</sup> Nilda Flores-Gonzalez. Paseo boricua: Claiming a Puerto Rican Space in Chicago Centro Journal, vol. XIII, núm. 2, 2001, pp. 7-23 The City University of New York

<sup>112</sup> Stewart-Winter, “Queer Clout,” 8

<sup>113</sup> Chavez. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 28, October 1998: *Opiniones: After A Summer of Pride*



were reporting that “we are supposedly two times as likely to own a vacation home and eight times as likely to own a laptop.” While Chavez didn’t cite the specific news outlets that provided such information, these were likely non-queer media outlets and possibly mainstream media outlets, highlighting a disparity in reporting on the queer community. Chavez protested that these supposed statistics are likely only representing a certain segment of the queer community: gay white men. “As usual, lgbt people of color and some white lesbians are pushed aside and misrepresented by not having our realities told. Our ethnicity, sexuality, class and gender all intersect to shape what we encounter in this world. We can’t separate these identities, and neither can the manipulative people who spread false information and profit from it,” Chavez wrote.<sup>114</sup> This mirrors Stewart-Winter’s analysis of the Halsted Street project, “the Halsted Street streetscape project affirmed gay identity, inclusion, and legitimacy, and it also spatialized it in a way that linked gayness and whiteness powerfully and permanently.”<sup>115</sup> Chavez continued to express her frustration, drawing from personal experiences of marginalization in predominately white queer spaces. Chavez cited the lack of space provided to queer people of color and the fact that queer entertainment venues largely ignored and neglected them: “On the North Side, we are given a very much over-hyped “Salsa Nite” two times a month at an otherwise all-white catering club. Or in towns we have to go to small, hidden club or meeting ... It’s time that as LGBT Latinos/as, we begin to build our own open space within our own neighborhoods while demanding an equal space on the North Side.”<sup>116</sup> This closing statement was not only a rallying call for the queer Latine community in Chicago to build community, but it also seems to be a direct response to recent pride events which had sparked controversy among those living in or owning businesses in the North Side. Stewart-Winter discussed how many saw the unveiling of the streetscape as a success, and it received major

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<sup>114</sup> Chavez. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 28, October 1998: *Opiniones: After A Summer of Pride*

<sup>115</sup> Stewart-Winter, “Queer Clout,” 221

<sup>116</sup> Chavez. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 28, October 1998: *Opiniones: After A Summer of Pride*



praise; yet, Chavez's perspective in this article as a queer Latine people revealed how those that were marginalized were impacted and dismayed by the infrastructure and its funding.<sup>117</sup> This piece illuminates tensions provoked by the ongoing gentrification occurring in predominantly Latine Chicago neighborhoods in the late 1990s. Chavez's piece championed declaring a Latine space in their neighborhoods to combat this. This was a strong message from *En La Vida* to run while many in non-queer Chicagoan media supported the project, and it demonstrated the newspaper's capacity to amplify Latine voices and perspectives.

### *Political Commentary on AIDS*

The *Opiniones* articles that addressed larger political trends were still community-oriented as the issues they discussed were issues that directly impacted the community and the writers as queer Latine folk. These pieces provide a window into the limited queer Latine literature (often published in print) on the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS in the Latine community. In 1998, researcher Rafael M. Diaz stated "painfully lacking in the literature are the voices and subjective experiences of Latino gay men, as we struggle to remain healthy and live fulfilling sexual lives amid a devastating epidemic."<sup>118</sup> These two pieces published before 1998 are significant as they provided insight into the lived experiences and opinions of two queer Latines. Moreover, Monica B. Pearl's *AIDS Literature and Gay Identity: The Literature of Loss* highlighted that after 1994 literature about AIDS became more retrospective, and after 1995 the literature began to convey an angry tone as opposed to the mournful tone that characterized previous literature. Pearl also commented on the dearth of expression of Black and Latine experiences in AIDS literature and claimed it was due to "a paralyzing impact of poverty and stigma."<sup>119</sup> These pieces demonstrate a

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<sup>117</sup> Stewart-Winter, "Queer Clout," 221

<sup>118</sup> Mark DeStephano, "Gay and Bisexual Men's Use of the Internet: Research from the 1990s through 2013," *The Journal of Sex Research* 51, no. 4 (2014): xx, doi:10.1080/00224499.2013.871626.



different argument, as seen through Rivera who despite his struggle with AIDS continued to speak out against systemic inequalities. Both Colón and Rivera's novel insight demonstrated how *En La Vida* provided a necessary space for their voices to be heard, which was likely not granted by other publications as seen through these scholars' discussion of a lack of literature.

In the September 1996 issue, Johnny Colón contributed the insightful piece, "Puerto Rican Week, Puerto Rican Pride, Puerto Rican Reality: Poison Under the Parade." Colón's article was written in response to the local celebration of Puerto Rico week against the backdrop of the rising AIDS epidemic in Chicago and the United States. It tied the local experiences of queer Puerto Ricans of Chicago to national statistics and analyzes the roots of structural issues that plague the Puerto Rican community. Colón begins with praise of all that Puerto Ricans have contributed to the United States from pop culture to science, but questions what the Puerto Rican community has gained from the United States. Colón cites national statistics of how Puerto Ricans have the lowest labor force participation and highest poverty rate. In Chicago, Puerto Ricans also have the highest incidence of AIDS of any ethnic group according to the Chicago Department of Health's AIDS surveillance report in 1995.<sup>119</sup> According to a later Chicago Department of Health report that captured this time, for Black Americans in Chicago, AIDS incidence increased from 54% to 65% from 1994 to 1999, and for Hispanics, it increased from 14% to 16% in the same period.<sup>120</sup> Colón then stated that "...we also need to begin seeing this disease in a political context. For Puerto Ricans, we need to see this as a colonial issue, considering that our nation is a colony (possession) of the United States."<sup>121</sup> Colón discusses Puerto Rican history in the United States as a history of

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<sup>119</sup> Colón. 1996. *En La Vida*, no. 3, September 1996: *Opinion: Puerto Rican Week, Puerto Rican Pride, Puerto Rican Reality: Poison Under the Parade*

<sup>120</sup> Chicago Department of Public Health, "HIV/AIDS in the Chicago EMA," Home: AIDS Foundation of Chicago, accessed January 27, 2023, [https://www.aidschicago.org/resources/legacy/pdf/HIV\\_in\\_Chicago.pdf](https://www.aidschicago.org/resources/legacy/pdf/HIV_in_Chicago.pdf)

<sup>121</sup> Colón. 1996. *En La Vida*, no. 3, September 1996: *Opinion: Puerto Rican Week, Puerto Rican Pride, Puerto*



genocide and disease, and affirmed that “the urgency of AIDS becomes meaningless in a historical cycle of neglect and abuse.” Colón aimed to remind readers that while celebrations are going on in Chicago, the community was still facing devastating issues that have historical roots. Pearl stated that in 1995 there was a change in AIDS literature from one that was characterized by grief to one of outrage and anger.<sup>122</sup> While anger may not be the best way to describe Colón’s writing, he was charged in his writing and did not focus on grief. Instead, Colón urged readers to understand the systemic issues that the queer Puerto Rican community faced in the past and faced during the time of Colón’s writing.

Similar to Colón, Richard A. Rivera discussed the crisis of AIDS in the community and its structural roots. In the April 1997 issue, Rivera’s “Nuestro Reflejo La Guerra Virtual” which is written in both Spanish and English discusses how the War against AIDS was akin to a sci-fi episode of Star Trek. Rivera is not making light of the crisis or saying that anything is fantasy. Rather, he used this metaphor (that can be seen as fictional) to point out the risks of desensitization and how mass death can become unbelievable. Rivera wrote, “We do not see the piles of dead in trucks. But corpses there are. We don’t see nations becoming extinct, as the government does not tell us the truth.” However, Rivera didn’t leave the reader behind in this dystopia, he highlights the structural issues at play and wrote “we must declare war on cultural closetism, our own homophobia, to institutionalized racism, and especially, to apathy ... only together we can expect to prevail.”<sup>123</sup> Rivera takes a hard reflective look at the state that the country is in, and hones in on systemic issues at large, which supports Pearl’s argument that after 1994, AIDS literature became more retrospective.

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*Rican Reality: Poison Under the Parade,*

<sup>122</sup> Pearl, *AIDS Literature and Gay Identity*

<sup>123</sup> Richard A. Rivera. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 10, April 1997: *Opiniones: Nuestro Reflejo: La Guerra Virtual*



Both Colón's and Rivera's articles reflect the larger trend of the spread of the AIDS epidemic directly impacting the community in Chicago with a higher incidence. Moreover, their scrutiny of the political landscape provided insight into queer Latine writing on AIDS, this provides novel evidence for scholarship on AIDS literature that stated that Latine voices were missing. Colón and Rivera provided insightful reflections on the political and community impacts of AIDS through their work, demonstrating that queer Latine folks did have opinions and commentary on the issues, they just weren't likely given platforms. *En La Vida* granted the writers a platform, demonstrating its capacity to uplift queer Latine voices, despite these opinions being strong-willed.

#### *Why wasn't the Opiniones section a larger part of En La Vida?*

The *Opiniones* section was a space that allowed those from the community to write about the community, providing an important and necessary nuanced perspective to the paper. However, *Opiniones* in *En La Vida* became inconsistent in appearing in each issue and eventually became absent as the publication ran on. Poetry began filling up space on the *Opiniones* pages beginning in the June 1997 issue, with a poem titled "WHAT WAS" by frequent *Opiniones* writer Miguel Ayala.<sup>124</sup> The poetry featured can be seen as another way writers can express themselves as many touched on Latinidad and queer identity. However, after the August 1998 issue, most issues didn't even feature an *Opiniones* section.<sup>125</sup> There were still personal narrative articles that read as if they would fit under the *Opiniones* but were not labeled as such. For example, in Gomez's aptly-named

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<sup>124</sup> Miguel Ayala 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 12, June 1997: WHAT WAS, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045118](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045118).

<sup>125</sup> Lillian Gomez. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 24, June 1998: A Series of Finales, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045556](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045556).



last contribution “A Series of Finales” in the June 1998 issue, the writer wrote a personal recollection of break-ups in the style of writing that characterized her *Opiniones* articles. The style was casual and conversational, as opposed to the more formal and impersonal news stories. However, this piece wasn’t published in the *Opiniones* section.<sup>126</sup> The issue does not have an *Opiniones* section, rather this story was on the same page as the “el poder de palabras” (the power of words) section which featured poetry in English and Spanish.<sup>127</sup>

If this space to express opinions and distinctive perspectives was important to the community, why was the *Opiniones* column eliminated? Potential reasons why the *Opiniones* section faltered are likely problems of writer retention due to the nature of the section, and possible that the opinions it featured generated too much controversy. Writer retention issues can be seen through the fact that there were fewer steady contributors to the publication, leading to the inconsistency of publishing *Opiniones*. A lack of regular writers was likely because writing for *Opiniones* was not regular employment and was likely, not lucrative. There were many advertisements reminding readers that *En La Vida* wanted to feature their work and would provide compensation – yet the specific pricing for pay per article was not provided. The nature of the work and its pay may have been a barrier that prevented those from marginalized communities, such as the very community *En La Vida* served, from contributing. Even for the three frequent writers, Arredondo only wrote from July 1996 to July 1998, Gomez wrote from March 1997 to February 1998, and Ayala wrote from March 1997 to July 1997. Moreover, the reason why Arredondo, Gomez, and Ayala were frequent writers for *Opiniones* is that they were still involved in the newspaper in other capacities, which likely supplemented their pay. Arredondo was a proofreader for *En La Vida* from April 1997 to September 1998.<sup>128</sup> All three writers were listed as

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<sup>126</sup> Gomez. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 24, June 1998: *A Series of Finales*

<sup>127</sup> Gomez. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 24, June 1998: *A Series of Finales*

<sup>128</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 27, September 1998: *[Frontmatter]* 1998., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda



editorial contributors in issues in which they did not write *Opiniones* articles and were not listed as an author of any other story, suggesting that they provided article ideas or assisted in writing articles. Furthermore, for *Opiniones* writers whose biographies were provided, it was clear that their main career wasn't writing and that they were freelance writers – demonstrating another way that pays offered to writers was supplemented. For example, writer Richard A. Rivera, who contributed two articles, was originally a medical assistant.

The other potential reason why the *Opiniones* section fizzled out was due to writers' opinions generating too much controversy. As seen through *Opiniones'* very beginnings, the second issue of *En La Vida* featured two responses in an argument with the first *Opiniones* piece published in la primera edición. *Opiniones* concluded with stories that reflected a strong sentiment such as Chavez's "A Summer of Pride." Moreover, it is seen through Rivera's second (and last) *Opiniones* article, that perhaps some writers experienced expressed pushback to certain articles published. In "Our Unions Recognized ... When Convenient for Government" from the July 1997 issue, Rivera ends the article stating that he can personally be reached for comments, suggesting that some readers had their own opinions and possible critiques and tried to get in contact with *En La Vida* due to his previous article, "Nuestro Reflejo: La Guerra Virtual," published in the April 1997 issues. This reason is further supported by the drop in the newspaper subscription pricing and the newspaper's reliance on advertisements from businesses who may have not looked kindly at possible outrage generated.

Despite, *Opiniones* ultimately faltering, the section still demonstrated how *En La Vida* provided an important creative space for the community to voice their opinions on a range of topics, sharing personal narratives or delivering calls to action. Such content highlights the diversity and complexity of issues the queer Latine community faced, allowing for a more accurate



and nuanced depiction of the queer Latine community from 1996 to 1998 than those crafted by outsiders, concerning the queer Chicagoan community's experiences and responses to events.

### *Conclusion*

*En La Vida's Opiniones*, columnists spoke passionately about, respectively, the importance of intersectionality and political engagement. These discussions provided invaluable information on the experiences of queer Latine folk, which many scholars of each respective topic that a writer covered stated was lacking from the past and current scholarship. In particular, the perspectives provided by the queer Latine writers highlighted efforts to reimagine how we can think about queer families, political issues impacting queer Latine folk in Chicago, and queer Latine literature on the impact of AIDS. This demonstrated how this column was one of the most important parts of *En La Vida* as it captured queer Latine people's lived experiences by providing a platform to disseminate their ideas within the community. While *En La Vida* provided this space during the publication period of the *Opiniones*, external factors related to the payment to writers, along with funding and advertising of the newspaper, ultimately contributed to the end of the column, and thus an end to this space it provided to queer Latine folks who wanted to voice their perspectives and opinionones. *En La Vida* demonstrated an effort to provide these spaces and acceptance of the variety of opinionones expressed, the column simply couldn't be sustained.



## Chapter 3

### The Complications of Making International Queer Connections in Latin America

*Tierras Distantes* columns appeared in *En La Vida* from July 1996 to November 2000. These articles brought international queer news from various Latin American and Hispanic countries to the queer Latine readers in Chicago. This column, written by Rex Wockner, consisted of regular news briefs (essentially short news stories about five paragraphs in length) that detailed legislation, protests, and pride events in Latin American and Hispanic countries — other stories reported on queer Spanish-language publications from across Latin America. *Tierras Distantes* were located in the beginning pages of an *En La Vida* issue, typically following the index, calendar, and any news or feature articles. This placement suggests that those at *En La Vida* considered these international news stories of particular significance for the paper's readers.

Forty-one *Tierras Distantes* columns appeared in *En La Vida* between 1996 and 2000. This chapter explores three main types of international news reported by Wockner in *Tierras Distantes*: immigration legislation, healthcare for AIDS patients, and same-sex unions or marriage equality. The news briefs on politics regarding legislation and immigration supported scholarship of “Public Opinion Toward LGBT People and Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean” that argued that queer political gains in 1990s Latin America were often met with hostile resistance. The news briefs offered evidence on events that demonstrated significant legal and political milestones but also covered instances of discrimination and violence queer Latine folk faced, which led to many



seeking asylum abroad. The international news about the AIDS crisis focused on how many Latin American countries refused to provide HIV and AIDS treatment to their queer citizens. A recent case study by Public Health of Latin America stated that this access would have lowered hospitalization rates, and these news briefs detailed the adverse effects a lack of health accessibility had upon citizens, with many denouncing deficiencies in government healthcare systems as contributing to high mortality rates. Those *Tierras Distantes* stories about same-sex unions and marriage equality did not support the scholarship of Gerald Rosenberg who argued that the court's recognition of queer partnerships did not create significant social change and succeeded only in creating a backlash against the queer community. These news briefs detailed how Latin American courts recognized extra-legal partnerships that queer couples entered and this laid the groundwork for social policy regarding same-sex marriage. This chapter argues that *Tierras Distantes* not only connected the histories of queer Latine Chicagoans and queer Latin Americans but that publishing news about Latin American countries allowed those in Chicago to retain bonds with friends and families as well as knowledge of queer life in their communities of origin. However, as we will see, Wockner's control over the column also raises questions about how relevant and helpful the news in *Tierras Distantes* was for local readers.

Many of the individual news briefs in *Tierras Distantes* included calls to action. Contact details were provided when an article detailed an injustice against a queer person or group or covered a discriminatory policy to rally support or opposition. In this way, *En la Vida* – at least initially - played a crucial role in encouraging direct action while connecting readers to their countries of origin by highlighting instances of queer political activism both nationally and internationally.



Rex Wockner wrote each *Tierras Distantes* column. Wockner was also the news writer and Opinion columnist for *Outlines*, another Lambda Publication. Wockner had worked for *Outlines* since its inception, his first full-time job after graduating from Duke University.<sup>129</sup> At Duke, Wockner first met Tracy Baim, the publisher of *Outlines* and *En La Vida*,<sup>130</sup> at an AIDS conference in which Wockner was advocating for more legal health rights, and Baim covered the event. Soon after, Wockner became a full-time reporter for *Outlines*.<sup>131</sup> According to a short biographical blurb at the end of one of his Opinion column pieces in *Outlines*, “Rex Wockner [was] a legal researcher, free-lance writer, and local noise-maker living in Urbana, Illinois”<sup>132</sup> Today, Wockner is reasonably well-known in queer and non queer media and is cited in research-based work such as GLBTQ Archives.<sup>133</sup> According to one of his recent articles in the Seattle publication *the Stranger*, his work has appeared in more than 250 gay publications in thirty-six countries over the past sixteen years.<sup>134</sup> Most relevantly, during his time writing for *En La Vida*, he also wrote for mainstream Chicago newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune*, focusing on queer-related events such as a local AIDS walk.<sup>135</sup> He also provided quotes to the *Chicago Tribune* on events related to queer issues.<sup>136</sup> As seen through his news coverage in these publications, along with his current

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<sup>129</sup> “Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 19: Rex Wockner, edited by William B. Kelley, Jorjet Harper and Tracy Baim.” 2012 Chicago, IL: Prairie Avenue Productions. [https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044934](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2044934).

<sup>130</sup> “Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 19: Rex Wockner

<sup>131</sup> “Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 19: Rex Wockner

<sup>132</sup> Rex Wockner. 1987. *Chicago Outlines the Voice of the Gay and Lesbian Community Vol.1 no. 2 June 11 1987: Making 1987 a Time for Change*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2628524](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2628524).

<sup>133</sup> Claude J. Summers, “Political Blogs,” Archives of the Gbltq Encyclopedia Project, accessed March 20, 2023, [https://www.glbqtarchive.com/ssh/political\\_blogs\\_ssh\\_S.pdf](https://www.glbqtarchive.com/ssh/political_blogs_ssh_S.pdf).

<sup>134</sup> Rex Wockner, “Gay Newspapers,” *The Stranger*, last modified June 22, 2000, <https://www.thestranger.com/pullout/2000/06/22/4254/gay-newspapers>.

<sup>135</sup> Gregory S Harris, President, AIDS, Walk Chicago. “Everyone’s Concern: [NORTH SPORTS FINAL, C Edition].” *Chicago Tribune (Pre-1997 Fulltext)*, Oct 24, 1990.

<https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/everyones-concern/docview/283022122/se-2>.

<sup>136</sup> Schoenberg, N. (2021). Boystown, the nickname dropped by business leaders in Chicago’s premier gay neighborhood last year, is still going strong: ‘It’s always going to be boystown to me’.



personal blog, Wockner has an interest in international news in particular.<sup>137</sup> And according to Wockner himself, he chased “where the big stories were happening,” which led to him covering significant international events on queer political strides such as the first “marriage-like” civil union in Denmark, the first same-sex marriage in the Netherlands, and first public gay events in the USSR, and international AIDS conferences along with international queer conferences.<sup>138</sup> Wockner took a wide-lens perspective on queer news, focusing on large milestones across the nation and other nations. This informs why the *Tierras Distantes* column was likely created, it provided an outlet for him to continue his international news coverage by focusing specifically on Hispanic and Latine countries. Notably, for the *Tierras Distantes* column, some of the news briefs would be written in both Spanish and English, which seems especially resourceful as the column’s content is from Spanish-speaking countries. For those who were interested in the news of their countries of origin in their language of origin, this allowed for the content to be more accessible for those who otherwise would not have access to a local source of Spanish-language news from Latin American countries. However, Wockner did not write the translations according to the April 1999 edition of *En La Vida*, in which the *Tierras Distantes* column began with a Spanish language note.

“Nota: La traducción de estas noticias ha sido autorizada por Rex Wockner. Toda responsabilidad por errores en la traducción corresponde a las personas que voluntariamente hacemos este trabajo en Buenos Aires. A cada noticia traducida le sigue su versión original en inglés.” (The translation of this news has been authorized by Rex Wockner. All responsibility for errors in the translation corresponds to the people who voluntarily do this work in Buenos Aires. Each translated news is followed by its original version in English).<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Wockner, "Blog Archive," Wockner, last modified January 2, 2023, <https://wockner.blogspot.com/>.

<sup>138</sup> “Gay Press, Gay Power: The Growth of LGBT Community Newspapers in America: 19: Rex Wockner

<sup>139</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 34, April 1999: *New Officers for ALMA in Chicago* 1999., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045880](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045880).



Wockner's stamp of approval on the authorization of translations is an interesting facet of this statement. It is uncertain whether he is referring to an authorization of the translator's work (and it is also uncertain if he can write in Spanish as he relies on their work), or whether is referring to the authorization of publishing, likely copyrighted, material from other Spanish language news sources. Moreover, The identity of these Buenos Aires translators is uncertain as the front matter of *En La Vida* editions, which includes the names of all other contributors to the paper, doesn't have a section listing its translators. These people may be credited as editorial contributors, but it can't be discerned. Wockner may have forged connections with and recruited the assistance of these Argentine Spanish-language writers due to his international news interest and coverage. It is a possibility that these contacts of his in Argentina may have been the ones who initially alerted him to the bulk of the international news story that appeared in this section and pointed him to sources as there is a sufficient, though not disproportionate, coverage of Argentina in the *Tierras Distantes* column.

However, in the last year of the column's publication within *En La Vida*, the content of the column became less fleshed out. Some columns barely filled up a quarter of the page, and the last column from the November 2000 issue reused the same content from the previous October 2000 issue.<sup>140</sup> The reason behind the fizzling out of the column is likely simply because columnist Wockner had moved on to found his endeavors in a queer publication in San Diego during *En La Vida*'s publication run, according to a quote from the *Chicago Tribune*.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Rex Wockner. 2000. *En La Vida*, no. 51, September 2000: *Tierras Distantes*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046391](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046391).; Rex Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 52, October 2000: *Tierras Distantes*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046416](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046416).

<sup>141</sup> Jean Latz Griffin, Tribune Staff Writer. "SURVIVORS' GUILT SOME GAYS SAY THEY'VE FOUND THAT THERE'S NOTHING POSITIVE ABOUT BEING NEGATIVE: [NORTH SPORTS FINAL, CN EDITION]." *Chicago Tribune (Pre-1997 Fulltext)*, Aug 30, 1995. <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/survivors-guilt->



### *Politics:*

As many Latin American scholars have observed, significant legal and political changes in favor of queer rights occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean in the wake of the third wave of democratization in the 1980s.<sup>142</sup> Latin American queer activists aligned themselves with different social movements to advocate for more rights, such as the post–Cold War human rights movement in international politics.<sup>143</sup> However, as described in “Public Opinion Toward LGBT People and Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean” these legal gains were “highly uneven; they are fragile and likely to become targets of politically motivated public outrage; enforcement is irregular and often faces hostile resistance from the civil servants appointed to enact and uphold them; and LGBT individuals continue to face high levels of violence.”<sup>144</sup> The picture painted in this scholarship is strongly supported the content of the international political news section of *En La Vida, Tierras Distantes*. *Tierras Distantes* featured news briefs about significant political and legal milestones for queer Latin American folk. However, it was likewise reported that there was still significant inequality and violence that queer Latine folk faced. This latter point is especially evident in the news briefs describing queer Latine folk seeking refuge outside of Latin America.

Concerning the news briefs that highlighted legal milestones in queer rights reached in Latin America, in the January 1998 issue, there was a piece entitled “Ecuadorian Sex Ban Struck

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some-gays-say-theyve-found-that/docview/283985899/se-2.

<sup>142</sup> Chaux, Enrique, Manuela León, Lina Cuellar, and Juliana Martínez. "Public Opinion Toward LGBT People and Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. 22 Jan. 2021; Accessed 19 Feb. 2023.

<https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-1941>.

<sup>143</sup> Omar G. Encarnación, "Reinventing Latin America's Oldest Gay Rights Movement," *Out in the Periphery*, 2016, doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199356645.003.0004.

<sup>144</sup> Chaux, Enrique, Manuela León, Lina Cuellar, and Juliana Martínez. "Public Opinion Toward LGBT People and Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean."



Down” which discussed how Ecuador’s Constitutional Tribunal unanimously declared the nation’s gay sex ban unconstitutional on November 25. This declaration was issued in response to a lawsuit filed about a month prior by gay rights groups protesting against Penal Code Article 516 which punished gay sex with four to eight years in prison.<sup>145</sup> About a year later, in the February 1999 issue, there was a piece entitled “Chile Deletes Sodomy Law” which discussed how Chile, the previous December in 1998, had repealed its ban on gay sex, which had been punishable with up to five years in prison.<sup>146</sup> With the repeal of this ban on gay sex in Chile in 1998, the only Latin American nation to continue to criminalize homosexual sexual relations was Nicaragua. (Indeed, Nicaragua only overturned their sodomy law in 2008.)<sup>147</sup> The 1999 piece on Chile also noted that in the US, 19 out of 50 states still banned sodomy, including five states that ban only homosexual sodomy. This was a jab at how the US was behind in its endeavors to promote queer rights and equality, despite often portraying itself as “more developed” than Latin American countries. Notably, as discussed in the piece “VENEZUELAN CONSTITUTION COULD PROTECT GAYS” published in the November 1999 issue, only four nations banned discrimination against gays through their constitutions: Canada, Ecuador, Fiji, and South Africa.<sup>148</sup>

Despite these strides, these news items likewise acknowledged how there was little political legislation to uphold the rights of queer folks in Latin America, leading many to seek refuge in

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<sup>145</sup> Rex Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 19, January 1998: *Tierras Distantes* 1998., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045334](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045334).

<sup>146</sup> Rex Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 32, February 1999: *Tierras Distantes* 1999., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045827](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045827).

<sup>147</sup> Lorraine Bayard de Volo, "LGBTQ Politics in Nicaragua: Revolution, Dictatorship, and Social Movements (Review)," *NACLA*, accessed March 20, 2023, <https://nacla.org/lgbtq-politics-nicaragua-revolution-dictatorship-and-social-movements-review>.

<sup>148</sup> Rex Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 41, November 1999: *Tierras Distantes* 1999., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046099](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046099).



other countries during this time – such as the aforementioned countries that banned discrimination against gays via their constitutions. Many sought refuge from larger political conflicts underway such as Central American civil wars and the change of post-Cold War regimes, and marginalized people, such as queer Latin American people, are often at the most risk with little protection of their rights. One of the earliest mentions of the challenges faced by queer asylum seekers is in the August 1998 issue's piece "Mexican Gays Attack INS Report" which described how a US Immigration and Naturalization Service report had been released which claimed that since 1995 "there have been no further reports that homosexuals have been murdered with the apparent complicity or tolerance of government authorities."<sup>149</sup> Mexican queer activists denounced this as a US tactic to justify not granting asylum to Mexican queer folk.<sup>150</sup> This is supported by the evidence cited in the piece that research conducted by Mexico's Citizens' Commission Against Homophobic Hate Crimes found thirty-eight anti-gay killings nationwide in 1995.<sup>151</sup> This issue is revisited in the November 1998 issue with "US Looks At Anti Gay Climate in Latin American." This piece described how the US State Department began gathering information on discrimination against gays and persons with HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean following an increase in the number of such people seeking asylum in the US.<sup>152</sup> In particular, these nations included Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Jamaica, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.<sup>153</sup> This may signal a possible effort into

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<sup>149</sup> Rex Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 26, August 1998: *Tierras Distantes* 1998., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045602](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045602).

<sup>150</sup> Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 26, August 1998: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>151</sup> Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 26, August 1998: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>152</sup> Rex Wockner. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 29, November 1998: *Tierras Distantes* edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045714](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045714).

<sup>153</sup> Wockner. 1998. *En La Vida*, no. 29, November 1998: *Tierras Distantes*



providing asylum for Latin American queer folk after the pushback the INS report received a couple of months prior.

This controversy over whether Latin American queer folk ought to be awarded refugee status, of course, was not limited to the US. A piece entitled “GAYS, TRANYS PICKET PRINCE CHARLES” in the April 1999 issue, described how Argentine gays and transgender people picketed during Britain’s Prince Charles’s visit to Buenos Aires on March 9, 1999, demanding political asylum in the UK based on anti-gay persecution in Argentina. The piece was originally written in Spanish and then translated into English.

Additional pieces in *Tierras Distantes* further noted how even when queer folks were granted asylum in countries, they still faced obstacles and the possibility of being sent back to their home country. This is seen in the September 1999 issue with the piece “No Refuge for Colombian.” In this piece, readers were informed how the Federal Court of Canada issued a ruling saying that refugee Corredor Serrano couldn’t stay in Canada to escape homophobic abuse in his home country of Colombia. While, since 1992, “more than 200 foreign homosexuals have received asylum in Canada” the article noted how, in this case, the court (disappointingly) had ruled that Serrano was “not in serious danger because he’s not overly gay, doesn’t frequent gay venues, and doesn’t live a gay lifestyle.”<sup>154</sup> Despite the important legal milestones, Latin American queer people continued to face high levels of violence, both by private individuals and by state-sanctioned police forces which led to them seeking refuge abroad in places like the US and Canada.

#### *HIV/AIDS Healthcare Accessibility:*

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<sup>154</sup> Rex Wockner. 1990 *En La Vida*, no. 34, April 1999: *Tierras Distantes*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045880](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045880).



The 1990s saw the development of anti-retroviral drugs to treat HIV and the effects of AIDS. The approval and production of reverse-transcriptase inhibitors, such as AZT (zidovudine), demonstrated that treating HIV was possible, and opened doors for new improvements to be made.<sup>155</sup> However, these pharmaceutical drugs and ‘cocktails’ (a mixture of drugs) were not accessible to everyone. In Latin America, healthcare in general was not accessible to many. According to the International Labor Organization’s 1999 report, in Latin America and the Caribbean, more than a third of the total population did not have access to health services.<sup>156</sup> For those who did have healthcare, the government healthcare systems were still hesitant to spend money on these HIV pharmaceuticals due to the high price as drug companies overseas held the rights to the patents for antiretroviral drugs.<sup>157</sup> Yet, a case study by Public Health of Latin America of Brazil’s government demonstrated how granting wide access to antiretroviral therapy cut the HIV/AIDS hospitalization rate by 80% from 1996 to 2001, highlighting how countries that did not grant access were likely contributing to high hospitalization and mortality rates.<sup>158</sup> As reported in the news briefs discussed below, this was not the case for many other Latin American countries. In *Tierras Distantes*, Chicago’s queer Latine community would also encounter pieces denouncing Latin American government healthcare systems for causing even further deaths of people with AIDS, reinforcing the Brazilian study’s findings.

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<sup>155</sup> "Antiretroviral Drug Discovery and Development," National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/diseases-conditions/antiretroviral-drug-development#:~:text=In%20the%20early%201990s%2C%20additional,new%20generations%20of%20antiretroviral%20drugs>.

<sup>156</sup> International Labor Organization, "More Than 140 Million Denied Access to Health Care in Latin America and the Caribbean," International Labour Organization, last modified November 29, 1999, [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_007961/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_007961/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>157</sup> Public Health in Latin America, "HIV/AIDS in Brazil: the Struggle for Affordable Anti-Retroviral Drugs," accessed March 20, 2023, <https://sites.google.com/macalester.edu/phla/diseases-and-issues/hivaids-in-brazil-the-struggle-for-affordable-anti-retroviral-drugs?pli=1>.

<sup>158</sup> Public Health in Latin America, "HIV/AIDS in Brazil"



AIDS drug accessibility is discussed in the March 1997 issue with the piece “Chile to Expand AIDS Drug Availability.” The article reported how people with AIDS in Chile would soon have access to 3TC (lamivudine) and ddl (didanosine), antiretroviral drugs that are used to treat HIV.<sup>159</sup> It notes how, up until then, people with AIDS in Chile only had access to AZT (zidovudine).<sup>160</sup> The piece further recounted how, though this was good news, the government healthcare system still was unwilling to didn’t want to purchase the new protease inhibitors that were credited with halting HIV disease progression in most individuals. Though experts recommended that at least one protease inhibitor be included in an AIDS patient’s antiviral cocktail to be effective.<sup>161</sup> Government officials in Chile were not prepared to pay for this. As such, while the government aimed to purchase more drugs to treat HIV, it still fell short of all the necessary preventive measures to aid in treating HIV. Similarly, we find, in the same March 1997 issue, a piece about how Costa Rica’s healthcare system was denying AIDS drugs to their citizens. In “No AIDS Drugs for Costa Ricans,” Wockner wrote about how the assistant director of Costa Rica’s nationalized healthcare system Dr. Julieta Rordriguez told a group of twenty-five HIV-positive people on January 22 1997 that the healthcare system will not pay for HIV antiviral drugs.<sup>162</sup> Rodriguez’s statement immediately provoked protest among AIDS activists, and at the meeting, this was announced at one of the attendees named Antonio stated,

“Since we started meeting three weeks ago, two members of our group have died. But the authorities here don’t care. We are young, productive members of this society who have contributed [via mandatory payroll deductions] to this [healthcare] system as workers during many years. But they won’t give us anything. It is a horrible situation.”<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Rex Wockner. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: *Tierras Distantes*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2047049](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2047049).

<sup>160</sup> Wockner. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>161</sup> Wockner. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>162</sup> Wockner. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>163</sup> Wockner. 1997. *En La Vida*, no. 9, March 1997: *Tierras Distantes*



There is a follow-up to this story. In the November 1997 issue, one encounters the piece “Costa Rican AIDS pioneer dies.” In it, readers learned about the death of William Garcia who, several weeks before his death from complications with AIDS, forced Costa Rica’s government healthcare system to provide antiviral drugs to people with AIDS.<sup>164</sup> In September 1997, Garcia provided proof to the Costa Rican Supreme Court that he had paid the required 23% of his salary into the healthcare system and thus was fully entitled to receive the drugs.<sup>165</sup> The Supreme Court ordered the health care system to buy anti-HIV cocktail drugs for Garcia, and a few days later, for three other people who had filed similar suits.<sup>166</sup> However, the article stated that the Costa Rica government healthcare system still claimed that the antiviral drugs don’t work, have debilitating side effects, and are too expensive.<sup>167</sup> Despite Garcia having access to healthcare, he still faced significant hurdles to gaining access to antiviral drugs and thus this piece suggests that the government healthcare system’s lack of attentiveness to this issue contributed to his demise. These news briefs are indicative of the widespread accessibility to HIV and AIDS treatment across the world, and the effects that it leaves upon citizens. Moreover, they demonstrated the Latin American governments’ role in denying access to treatment, and scholarship stated that governments that played an active role aided in lowering hospitalizations. The news briefs detailed the outrage that came from a lack of government support, especially as it seemed to be a key issue in preventing deaths in the community. It is curious if Wockner chose to run these news briefs in order to demonstrate similarities among government control of AIDS healthcare, or if he ran them to

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<sup>164</sup> Rex Wocker. *En La Vida*, no. 17, November 1997: *Tierras Distantes* 1997., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045261](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045261).

<sup>165</sup> Wocker. *En La Vida*, no. 17, November 1997: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>166</sup> Wocker. *En La Vida*, no. 17, November 1997: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>167</sup> Wocker. *En La Vida*, no. 17, November 1997: *Tierras Distantes*



demonstrate how Latin American governments appeared to be behind Western countries' regimes by contributing to deaths.

### *Same-Sex Union and Marriage:*

The *Tierras Distantes* column also highlighted strides made for marital union ships in Latin America, yet notably, none of these "marriages" were legally enshrined marriages, rather these were union ships or extensions of a partner's benefits that a married couple would be entitled to. While some scholars state that "courts are relatively weak policymakers and are unable create social change and indeed only create damaging backlash if they act too aggressively," other scholars such as political science professor Michael McCann stated that litigation of marital union ships "led to concrete policy change, was linked to (though not exclusively responsible for) positive shifts in public opinion, and demonstrated that opponents of same-sex marriage would have acted in the political arenas, or engaged in a backlash, regardless of whether the change came from courts or legislatures."<sup>168</sup> The news briefs concerning marital union ships demonstrated how the strides made in granting same-sex couples more rights did provide frameworks for further policy change to be made.

This can first be seen in the January 1999 issue, in which the *Tierras Distantes* column featured a piece called "Two Men Marry in Colombia." The piece described how Luis Antonia Arias Bolivar and Isauro Rincon Angarita signed "a joint ownership of property contracting affirming that they are homosexuals, love each other, and desired economic union."<sup>169</sup> The

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<sup>168</sup> Unpacking the Backlash to Marriage Equality in Latin America Paper prepared for presentation at the Western Political Science Assn. Annual Meeting March 29-31, 2018 San Francisco, CA Adriana Piatti-Crocker, University of Illinois Springfield, [acroc2@uis.edu](mailto:acroc2@uis.edu) Jason Pierceson, University of Illinois Springfield, [jpier2@uis.edu](mailto:jpier2@uis.edu), [http://www.wpsanet.org/papers/docs/crocker\\_pierceson\\_wpsa.pdf](http://www.wpsanet.org/papers/docs/crocker_pierceson_wpsa.pdf)

<sup>169</sup> Rex Wocker. *En La Vida*, no. 31, January 1999: *Tierras Distantes* 1999., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.  
[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045794](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2045794).



document was drafted by gay lawyer and activist German Humberto Rincon.<sup>170</sup> While this is not the same as a marriage, it granted some economic rights and can set a precedent for similar unions and rights. Similarly, in the July 2000 issue, there was a piece entitled “BRAZIL EMBRACES GAY COUPLES.” The government of Brazil issued a decree on June 8 2000 granting same-sex couples spousal rights in the areas of pensions, social security benefits, and income taxation.<sup>171</sup> As stated in the news brief, this was a “historic and unprecedented decision in all of Latin America.”<sup>172</sup> However, while this is a great milestone, the piece stated that Brazil has the highest recorded rate of anti-gay murders.<sup>173</sup> This supports McCann’s scholarly analysis that opponents of same-sex marriage would engage in backlash regardless of who was making political change.

In relation, in the same July 2000 issue, there is another piece about a queer marriage titled “GAY WEDDING RILES EL SALVADOR.” The piece is about a same-sex marriage that took place in an indigenous community of San Juan Nonualco in San Salvador. This highlights an interesting aspect of marriage views of the indigenous communities of Latin America, and how indigenous communities may have been more queer-friendly or open to queer marriage. Some scholarly articles discuss how legislation policing queer relations was directly related to the effects of colonization.<sup>174</sup> The piece then states that the marriage was being investigated by authorities, and it was unknown what the non-Indigenous Salvadoran authorities may do to the couple.<sup>175</sup> This

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<sup>170</sup> Wocker. *En La Vida*, no. 31, January 1999: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>171</sup> Rex Wockner. 2000. *En La Vida*, no. 49, July 2000: *Tierras Distantes*, edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046303](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046303).

<sup>172</sup> Wockner. 2000. *En La Vida*, no. 49, July 2000: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>173</sup> Wockner. 2000. *En La Vida*, no. 49, July 2000: *Tierras Distantes*

<sup>174</sup> “This Alien Legacy,” Human Rights Watch, last modified April 29, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2008/12/17/alien-legacy/origins-sodomy-laws-british-colonialism>.

<sup>175</sup> Wockner. 2000. *En La Vida*, no. 49, July 2000: *Tierras Distantes*



piece underscores the backlash and danger that queer couples still faced, despite some strides being made in other Latin American countries. As such, it is curious why Wockner cited the news report including the names of those who were married, as it may add to the possible legal and physical danger they are in.

Another aspect of unions is the legal rights and benefits that come with them. As explored in the non-legal unions of queer couples, these couples did not have legally binding marriages. Thus, they did not retain the legal rights and benefits that a heterosexual couple may have. However, in 1990s Latin America, as seen through the *Tierras Distantes* column, strides were made by queer couples to attain these rights when they were in a relationship. In the December 1999 issue, there was an example of the extension of benefits in a piece entitled “COLOMBIAN COURT ORDERS DOMESTIC-PARTNER COVERAGE.” In the piece, it was reported that Bogota’s 26th Branch Civilian Court ordered the Social Security Institute to extend medical benefits to the male partner of a gay man who was covered by the national healthcare system.<sup>176</sup> This necessity of extending health insurance benefits to queer spouses was related to AIDS healthcare. In this case, a gay man who lost his job and health benefits sought healthcare coverage on his partner’s policy. The column stated that according to local activists, the court’s ruling marked the first time a Colombian judge recognized a same-sex couple as de-facto spouses.<sup>177</sup> This can be seen as creating the foundation for further policy change on expanding coverage to queer spouses. Overall, while courts were granting queer couples rights to forge legally-sanctioned unions as well as claim to the same spousal benefits heterosexual married couples were entitled to,

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<sup>176</sup> Rex Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 42, December 1999: *Tierras Distantes* 1999., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046130](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046130)

<sup>177</sup> Wockner. *En La Vida*, no. 42, December 1999: *Tierras Distantes*



providing a framework for eventual legislation on gay marriage. Yet, this did not prevent or stop pushback from those who strongly opposed the extension of such rights and privileges to queer couples.

*Conclusion:*

A close analysis of *Tierras Distantes* column provides significant insight into Latin American queer folks' experiences and interactions with larger political trends. The connection created by the *Tierras Distantes* between Chicago queer Latine folk and Latin American queer Latine folk created an informal bond between the two communities. This highlighted how *En la Vida* did aid in playing a role in mobilizing community organizing and connecting readers to their countries of origin by shining a light on queer political activism nationally and internationally. Yet, this is complicated as it is unknown how much of this column was simply a passion project for Wockner before he ended it to follow the best next thing in the news. His personal bias that may have been infused in the column adds to this uncertainty as well.



## Epilogue

Understanding lived experiences of those in the queer Latine community is important not only for scholarship but for those who currently live as a queer Latine person. The queer Latine community has slowly been moving out from the periphery with further recognition in non-queer or Latine spaces. With celebrities such as Puerto Rican singer Ricky Martin denying the rumor that he is gay in a piece from the December 2000 issue of *En La Vida*, to Latine celebrities now claiming their queer identity or sharing support of the queer community at large demonstrates a significant change in accepting queer Latine folk.<sup>178</sup> Moreover, in 2018, a major network company aired a drama series, *Pose*, about Latine, Afro-Latine and Black queer ballroom culture based in 1980s New York City.<sup>179</sup> The airing and popularity of the show among the queer community demonstrate that people are hungry for these stories of the experiences of these communities. The information revealed through the advertisements, *Opiniones* column, and *Tierras Distantes* column provides glimpses into the experiences, desires, and beliefs of queer Latine folk in Chicago during the 1990s. This is such a large and diverse community due to folks' dual identities, and further work can be done to nuance important specific perspectives.

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<sup>178</sup> *En La Vida*, no. 54, December 2000: *Ricky Martin: Speaking His Mind* 2000., edited by Tracy Baim. Chicago, IL: Lambda Publications.

[https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic\\_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046478](https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C2046478).

<sup>179</sup> GILBERTO BLASINI, "Latina/o LGBTQ Identities in Media – Latinx Media: An Open-Access Textbook," Open UGA – Open Access Books & Instructional Resources, accessed March 20, 2023, <https://open.online.uga.edu/latinxmedia/chapter/latina-o-lgbtq-identities-in-media/>.



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