

A Public Service Announcement from the Lesbian Avengers

AN OPEN LETTER from the NY 90s LESBIAN AVENGERS to the GAP

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To the GAP, its shareholders and consumers -- and to the media:

The GAP recently began selling a Lesbian Avenger T-shirt on its website with our group's name and the group's logo on the front, and a box of text about our group's origin with the names of its founders (lifted from a Lesbian Avenger document) on the back. That is unacceptable.

The GAP commercial deal was done without consultation with the larger body of the New York chapter, or other Avenger chapters across the world. Nor were several founders whose names appear on the back of the GAP T-shirt informed or consulted. Instead, the GAP initially approached one Avenger, a graphic artist, in late 2019 to produce a Lesbian Avenger T-shirt as part of a broader package of LGBTQ activist group T-shirts for a planned GAP 2020 Pride promotional campaign. She agreed after consulting with a founding member. Pride 2020 was later cancelled. Recently the GAP released an Avenger T-shirt for sale online as part of its 2021 Pride promotion without consulting anyone. After learning about this, members of the NY Avengers as a group immediately called for an end to production and sales of the T-shirt.

Our direct action group was founded in 1992 on activist principles that oppose the commercial branding/sale of lesbian history and ideas. As founding members of the New York 90s Avengers, we strongly oppose any deal made to license the Lesbian Avenger name, logo, member names and origin story to the GAP -- or to any corporation or commercial entity for purposes of profit.

The Lesbian Avenger name and our bomb logo have always existed and been made available as open-source name/graphics to be used in good faith only by and for Lesbian Avengers activities, actions and projects -- not to be sold or used to raise funds by a commercial venture. In fact, the Avengers have their own T-shirt which is sold to support a historic documentary project about the Lesbian Avengers and encourage lesbian activism (www.thelesbianavengers.com).

We regard the Lesbian Avengers bomb logo and activist history as the intellectual and moral property of the Lesbian Avengers. No individual or member has the legal right to license it for profit. Our organization and movement *then as now* oppose the commodification and co-optation of our lives and history, what some today call "Rainbow Capitalism". We oppose commercial licensing of the Lesbian Avenger name, logo, or history – *then, now and in the future*.

We demand that the GAP halt its production, sale, distribution of the Lesbian Avenger 2021 Pride T-shirt. We also seek transparency regarding sales, distribution and revenue from this GAP T-shirt to date and demand that the GAP respond to our concerns in writing and provide updated information about all aspects of the Lesbian Avenger Pride 2021 T-shirt promotional campaign.

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Our message is clear: Our lesbian history is not for sale. We are not a brand, a meme, a gif or an NFT.

We founded the Lesbian Avengers as a "direct action group focused on issues vital to lesbian survival and visibility." We find it especially offensive that, as the Gap and corporations seek to use our logo and activist history to sell t-shirts, **the media continues its historic erasure of lesbian issues and activism**, including the global Dyke Marches that happen during Pride.

This year's annual NYC Dyke March is in its 30th year and continues to draw thousands of participants. Yet the *New York Times* again overlooked the Dyke March in its Pride 2021 supplement, with only a single line in one article noting it. The inaugural Dyke March in DC in 1993 was founded by the Lesbian Avengers and other lesbian groups and drew 20,000 women. Dyke Marches now happen around world, typically without a permit, with hundreds to tens of thousands of participants as seen in the recent Paris lesbian march in April.

We call on the media to break its silence on lesbian activism, to cover lesbian issues, to pay attention to our work, including the Juneteenth "Break the Chains with Love" march on June 19 in Brooklyn, founded by a Lesbian Avenger, as well as this year's Dyke Marches in NY, LA, Philly, DC...the list goes on.

It's past time to shine a bright spotlight on the enduring legacy of the Lesbian Avengers, other lesbian activist groups, and our shared living history.

We repeat: Our lesbian history and movement are not for sale.

For the New York Lesbian Avengers,

Cofounders Anne-christine d'Adesky, Ana Maria Simo, Sarah Schulman