



## **Riders Against Gender Exclusion (RAGE) records, 2007-2013 : Ms.Coll.46**

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Finding aid prepared by John Anderies on March 10, 2017

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John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center  
1315 Spruce Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
[archives@waygay.org](mailto:archives@waygay.org)

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## Summary Information

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| <b>Repository:</b>               | John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center  |
| <b>Creator:</b>                  | Riders Against Gender Exclusion (RAGE)  |
| <b>Title:</b>                    | Riders Against Gender Exclusion (RAGE) records  |
| <b>ID:</b>                       | Ms.Coll.46  |
| <b>Date [inclusive]:</b>         | 2007-2013   |
| <b>Physical Description:</b>     | .4 Linear Feet (1 document box)   |
| <b>Language of the Material:</b> | English   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>                 | RAGE (Riders Against Gender Exclusion) was founded in 2009 by a small group of Philadelphia-area LGBTQ activists in order to bring attention to and ultimately change the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) policy of using binary gender stickers on their transportation passes. The records of RAGE span the life of the organization from 2009 to 2012, plus some materials dating before and after this time period. Included are internal organizational records as well as promotional materials and coverage by the press. |

### Preferred Citation

Riders Against Gender Exclusion (RAGE) records, 2007-2013, Ms. Coll. 46, John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center, Philadelphia, PA.

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## Biographical / Historical

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RAGE (Riders Against Gender Exclusion) was founded in 2009 by a small group of Philadelphia-area LGBTQ activists in order to bring attention to and ultimately change the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) policy of using binary gender stickers on their transportation passes.

SEPTA is the name of the regional public transportation system that served (in 2009) 3.8 million people in the city and county of Philadelphia and the four suburban counties that surround it. Its services include bus, subway, elevated rail, commuter rail, light rail and electric trolleybus. SEPTA required the use of male and female gender stickers on all monthly and weekly commuter passes (called transpasses), as well

as passes for senior citizens and people with disabilities. SEPTA's rationale for the policy was that the gender stickers would prevent (presumably heterosexual) couples and others from sharing their passes with one another. There were no other forms of identification on the passes.

In 2007, a 46-year-old African American transwoman named Charlene Arcila was told she could not use the transportation pass she had purchased to board her usual bus for work in Philadelphia. In this incident Arcila was told that she could not use a pass with a female sticker on it, but after buying another pass with a male sticker on it, she was denied service again. Equality Advocates of Philadelphia filed a complaint with the Philadelphia Human Relations Commission on Arcila's behalf, arguing that the gender stickers violated the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance and the Equal Protections clauses in the state and federal constitutions. Arcila's actions were the first public stance against SEPTA's gender sticker policy. (Charlene Arcila died April 7, 2015; as of January 22, 2017, the city's suit against SEPTA is now before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court).

According to RAGE's "Who We Are" statement:

"RAGE (Riders Against Gender Exclusion) is an all-volunteer organization, led by those impacted by transphobia and gender-based discrimination. We see ourselves as part of a movement for gender justice that is led by transgender, genderqueer and gender non-conforming people standing up to demand respect, dignity and equality.

RAGE was founded to address SEPTA's policy of using M/F gender stickers on weekly/monthly passes because of the instances of discrimination and the threat to safety this causes transgender and gender non-conforming riders. We seek to win this campaign in a way that builds Philadelphia's transgender and genderqueer community's capacity for self-advocacy, organizing, direct action and collaboration."

In its earliest stages, RAGE studied past efforts to change the gender stickers on passes and developed options for their own campaign. They quickly established a Facebook presence, held a successful happy hour at Stir Lounge in Philadelphia, and scheduled a meeting with the SEPTA Citizen's Advisory Committee. The 27-member committee voted unanimously in 2009 to recommend that SEPTA discontinue use of the gender stickers. RAGE partnered with Liberty City Democrats to administer an online petition and testimony collection form. The effort produced over 2,000 signatures and 20 testimonials.

In October 2009 representatives from RAGE met with SEPTA General Manager Joe Casey to deliver the petitions, testimonials, and a list of the organization's demands. At this meeting Casey stated that SEPTA would be switching to a new fare system within a year and that the gender stickers would be discontinued then.

In March 2010 RAGE put on a public drag show at the City Hall SEPTA station called "SEPTA is a Drag." This event was well attended and was covered by the media, but the organization found it difficult to get participation by performers, as many opted not to participate out of concerns for their safety; indeed, RAGE received some criticism for potentially putting vulnerable people at risk. However, this event did help to launch new telephone and online systems to report incidents related to the gender stickers. Around this same time SEPTA announced that their plan to move to a new fare system would be put on hold indefinitely.

In the fall of 2010 RAGE drafted a "SEPTA Rider's Bill of Rights," got over 25 community organizations and high profile individuals to endorse it, and interrupted a SEPTA meeting to unveil the document. In 2011 Liberty City Democrats sponsored a questionnaire for candidates for City Council and Mayor of Philadelphia, including a question about the gender stickers; most were in support of discontinuing their use.

In the summer of 2011 filmmaker Wren Warner debuted a short documentary film about the gender sticker issue (<http://www.wrenwarner.com/transpass.html>). *Transpass* focuses on "personal interviews, footage of Riders Against Gender Exclusion (RAGE) demonstrations and actions, and includes music created by people in the trans and queer community." Meeting with great success, the film was an official selection at the Philadelphia QFest and the Frameline 37 LGBT Film Festival in San Francisco. It has also been shown at New Filmmakers New York, Frameline Film Festival, TLV Festival, South West Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, Scribe Street Movies, LA Transgender Film Festival, San Francisco Transgender Film Festival, and Gender Reel.

Also in 2011 RAGE initiated the "Operation Ride With Respect" membership drive hoping to further build community support, put increased pressure on SEPTA, and encourage more people to resist the gender policy on their own. RAGE offered a \$2.50 membership kit, which included a "Ride with Respect" button, a membership card, information to spread the word about RAGE, and tips for riding safely and supporting other riders. RAGE members publicly delivered a membership kit to SEPTA General Manager Joe Casey, encouraging him to become a member and take a stand against the stickers.

In March 2012, Philadelphia Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown proposed a resolution in favor of the removal of the gender stickers and City Council passed the resolution unanimously. The gesture was a symbolic one and did not name any consequences to SEPTA should they fail to remove the gender stickers.

The following month, March 2012, SEPTA announced that they would recommend removal of the gender stickers in that year's budget hearings. The recommendation was approved and on July 1, 2013, SEPTA officially discontinued the use of the gender stickers.

Individuals who were involved in the organizational work of RAGE include Jaci Adams, Nico Amador, Charlene Arcila, Sheila Colson-Pope, David Connors, Andrea Harrington, Ray Murphy, Max Ray, and Talia Young.

(Sources: Internal; Riders Against Gender Exclusion website: <https://phillyrage.wordpress.com/>; "Transgender activists end policy of gender markers on Philadelphia public transit" in Global Nonviolent Action Database: <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/transgender-activists-end-policy-gender-markers-philadelphia-public-transit>).

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## Scope and Contents

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The records of Riders Against Gender Exclusion span the life of the organization from 2009 to 2012, plus some materials dating before and after this time period. Included are internal organizational records as well as promotional materials and coverage by the press. There are also digital photographs documenting the group's public actions taken by Kaytee Ray-Riek and a digital copy of the short documentary "Transpass" by Wren Warner. Some aspects of the organization's work, such as the collecting of membership data and testimonials, as well as outreach through the organization's Facebook Group Page "Stop SEPTA from Using Gender Stickers on Transpasses" (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/119024039464/>), occurred only online. As yet this information has not been included in the collection. Additionally, protest signs associated with the cause are not yet included.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center

1315 Spruce Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
[archives@waygay.org](mailto:archives@waygay.org)

### Conditions Governing Access

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### Conditions Governing Use

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift, Nico Amador, 2015; Talia Young, 2016.

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## Controlled Access Headings

- Advertising fliers
- Blogs
- Passes (Transportation)
- Petitions
- Philadelphia (Pa.)
- Public transportation
- Records
- Sex discrimination
- Transgender people -- Civil rights
- Transphobia
- Riders Against Gender Exclusion (RAGE)
- Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority

## Collection Inventory

| Title/Description  | Instances |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Business cards, undated  | Box 1     | Folder 1  |
| Correspondence, 2009   | Box 1     | Folder 2  |
| Flyers, undated  | Box 1     | Folder 3  |
| Forms, undated   | Box 1     | Folder 4  |
| Legal research, 2009, undated  | Box 1     | Folder 5  |
| Organizational documents, 2009-2011, undated   | Box 1     | Folder 6  |
| Petition signatures, undated   | Box 1     | Folder 7  |
| Phillyrage.wordpress.com site printout, 2010-2013  | Box 1     | Folder 8  |
| Press coverage, 2008-2009  | Box 1     | Folder 9  |
| SEPTA Citizens Advisory Committee, 2009  | Box 1     | Folder 10 |
| Stickers (BALD, [Eyeglasses symbol], F, F2M, FAT, M, M2F, [International symbol of access (wheelchair)], T), undated | Box 1     | Folder 11 |
| Testimonials, undated  | Box 1     | Folder 12 |
| Transpasses, 2009  | Box 1     | Folder 13 |
| Young Philly Politics discussions, 2007-2008   | Box 1     | Folder 14 |

Digital photographs ("SEPTA is a Drag" event and "SEPTA Rider's Bill of Rights" presentation) by Kaytee Ray-Riek, 2010

Digital video of film "Transpass" by Wren Warner, 2011