

History Happens



GLBT
Historical
Society
museum & archives

June 2020



A Manifestation of Courage & Celebration: The Birth of San Francisco Pride, 1970–1980

by Gerard Koskovich, Don Romesburg & Amy Sueyoshi

It all started with an impromptu march and a picnic. On June 27, 1970, a small band of hippies and “hair fairies” marched down Polk Street, then San Francisco’s most prominent LGBTQ area, to celebrate an event they called “Christopher Street Liberation Day.” The following afternoon, some 200 people congregated for a “Gay-In” picnic in Speedway Meadows at Golden Gate Park. These two modest gatherings inaugurated the annual celebration we now know as San Francisco Pride.

As difficult as it is to believe that every single Pride participant in 1970 could fit into a small area of the park, it’s also remarkable that just ten years later, Pride was drawing some 250,000 participants and

spectators. The foundational first decade of Pride is the subject of a new online exhibition, "[Labor of Love: The Birth of San Francisco Pride 1970–1980](#)," opening June 15 on the GLBT Historical Society's website. It's the second of two exhibitions the society is organizing to commemorate Pride's golden jubilee.

"Labor of Love" is curated by three LGBTQ historians who have worked with the society for many years: Gerard Koskovich, Don Romesburg and Amy Sueyoshi. To introduce the exhibition, each selected one item that will be on display and wrote a brief reflection about its significance:

Gerard Koskovich: The flyer for the 1970 Christopher Street Liberation Day Gay-In (top left) is one of many items of ephemera that stand out for me. It's our first fragile historical document recalling an event that appeared to have little impact at the time. At the end of the tumultuous 1960s, when enormous protests, sprawling counterculture festivals and massive full-on riots regularly dominated the news, a ragtag band of hippies and queens staging an informal march followed by a couple hundred queerfolk holding a picnic the next day didn't strike much of anybody as meriting a headline.

The fact that this flyer survived likely tells us something important: Some of the people involved in the event thought of themselves as actors in history. In this case, the copy came to the archives with the papers of Charles Thorpe, an activist involved in the first glimmers of gay liberation in San Francisco. He carefully gathered this flyer and other materials documenting those efforts. For Thorpe, the flyer evidently wasn't just designed to announce an event, then be tossed in the trash. It was a reminder of a manifestation of courage and celebration that should be handed along to the future.

Amy Sueyoshi: The logo for gay pride on the 1972 program (top right) features a raised fist with purple butterfly wings. It's an odd image when you stare at it too long, but it reminds me of the explicit ties that the Gay Power movement had with other cultural nationalist movements such as Black Power. We know from Asian American activists that the alliances were far from perfect. Queers of color felt racism in dominantly white gay and lesbian spaces, and homophobia disabled full inclusion in the fight for Third World liberation. Still, the logo to me signals an aim for a liberation movement that explicitly articulates allyhood and intersectional identities, in its nod towards mariposa consciousness and a raised fist against white supremacy.

Don Romesburg: From its earliest years, people used Gay Freedom Day to express sameness and difference simultaneously. Unlike bars, organizations and neighborhoods, which served particular identitarian, political, cultural and erotic constituencies, the parade and festival were the only places where all of the community would experience its full collectivity. Yet many also used the gathering to assert the worth and pleasure of their particular facet of sexual and gender diversity. Gay Freedom Day became the annual reunion of one big queer dysfunctional family. Early Pride events showcased that we could all be an LGBTQ community, despite and through our differences.

That's why I love this Marie Ueda photo of the Third World Gay Caucus (center), a coalitional organization for the liberation of queer people of color, marching in the 1977 parade. Black, Latinx and Asian American people assembled themselves under one banner, an exuberant solidarity in difference. And they gestured, through signs such as "Gay Rights Are Human Rights," toward a universal call for all "gay" (what we'd now call LGBTQ) people to claim their full humanity in the face of racism, cis and hetero marginalization and erasure.

NOTE: "[Labor of Love: The Birth of San Francisco Pride](#)" opens on the GLBT Historical Society's [website](#) on June 15.

Gerard Koskovich is a San Francisco historian, curator, rare book dealer and a founding member of the GLBT Historical Society.

Don Romesburg is a professor of women's and gender studies at Sonoma State University.

Amy Sueyoshi is dean of the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University.

From the Executive Director Strengthening Our Connections



by Terry Beswick

When people congratulate me for being selected as a [Grand Marshal of the 2020 San Francisco Pride Parade](#), I like to joke that I am planning on making a video of me riding a cut-out cardboard convertible around my living room, my boyfriend by my side, decked out in rainbows and giving the standard pageant-queen wave. Maybe it's not such a bad idea!

As I am writing this, we've just received notice that San Francisco Mayor London Breed has extended the shelter-in-place orders, ensuring that our museum and archives are likely to remain closed to the public through August, at least. While this is disappointing, I'm grateful that our local political leadership is following the science of public health.

When the shutdown went into effect in mid-March, we had just signed a Letter-of-Intent to lease space for the largest museum of LGBTQ history in the United States. But as covered in the [Bay Area Reporter](#) last month, when the pandemic broke, we quickly realized that our vision of securing a new museum space by 2020 was no longer tenable.

Not Giving Up

However, we have not given up the dream just yet. In the short-term, we have begun moving all exhibitions, educational events and many archival resources online. In June our website will make available three

new online exhibitions, dozens of recorded history forums, and a multitude of resources for researchers. And in the coming months, while we continue to plan for a full-scale, brick-and-mortar museum, we will be redesigning our online portals to establish a more robust, albeit virtual, LGBTQ museum and archives.

During these challenging times, I hope you will join us in our efforts. Every Pride month over the last few years we have launched a membership drive, and this June we need you more than ever. For just **\$35 annually**, you can be a part of LGBTQ history, knowing that you are helping to preserve your heritage in our archives and museum.

There are so many thousands of stories in our vaults — Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, José Sarria, Sylvester and thousands of lesser-known everyday heroes — that must be told so that others can be inspired and learn. I'm always touched when I read the comments left in the guestbook in our small, now-boarded-up museum. Young people especially, from around the world, are always wowed when they identify with the stories we share and gain a better appreciation of their own tribal heritage.

A Broader Audience

I know that Pride parades and celebrations will not be the same on a small screen, and that an online exhibition is not the same as an in-person visit to the museum. But while we adapt to this new environment with virtual offerings, I hope we are also reaching a broader audience with our richly diverse stories. By sharing our stories among LGBTQ people everywhere, we are strengthening our connections to each other, identifying our similarities and bridging our many differences. And to me, that's worth doing. Happy Pride, everyone!

Terry Beswick is executive director of the GLBT Historical Society.

In the Archives

Small Moments of Intimacy



By Isaac Fellman

Just before the California shelter-in-place order went into effect, the archives staff put together an online collection of [Pride parade videos](#) from the 1970s and 1980s. Despite their huge size, Pride celebrations are made up of small moments of intimacy, and it's that intimacy that makes an in-person Pride parade impossible this year. Pride isn't just about buying new rainbow

clothes, decorating floats or celebrating love in the abstract; it's about contact and coziness, about proximity.

So as we celebrate Pride without a physical parade in 2020, I thought I'd share some of my favorite small moments from our archival parades

(click the boldface text to go to the videos):

1975 Parade, 0:58. A beaming Harvey Milk clasps hands with a young man sprawled out in the flatbed of his campaign truck; the eye contact is warm, intimate, for just a flash, and then the camera moves on.

1983 Parade, 2:23. The camera rides along on the People With AIDS Alliance trolley. As it passes the Warfield theater, crowds packed tightly onto the sidewalk clap and holler. The trolley is passing directly over the location now occupied by the GLBT Historical Society's archives, on the lower level of the building directly across the street from the Warfield.

1986 Parade, 11:36. The Dykes on Bikes are start-stopping, idling in each other's exhaust. One butch/femme couple (shown in the image above) is in full wedding gear, their motorcycle dragging shoes on a string. The butch's hat flies off in the wind, and the femme trips off the bike in her floor-length gown to pluck it from the head of the dyke (on a bicycle) who has picked it up offscreen. It's a minuet of lesbian gallantry.

1989 Parade, 5:30. Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin are grand marshals of the 1989 parade. They sit shoulder to shoulder in the back of a convertible, Phyllis greeting the masses with a Roosevelt grin, Del in huge sunglasses, talking avidly to her wife but looking uncomfortable with the attention of everybody else. A campy cowboy in a black tank top waves to his friends from the driver's seat, inches from Del's knees.

When you link to the videos, take the time to look closely and identify those sequences — those small moments of intimacy — that are meaningful to you. And please check out our [special archives webpage](#) with all of our collections and resources pertaining to this beloved, annual San Francisco celebration.

Isaac Fellman is the reference archivist at the GLBT Historical Society.

Upcoming Online Events

[Fighting Back
Pandemic Harm
Reduction: Risk &
Social Needs](#)

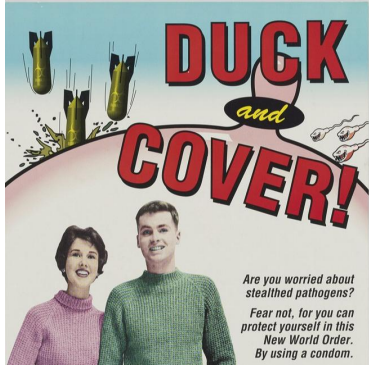
Wednesday, June 3
6:00–7:30 p.m.
Online forum
[Free](#) | \$5.00 donation

[Workshop
Beyond the
Rainbow: Symbols &
Flag-Making](#)

Friday, June 5
6:00–8:00 p.m.
Online forum
[Free](#) | \$5.00 donation

[Fighting Back
Testing, Contact
Tracing &
Quarantine](#)

Wednesday, June 10
6:00–7:30 p.m.
Online forum
[Free](#) | \$5.00 donation



AIDS ANTIBODY TESTING

What should you tell your patients about the HTLV-III Antibody Test and the Alternative Test Site Program?

Forums for Health Care Professionals

Wednesday August 28, 1985
3:00 – 5:00 P.M.
Room 300, Department of Public Health
101 Grove Street, San Francisco

Guest Speakers:

Donald Abrams, M.D. Assistant Director, AIDS Clinic S.F. General Hospital	Matthew Coles Attorney Marc Gold Special Projects Coordinator UCSF AIDS Health Project	Nancy Shaw, Ph.D. Education Department SF AIDS Foundation
Jeff Amery Special Assistant for AIDS Programs to the S.F. Director of Health	Tim Mess, M.D. Staff Physician AIDS Clinic, Ward 86 S.F. General Hospital	Tim Wilfred Director SF AIDS Foundation
		David Werdegger, M.D. Director S.F. Department of Public Health

A panel of community historians, harm-reduction experts and AIDS educators will consider what harm-reduction and risk-management strategies from the AIDS crisis might point our way forward as our responses to COVID-19 continue to evolve. Register online [here](#).

This presentation and workshop dives into the rich history of symbols that have represented and been used within the LGBTQ community, and will encourage participants to invent and design their own flags and symbols at home. Register online [here](#).

What are the implications of testing, contact tracing and quarantine for civil rights and disease prevention? A panel of HIV-prevention workers, COVID-19 prevention specialists and community historians will tackle these questions. Register online [here](#).

[Fighting Back](#) Being Transgender in a Pandemic

Wednesday, June 17
6:00–7:30 p.m.
Online forum
Free | \$5.00 donation



A panel of activists, healthcare specialists and community historians will consider how the AIDS crisis affected the transgender community and

[Artist Talk](#) Celebrating 50 Years of Pride Through Art

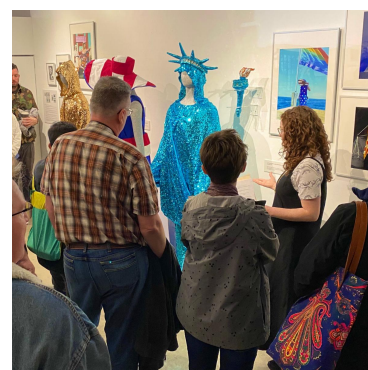
Thursday, June 18
6:00–8:00 p.m.
Online forum
Free | \$5.00 donation



Illustrator Win Mixer will discuss how his research in the GLBT Historical Society archives provided inspiration for his artistic contribution to this year's San

[Panel Discussion](#) Curating With Pride: A Triptych of Pride Exhibitions

Sunday, June 21
2:00–4:00 p.m.
Online forum
Free | \$5.00 donation



This panel discussion brings together curators from all three of the society's [Pride exhibitions](#) to discuss their curatorial approaches and decisions. They will

identify strategies to provide support to transgender people during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Register online [here](#).

Francisco Arts Commission "Art on Market Street" program, "Celebrating 50 Years of Gay Pride." Register online [here](#).

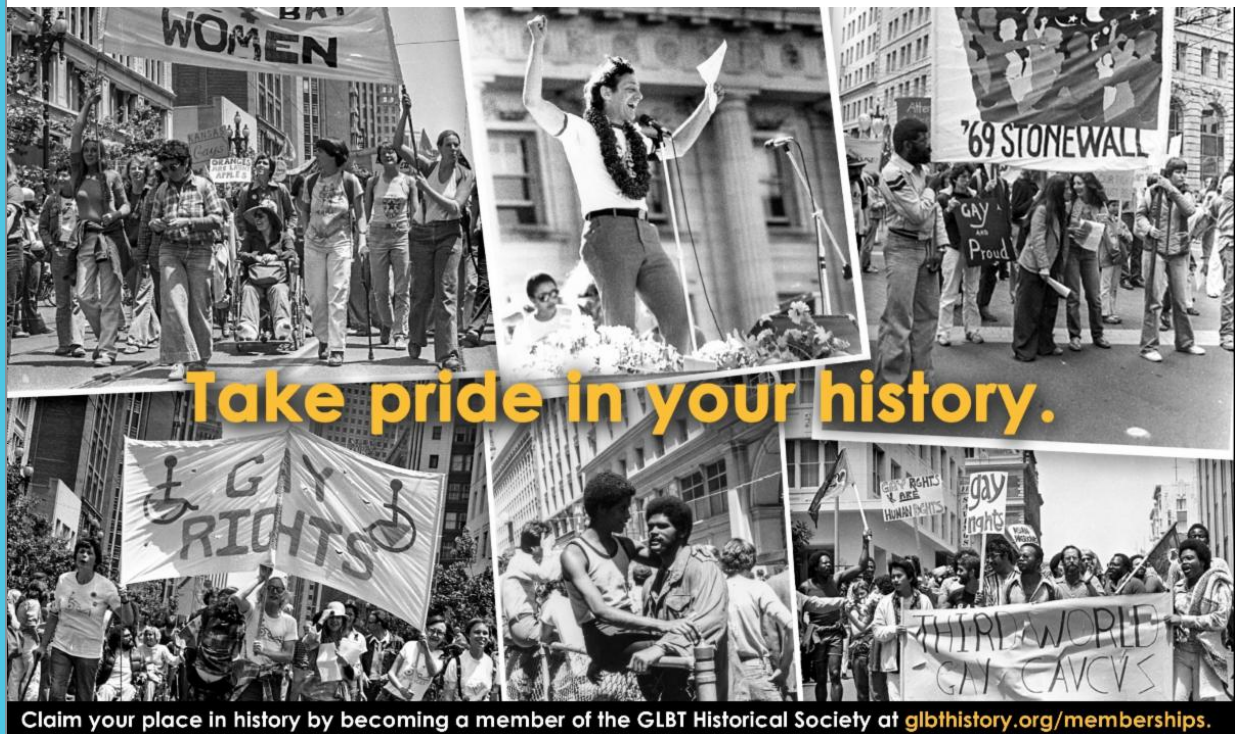
outline the themes they selected and discuss the curatorial lenses that informed their work. Register online [here](#).



[Fighting Back](#) Direct Action, Marching & Parading

Wednesday, June 24
6:00–7:30 p.m.
Online forum
Free | \$5.00 donation

An intergenerational panel of community historians, veteran organizers and younger activists will discuss the history of direct action, marches and parades for advancing social justice in the fight against AIDS and discuss how these strategies are being adapted and deployed during the coronavirus pandemic. Register online [here](#).



Take pride in your history.

Claim your place in history by becoming a member of the GLBT Historical Society at glbthistory.org/memberships.

Visit Us & Online Resources

The museum and archives are closed until further notice due to San Francisco's shelter-in-place order. The archives staff is still available to work with researchers; please contact us at reference@glbthistory.org.

We have expanded our resources on our website. Click the title to go to the page.

Online exhibitions: Our online exhibitions are available here.

Online collections: Browse over a dozen digital collections.

Upcoming events: More information about all of our online events.

Fighting Back series: More information about this online event series.

Past events: Footage of a large number of our past programs.

THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

Exhibitions & Programs

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San Francisco, CA 94114

(415) 621-1107

www.glbthistory.org/museum

DR. JOHN P. DE CECCO ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

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CREDITS. FEATURE. Top left: "Christopher Street Liberation Day Gay-In" offset flyer, June 1970; Charles Thorpe Papers (1987-02), GLBT Historical Society. Top right: San Francisco Gay Pride Program, 1972; Ephemera Collection, GLBT Historical Society. Center: The Third World Gay Caucus contingent at the 1977 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade; photo by Marie Ueda, Marie Ueda Photographs (2006-12), GLBT Historical Society. **FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Photo of Terry Beswick by Gareth Gooch. **IN THE ARCHIVES:** Still from footage of the 1986 San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day Parade; footage by Charles Cyberski, Charles Cyberski Collection (1994-03), GLBT Historical Society. **EVENTS.** Fighting Back, 6/3: A National Condom Week flyer from 1995; Beowulf Thorne Papers (2003-10), GLBT Historical Society. Workshop 6/5: A participant at the January flag-making workshop creates a unique LGBTQ flag; photo by Leigh Pfeffer. Fighting Back 6/10: Promotional flyer, 1985; Ephemera Collection, GLBT Historical Society. Fighting Back 6/17: The San Francisco Trans March in 2018; photo by Nalini Elias. Artist Talk 6/18: Original artwork created by Win Mixer for the San Francisco Arts Commission; courtesy of the artist, used with permission. Panel Discussion 6/21: Curator Joanna Black gives a tour of the Gilbert Baker exhibition at the GLBT Historical Society Museum in March 2020; photo by Nalini Elias. Fighting Back 6/24: A candlelight march in the Castro, 1980; photo by Crawford Barton, Crawford Barton Collection (1993-11), GLBT Historical Society.

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