



GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2020

ANNUAL REPORT

GLBT
GLBT
Historical
Society
museum & archives



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Founded in 1985, the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) Historical Society is recognized internationally as a leader in the field of LGBTQ public history. Our operations are centered at two sites: our GLBT Historical Society Museum, located since 2011 in the heart of San Francisco's Castro neighborhood; and our Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Research Center, open to researchers in the Mid-Market district.

OUR MISSION

The GLBT Historical Society collects, preserves, exhibits and makes accessible to the public materials and knowledge to support and promote understanding of LGBTQ history, culture and arts in all their diversity.

OUR VISION

We envision a world in which LGBTQ people are appreciated and celebrated by one another in all their diversity and by all people for their contributions to history and culture.

We envision a world in which everyone can learn about LGBTQ history as a vital means for promoting civic engagement, social justice, and political change.

We envision a world in which LGBTQ people find acceptance, strength, and pride in acknowledging their heritage and in sharing it with society as a whole.

OUR VALUES

We believe that knowledge of our diverse LGBTQ past is an invaluable resource for understanding the challenges of the present and inspiring dreams for a future of greater social justice.

We appreciate the importance of LGBTQ history for building community and promoting connection.

We support debate, dialogue, and discussion about the LGBTQ past as a way to educate, inspire, and empower LGBTQ people and our allies in building our future.

The
Sisters
of Perpetual
Indulgence

Sister Vicious Power-Hungry Bitch of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence poses in San Francisco's Corona Heights with a flag bearing the order's name, October 1989; photo by Jean-Baptiste Carhaix, Jean-Baptiste Carhaix Photographs (2019-39), GLBT Historical Society.

THE CHALLENGE & HOPE OF HISTORY

Thank you for your support of the GLBT Historical Society. We write this letter acknowledging that historians will analyze and learn from 2020 for decades to come. The COVID-19 pandemic, the country's racial reckoning and a divisive election made it very clear that we are living in challenging and historic times. As leaders of an institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting LGBTQ history, we confront the challenges posed by our history, we acknowledge their impact and we work toward a more just future.

We are excited to share our progress in these pages and are deeply grateful for all of the members, volunteers and supporters who have sustained us over the last year. Our new Five-Year Strategic Plan, included with this report, centers our longstanding commitment to the principles of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility. These ideas are at the very core of our work. Our updated plan recognizes the historic realities we face, and focuses on lifting up the stories of people with disabilities, communities of color, women, bisexual and transgender people—our LGBTQ communities that have been historically most marginalized. It also charts a path forward for our continued growth, as we take our place as a vital, inclusive community institution.

Over the last year, we have invested significant resources into establishing robust infrastructure for our collections, including expanding our online archival content and instituting a redesigned digital archives management system. This work was already underway, and the pandemic underscored its urgency and importance. With these new systems in place, we are better able to serve researchers both locally and internationally. Our exhibitions and public programming have taken on renewed vigor, providing critical historic context in an unprecedented time. Our programming uses the past as a resource, identifying strategies, lessons and opportunities to take action in the present. With thousands of attendees from around the world, our programs provided a lively forum enabling people to connect while sheltering in place.

As we look to the future, we cultivate hope and optimism. Soon, we'll be able to connect in person once again, and we'll be fully reopened to researchers and visitors. And while the pandemic stalled our plans for a permanent home for our museum and archives, we continue to work towards this essential goal.

We are committed to remembering the lessons that 2020 has taught us. That the legacies of the past are still with us. That the "arc of the moral universe" does not bend toward justice on its own. That our community is strong and resilient even when faced with enormous challenges. That together, we make history.

With respect for our shared past and hope for our future,



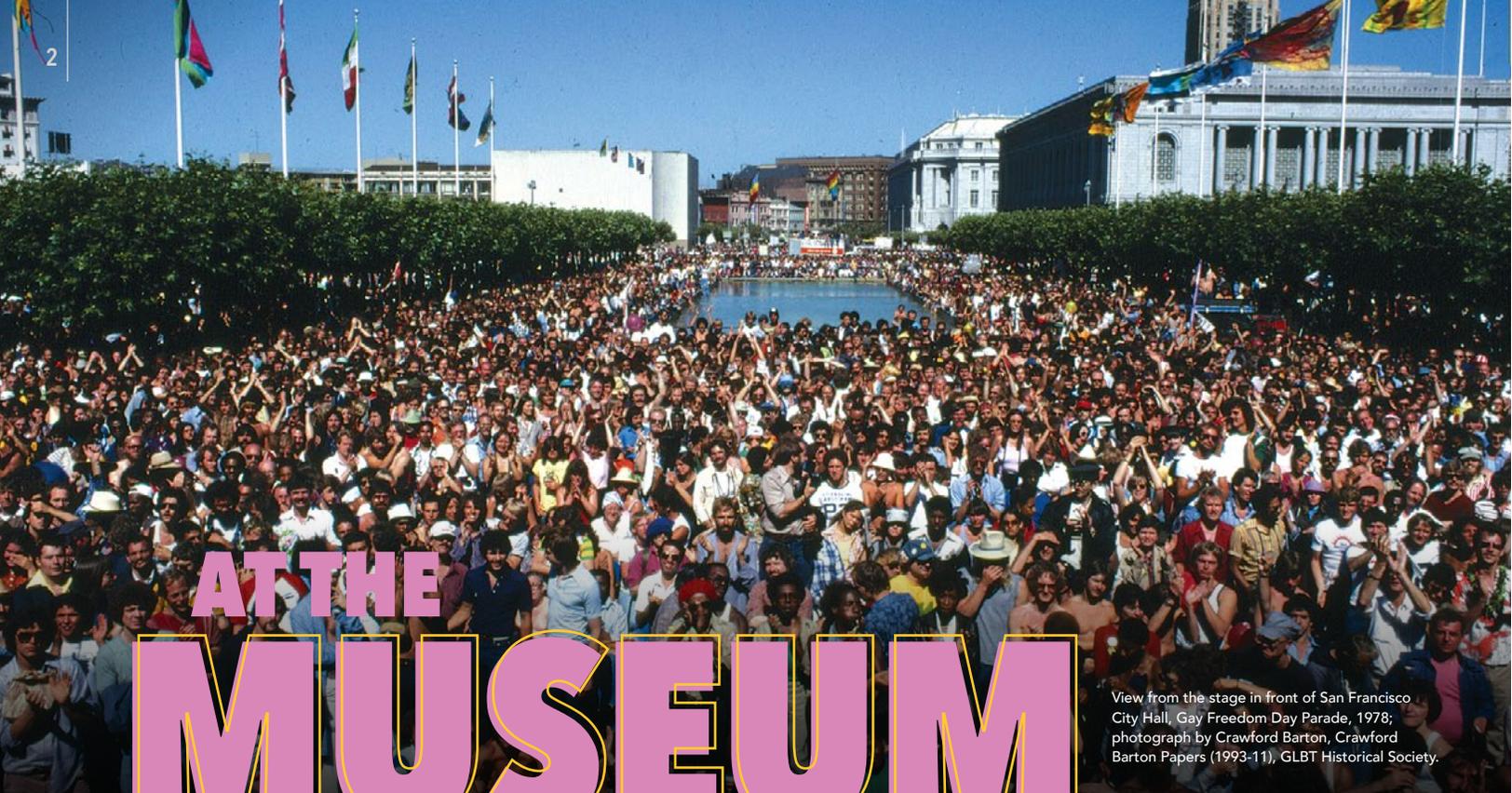
Tina Valentin Aguirre

Tina Valentin Aguirre
Chair, Board of Directors



Terry Beswick

Terry Beswick
Executive Director



View from the stage in front of San Francisco City Hall, Gay Freedom Day Parade, 1978; photograph by Crawford Barton, Crawford Barton Papers (1993-11), GLBT Historical Society.

Though the COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench into our exhibitions and public-programming plans for the GLBT Historical Society Museum, our staff adapted quickly in the midst of a confusing and rapidly evolving situation to produce successful virtual exhibitions and move our popular programs online.

Over the course of the year, we created three entirely original online exhibitions, two of which celebrated the historic 50th anniversary of the first Pride celebration in San Francisco.

- In May, together with the San Francisco Arts Commission Galleries, we mounted **50 Years of Pride**, originally intended for display at San Francisco City Hall. Curated by artists Lenore Chinn and Pamela Peniston, the show explores the evolution of Pride over a half-century, joining images from the GLBT Historical Society's archival collections with photographs contributed by over a dozen queer photographers. The exhibition won culture magazine *The Bold Italic's* 2020 Award in the category of "Best Virtual Art Exhibit."
- In June, we unveiled **Labor of Love: The Birth of San Francisco Pride**, curated by Gerard Koskovich, Don Romesburg and Amy Sueyoshi. The show focuses on the first decade of San Francisco Pride celebrations, using archival documents and images to trace the evolution of Pride from a motley bunch marching down Polk Street in 1970 into a massive cultural institution drawing more than a quarter-million people in 1980.
- Over the summer, we released Brenda Lein's exhibition **AIDS Treatment Activism: A Bay Area Story**. This exhibition explores the rise and growth of the treatment-activism movement in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s and 1990s, a movement that would ultimately redefine the role of "patient" and "community" in medical care and research.

We also leveraged our existing strengths by adapting three successful past exhibitions for online display:

- **Angela Davis: OUTspoken**, a 2018 show that deploys rare posters and ephemera from a private collection to highlight the journey of Black lesbian activist Angela Davis.
- **Performance, Protest & Politics: The Art of Gilbert Baker**, a 2019 exhibition that examines how rainbow-flag creator Gilbert Baker blurred the lines between artist and activist.
- **Reigning Queens: The Lost Photos of Roz Joseph** from 2015, which focuses on evocative color photographs of San Francisco's epic drag and costume balls of the mid-1970s.

With in-person events at the museum not possible, our staff quickly shifted our public programming online, organizing a total of 43 programs in 2020. In an effort to elicit fresh perspectives on the unprecedented public health crisis, we organized a special summer program series, "Fighting Back: Lessons From AIDS for COVID-19." Panelists shared stories from the AIDS pandemic that help frame our understanding of and response to COVID-19, considering such issues as community-building, direct action, sex and the specific challenges faced by people of color and the transgender community. We also continued our existing public-program series, with topics ranging from author talks on recently published works to workshops providing remote artistic instruction.

Finally, museum and program staff prioritized long-term projects to enhance the museum experience for visitors when it becomes possible to reopen fully. With these new procedures in place, and our enhanced online presence, we look forward to welcoming thousands of visitors to our physical and online museums in the year ahead. ■

OPENING A CONVERSATION

Our shift to online programming allowed us to reach new audiences and give a platform to more than 50 speakers, from artists and activists to historians and curators. One speaker, Eric Wat, shares his reflections on how our virtual programs helped him engage in important conversations.

In 2020, I presented two programs with the GLBT Historical Society. I was a panelist in an April program about stigmatization during the HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics, and in May I did a reading from my novel *SWIM*. That program included a discussion with longtime society supporter and employee Daniel Bao about how AIDS activism influences how I write about sex and sexuality, but also how the AIDS crisis influenced the formation of gay Asian identity in the 1990s.

While I missed seeing people in person, of course, the virtual format of the programs opened participation to a lot more people because they were no longer limited by geography. And there was a lot more interaction from the audience during the talk, because people could talk to each other in chat, “clap” or even “clap back” without disrupting the flow of the conversation.

// QUEER CULTURE AND HISTORY IS SUPER IMPORTANT IN THE AGE OF COVID, BECAUSE LGBTQ PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT SCAPEGOATING, SHAME, STIGMA, FEAR, PARANOIA. WE INVENTED HARM REDUCTION AS A WAY TO COPE AND STILL LIVE MEANINGFULLY. //

Queer culture and history is super important in the age of COVID, because LGBTQ people know about scapegoating, shame, stigma, fear, paranoia. We invented harm reduction as a way to cope and still live meaningfully. Queer Asians, in particular, have an intersectional lens, as the recent violence against Asian Americans show how fragile racial tolerance really is.

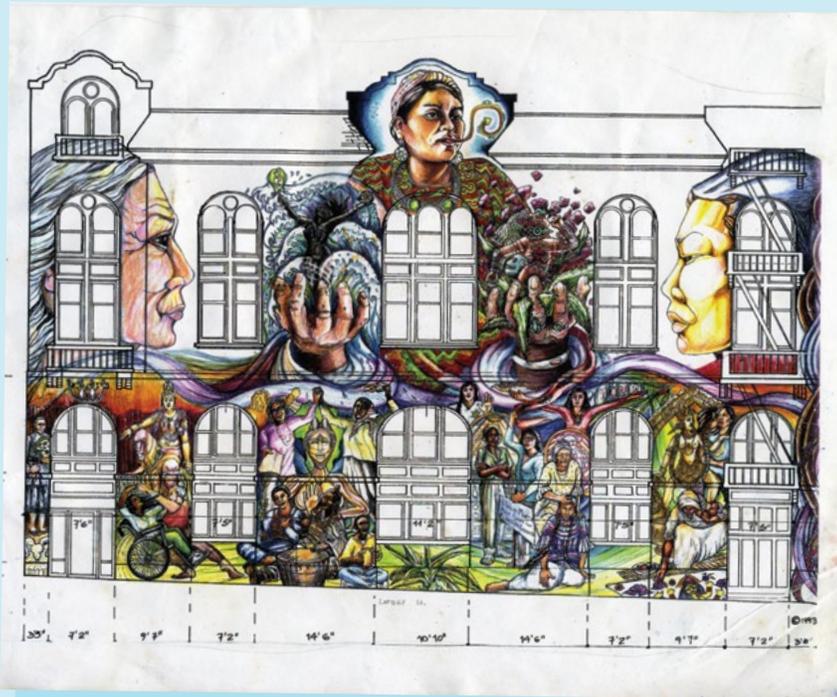
I will say that the pandemic has opened a lot of conversations about disparities, about the fractures of our political and economic systems, that had gone unnoticed in the mainstream for so long. It's a huge teaching moment and opportunity to mobilize broadly. Ironically, as a writer, because the pandemic shut down a lot of distractions, I've been able to write more! ■

*Eric Wat has been active in struggles for LGBTQ, immigrant, and workers' rights for more than two decades. His short stories and essays have appeared in various anthologies and journals. He is the author of *The Making of a Gay Asian Community: An Oral History of Pre-AIDS Los Angeles* (2002) and the novel *SWIM* (2019) about drug addiction and family caregiving. He is currently working on a follow-up book on AIDS activism in the Asian Pacific Islander communities.*

Portrait of Eric C. Wat; photo by Eugene Lee Visuals, used with permission.

IN THE ARCHIVES

The Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Special Collections of the GLBT Historical Society had a successful year despite limited onsite access due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We improved digital access and added new online resources, updated catalog records, and created new finding aids and research guides to enhance collection searchability.



We broadened and strengthened our digital collections, with a special focus on documenting LGBTQ Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) communities. We added 23 new digital collections, including thousands of pages of ephemera, audiovisual recordings and historical photographs. Additions include:

- Videos of performers at the Valencia Rose cabaret in the 1980s, a venue that welcomed many Latinx comedians, including Marga Gomez and Monica Palacios;
- Jean-Baptiste Carhaix's evocative photographs of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence;
- Harold T. O'Neal's home videos of gay men socializing as far back as the 1940s;
- Photographs from the Lorraine Hurdle Papers, documenting the life of a Black lesbian who served in the U.S. Women's Army Corps in Germany during World War II;
- Photographs and documents from the papers of Japanese American World War II incarceration-camp survivor Jiro Onuma;
- Material documenting the creation of the famed "Maestrapeace" mural on the Women's Building in San Francisco.

Additionally, we finalized our inventory of the over 1,000 objects in our Art and Artifacts Collection and made a significant selection of photographs of these objects available online. We have now begun a similar project for the many colorful and rare posters in our Poster Collection.

ABOVE: A 1993 rendition of the planned Maestrapeace mural painted on the Women's Building in San Francisco in 1994; Maestrapeace Artworks Records (2008-50), GLBT Historical Society. BELOW: Lorraine Hurdle and her baseball team, ca. 1950; photographer unknown, Lorraine Hurdle Papers (2018-12), GLBT Historical Society.





ABOVE: Disabled gay rights contingent at the 1977 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade; photo by Marie Ueda, Marie Ueda Collection (2006-12), GLBT Historical Society.

On the website, we redesigned the Online Resources portal to make it easier to locate relevant content. We also unveiled a new resource: over 30 subject-specific primary source sets that highlight a variety of historical materials on specific topics and are designed to be especially helpful to students, educators and novice researchers. Some of the topics include:

- Drag
- People with disabilities
- Gays and lesbians in the military
- Queer feminism
- Trans men and trans women
- Major LGBTQ figures, including José Sarria and Sylvester
- Documentation of voices and activism, including sets on LGBTQ Asian Americans, the Black community, Latinx people and Native Americans.

We remain committed to robust collection development. Prior to COVID-19 onsite restrictions, we accessioned four new archival collections and seven collection additions. During the pandemic, we made arrangements to accession another 36 collections once conditions improve. These include a number of exciting and unusual additions:

- Accretions to the Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, added following the death of lesbian pioneer Phyllis Lyon (1924–2020).
- The Howard Grant Papers, documenting the work of this gay architect who designed the Civic Center BART station and four Muni Metro subway stations in the late 1970s.
- The Wilderness Women newsletters, an addition to the Periodicals Collection, which document over thirty years of organized Bay Area outdoor activities for women, including a large community of lesbians.

Finally, in December, we completed the ACT UP Oral History Project and made the recordings available online. This project documents the diverse history of Bay Area direct-action movements during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s. Composed of 23 interviews, it is among the most extensive histories of local AIDS activism in the United States. ■

23

new additions to our digital collections

1K+

objects in our Art and Artifacts Collection cataloged

30

subject-specific primary-source sets added

23

interviews in the ACT UP Oral History Project completed



EXPLORE OUR ONLINE RESOURCES
glbthistory.org/online-resources

THE MAKING OF EQUAL

Hundreds of researchers use our archives each year to locate and share valuable stories from our vast queer past. The HBO series *Equal* used our archives to foreground the leadership of LGBTQ people of color in the fight for equal rights. Filmmaker Jenni Olson shares her reflections on working with our archives to produce the series.

In undertaking our research for *Equal*, we uncovered so many powerful stories that it is hard to choose among them, but certainly one of the most compelling is the story of José Sarria. We also looked at the Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, as well as materials on Pat Bond. Other items we sourced from the society included home movie footage from the Harold T. O'Neal Films and also an amazingly rare photo by Henri Leleu depicting the interior of Compton's Cafeteria in the mid-1960s.

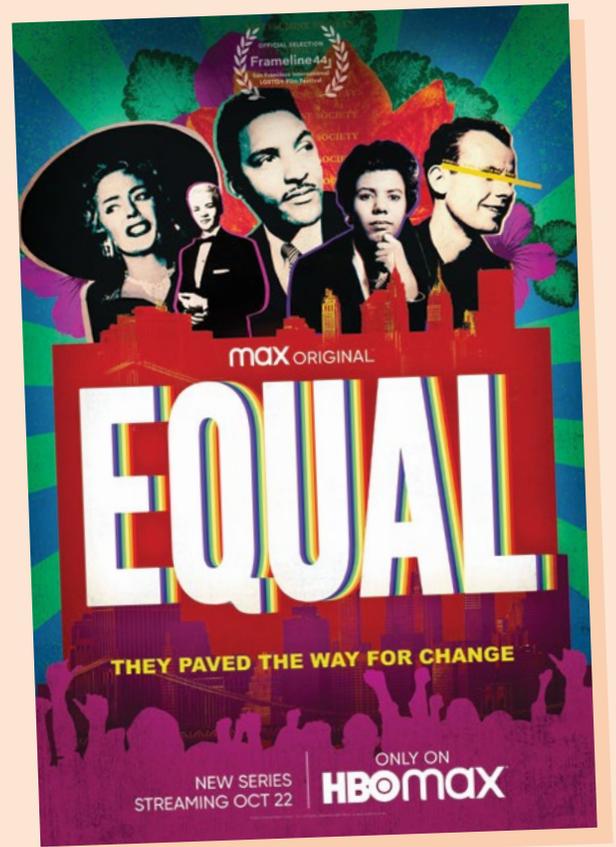
// TELLING THE STORIES OF OUR HISTORY IS SO IMPORTANT — TO HONOR OUR HEROES, TO GIVE US CONTEXT OF HOW WE GOT TO THIS POINT IN THE STRUGGLE, AND TO REMIND US THAT WE'RE NOT ALONE. //

Telling the stories of our history is so important—to honor our heroes, to give us context of how we got to this point in the struggle, and to remind us that we're not alone. I am always grateful to work with the GLBT Historical Society. There is such a wealth of visual material in the collections and the archivists are always so helpful.

Our entire production team also wanted to share the following: "The archives provided a wealth of material which aided in our research and many items were ultimately licensed for the series. Beyond the material, the archivists' incredible knowledge of people and events assisted us during our research and development period." ■



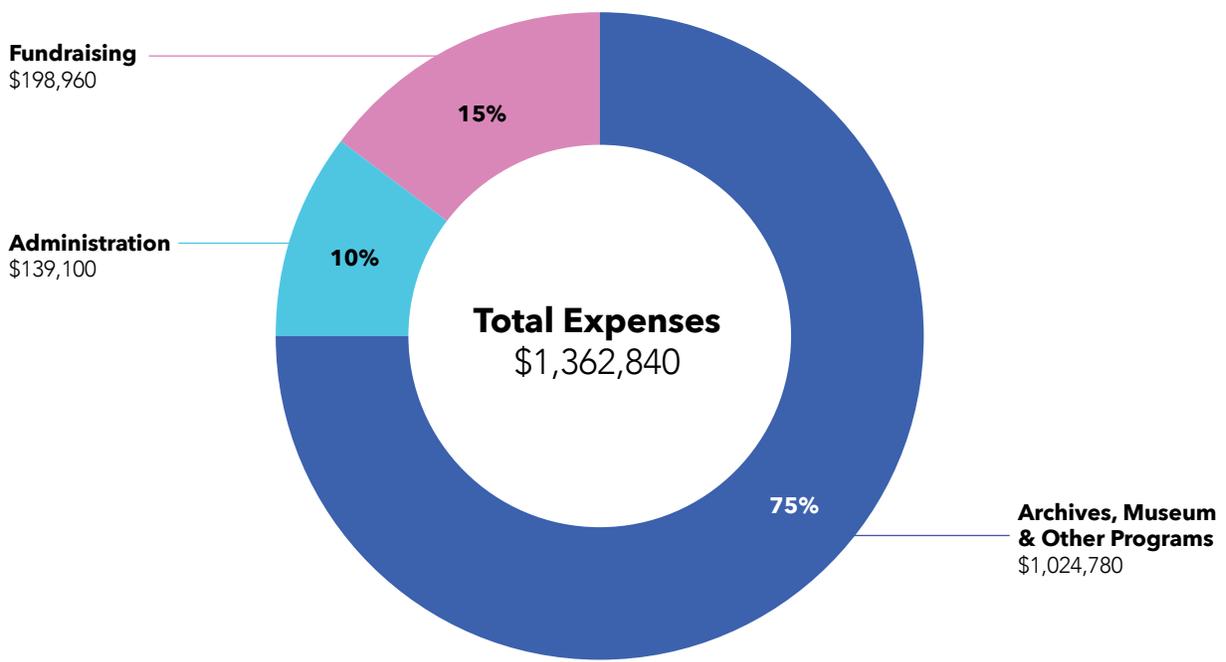
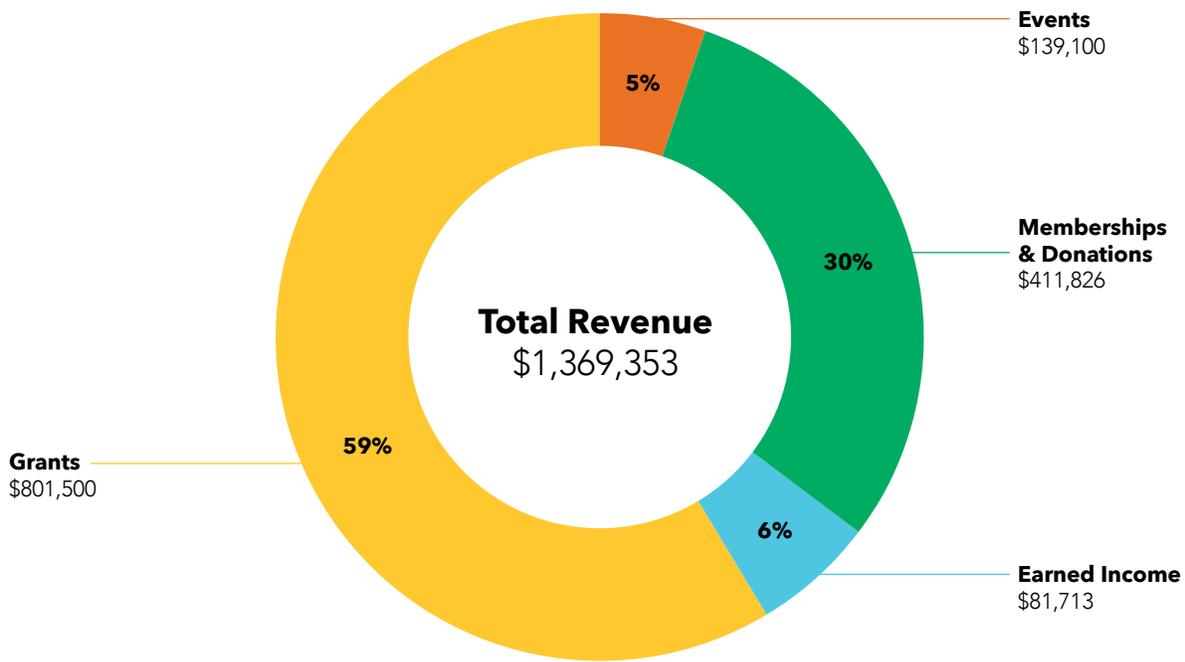
Jenni Olson is an archival researcher who works with documentary filmmakers. She used materials from a number of archival collections to help produce *Equal*, a four-part LGBTQ history series that aired in 2020 on HBO Max. The series depicts landmark events, leaders and unsung heroes of LGBTQ history, and consists of a mixture of archival footage and scripted reenactments.



ABOVE: Portrait of Jenni Olson courtesy of same. TOP: *Equal* poster courtesy of HBO. MIDDLE: José Sarria performs at the Black Cat Café in 1958; José Sarria Papers (1996-01), GLBT Historical Society. BOTTOM: Del Martin (left) and Phyllis Lyon (right) at their home in San Francisco, CA, 1975; Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers (1993-13), GLBT Historical Society.

2020

BY THE NUMBERS



For full financials, please visit our website: glbthistory.org/reports

THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

STRATEGIC

GOAL 1

Intentionally prioritize content that highlights communities historically underrepresented and underserved in archival, exhibition and other public history programs.

- 1.1.** Ensure that historically marginalized communities (prioritizing people with disabilities, communities of color, women, bisexual and transgender people) are integral to all aspects of the organization to foster trusting relationships and collaborations that counter established systems of racism, sexism, biphobia, transphobia, and other forms of oppression. Build on these relationships, and partnerships with historians, archivists, educators, artists, curators, and community members, to preserve, celebrate and share diverse LGBTQ histories and cultures.
- 1.2.** Strengthen alliances and develop institutional partnerships with local, state, and federal government, academic, and community groups, focusing on organizations representing historically marginalized communities, to further the creation of innovative archival, exhibition, and educational projects that serve the varied needs of LGBTQ communities.
- 1.3.** Conduct ongoing demographic evaluations of archival collections, exhibitions and other public history programs, establishing goals for expanding inclusion with grounded metrics.
- 1.4.** Establish mentorship and fellowship programs designed to create opportunities for archival and museum training and research, scholarship, and curation for LGBTQ students and community members, focusing on historically underrepresented communities.
- 1.5.** Review and revise the scope of collections, exhibitions and public history programs to clearly define geographic scope and balance between archival and museum collections for future development.

GOAL 2

Center principles of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA) in a review and revision of policies and organizational systems, while instituting best practices to improve stability and ensure sustainable growth.

- 2.1.** Investigate and adopt equitable recruitment, retention, compensation and management strategies in order to decenter whiteness and counter established systems of racism, sexism, ableism, biphobia, transphobia and other forms of privilege, oppression and bias, both explicit and implicit, on the staff and board of directors.
- 2.2.** Strengthen and standardize fiscal management and operational systems by adopting state-of-the-art, complementary and accessible best practices in the archives, museum and administration (e.g. cloud-based technologies) while providing maximum transparency, accountability and adherence to regulatory frameworks.
- 2.3.** Encourage board and staff development via updated professional and cultural trainings, engagement with organizations representing historically marginalized communities, peer advisory groups, and mentorships, in support of the establishment and maintenance of best policies and practices in the fields of archives, museums, nonprofits, queer activism and other related disciplines.
- 2.4.** Improve internal communications among all departments, and among board and staff and working groups, to encourage collaboration and ensure sharing of external contacts and resources.
- 2.5.** Create a five-year implementation plan and an annual progress evaluation report for all goals and objectives outlined within this Strategic Plan, including actionable steps with grounded metrics for all public history, fundraising and administrative programs.

PLAN 2021–2025

GOAL 3

Build a solid foundation for the growth and sustainability of the society's archival, exhibition and other public history programs—both physical and virtual—to ensure the stories and lessons of our broadly diverse communities' histories and cultures will be preserved and shared.

- 3.1.** Establish a new, permanent home for the society's archival, exhibition and other public history programs.
- 3.2.** Institute a long-term financial growth and sustainability plan, including the establishment of reserve, endowment and capital funds for the archives, exhibitions and public history programs.
- 3.3.** Invest in infrastructures to support digital preservation and online access to state-of-the-art, remote visitor research and interactive experiences of archival resources, exhibitions and other public history programs.
- 3.4.** Ensure archival, exhibition and other public history programs are financially and ADA-accessible, and have adequate space, staffing, and resources to meet growing public demand.
- 3.5.** Establish and staff new public history programs designed to preserve and share our widely diverse LGBTQ community histories, including an oral history program, place-based history initiatives and a robust K–12 educational program.

GOAL 4

Communicate our role as a global leader in connecting LGBTQ past and present, advancing racial, gender and queer equity through all our programs.

- 4.1.** Create a new name, logo, and brand identity that reflects the organization's commitment to IDEA, as well as the scope of our work.
- 4.2.** Develop a communications and engagement plan that transparently states the organization's adoption of IDEA principles and practices, and emphasizes connections from past to the present in all communications.
- 4.3.** Expand the organization's visibility internationally in all media, in keeping with IDEA principles.
- 4.4.** Develop an editorial plan for all communications platforms that embraces IDEA principles, continually reviews terminology and language to ensure multicultural competencies, and advances the goals and objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan.
- 4.5.** Ensure website, social media and other online platforms and publications maximize accessibility and aesthetic design to reach widely diverse audiences.

MAKING HISTORY

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We also thank our many members who support the GLBT Historical Society's museum and archives.

ABOUT THE COVER

Mission District, 2020 by Marcela Pardo Ariza, featuring Jordanne, Jessi, Suzu, Felipe and Mireya, used with permission. The photograph combines elements from a black-and-white photograph in the GLBT Historical Society's archives depicting women protesting Proposition 6 at the 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. This photograph is by Elaine Gay Jarvis, Elaine Gay Jarvis Photographs (2018-90), GLBT Historical Society.

Mission District, 2020 is one of the photographs that Marcela Pardo Ariza created for the Kin Streets Project, a love letter to the LGBTQIA+ community in the midst of 2020. The project honors and celebrates trans-historical

kinship and resilience. It consists of 18 photographs that feature 60+ collaborators, including people from the Transgender District, the Stud Collective, artists, drag queens, performers, mentors and activists. The photographs also include our queer ancestors, sourced from photographs from the archives of the GLBT Historical Society. These images have been cropped, printed life-size and re-photographed alongside numerous LGBTQIA+ folks currently shaping the Bay Area. The images highlight gestures of care, intergenerational connection and resiliency throughout it all.

See more at marcelapardo.com.



GLBT
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Society
museum & archives

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