

**GLBT Historical Society**  
**Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Special Collections**  
**Holdings related to the Compton's Cafeteria Riot**

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This research guide is intended to help users locate holdings related to the Compton's Cafeteria riot in the GLBT Historical Society Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Special Collections.

The Compton's riot was led by very marginalized people – many of them some combination of transgender, gender nonconforming, and sex workers – and there was no documentation of the event. Even its date is disputed. As a result, archival materials are limited. However, we have compiled some materials that will be helpful in understanding Compton's, including:

- Manuscript collections
- Photographs
- Oral histories
- Periodicals

Please reach out to [reference@glbthistory.org](mailto:reference@glbthistory.org) with any questions or comments.

**Manuscript Collections**

**The Screaming Queens collection (2008-03).** *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria* is a documentary film directed by Victor Silverman and Susan Stryker. This all-audiovisual collection contains production materials from the film. Its primary research value lies in the 24 VHS and audiocassette recordings of interviews with Tenderloin residents and other people familiar with the Compton's riots, including Elliott Blackstone, Felicia Elizondo, Aleshia Brevard, Amanda St. Jaymes, Regina Elizabeth McQueen, and Ed Hansen.

**Compton's Cafeteria Riots 40th Anniversary photographs (2006-36).** Collection contains photographic snapshots from the 40th Anniversary Commemoration of the Compton's Cafeteria Riots, along with a corresponding list of notable attendees, including Susan Stryker, Victor Silverman, and Heather Fong.

**Tamara Ching papers (1999-47).** Tamara Ching, a trans woman and sex work activist, lived in the Tenderloin during the time of the riot. Although this collection contains no materials related to Compton's, it may provide some context.

**Photographs**

There was no media present at the Compton's riot, and no known photographs were taken. Three images are often used to represent the riot, but none of them depict what happened that night.



The “Drag it Out in in the Open” photograph comes from the October 31-November 17 1969 issue of the *Berkeley Tribe*. The GLBT Historical Society has a copy of the clipping in the Raymond Broshears papers (1996-03). It is often used by media to represent the Compton’s riot, but depicts a protest from 1969: a picketing of the Beaux Arts Ball by people who were frustrated that the San Francisco Tavern Guild used this yearly drag ball to celebrate gender nonconformity, but ignored the needs of gender nonconforming people the rest of the time. The photograph is attributed to Bil Paul, but Paul has told GLBT Historical Society archivists that the attribution is incorrect, and so the photographer is unknown.



This photograph of patrons at Compton’s is the one of the only known images of the diner’s interior. It was taken by Henri Leleu and is part of his collection at the GLBT Historical Society (1997-13).



This film still, taken from vintage footage used in Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman’s *Screaming Queens*, is one of the only known images of the Compton’s location where the riot occurred. Other images you may have seen online show different locations of this local chain. This image is not part of the GLBT Historical Society’s collections.

### Oral Histories

The GLBT Historical Society’s collections include a number of oral histories of gender nonconforming people, as well as people who worked with this community; some narrators (like Elliot Blackstone, Aleshia Brevard, and Suzan Cooke) were familiar with the Tenderloin at the

time of the Compton's riot. These oral histories are available online at the Digital Transgender Archive:

[https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/catalog?f%5Bgenre\\_ssim%5D%5B%5D=Oral+Histories&q=glbt+historical+society&search\\_field=all\\_fields](https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/catalog?f%5Bgenre_ssim%5D%5B%5D=Oral+Histories&q=glbt+historical+society&search_field=all_fields)

### **Periodicals**

*Vanguard* was a zine published by young people in the Tenderloin between 1966 and 1970. Printed on scrap paper at Glide Memorial Church, it provides a valuable document of Tenderloin life at the time of the Compton's riot. The GLBT Historical Society's digitized *Vanguard* collection is hosted at the Digital Transgender Archive.

[https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/catalog?f%5Bcollection\\_name\\_ssim%5D%5B%5D=Vanguard&sort=dta\\_sortable\\_date\\_dtsi+asc%2C+title\\_primary\\_ssort+asc](https://www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net/catalog?f%5Bcollection_name_ssim%5D%5B%5D=Vanguard&sort=dta_sortable_date_dtsi+asc%2C+title_primary_ssort+asc)

The *Bay Area Reporter* has a number of articles referencing the riot.

<https://cdnc.ucr.edu/?a=q&hs=1&r=1&results=1&txq=comptons&puq=BAR&e=-----en--20--1--txt-txIN-----1>