

March 2019



Amy Sueyoshi, co-chair of QHC 19, speaks at the GLBT Historical Society Museum.

Sampling Ten-Minute Tastes of the LGBTQ Past: Preparing for Queer History Conference 2019

by Mark Sawchuk

In June 2019, the GLBT Historical Society is co-hosting an unprecedented gathering in San Francisco: the [Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender History](#)'s first stand-alone conference, [Queer History Conference 2019](#). Founded in 1979, the committee is an affiliate of the American Historical Association that promotes the study of the LGBTQ past by facilitating communication among scholars in a variety of disciplines. As the conference approaches and participants finalize their papers, *History Happens* dropped in for a chat with the conference co-chairs, Amy Sueyoshi of San Francisco State University and Nick Syrett of the University of Kansas.

What will the Queer History Conference offer to members of the public, whether LGBTQ or not?

Sueyoshi: For the nonhistorian, QHC offers a fascinating window into all the innovative work in queer history that's going on today. Imagine it as a pupu platter, an incredibly large assortment of every and any type of queer history. And you could experience it all through ten-minute tastes, since each panel presentation typically lasts around ten minutes. These conferences are most interesting for self-identified nerds, not just because of the historical material, but also by the sheer beauty of being amongst book-loving queers who find history fascinating.

Syrett: There will be about 170 different scholars making presentations on a whole range of topics. While many of them will be talking about their research, we also have panels dedicated to digital and more traditional archives projects, teaching queer history at the K–12 level and public history projects. Even the more academic panels will be talking about new research and finds in the archives and should be accessible to the general public.

What can you tell us about the range of topics and approaches you're seeing in the panel proposals?

Syrett: We're delighted that scholars are coming from all over the world for the conference and that they will be talking about LGBTQ history from all continents, with the exception of Antarctica. While a majority of the research focuses on the 20th century, we also have scholars doing research on subjects as far back as the 15th century. The list of topics includes activism; drag and other queer performers; AIDS and healthcare; religion; various identity politics (trans, lesbian, bi, poly, queer people of color); homosexuality and legal regulation; politics; film and TV representation of LGBTQ people; queer youth; families; pornography; intergenerational sex; bathhouses; BDSM; public sex; and queer beauty and leather contests.

What contributions have public historians and community-based historians made to the field of LGBTQ history?

Sueyoshi: Community historians and public historians are part of the vanguard making queer history visible and accessible. I'm reminded of Allan Bérubé, a community historian who wrote about gays and lesbians in the military — one of the first [books](#) on queer history that I read. More recently, public historian Megan Springate coordinated the historic [LGBTQ theme study](#) for the National Park Service. Who would have ever imagined that the NPS would ever care about queer landmarks?

Syrett: Public and community-based historians have done all kinds of wonderful things for LGBTQ history. Community-based historians have done an excellent job of showing that queer history really is everywhere, not just in the big cities famous for it. Public history projects in small and midsized cities and towns have documented the queer history of all kinds of places between the two coasts. Public historians have also done so much to educate the public about queer history before

Stonewall, demonstrating that there have been same-sex loving and gender nonconforming people long before the mid-twentieth century.

Mark Sawchuk is the communications manager at the GLBT Historical Society.

From the Staff

Building on the Value of Queer Exceptionalism



by Terry Beswick

In addition to ensuring that our treasured community archives, museum and public history programs receive the resources necessary to continue their vital work, my current efforts with the GLBT Historical Society, where I have been executive director for three years, are focused on long-term planning.

Specifically, together with our board and staff, I am working to establish the first full-scale museum of LGBTQ history and culture in the country as a permanent location for the society in San Francisco.

My guiding belief is in something I like to call “queer exceptionalism,” an audacious idea that queer people are in fact very special, that there is an intrinsic power not only in our unique queer identities, but also in our collective community that is fueled by our intersectional and diverse histories. This power we have most notably flexed in service to our own survival and civil rights also has served to benefit society as a whole and, I believe, holds the potential to do much more.

Finding a Permanent Home

Our community is changing due to socioeconomic and technological forces in society in which we are intrinsically enmeshed and over which we have limited control. In the face of all this change and the growing queer diaspora, my concern is that if we do not build and maintain our physical gathering places and cultural venues — if we do not have a permanent space where we can share our stories, where we can learn about and celebrate our diverse cultures and histories — will we lose our capacity to be exceptional?

I want to thank all those who have stepped up over the last few years to support our vision of establishing a permanent home for our history. Your memberships and donations of all sizes help move us closer to realizing our dream, and for that we are deeply grateful.

Our mission is to collect, preserve and share our communities’ stories in all their incredible diversity. It is through this work that we enrich our young people, honor our elders and build a stronger community and a better world. I believe our planned museum and public history center is

necessary to this mission, and now is the time to bring it to reality in San Francisco.

To get involved with the GLBT Historical Society, please visit our [website](#).

Terry Beswick is executive director of the GLBT Historical Society.

At the Museum

Discovering a World of Historic LGBTQ Spaces



by Gerard Koskovich

Each exhibition at the GLBT Historical Society Museum has a principal story to tell — but visitors also can discover many other themes and narratives within the objects, images and documents visible in the galleries. One of the goals of the new “At the Museum” column that we’ll be running every other month in *History Happens* is to highlight these fascinating

alternatives for viewing what’s on display.

Because the group working to organize the [Castro LGBTQ Cultural District](#) meets at the museum, one such approach to touring the galleries comes readily to mind: looking for evidence of the ways interiors, buildings, neighborhoods and even natural landscapes serve as touchstones for queer memory and as sites that help us reconstruct the LGBTQ past in vivid ways.

The Queer Meaning of Place

One of the sections in the Main Gallery, “Gayborhoods: Lost Queer Landscapes,” focuses directly on this theme. But that’s only a starting point. Looking elsewhere, visitors can find other examples of LGBTQ people marking spaces and places with queer meaning. Sometimes the sites are personal and unexpected: Harold O’Neal’s home-movie footage, for example, shows his gay friends picnicking, swimming and camping it up at a bayside cabin in Vallejo in 1947.

Visitors also can find sites that are public and much celebrated: Snapshots in the Main Gallery display about [José Sarria](#) (1922–2013), for instance, peek inside the Black Cat Café in North Beach. That’s where Sarria performed satirical operas in the late 1950s and early 1960s — and where he set up the headquarters for his 1961 campaign for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

We even can look into a home on the other side of the world which holds a place in LGBTQ history: In the “Lesbians of *The Ladder*” display about the first lesbian magazine in the United States, the November 1964 issue features a cover photograph of a woman (seen in the thumbnail) who corresponded with the editor of the journal. The reader

is shown seated in a traditional room in her home in Indonesia — a site that certainly merits a plaque to mark a small but significant example of the transnational networks created by lesbians.

Gerard Koskovich is the senior public history advisor for the GLBT Historical Society.

Upcoming Events

Author Talk

Lana and Lilly Wachowski: Sensing Transgender



Friday, March 1
7:00–9:00 p.m.
The GLBT Historical Society Museum
4127 18th St., San Francisco
\$5.00 | Free for members

In visionary works like *Bound* (1996), *The Matrix* trilogy (1999 – 2003), and *Sense8* (2015–2018), filmmakers Lana and Lilly Wachowski have redefined the cinematically possible. In this presentation, author Cael M. Keegan will discuss his book *Lana and Lilly Wachowski: Sensing Transgender* (2018). He analyzes the work of the Wachowskis as transgender-authored cultural productions that have deeply affected our understandings of how gender, race, the body and the senses are represented in popular film and television. Tickets are available [here](#).

Living History Discussion

Flashing After Dark: Queer Nightlife Photography



Thursday, March 7
7:00–9:00 p.m.
The GLBT Historical Society Museum
4127 18th St., San Francisco
\$5.00 | Free for members

A panel of contemporary and classic San Francisco queer nightlife photographers and writers will join photographer Melissa Hawkins, a former photographer for the San Francisco gay weekly *The Sentinel*, to share their favorite photographs and stories of venturing into the night in the 1980s and 1990s. Panelists will discuss their professional methods and techniques and will address the challenges and rewards of ever-changing camera technologies, the rise of social media and selfies, and club denizens' evolving attitudes toward being photographed in the midst of debauchery. Tickets are available [here](#).

Resource Fair

When Pigs Fly Over the Moon: A QTAPI Gathering



Friday, March 15
6:00–9:00 p.m.
Salesforce Tower
415 Mission St., San Francisco
[Free tickets](#)

The Bay Area is home to some of the earliest queer and trans Asian and Pacific Islander (QTAPI) organizations in the nation. Sponsored by the QTAPI Bay Area Coalition and cosponsored by the GLBT Historical Society, this event brings together many of the region's QTAPI-serving groups for a festive resource fair. The interorganizational, intergenerational gathering will showcase QTAPI history, talent and strengths. The event is part mixer, part resource fair, part talent showcase and part history exhibit. Funds raised will support the Asian and Pacific Islander Pavilion at San Francisco Pride. Free tickets are available [here](#).

[Living History Discussion](#)

Life Beyond Uranus: A Golden Age of Queer Nightlife



Thursday, March 21
7:00–9:00 p.m.
The GLBT Historical Society Museum
4127 18th St., San Francisco
[\\$5.00](#) | Free for members

Club kids, DJs, queer punks, DIY fashionistas, nightlife promoters and club owners gather to share their scandalous stories of San Francisco nightlife in the 1980s–1990s, just before the emergence of the consumer Internet. They'll recount stories from queer clubs such as The Box, Colossus, The Eagle, The Stud, Universe, Uranus and more. Notorious outfits, artifacts and looks from both the club-goers' personal collections and the GLBT Historical Society's archives will be shown, highlighting how a resilient nightlife scene helped the LGBTQ community weather the darkest years of the AIDS crisis. Tickets are available [here](#).

[Fighting Back](#)

The L and the GBQ: Lesbian Leadership and Power

Thursday, March 28
7:00–9:00 p.m.
The GLBT Historical Society Museum
4127 18th St., San Francisco
[\\$5.00](#) | Free for members

The latest in the GLBT Historical Society's monthly "Fighting Back" series exploring contemporary



queer issues in a historical context, this community forum will focus on the struggles and successes of lesbians in relationship to history, the LGBTQ community and coalition building in the Bay Area. A panel of historians, community organizers and advocates will explore how lesbian identity and community have evolved over time while underlining how this history informs today's resistance movements. Tickets are available [here](#).

Current Exhibitions

Front Gallery

[SoMa Nights: The Queer Club Photography of Melissa Hawkins](#)

Open through May 27, 2019

[More information](#)

Community Gallery

[Two-Spirit Voices: Returning to the Circle](#)

Open through May 6, 2019

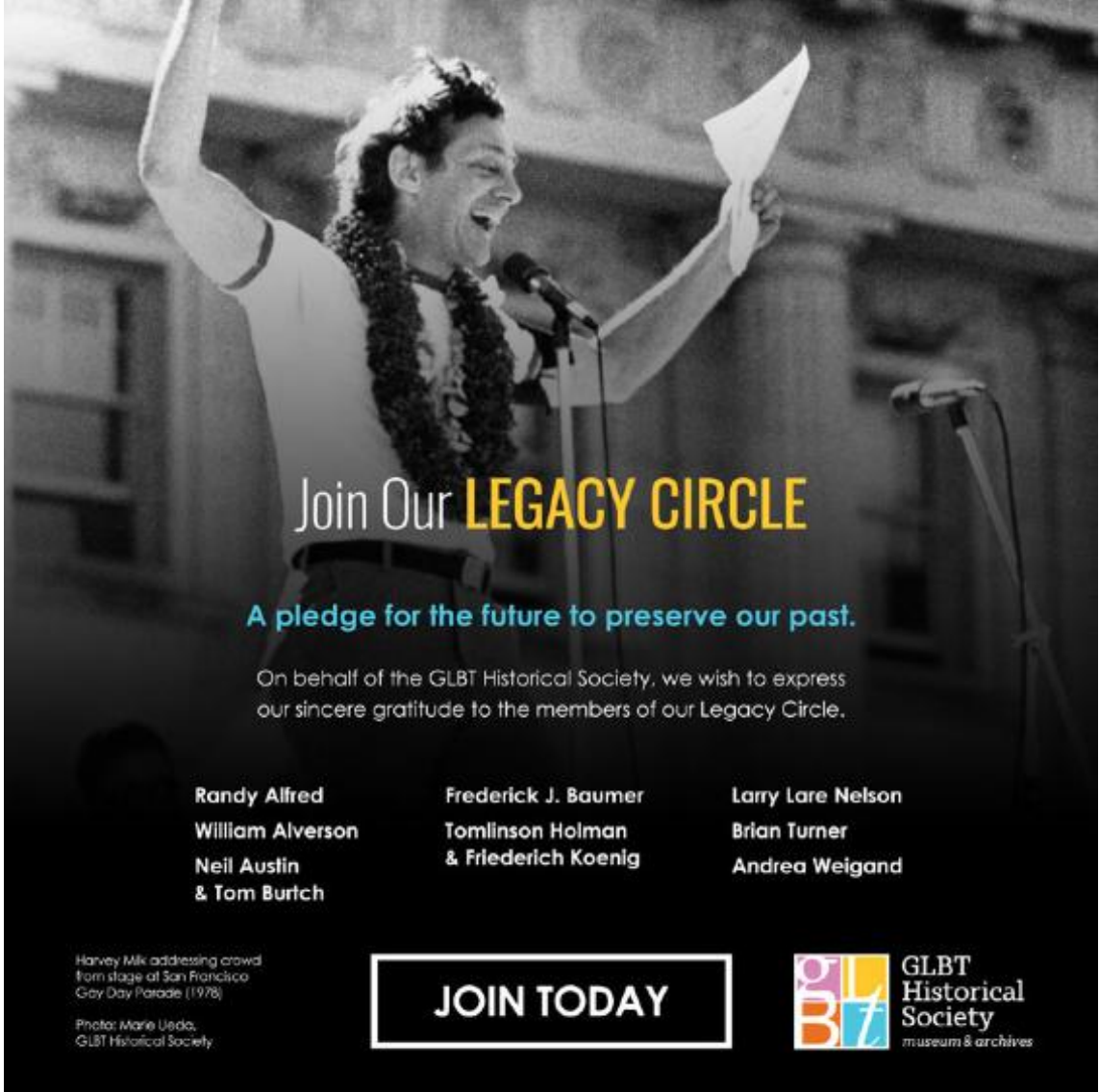
[More information](#)

Main Gallery

[Queer Past Become Present](#)

Permanent exhibition

[More information](#)



Join Our **LEGACY CIRCLE**


A pledge for the future to preserve our past.

On behalf of the GLBT Historical Society, we wish to express our sincere gratitude to the members of our Legacy Circle.

Randy Alfred	Frederick J. Baumer	Larry Lare Nelson
William Alverson	Tomlinson Holman	Brian Turner
Neil Austin	& Friederich Koenig	Andrea Weigand
& Tom Burch		

Harvey Milk addressing crowd from stage at San Francisco Gay Day Parade (1978)
Photo: Marie Ueda, GLBT Historical Society

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CREDITS. FEATURE: Photo by Gerard Koskovich. FROM THE STAFF: Photo of Terry Beswick by **Gareth Gooch**. AT THE MUSEUM: Cover detail from *The Ladder* (November 1964), GLBT Historical Society. UPCOMING EVENTS. Author Talk: Photo courtesy Cael M. Keegan. Living History Discussion: Melissa Hawkins, *Duo With Cigar*, *The Eagle* (undated); used with permission. Resource Fair: QTAPI Gathering logo. Living History Discussion: Melissa Hawkins, *Dancer at 1015 Folsom* (1991); used with permission. Fighting Back: Marie Ueda, *San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade* (1977), GLBT Historical Society.

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