

[26] Sophie's Parlor — 1736 R St NW In the early and mid 70s, the coffeehouse at the Women's Center became an important performance space for lesbian entertainers such as Cris Williamson, Meg Christian, and Casse Culver. Sophie's Parlor began a radio show, first on WGTB and later on WPFW, which ran for decades bringing music and women's issues to a larger public.

[27] (Steve's) Spring Rd Café — 3700 14th St NW The Spring Rd. Café, at 14th and Spring Rd., once painted purple, was a weekend haven for lesbians during the 1960s. Evenings at Steve's sometimes turned rowdy.

[28] Tracks — 1111 First St SE Tracks, the very popular dance club at M and First Streets SE, started a Women's Night for lesbians on the last Tuesday of the month. The events regularly attracted more than 2,000 women. Women's Nights were frequent distribution points for OUT's Safer Sex Sirens to hand out safe sex literature. A controversial later event called Lesbo-agogo started in July 1991 and featured lesbian go-go dancers.



[29] Washington Area Women's Center — 1736 R St NW The Women's Center began as a DC feminist venture in an R St NW townhouse. Despite financial problems, the center initiated many groundbreaking activities for area women. In April 1972, 30 lesbian feminists met at the center to plan a new Lesbian Office for the center. Other gay and lesbian groups in the city raised funds for the Women's Center, including the Gay Activist Alliance's community center on 13th St NW. One of the longest lasting creations of the center was the Sophie's Parlor coffeehouse. The Women's Center moved five times, to three locations on 18th St NW, P St NW, and finally to 1350 Pennsylvania Ave SE before finally closing in the early 1990s. Two of its 18th St homes were shared with the Whitman-Walker Clinic.

[30] Woman Sound — 19 Logan Circle Woman Sound was formed by Casse Culver and Boden Sandstrom in 1975 to provide sound and technical support for productions of women's music in

metropolitan Washington, DC. The company started out at 1715 New Hampshire Ave. NW Woman Sound advertised regularly in the Washington Blade and supported local performers.

[31] Woman's Monthly — 2401 H St NW - The first issue of the magazine, popularly known as WOMO, appeared in September 1992. WOMO is an important chronicle of events, organizations and personalities in the lesbian women's community. As founder Nancy McMurray wrote on the tenth anniversary "The WOMO archive, the older it gets, becomes more and more valuable for its witness to views nobody else had. It is part of our collective self portrait, and 'proof' that we were here."



[32] Women In The Life — 1623 Connecticut Ave NW (rear) Women In the Life ("WITL") was created in 1993 to empower and enrich the lives of lesbians of color, through educational, social and cultural programming, and support services. Sheila Alexander-Reid started WITL because there were no safe spaces for lesbians of color to socialize, network and share their sisterhood. Initially WITL brought lesbians of color together through informal social events, such as poetry readings, dances, community fundraisers, and workshops.



RAINBOW HISTORY PROJECT

collecting, preserving and promoting the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered history of metropolitan Washington, DC

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Gay DC Walking Tours



The social innovation, self-affirmation, and ferment in the arts and political organizations of DC's lesbian

and bisexual women is a largely untold story. Their energy and creativity has had ramifications nationally as well as locally.

Women sought places and opportunities to meet. The Showboat and the Kavakos in the 30s and 40s and the Redskin in the 50s were among the few public social spaces for women. By the early 60s, there were only the Rendezvous Grill and Steve's (the Spring Rd Café).

Even as gay clubs emerged in the 70s, women were often unwelcome. Both the Lost & Found and the Grand Central disco initially made a practice of 'carding' women to exclude them. To its credit, DC's activist community fought such discrimination. Pat Price, editor of the *Gay Blade* (under the pen name Pat Kolar), was one complainant to the Office of Human Rights about Grand Central's discrimination in 1974.

House parties and clubs exclusively for women offered alternatives. Lilli Vincenz recalls JoAnna's, which opened on 8th St SE in the summer of 1968, as "the first nice club for women." The 70s brought more women's clubs: Phase One (1971), Club Madame (1974), and The Other Side (1978). In 1971, Vincenz created the first regularly scheduled house party, the Gay Women's Open House, at her home in Arlington. She recalled, it was "just people socializing. And then we had discussion groups; sometimes musical groups... Meg Christian, the very first lesbian performer, came and sang."

DC's women began taking a more public role in the 60s. At the



Mattachine Society, Lilli Vincenz edited *The Homosexual Citizen* and Eva Freund later co-edited a local newsletter, *The Insider*. From October 1969, Nancy Tucker produced and edited the *Gay Blade*, later to become the *Washington Blade*.

A spirit of self-reliance liberated lesbian and bisexual women in the 70s. The Furies collective sought to empower women by training them to do themselves what they had relied on men to do. *The Furies* newspaper carried the collective's ideology to a national audience. A feminist collective created *off our backs*, a "journal of record for the feminist movement" in 1970.

In 1972, the Washington Area Women's Center opened on R St NW. The Women's Crisis Center (later known as the DC Rape Crisis Center) formed. The Washington Free Clinic in Georgetown offered women's health nights from 1972 to 1975. It wasn't until 1979 that a lesbian clinic formed. In 1973, Lammas Books opened on 7th St SE. Under Mary Farmer it was soon a *de facto* community center for lesbian and bisexual women.

Lesbians and bisexuals active in the feminist movement created their own organizations. Eva Freund created NOW's Task Force on Sexuality. In 1973, Freund helped ensure enactment of Title 34, the DC law protecting sexual orientation and extending financial rights to women. Mary-Helen Mautner and Elaine Noble created the Washington Women's Law Caucus in 1975.

Patricia Radomski became the first woman to lead the Gay Activists Alliance (1972-73), followed in later years by Mayo Lee, Lori Jean, and Mindy Daniels. In the African American community, Rev. Dolores Berry co-founded the National Coalition of Black Gays and Carlene Cheatam and Valerie Papaya Mann helped create the DC Coalition of Black Gays in 1978. Alexa Freeman became the first lesbian named to public office when Mayor Marion Barry named her to the DC Council for Women in 1979.

Women's music exploded in DC in between 1973 and 1978, voicing women's concerns and aspirations. Sweet Honey in the Rock, Meg Christian, Cris Williamson, Willie Tyson, Casse Culver, among others, started here, giving women voice in song. In the self-reliant atmosphere of the 70s, women made music, produced music,

and staged music festivals for each other.

The Olivia collective created Olivia Records here in 1973 to produce the first records for lesbians, *Changer and the Changed* and *I Know You Know*. Sophie's Parlor, a coffeehouse at the Women's Center, became an important performance site for women. Casse Culver and Boden Sandstrom formed the first woman-owned audio engineering company in the country. Amy Horowitz's Roadwork organization emerged in 1978 to organize and produce multicultural women's performances. Also in 1978, Flo Hollis organized the area's first community musical group, the DC Feminist Chorus.

DC is rich in talented photographers and filmmakers who document our LGBT history. Joan E. Biren (JEB), Sharon Farmer, Leigh Mosley, and Patsy Lynch began creating our visual heritage more than 30 years ago.

The 80s brought the Sapphire Sapphos, a major support and social organization for African American lesbians. DC's Gay Women's Alternative sponsored educational and social events, including the popular Spring Cotillions, from 1981 to 1993. Roadwork



staged Sisterfire, the first urban women's music festival, at Takoma Park Junior High in 1982, repeating

the festival until 1988. Papaya Mann, Michelle Parkerson, and Chi Hughes were among regularly featured performers at the Coffeehouse, a major African American performance site in NE DC in the early 80s. The Toy Box Revue produced "women of color" events in the first part of the 80s.

Women have led faith communities in DC for many years. Rev. Candace Shultis came to town in 1979 and has served in MCC-DC's ministry since 1983. Rev. Dolores Berry has served prominently in the Metropolitan Community Church since the 70s. Rev. Darlene Garner has served MCC churches in the area as well. Rabbi Leila Gal Berner serves Bet Mishpachah in DC.

The first Passages conference brought lesbians together to discuss issues of ageism and became an annual event. In 1987, Latina lesbians and bisexuals helped create the area's first Hispanic support organization, ENLACE, as well as the HIV/AIDS support organization Salud. Susan Hester organized the Mautner Project in 1989 to support women living

with cancer. After the Sapphire Sapphos ended, African American lesbians met in area homes for group discussions. These meetings led to the Black Lesbian Support Group which formally organized in 1990.

Creation of the Lesbian Services Program in 1990 broadened support programs. Amelie Zurn provided a firm foundation for LSP as its first full time director

Fed up with violence and threats against women, DC women organized the first Walk Without Fear in 1991. Building on women's leadership in AIDS protest organizations, DC lesbians organized a local chapter of Lesbian Avengers in 1993. The fire-eating Avengers staged the nation's first Dyke March in April 1993. Loraine Hutchins, a leader in bisexual politics and organizing, participated in the creation of AMBi in 1991 and helped put together the Embracing Diversity conference in 1993. In the early 90s, Cheryl Spector began filming local social and political events as a community archive.

The Passages conference (1984-1995) provided initial funding for Woman's Monthly (WOMO) which first published in September 1992.

The 90s also saw the creation of two social organizations for African American lesbians Women in the Life and CLOAVE (Collective Lesbians of African Descent Voices Everywhere). In the developing social scene, drag kings appeared in the mid-90s with the Lesbian Avengers' drag king contest at the Hung Jury.

[1] Bi Any Other Name — 6104 3rd St NW - This crucial text (1991) provided philosophical underpinnings for bisexuality. It was co-authored by native Washingtonian Loraine Hutchins who wrote much of the text at this address. Hutchins co-founded The Alliance of Multi-Cultural Bisexuals (AMBi) in DC. AMBi's 1992 conference *Embracing Diversity* was held at St Thomas Church (on 18th St NW).

[2] Black Lesbian Support Group — 1407 S St NW -- A successor to the Sapphire Sapphos, BLSG formally organized in 1990 and within a year was working with the Whitman-Walker Clinic. Funded primarily through Whitman-Walker Clinic, BLSG offers discussion



and support groups for African American lesbians.

[3] Club Madame — 500 8th St SE BB and Lorissette Gatch's club for women offered dancing and social space, "with a French accent," from 1974 to 1978. Nancy Hayward, a founder of Parents of Gays - DC records a visit to the club in the book *Now That You Know*.

[4] DC Rape Crisis Center — 1609 Connecticut Ave NW The group formed in the summer of 1972 as the Women's Crisis Center. From the start it offered "medical, legal, and personal counseling for women, also self-defense". For over thirty years, the center has aided women who have been sexually assaulted. It originally met in the basement of a Mt. Pleasant house and later occupied space at 1609 Connecticut Ave NW.

[5] The Furies — 219 11th St SE &

1861 California NW The Furies collective was among Washington, DC's best known communal living groups in the early Seventies. The twelve women (including Joan Biren, Charlotte Bunch, and Sharon Deevey) living here constituted an important experiment in lesbians of diverse social and economic backgrounds living together and working to make their political and social beliefs a day-to-day reality. From January 1972 until mid-1973, the collective published its groundbreaking newspaper, , and distributed it nationally. When the collective disbanded in late spring 1972, "the core of the newspaper staff decided to continue the paper as a project separate from the collective."

[6] Gay Women's Alternative — 7750 16th St NW Created by Ina Alterman, Maryl Kerley and others in 1980. For 12 years, GWA provided educational and social opportunities for lesbian and bisexual women in the metropolitan area. GWA was "an alternative to the closet; an alternative to the bars." The group's annual Spring Cotillion was a highlight of the season. GWA met at the



Washington Ethical Society on upper 16th St NW and was an all-volunteer organization.

[7] Gay Women's Open House — 5411 South 8th Place, Arlington - Lilli Vincenz opened her home as a gathering place for women, first announced in the *Gay Blade* in April 1971. For many women, it offered a secure comfortable space to meet other women. The open house was usually Wednesday evenings, from 1971 to 1978. After 1978, it met monthly for about a year. The event inspired other Gay Women's Open Houses in Bowie, on 17th St in Washington, DC, and briefly in Prince George's County. One oral history recalls " ...it was a great environment because it wasn't a bar and it was in her living room. She opened up her house ... And it was cruising without cruising in that it was a very comfortable environment, but yet people there were predominately single and just trying to reach out and find one another."

[8] Hill Haven — 516 8th St SE The women's bar opened in late 1989 and provided another gathering place on Capitol Hill for lesbians and bisexuals. The club

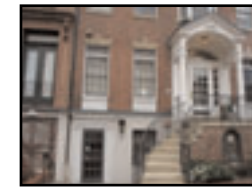
[9] Hung Jury — 1819 H St NW The club opened in 1984 and was one of the city's longest running clubs for lesbian and bisexual women. Hung Jury hosted First Friday dances for Women in the Life as well as the first local drag king contest in 1996.

[10] JoAnna's — 430 8th St SE As Lilli Vincenz remarked, "JoAnna's was the first nice bar for women" when it opened in 1968. JoAnna's was not only the first lesbian bar, but it was the first bar to provide a dance floor for same-sex dancing, an innovation quickly copied by other clubs. In 1971 and 1972, JoAnna's held a women's film festival the first Sunday of the month. JoAnna's closed briefly in 1972 and then re-opened in 1973, featuring Billie's Gold Dust Review, a drag show.

[11] Lammas Books — 321 7th St SE Judy Winsett and Leslie Reeves founded Lammas as a jewelry and craft shop in 1970 at 115 8th St SE. In the final lesbian issue of *Motive* in 1972, Winsett wrote "We work about fifty hours a week ... But it's



not like real working, because we love it and it's fun." By 1973, Lammas moved to 321 7th St SE and became the LGBT community's first bookstore and a lesbian community center. Lammas sponsored a softball team, hosted readings and concerts, and other events of interest to lesbians. Mary Farmer ran Lammas after Winsett and Reeves, turning the shop into a bookstore, performance space, and lesbian community center. The store hosted concerts, staged readings of new works, and functioned as the information center for many of the activities in the lesbian community. In 1986, Lammas



opened a Dupont Circle branch at 1426 21st St NW, which offered many of the same services as the Capitol Hill store. The original store on Capitol Hill closed in 1989. Jane Troxell, Rose Fennell, Marge Darling & Susan Fletcher took over Lammas in March 1993. The 21st Street store presented Sweet Honey in the Rock, Norma McCorvey (Jane Roe of Roe v. Wade), Alice Walker, Gloria Steinem, Lily Tomlin to name a few. The store provided space for the Lesbian Avengers meetings and held numerous fundraisers for women's organizations. Lammas sold books and gifts at every feminist and lesbian conference in DC for years. Seven years later the store moved to 1607 17th St NW before closing in 2001. The last owner was Sylvia Colon.

[12] Lesbian Avengers — 1426 21st St NW The non-violent direct action Lesbian Avengers formed in 1992 to empower lesbians, bring attention to lesbian issues and to work with other LGBT

groups on lesbian issues. Known as "fire eaters," Avengers also advertised "we recruit." The DC chapter used direct action efforts in confronting George Mason University and in support of AIDS actions in the city. The Avengers often met at Lammas' shop in Dupont Circle and organized the first annual Dyke March.



[13]
Lesbian
Health —



1606 17th St NW Building on earlier women's health nights at the Washing-ton Free Clinic, Lorraine Biros co-founded the Lesbian Resource and Counseling Collective at the Whitman-Walker Clinic. In 1979, Barbara Lewis and Lauren Taylor co-founded the Wednesday evening Lesbian Health Clinic. With the 1990 establishment of the Lesbian Services Program (LSP) at 1432 U St NW, under the leadership of Amelie Zurn, DC's lesbian and bisexual women had access to full-fledged health and support programs. Since Zurn, LSP has been led by Nancy Meyers and currently by Ellen Kahn.

[14] Mautner Project — 1707 L St NW In 1989, Susan Hester created the Mautner Project to support lesbians with cancer. The Mautner Project is named for Mary-Helen Mautner, who died of breast cancer in 1989. During her illness Mary-Helen was fortunate to have a support network of friends and family. She realized that other lesbians were not so fortunate. The Mautner Project has set standards for lesbian health programs around the country.

[15] mothertongue — 1811 14th St NW Since October 1998, *mothertongue* has presented a monthly evening "where all women may speak freely and powerfully and have their creative and artistic voices heard ... Through monthly women's spoken word events and writing/performance workshops, *mothertongue* encourages women to use their voices, art, talents, and skills to build just and inclusive communities." *mothertongue* is held the third Wednesday of each month at the Black Cat club on 14th St.

[16] The Other Side — 1345 Half St SE Owners Carroll and Jansen opened a popular women's bar in 1978 on the site of early gay male dance clubs. This was their second lesbian club (after the Phase One). The Other Side was a popular women's dance bar and restaurant for a decade, adding weekend drag shows in the 1980s.

[17] Passages — 7750 16th St NW, Marvin Center & other venues From 1985 to 1997, the annual Passages conference focused on issues

in women's lives. Ina Alterman, Hope Brown, Marti Burt, Lee Dotson, Jerrie Linder, Ruth Meeron, Cheryl Jennings, Kate Seelman, and Helen Zanes organized the first conference. The conference, held first at the Washington Ethical Society, began as *Passages: A Conference on Aging and Ageism for Lesbians of All Ages*. Kate Seelman recalled "We expected 150 and 300 showed up." In later years the conference focus expanded to a wide-ranging repertoire of issues as *Passages* became a general conference for lesbians.

[18] Phase One — 525 8th St SE DC's longest running gay club opened in mid-summer 1971. With a dance floor, pool tables, and a bar, the Phase was a success. One oral history recalls the false fur under the Phase's bar. The Phase fielded its own softball team.



[19] Playing Fields — 23rd and Constitution The playing fields at 23rd and Constitution NW became the site of women's softball games in the summer of 1972. A notice in the *Gay Blade* directed readers to diamond 18 and noted "if you don't see the number, look for the dykes." Football games moved to this location in the autumn of 1972. One Saturday morning during the Lammas team's practice, a limo pulled up and out climbed Ann Richards who wanted to learn how to throw out the first ball at a major league baseball game. The Guy Mason Field in Glover Park was another popular area.

[20] Roadwork — 1475 Harvard St NW In 1978, Amy Horowitz formed Roadwork as a "multiracial women's cultural organization" to create a national/international audience for Sweet Honey as well as to organize and



produce performances by women. Roadwork started at 1724 20th St NW, later moving to Harvard St NW. In 1982, Roadwork launched Sisterfire "as celebration ... and acknowledgement of women as vital carriers of culture." Sisterfire was conceived in Bernice Johnson Reagon's living room and over the next six years, Sisterfire introduced a special mix of emerging and internationally recognized women perform-

ers such as Alice Walker, Tracy Chapman, Ronnie Gilbert, and Elizabeth Cotten.

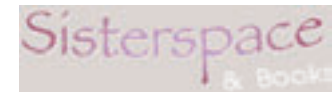
[21] Red Capricorn — 12222 Rockville Pike Marti Biton opened a coffeehouse/night club for women in 1994, bringing a performance and social space for lesbians to Montgomery County, MD.

[22] Redskin Lounge — 1628 L St NW (demolished) Redskin followed the Maystat and Jewel Box clubs at this address. In the mid to late 50s, the Redskin was a popular women's club.

[23] Sapphire Sapphos — 816 I St NE The group originally met in the basement of La Zambra (1406 14th St NW), at All Souls Church, and later at the ENIKAlley Coffeehouse (816 I St NE), which the Sapphire Sapphos took over in the mid-80s. They briefly ran a coffeehouse here called Essie's. Papaya Mann recalls "some people got the idea that we should start a social club or a support group. And it was both of those things. So it was mostly black women coming together attempting to attract other women who wanted to be together. And there was an emphasis on women with children being very accepted. So we all, we created an extended community, sort of family type of energy."

[24] Showboat — 1310 H St NW (demolished) The Showboat opened in 1936 and was one of the most popular lesbian clubs of the 30s and 40s. In the 30s, nightly entertainment was provided by a lesbian couple, Chloe and Loverboy.

[25] Sisterspace — 1515 U St NW Sisterspace grew out of a book corner



in Cassandra Burton's Consignment Boutique on U St and by 1995 was an independent bookstore. With Faye Williams, Burton has turned Sisterspace and Books into one of DC's most popular spots for African American women. Williams says "This is more than a bookstore ... This is where people come to connect." Sisterspace provides discussion and meeting space for women in the community, as well as books, readings, and concerts.