



YEAR FIVE

2005 marked a major transition in the life of The Rainbow History Project. Founder Mark Meinke stepped down as Chairman of the Board in order to devote more time to research and write about Washington's GLBTQ community. The Board expanded from 6 members to 10.

2005 presented the Project with a number of challenges involving our mission, our resources, both human and financial, and our ability to meet that mission. We continue to serve our basic mission, to collect, preserve, and promote our community's history. But we must in the years ahead address fundamental questions affecting the Project.

In five years, the Project's reputation, both locally and nationally, has grown considerably. As this report will make clear, The Rainbow History Project has emerged as a leading source of our community's history and a model for other organizations. While both our reputation and demands upon us from outside the metropolitan area have grown, our ability to grow with this increased visibility presents us with major challenges.

PROMOTING OUR HISTORY

The Project expanded the successful brochure program begun in 2004 with the publication of two new brochures, one on Drag in DC and one on Walt Whitman's Washington. The Whitman brochure was produced in collaboration with the Washington, DC Friends of Whitman. This was our first joint production effort and was very successful.

We participated in Cultural Tourism DC's WalkingTown DC program in the autumn. WalkingTown DC is a weekend program in which neighborhood and community organizations offer walking tours of their communities. Cultural Tourism DC, of which we are a member, handles the promotion of the tours. We offered two of our tours, Dupont Circle and Capitol Hill. This was a good opportunity to introduce people to The Rainbow History Project and we drew a larger and more diverse crowd than we have previously done on our tours. We plan to participate in the Spring 2006 program.

Beginning in 2005, The Rainbow History Project undertook a major collaboration with The Museum Project of One in Ten to mount an exhibition on the history of Pride

celebrations. The Project provided a first draft of the text, located and lent graphic and photographic images and ephemera from our collections, assisted with writing and editing the exhibit text. The exhibit, "Pride: Party or Protest?" opened this January and runs through June 11.

In 2005, we again participated in Youth Pride Day by staffing a booth at the program. For Black Pride, as in 2004, we placed an ad in the official program. We decided not to take a booth at the Capital Pride Day event because of the expense and time required, a decision we first made in 2004. However, at the request of the Capital Pride organizers, we provided contact information for as many of the past Capital Pride honorees as we could locate. In 2005, we nominated five individuals for designation as Heroes of Pride and one of our nominees, Mindy Daniels, was so honored.

In June, we were invited to participate in a program on "Community Heritage Preservation: Identifying and Managing Local Grassroots Resources" sponsored by the Humanities Council of Washington, DC in collaboration with the DC State Historic Preservation Office and the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation at the University of Maryland. We were one of three organizations to make formal presentations to the workshop.

The Rainbow History Project was invited to deliver the keynote address to U.S. Department of the Interior's observation of Gay History Month, sponsored by the Department's Office of Civil Rights and the Department's GLOBE. The theme of the event was "Sexual Orientation in the Workplace" and the address focused on the adoption of Title 34 by the District government.

For the second year, the Project assisted with the planning of the Max Robinson Center's month-long commemoration of World AIDS Day. We updated both the original timeline of AIDS history in Washington, DC and also the roll of names of people who have died of AIDS or AIDS-related causes in the area. Rainbow History also provided assistance in obtaining display materials and in physically mounting the display. As we did in 2004, we produced the reading of the names at the Martin Luther King, Jr Library on World AIDS Day.

In 2005, we raised our visibility in the media. Mark Meinke was interviewed for articles in the Philadelphia Gay News and The Washington Post.

Sadly, for the first time, The Rainbow History Project used excerpts from a narrator's story in a public setting at Wanda Alston's memorial service and funeral.

RESEARCHING AND ARCHIVING OUR HISTORY

Research – The project's website continues to be the primary public repository of our research, undertaken by Mark Meinke. During the year, Mark researched and collected materials on 1965, the year of picketing that began with the Mattachine Society of Washington's picket at the White House in April 17. This research was useful in

documenting the role that Washington residents played at this seminal moment. We also completed the DC Bisexual History Timeline and placed it on the website.

Working with John Eddy, the Project published an online exhibit of The Clubhouse, DC's premier venue for the African-American GLBT community for many years, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of its opening. Mark Meinke also wrote a history of Best of Washington for use on its website.

Rainbow History received copies of the final two issues of *Motive*, a magazine published by the United Methodist Church. To accompany their appearance on our website, Mark Meinke wrote an introductory essay exploring the background of these two issues devoted to LGBTQ issues.

Ric Mendoza-Gleason completed work on the index of the *Mattachine Review* and *One*, both collections donated to us in 2004 by longtime RHP supporter Bob Summersgill.

Website -- The website continues to generate queries from scholars, journalists and students who are looking for resources for GLBTQ history, or who are trying to locate individuals who have played a role here in DC. One of the nation's leading historians of gay civil rights has requested permission to use the website as part of his syllabus.

Usage of the Project's website grew significantly in 2005. Overall, traffic at www.rainbowhistory.org was up a third over 2004 for number of visitors, page views, and general hits. Even more significant is the continued growth in the number of return visitors. (See appendix for the actual numbers and a more detailed discussion of their significance.)

A number of significant documents and collections were added to the website in 2005. Among them were documents from the David Aiken collection, information on DC's Council on Homosexuals and Religion, documents associated with the history of The Clubhouse and the Mattachine Society's picket of the White House in April, 1965.

Collections - 2005 brought The Rainbow History major new collections. In addition to the issues of *Motive* and the documents relating to The Clubhouse mentioned above, we received audio and video materials.

Bob Summersgill donated audio tapes of the meetings of the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance (GLAA) from the period when he was an officer.

Michael Claypoole gave us a major collection of material from *Gay Fairfax*, including CDs, photos, and text transcripts from the shows *Gay Fairfax*, *One in Ten People*, *Gay Spectrum*, and *The Third Side*. This collection, coupled with the *Friends* radio tapes, adds to our understanding of the vital role that gay broadcasting played in our community.

Over the course of the year, RHP received a number of queries from around the country regarding the possibility of our taking possession of personal GLBTQ-related libraries, documents, artifacts and personal papers. We have had to decline these offers because we lack adequate and appropriate storage facilities for these materials. In most cases, we suggested other possible organizations, collections or facilities. This highlights a major concern of the Project as we continue to grow: how do we responsibly care for the material we already possess and develop the resources to expand our collections.

Preservation – The *Friends* radio tape project continues. Although we have not designated any tapes for restoration and preservation recently, we will resume the program within the next month.

The return of baseball to Washington sparked a not totally unexpected interest in neighborhood preservation. The site of the proposed stadium encompasses an area rich in GLBTQ history. Numerous clubs found their homes there beginning in the 1970s and these clubs brought a vibrant nightlife to the area. RHP has served as a resource on the history of the area for many journalists for whom these streets were previously *terra incognita*.

John Olinger participated in the “Community Heritage Preservation workshop mentioned above and continues to work with some of the organizers of the workshop on preservation issues.

PARTNERS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Rainbow History Project expanded its ties to both local and national organizations that share our interests in 2005.

The Project was invited to organize and lead a panel at the Mid Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC), to be held this April in Baltimore, on community-based GLBT archival groups. Our Advisory Board member, Gail McCormick, recommended our participation to the MARAC program committee. Mark Meinke is in the final stages of co-ordinating the presentation.

The GLBT-ALMS (Archivists, Librarians, Museums, Special Projects) Conference invited Mark Meinke to participate in two of its sessions organize. He will lead a panel on virtual archiving and virtual exhibits and will be a member of the panel on oral histories for its conference in May. Finally, Mark Meinke will present a weekend training seminar on oral history at Macalester College’s GLBT Alumni Reunion in September.

We maintain our relationship with the American Historical Association’s Committee on Lesbian and Gay History (CLGH). Mark Meinke was nominated for the Board of Governors of CLGH this year.

Once again this year, John Olinger served on the Planning Committee of the Washington, DC Historical Studies Conference and RHP was one of the event's sponsors. This year, Mr. Olinger moderated a panel at the conference.

As referenced above, Board Vice-Chair Jeff Donahoe undertook RHP's responsibilities in mounting the joint exhibit with One in Ten, "Pride: Party or Protest?" Jeff also presented on behalf of RHP at the Center's Volunteer Project workshop.

RHP renewed its membership in Cultural Tourism DC, and as reported above, we led two of our tours in the autumn for WalkingTown DC. Board member Ric Mendoza-Gleason joined the working group preparing the Mount Pleasant Heritage Trail. As a result of RHP's input, the Adams Morgan Heritage Trail includes the 18th Street site of Whitman Walker Clinic, the first citation of a GLBTQ site on a public heritage trail. RHP has also proposed sites for the forthcoming Shaw trail.

We worked with the Washington, DC Friends of Whitman to support the enactment of Council Bill 16-169, *The Walt Whitman Way Designation Act of 2005*, which was approved by the City Council at the end of last year. The Rainbow History Project sent a letter to Council Chairman Linda Cropp urging hearings on the bill and submitted testimony to the Council hearing.

We provided an audio clip of Wanda Alston's narrative to the Human Rights Campaign for use in their taped remembrance of her life.

Best of Washington nominated the Project for a Ford Foundation *Leadership for a Changing World* grant in February. Although we were not awarded a grant, the nomination itself is a sign of the community's support for our work.

Similarly, The Washington Academy held its annual fundraiser for Rainbow History in October. The third such event raised over \$2200 for the Project. We released the new Gay DC brochure, *Drag in DC*, at the event.

The Atlantic States Gay Rodeo Association (ASGRA) honored The Rainbow History Project by designating us as Grand Marshall of the Atlantic Stampede. Project Board members attended both days of the rodeo and were part of the opening ceremonies on each day.

As in the past three years, we successfully applied for a grant from Brother Help Thyself. We received a total of \$2986 which will allow us to purchase new audio equipment for taping our panel discussion and other public programs.

This year, The Rainbow History Project awarded its Community Pioneer Award to Mame Dennis and Ella Fitzgerald, two longtime leaders of Washington's drag community. The first award went to the late Bruce Pennington.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

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Newly elected Board members Chuck Goldfarb, Chris Man, Joe Rawson and Kim SESCOE brought our board strength to 10. Founding Chairman Mark Meinke stepped down as Chairman but remains as a Board member. The officers of the Board are

John Olinger Chairman
Jeff Donahoe Vice-Chairman
James Crutchfield Treasurer
Joe Rawson Secretary.

As our organization grows, we face many new challenges. As our work and collections become more widely known, we have had to deal with questions of the use of our materials and the proper transmittal of them to researchers and others. We have benefited greatly from the diverse talents of our Board, including Chris Man's legal expertise, as well as the sound advice of our Advisory Board as we tackled these issues. We have developed a transmittal form for use when we release documents, transcripts and photos to researchers. We have also drafted a confidentiality agreement to be signed by individuals who transcribe the tapes in our oral history collection.

Chuck Goldfarb drafted a development plan which we are continuing to review with the aim of increasing our financial support.

Due to the increasing recognition of the Project's work, we have many more opportunities to work with other organizations and to promote the work we have done up to the present. The challenge is to respond to these opportunities and develop these new relationships without diverting energy from our core responsibility as a local, Washington organization. The fact that we did not present any public programs this year demonstrates the difficulty of striking this balance.

Similarly, we have had many offers of volunteer assistance this year, only some of which have we been able to take advantage of. Nor have we been able to expand our membership base; in fact, our paid membership has declined this year.

The development plan is one part of the response to this situation. However, the Project needs to create a better organizational structure in order to overcome these difficulties and keep pace with the demands of our core mission and our increased local and national visibility.

FINANCIALS

The accompanying Profit and Loss statement shows that we essentially broke even at the end of the year. We had a deficit of \$32.12. However, we carried over from 2004 funds in the *Friends* radio tape preservation program in the amount of \$4633. so that amount was covered.

The generous support of a number of organizations – Brother Help Thyself, The Washington Academy, the Wessel Family Foundation, Best of Washington, and the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance – provided the bulk of our financial resources.

As noted above, our membership has declined in the past year. We must expand our membership base in order to continue our work. This is not only true for financial reasons but also so that we can carry on the day to day tasks of the organization.

This year saw a significant increase in the number and amount of individual contributions. Our total, unrestricted individual donations increased from \$2050 in 2004 to \$3685 in 2005. This was largely the result of active solicitation on the part of two board members. We hope to be able to expand this solicitation program in the coming year.

THE YEAR AHEAD

The Project has a number of new projects underway, including the three conference presentations noted above and participation in the spring Walking Town DC program.

The Board needs to address the issue of membership recruitment and follow-up on the initial work on the development plan. We are planning to re-launch our public programs, and we hope to work with other GLBT organizations in developing these programs. We will resume the *Friends* radio tape preservation work. And we will continue to collect and promote our community's history, the reason we exist in the first place.