

## RAINBOW HISTORY PROJECT YEAR 15: 2015

Taking advantage of our very successful 2014 campaign to expand and train our volunteer corps, in 2015 Rainbow History Project made great gains in all our programmatic areas and in our online presence. In addition, we diversified our fundraising activities and implemented a development calendar to help us raise the funds needed to meet the demands of our growing programs. For the first time, Rainbow History is integrating its programmatic and development activities to ensure our long-term strength. We started our most ambitious project to date, a \$10,000+ effort to digitize all the *Friends* radio show tapes from 1973-1982, by implementing a multi-pronged funding plan that included our initial venture into crowd funding. And once again, Brother Help Thyself provided essential funding support.

But the highlight of the year was the incredible contribution of our full-time summer intern, Sarah Geselowitz. Among her many achievements was the creation of a video to support the *Friends* radio project and the redesign of our website. The board remains amazed by how much one energetic, creative, and insightful person can accomplish in just a few months – and by how she motivated all of us who worked with her.

Here are some of Rainbow History's 2015 accomplishments.

**Educational Events:** On May 14, more than 165 people came to the historic Thurgood Marshall Center to join RHP in recognizing 12 Community Pioneers whose vision, perseverance, and plain hard work has had a lasting impact on DC's LGBT community. The honorees' contributions extended from the 1960s to the present and their words that evening provided a multigenerational seminar on community leadership. The event was partially funded by a grant from Brother Help Thyself and, yes, we have a video recording of the evening, which enriches media coverage from *The Blade* and *MetroWeekly*. In addition, portraits and short bios of each of the pioneers were displayed at the DC Center for the LGBT Community for several months after the event.

On June 16, board member Bonnie Morris moderated a public panel discussion on "Lost Lesbian Spaces" at the Library of Congress. The event was co-sponsored by RHP and the Library of Congress GLOBE. We have a recording of this event as well and it was covered in depth by *Washingtonian* magazine. Bonnie also spoke on the vanishing of local lesbian history at the Lavender Languages conference at American University. On June 9, Philip Clark lectured to FBI records management employees about DC LGBT history, especially as related to the federal government and civil service employment. On September 2, Philip Clark and Vincent Slatt participated in a DC LGBT historic context study for the DC Office of Planning and the DC State Historic Preservation Office. Vincent Slatt also presented an information session on Rainbow History Project activities on June 30 at the DC Public Library's Southeast branch.

**Walking Tours:** Rapid development is changing Washington, DC's physical and cultural shape, with old gayborhoods and LGBT hangouts disappearing or changing their physical presence. Rainbow History's walking tours keep historic LGBT Washington alive for locals and visitors alike. In 2015, we were selected by Cultural Tourism DC to give several educational walking tours through two historic neighborhoods, Dupont Circle and Capitol Hill, during the "WalkingTown DC" program in September. Philip Clark led the Capitol Hill tours and Jeff Donahoe led the Dupont Circle tours. Philip also led a group of German tourists through Capitol Hill in August. Rainbow History also provided two hugely well-attended Dupont Circle

walking tours during the Pride celebration in June. One of the walking tours led by Jeff Donahoe was covered by the *Florida Agenda*.

In 2015, Rainbow History received a generous grant from Brother Help Thyself to update our walking tour brochures to accommodate the city's changing physical presence. We used that funding to contract with RHP member Diane Barnes to perform the research to update the Capitol Hill walking tour. Rachel Ake, a New York City-based graphic designer, provided *pro bono* graphic design work for the Capitol Hill Walking Tour Brochure, which we presented at our 2015 Brother Help Thyself grants hearing. We are employing new technology that will allow people to use their personal devices to interact with our databases to create their own walking tours.

**Oral Histories:** Led by Jeff Donahoe, we significantly expanded our library of oral histories in 2015 and updated our oral history volunteer booklet. More than 15 new volunteers were trained and the new and existing oral history volunteers collectively added more than 30 narrators to RHP's collection. Also, Rainbow History was asked to design an oral history component for an undergraduate gender studies class at Georgetown University. This involved an in-class presentation and training, led by Jeff Donahoe, and working with students who chose to perform an oral history interview as a major class assignment. It resulted in about a dozen new oral histories. In addition, Philip Clark digitized the Genny Beemyn/A *Queer Capital* collection of oral histories with 105 narrators.

**Expanding and Improving Access to Our Collection:** There are now 20 different series and runs of 12 different periodicals in the Rainbow History Project Collection housed at the Kiplinger Library of the Historical Society of Washington, DC, our archival partner. In 2015 Rainbow History hosted 11 archiving sessions, at the homes of Chuck Goldfarb and Vincent Slatt and at HSW. The many volunteers who participated worked on both incoming donations and on improving cataloging of materials received in previous years. Much of the newly collected materials have been physically transferred to HSW. Some of these materials expanded existing series in our collection; some represented entirely new series.

The archiving work covered a number of large and small collections, including:

- The Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance records. Seven photocopier size boxes of materials from the 1970s-1990s were donated by Mindy Daniels, a Rainbow History Project Community Pioneer and a former president of GLAA. This is now the largest collection in the RHP holdings, and by far the one that most fully demonstrates the development of political power in the DC LGBT community. This collection is now at the HSW as Series XVI: Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance.
- Patrick Gertschen Photo Albums. A collection of photo albums created by the late Patrick Gertschen in his role as a photographer at drag events in the 1970s and 1980s. Donated by his former partner, this material has been saved since Gertschen's death more than 20 years ago, and relates to activities of the Academy of Washington and various events they hosted annually.
- Gay Community Center Records. Records of the Gay Community Center, from the 1970s and 1980s, were donated by Jim Lemley, and have been organized and are ready for scanning and transfer to HSW.
- Chuck Goldfarb's collection, primarily from his involvement with Black and White Men Together in the 1980s and the DC Gay Switchboard in the 1970s. Materials include Resisting Racism workshops in the 1980s and documents relating to efforts to create a Gay Community Services Center in the 1970s and the Gay Community Center in the 1980s. Chuck organized these materials and donated them to RHP.

- T-Shirts. Volunteer Eric Gonzaba, who runs the website Wearing Gay History (<http://wearinggayhistory.com/>), has photographed, cataloged, and posted on both his website and our Omeka.com catalog, photographs and descriptions of the various t-shirts held by RHP.
- Bruce Pennington materials. An additional box that was located in the storage shed has been organized, described, and transferred to HSW and integrated with Series IV: Bruce Pennington Papers.
- AIDS Quilt Washington DC. An additional box of materials related to the AIDS quilt was located in the storage shed and transferred to HSW and integrated with Series XIII: AIDS Memorial Quilt.
- Various collected pride guides were transferred to HSW into Series XI: Pride Programs and Publications.
- Gay Liberation Front-DC materials. Philip Clark organized and transferred to HSW materials related to the Gay Liberation Front-DC.
- Copies of Metro Weekly, Washington Blade, and DC Agenda have all been transferred to HSW to be integrated with our existing holdings there.
- New donations from Robert Dardano, Rudolf "Skip" Keith, and Gideon Ferebee's estate were donated to RHP this year. These have been organized and are awaiting further description and later transfer to HSW.
- Jim Marks collection of Out Magazine, Lambda Literary Report, Metro Weekly, and also records of LLR, as well as individual books published by notable gay authors were received this year. This material has also been organized and awaits transfer to HSW.

**Assisting Researchers and Journalists:** Philip Clark again assisted a number of researchers and reporters by guiding them through our collection, informing them of possible other archival sources, and putting them in contact with community pioneers and others who might be able to provide first-hand accounts. Among those he helped are: Emily Bell, who is performing research on radical feminist activism; Pete Bonds, who is researching DC LGBT political history during the period 1964-1972; Elise Chenier, who is researching same-sex marriage history; Gerard Koskovich, who is researching gay and lesbian historiography; Peter Murray, who sought photographic permissions relating to Gay Pride and Stephen Vider, who also sought photo permissions; and William Zeisel, with the Anacostia Community Museum, who sought information on 1960s/1970s DC gay history. As a result of Philip's assistance to the Anacostia Community Museum, Rainbow History Project archival materials appear in the museum's exhibit entitled "Twelve Years that Shook and Shared Washington: 1963-1975," and Rainbow History has been invited to lead a presentation there in June 2016.

Brian Miller used our archives to expand his research on the DC Gay Liberation Front. Bonnie Morris helped a local magnet middle school prepare a video documentary of the Lavender Scare era. She also published an essay in the *Journal of Lesbian Studies* on the local DC history of Olivia Records.

**Community Outreach:** More than 50 people attended our annual meeting on March 31 at the Gay Community Center. Board members led discussions of each of our program areas. Many first time attendees signed up to volunteer or agreed to be interviewed for our oral histories program. Rainbow History had a visible presence with our booth at the Gay Pride Festival and at the Gay Fairfax 25<sup>th</sup> Reunion, which reunited the cast and crew of a series of historic gay-themed public access shows that aired in Fairfax, Virginia beginning in the early 1990s.

**Online Presence:** Led by Vincent Slatt, Cassandra Ake, and Sarah Geselowitz, we greatly improved the Rainbow History Project website ([rainbowhistory.org](http://rainbowhistory.org)), writing more than 30 blog posts and digitizing several dozen key documents and photographs as we continued to expand our physical collection, and

making the site both more comprehensive and more user-friendly. Notable additions were an interactive timeline of local and national trans history from 1896 to 2008 and a companion exhibit to Philip Clark's presentation to FBI employees on LGBT history and its intersection with the federal government and civil service.

Our *Facebook* page enables our followers to post and discuss various matters relating to LGBT history. We also use *Facebook* to advise the public about RHP's events, as well as educational activity sponsored by other groups in the community. Richard Haight created a Rainbow History presence on *Flickr*, with hundreds of pictures placed in the new "RHP Photo Journal." If you haven't been on our website recently, please check it out.

**The *Friends* Radio Tapes:** Rainbow History has undertaken our largest project to date – the preservation of the reel-to-reel and cassette tapes from the *Friends* radio program that was broadcast from 1973 to 1982. Some of the original tapes had already been digitized, but many remained unidentified and undigitized. None were readily available to listeners.

Vincent Slatt, with the assistance of Anne Scott, Cassandra Ake, and Sarah Geselowitz, began the process of creating an inventory and work plan for the *Friends* Radio project. He was able to contact the Cutting Corporation, which had contracted with services for RHP during the initial phases of the project (2004-2011). They provided much information on the process and work orders which matched certain materials in the storage unit. It has been agreed that they will be the vendor for the digitization work that remains to be done (outtakes of interviews, as well as certain reel-to-reel broadcasts). Additionally, the web-based hosting service PopUp Archive ([www.popuparchive.com](http://www.popuparchive.com)), has been selected as the online platform for storing and making accessible the recordings. This innovative service will allow for automated transcripts, secure web-hosting, digital file preservation, and search engine optimization. Initial quotes and estimated expenses were provided by both vendors, and used for the fundraising campaign. Indexes, container labels, and other records have been located within the storage shed and the hard drive to be used in establishing a work plan and cataloging data. Vincent Slatt remains the lead on the project, and with successful fundraising, we hope to have the entire set of broadcasts and outtakes

Cassandra Ake and Vincent Slatt, with help from the board, developed a multi-pronged funding plan that included seeking grants, making our first attempt at online crowd funding (on Razoo), and preparing a targeted mailing for our current supporters. The project was highlighted by Vincent Slatt in an interview with *MetroWeekly*.

RHP received funding from Brother Help Thyself, the Capital Pride Alliance, and the DC Preservation League, as well as a large number of individuals. One individual made the largest donation Rainbow History Project has ever received. The funding campaign generated more than \$19,000, though much of those funds are not restricted to the *Friends* project.

**Development Activities:** As exemplified by the *Friends* radio tapes project, we are now integrating our programmatic and development activities. Rainbow History hopes to take the lessons learned from that campaign, notably the success of a project-driven campaign taking place in the fall, and apply it to 2016. RHP also plans to thank and keep excitement high with donor events and follow-up communications on the project's progress. Although Rainbow History is forever grateful for the financial support that Brother Help Thyself has provided since our inception in 2000, we are taking BHT's advice and making a determined effort to diversify our funding streams.

**Changes to the Board:** At the annual meeting in March, Cassandra Ake was elected to the board. Soon after, Anne Scott also joined the board. Our treasurer, Jim Marks, has moved to the Florida. He has remained on the board but we are searching for a new treasurer.

**What's Coming Up:** The Rainbow History Project annual meeting is scheduled for March 24 at the DC Center. At the meeting, we will discuss all of our programs and encourage community members to join us. We already have plans to work with other major organizations in metropolitan DC in 2016. We have begun planning an event with the Stonewall group at the National Archives and Records Administration. We have been invited by the Anacostia Community Museum of the Smithsonian Institution to present a panel or lecture on the LGBT community June 25 as part of their on-going program on "12 Years that Shocked and Shaped Washington, DC, 1963-1975." In addition, RHP has received requests for programming from community organizations like the DC Public Library, and will participate in the 2016 Pride Festival.