
**R A I N B O W
H I S T O R Y
P R O J E C T**

RAINBOWHISTORY.ORG



Celebrating Our 20th Year in 2020

2020 Annual Report

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Rainbow History Project (RHP) is to collect, preserve, and promote an active knowledge of the history, arts, and culture of metropolitan Washington DC's diverse LGBTQ+ communities. That can be accomplished only if our collection, volunteer corps, and programming reflect and represent the full diversity of those communities and their allies. It is therefore our fundamental policy to seek out the active participation and involvement of individuals of all backgrounds -- particularly those from under-represented groups -- who agree with and are committed to carrying out the goals of our organization.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN US?

We cannot do our work properly if we do not have a board that fully reflects the rich diversity of DC's many LGBTQ+ communities. If you, or someone you know, shares our mission to collect, preserve, and promote our varied history, please ask them to contact Cassandra Ake at Cassandra@rainbowhistory.org or Rob Berger at Rob@rainbowhistory.org for more information about joining our Board.

SUPPORT RHP

If you would like to make a donation to RHP, you can do so online [here](#) or send a check to RHP, P.O. Box 73176, Washington DC 20056.

OUR HISTORY

Frustrated by failed attempts to identify archives and sources of information on gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender history in metropolitan Washington DC, Mark Meinke placed a notice in the Washington Blade for community discussion about the problem. On November 4, 2000 Charles Rose, Bruce Pennington, Jose Gutierrez, and James Crutchfield met with Meinke at the CyberStop Cafe, formerly at 1534 17th Street NW. The outcome of the discussions was to create RHP which would work to preserve our community's memories.

OUR WORK

Since our founding 20 years ago, we have assembled a collection of nearly 300 oral histories and hundreds of documents and photographs, many of which are held at the DC History Center. Our main projects include: oral history interviews, walking tours, panel presentations, gathering materials about our history, recognizing our community pioneers, and research assistance.

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RHP's activities are planned and organized by an executive board of directors. Board members are elected for two year terms. Current Board Members are:

Rob Berger, Board Chair

Cassandra Ake, Vice Chair

Richard Haight Corporate Secretary

Jeff Gruber Treasurer

Nathan Avant

Ashley Bamfo

Jeff Donahoe

Delan Ellington

Chuck Goldfarb

Jamal Gordon

Dane Ray

Glenn C Reimer

Bryan Schwartz

Vincent E. Slatt

Robert Michael Vanzant

2020 Annual Report

RHP CELEBRATES OUR *OWN* HISTORY

RHP celebrated our 20th anniversary on November 4, 2020. On December 3, we held a virtual Zoom-based history panel to celebrate. The panel featured RHP founders and early volunteers Mark Meinke, James Crutchfield, Jose Gutierrez, Sharon Doetsch-Kidder, Patsy Lynch, Leti Gomez, and Buddy Sutson. Board members Jamal Gordon and Rob Berger organized the event and Jamal was the panel moderator.

RHP TACKLES MAJOR PROJECTS TO PRESERVE OUR STORIES

In January 2020, RHP launched a major project to **collect and preserve the story of the ClubHouse**, led by RHP Board Member and Howard University History Graduate Student Delan Ellington. As a part of this project, RHP collected 15 audio oral histories and two videotaped oral histories from people associated with the ClubHouse and its amazing story. A generous grant from the BHT Foundation underwrote the costs of collecting the video oral histories and Irene Rojas of Small Wonder Media LLC recorded the videos and produced three short videos that share this amazing story. You can check out the three videos - ClubHouse Trailer [HERE](#). “History: Origins & Location” [HERE](#) and Club Trips” [HERE](#). The ClubHouse, a DC after hours club from 1975-1990 catered mostly to a Black gay and lesbian clientele. It was known internationally for its sound system, had legendary DJ’s and helped introduce house music to DC. The ClubHouse hosted the Children’s Hour and many political events and was an important incubator for AIDS activism. It was the first home for Us Helping Us - an organization offering support to Black men living with HIV/AIDS, and hosted the first AIDS Forum for Black and Third World Gays. In 2021, RHP Board Members Ashley Bamfo and Ellington have formed a committee to continue the important work started by the ClubHouse Project.

In August, RHP received a \$5,000 matching grant from HumanitiesDC (in partnership with the DC Historic Preservation Office) to begin the work of digitizing the **Cheryl Spector film collection**. Spector was a well known fixture at gay and lesbian events where she used her still and video cameras to record meetings, marches, protests, drag king and queen shows, and many other community events. Cheryl’s recordings provide a snapshot of DMV LGBTQ+ life in the 1990s and early 2000s. After Cheryl died in 2007, her collection of photographs and video recordings was donated to RHP. Of the 980 films, over 450 have been digitized and RHP is in the process of creating a highlight reel for public dissemination. This is a massive project that will take several years of work to preserve her collection. This important project is being led by RHP Board Members Nathan Avant, Bryan Schwartz and Vincent Slatt with assistance from Irene Rojas of Small Wonder Media LLC.

RHP CELEBRATES PRIDE

In 2020, the pandemic changed the way the LGBTQ+ community celebrates Pride. In the past RHP participated in or staffed a booth at various Pride events. Because the Capital Pride Parade and Festival, Capital Trans Pride, API Pride, Youth Pride Day, Silver Pride, Black Pride, Leather

Pride and Latinx Pride were cancelled, we had to find other nontraditional ways to connect to the community.

RHP Board Member Delan Ellington made a presentation on the ClubHouse Project on May 21 as a part of Black in Space: A Virtual Black Pride Experience. Delan shared from the RHP collection of ClubHouse photographs and oral history interview recordings as a part of The Liftoff: Welcome to Black in Space.

On June 14, RHP Board Member Rob Berger interviewed RHP Board Member Delan Ellington about what they have learned about the ClubHouse and Delan shared photos from the RHP collection and excerpts of oral history interview recordings. This virtual program was done in partnership with the DC Center.

On June 18, RHP Board member Rob Berger participated in a Washington Blade virtual online Pride Chat on “Reflections of Pride” with Tommy McFly (Host), Nii-Quartelai Quartey (AARP), Rev. Troy Perry (Metropolitan Community Church), and Blossom Brown (Activist). In conjunction with this event, Rob wrote an article that was published in the Blade entitled Remembering the Modest Origins of DC Pride, which can be found [HERE](#).

RHP PROMOTES OUR STORIES

Throughout the year, RHP participates in a variety of events:

On February 8, RHP Board Member Nathan Avant represented RHP at the Historic London Town Maryland LGBTQ+ History Lecture Series. At the event, Dr. Christopher Mielke presented a talk entitled “More than Friends: The Queer Chesapeake in the 18th, 19th, & 20th Centuries.”

On February 20, RHP celebrated Black History Month by participating in *Rayceen Pendarvis Is Living Black History*, an evening of performances, interviews, artwork to celebrate the accomplishments of people of African descent. RHP Board Members Glenn Reimer, Dane Ray, Delan Ellington and Jeff Donahoe represented RHP at this event.

On June 1, RHP partnered with Dr. Eric Cervini, DC Homos, The Washington Blade, Solid State Books and Rayceen Pendarvis for an online virtual program on Cervini’s new book about Frank Kameny, entitled *The Deviant’s War: The Homosexual vs. The United States of America*.

On September 26, Board members Dane Ray and Delan Ellington moderated an online history panel entitled Queer Womxn Creating Spaces. This multi-generational panel of queer femme / women identifying people discussed what it means to be a queer womxn-identified organizer of color. The panel featured Kimberly Bush, Sian Lewis, Jordyn Marie, Papaya Mann and Emilia Talirico.

RHP celebrated LGBTQA+ History Month in October by sending four weekly emails to the RHP email list. The emails shared information about our eight walking tours, the ClubHouse Project, five online exhibits on our website and an online program on the Gay Liberation Front DC presented by RHP supporter and member Brian Miller. The same information was shared on our social media accounts.

In December 2020, RHP board member Jeff Donahoe was a panelist on Out and About Online, and provided a historical context for the discussion from three artists about dance in D.C. as a cultural, social, and activist event. Out and About was presented by Matthew Combie Presents with the support of HumanitiesDC.

RHP provided letters of support and pledged additional assistance and use of the RHP collection to two LGBT-focused documentary films that were awarded grant funds by HumanitiesDC. Wayson Jones, Christopher Prince, Michelle Parkerson, Gregory Adams and Pamela Jafari are making a documentary about the ENIK Alley Coffee House, the poets, musicians, actors, visual artists and political activists who used the coffee house as a performance and meeting space, and the resulting Black LGBT Renaissance. Filmmaker Robin Hamilton is making a film about Odessa Madre. Entitled Odessa's Reign, the film tells the story of Madre, a notorious numbers runner, a prominent figure in the mob, and secretly a lesbian.

Annie's Paramount Steak House was nominated for landmark status by the DC Preservation League and RHP was proud to submit a letter of support. RHP has heard and collected many stories about the critical and singular role Annie's served as a safe and welcoming gathering space, especially during the 1950s through the 1970s, when most gays and lesbians concealed their sexual orientation to avoid discrimination, termination from employment, harassment and violence.

RHP HONORS OUR COMMUNITY PIONEERS

In 2020, RHP began planning the next Community Pioneers event under the leadership of RHP Board Members Glenn Reimer, Chuck Goldfarb and Jeff Donahoe. RHP established the Community Pioneer Award in 2003 to recognize people whose contributions to LGBTQ communities of greater metropolitan Washington DC merited special commendation. As Event Chair, Glenn has lead event planning efforts and laid the groundwork for the event in challenging times and ever changing circumstances, including planning for location, logistics and production. Chuck and Jeff have led efforts to identify potential honorees and collect their stories. We hope we can gather virtually in 2021 to thank those who have helped establish important institutions or made significant contributions to the overall lives of the District's LGBTQ residents. Stay tuned for details.

RHP PRESERVES OUR PHOTOS AND RECORDS

The pandemic has made it a challenging year for our partner and the home of the majority of the RHP collection, the DC History Center. The DC History Center closed in early 2020 due to the

pandemic, reopened in September, and then closed again in November. We are hopeful that in-person access to the RHP collection will be possible soon.

The following new collections were donated to RHP in 2020: Leti Gomez donated a variety of framed documents and certificates related to Aundrea Scott and the ClubHouse, and Daniel Emberley donated a variety of materials, including documents related to the Triangle Artist Group and the National Academy of Sciences employee LGBT group.

RHP COLLECTS OUR ORAL HISTORIES

The COVID-19 pandemic required a shift in how RHP collects its oral histories, which are usually taken in people's homes or in public spaces. After some assessment, we decided that video communications technology, specifically Zoom, is an acceptable alternative to in-person story collection. In 2020, under the leadership of RHP Board Member Jeff Donahoe and oral history volunteer Bob Dardano, RHP volunteers collected about a dozen new oral histories in topics including D.C. politics, arts, activism, social clubs, and the 1977 Cinema Follies fire.

RHP CONNECTS THE COMMUNITY WITH WALKING TOURS

RHP was unable to offer in person walking tours for most of 2020. In February, Jeff Donahoe was able to give the Dupont Circle tour to Georgetown University students in a special D.C.-intensive learning experience. A Suffolk University tour that had been scheduled for March had to be cancelled. The "live" tours remain suspended.

In lieu of in person tours, we offered several virtual online tours. On July 16, former RHP Chair Philip Clark led a Capitol Hill walking tour in conjunction with Pride Outside and the National Park Service LGBTQ employee group. Board Member Rob Berger led two virtual Walt Whitman tours on September 14 and 20, as a part of the annual WalkingTown DC events. On October 16, Board Member Rob Berger presented a virtual version of the same Walt Whitman walking tour the the DC Center Aging Group. On November 14, RHP Board members Cassandra Ake and Ashley Bamfo led a virtual Women's Tour for Center Women with the DC Center.

RHP RAISES FUNDS TO PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

While it feels like I say this every year, 2020 was a groundbreaking year for [Rainbow History Project](#)'s (RHP) fundraising team! The committee did not meet regularly as in previous years, but we exceeded our fundraising goals thanks to a successful matching campaign sponsored by an anonymous donor, a significant donation from Darrell Totman, and a grant from HumanitiesDC.

This year's annual appeals, assembled and mailed by the committee in June and December, drew in over \$4,500 in individual donations. In October, RHP worked with an anonymous donor to assemble a matching gift campaign that resulted in a generous \$5,000 gift to support RHP's operations. In November, RHP was contacted by Darrell Totman who made a generous and historic donation. The board of directors is currently planning how best use these donations.

In May, RHP applied for, and later received, a \$5,000 grant from HumanitiesDC to support the preservation of the Cheryl Spector collection. While we were unable to host an in person launch event to publicize our work on the collection, Board member Nathan Avant and Irene Rojas of Small Wonder Media LLC digitized over 450 videotapes in the 980 tape collection and purchased several pieces of technology to help streamline the digitization of future collections. It may go without saying, but this work was a remarkable achievement during a global pandemic.

In 2021, the fundraising committee will continue to manage the annual appeal process, investigate new grant opportunities, and work to create a centralized database of RHP donors for more targeted outreach.

While the committee is pleased with the progress that it has made over the last two years, there is much to do! If you are interested in assisting with grant applications and/or other fundraising related duties, please contact Bryan Schwartz (bcschwartz9@gmail.com). Finally, and if you are able, please consider making a tax deductible (TIN 31-1777636) donation to RHP on our website (www.rainbowhistory.org) or by mailing a check to: Rainbow History Project, P.O. Box 73176, Washington, D.C. 20056. 100% of your donation will support our efforts to preserve the DC area's LGBTQ+ history and culture.

RHP IS IN THE NEWS

In February RHP assisted Esther Ciammachilli, a reporter at WAMU (NPR) who was doing a story on D.C.'s queer and drag history and evolution, by connecting her to community members to interview.

The RHP ClubHouse project was featured in the March issue of Community Life Newsletter.

In October, Board Member Ashley Bamfo was interviewed by Krylios of Team Rayceen about RHP and her new board service. You can check out a video of Ashley's interview [HERE](#).

RHP's five online exhibits were featured in a November email sent to all DC History Center members.

RHP ADDS A NEW OFFICER AND A NEW BOARD MEMBER

In March, RHP amended our bylaws to add a Vice Chair position and on June 3, RHP held our first ever virtual Annual Membership Meeting. In June, Board Member Cassandra Ake was elected to serve as the first RHP Vice Chair and Board Members Rob Berger, Richard Haight and Jeff Gruber were re-elected as Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

In August Ashley Bamfo joined the RHP Board. Ashley had previously been a volunteer for the ClubHouse Project.

In 2020, RHP began a concerted effort to add additional female board members. At each 2020 board meeting we discussed steps we could take and Board Members Cassandra Ake and Glenn

Reimer led the research and outreach efforts. As a part of this effort, we reached out to former female board members and volunteers to try and identify institutional barriers and best practices. While the pandemic has made our efforts more challenging, we will not be deterred and plan to continue our efforts in 2021.

RHP also made a couple operational improvements. To deal with the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we obtained a Zoom account to use for future public events and board meetings. We purchased a new small display banner for events and a carrying bag for our large retractable RHP banner. We also reorganized our storage facility and offered framed photographs of individuals we had previously recognized as Community Pioneers to those Pioneers as a gift.

RHP ASSISTS RESEARCHERS

RHP continued to help researchers find sources both within the RHP collection and outside the collection. We also gave several people and organizations permission to use photos for which we hold the intellectual property rights. Our assistance included helping a Holocaust scholar, several authors writing LGBT history-related books, numerous high school and college students, the DC Historic Preservation Office and many individual researchers.



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Check Out Our Social Media Presence

RHP on Flickr [here.](#)

RHP on FaceBook [here.](#)