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

RAINBOWHISTORY.ORG



2021 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 us at info@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 in 2000, 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

Glenn Reimer, Vice Chair

Vacant, Corporate Secretary

Jeff Gruber, Treasurer

Tanja Aho

Nathan Avant

Ashley Bamfo

Jeff Donahoe

Delan Ellington

Chuck Goldfarb

Jamal Gordon

Richard Haight

Dane Ray

Bryan Schwartz

Vincent E. Slatt

Robert Michael Vanzant

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RHP TACKLES MAJOR PROJECTS TO PRESERVE OUR STORIES

On December 9, thirteen new **Community Pioneers** were honored by RHP for their diverse contributions to the Washington-area LGBTQ+ community. You can find a recording of the event [HERE](#). The 2021 Community Pioneers are:

- Arlington Gay and Lesbian Alliance, which since its 1981 founding has addressed equal rights issues for LGBT Virginians from a state and local perspective;
- Eboné F. Bell, founder and editor-in-chief of Tagg Magazine and Tagg Communication LLC,
- Bart Forbes, founding member of “Gay Fairfax,” a pioneering television newsmagazine program in Northern Virginia;
- Ellen Kahn, youth and family advocate, former president of Rainbow Families, former director of the Lesbian Services Program at Whitman-Walker Health, and currently senior director of programs and partnerships at the Human Rights Campaign Foundation;
- Theodore Kirkland (deceased), a co-founder of D.C. Black Pride in 1991, member of the Gay Liberation Front and Skyline Faggots, active community health volunteer and advocate;
- Paul Marengo, community leader through LGBT organizations including Reel Affirmations, Cherry Fund, and Pride celebrations for Youth, Latino, Black and Transgender communities,
- David Mariner, executive director, CAMP Rehoboth, and former executive director of the D.C. Center for the LGBT Community;
- Mark Meinke, founder and longtime chair, Rainbow History Project, and co-founder Rainbow Heritage Network, a national organization for the recognition and preservation of sites, history and heritage associated with sexual and gender minorities;
- David Perez, community leader, including former service as chair, Advisory Committee to the Mayor’s Office of LGBTQ Affairs; president, Latino GLBT History Project; and co-chair LGBTQ Task Force, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda;
- Michael “Micci” Sainte-Andress, artist, health educator and advocate and an early leader in bringing African Americans into HIV/AIDS clinical trials;
- Boden Sandstrom, founder and owner of Woman Sound (later City Sound), the first all-woman sound company, which made LGBT rights rallies and the woman’s music scene possible, and her late partner, singer/songwriter Casse Culver; and
- Alan Sharpe, playwright, director and co-founder of the African American Collective Theater in Washington in 1976, which now focuses on LGBT life and culture in the Black community.

The Community Pioneers event would not have occurred without the leadership of RHP Board Members Glenn Reimer, Chuck Goldfarb and Jeff Donahoe. As Event Chair, Glenn led 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 led efforts to identify potential honorees and collect their stories. RHP established the Community Pioneer Award in 2003.

In January 2020, RHP launched a major project to **collect and preserve the story of the ClubHouse**, led by RHP Board Member 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. In 2021, Irene Rojas of Small Wonder Media LLC continued to produce short videos that share this amazing story. You can check out all of the videos - ClubHouse Trailer [HERE](#), “History: Origins & Location” [HERE](#), Club Trips” [HERE](#), “ClubHouse Membership” - [HERE](#). The ClubHouse was 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 formed a committee to continue the important work started by the ClubHouse Project, with a focus on transcribing the oral history interviews.

In 2021, RHP launched a major project to update and upgrade our website led by RHP Board Member Jeff Donahoe. The **RHP website** has reached the end of its natural life and RHP has committed to time and financial resources to a complete re-think, re-build, and hosting of its website and formed a committee to work on the project. RHP created and issued an RFP to about 10 recommended vendors. Currently we have selected a vendor and work is underway.

In 2021, RHP continued our efforts to digitize 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 600 have been digitized. 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 2021, 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 or did not involve a large gathering, as in the past, we had to find other nontraditional ways to connect to the community.

On June 12, RHP premiered a selection of our newly digitized collection of Cheryl Spector videos of Capital Pride events in Washington DC from the years 2000-2006. This YouTube video features historic footage shot by Cheryl Spector at Ms. Capital Pride 2000, the DC Black Pride Picnic 2006, and the Capital Pride Parade 2001 and 2004. You can watch these videos by visiting the RHP YouTube site [HERE](#). Thanks to RHP Board Members Nathan Avant and Vincent Slatt for their efforts.

On June 16, RHP Board Member Rob Berger participated in Pride Month Event with Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton. The event featured a panel discussion entitled “Advancing LGBTQ+ Civil Rights: Celebrating Achievement and What Comes Next.”

On June 28, Former RHP Chair John Olinger spoke at an event at Waterfront Village, a small non-profit organization in the Southwest and Navy Yard neighborhood that serves older adults. John discussed the prominent role that SW and the Navy Yard neighborhood had in DC gay life as part of their Pride month virtual programming.

RHP PROMOTES OUR STORIES

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

In April, the DC History Center website featured a blog post about the ClubHouse written by former RHP Board Chair John Olinger. The post includes information about the story of the ClubHouse and the oral histories and photographs RHP has collected. You can find the post [HERE](#). Also in April, the DC History Center Instagram account featured information about RHP and our Cheryl Spector project. Thanks to RHP Board Members Bryan Schwartz and Nathan Avant for their work.

On June 28, RHP Board Member Rob Berger, was featured on the Team DC Under The Bleachers Podcast. Rob talked about RHP and sports-related items in the RHP collection. The RHP episode can be found [HERE](#).

On September 28, RHP and the [Urban Health Media Project](#) sponsored a virtual preview screening of the award-winning documentary CURED, which highlights a pivotal but little-known moment in LGBTQ history when activists rose up to challenge a formidable institution — and won! The event included a virtual panel discussion, moderated by Heidi Ellis of HME Consulting & Advocacy, and featuring DC-based Co-Director Patrick Sammon, Eva Freund, Dr. Stuart Sotsky, and Dr. Rose B. Shelton. Thanks to RHP Board Member Bryan Schwartz and Ellis for organizing this event.

On October 27, RHP Board Member Robert Michael Vanzant participated in a virtual LGBTQ history program for queer teens and their allies for the PG County Memorial Library. You can find a recording of the program [HERE](#).

In November, RHP Board Member Jamal Gordon moderated a panel on importance of learning LGBTQ history. You can watch the event recording [HERE](#).

On October 28, RHP Board Member Jeff Donahoe participated in a virtual panel discussion organized by the DC Preservation League. The program featured Dr. Rebecca Graham and a discussion of the DC Office of Planning's Historic Context Statement for Washington's LGBTQ Resources. Completed in 2019, this study explores the history of Washington, DC's LGBTQIA+ community, while highlighting important themes such as: Politics, Law, Activism, Arts, and Health Advocacy.

Two LGBT-focused documentary films that received research and/or in kind support from RHP were released in 2021. Wayson Jones, Christopher Prince, Michelle Parkerson, Gregory Adams and Pamela Jafari created 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. RHP Board Member Delan Ellington appears on-screen in this film as a subject-matter expert on Black queer history. Filmmaker Robin Hamilton made 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.

RHP PRESERVES OUR PHOTOS AND RECORDS

RHP brought in several new collections of material this year--a large amount given pandemic restrictions on gathering, processing, and transfer of collections. These will be made available at the DC History Center in the near future. They include:

- 2021 Community Pioneer Boden Sandstrom has donated materials concerning her late partner Casse Culver and her contributions to the Womens Music Movement.
- 2021 Community Pioneer Alan Sharpe has donated a collection of paperwork, newsletters, magazines and similar that document the experiences of Black people during the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.
- Maryl Kerley has donated a box of materials from the early days of the Gay Women's Alternative.
- Longtime RHP volunteer Brian Miller has donated a copy of his new book "Here because We're Queer: Inside the Gay Liberation Front of Washington, D.C."
- Kurt Vorndran has given us some paperwork from the Capitol Stonewall Democrats' early days in the 1980s (then called the Gertrude Stein Democrats)
- Jerry Wnuck donated several pins with different activists logos and slogans.

Many thanks to our generous donors.

RHP COLLECTS OUR ORAL HISTORIES

In 2021, under the leadership of RHP Board Member Jeff Donahoe and oral history volunteer Bob Dardano, RHP volunteers added 33 new oral histories to the collection, including four that were collected from 2021 Community Pioneers. The Pioneers work gave us the opportunity to

update the oral histories of more than 10 existing narrators for a total of more than 40 new or updated oral histories. Additionally, six new volunteers joined as interviewers in 2021 and we fulfilled seven requests to use oral history sound files.

On the oral history archiving side, new volunteer Delaney Resweber gave many hours to work with Jeff to figure out how to organize sound files to the RHP Google drive, standardize naming conventions, and inventory narrator records to find those that were missing information. Delaney also began a strategy to revise the spread sheet of oral histories to make the tags more consistent tags to make search easier and more accurate.

RHP CONNECTS THE COMMUNITY WITH WALKING TOURS

RHP was unable to offer in person walking tours for much of 2021. RHP Board Member Jeff Donahoe led the historic LGBT Dupont Circle tour five times, each time for undergraduate college students. There were two tours for summer fellows at the Victory Fund, which is dedicated to increasing the number of openly LGBTQ elected officials. Students and the faculty director in the Georgetown University CALL (D.C.-intensive) program twice toured Dupont as part of their coursework. Students in a special Georgetown new student orientation program for students with interests in social justice also toured. The Victory Fund and the Georgetown orientation programs were new connections; the CALL program was a repeat from 2020. In all, RHP reached about 75 students.

On June 22, RHP Board Member Rob Berger led a virtual Walt Whitman and Washington DC tour. Whitman lived and worked in DC from 1863-1873.

RHP RAISES FUNDS TO PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

RHP once again exceeded its fundraising goals this year thanks to the contributions from the general public and its board of directors.

This year's annual appeals, assembled and mailed in May and December, drew in over \$5,500 in individual donations.

In July, RHP applied for, but did not receive, a grant from HumanitiesDC to support the Community Pioneers award ceremony. RHP will continue to apply for HumanitiesDC grants in 2022 and explore additional grant opportunities including a particularly compelling opportunity that would focus on the preservation of the history of Maryland's LGBTQ+ history.

In 2022, the fundraising committee will continue to manage the annual appeal process, revise the giving page on the RHP website, and follow up with some of RHP's consistent donors to learn more about why they give to our organization.

While the fundraising team is pleased with the progress that it has made this year, there is still much to do! If you are interested in assisting with grant applications and/or other fundraising related activities, 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 DMV area's LGBTQ+ history and

RHP ADDS A NEW BOARD MEMBER AND CONTINUES DIVERSITY EFFORTS

On March 23, RHP held a virtual Annual Membership Meeting. At the April RHP Board Meeting, Board Member Glenn Reimer was elected Vice Chair and Rob Berger and Jeff Gruber were re-elected as Chair and Treasurer. In May, Tanja Aho joined the RHP Board.

In 2020, RHP began a concerted effort to add female board members. At each 2021 board meeting we discussed steps we could take and Board Members Vincent Slatt, Tanja Aho, Cassandra Ake and Glenn Reimer led efforts. In 2021, we expanded our efforts and sought to also add trans, non-binary and women-identified board members

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 WETA-PBS for a May program on DC drag history, 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.](#)