



## FOR MEDIA RELEASE

### ***Announcing Pickets, Protests, and Parades: The History of Gay Pride in Washington***

#### **Rainbow History Project's WorldPride Exhibition**

**May 19-July 6, 2025**

On May 19th, the Rainbow History Project (RHP) will open its exhibition *Pickets, Protests, and Parades: The History of Gay Pride in Washington*. Located at Freedom Plaza (14th Street NW & Pennsylvania Avenue NW), the exhibition chronicles the local LGBTQ+ Pride movement and how the pickets and protests of the 1960s led to the vibrant celebrations of the 2020s. The exhibition will run through Pride Month and close on July 6th, 2025.





RHP is an all-volunteer run 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to collect, preserve, and promote the history and culture of the diverse LGBTQ communities in the metropolitan Washington, DC area. 2025 marks 25 years of RHP's work, and on April 17th at 4:15 pm, RHP will kick off our celebration with a reenactment of the first gay rights protest at the White House--the Picket for Homosexual Rights--[held on April 17, 1965](#). This 60th anniversary celebration will mark just over one month until the opening of RHP's exhibition *Pickets, Protests, and Parades: The History of Gay Pride in Washington, DC*.

The exhibition disrupts the popularly held belief that the LGBTQ+ Rights Movement began with the Stonewall Riots in 1969 New York. While this pushback to police violence was vital, DC's LGBTQ+ history of resistance actually predates the Stonewall Riots. RHP recognizes this picket, four years before the Stonewall Riots, where 10 members of the [Mattachine Society of Washington](#) marched with signs in front of the White House--as the start of DC's rich queer history.

From 1965 to the present day, the exhibition divides DC's LGBTQ+ into ten eras that are explored in a visual timeline wall along Pennsylvania Avenue. Alongside the timeline wall are ten large cubes with archival photos of pickets, protests, and parades, as well as portraits of Community Pioneers who championed each era called the Hero Cubes. The exhibits will premiere on Monday, May 19th, officially opening the exhibition to the [over 3 million people](#) expected to travel to DC for WorldPride.

Exhibit Curator (and former Director of Archiving) Vincent Slatt (he/him) has been involved in RHP since 2012, when he sought out a group to connect to the community and our history that had not been taught in school. *"What this exhibit signifies,"* Slatt said, *"is that I am not starting a new battle. I'm not newly under attack. This is 60 years of my community fighting back and winning more than we lose."*



The exhibition will also host over 50 days of first amendment activities at Freedom Plaza, situated directly between the White House and Capitol Building, including docent-led exhibit tours, a celebration on Mattachine Society founder [Frank Kameny's](#) 100th birthday, Black Pride, Latinx Pride, Trans Pride, queer-affirming religious events, and more. More events will be announced in the



coming days at [rainbowhistory.org/events](https://rainbowhistory.org/events), and RHP is looking for potential partnership activities to host in this 18-acre space.

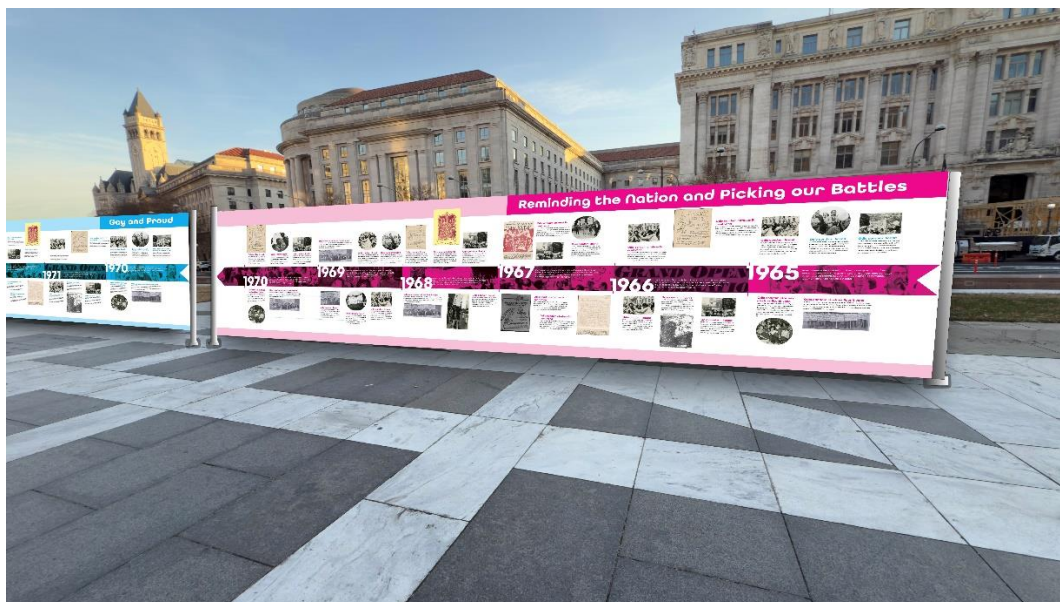
Since 2023, RHP's research team--led by Slatt and Assistant Curator and Image Coordinator Colette Combs (she/her)--has been working diligently on this Project. This Project began by revisiting RHP's online exhibition *PRIDE: Party or Protest?*, digging into the concept that Pride is over 30 years old yet the LGBTQ+ community is still working to write the story of Pride. This exhibition is the culmination of 25 years of RHP's work and is the largest in RHP's history.

As volunteer Monika F. (she/her) said, *"this project started as a celebration and recognition of DC and nationwide gay rights pioneers. In the current environment, as the progress we've made and the very existence of some of our community members is under attack, it is also a protest--we're still here, and we're not going anywhere."*

Slatt, Combs, and volunteers worked for the past two years, exploring RHP's physical collection of documents, manuscripts and photographs has its home at the [DC History Center](https://dchistorycenter.org/) as well as archives from across the United States, reaching out to Community Pioneers, and forging connections within the community. As fellow volunteer Karen (she/her) said, *"research for this exhibit has been beyond inspiring to me. To see the ways our community has resisted and celebrated our existence despite the many hardships and attempts to silence us is a reminder that we are one moment in a long, shared history of queer joy and queer liberation."*

Given the diverse history, the exhibition can only capture a small selection of the histories RHP has uncovered, but readers can delve deeper into each era in the series of [op-ed pieces](#) that RHP published in the *Washington Blade*, a DC-based LGBTQ+ publication.

All volunteers who have contributed to the exhibition, alongside information about RHP and the sponsors who made this exhibition possible, in a meetup area located east of the cubes--a flexible engagement space.





This exhibition has been funded thus far by community organizations and individuals, opposed to traditional funding for Pride initiatives seeking funds from



corporations. RHP is looking to raise an additional \$20,000 to ensure sustainability for the organization for years to come. Donations are being accepted online at [rainbowhistory.org/donate/](https://rainbowhistory.org/donate/). Sponsorship opportunities are available, to learn more, email Board Secretary, Alex Fraioli at [info@rainbowhistory.org](mailto:info@rainbowhistory.org).

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### **About the Rainbow History Project**

When it was announced that Washington, DC would be hosting WorldPride, RHP recognized the opportunity to celebrate our 25th anniversary and share the histories of Washington, DC's LGBTQ+ communities with visitors from around the world. Rainbow History Project's physical collection of documents, manuscripts and photographs has its home at the [DC History Center](#). Our [online archives](#) contain more than 1,400 searchable items. We continually collect materials, information and stories that reflect the diversity of the D.C.-area LGBTQ community.



Rainbow History Project has several ongoing programs, including: archiving historical materials, collecting oral histories, giving walking tours, creating K-12 curriculums, offering public presentations, providing research assistance, and recognizing Community Pioneers. The latter is part of an award program honoring the legacies of trailblazers who have advanced LGBTQ+ rights and visibility in the nation's capital.

At 250,000 pages and counting, the Rainbow History Project is the most accessed collection based out of the DC History Center and continues to grow each year. This partnership ensures the rich history of the LGBTQ+ community is available to researchers within the context of greater DC history. 10 new archival collections were donated to the Rainbow History Project (and made available to the public) in honor of the exhibit.