



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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RAINBOW HISTORY PROJECT TO REENACT FIRST NATIONAL GAY RIGHTS PICKET

LGBTQ History Non-profit will reenact the historic 1965 White House picket on its 60th anniversary in honor of RHP's 25 years, Pride's 60 years, and RHP's upcoming exhibit for World Pride.

On April 17, 1965, the Mattachine Society of Washington (MSW) held the nation's first organized gay rights picket at the White House. Led by Dr. Frank Kameny and Dr. Lilli Vincenz, the 10 picketers demanded action on MSW's four major issues: the exclusion of homosexuals from federal employment; the punitive policies of the U.S. Military; blanket denial of security clearances to gay men; and government refusal to meet with the LGBTQ community.

MSW staged several pickets through the summer of 1965 and countless other pickets during the late 1960s. In January 1966, activist and picketer Eva Freund [wrote in](#) *The Homosexual Citizen* that "these groups include[d] housewives, clergymen, business executives, and laborers." She also wrote that the public had "mixed feelings of disbelief and confusion" about the pickets.

"The casual observer was hard-pressed to distinguish the heterosexual from the homosexual picketer," she wrote, adding that these conversations included: "I don't understand – how can homosexuals be learned and intelligent?" and "I always thought you could spot a deviant: now I wonder how many of my friends are homosexuals."

Frank Kameny, Ph.D., was fired by the U.S. Army Map Service in 1957 for being gay, kicking off his life-long battle for LGBTQ rights. He founded the Washington chapter of the Mattachine Society, an early national gay rights organization. Lilli Vincenz, Ph.D., was the first lesbian to join the Mattachine Society of Washington, shortly after she was expelled from the U.S. Army for being gay. The Mattachine Society's efforts in the early 1960s led to the 1965 White House picket and countless other pickets and media campaigns during the late 1960s.

The Rainbow History Project will reenact the historic 1965 White House picket on its 60th anniversary ahead of Frank Kameny's 100th birthday on May 21st. It also marks one month until the opening of our upcoming exhibit on the evolution of Pride and political resistance: [Pickets, Protests, and Parades: The History of Gay Pride in Washington](#). The exhibition will be on Freedom Plaza from May 19 - July 6, 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; this exhibition will be the largest in RHP's history.



The second-annual reenactment will educate community members and the media on the demands of gay and lesbian activists from the early gay rights movement and challenge the traditional notion that the modern gay rights movement began at Stonewall 4 years later. RHP's volunteers will carry replicas of the original protest signs and hand out literature explaining the picket to passersby and tourists.

Protesters will gather in front of the White House at 4 pm and begin the picket at 4:15 pm, mirroring the exact time when the picket 60 years ago began. Participants may learn more and register online at: rainbowhistory.org/events/.

For media inquiries:

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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.