



GLBT
Historical
Society
museum & archives

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Labor of Love: Online Exhibition Explores First Decade of San Francisco Pride, 1970–1980

San Francisco — A new online exhibition by the GLBT Historical Society, with the support of San Francisco Pride, showcases how San Francisco’s LGBTQ community in the 1970s forged the internationally renowned annual celebration that would come to be known as the San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Parade. “Labor of Love: The Birth of San Francisco Pride, 1970–1980” opens on the society’s website at glbthistory.org/labor-of-love on Monday, June 15.

On June 27, 1970, a small group marched down Polk Street, and the following day staged a “gay-in” picnic in Golden Gate Park. Over the course of the decade, Pride became an annual San Francisco event, growing by leaps and bounds. Initially referred to as Christopher Street West — to commemorate the 1969 Stonewall Riot on that street in New York City — and then as Gay Freedom Day, Pride drew some 250,000 participants and spectators in 1980.

“Labor of Love” revisits the first ten years of San Francisco Pride using historic photographs, ephemera, artifacts, and film and sound recordings from the archives of the GLBT Historical Society and from community members. The exhibition explores the goals, the controversies, the hard work, the desires and the sometimes-competing spirits of struggle and celebration that laid the foundation for one of the city’s best-known public festivals.

The exhibition is co-curated by Gerard Koskovich, a public historian and rare book dealer; Don Romesburg, professor of gender and women’s studies at Sonoma State University; and Amy Sueyoshi, dean of the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. They emphasize that Pride has traditionally deployed both frivolity and protest to promote a positive cultural shift in how society views LGBTQ people.

The exhibition is organized around four themes. “Why Pride?” considers how organizers and community members explained the purpose of the annual gathering. “The Work of Pride” explores the ever-increasing commitment to planning, fundraising, volunteer support and governance that the event required. “Pride Fights” grapples with the debates over what Pride should be, who should be included, who should make the decisions and how they should

be made. Finally, “Big Gay Family” highlights how the creation of San Francisco Pride brought diverse people into a collective, yet often contested kinship.

The interactive final section of the show, “Pride: From Past to Future,” invites visitors to reflect on the history, then look ahead by submitting their responses to two questions: “How will the future of Pride be shaped? How should it be shaped?” The answers will be posted in the online gallery to spark an ongoing dialog about the heritage of Pride.

“Labor of Love” opens Monday, June 15 on the GLBT Historical Society’s website at glbthistory.org/labor-of-love. The exhibition will also be installed as a physical exhibition at the GLBT Historical Society Museum at 4127 18th Street in San Francisco’s Castro district at a future date.

For more information, visit the GLBT Historical Society website at www.glbthistory.org.

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About the Curators

Gerard Koskovich is a San Francisco historian, curator and rare book dealer. A founding member of the GLBT Historical Society, he has been active in the movement to create LGBTQ archives and museums for nearly four decades and has curated numerous exhibitions. Koskovich has presented widely, including talks at the Ecole du Louvre, Kyoto University and Oxford University, and has published extensively in English and French. Most recently he has focused on the work of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935); the history of queer history in the United States; and LGBTQ place-based history.

Don Romesburg is professor of women's and gender studies at Sonoma State University and a co-founder of the GLBT Historical Society Museum. He is editor of the *Routledge History of Queer America* (2018) and has published queer takes on public history, histories of adolescence, sex work, transracial adoption, and queer and trans performers. He was the lead scholar working to bring LGBTQ content into California's K–12 History-Social Science Framework and textbooks and now trains educators on implementation. For these efforts, he is the namesake of the Committee on LGBT History’s Don Romesburg Prize for K–12 Curriculum.

Amy Sueyoshi is dean of the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State University. A historian by training, her research lies at the intersection of Asian American studies and sexuality studies. She has authored two books: *Queer Compulsions: Race, Nation, and Sexuality in the Affairs of Yone Noguchi* (2012) and *Discriminating Sex: White Leisure and the Making of the American “Oriental”* (2018). Sueyoshi is a founding co-curator of the GLBT Historical Society Museum and served as co-chair of the inaugural Queer History Conference 2019 hosted by the Committee on LGBT History and the GLBT Historical Society.

Statements From the Curators

Gerard Koskovich: “San Francisco Pride today can seem like a timeless feature of the city’s cultural and political landscape — both a massive celebration and a major institution. By bringing into focus the first decade of what was then called Gay Freedom Day, the exhibition suggests that nothing about the parade is inevitable. LGBTQ people have shaped and reshaped the gathering through debate and struggle, through love and passion, and through a very queer desire to hold a protest and throw a party all at the same time. The early years remind us that it’s up to LGBTQ people to determine the direction of our annual march. And at the end of ‘Labor of Love,’ we invite visitors to post their own ideas on that very topic: Given the history, where should Pride go in its next half-century?”

Don Romesburg: “Across the 1970s, diverse people coalesced through San Francisco Gay Freedom Day into what would later become known as the LGBTQ community. ‘Labor of Love’ shows how the parade sought to gather everyone, even as real political, cultural, racial, gendered, sexual and economic differences frustrated efforts at unity and solidarity. That frictional heat fused us together. It also lit burning desires anew to stake out our differences. The annual reunion of one big gay dysfunctional family made space for us to celebrate, as the 1976 theme would attest: ‘Our Diversity Is Our Strength.’”

Amy Sueyoshi: “I was surprised to see how much turmoil and tumult was involved in organizing what we know now as Pride during its first decade of existence. I felt strangely comforted and inspired by the drama. Often we think difficulties we face in organizing are specific to the moment that we’re in, when in fact leading a queer organization such as Pride might inherently and unavoidably be contentious and fiery. This then requires us to look beyond our individual suffering particularly in community organizing and to be even braver and more committed to the larger cause.”

Interviews & Media Tours With the Curators

The curators are available for phone interviews about the exhibition and will provide private media tours on an as-available basis. Send requests via media contact Mark Sawchuk at mark@glbthistory.org.

About the GLBT Historical Society

The GLBT Historical Society is a public history center and archives that collects, preserves, exhibits and makes accessible to the public materials and knowledge to support and promote understanding of LGBTQ history, culture and arts in all their diversity. Founded in 1985, the society maintains one of the world’s largest collections of LGBTQ historical materials. The society’s operations are centered around two sites: the GLBT Historical Society Museum, located since 2011 in the heart of San Francisco’s Castro neighborhood; and the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Research Center, open to researchers in the Mid-Market district. For more information, visit www.glbthistory.org.

Complementary Exhibition

A complementary online exhibition about San Francisco Pride, “50 Years of Pride,” documents and celebrates five decades of Pride in the city. Presented

by the GLBT Historical Society and the San Francisco Arts Commission Galleries (SFAC) with the support of San Francisco Pride, "50 Years of Pride" can be experienced on the GLBT Historical Society's website at glbthistory.org/50-years-of-pride.

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"Christopher Street Liberation Day Gay-In," offset flyer, 1970; Charles Thorpe Papers (1987-02), GLBT Historical Society.

GAY PRIDE

SAN FRANCISCO · JUNE 25, 1972



Christopher Street

SUN, JUNE 25, SAN FRANCISCO *West*

San Francisco Gay Pride program, 1972; Ephemera Collection, GLBT Historical Society.



Third World Gay Caucus contingent, San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade, 1977; photograph by Marie Ueda, Marie Ueda Collection (2006-12), GLBT Historical Society.

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