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News from the



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Historian Marc Stein places
the Stonewall Riots in
context

Rethinking the Stonewall Riots: 'A Turning Point, Not a Starting Point'

Reports in the national media suggest that President Obama soon will declare the site of the 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York City the first national monument to honor LGBTQ history. As the *Washington Post* notes in [a story on May 3](#), the decision involves "singling out a sliver of green space and part of the surrounding Greenwich Village neighborhood as the birthplace of America's modern gay liberation movement."

For historian Marc Stein, this conventional claim about Stonewall both obscures the broader history of the LGBTQ movement and creates confusion about the genuine significance of the riots. A new member of the board of the GLBT Historical Society, Stein is the Jamie and Phyllis

Pasker Professor of History at San Francisco State University and is the author of three books, including *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (Routledge, 2012). In this exclusive interview, he provides an overview of his perspective on Stonewall.

The Stonewall Riots often are described as the beginning of the modern gay rights movement. Does the historical record support this idea?

Absolutely not and it frustrates me whenever I see this claim made, which is quite often! Saying that the modern movement began at Stonewall is just a slightly improved version of the notion that the movement itself began there. What is "modern" supposed to mean in this formulation? If we're thinking internationally, I see late-19th-century Europe as the key time and place. If we're focusing on the United States, there were sporadic organizing efforts in the early 20th century, and then the movement really developed in the 1950s and 1960s. Saying that the modern movement began at Stonewall is a good way for the Stonewall and post-Stonewall generations to congratulate themselves on how far we've come, but it's not a very convincing historical argument.

Was the movement in the 1960s outside of New York already taking on a more militant form that presages gay liberation politics?

Yes, though I think the answer depends on how we define gay liberation politics. I see an upsurge of LGBTQ militancy and sexual radicalism in the mid-1960s, when many U.S. social movements were changing. California historians have pointed to the Cooper's Donuts protest in Los Angeles in 1959, the Compton's Cafeteria Riot in San Francisco in 1966 and the Black Cat demonstrations in Los Angeles in 1967. I've helped document the 1965 Dewey's sit-in and the Annual Reminder demonstrations at Independence Hall from 1965 to 1969 in Philadelphia, along with the rise of *Drum* magazine (1964-1969), which had much more radical sexual politics and much wider circulation than the older homophile magazines. This spring we also marked the 50th anniversary of coordinated Armed Forces Day demonstrations in Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.

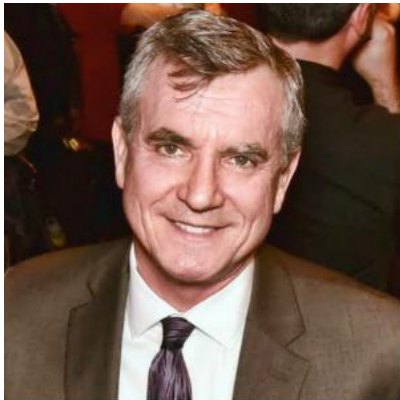
With President Obama likely to declare Stonewall the first LGBTQ national monument, what makes the site of national importance?

I think the Stonewall riots were very important, not as the starting point of the movement but as a series of events that contributed greatly to the mass mobilization and political transformation of the movement. In my work, I describe the riots as a turning point, not a starting point. In the days, weeks, months and years that followed the riots, they became an iconic symbol of LGBTQ resistance and rebellion.

Timing was critical. Six months before the riots, Richard Nixon, who had

campaigns as the law-and-order candidate, was inaugurated as the new U.S. president. Six weeks before the riots, *Drum* magazine was destroyed in an anti-obscenity crackdown by the federal government. And the Stonewall rebellion was triggered by an escalation of local police repression in New York. There were very real fears that political momentum was shifting and the movement's small but significant victories were under threat. All of this helps explain how and why LGBTQ reactions to Stonewall went well beyond the responses that had occurred after earlier episodes of militant LGBTQ resistance. Stonewall the event became Stonewall the symbol in the post-Stonewall era.

From the Executive Director **Securing Our Past While Planning the Future**



by Terry Beswick

The GLBT Historical Society achieved a major goal this month with the recent move of our treasured archives to a new and expanded space in the mid-Market neighborhood of San Francisco.

So many people contributed time, energy and resources to make this move possible.

In particular, I want to give a big shout-out to a few unsung heroes who made it possible: outgoing board member and archives working group chair Al Bersch, board cochair Brian Turner, managing archivist Joanna Black and move manager Ramon Silvestre. We deeply appreciate their dedication to the cause of protecting LGBTQ history.

The move to the new space at 989 Market St. also was made possible by contributions from the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, the Nonprofit Displacement Mitigation Program of the Northern California Community Loan Fund, the GLBT Historical Society Board of Directors, the Excelerate Foundation, the Horizons Foundation, and -- most importantly -- 202 individual contributors to our Indiegogo campaign.

Thank you, all! Your support has ushered in a new era for the GLBT Historical Society. We're especially delighted that we finally have room to grow -- and we're committed to using this opportunity to strengthen the diversity of our collections, especially by expanding our documentation of the lives of people of color, women and other groups underrepresented in the archives.

To celebrate, we want to invite all our members and all the donors to our Indiegogo campaign to a special hard-hat preview of the new archives on Saturday, June 11, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Managing archivist Joanna Black will be leading tours at the start of each hour. If you're a member or a donor, reserve your place by [clicking here](#) (access code: GLBTHistory).

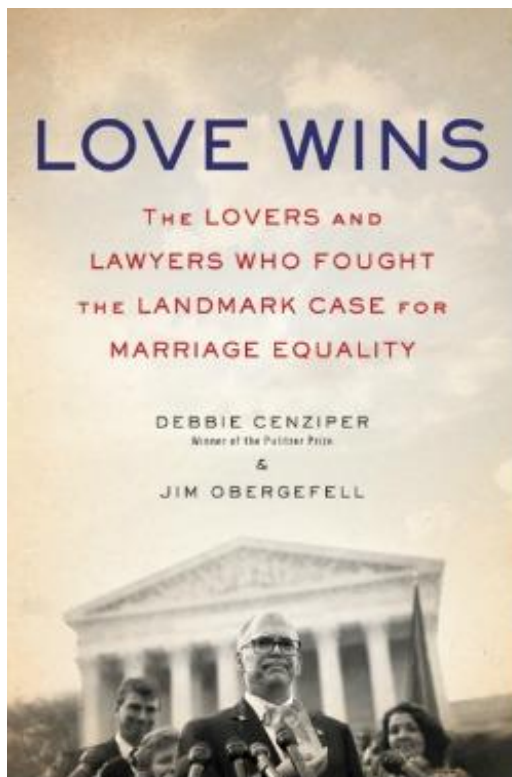
If you can't make it to the preview, don't worry. We'll soon be settled in to the new archives space. The reading room will be open by appointment to researchers and other visitors in three or four weeks.

Watch your e-mail for another special announcement later this month. We plan to share our vision for an exciting new long-term project that will fully showcase LGBTQ history and culture in San Francisco for generations to come. As with the archives move, your support will be one of the keys to its success.

Happy Pride, everyone!

Special Program

Meet the Man Who Won Marriage Equality



On the evening of June 21, the GLBT History Museum will present Jim Obergefell, lead plaintiff in the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court case that established marriage equality in all 50 states, in conversation with Shannon Minter, a lawyer for the [National Center for Lesbian Rights](#) who was a leading advocate during the legal struggle for marriage rights.

One year after the victory, Obergefell and Debbie Cenziper have published *Love Wins: The Lovers and Lawyers Who Fought the Landmark Case for Marriage Equality* (William Morrow). The book recounts Obergefell's efforts to make the State of Ohio recognize his marriage to his

late husband, John Arthur, after the state insisted on listing Arthur as "single" on his death certificate. The lawsuit Obergefell filed in response led to victory in the nation's highest court for same-sex marriage.

A VIP reception from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. will be hosted by [Equality Wines](#),

which will serve "The Decision," a pinot noir, and "Love Wins," a sparkling wine created as a tribute to Obergefell and his late husband. From 7:00 to 8:30 p.m., Obergefell will discuss the lawsuit in conversation with Minter. A book-signing will follow from 8:30 to 9:00 p.m.

The event will take place at the GLBT History Museum at 4127 18th St. in San Francisco. Admission to the VIP reception is \$100. General admission for the book discussion and signing is \$20. All proceeds benefit the GLBT Historical Society. To purchase tickets, [click here](#).

Upcoming Events

Film Screening

Queering the Castro: Queer Historical Film Mixtape



Thursday, June 2

7:00 - 9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

Free | Donations welcome

For this month's presentation in the [RADAR Productions](#) "Queering the Castro" series, local filmmakers Celeste Chan and Irina

Contreras have joined forces to create a queer film mixtape from historic raw footage found in the archives of the GLBT Historical Society. After spending months unearthing the memory of queer life in moving images, Chan and Contreras have pieced together an extraordinary short film that traverses bars, protests, street life, activism and the underground world of queer culture. Join the Facebook conversation [here](#).

Film Screening

Mighty Reels: Pride in the 1970s



Friday, June 10

7:00 - 8:30 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

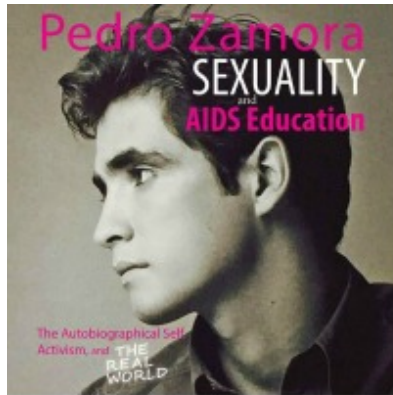
\$5.00 | Free for members

In celebration of Pride Month, media preservationist John Raines devotes his ongoing "Mighty Reels" series to a look back at Pride in the 1970s. Beginning with amateur video of the 1973 San

Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade and festival -- a casual party in the park -- the program surveys annual marches in the city through 1981. Harvey Milk appears in some of the reels, both before and after becoming California's first openly gay elected official. Rare film and video drawn from the archives of the GLBT Historical Society include a Super 8 retrospective lensed and introduced by [Lou Perica](#) (1930-1989), a longtime member of San Francisco's gay community. Join the Facebook conversation [here](#).

Author Talk

Pedro Zamora, Sexuality & AIDS Education



Tuesday, June 14

7:00 - 9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5.00 | Free for members

Author Christopher Pullen will discuss his new work, *Pedro Zamora, Sexuality and AIDS Education: The Autobiographical Self,*

Activism and The Real World (Cambria Press). The book details how Pedro Zamora (1972-1994), a gay AIDS activist of Cuban descent, became a worldwide media phenomenon, particularly after his participation in the 1994 season of *The Real World* television series, filmed in San Francisco. The presentation will include a showing of the rarely screened documentary *A Tribute to Pedro Zamora*, offering insight into Zamora's time in the city and his reach to the wider world. Zamora died at age 22, the same year that he appeared on *The Real World*, yet his story continues offering an important contribution to debates about AIDS education for young people and diverse populations. Join the Facebook conversation [here](#).

Frameline Festival

Historical Society Copresents Film Programs



June 19, 21 & 23

Roxie Theatre & Victoria Theatre

San Francisco

Tickets available from Frameline

The GLBT Historical Society is copresenting three programs focused on queer history at Frameline, marking its 40th anniversary this year as the world's oldest and largest LGBTQ

film festival: "[Flashback 1977: Frameline's Founding Year](#)" at the Roxie Theatre on Sunday, June 19, at 6:15 p.m.; "[We've Been Around/This Is](#)

"Me" on Tuesday, June 21, at 7:00 p.m. at the Roxie Theatre; and "Upstairs Inferno" on Thursday, June 23, at 9:30 p.m. at the Victoria Theatre. For more information and to buy tickets, click on the title links above or visit the [Frameline Festival home page](#). In addition, admission to the GLBT History Museum will be free for California students throughout the festival (June 16-26) thanks to a sponsorship by [Wells Fargo](#).

[Pride Sunday](#)

[Free Museum Admission Sponsored by Wells Fargo](#)



Sunday, June 30

Noon - 5:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

Thanks to a generous sponsorship by [Wells Fargo](#), admission to the GLBT History Museum will be free for all visitors on Pride Sunday in San Francisco -- a perfect day to be inspired by the heritage of LGBTQ people. See the

current exhibitions, "Queer Past Becomes Present"; "Feminists to Feministas: Women of Color in Prints and Posters"; and "Dancers We Lost: Honoring Performers Lost to HIV/AIDS." And be sure to visit the museum store for a history-themed t-shirt, tote bag, mug, whistle, magnet or postcard. For more information on the museum, [click here](#).

Visit Us

EXHIBITIONS & PROGRAMS

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St.

San Francisco, CA 94114

(415) 621-1107

www.glbthistorymuseum.org

Monday - Saturday: 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Sunday: Noon - 5:00 PM

ARCHIVES & READING ROOM

The GLBT Historical Society

989 Market St., Lower Level

San Francisco, CA 94103-1708

(415) 777-5455

www.glbthistory.org/archives

Archives closed in June for set-up of new location.

CREDITS: Feature photo courtesy of **Marc Stein**. Photo of Terry Beswick by **Gareth Gooch**. Frameline photo from **Gay USA** (1977), a film directed by Arthur Bressan.

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