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## POLITICS, SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT: SELECTED GAY AND LESBIAN PERIODICALS AND NEWSLETTERS

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This collection of periodicals focuses on newsletters issued by gay and lesbian political and social activist organizations throughout the country and on periodicals devoted to gay and lesbian political and social activist agendas—the "public" face of gay and lesbian activism. In addition, this collection includes serial literature on its "private" face, exploring the challenges and complexities of building gay and lesbian communities inside and outside of a "straight" world, the need for psychological reinforcement through support groups in an effort combat an often hostile environment, and the yearning for spiritual confirmation of one's identity and life choices. Carefully selected for rarity from the thousands of titles in the GLBT Historical Society archives, the collection features more than 200 newsletter and periodical titles totaling nearly 8,000 issues. This product is strong in newsletters from organizations that began their work during the formative years of the gay and lesbian movement. Most of these organizations are now defunct and their newsletters are the only record of their history and contribution to the movement.

**Date Range:** 1947-2004

**Content:** 191,035 images

**Source Library:** Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered (GLBT) Historical Society, San Francisco

### **Detailed Description:**

#### *Our Stories: The Periodical and Newsletter Collection of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society*

Long before *Life* magazine called San Francisco the "gay capital of the world" in 1964, the city was a mecca for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered (GLBT) people. San Francisco had a well-deserved reputation as a "wide-open town" that tolerated sexual and gender nonconformity.<sup>1</sup> In the early twentieth century, as lesbians and gay men were drawn to the city to be with others like themselves, queer gathering places began to emerge,

particularly in neighborhoods frequented by tourists, such as North Beach. Demographic changes wrought by World War II expanded queer life in the city, which was home to many military bases and industries. Lesbians moved to the Bay Area to take advantage of well-paying jobs in wartime industries. Veterans—those who were discharged (both dishonorably and honorably) or who disembarked in San Francisco—stayed and made their homes in the city. Bars catering to gay and lesbian military personnel multiplied. During the McCarthy era, when police and state repression against gays and lesbians in San Francisco increased—as it did across the country—the city’s nascent GLBT communities fought back, both in the bars and through homophile organizations, such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB). Transsexuals, who had moved to San Francisco in the 1950s to seek the services of Dr. Harry Benjamin, one of the leading medical experts on transsexuality, began to organize in the 1960s. In 1966, three years before Stonewall, transgendered residents of the city’s Tenderloin neighborhood responded to police harassment at Compton’s Cafeteria by rioting. This marked the beginnings of a militant transgender movement in San Francisco and helped generate a complex of medical, social, and psychological support services for transgendered people. Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, San Francisco was a center of countercultural activity. Inspired by the student movement, anti-war activism, the Black Freedom movement, the American Indian Movement (AIM), women’s liberationists, Chicano and Asian power activists, the hippies of Haight-Ashbury, and the sexual revolution, gay liberationists and gay pride activists in San Francisco flourished, and the movement for GLBT freedom matured.

*"You Can Help Preserve Lesbian and Gay History!": A Brief History of the GLBT Historical Society*<sup>2</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a burgeoning interest in preserving GLBT history and culture on the part of both community historians and academics. Community-supported institutions, such as queer archives, bookstores, and presses, proliferated across the country. Given San Francisco’s reputation as the "gay capital," and its role as a unique bastion of GLBT culture and politics, it is surprising that no public or private institution systematically documented the Bay Area’s incredibly rich queer history. A group of community historians and activist scholars responded to this lacuna by establishing the San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society (SFBAGL)—permanent archives dedicated to preserving local queer history and making it accessible to the public. The organization, which later changed its name to the GLBT Historical Society, was officially founded in 1985, but it had its roots in a periodicals archive that was created several years earlier. Willie Walker, an archivist who was one of the many founders of the Historical Society, also worked as a nurse on the so-called AIDS ward at San Francisco General Hospital. Like others who witnessed the AIDS epidemic firsthand, Walker was convinced that if no one collected and preserved these records, before long, vital information about the collective past of San Francisco’s queer community—our stories—would be lost forever. In 1982, Willie Walker and Greg Pennington, another founder of the Historical Society, compiled the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Periodical Archives from a number of private collections. The publications in these archives, which also included newsletters, provided an indispensable source of

documentation of GLBT history, culture, and politics. Recognizing the historical importance of these documents, publishers and community members played a role in preserving GLBT history by offering complimentary subscriptions or by donating periodicals and newsletters to the archives. By 1985, the Periodical Archives had over 600 individual titles, 200 of which were published in the Bay Area. The Historical Society's collection of periodicals, newspapers, newsletters, journals, and 'zines has grown today to over 4,000 titles.

The Historical Society maintains one of the largest collections of queer historical materials in the world, and is, perhaps, the preeminent collection of GLBT materials in the United States. In addition to periodicals and newsletters, the collection houses rare books, personal papers, organizational records, oral histories, historic photographs, printed ephemera such as posters, fliers, leaflets, and matchbook covers, artifacts, original artwork, and textiles. Hundreds of researchers use the collection every year, and the Historical Society makes these materials available to the public through exhibits, public programs, and collaborations with other community institutions. The Historical Society's mission is to increase public understanding, appreciation, and affirmation of the histories and cultures of the incredibly diverse queer communities in the Bay Area and beyond. Its GLBT History Museum is the first full-scale, stand-alone museum of its kind in the United States.

### *Documenting Nearly Sixty Years of GLBT Life*

This digital edition of the Historical Society's Periodical and Newsletter Collection replicates the spirit in which the archives were founded. From the beginning, the founders of the Historical Society made every effort to ensure that their holdings reflected the vast diversity of GLBT life. Not surprisingly, the Periodical and Newsletter Collection has exceptionally rich holdings from the San Francisco Bay Area and Northern California. However, the collection also boasts a large selection of important periodicals and newsletters from across the United States and around the world. The collection documents nearly sixty years of queer life in big cities and small towns across the United States, and in Canada, Europe, and Latin America. Over time, the GLBT population fragmented into separate interest groups. As organizations and institutions sprang up to represent nearly all of these groups, journals and newsletters became more specialized. The collection provides a wealth of primary source materials that document the evolution of GLBT identities, pride, and politics; the formation of GLBT communities, professional groups, and support networks; and the ways in which the GLBT community was divided by such issues as race, gender, and class. The collection, which spans from 1947 to 2004, includes rare editions of some of the earliest publications pertaining to GLBT life, as well as substantial runs of newsletters from well-known organizations and popular periodicals.

The Periodical and Newsletter Collection covers a wide variety of topics pertinent to GLBT people. Subjects represented in the collection include: the homophile movement, gay liberation, radical lesbianism, the men's movement, economic and racial justice, civil rights legislation, civil liberties, poverty, urban life, rural life, sexism, sexual politics, electoral politics, domestic violence, interracial relationships, censorship, homophobia and hate crimes, ageism, aging, student activism and GLBT student groups, community building,

GLBT identity, the politics of representation and the media's portrayal of GLBT individuals, bisexuality, transvestism, transsexuality, transgendered lives, the medical profession, AIDS, mental health, disabilities, abortion and abortion rights, education, business, spirituality and religion, gay parenting, raising queer children, support groups, GLBT history, the Gay Games, queer film, GLBT book clubs, science fiction, music, fiction, poetry, art, and photography.

Historians, sociologists, political scientists, and urban anthropologists will make extensive use of these sources. Scholars in GLBT studies, American studies, departments of religion, cultural studies, library and information science, communication studies, journalism, ethnic studies, and women's and gender studies will also find the collection essential to their research. Whether they are writing monographs on a specific topic or syntheses of their major field, scholars in these subject areas will be richly rewarded by the materials in the collection. Moreover, the periodicals and newsletters will provide both graduate and undergraduate students with a myriad of ideas and evidence for their dissertations, masters' theses, or honors theses. Any scholar writing about queer life and culture in the post-war United States needs to consult this collection.

This digital collection comprises two of Primary Source Media's Gay Rights Movement microfilmed periodicals series—*Series 8, Gay and Lesbian Politics and Social Activism: Selected Newsletters and Periodicals from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society* focuses on political and social activism; and, *Series 9, Gay and Lesbian Community, Support, and Spirit: Selected Newsletters and Periodicals from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society* focuses on spirituality, community building, and support groups. Most of the religious and spiritual organizations and support groups represented in the collection have played activist roles, either through ministering to the GLBT community or by advocating for tolerance and equal rights. Moreover, in the publication of this collection, scholars will find ample primary source materials on many separate constituencies, such as homophiles, transgendered people, senior citizens, and rural Californians.

### ***The Homophile Movement***

The collection contains some of the earliest and most significant homophile publications, representing many of the movement's most important organizations. It also includes treasures from the earliest days of queer journalism, such as eight of the nine issues of *Vice Versa: America's Gayest Magazine*, the first lesbian periodical in the United States. Lisa Ben (an anagram of "lesbian"), the Los Angeles secretary who created *Vice Versa* in 1947, chose the name "because in those days our kind of life was considered a vice."<sup>3</sup>

San Francisco's reputation as a gay capital often overshadows the fact that GLBT subcultures and homophile organizations existed in cities across the United States. The collection has substantial runs of newsletters, spanning the 1950s through the 1970s, from national and local chapters of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society, the nation's first lesbian rights organization and gay rights organization, respectively. These newsletters are invaluable resources for compiling regional histories of the homophile movement in the

United States and for examining gay consciousness prior to Stonewall. Local DOB chapters represented in the collection include Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. In addition, the collection has near-complete runs of two journals of lesbian feminism, poetry, literature, and politics issued by DOB: *Focus*, published by the Boston chapter between 1971 and 1983, and the national magazine *Sisters*, published in San Francisco between 1971 and 1975.

In addition to the national *Mattachine Interim Newsletter*, local chapters represented in the collection include Chicago, Denver, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Mattachine Midwest, New York, and Washington, D.C. Additional titles include the *Homosexual Citizen*, a more militant magazine founded in 1966 by Washington Mattachine Society members Frank Kameny and Jack Nichols. Only eighteen issues were produced, and the collection has the first six.

Other important regional publications include Philadelphia's *Homophile Action League Newsletter* (1969-1970) and the Kansas City, Missouri magazine *Phoenix: Midwest Homophile Voice* (1966-1969). The collection also includes the first thirty issues of *Drum*, published between 1964 and 1969. Editor Clark Polak thought of *Drum* as a gay lifestyle magazine: "I envisioned a sort of sophisticated but down-to-earth, magazine for people who dug gay life and Drum's view of the world."<sup>4</sup> Many people embraced *Drum's* vision; circulation quickly climbed to 10,000, the highest figure of any GLBT publication at the time. *Drum* was published in Philadelphia by the Janus Society; the collection includes the first incarnation of the society's newsletter (1963-1967).

The collection includes substantial runs of several newsletters from the Los Angeles-based One Institute, from 1957 to 1995. The One Institute conducted classes, sponsored lectures, operated a counseling center, participated in research projects about homosexuality, and published several influential homophile magazines, including *Homophile Studies*, a journal of reviews, education, philosophy, and history. The collection has a full run of the journal from 1958 to 1964, as well as scattered issues from 1966 and 1970. These publications will be invaluable for scholars interested in documenting the activities of One Institute.

Scholars looking for an international perspective on the homophile movement will find a remarkable selection of early gay publications from Britain, France, Canada, the Netherlands, and Denmark. The collection includes *Arena 3: A Special Monthly Publication for Women*, a British magazine published by the lesbian Minorities Research Group (1964-ca. 1972); selections from *Arcadie*, a literary and scientific review published by the Mouvement Homophile de France from the 1950s through the 1980s; eight issues of *Gay*, a homophile magazine from Toronto (1964); *Vennen* (The friend), a Danish magazine (1954-1969); and *ICSE Newsletter*, published by the Foundation International Committee for Sexual Equality in Amsterdam (1955-1961).

Of course, San Francisco homophile organizations are also well represented in the collection and provide important resources for scholars who want to document an important time of social and political fermentation in the city. The collection includes extensive runs of the *Gold Sheet* and its successor, the *Insider* (1967-1976)—newsletters of the Society for Individual Rights (SIR), which was, at one point, the largest gay rights group in the United States.

The collection contains a rare 1963 issue of the News, an incarnation of one of the first gay papers in San Francisco, and the official publication of the League for Civil Education. The League, formed in 1961 by Guy Strait, was one of the first groups to try to organize a gay voting block in San Francisco.

### *The Gay Liberation Movement*

The primary sources available in the collection reveal that activist agendas were quite fluid in the early days of the GLBT movement. As indicated by the dates of these periodicals and newsletters, militant activism (e.g., envisioning a "gay lifestyle") preceded the rise of gay liberation, while homophile activism was not completely eclipsed by the more radical gay liberationists. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, GLBT political, social, cultural, commercial, and religious institutions proliferated, as did the GLBT press. The Historical Society made a concerted effort to collect and preserve periodicals, newspapers, and newsletters that documented the growth of these institutions. These extraordinary holdings also detail the development of an activist, or movement, press, which advocated for gay rights, reported news of interest to the queer community, published positive representations of queer life, and provided a forum where GLBT people could exchange ideas. Scholars interested in this period will find a gold mine in the materials of the collection, which document a wide range of activity in the gay liberation movement, from fairly moderate tabloids to the more radical publications of the Gay Liberation Front.

The geographical scope of the collection's gay liberation holdings is remarkable, encompassing California and the American Midwest, Vancouver and London, and Philadelphia and New York. Immediately after the Stonewall Riots, a number of queer activists in New York formed the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), a group that embraced revolutionary politics rather than an assimilationist approach. The organization did not last long, but from 1969 to 1971 dozens of independent chapters formed across the nation and around the world. This product includes three GLF magazines—*New York's Come Out!: A Liberation Forum for the Gay Community* (1969-1972); *Gay Flames: A Bulletin of the Homofire Movement* (1970); and London's *Come Together* (1971-1972).

The Committee for Homosexual Freedom, a pre-Stonewall gay liberation group, was a vocal and militant presence in the Bay Area between 1969 and 1972. The collection's holdings include the group's own newsletter, as well as newsletters it issued jointly with the Berkeley Gay Liberation Front (1969-1970). The collection also includes several rare issues of the Bay Area Gay Liberation newsletter (1975 and 1978). Hollywood, California is represented by several publications; there is a near-complete run of the liberationist and socialist paper *Come Out Fighting: The Newspaper of the Lavender & Red Union* (1975-1977) and scattered issues of the *Homosexual Information Center Newsletter* (1972-1996).

Queer students played an important role in the gay liberation movement. The collection includes newsletters from some of the earliest gay student organizations. There are several incarnations of the newsletters produced by the Gay People's Union at Stanford (1974-1977); and, *Homosexuals Intransigent!*, a publication of an early student gay rights organization at the City University of New York (1971-1972).



The collection includes most of the first forty-eight issues of the influential *Detroit Gay Liberator* (1970-1976). Scholars interested in studying the fractious nature of gay liberation politics will find a case study in the collection's holdings. In October 1970, the gay liberation organization in Chicago split into two groups: Chicago Gay Liberation and Chicago Gay Alliance. The collection has five issues of the former's newsletter (1970), and the first sixteen issues of the newsletters published by the latter (1970-1971).

Scholars interested in New York's gay liberation press will find the collection's holdings essential for their research. There are substantial runs of *Gay Activist*, the newsletter of the Gay Activists Alliance in New York (1971-1973, 1977, 1979), and three early gay newspapers: *Gay* (1969-1974), *Gay Power* (1969-1975), and *Gay Scene* (1970-1986). In addition to reporting news, politics, and entertainment of interest to the GLBT community, these newspapers affirmed and celebrated gay men's sexuality by featuring beefcake and homoeroticism. Gay liberationists embraced two fundamental principles articulated by the women's movement: "The personal is political" and "Sexual politics matter." They viewed the validation of their sexual identity as a political act, and the fight for their sexual autonomy as a political struggle.<sup>5</sup> Scholars exploring this topic will be particularly interested in the substantial run of newsletters from the sex-positive organization, the San Francisco Sex Information Center (1973-1996).

#### *Feminism and Lesbian Feminism*

The growth of lesbian feminism in the 1970s also fueled a proliferation of newspapers, magazines, and newsletters. Many important lesbian feminist journals from all across the country are housed in the collection. Holdings from the 1970s through the 1990s include the aforementioned *Sisters*, extensive runs of *The Lesbian Feminist*, the newsletter of Lesbian Feminist Liberation from New York City (1976-1979), *Out and About: Seattle Lesbian Feminist Newsletter* (1976-1985), Los Angeles's monthly, *The Lesbian News* (1976-2004), and the first eighteen issues of *Rundbrief* (later *Spinnboden*), the newsletter from the Citizens of Berlin Lesbian Archives, the largest lesbian collection in German-speaking countries (1982-1992). In addition, the collection includes all six issues of New York's *Dyke* (1975-1978) and San Francisco's *Dykespeak* (1993-1995). These publications are invaluable to scholars who want to document the emergence and evolution of lesbian feminist consciousness, politics, and culture.

The collection has a number of publications from across the country that document feminism in the men's movement, such as Seattle's *Morning Due*, a "journal of men against sexism" (1975-1977), *Berkeley's Brother*, which was both "a male liberation paper" and "a forum for men against sexism" (1971-1975), and *Double-F: A Magazine of Effeminism*, from New York (1972-1976).

The collection has a considerable number of local publications that document women's activism and feminist community building in San Francisco and the East Bay. Although these publications are not specifically queer, they offer evidence of the ways lesbians, bisexual, transgendered, and heterosexual women formed alliances. They are important resources for any scholar researching the history of women or feminism in the Bay Area. *Union W.A.G.E.*

*For Equal Rights, Equal Pay, and Equal Opportunity*, published by Union Women's Alliance to Gain Equality (1972-1980), deals with labor and class politics. So does the newsletter of the socialist-feminist organization, the Berkeley/Oakland Women's Union (1974-1974). Other especially rich resources are the extensive runs of various newsletters from several local women's community centers, the Women's Switchboard and Women's Centers (1974-1979), and its successor, the San Francisco Women's Center and Building (1981-1991). The Women's Building is a multi-cultural institution that gave girls and women the resources they needed to achieve full participation in society.

### *Electoral Politics*

The GLBT communities in San Francisco have a long history of activity in electoral politics. The potential of the queer political constituency—initially realized when Harvey Milk became the first openly gay elected official in San Francisco—can be traced back to the early 1960s and the activities of José Sarria and the League for Civil Education. In 1961, Sarria, a popular drag performer at San Francisco's famous "bohemian" bar, the Black Cat, ran for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and received 5,600 votes. Scholars interested in GLBT participation in electoral politics in San Francisco will find a wealth of material from diverse political affiliations in the collection. These include extensive runs of the publications produced by the Alice B. Toklas Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Democratic Club, the first gay Democratic club in California (1972-2002), as well as newsletters from Log Cabin Republicans (1984-2002) and Libertarians for Gay and Lesbian Concerns (1983-1993).

### *Advocacy Groups and Professional Organizations*

In the 1970s and 1980s, increased political power, economic clout, and visibility led to a proliferation of activist and professional groups that advocated for GLBT rights in the Bay Area. The Historical Society's holdings in this area are extensive. They include runs of newsletters from Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom (1988-1993), Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights (1979-1998), and Communities United Against Violence (1984-1988). One remarkable collection is the near-complete run of newsletters of the American Legion, Alexander Hamilton Post #448 (1985-2003). Formed in San Francisco in 1984, Post 448's predominantly GLBT membership of honorably discharged veterans is recognized nationally for its activism on behalf of all veterans and for its efforts to end discrimination against gays in the military. Another noteworthy holding is a substantial three-year run of the newsletter of PLAGAL, the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians, formerly Gays Against Abortion (1992-1995).

Local professional organizations, such as the Bay Area Network of Gay and Lesbian Educators (BANGLE), the Golden Gate Business Association, and Bay Area Career Women, offered social events for queers; addressed issues and needs specific to the GLBT community; provided mentoring, education and support services; and created networks through which queer people could advance their careers. Scholars interested in the histories of organizations catering to the GLBT community as well as queer people within certain professions will find extraordinary documentation in this collection's newsletters.



### *GLBT Cultural Institutions*

The collection also affords scholars an opportunity to examine primary source materials that document the history of the numerous national and local GLBT cultural institutions that sprung up in the 1970s and 1980s. This publication includes all nine issues of *Gay Olympics*, the newsletter documenting the first-ever Gay Games, which took place in San Francisco in 1982 (November 1981-August 1982). It also features a variety of newsletters and primary source documents pertaining to San Francisco's Frameline, the producers of the oldest and largest LGBT film festival in the world. In addition to its own newsletters, *Our Stories*, the Historical Society has collected the publications of other community-based institutions that preserve GLBT history. A number are included in the collection, such as the Gerber-Hart Library in Chicago, the Midwest's foremost GLBT archive (1990-2002).

### *Community Building in Northern California*

While the geographical breadth of the collection is remarkable, the Historical Society's commitment to preserving local queer history makes it the preeminent repository of GLBT history in Northern California and, consequently, indispensable to scholars doing research on this region. The collection includes numerous locally produced periodicals and newsletters that are dedicated to serving particular geographical communities. There are substantial runs of local publications from San Francisco, the East Bay, the Silicon Valley, San Jose, Sunnyvale, Santa Cruz, Marin County, and Sonoma County. These include early treasures, like San Francisco's *Rip Off Rag* (1976-1979) and the *Marin Women's Newsletter/Journal* (1973-1975), as well as more contemporary publications, like a near-complete run of newsletters from the Billy DeFrank Lesbian and Gay Community Center in San Jose (1983-2002) and San Francisco's *Spectrum* (1998-2003). Queer publications like these were particularly important before the advent of the Internet, especially for GLBT people who lived outside major metropolitan areas. They afforded queer people a sense of local community while keeping them connected to the larger GLBT world. Many of the collection's holdings are publications that enabled queers who lived in more rural areas of Northern California to connect with one another. These include Novato's *Wishing Well* (1978-1986) and the newsletter of the Lesbian and Gay Resource Network of Sonoma County (1982-1984). These primary sources will provide a wealth of materials for scholars interested in studying how GLBT communities developed outside of urban centers.

### *The Transgendered Communities*

The GLBT Historical Society's collection of periodicals and newsletters related to transvestism, transsexuality, and transgender issues is one of the best in the western United States. These publications, which span the 1950s through the 1990s, are essential for any scholar who wants to document the emergence and evolution of trans-identities, trans-services, and trans-communities. This publication includes substantial runs of early publications, such as *Transvestia: Journal of the American Society for Equality in Dress*, and *TV Clipsheet*, which was a compilation of news clippings from the 1960s about cross-dressers and transsexuals. *Transvestia* was created by Virginia Charles Prince, founder of one of the first peer support and advocacy groups for male-to-female transsexuals in

the United States. Issues in the collection date from 1952, and from 1960 to 1969; some consider the early issues to be markers of the beginning of the transgender rights movement in the United States. Both these magazines were produced in Los Angeles, but the collection also includes publications from New York; New England; Toronto; Baton Rouge; Atlanta and Decatur, Georgia; and the Bay Area. There are several journals for female-to-male transsexuals, such as Toronto's *Metamorphosis* (1982-1988) and, all fifty-three issues of *FTM Newsletter* (1987-2003).

### ***Bisexuality***

Scholars interested in bisexuality will find national publications, as well as newsletters from bisexual support groups in San Francisco and Boston in the collection, including the first twenty-two issues of the Bay Area's *Anything that Moves*, a magazine whose mission was to provide as diverse a view as possible of bisexual, transgendered, and "gender fluid" communities (1991-2001), and *BiNet News*, the newsletter of Bisexual Network USA (1996-2000).

### ***African American, Latino, Asian American, and American Indian Communities***

Though people of color are represented in other materials throughout the collection, the archives include a strong selection of periodicals and newsletters produced specifically by and for people of color. These publications were dedicated to building community, combating racism and homophobia, sharing literary work, and instilling pride in their readers by presenting positive representations of GLBT people of color. One example of a publication that promoted coalition building is *Morena: Women of Color Press Empowering Our Communities*, a newspaper from Berkeley for African American, Latino, Asian American, and Native American women (1988-1991). African Americans are represented in the collection by sizeable runs of the local publications: *Aché*, a journal for lesbians of African descent produced in Albany, California (1989-1993); and *Whazzup! Magazine*, a free monthly newspaper produced in Oakland for GLBT African Americans (1996-1998). The collection includes newsletters from Asian/Pacific Islander groups from the Bay Area, Massachusetts, New York, and Toronto. Highlights include substantial runs of *Lavender Godzilla*, the newsletter of the Bay Area's Gay Asian Pacific Alliance for Gay and Bisexual Asian/Pacific Islander Men (1988-2004), *Celebrasian*, Toronto's newsletter for Gay Asians (1983-1995), and San Francisco's *Phoenix Rising: The Asian Pacifica Sisters Newsletter* (1986-1994). Many of the publications produced by the Latino community are bilingual, or in Spanish or Portuguese. The collection includes various newsletters from the Washington, D.C.-based National Latino/a Lesbian and Gay Organization (1994-1997), and the San Francisco-based *Asociación Gay Unida Impactando Latinos A Superase* in San Francisco (2000-2003). It also includes substantial runs of the Brazilian magazine *Nos Por Exemplos* (1992-1995), the Mexican lesbian magazine, *Amantes de la Luna* (1994), and Chicago's *En La Vida: voces de lesbians, gays, bisexuales y transgéneros latinos* (1997-1998).

The Historical Society has an outstanding collection of newsletters from two multiracial, multicultural groups devoted to promoting interracial cooperation, friendship, and understanding. *Black and White Men Together* (later *Men of All Colors Together*) was

founded in San Francisco in 1981 by Michael Smith. While it is a social group, it is also dedicated to fighting racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination. The collection's holdings are substantial. In addition to newsletters from the national organization, there are newsletters from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s from almost all the local chapters, including the San Francisco Bay Area; Atlanta; Baltimore; Cleveland; Washington, D.C.; Detroit; Memphis; Tallahassee and Big Bend, Florida; San Diego; Philadelphia; Austin; Chicago; Dallas; New York; Kansas City; Boston; Connecticut; Indianapolis; Louisville; Milwaukee; Los Angeles; Youngstown; Oakland; and the Research Triangle in North Carolina. In addition, there are significant newsletter collections from the local Bay Area organizations Pacific Friends San Francisco and Pacific Friends, South Bay (1986-1996). Founded in 1984, these organizations promote community service and camaraderie among gay Asians/Pacific Islanders, their partners, and their friends.

### *GLBT Elders*

The collection features a number of publications devoted to more mature members of the queer community. There are newsletters from organizations serving seniors, like San Francisco's New Leaf Services (1984-2003), substantial runs of newsletters from Lavender Seniors of the East Bay (1995-2003) and SAGE - Seniors Active in a Gay Environment (1982-2002). In addition, there are an extensive compilation of newsletters from the Prime Timers, an international organization for gay men over forty. Retired professor Woody Baldwin founded the Prime Timers in 1987 in Boston as a social and cultural organization dedicated to assisting and supporting aging gay and bisexual men. There are over fifty chapters across the world. In addition to Prime Timers Worldwide (based in Manchacha, Texas), the collection includes substantial runs of newsletters from all over the United States and Canada, from the 1980s through today, including chapters in Atlanta; Baltimore/Washington, D.C.; Boston; central Florida; central Oklahoma; Chicago; Colorado; Edmonton; the Gulf Coast; Houston; Las Vegas; New Orleans; New York; Palm Springs; San Diego; San Francisco; Seattle; Shreveport; Tampa Bay; Toronto; the Tri-State Area; Tulsa; Vancouver; Victoria; and Winnipeg. These materials are a potential gold mine for scholars researching the effect of demographic shifts and the aging of the baby boom generation on the GLBT community in North America.

### *Spirituality and Religion*

The breadth and depth of materials pertaining to organized religion in the collection is remarkable and invaluable to researchers studying religious and spiritual practices in the GLBT community. Almost every major religion is represented—Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism—as are most denominations of Christianity, including Catholicism, Lutheranism, Mormonism, the United Methodist Church, evangelical Christianity, Presbyterianism, and the Episcopalian Church. The collection includes substantial runs of various newsletters from the first church with a primary, positive ministry to the GLBT community—Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) San Francisco (1970-1996). Today, MCC has over 43,000 members worldwide. There is a near-complete run of the Jewish *Gaily Forward*, the news magazine from San Francisco's Reform congregation, Sha'ar Zahav.

There are also newsletters from the San Francisco chapters of the Gay Buddhist Fellowship/Fraternity (1992-1999), and Sadhana Brothers, a San Francisco group for gay men pursuing a Hindu/yoga/mystical path (1994-1997).

Most of the religious organizations represented in the collection recognize and affirm their congregants' sexual orientation. Remarkably, however, the collection also includes the newsletters *Regeneration News* (1996-2004) and *Wellspring* (1998-2004), from several ministries that believe that GLBT people can become heterosexual through faith in Jesus Christ.

Also noteworthy is the collection's selection of publications by gay and lesbian atheists. These include fairly complete runs of newsletters from the national and San Francisco chapters of the American Gay & Lesbian Atheists (1989-1995 and 1982-1987, respectively), and the journal *GALA Review*, which was published in conjunction with the Gay Atheist League of America (1978-1985 and 1985-1989).

Researchers interested in alternative religions and spirituality will find plenty of sources in the collection. Highlights include *Faerie Dish Rag*, a magazine from the Radical Faeries (1991-1997), and *Cerunnos News: Wiccan Newsletter for the Bay Area* (1982-1986).

### *Parenthood*

These days, there is nothing extraordinary about the idea of queer people raising children. In fact, there is a veritable baby boom in the GLBT community and a proliferation of resources for GLBT parents. Not so long ago, however, this was not the case. The collection contains newsletters from some of the earliest groups that offered support to, and fought for, the well-being and rights of GLBT parents, prospective parents, and families. There are substantial runs of newsletters from several groups, including two local organizations, San Francisco Bay Area Gay Fathers (formerly Gay Fathers San Francisco Bay Area, 1982-1989) and Berkeley's Lesbian/Gay Parenting Group (1987-1992), the precursor to the San Francisco-based support and civil rights group, Our Family Coalition.

One of the most remarkable holdings in the collection is the extensive selection of national and local newsletters, from the 1980s through the present, of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG), an advocacy, education, and support organization for GLBT people, their families, friends, and allies. Approximately twenty people attended the first formal meeting of PFLAG in New York in 1973. Today, PFLAG is the largest grass roots family organization of its kind, with over 200,000 members, and chapters in nearly 500 communities across the United States and throughout the world. The depth and breadth of the holdings are impressive. In addition to the national newspaper, there are newsletters from local chapters throughout California—Chico, Los Angeles, Marin County, the mid-Peninsula, Mill Valley, Orange County, and San Francisco—and across the United States: Akron; Boston; Chicago; Denver; Houston; New York City; Philadelphia; Phoenix; Rochester, New York; and Washington, D.C.

GLBT people have been ignored, marginalized, and deliberately erased from history by mainstream society. In the words of the founders of the Historical Society, "For generations

our letters have been burned, our names blotted out, our books censored, our love declared unspeakable, our very existence denied."<sup>6</sup> GLBT people recognize that denying and distorting their history facilitates their oppression. Consequently, the founders of the Historical Society have spent the last generation accumulating periodicals and newsletters that document the history and culture of nearly sixty years of queer life in and beyond the Bay Area. They know that history is instrumental in creating a positive sense of queer identity and pride, and in building political movements that can fight for the equal rights they have long been denied because of their sexual orientation. This digital edition of the Historical Society's Periodical and Newsletter Collection will make these primary source materials accessible and will help preserve this history and our stories for countless future generations.

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*Many thanks to Terence Kissack and Ramón Silvestre for their feedback and guidance on this essay.*

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> The term "wide-open town" comes from Nan Alamilla Boyd's excellent monograph, *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). I also drew on Susan Stryker and Jim Van Buskirk's *Gay by the Bay: A History of Queer Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> *San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society Newsletter*, 1:3 (March 1986), 5.

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Ben, quoted in "In Our Own Voices: The Lesbian and Gay Press", in Larry Gross and James D. Woods, eds., *The Columbia Reader on Lesbian and Gay Men in Media, Society, and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 437.

<sup>4</sup> Clark Polak, quoted in *In Our Own Voices*, 439. Kameny and Polak are considered part of the "movement press," and viewed as "missing links" between homophiles and gay liberationists. See *In Our Own Voices*, 439.

<sup>5</sup> Ed Jackson, "Flaunting it! A decade of gay journalism from The Body Politic," *The Columbia Reader*, 463.

<sup>6</sup> *San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society Newsletter*, 1:3 (March 1986), 5.

#### ***Organization and Format***

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society boasts the largest collection of periodicals and organization newsletters that promote the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered people, and ethnic and racial minorities. The policy of GLBT is to locate and preserve periodicals documenting the history, culture, and political and social activism of the gay and lesbian community. This collection represents a wide range of gay, lesbian, bisexual,

and transgender experience and thought. A strength of the collection is the newsletter and periodical collection from Northern California, which boasts the largest concentration of gay and lesbian organizations in the nation. But the collection is also strong in national and international publications as well. Holdings range from historical newsletters of the 1960s to current newsletters and periodicals. The collection is strong in rare materials, especially newsletters from defunct organizations from the formative years of the gay and lesbian movement, even from the 1940s and 1950s.

### *Selection Process*

The selection of materials for the microform edition of *Gay and Lesbian Politics and Social Activism: Selected Periodicals and Newsletters* was based on several criteria:

- **Relevancy:** This collection comprises selected periodicals and newsletters from the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society archive. Selections emphasize the relevance of the material to the history of gay and lesbian political and social activism in America, particularly the pursuit of equal rights. Newspapers were also selected to aid scholars exploring the phenomena of GLBT community building, support networks, and spirituality.
- **Rarity:** Some periodicals and newsletters were excluded because they can be found in many libraries or have appeared in other Primary Source Media publications of gay and lesbian publications. Newsletters devoted primarily to commercial advertisements were not included.
- **Privacy:** Some materials could not be included for reasons of confidentiality. In the interest of protecting the privacy of individuals, a concerted effort was made to exclude newsletters that contained people's home addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers, or personal financial information. Examples of such materials include newsletters devoted primarily to contact club information.