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**World's Original Rainbow Flag Returns to its City of Origin
Created for 1978 Gay Pride Celebration in San Francisco
Was Thought Lost for 40 Years**

4 June 2021 – San Francisco, CA: Surrounded by community leaders, elected officials and other history lovers, **San Francisco Mayor London N. Breed** today officially welcomed back the long-lost original Rainbow Flag to the city that first saw it fly in the 1978 Gay Freedom Day celebration that featured then San Francisco Supervisor **Harvey Milk**. This historic artifact will be added to the permanent collection of the **GLBT Historical Society** and will be on display at the society's museum (www.glbthistory.org) at 4127 18th Street in San Francisco's internationally known Castro District. The flag is the centerpiece of the exhibition entitled "**Performance, Protest and Politics: The Art of Gilbert Baker.**"

"I am thrilled to welcome back this important piece of LGBTQ and San Francisco history to its original home," said **Mayor Breed** in remarks at a ceremony marking the flag's unveiling. "This flag represents so much to people across the world, and they will now be able to visit and see it for

themselves. Our history as a city and a nation is inseparably connected to the LGBTQ movement, and this symbol serves to remind us all of this history.”

In April 2021, the GLBT Historical Society received an archival donation of an extraordinary, unique piece of history, now being publicly unveiled during the Pride season: a fragment of one of the two monumental rainbow flags first raised on June 25, 1978 in San Francisco’s United Nations Plaza at the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade. Displaying the original design’s eight colored stripes, it was created by Gilbert Baker (1951–2017) and hand-stitched and dyed with the help of Lynn Segerblom (Faerie Argyle Rainbow), James McNamara, Glenne McElhinney, Joe Duran and Paul Langlotz and other volunteers and friends. Thought to have been lost for over 40 years, the fragment was recently rediscovered and is the only known surviving remnant of the two inaugural rainbow flags.

“I love that our iconography evolves, as we do as LGBTQ communities coming together under the same queer umbrella. I grew up with the pink triangle and the lambda sign and was happy when the pride flag by Gilbert Baker became popular,” said **Tina Valentin Aguirre, Board Member, GLBT Historical Society**. “Today, I love the Transgender, Nonbinary, Bear, and Progress pride flags. And if I see a Mexican pride flag, I’m in love, because it’s a mash-up and there’s something revolutionary about that. Yay for pride in all guises!”

“Rainbows are of nature, and Gilbert Baker’s creation represents every aspect of our nature: communities of color, the differently abled, all genders and expressions,” said **Terry Beswick, Executive Director of the GLBT**

Historical Society. “Gilbert Baker not only created a symbol of our movement, but that creation has actually pushed our movement forward.”

The GLBT Historical Society 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 nonprofit is recognized internationally as a leader in the field of LGBTQ public history. The Society’s operations are centered at 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 San Francisco’s Mid-Market district.

“San Francisco’s LGBTQ community deserves a world class museum to properly document our history,” **California State Senator Scott Wiener** said. “We owe this to Harvey Milk, Gilbert Baker, Phyllis Lyon, Del Martin, and all the trailblazers that came before us. We’re going to make this museum a reality, and it will be such a benefit to this community. Let’s get it done.”

“I want to thank the people of San Francisco for making this place the home of the rainbow flag,” said **Charley Beal, President of the Gilbert Baker Foundation.** “The flag means something to a lot of people. Its significance is global.”

The Gilbert Baker Foundation (www.gilbertbaker.com) exists to protect and extend the legacy of Gilbert Baker, the creator of the LGBTQ Rainbow Flag, as an activist, artist and educator.

Also present for the unveiling ceremony were GLBT Historical Society Board Chair **Maria Powers** and **San Francisco District 8 Supervisor Rafael Mandelman**. Sponsors for the exhibit are the **Gilbert Baker Foundation**, **ABSOLUT® Vodka**, **Rythm** and **Big Run Studios**.