

History Happens

News from the



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archives & museum



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February 2017

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Filmmaker Leo Herrera in the archives of the GLBT Historical Society

How an Archives Visit Inspired a Filmmaker: "Our History Isn't Just Pride Flags and Discos"

by Leo Herrera

Harvey Milk's suit, delicately wrapped in tissue paper, as blood-stained as one would expect from a man shot five times at close range. "We're going to have to touch it," said my brother, our hearts racing at the sight of the casket-sized archival box. This was San Francisco of 2004, in the archives of the GLBT Historical Society. My brother was barely 20, and I

was barely 22. We had just moved from Arizona.

The Historical Society's "Saint Harvey" exhibition had made such an impact on us that my brother and I had volunteered to photograph the suit in commemoration of the society's upcoming 20th anniversary. We're both gay, he's a costume designer, and I'm a photographer. We'd been playing fashion shoots since we were kids, but now we felt like we were in over our heads, wondering whose bright idea this had been.

"Gurl, let's just pretend we're shooting for Gucci," I said. We held our breath and lifted the suit as if was the most expensive thing we'd ever touched and treated each bullet hole as if it was a jewel.

We spent the rest of that day exploring the archives, nervously giggling at all the secrets held in the boxes. Entire estates were donated to the Historical Society during the darkest years of the AIDS crisis -- and other collections had been saved from the trash bins of ashamed families.

"He Looked Taller and Prouder"

At the end of the day, I found my brother holding a small vintage frame he had pulled from a box filled with a leatherman's outfit. The photo showed a kind-looking man in a frumpy suit. In a swift move, my brother slid off the wooden backing, revealing a hidden photograph. It was the same man, this time dressed in the leather gear from the box. He looked taller and prouder (and very sexy).

"How did you know that was there?" I asked.

"I don't know, I just had a feeling."

For two Mexican immigrant gay boys who grew up in the ignorance of Phoenix, where neither our Mexican heritage nor our gay history was honored, that first visit to the archives was a revelation that I still don't know how to fully describe.

What I do know is that once I felt the thickness of Harvey's dried blood splatters under my fingers, I realized our history isn't just pride flags and discos, but a collision of violence, art and brotherhood. I know that in a world that disarms cultures by claiming they have no history, just the preservation of our own is an act of resistance. I know that amidst the fluorescent office lights of the archives, ghosts can talk.

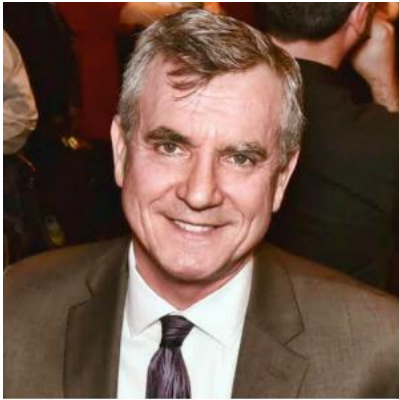
Those ghosts have not stopped talking to us. More than a decade later we're working on The Fathers Project, which doesn't just visit the memory of gay men lost to the AIDS crisis, but tries to raise them. With the help of the archives, historians, artists and other collaborators, we'll imagine the contribution these men would have made to our world had they lived. The Historical Society first awakened our love of queer history, so we're

proud it has agreed to sponsor the film. To learn more about the project, visit [our website](#).

Leo Herrera is an artist and filmmaker based in San Francisco.

From the Executive Director

Building on Success, Taking on the Challenges



by Terry Beswick

One of the major goals of the GLBT Historical Society is to get people thinking and talking about contemporary events in ways that are informed by LGBTQ history. I know you'll agree with the importance of promoting such understanding, particularly in the current political climate.

It's been one year since I took the reins as executive director, and I'm proud of what we've been able to accomplish in this short time. Here are just a few of the highlights of our efforts, all of them designed to support our broader purpose of learning from the past to inspire positive social change:

- We moved our archives to a more spacious, central location.
- We expanded the offering of events and exhibitions at our museum.
- We stabilized our finances and increased our operating budget over 50 percent.
- We increased our membership nearly 60 percent.
- We launched a campaign to create a world-class LGBTQ museum and public history center.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the steadfast support of [our donors and members](#). If you are among them, thank you! You're making a difference in the lives of LGBTQ people today and are contributing to the well-being of future generations, too.

Responding to the Demand

This year, we plan to match or surpass the pace of work we achieved in 2016. Our projected budget for 2017 tops \$1 million for the first time, reflecting the increasing cost of operating in San Francisco, but also responding to the increased demand for information from our archives and for diverse exhibitions and programs in our museum.

This month, we're also embarking on a five-year strategic planning process to help us chart a course for the future. Central to this effort will

be [Vision2020](#), our campaign to create the New Museum of LGBTQ History and Culture in San Francisco. We've got a long road ahead of us, but we are encouraged by growing support from City Hall and from the community. I'll be giving you regular progress reports throughout 2017.

Judging by early moves of the new administration in Washington, LGBTQ people and other minority communities are facing many challenges. Individually and collectively, we're going to be called on, perhaps more than ever before, to step up and to stick together to make sure we keep moving forward as a country, building a more just and equitable society.

At the GLBT Historical Society, we believe that LGBTQ history and culture is vital to this future. That's why we trust you'll join us in our Vision2020 campaign to preserve and share the stories of our past by making a new LGBTQ museum in San Francisco a reality. You can learn more and make a donation [here](#).

Terry Beswick is executive director of the [GLBT Historical Society](#).

Get Involved

Join Our Team at the GLBT Historical Society



The GLBT Historical Society is currently accepting applications for the following job openings: development manager (full time); bookkeeper (part time); and digitization project archivist (contractor). In addition, we're looking for archival interns, an unpaid position that provides training and hands-on experience processing archival collections. For more details on the job openings and internships including information on how to

apply, visit our "[Opportunities](#)" page.

Upcoming Events

[Volunteer Orientation](#)

Voices of the Past: Capturing LGBTQ Oral Histories

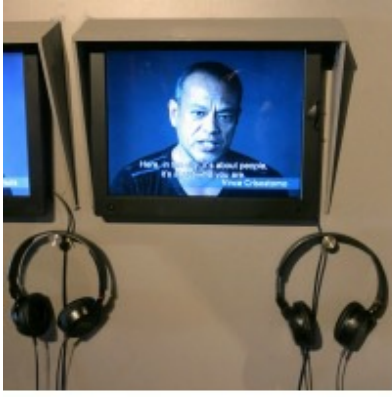
Wednesday, February 1

7:00-9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

Free admission



The GLBT Historical Society is relaunching its Oral History Project -- an initiative to record interviews with community elders who'll share their recollections of the LGBTQ past. Such interviews often provide the only record of aspects of everyday life in decades gone by, particularly for LGBTQ people from underrepresented groups. The project will offer numerous volunteer opportunities, from

conducting interviews and researching background histories to providing technical assistance or offering general support. This volunteer-orientation evening will provide all the details you'll need to get involved. Join the Facebook conversation [here](#).

Staged Reading

Rhino in the Castro: She Kills Monsters



Monday, February 9

7:00-9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

Free | \$5.00 donation welcome

[Theatre Rhinoceros](#), San Francisco's groundbreaking queer stage company, has teamed up with the GLBT History Museum to

present "Rhino in the Castro," a series of readings of plays reflecting the LGBTQ community and our allies. The museum provides the space, and Rhino provides the scripts and actors.

This month's offering is "She Kills Monsters," a drama by [Qui Nguyen](#). Agnes regrets that she never got to know her teenage sister, Tilly, who was killed in a car accident. But when Agnes ventures into Tilly's world of Dungeons and Dragons, she discovers a Tilly she didn't know existed, along with Tilly's girlfriend, a few enemies and some unfinished business. Join the Facebook conversation [here](#).

Living History

Remembering International Bear Rendezvous

Thursday, February 16

7:00-9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5.00; free for members



From 1995 to 2011, the [Bears of San Francisco](#) produced International Bear Rendezvous, an annual gathering that celebrated older, larger, hairier, ruggedly masculine gay men. Guests arrived from throughout the U.S. and beyond for a weekend culminating in the International Mr. Bear competition. For this living history panel, organizers and participants will share memories of this foundational event for the bear community.

Join the Facebook conversation [here](#).

Theater & Film

Missing You: Queer Memory in the Mission



Saturday, February 18

6:00-9:00 PM

Brava Theater Center

2781 24th St., San Francisco

\$10 advance; \$15 at the door

[RADAR Productions](#) presents an investigation of memory through narrative, film and drag designed to unearth and materialize queer

ghosts that linger in San Francisco's Mission District. Includes storytelling by Still Here, performance by Persia and special guests, and a showing of the 1994 documentary *Viva 16!* Presented at the [Brava Theater Center](#) in San Francisco; cosponsored by the GLBT Historical Society. Purchase tickets [here](#).

Community Forum

Gay Men & Lesbians: We Still Like Each Other, Right?



Wednesday, February 22

7:00-9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

Free admission

Queer theater artists Tracy Ward, [Brian Thorstenson](#) and Patricia Cotter are developing a stage work about the

connections between lesbians and gay men. As part of their research, they're hosting this open forum to explore how men and women in the queer community have formed friendships, chosen family, collaboration in work and activism, and other kinds of relationships. The gathering will

involve an open, honest and fun discussion of divisions and connections within the community. Some of the stories might even find their way on to the stage. All ages, opinions and genders are welcome. Join the Facebook conversation [here](#).

[Author Talk](#)

Lavender & Red: The Bay Area Gay & Lesbian Left



Monday, February 27

7:00-9:00 PM

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5.00; free for members

Emily Hobson will discuss her new book, *Lavender and Red: Liberation and Solidarity in the Gay and Lesbian*

Left (University of California Press, 2016), a history of queer radicalism in the San Francisco Bay Area from the late 1960s through the Reagan-Bush years. Drawing on extensive research at the GLBT Historical Society, Hobson shows how gay and lesbian leftists defined sexual liberation through solidarity against racism, imperialism and war. Her use of archives, oral histories and images rediscovers the radical queer past for a generation of activists today. Join the Facebook conversation [here](#).



Visit Us

EXHIBITIONS & PROGRAMS

The GLBT History Museum

4127 18th St.

San Francisco, CA 94114

(415) 621-1107

www.glbthistory.org/museum

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

Tuesday: Closed

Sunday: Noon - 5:00 PM

ARCHIVES & RESEARCH CENTER

The GLBT Historical Society

989 Market St., Lower Level

San Francisco, CA 94103-1708

(415) 777-5455

Call to schedule a research appointment.

CREDITS: Photo of Terry Beswick by [Gareth Gooch](#). International Bear Rendezvous photo by Ted Buel; courtesy [Bears of San Francisco](#). Community forum photo courtesy Brian Thorstenson.

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