

September 2019

Educators Don Romesburg (left) and Ralph Vásquez-Concepción (right)



Bringing LGBTQ History Into California's Classrooms: A Conversation From the Front Lines

by Don Romesburg & Ángel Rafael Vásquez-Concepción

In 2011 California ratified the [Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful Education Act](#), a law that mandates the inclusion of the political, economic and social contributions of people with disabilities and LGBTQ people in educational textbooks and the social studies curricula in California public schools. The legislation was groundbreaking in its own right, but was only a first step. Real change involves updating textbooks and classroom materials, providing teacher support and fighting efforts to water down or undermine the requirements of the statute.

Eight years after passage of the FAIR Education Act, *History Happens* is checking in with two California educators to learn how the act is being

implemented both in the policy realm and in the classroom. Don Romesburg, a professor of women's and gender studies at Sonoma State University and one of the key advocates of the legislation, engaged in a conversation with Ángel Rafael "Ralph" Vásquez-Concepción, an eighth-grade teacher at Everett Middle School in San Francisco, to compare notes from their respective vantage points.

Ralph: Don, can you please offer some updates on the implementation of the act? How have you seen it roll out from your perspective as an advocate for the act and as a university professor?

Don: Implementation has been slow and has required tireless advocacy by LGBTQ historians, advocacy organizations, students, community members and educators. In 2014, queer historians produced *Making the Framework FAIR*, a policy document drawing on decades of scholarship, including research based on materials in the GLBT Historical Society's archives. It proposed comprehensive curricular changes for the California Department of Education to incorporate into its History–Social Science Framework. In 2016 the CDE approved the revised framework, and it now features significant LGBTQ content for elementary schools, middle schools and high schools. Finally, in 2017 the CDE also approved 10 possible textbooks for the state's K–8 classrooms, which cover most of the LGBTQ material.

Since then, organizations such as the California History–Social Science Project and Our Family Coalition, as well as individuals such as me and Rob Darrow, who works with the Safe Schools Project in Santa Cruz County, have been collaborating with the state's teachers and administrators to integrate the LGBTQ content into their curricula.

It's been encouraging to see how enthusiastic educators are. Many want to bring LGBTQ history into their classrooms, but are unsure how. Most K–12 teachers never learned any LGBTQ history in their own primary, secondary or undergraduate education or in their credentialing and graduate programs. So there's a big demand for training, but unfortunately not much funding to support it. Progress is being made slowly. Individual professors are teaching this content: I've been doing it with my undergrads at Sonoma State and so has Wendy Rouse, who teaches history for future teachers at San Jose State.

Ralph, I'm interested to know how well you think implementation is going, since you're on the ground. How proactive has San Francisco Unified School District been about training teachers on the LGBTQ content? How supported do you feel in your school, and what are some examples of ways you are teaching queer content in eighth grade?

Ralph: I feel very supported. At Everett we consistently bring up LGBTQ experiences not just in social sciences and history, but in natural sciences as well. There are many queer and Two-Spirit people who have made important contributions to our democratic and scientific institutions, and as a school we engage that history as much as possible. During Pride Week, queer content is the backbone of lesson-planning, ensuring that our students get exposure in all their classes. Every teacher brings their unique expertise to bear; for example, I use contemporary art history

and queer poetry.

Don: Also, Ralph, how could you use the GLBT Historical Society's resources in teaching students?

Ralph: While consulting the archives for past exhibitions I have curated at the GLBT Historical Society Museum, I have used materials that could serve as primary source documentation of queer life in this city. It would be great to create lessons around some of these materials.

Don, can you offer some clues as to how similar legislation is proceeding in other parts of the country?

Don: It's been so exciting to see how what started in California has taken off nationally. New Jersey, Colorado, Illinois and Oregon have passed laws similar to the act, and now we are waiting to see how implementation proceeds. In Massachusetts, an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum has been put forward, but it's optional; I'm curious if it will become mandatory, following in the other states' footsteps.

In August, Maryland's Department of Education announced that it would incorporate the LGBTQ civil rights movement into its history framework when it is revised in 2020. I expect that we'll see a number of other states follow suit in the next couple of years. California fortunately set the curricular standard pretty high, and it's going to be hard for other states to just mention Stonewall and think they've done it right.

Ralph, what role do you think California's teachers can play in helping other states create change?

Ralph: We live in a very special state, where teachers have the freedom to prepare students to engage differences and be culturally responsive. Teachers elsewhere face pressure from religious groups and homophobic organizations, and some live in fear of being outed and having their livelihoods destroyed. By continuing to develop community programming around Pride and actively seeking to bring visibility to LGBTQ curricula, teachers in California can help ensure that queer history is not erased, and that it is ultimately protected by federal policy. I also foresee the need for more collaboration between college professors and K-12 teachers.

Don Romesburg is a professor of women's and gender studies at Sonoma State University. Ángel Rafael Vásquez-Concepción teaches eighth grade at Everett Middle School in San Francisco.

From the Staff

Satisfying Students' Hunger for Queer History

by Kelsi Evans & Nalini Elias

One of the GLBT Historical Society's key goals is to facilitate student access to LGBTQ history.



We do this through a multipronged approach, overseeing opportunities for student engagement both at the museum and at the archives.

Since the opening of the GLBT Historical Society Museum in 2011, we have offered docent-led tours to students at all levels. Of the nearly 80 museum tours we conducted in 2018, over half were provided to student groups.

Personalizing the Historical

For many students, the museum is their first exposure to queer history. Others have heard of well-known figures such as Harvey Milk, but are amazed by the range of the exhibits and time periods covered. The tours inevitably inspire intelligent questions and debates, leaving students curious to learn more. The historical becomes personalized: “I had no idea all this existed,” is a common refrain that we’ve overhead as students are on their way out of the museum.

The archives also welcomes student tours several times a quarter, often organized by college professors who teach queer theory, history or library-science courses. In addition, every few months the archives hosts specially designed volunteer days for college student groups participating in alternative spring break community-service activities or student leadership programs.

Most groups undertake item-level, archival processing work that fleshes out our collection finding aids. In March, for example, we welcomed a group of Willamette University students who inventoried over 500 T-shirts in our extensive T-shirt collection. And this past month, a group of LGBTQ teens finished their two-week Outward Bound program by inventorying approximately 100 banners in our banner collection.

Finally, we regularly offer internships to undergraduate and graduate students in library science, museum studies and related fields. Depending on their interests and experience, interns focus on archival work, including processing; curatorial activities; museum operations; or a combination of the three. Designed to provide hands-on job training and mentorship, these positions usually last for a quarter or a semester.

The number of requests for student tours, inquiries into group service projects and applications for internships indicates that there’s a real hunger among young people for knowledge about queer history — and we’ll continue to respond through our student outreach initiatives.

Kelsi Evans is director of archives and special collections at the GLBT Historical Society. Nalini Elias is the society’s curator of exhibitions.

National History Day 2019

Researching the “Erased” History of Compton’s Cafeteria



by Rania Zeidan

The GLBT Historical Society grants an annual Young Scholar Award to the best LGBTQ project in the California competition for National History Day. This year's winner is Rania Zeidan, who wrote an essay on the Compton's Cafeteria Riot during her junior year at El Camino High School in South San Francisco.

National History Day is a particularly big deal in the South San Francisco Unified School District. Students from both high schools do projects on historical events that pertain to a certain theme, this year's being "triumph versus tragedy." Our history teachers help us identify a topic, locate sources and complete our final reports.

From the beginning of junior year, I knew I wanted the focus of my topic to be on the LGBTQ community, because I am a passionate activist for LGBTQ rights. My teacher gave me the idea of writing about the Compton's Cafeteria Riot. This topic stood out for me because despite being from the San Francisco Bay Area, I had never heard about the riot and was shocked by that fact.

Almost Erased

At the Compton's Cafeteria Riot, transgender women, drag queens and gay youth fought back at Gene Compton's Cafeteria in the Tenderloin district of San Francisco. Having faced consistent police brutality, assaults and arrests, the patrons defended themselves against a police raid one night in August 1966. However, change was not immediate and the riot was almost entirely erased from the historical record.

When I went to the library to find primary sources, it was rough. I scrolled through websites, flipped through the pages of numerous books and started to feel hopeless. It truly felt like sources about this riot did not exist, as a result of our transphobic society. I almost gave up, but both my teacher and the librarian encouraged me to stay determined.

Eventually, we found two primary sources. The first was an LGBTQ newspaper article (which unfortunately misidentified the trans women as gay men); and the second was a speech by Felicia "Flames" Elizondo, a transgender San Franciscan who frequented Compton's.

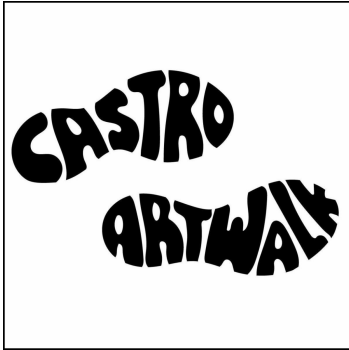
Ultimately, I wrote my report on Compton's Cafeteria because I wanted to give it the representation it did not receive 53 years ago. And I especially wanted to write about a topic that involved the transgender community, whose members are still not widely accepted.

Rania Zeidan is beginning her senior year at El Camino High School this autumn.

Upcoming Events

Neighborhood Event

Castro Art Walk at the GLBT Historical Society Museum



Thursday, September 5

6:00–9:00 p.m.

The GLBT Historical Society Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

Free

The GLBT Historical Society Museum is participating in September's [Castro Art Walk](#), a monthly event in the Castro neighborhood on the first Thursday of the month. Participating

merchants extend their business hours to host special events and share artwork with the neighborhood. Drop by the museum during your self-guided tour of the Castro and enjoy our exhibitions at your own pace. Entry is free and the museum will remain open until 9:00 p.m. Light refreshments will be served. More information is available [here](#).

Panel Discussion

Queering Familias: Building Latinx Resilience & Hope



Thursday, September 12

7:00–9:00 p.m.

The GLBT Historical Society Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5 | Free for [members](#)

Rooted in a history of resistance, LGBTQ Latinx people in the Bay Area have created numerous activist groups and institutions that have built a strong foundation for subsequent generations.

Over time, they have forged personal and community bonds that create *familias*, or chosen families. This intergenerational panel brings together Latinx activists, artists, performers and community leaders to discuss the unique ways they have mobilized by building strong bonds of kinship. The event is being held in conjunction with the exhibition "[Chosen Familias: Bay Area LGBTQ Latinx Stories](#)" now on view at the GLBT Historical Society Museum. Tickets are available online [here](#).

Book Launch

In Search of Stonewall: 25 Years of Scholarship

Thursday, September 19

7:00–9:00 p.m.

The GLBT Historical Society Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5 | Free for [members](#)



The year 1994 marked the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, and it was also the year in which a new journal, *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review* (known since 1998 as *The Gay & Lesbian Review/Worldwide*), published its first issue. In honor of its own 25th anniversary, the journal has released a book, *In Search of Stonewall: The Riots at 50, The Gay & Lesbian Review at 25* (G & LR Books, 2019) collecting

Stonewall-related articles published in the *Review* over the past quarter century. Join three contributors to the collection — Jewelle Gomez, Will Roscoe and Eve Goldberg — for a panel discussion about Stonewall scholarship and for readings from the collection. Copies of *In Search of Stonewall* will be available for purchase and signing. Tickets are available online [here](#).

[Living History Discussion](#)

Enola Gay: The Birth of Militant AIDS Activism



Friday, September 20

7:00–9:00 p.m.

The GLBT Historical Society Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5 | Free for [members](#)

In September 1984, members of Enola Gay, a gay men's direct-action affinity group, joined a blockade at the entrance to Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory during a large demonstration against the development of nuclear weapons. The activists poured real human blood at the entrance and chanted "Money for AIDS, not for war!" The protest called attention to government neglect in the face of a deadly epidemic and has been described by one historian as "the first recorded instance of civil disobedience to confront AIDS." To mark the 35th anniversary of the event, Enola Gay members Robert Glück, Richard Bell and Jack Davis will share photographs and stories from the group's history, discuss the shifting priorities for sexual politics during the 1980s and reflect on direct action and intersectional organizing during the early years of the AIDS crisis. Tickets are available online [here](#).

[Book Launch](#)

The Ventriloquists: A Novel of Queer Resistance

Thursday, September 26

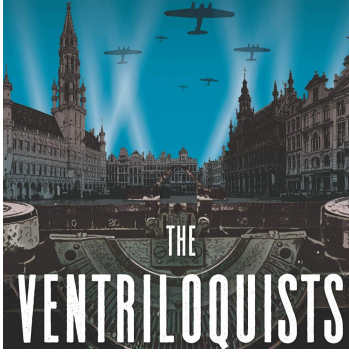
7:00–9:00 p.m.

The GLBT Historical Society Museum

4127 18th St., San Francisco

\$5 | Free for [members](#)

Author E. R. Ramzipoor will read selections from



her new novel, *The Ventriloquists* (Park Row Books, 2019), a work inspired by the true story of a ragtag gang of journalists and resistance fighters who published a satirical fake edition of the Nazi-controlled Brussels newspaper *Le Soir* during World War II. Inviting the reader on a fast-paced, high-stakes caper featuring a diverse cast of queer heroes, the novel highlights the LGBTQ community's role in reclaiming occupied spaces. Ramzipoor will supplement her talk by

discussing stories of everyday queer heroes from World War II until the present, focusing on ordinary people who carried out daring feats of resistance. Tickets are available online [here](#).

Current Exhibitions

Front Gallery

[Chosen *Familias*: Bay Area LGBTQ Latinx Stories](#)

Open through October 20, 2019

[More information](#)

Community Gallery

[The Mayor of Folsom Street: The Life & Legacy of Alan Selby](#)

Open through October 20, 2019

[More information](#)

Main Gallery

[Queer Past Becomes Present](#)

Long-term exhibition

[More information](#)



You are family. Please join us for

REUNION CHOSEN FAMILY

The 2019 GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Gala

October 18th | Friday | 6-9PM

Ohana Floor | **Salesforce Tower** 415 Mission St | SF



Visit Us

THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

Exhibitions & Programs

4127 18th St.

San Francisco, CA 94114

(415) 621-1107

www.glbthistory.org/museum

Monday–Saturday: 11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

Sunday: Noon–5:00 p.m.

DR. JOHN P. DE CECCO ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Research & Public History Center

989 Market St., Lower Level

San Francisco, CA 94103-1708

(415) 777-5455

www.glbthistory.org/archives

Call to schedule a research appointment or make an appointment

online by [clicking here](#).

Donate

Volunteer

Join

CREDITS. FEATURE: Photos courtesy of Don Romesburg and Ángel Rafael Vásquez-Concepción. FROM THE STAFF: Photo of Outward Bound students in the archives by Ramón Silvestre. NATIONAL HISTORY DAY 2019: Photo courtesy of Rania Zeidan. UPCOMING EVENTS. Panel Discussion: One of the pages in the family albums displayed in the exhibition “Chosen *Familias*,” photo by Nalini Elias. Book Launch: Detail from cover illustration of *In Search of Stonewall*, courtesy of G & LR Books. Living History Discussion: Members of Enola Gay pour blood on the road outside Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, September 24, 1984; photo by Jack Davis, used with permission. Book Launch: Detail from cover illustration of *The Ventriloquists*, courtesy of Park Row.

Executive Director: Terry Beswick

Editor: Mark Sawchuk

Associate Editor: Gerard Koskovich

Copyright © 2019 GLBT Historical Society

Back Issues

