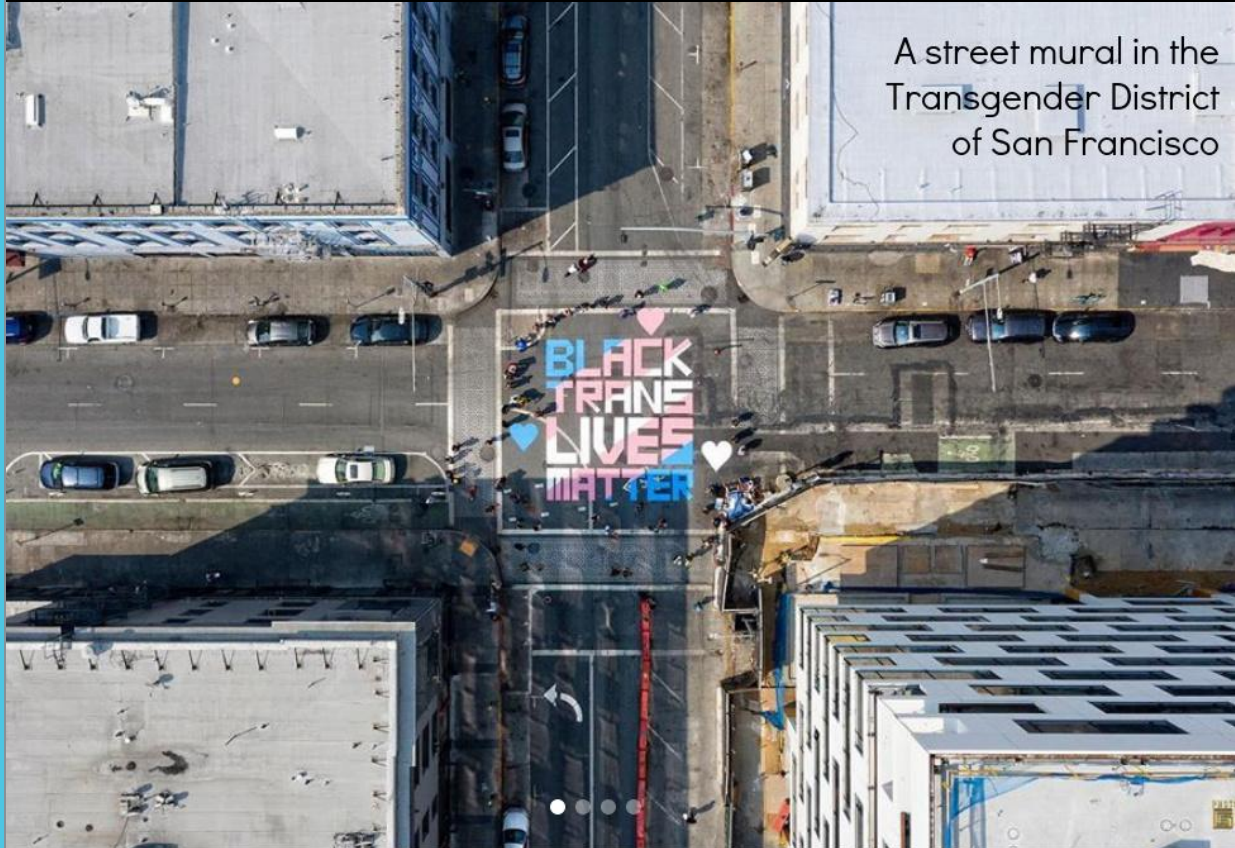


November 2020



A street mural in the Transgender District of San Francisco

## Advocating for Transgender People in 2020: Not a Moment, but a Turning Point



by Aria Sa'id & Mark Sawchuk

The second week of November is observed as Transgender Awareness week and leads up to the Transgender Day of Remembrance on the 20th, which memorializes victims of transphobic violence. This has been another perilous year for trans people: more were murdered in the first seven months of 2020 than all of last year, and trans people of color are still disproportionately victims of violent crime.

As part of our commitment to Transgender Awareness Week, the GLBT Historical Society's archivists have organized two new primary-source sets on [trans men](#) and [trans women](#) in the [Online Resources](#) area of our website. And we've caught up with Aria Sa'id, the executive director and cofounder of San Francisco's [Transgender District](#). Established in

2017, the District is one of seven officially designated cultural districts in the city and the first legally recognized transgender district in the world.

### **What has the Transgender District been doing to remember the many precious trans lives lost this year?**

AS: I don't think we're ever able to properly mourn and grieve the loss. We live in a world where so much is stacked against transgender people, and it has been a gravely emotional experience both as a trans woman and as the leader of an organization that focuses on celebrating our joy and resilience. We held a #BlackTransLivesMatter rally in June called "Courthouse 2 Comptons" in partnership with transgender historian Dr. Susan Stryker and filmmaker Julian Carter. Hundreds of people filled the streets of the Tenderloin to raise awareness and mourn the lives of transgender people who have been senselessly murdered. In August, as part of our celebration of the 54th anniversary of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot, we painted the historic Turk and Taylor intersection with the affirmation "BLACK TRANS LIVES MATTER" as a symbol of both past and present struggle in America — and to commemorate the lives of transgender women who have been lost.

### **The Transgender District is centered in the Tenderloin, a neighborhood that has historically been home to trans people and has been hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. How has the District responded?**

AS: As a cultural district, we are both limited in how we can support people (for example, we don't have access to a clinic or a food pantry), but on the other hand we are able to be innovative. Within three days of the San Francisco shelter-in-place orders, after seeing the lines of hundreds of people in grocery stores stocking up on food and supplies, we launched our COVID-19 mutual-aid relief fund. So many of our folks were struggling to get supplies and food. To date, we've given cash grants to over 550 transgender people across the country, and over 40 nonprofit projects across the country have replicated our model to support their local communities. We've also launched our COVID-19 testing-access event in partnership with Mayor London Breed's administration to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 testing for transgender San Franciscans. We have a ton of other projects and efforts launching in 2021 that I'm confident will support our community and educate people on how to minimize the spread of COVID-19, especially those who are marginally housed and economically vulnerable.

### **In a year when racial injustice and the Black Lives Matter movement are at the forefront of the nation's attention, how has the District addressed these issues?**

AS: I pray this isn't just a moment, but a turning point. We've been doing this work and addressing these issues from the beginning. We were founded by Black transgender women and created a space and sanctuary for ourselves even when gay white men stood in opposition to us (literally and figuratively). And we continue to design every aspect of our programming, actions, efforts and moments with Black transgender San Franciscans in mind — we are so often treated as the afterthought,

or not included at all. Our racial justice work is applied to intersections of being Black, transgender, and women — this is a Tenderloin experience that is consistently ignored, consistently not centered.

But we've also been working in tandem with Black transgender leaders from across the country, including the lead organizers of both Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives, to ensure an expanded framework for our movement's fight for the protection and safety of our people and to shape how we communicate that to non-Black people. We've also been a part of MegaBlackSF and our collective effort to defund the San Francisco Police Department of \$128 million — funds that will be directed to Black communities across San Francisco as we face forced outmigration, displacement, and increased poverty in a city that has gentrified and erased us.

*Aria Sa'id cofounded the Transgender District and currently serves as its executive director.*

*Mark Sawchuk is the communications manager at the GLBT Historical Society.*

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## From the Staff

### A Roadmap to our Online Archival Content



by Kelsi Evans & Isaac Fellman

While the society's archives remain closed in compliance with city and state health regulations during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we have been busy adding digital content for researchers at home and are thrilled to provide you with a roadmap to these resources.

We have overhauled the archives area on the website to make it easier to find the content you're looking for. On the website, click on "[Online Resources](#)" under the "Archives" tab, and you'll find a new launch page for all of our digital materials featuring four colored boxes that link to the four following sections:

[Digital Collections](#), accessed through the **pink box** (top left), are selections from our physical archival collections, scanned and photographed. We've vastly expanded this page in the last six months. Recent additions include [ACT UP oral histories](#); videos of [performers at the Valencia Rose cabaret](#) in the 1980s; the [Posters](#) and [Art and Artifacts](#) collections; Jean-Baptiste Carhaix's evocative [photographs](#) of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence; [Hal O'Neal's home videos](#) of gay men socializing as far back as the 1940s; and collections about lesbian poet [Elsa Gidlow](#), Japanese American World War II incarceration-camp survivor [Jiro Onuma](#), and the famed "[Maestrapeace](#)" mural on the Women's Building in San Francisco.

**Exhibitions**, accessed through the **yellow box** (top right), takes you to our online exhibitions, curated and built since March by our museum staff. You can view exhibitions that were previously on display at the museum on **Roz Joseph's drag photographs**, **Angela Davis**, **Gilbert Baker** and more. And some of the exhibitions, such as *AIDS Treatment Activism*, are “born-digital” shows that are exclusively available online.

**Primary Source Sets**, linked from the **orange box** (bottom left), are a new resource we've introduced this year. These are curated sets of images, articles and recordings on specific topics, ranging from drag to the **Gay Games**, to **gays** and **lesbians** in the military, to **queer feminism** and **trans men** and **women**. They're great jumping-off points for research, and are intended to be especially helpful to students, educators and novice researchers.

**Research Guides** are available through the **blue box** (bottom right). They're textual roadmaps of the archives, also themed around specific topics, and intended for researchers who are planning to dig deeper and ultimately consult the physical archives. They list relevant collections, oral histories and periodicals. Also available here are our presentations about research and collection donation, as well as information about local LGBTQ historic places, links to other LGBTQ archives and more.

We hope you'll explore our online resources. And if you have any suggestions for topics you might like to see covered or any questions, email us at [reference@glbthistory.org](mailto:reference@glbthistory.org). We're here to help you!

*Kelsi Evans is director of the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives & Special Collections at the GLBT Historical Society.*

*Isaac Fellman is the reference archivist at the GLBT Historical Society.*

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## At the Museum

### A Magic Key to our Past, Present & Future



by Harry Breaux

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, a museum is “an institution devoted to the procurement, care, study, and display of objects of lasting interest or value.”

The concept behind this definition inspired my membership in the GLBT Historical Society and, later, to become one of the volunteer docents at GLBT Historical Society Museum. The museum, which reopened last month, teases and pleases those who enter with its significant and abundant displays.

Since my first days volunteering at the museum, one object on display

that has always fascinated me is a simple, unassuming door key. It doesn't seem like much, but it's the key to the front door of the Black Cat, a historic establishment that was located in San Francisco's North Beach district where the activist José Sarria performed in drag shows. An astounding person of energy and imagination, Sarria founded the Imperial Court System and in 1961 became the first openly gay candidate for public office in the United States when he ran for a seat on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

## The Warp & Weave

When I first saw the key and realized what a journey that little front-door key had to go through to be here on display from the early 1960s, I paused and thought of all the lives that were touched by the hopes and dreams that passed through that establishment, and the thousands and thousands of other bars in San Francisco and around the world.

Bars have from the earliest of times been the social gathering places of "our kind." Throughout history they have become the very warp and weave of our social fabric. Many of us, gay or straight, probably remember our first visit to a "gay bar." That little key sparked in me a vision of our progress through history with all its breakthroughs, disappointments and victories. I think of it as a magic key to our past, present and future experience and stories.

I hope each of you will get the chance to see this little piece of history and all the displays that document the days that this key — and many others — worked their magic. May you allow it to transport you through our history and on into the future.

*Harry Breaux volunteered as a Shanti emotional support counselor during the AIDS crisis. He is a longstanding volunteer at the GLBT Historical Society Museum.*

**NOTE: The museum is open but requires advanced, timed tickets. Please [click here for more information](#).**

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## Upcoming Online Events

### Panel Discussion

### Podcasting LGBTQ History, Part II



Friday, November 6  
11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m.  
Online program  
Free | \$5 suggested donation

With the advent of more digital media than ever before, people are finding new ways to learn about LGBTQ history and culture, including podcasts. In the last several years, there has

been an explosion in the number of queer voices in podcasting, a powerful tool and medium for teaching LGBTQ history in an accessible, intimate way. In the second of our two-part conversation, prominent queer podcasters whose shows cover a broad spectrum of LGBTQ history will share their experiences, perspectives and tips on how queer history can be shared beyond the classroom through podcasts that potentially reach a global audience. Register online [here](#).

## [Panel Discussion](#)

### Queer Compulsions in Early Japanese America



Sunday, November 8

4:00–5:30 p.m.

Online program

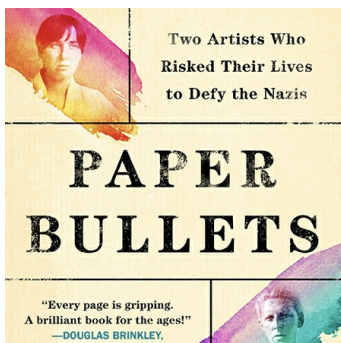
Free

Poet Yone Noguchi wrote lover letters to his “Daddy” Charles Warren Stoddard. Kosen Takahashi declared himself the “queerest Nipponese” to Blanche Partington. And while

Joaquin Miller preferred that Japanese “boys” come live with him in the Oakland Hills, San Franciscans involved in a “fellatio ring” found each other in front of Japanese and Chinese storefronts. In this talk based on her book *Queer Compulsions*, historian Amy Sueyoshi of San Francisco State University will discuss how issei — first-generation Japanese Americans — forged queer love in the first two decades of the twentieth century and their indelible impact on the formation of a modern gay identity. Co-presented by the GLBT Historical Society, this is the first of three programs organized by J-Sei, a Japanese American community organization in Emeryville, in conjunction with its an online exhibition “[Seen And Unseen: Queering Japanese American History Before 1945](#).” This exhibition explores queerness in the Japanese American community in the first half of the twentieth century. Register online [here](#).

## [Author Talk](#)

### Paper Bullets: How Two Lesbians Defied the Nazis



Friday, November 13

6:00–7:30 p.m.

Online program

Free | \$5 suggested donation

Historian Jeffrey H. Jackson will discuss his new book *Paper Bullets* (Algonquin Books, 2020), documenting the exciting true story of an audacious anti-Nazi campaign undertaken by a

lesbian couple, Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe. Better remembered today by their artist names, Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, these avant-garde artists spent their formative years in Paris creating shocking photographs that undermined gender roles. After the Nazis occupied the British Channel Island of Jersey, where the women made their home, they drew on their creative skills to write and secretly

distribute "paper bullets" — juicy notes replete with insults against Hitler, calls to rebel and subversive fictional dialogues designed to demoralize the occupying troops. Devising their own psychological-operations campaign, they slipped their notes into soldiers' pockets or tucked them inside newsstand magazines. Betrayed and captured by the secret police, they were executed after months of imprisonment in 1944. Register online [here](#).

## [Panel Discussion](#) Here & Queer Before the Issei



Tuesday, November 17  
7:00–8:30 p.m.  
Online program  
Free

Japanese words for generational identity, from *issei* to *gosei*, are now taken for granted by Japanese American community members and the scholars who study them. However, these terms only entered common use in the mid-1920s, four decades after the beginning of mass Japanese emigration to Hawaii and the continental United States. In this talk, professor Andrew Way Leong documents how early Japanese immigrant community leaders developed and used the idea of generation to promote ideas of stable, permanent settlement through heterosexual marriage and child-rearing. Way Leong shows that despite its good intentions, this generational thinking has reduced our awareness of less settled and more impermanent forms of queer and same-sex intimacies in early Japanese American communities. This is the second of three programs cosponsored by the GLBT Historical Society and organized by J-Sei. Register online [here](#).

## [Film Screening](#) Queer Cinematic Visions of Nikkei History



Tuesday, December 1  
7:00–8:30 p.m.  
Online program  
Free

Join award-winning filmmaker Tina Takemoto for a screening and discussion of two short experimental films engaging with the tactile and sensory dimensions of queer Japanese American history. Takemoto combines found footage and archival materials with performance art and popular music to conjure immersive fantasies that honor queer Asian Americans who lived, loved, and labored together during the pre-World War I era and beyond. This is the third of three programs cosponsored by the GLBT Historical Society and organized by J-Sei. Register online [here](#).

# Current Exhibitions

## Queer Past Becomes Present

### Museum

Our long-term exhibition tells the amazing stories of over a century of everyday queer life among the diverse populations of San Francisco.

## Performance, Protest & Politics: The Art of Gilbert Baker

### Museum & online

Examine how rainbow flag creator Gilbert Baker blurred the lines between artist and activist, protester and performer.

## 50 Years of Pride

### Online

This photography exhibition documents the evolution of San Francisco Pride over the past half century.

## Labor of Love: The Birth of San Francisco Pride

### Online

Learn how San Francisco forged the internationally renowned annual celebration that would come to be known as Pride.

## AIDS Treatment Activism: A Bay Area Story

### Online

Explore the rise of and growth of the treatment activism movement in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s and 1990s.

## Angela Davis: OUTspoken

### Online

Rare posters and ephemera from a private collection highlight the journey of Black lesbian activist Angela Davis.

## Reigning Queens: The Lost Photos of Roz Joseph

### Online

These evocative color photographs depict San Francisco's epic drag and costume balls of the mid-1970s.

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# Volunteer With Us!

[Click to learn more](#)

## Visit Us & Online Resources

The archives are online-only until further notice, but archives staff members are still available to work with researchers; please contact us at [reference@glbthistory.org](mailto:reference@glbthistory.org).

**Online exhibitions:** Our online exhibitions are available here.

**Online archives resources:** Browse dozens of digital collections.

**Upcoming events:** More information about all of our online events.

**Past events:** Video footage of a large number of our past programs.

### THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

#### Exhibitions & Programs

4127 18th St.

San Francisco, CA 94114

(415) 621-1107

[www.glbthistory.org/museum](http://www.glbthistory.org/museum)

Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday: 12:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.

Closed other days

### DR. JOHN P. DE CECCO ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

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CREDITS. FEATURE: The Black Trans Lives Matter mural at Taylor and Turk Streets in San Francisco; photo by Gareth Gooch, used with permission. Portrait of Aria Sa'id by Karen Santos Photography, used with permission. FROM THE STAFF: Screenshot of the new Online Resources page on the GLBT Historical Society website. IN THE ARCHIVES: The key to the Black Cat in the GLBT Historical Society Museum; photo by Mark Sawchuk, used with permission. EVENTS. Panel Discussion 11/6: Logo artwork for "Bad Gays," "History is Gay," "One From the Vaults" and "AfroQueer" used with permission. Panel Discussion 11/8: Inscribed portrait of Yone Noguchi to Charles Warren Stoddard, 1897; Bancroft Library, Berkeley, CA, used with permission. Author Talk 11/13: Detail of cover of *Paper Bullets: Two Artists Who Risked Their Lives to Defy the Nazis*, courtesy of Algonquin Books. Panel Discussion 11/17: Jiro Onuma (1904–1990, center) and friends in San Francisco, ca. 1935; photographer unknown, Jiro Onuma Papers (2000-27), GLBT Historical Society. Film Screening 12/1: A screenshot from Tina Takemoto's short film *Looking for Jiro*, courtesy of Maxwell Leung. HOUSE AD: Museum volunteers Fred Baumer (left) and Greg Starr (right) at the GLBT Historical Society Museum; photo courtesy of same.

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