



Rainbow History Project Annual Report Year Twelve: 2012

Rainbow History Project had many notable achievements in 2012. It recognized 14 Community Pioneers at a lively and highly-attended reception in October, instituted an internal "Archiving 101" program to train volunteers in the basics of archiving, provided essential support to a growing number of academic and community researchers, and turned the website into a state-of-the-art research tool. Perhaps most important, Rainbow History's board restructured individual board member responsibilities to best utilize each member's skill set and to share the work burden more equally.

Community Pioneers

On October 3, 2012, Rainbow History Project honored the following Community Pioneers at a reception at the Thurgood Marshall Center:

Robert Alfandre
Colevia Carter
Keith Monroe Clark
Paulette Goodman
Jose Gutierrez
Susan Hester
Leonard Hirsch
James Edward Mercer
Robert Miailovich
Bob Summersgill
Larry J. Uhrig
Stefan Wade
Cade Ware
Jessica Xavier

By honoring a smaller number of Pioneers than we had in the past, there was time in the program for the Pioneers to share their insights on building and nurturing our community. The event marked the start of what we expect to be an on-going relationship with the Thurgood Marshall Center, a community-based organization with which we share many values and goals.

Brother Help Thyself continued its long history of support for RHP by providing the funding for a state-of-the-art audio recorder that we used to obtain oral histories of our Community Pioneers.

Walking Tours and Other Public Outreach

Rainbow History continued to offer its popular walking tours, which educate the public about places and spaces in Washington, DC with historical connections to the LGBT community. We offered separate tours of Capital Hill, Dupont Circle, and Dupont East. Several tours, offered in conjunction with Cultural Tourism, DC, a sister community-based organization, were open to the public; others were private events offered in response to requests from visiting LGBT organizations. In 2012, RHP led a special walking tour of Capital Hill to SMYAL youth and another to iDiversity of the University of Maryland. Kim Sescoe, Jeff Donahoe, Brock Thompson, and Philip Clark led our 2012 tours. Philip also performed the first comprehensive update of Rainbow History's Places and Spaces database since 2005.

Philip Clark and Jeff Donahoe participated on behalf of RHP at the DC Historical Studies Conference October 18-21, which we co-sponsored.

Rainbow History Project provided administrative support to the Dakshina/Daniel Phoenix Singh Dance Company, acting as fiduciary for a DC Community Heritage grant from the Humanities Council of Washington D.C. for a poetry reading that Dakshina produced of works by local gay poets published in the poetry anthology edited by Philip Clark, *Persistent Voices: Poetry by Writers Lost to AIDS*. The event took place on November 29, as part of World AIDS Day, at Westminster Presbyterian Church in southwest Washington DC.

Philip Clark also made a presentation about H. Lynn Womack and DC's Guild Press on a panel at the Radically Gay conference.

When Shawn Davis began designing a three-week study tour for leaders in the LGBT community in the eastern European nation of Belarus, as part of the State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program, he asked RHP for help identify women to participate in a panel discussion on "The Role of Women in the LGBT Rights Movement." We were able to put him in touch with women we have recognized as Community Pioneers, who agreed to participate in the panel.

Archiving 101

Recognizing that many RHP board members and volunteers are committed to the goal of preserving our history, but not trained in the area, board member Steven Mandeville-Gamble created and led an "Archiving 101" course in which he showed us how to take box loads of donated documents and cull, organize, and preserve them. A small crew met on average once a month under Steven's tutelage to work their way through accumulating materials. Steve provided acid-free binders and taught us how to handle photos, newsletters, legal documents, and other written materials. Participants have learned the process well enough to be able to continue this "course" even as Steven has taken leave of RHP to accept the position of University Librarian at the University of California at Riverside. Richard Haight, who has energized Rainbow History since joining the board in 2012, and Alison Scott, a professional archivist who will be joining our board in 2013, have assumed leadership of this ongoing program.

The initial class used as its class materials five boxes of documents from Black and White Men Together of Washington DC, covering more than 15 years. When other community members who had past involvement with BWMT learned that RHP was organizing and archiving the BWMT collection, they

donated additional materials to expand the collection. These materials, among others, will be part of RHP's on-going Archiving 101 efforts in 2013.

Helping Academic and Community Researchers

Perhaps RHP's most important action in 2012 was to free Philip Clark from the daily administrative responsibilities of chairing the board of directors. When Chuck Goldfarb agreed to take on those responsibilities, Philip was able to focus on the growing number of requests RHP is receiving from researchers. Philip is the in-house expert both on the RHP collection and on who in the community is likely to have knowledge and insights about historical events and community developments. Philip frequently puts researchers in contact with leaders from throughout our community. In 2012, Philip used his expertise to respond to dozens of requests, notably guiding author Lillian Faderman to sources for her research for a work on 20th century LGBT activism; helping Genny Beemyn reach dozens of early community leaders for a book on LGBT DC history; aiding Kelsey Brannan for a documentary film about lesbian space in Washington DC; and assisting Daniel Royles' research efforts for a dissertation on African American LGBT AIDS activism.

Philip's hard work went beyond one-on-one work with researchers. It included major in-house projects. Most notably, in the fall of 2012 Philip began the tedious but essential task of digitizing the more than 130 oral histories in the RHP collection. He completed that task in March 2013. Now, when a researcher seeks access to an oral history – the most frequent type of request that RHP receives – once it is confirmed that the person who provided the oral history has given permission, RHP can simply send an electronic version to the requester. This provides an enormous time saving to both RHP and the researcher.

Website

One of the great challenges of an organization like RHP, which wants to make its collection as accessible as possible, is to maintain a rigorous, yet user friendly website. In 2012, Rainbow History was privileged to have Steven Mandeville-Gamble not just as a board member and archivist, but also as our web master. Steven introduced state-of-the-art techniques that made our website far more user friendly.

In October 2012, Steven performed a study of the visitors to our website during a 30-day period. Almost 1,000 unique visitors had come to the RHP main website and more than 400 came to the Digital Collections site. Visitors were located in 49 countries in addition to the United States, and from 43 states in the U.S. as well as DC.

Rainbow History seeks a volunteer to assume some of the website tasks that Steven had been handling.

Revved up for 2013

Rainbow History has learned that we are most effective when our serious researchers and archivists are freed of the day to day administrative tasks associated with operating an archival organization. We therefore will continue our current structure that allows Philip Clark to be the contact person for researchers. Alison Scott and Richard Haight will take the lead on our Archiving 101 activities. Chuck Goldfarb will continue as board chairman. Jim Marks will continue as our treasurer and as the board member who always reminds us that fundraising is an essential task for every community-based organization and that every event should be a potential fundraiser.

With the generous support of a grant from Brother Help Thyself, Richard Haight will lead a public panel discussion of racial discrimination in the DC LGBT community in the 1970s and 1980s. He will use as a starting point the Discrimination Response System that Richard, Jim Mercer, Ron Wilson, and others at Black and White Men Together developed in the early 1980s to document and bring a successful class action suit against gay bars that were employing discriminatory carding policies against African Americans. This panel will be held at the Thurgood Marshall Center later this year.

In March 2013, RHP held two volunteer meetings that were attended by half a dozen new recruits who brought a wide array of skills. We expect the new volunteers to help in all aspects of the organization, including governance on the board of directors.

After many years' service, Patsy Lynch and Kim Sescoe have retired from our board, but will join our advisory board. Patsy and Kim have been involved with every aspect of Rainbow History, but have been especially important to our Community Pioneers events, Patsy as our professional photographer in residence and Kim as our professional events planner. Kim also has been a premiere walking tour guide. Brock Thompson also will move from the board to the advisory board, but promises he will continue to lead walking tours. We thank Patsy, Kim, and Brock for their contributions to Rainbow History Project.