

7-1-2016

July 2016; Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project Minutes

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Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project, "July 2016; Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project Minutes" (2016). *Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project Minutes*. 1.
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Buffalo LGBTQ History Project
General Meeting Minutes
July 28, 2016

Dramatis Personae: Adrienne, Ana, Carolyn, Lisa

Update: Archiving Project

During the June meeting, the group decided that we would like to make the establishment of a website, complete with a digital archive from Carol Speser's private collection, our next big project.

Ana and Adrienne talked with Carol about this project in July. She is very much interested in getting this done. She's even okay with us taking some of her materials offsite to scan them. She also suggests that we start by archiving and providing captions for the archival material about the first Candlelight Wish celebration, which we researched and curated for the Chroma Exhibit during Pride weekend, since we've already done the preliminary work.

Carol does, however, have some reservations, which are as follows:

- **Not duplicating the work of the Madeline Davis Archives.** She is going to talk with Dan DiLandro at Buff State about how best to handle this. That said, we spent some time during the June meeting talking about how best to scan Carol's archives, but we should keep this in mind: Carol already has plans to bequeath her archives to Buff State upon her death, so the Madeline Davis Archives will eventually get her possessions (and hopes, one day in the unknown future, to digitize them). As such, making sure her archives are perfectly scanned so as to last forever is a lower priority than providing a public forum for them as quickly as we can.
- **Retaining her ownership of the archival material.** Carol wants a digital copy of everything we scan. We discussed the possibility of a "shadow website" where she can place her own archive. Adrienne is talking with Vanessa and Clinton, who have agreed to work with Carol on finding a solution (probably an external hard drive, though we're looking at online storage as well) that will allow her to retain ownership of her digitized archives.

Unfortunately, shortly after Ana and Adrienne had this conversation with Carol, Carol announced that she would have to hold off on the project because of health issues. We are giving Carol space for the time being; in the next week or so, Ana is going to check in with Carol and see if she is once again in a condition to continue with this work.

September Screening of *Swimming with Lesbians*

In the meantime, the History Project is working on putting together a screening of the 2009 documentary *Swimming with Lesbians*, followed by a Q&A with none other than documentary star, historian activist, and all around amazing woman Madeline Davis. Camille has been talking with Madeline about the idea, and she loves it. We haven't settled on a date yet, but we're aiming for a September screening.

The first step in this process as we see it, is finding a venue for the screening, and determining available dates. We are in the process of doing that now, and would love some help! **If you know of a venue, or would like to help us screen venues, please let Adrienne, Ana, or Camille know.** We are asking the following questions of potential venues:

- How much does it cost?
- What is the process for borrowing/renting the venue?
- When (if at all) is it available in September?
- What are the accessibility details?

Here, so far, is the list of venues we're looking at, as well as the person who agreed to research them. **As you know the answers to the above questions about each venue, please add that information to the list.** Feel free to suggest additional venues, too.

- Hallwalls (Lisa)
- Sugar City (Carolyn)
- North Park (Carolyn)

(We've also talked about Burning Books and Dreamland, but in each case we're a bit concerned about accessibility details.)

In addition, we're looking for organizations who might be willing to help sponsor the screening. Ana is going to ask if the UB Gender Institute or the Leslie Lohman Center would be willing to provide sponsorship. Adrienne will ask the Pride Center. **If you have other ideas for sponsors, please let us know.**

Update: Burlesque Fundraiser

Inbal has been doing a really good job working on this fundraiser; however, she's had some trouble contacting Nola for further planning. The troupe's performance space is a no-go: it's not accessible, and at this point, Nola herself has expressed her preference not to hold the event there. We're now in a holding pattern.

Unfortunately, this delay is posing a big problem for us. Inbal is leaving for North Carolina in mid-August to go to grad school (cue tears here), and she has to spend the first half of August prepping for her move. This means she has to step down as the planner of this fundraiser. For the time being, Ana is our primary liaison with Nola, but **if you can and/or are willing to help with the fundraiser, please let Ana know.**

Nola has suggested El Museo as an alternative venue, but has also suggested that we do some of the work of finding a venue. Carolyn suggests that we hold the event at Sugar City, because using that venue costs either \$10 or five hours of volunteer work per hour. We thought that multiple History Project members could agree to volunteer in exchange for “renting” the venue: that way, we can maximize our admission profits, and also build a better relationship with Sugar City. Bonus: if Bridge is ready to do this, they could put up their exhibit on the Dyketones for people to look at in the front room, while the performance takes place in the back room. Carolyn will ask Bridge if they are ready to display that exhibit, and also look into the logistics of putting an exhibit up on the walls of Sugar City in the first place.

Ana is scheduled to talk with Nola on the evening of Monday, Aug. 8 about all this. We will keep you updated as we know more.

Trans Committee Update

The Trans Committee is slowly but surely working its way toward the launch of its oral history project. The committee has been broken down into three subcommittees: one focused on doing outreach and putting together the questions for the interviews, one who will do archival research to support the interviews, and one who will do secondary source research to put what we learn about Buffalo’s trans community into a historical and inter/national context. The committee is hoping to have a pilot interview done by late summer/early fall.

The next Trans Committee meeting is on **Sunday, August 7, at Grindhaus at 4 p.m.** Bridget is the coordinator of the Trans Committee; if you are interested in participating or have any questions about the committee, please contact her.

POC Committee Update

We are proud to announce the founding of another History Project committee, focused on researching and recording the experiences of queer and trans people of color, which will be coordinated by Marielle.

Marielle and Adrienne have been doing some background research on the history of local QTPOC in the Madeline Davis Archives. So far, they have found two stories to pursue. The first is about the history of Shades, an organization by and for lesbians of color in Buffalo. Founded in the early 1990s, Shades appears to have mostly been a social group. We are interested in learning more about the conditions of its founding, and speaking with some of the organization’s former members. The second story, we can barely find any evidence for at all, but it’s really intriguing: there is some evidence that in the 1970s, a group of LGBT people of color sued a number of white-owned gay bars in Buffalo for discriminatory practices against POC (for example, forcing POC to show three pieces of identification in order to enter a bar, whereas white people were allowed to show one or even zero pieces of ID). This feels like a deeply important story; however, the only evidence we have been able to find in the archives about this story come from an audio interview with Ann Hubbard, a Black lesbian and founding member of Shades who passed away in 2010.

Unfortunately, this is about all the information we can find about QTPOC in the Madeline Davis Archives. The archive, for all its abundance, is an overwhelmingly white archive-- which feels like an issue we may need to tackle down the line.

In any event, the first meeting of the POC Committee will take place on **Thursday, August 4 at 6 p.m., at Ashker's on Elmwood**. If you are interested, or have any questions, please feel free to contact Marielle.

Mission Statement

Lisa and Adrienne worked on the History Project's mission statement over the month, and at long last, have a draft to present to the group. The proposed mission statement is as follows:

*The Buffalo LGBTQ History Project is a volunteer-run organization that preserves and shares the histories of **all** local LGBTQ community members. We collect oral histories, assist in the preservation of archives, and otherwise document the legacies of Buffalonians of all races, genders, ages, and abilities, all across the LGBTQ identity spectrum. We seek to bridge generational gaps between community members, and to promote the idea that local and regional activist histories matter just as much as those that originated in large cities on the American coasts. And we believe that knowing our histories will guide us into more meaningful political action, both in the present and across the generations.*

We would like to hear your feedback! Love it? Hate it? Want to add, subtract, or revise something? Please respond, either in the comments of the Facebook post or in the Google group. Or just come to the August meeting prepared to discuss it.

Next Meeting

In keeping with our practice of holding meetings on the last Thursday of the month, our next meeting will be **Thursday, August 25** (which, btw, is Adrienne's birthday). The venue hasn't been decided yet, but will likely be somewhere on the East Side. We're thinking maybe Merriweather Library again, or Golden Cup, or one of the coffee shops off East Delevan, like Talk Coffee or EM Tea Coffee.

Speaking of coffee: Carolyn, our venue-finding maven, has some questions for the group. She wants to know:

- Are people okay with going to venues where they have to pay for a drink and/or food to be there, or would they prefer venues where that isn't necessary?
- Is it okay for us to hold meetings at venues where alcohol is served?

If you wish, you may respond to these questions right away in the comments to the Facebook post, or in the Google group. Carolyn plans to post polls with these questions in the near future, though, so be on the lookout for those.