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Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project

Feb. 25, 2018

Dramatis Personae: Collin, Nissa, Dani, Ana, Adrienne

This was not a regular monthly meeting--its purpose was to evaluate our progress toward the Black in Time event, and to figure out what we would need to do in order to make the event happen.

Changing the Date:

Our first order of business was to discuss changing the date of the event. Initially, we had planned to hold the event on March 10, because that was the only date in March that Robert Hairston could attend. However, for the past 3 weeks, despite multiple attempts on the parts of Adrienne, Melissa, Carolyn, and Ari Moore, we have been unable to reach Mr. Hairston.

Mr. Hairston's MIA status poses further problems for the planning process. It was his responsibility to secure a DJ; at this point, we are two weeks from the event without a DJ, which is not a good thing. Moreover, Adrienne has yet to begin press for the event, as she wanted a DJ name to include in the press release.

We therefore discussed the possibility of changing the date of the event. Because we have not been able to reach Mr. Hairston in 3 weeks, we conclude that he is no longer involved in planning the event, and therefore, we are no longer bound by his availability to choose a date. Ana has spoken with Denise Sweet about changing the date, and Denise says that the 23rd, 24th, 30th, or 31st would work.

The group generally agreed that we should push back the date of the event. Collin emphasized the necessity of quickly choosing a date and sticking with it; though he agrees with pushing the date back, he works in the restaurant industry, and he will need to secure the night off well in advance. Collin also mentioned that the 24th would be the tail end of UB's spring break, so holding the event that weekend might be detrimental to bringing people in from UB. Adrienne checked the academic schedule for Buff State, and determined that the 31st would be the tail end of their spring break, so we may have to short change students no matter what we do.

The group ultimately agreed to put a poll up on Facebook, to see whether group members preferred the weekend of the 24th or the 31st. Nissa will be in charge of that. It is also possible that, as we secure a DJ and do some other work for the event, things like DJ availability will make the choice for us.

Addendum: The day after this meeting, Ana checked Facebook, and discovered that there will be a ball on the 31st. We do not want to compete with the ball. So it seems that our choice is either the 24th, or the first weekend of April.

Memorabilia:

Ana reported on the status of our memorabilia-collecting process. Good news: we have a lot of pictures. Bad news: most of these pictures are from a single source--Ari Moore. The material is pretty versatile, and spans 5 decades, but if we want a truly representative exhibit, we need to borrow material from at least a few more people.

A couple of other people have expressed interest in sharing their memorabilia with us. Their status is as follows:

- *Ebony Johnson* - Was briefly off the radar because she lost her phone, but Adrienne and Ana ran into her at the Tonya Harvey vigil today and got her new phone number. Will hopefully follow up with her.
- *Reggie Griggs* - Is still interested, as far as we know. Needs a lot of follow-up.
- *Nadine from Sweets* - Is looking for pictures. We will need to follow up with her. Ana is her Facebook friend.

In addition to the memorabilia, Dani has expressed interest in doing another filming session at Sweets. So far, they have filmed 5 people (mostly lesbians, talking about their experiences with *A Touch of Class/134*), but they would like to collect more stories--including stories from men, and from older folks. To this end, Adrienne has agreed to connect with John Morgan (currently of *Black Men Talking*; formerly of the MOCHA Project) and Rev. Gerard Williams (of Unity Fellowship Church) about finding more interested folks to participate.

We also spoke a bit about presentation of memorabilia. We think that some photos can be presented in collage form, while some of the more distinctive photos can either be framed (Adrienne and Dani both have formidable frame collections), or perhaps even enhanced with the help of artists (Ana will talk to contacts in the Visual Studies program at UB about this). Collin expressed a desire that some of the more distinctive photos have captions; Ana mentioned that she is supposed to sit with Ari to get captions for some photos, and invited Collin to come along.

Since we have yet to find direct information about the 40s and 50s, we are looking through *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* for relevant passages, and want to find someone (maybe Nadine, since she is interested in the Little Harlem Hotel) to read those passages at the event.

Finally, we spent some time talking about community connections. So far, Adrienne and Ana have done the bulk of connecting with members of the broader community--mainly because they already know the community members we hope to connect with. But: a) this is a tiring job for two people to do alone; b) because we believe in openness, Ana and Adrienne do not want to be stingy with their connections. We want everyone who desires to have a connection to figures of historical importance in Buffalo's LGBTQ community. So, we're going to start purposely introducing other members of the group to these figures. Dani will

help Ana make a connection with Reggie Griggs, Collin will meet Ari Moore and John Morgan, and Carolyn will also connect with Rev. Gerard Williams.

Important Personages:

Glorious news: Tinamarie Sweet has agreed to MC the event! That leaves the task of securing a DJ. We agreed to the following plan: Ana will reach out to Richard Stepney and Obsidian Bellis as possible DJs, while also working with Denise to pursue other folks. If, by a week from now, that strategy doesn't yield results, Nissa and Collin will reach out to their connections (not ideal, because we want a member of the black LGBTQ community to DJ the event).

Press:

For the record: Amanda is a superhero. She has agreed to work on a poster for the event--even though she just broke her wrist. Collin's roommate will step up if Amanda decides that she does not want to work through a serious injury, but for now, we salute Amanda.

Adrienne promises she will draft a press release this coming week, and leave blanks for the information we yet need. That way, once all the details are secured, the press release can go out immediately.

Game Plan:

By March 3, we will:

- *Have a date secured.* To facilitate this, Nissa will put up a Facebook poll, asking people when they would like the new event date to be.
- *Hire a DJ.* Ana will talk to Richard Stepney and Obsidian Bellis, and help Denise Sweet make connections to other possible DJs. If a DJ is not secured by March 3, we will reach out to our emergency contacts.
- *Have press done.* Adrienne will draft a press release, and ask Amanda if she can finish a poster by this date.
- *Have a second filming date planned.* Dani will talk with Denise about another filming date, while Adrienne will attempt to recruit new people to be filmed by talking to her contacts at BMT and Unity Fellowship Church.

By March 10, we will:

- *Have posters out in the world.* See last meeting's minutes re: who volunteered to print and distribute posters.

We will tell people to send out memorabilia by the 12th, with the understanding that if we get it by the 17th, we'll be on track.

March 18, 4 p.m.: Party at Adrienne and Ana's house to put memorabilia together.