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June 2018; Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project Minutes

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Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project

June 12, 2018

Meeting Agenda

Dramatis Personae: Phoebe, Adrienne, Ana, Ryan, Jocelyn, Tanja, Anne Marie, Carolyn, D, Tinamarie, Amanda

Fundraising and Social Media Presence

New History Project member Anne Marie opened up the meeting for us. Anne Marie has been busy at work for the History Project over the past few weeks: she has taken over our Facebook and Instagram accounts, opened a Twitter account, and with the aid of Ana and Amanda, started a Patreon account for the group.

Engagement on our social media is rising slowly, but steadily. We gained 20 followers on Twitter--not bad for our first week. In order to increase our presence, however, Anne Marie needs History Project members' help. As we all know, Facebook's algorithm is screwy, and just because we create a post on social media doesn't mean it will appear in our followers' feeds. In order to guarantee that more of our followers see our posts/tweets, we need to boost them. And in order to boost posts, we need to interact with them: like them, click on links so that they open, and share links with our own friends lists. Anne Marie asks us all to interact with posts on Facebook, and if we have Twitter accounts, to like the page on Twitter.

Anne Marie is less confident about her Instagram skills, and asked for help figuring out our presence on that account. Amanda mentioned that archival images are very popular on Instagram, and suggested that we post some of ours on our account. Adrienne agreed to talk to Brigitte and Melissa about posting some images from our website archives, and to talk to Dan DiLandro of the Madeline Davis Archives about posting some of the fruits of our research on Instagram.

Our Patreon page has received a little attention: as of the meeting, patrons had pledged a total of \$275 for every event the History Project creates. Fundraising on Patreon is going a bit slower than Anne Marie hoped it would, and if it doesn't pick up within the next few days, Anne Marie asks all History Project members to engage in direct targeting. Each of us should pick at least 5 people to ask directly for donations. Anne Marie will write a script we can use for asking people to donate money.

The group briefly discussed a number of ways we can up our social media game, especially where fundraising is concerned. These included:

- Using more targeted language to market our community read on social media. Amanda feels that we need to emphasize the specificity of this event--the fact that it really couldn't happen anywhere but Buffalo. She is interested in working a refining the language we use to reframe this event.
- Relatedly, we need to have a nice, concise title for our event. Titles can be made into hashtags, and hashtags can be use to create buzz about an event.
- Tanja observed that many of our rewards on Patreon relate to our previous event--Black in Time. She suggests that we include more rewards that relate to the current event--perhaps signed copies of the book.

Speaking of rewards: we have promised rewards to our patrons, and we need to make good on those promises. Anne Marie has been doing some research into button making, and has found two potential methods: we can either get button-making material from UB SOFEM, and make the buttons ourselves; or we can design the buttons and then outsource making them. Both methods are cost-equivalent, so the group has decided to go the outsourcing route. Amanda will design the buttons. One will be of our logo, and the other will likely be *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* themed. Amanda has volunteered to design them. Once the buttons are designed, we will begin to hold "parties" at regular intervals to send rewards out to patrons.

We then began to talk about other forms of fundraising, outside of social media. D, who had previously spoken to a few members of the group about directly petitioning members of the Buffalo City Council for donations, asked how that process was going. Adrienne replied that although she and Jocelyn had sent emails to every member of the Buffalo City Council, not a single member had responded to their requests. D and Tinamarie encouraged the group to keep following up. Jocelyn had the idea that perhaps emailing City Council members directly wasn't the greatest idea--perhaps we would be better off reaching out to intermediaries first. Jocelyn thinks she has a contact list of intermediaries somewhere; she will send it to Adrienne.

Gena expressed interest in planning a fish fry fundraiser for the group. Because she wasn't able to attend the meeting, we weren't able to discuss this plan in detail, but it should be on our collective horizon.

Finally, the group discussed grants. Gena and Adrienne have completed the Pollination Project grant, and have mostly turned it in--except that right before Adrienne turned it in, she found an obscure clause on the Pollination Project website which "strongly encouraged" applicants to turn in 2-3 minute videos explaining their projects. Fortunately, Anne Marie swooped in, and used her phone to record the meeting. She will also record short interviews with members, and edit them together

to make the asked-for video. Wish us luck, folks! If we get this, that could mean up to \$1,000 for us.

Tanja, meanwhile has applied for a grant from Public Humanities NY, who has tentatively pledged to give us \$500. In order to get it, though, we need to specify the venues, and those venues need to be ADA-compliant. We presented some future venues for Tanja to add to the grant.

Assignments:

- EVERYONE:
 - Share the History Project's posts all over social media.
 - Ask 5 people to donate to our Patreon page.
- Anne Marie:
 - Continue being a social media maven.
 - Edit video for Pollination Project grant.
- Adrienne:
 - Talk to Brigitte, Melissa, and Dan DiLandro about posting archival images on Instagram.
 - Continue bugging local government officials about donations to our event series.
 - Send finished video to Pollination Project.
- Amanda:
 - Help Anne Marie with Instagram strategy.
 - Design buttons for our patrons.
- Jocelyn:
 - Send Adrienne local government contact list.

She Walked Here: A Community Read

That's right, folks: we have a name for our *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold* event series. (More about that later.) But we still have A LOT of details to work out.

Kickoff Venue

Thanks to the illustrious Ana, we have reserved the Historic Colored Musicians Club for our event kickoff. The cost of the venue is \$320, and the club is okay with us paying the day of the event. The Colored Musicians Club will open their bar, but it will be up to us to provide food.

There was some discussion over whether it was okay for us to bring homemade food to a public venue. D, however, says we're covered. So, like good lesbians, we will make fresh hummus.

Publicity

The name for our event came from an idea that Amanda and Phoebe had for publicizing the community read. Phoebe wanted to create “Before and After” posters, where pictures of historical lesbian bars in their heyday were juxtaposed with images of the same sites today. Amanda loved that idea, and also has some graphic ideas that play with the confrontational images of women in the pages of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*. She was playing with the idea of “She was here” as a slogan, when Adrienne suggested that phrase as the title of the event. After a bit more discussion, the group agreed on “She Walked Here” as a title (a nod, also, to the lyrics of the Madeline Davis song that forms the basis of the book’s title).

Amanda is very interested in establishing the look and rhetorical frame of the event series, and has agreed to put together a poster. She would like, if possible, to print a poster that is larger than 8½ x 11”, and of slightly higher quality. Ana has agreed to approach UB about possibly assisting with printing. Adrienne, meanwhile, will write a press release for the event, Carolyn will try to spread the news on Buff State’s website, and Amanda will rep the event at Ambush on Friday.

Tanja and D asked a few questions about how to market the event and the book to Buffalonians. Not everyone knows about the book, and therefore, not everyone will know why it’s important. Some of our potential ideas for generating excitement about this book, especially on social media, include:

- Putting together a Spark Notes version of the book.
- Posting profiles of famous lesbian bars on social media.
- Posting factoids and pictures from the archives.

Making Books Available

Over the past several weeks, Phoebe has been in conversation with Talking Leaves about supplying or possibly donating books for the cause. Talking Leaves sells the book for \$31.95, but the actual cost to them for the book is \$28. They could sell it at slightly less than market price, but as a struggling independent bookstore, they’re not exactly chomping at the bit to donate books to us. Jocelyn asked if we had emailed the publishers of the book yet, and when we replied no, she offered to do so on the group’s behalf.

We took stock of how far we were from our goal of subsidizing 25 book copies. Adrienne and Ana reported that Christine has already bought three copies of the book and sent those copies to their house. We have had at least 2 patrons subscribe

to our Patreon at the book level. D offered to buy 5 copies of the book and donate them to the cause, and Anne Marie and Adrienne will buy some copies as well. That brings us about halfway to our goal. (Tanja reminds us to keep our receipts so we can get reimbursed from the grant money when it arrives.) Additionally, Adrienne will talk to Madeline Davis about, among other things, possibly donating any spare copies of the book she has.

Based on our progress so far, we have come up with a 3-tier system for getting the book into the hands of people who don't already have it. For those who can afford it, we will ask them to purchase the book at full price. Those with less money will be offered the chance to buy one of the use copies we've procured at sliding scale price--probably between \$5 and \$10, depending on what they can afford. And for those who find buying even a used book a financial hardship, we will create a "book buddy" system, where someone who can't buy a book shares with someone who already has a copy. (Bonus: This will create accountability, and an opportunity for people who don't know each other to bond through the community read process.)

Kickoff Event

So, what's actually happening at the kickoff event? Here's what we came up with:

- *Opening remarks:* Why are we doing this? Why now? Why Buffalo? We kicked around multiple possible ideas about these opening remarks: possibly a member of the History Project could make them, or maybe even one of the book's authors. Adrienne will ask Liz and Madeline if they are interested in speaking in this capacity at the kickoff event.
- *Curated archival material:* Although the group has looked at material in the Madeline Davis Archives, we have not selected any of it for an exhibit. As a group, we therefore decided to meet at the Madeline Davis Archives at 8am on Monday, June 18, and start making selections.
- *Dramatized readings:* These could either be from the book itself, or from archival material informing the book. No decision has yet been made on what these selections will be, or who will select them. We have, however, made a short list of people we may ask to read at the event: Anne Marie, Amanda, Jocelyn, 1-2 volunteers from BILA, Sherri Darrow, Carol Speser, Robbie Butler, Julie Carter, Camille Hopkins.
- *An interactive map:* We brainstormed a way that participants could post their own reactions to the event, as in the art exhibition *We Wanted a Revolution*. We finally decided to post a large map of Buffalo where we marked the sites of 1940s and 1950s lesbian bars, as actually appears in *Boots of Leather*,

Slippers of Gold. People who attend the event will be given notes (Phoebe suggested sticky notes that looked like the titular boots and slippers) upon which they can write their own recollections of life in LGBTQ Buffalo, and will be invited to post their stories on the map, as well. At the end of the event, we can preserve those narratives, and with the permission of the posters, we can post them on social media every now and then.

- *Period-appropriate music*: Ana will work to curate a playlist.

Other Events:

We have yet to plan subsequent events after the kickoff, or to plan how to break down the book for discussion. But in addition to the walking tour, we have discussed a discussion on butch-fem sexuality and relationships that begins with teaching the dances that were popular in lesbian bars of the period. (Adrienne thinks she has a lead on an instructor.) Jocelyn has also suggested that Chapter 4, on race and class in the 1950s, might be interesting for a targeted discussion.

Commitments for Next Week

The group does not feel confident enough in its plans for the kickoff event to hold off on meeting for another month. Therefore, we will hold a meeting in another week on **Tuesday, June 19**. (This is in addition to the archive visit on **Monday, June 18**.)

Because we are meeting in a week, and because there is so much to do in the ensuing weeks, each group member agreed to choose up to 3 things to commit to doing by next week's meeting. These are our commitments:

Carolyn:

- Go to the Madeline Davis Archives on Monday.
- Distribute posters, if there are any to be distributed.
- Try to get the event on the Buff State website.

Amanda:

- Create visual and verbal rhetoric of event, including poster layout.
- Go to the Madeline Davis Archives on Monday.
- Help out with social media and Patreon as needed.
- Rep event at Ambush.

Anne Marie:

- Rep event at Ambush.

- Make video for Pollination Project grant.
- Buy copies of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*.
- Make Facebook event page.

Phoebe:

- Continue arranging the song “Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold.”
- Contact Amanda re: putting song on sheet music.
- Continue communication with John from Talking Leaves.
- Work on sticky note design for interactive map.

Adrienne:

- Contact Madeline Davis and/or Liz Kennedy.
- Plan trip to Madeline Davis Archives.
- Write press release.
- Create 3 factoids about local lesbian bars.

Jocelyn:

- Go to the Madeline Davis Archives on Monday.
- Find list of legislative contacts for Adrienne.
- Contact publisher of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*.

D:

- Buy copies of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*.
- Recruit readers from BILA.

Ana:

- Continue working on Patreon page.
- Talk to Camille and Carol about reading at kickoff event.
- Research and start working on playlist.