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Buffalo Niagara LGBTQ History Project

Feb. 13, 2019

Dramatis Personae. Marek, Dean, Jeff, Adrienne, Catherine, Lydia, Ana

Because a lot of people were prevented from attending this meeting by the surprise blizzard (or snow squalls, because apparently those are totally different from a blizzard?), our agenda for this month was truncated from the original plans. Please stay tuned to History Project social media to find out how you can help us advance our projects!

Update on Project 501c3

The 501c3 team met in January to nominate board members. Thanks to their efforts, we now have five board members:

Michael Boucai (UB, History Project volunteer since 2018)

Eugenia Edwards (Lion Entertainment, History Project volunteer)

Christiana Limniatis (Preservation Buffalo Niagara, helped us plan She Walked Here)

John Morgan (founding member of The MOCHA Project and NY State Black Gay Network)

Carol Speser (a bajillion organizations, most recently RSVP)

We also agreed to ask Ari Moore and Chevon Davis to join the board. Ari Moore, alas, declined; she's got too many commitments already, although she was quick to assure us that she's willing to help the History Project in literally any other way. Chevon Davis has, as yet, proven impossible to contact. If anyone has Chevon's contact info, please come forward!

Another thing to keep in mind: we would like to have between 1 and 3 History Project volunteers on the board. We will hold off on nominating people until the March meeting, but we encourage all History Project members to consider whether they might be interested in joining the board.

In the meantime, the 501c3 team will meet before the March general meeting to discuss our second round of board asks.

Documentary Project

Ana and Jeff reported on a meeting they held with some of our filmmaker partners last month, preparing to work on our ball scene documentary project in earnest. At the meeting, the team went through our existing footage, to see what can be incorporated into the documentary, and to generate questions and ideas about how to move forward on the project.

During the meeting, the group spent a lot of time discussing the scope and political/ethical concerns surrounding the creation of this documentary. Through media like the TV show *Pose*, the ball scene has been getting a lot of national attention of late, so the group wanted to discuss what it means to make a documentary about a local ball scene in that context. How do we pay attention to the national context, while carving out a unique political and artistic space for this movie? Among other things, the group discussed either expanding the scope of the documentary from a narrow focus on the ball scene to Black gender nonconforming Buffalonians more generally, or simply trying to pay special attention to the broader contexts that led to the creation of a local ball scene.

The group agreed that Tonya Harvey was part of this story, as she participated in the local ball scene prior to her murder. There is a Tonya Harvey rally this coming Monday, and the team is planning to film footage and possibly interviews on site. But there is also general agreement that the narrative thread about Tonya Harvey needs to be sensitive, and not devolve into tragedy porn.

Ana is working to put together a follow-up meeting for the documentary team, but they also need help from all History Project members. Specifically, they need people who are willing to:

- **Transcribe interviews.** Ana and the team will give Adrienne some audio files that need to be transcribed, and Adrienne will post them to the History Project page. If you are looking for some easy volunteer work that can be done from home, this is it!
- **Conduct research.** The group needs people to conduct archival research on local scenes, and compile a bibliography of texts/media on ball scenes/Black LGBTQ communities in general. If you are interested in participating, talk to Ana, Jeff, or Adrienne.
- **Sound editing.** The group needs someone skilled with sound editing in the context of video. At the meeting, Lydia offered to help out with this.

Ana will begin making plans for a follow-up meeting shortly, so if you are interested in helping with this project, let her know. There may be some “homework” for the next meeting - some transcribed interviews of local activists that you should read beforehand.

Animal Collective

Dean reported on the progress of the “queers and their pets” project, which now bears the name “Animal Collective.” The group has accomplished quite a bit in the past few weeks, and is well on its way to a successful event. So far, the group has conducted about 20 interviews, has collected or borrowed memorabilia corresponding to each interview, and will be completing more interviews before our deadline. In addition, a couple of local writers have agreed to compose their own contribution to the project. Our submission deadline is

Feb. 20, and we anticipate having enough submissions to make for an interesting zine and exhibition.

The event itself will take place on March 9, from 3 to 7 pm, at Raqs Solidarity (322 Amherst Street). Now that we know for sure that this will be our venue, we have to finalize a concept for how to display the memorabilia we've collected, what we need to make this display, and how much it will cost. We have some basic concepts for display (using Eve's peg board for one wall of memorabilia, draping the mirror with cloth, using the provided screen to project some video submissions, and having the adoptable pets in the conference room), but we particularly need to know what cloth, mounting board, and enlarging photos is going to cost us. Lydia will be working on that in the coming days.

Other things we need to work on next:

- **Publicity.** Lydia has almost finished the poster; Adrienne will need to send it out to the printer's. Adrienne also needs to write and send out a press release for the event.
- **Transcribing interviews.** This is something we need the entire History Project to work on. Interviewers who need help should either send their audio files to bflolgbtqhistory@gmail.com, or place them in the Google drive. Adrienne can then assign them to History Project members.
- **Compiling digital memorabilia.** Lydia and Ana report that there is already a folder for digital memorabilia on our Google drive. Now it is the responsibility of everyone who has collected digital memorabilia to place it in that folder.
- **Establishing the tone of the exhibition.** Ana will be working with Canisius College professor and friend-of-the-project Tanya Loughead on the curatorial text. In the meantime, we ask everyone who has interviewed subjects for this event to come to our next meeting with a sample caption, so we can make sure we are on the same page, re: how to write captions.

NEXT GROUP MEETING: Monday, Feb. 18, 6:30pm, at Sugar City (1239 Niagara Street—we're meeting at the very beginning of the Queer and Trans Craft-Luck!)

STUFF WE NEED FROM THE GENERAL GROUP: Interview transcribers, poster distributors, and people who will help us set up the exhibition on March 8 and 9. Is that you? Let us know! Email bflolgbtqhistory@gmail.com or post on our FB group!

Stonewall 50th Anniversary Project

The initial plan for this month's general meeting was to jumpstart this project. Jeff was going to give us a brief lesson on the origins of Mattachine Society of the Niagara Frontier, and Cory was going to talk to us about the logistics of two of the projects we wanted to achieve: commandeering a parking lot for a party and getting an historical plaque. Because

of the weather, however, Cory wasn't able to make it, and Jeff decided to hold off on his lesson until more people were present. Jeff did share his personal research binder with the group, though, and Cory wrote up his findings (which will be included in the appendix below). We agreed to set up a meeting before month's end to launch this project. Ana will be in charge of setting up that meeting.

Rebranding the History Project, Part 2

Amanda continued her work on creating a new logo for the History Project, and presented her findings. Her work will be posted separately from the minutes, as it is too extensive to be summarized here. In essence, she is pursuing and proposing three options:

- Keeping Option A from last month (the logo with the diagonal lines) on the table.
- Reworking Option B. This constituted the majority of her presentation tonight, as she showed us a number of possible reworkings.
- Working on Option C with her friend Evan, a designer whose style is very different from hers.

We agreed upon the following timeline: Amanda will present to us the final three logo options by the end of the month, and we will vote on a logo at the next general meeting.

Final Thoughts

Marek Parker attended our meeting. Among other things, he is working with a group of local activists on putting together a homeless shelter and community center for LGBTQ people. (For those who are interested in making the shelter a reality, there is a [GoFundMe](#) open right now.) Marek invited History Project members to join their meetings, and floated, just as a preliminary idea, the possibility that the community center could become our institutional home and meeting place.

APPENDIX: Cory's Report on ParkingLot Party

I would first like to recommend that for the Stonewall event we find a venue that is not a parking lot for reasons I'll explain below. I recommend that we move forward with a Stonewall event at a venue where we will not need to worry about, security, insurance, food and beverages, etc. But for the sake of argument if we were to pursue the idea of reclaiming a parking lot these are the steps we will have to take:

Before we can explore the option of reclaiming a parking lot we need to first decide what the Stonewall event will look like exactly. We should start meeting to discuss exact programming. How the event will look and what the entertainment will be. If we go with the parking lot idea we will need to have something to pitch to the owners of these lots to justify holding the event on that space. This would require us to be meeting now so that we can find an event in time to advertise for it and have all the proper permits filed in time. I don't think we have this amount of time to flesh out a program, find and secure a parking lot, advertise for the event by June. It is for this reason I recommend we move forward with the Stonewall event at a venue such as a bar or restaurant.

If we want to do an event with a parking lot in the fall I think we can pull that off. Once we have an event planned and a site found we can start the permit process with the City of Buffalo. A special events permit is \$250 to apply. A successful application requires us to have a detailed description of the event from start to finish: it would include a map of what the site will look like, proof of security, proof the venue is properly fenced off, where toilets will be at the site, how food and beverages will be handled, and proof of insurance.

With food and beverages we have two options: catering or food and beverage trucks. Trucks are the easiest and cheapest options. Both options will have their own permits to serve food with the County so we will not need to file for a separate permit. Catering requires us to have the staff available to serve the food. Food trucks will provide their own staff. Beer trucks will need to be staffed by us and if we include alcohol of any kind we will be required to sell beer and wine tickets. Which in turn will mean our event will be closed to the public and will require us to sell tickets in. Increasing our need of staff for the event as well as security. To my understanding we will also need to apply for a permit with the State Liquor Authority which is \$150.

Aside from hiring security, renting toilets, renting fencing (if the site has no fence) we will also need to apply for special events insurance and will need proof of insurance when applying for a special event.

I strongly suggest we wait to do a parking lot event until after we procure 501c3 status. Once a non profit a lot of these costs will become much cheaper. If we have proof of our status it would be possible to get things such as fencing donated and other expenses will become eligible to be tax exempt. We will also then be able to better receive donations at the door. We might also be able to receive donations that might help drive attendance, such as having items provided for a silent auction or having different small businesses or organizations come to table at the event.

I apologize again for missing tonight and I do hope this makes sense. I originally framed this to be an open discussion so we can weigh the pros and cons of everything. My final recommendation is that we hold off on doing a parking lot event until later in the summer or fall after we procure 501c3 status. I recommend that for the Stonewall event we start to meet now so that we can determine what the event will look like so we can secure a venue and begin to advertise the event.