



# Queer Pasts

*Experiences and perspectives of under-represented historical groups*



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**QUEER PASTS** is a collection of primary source exhibits for students and scholars of queer history and culture, curated by academic editors Marc Stein and Lisa Arellano. The database uses “queer” in its broadest and most inclusive sense, to embrace topics that are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender and to include work on sexual and gender formations that are queer but not necessarily LGBT. Each of the document collections in the database will include a critical introductory essay that helps explain the significance of the primary sources in historical terms and in relationship to previous scholarship.

This database seeks to broaden the field of queer history, including projects that focus on the experiences and perspectives of under-represented historical groups, including people of color, trans people, and people with disabilities.

## ITS EDITORS AND THEIR VISION

Every exhibit includes 20–40 primary source documents and an introductory essay. The documents will appear in both their original form and in (searchable) transcription.

The introductory essay will help explain the significance of the primary sources in historical terms and in relationship to previous scholarship. Editors Marc Stein and Lisa Arellano ask the exhibit editors to address the strengths, limitations, and characteristics of their archive and to explore the ways in which archives are constructed, constrained, and contested.

Launching in November 2021 with 3 exhibits, followed by 3 more in Spring 2022.

## INTRODUCING MARC STEIN AND LISA ARELLANO



**Marc Stein** is the Jamie and Phyllis Pasker Professor of History at San Francisco State University. He is a historian of U.S. law, politics, and society, with research and teaching interests in constitutional law, social movements, gender, race and sexuality.



**Lisa Arellano** is a visiting Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Mills College and Research Associate at Colby College. Her research and teaching focus on comparative social movements, critical historiography and violence studies.

## EXHIBITS IN THE NOVEMBER 2021 LAUNCH WILL INCLUDE:

### RECLAMATION PROJECTS: AN ARCHIVE OF QUEER LATINIDAD



**Pablo Mitchell**  
History and Comparative American  
Studies, Oberlin College

**Exhibit Description:** This collection takes an expansive view of the history of queer Latinidad in the United States, drawing on a wide array of archival sources ranging from legal records and census documents to personal letters and newspaper articles.

The documents assembled here reflect the considerable diversity of the U.S. Latinx community in the 19th and early 20th centuries as Latin American and Caribbean immigrants to the East Coast and Florida joined the country's long-standing Mexican-descent population in the United States.





# THE CITY NIGHTCLUB: A COMMUNITY OF QUEER YOUTH IN PORTLAND, OREGON 1977–1997



**Lisa Arellano**

*Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies,  
Colby College/Mills College*

**Exhibit Description:** From 1983 to 1997, The City Nightclub was an all-ages gay nightclub in Portland, Oregon. By design, the venue made youth sexuality and sexual identity explicit, an acknowledgment that placed the club in a complex and often contentious relationship with local authorities and some members of the local community.

Beyond simply acknowledging that young people were gay, The City Nightclub was perceived as enabling intergenerational and commercial gay sex, triggering heightened scrutiny and the eventual closure of the club. The club's history offers a vivid example of how state power seeks to manage and control youth sexuality through familial frameworks and the criminalization of desire.

This history also reveals that the club was not merely a safe haven for Portland's queer (and often homeless) youth, but a battle zone for the City of Portland and the club's proprietor, who was a fierce critic of state policing.



# POWER, POLITICS, AND RACE IN THE 1968 PHILADELPHIA STUDY OF PRISON SEXUAL VIOLENCE



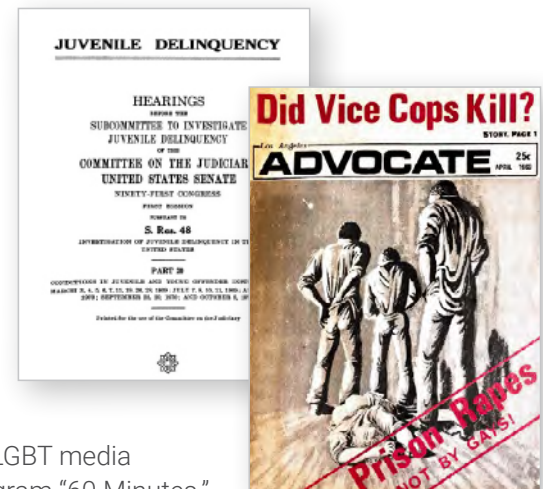
**Marc Stein**

*Professor of History, San Francisco  
State University*

**Exhibit Description:** This exhibit focuses on a groundbreaking 1968 study of same-sex sexual violence in Philadelphia's male prisons. The explosive report addressed racial dynamics, situational homosexuality, masculinity crises, and the causes of sexual violence.

The exhibit's primary sources include the 1968 Davis study, mainstream and LGBT media articles, transcripts of U.S. Senate hearings, and a clip from the television program "60 Minutes."

The introductory essay situates the Davis study in its time and place, discusses the media coverage, describes the responses of government officials and social scientists, and provides suggestions about how to interpret the primary sources.



## PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

### Queer API History, 1920–1960

*Amy Sueyoshi, Associate Dean of Ethnic Studies, San Francisco State University*

### AIDS Knows No Borders: Protesting the Ban on HIV-Positive Migrants, 1990–1993

*Karma Chavez, Associate Professor of Mexican American & Latina/o Studies, University of Texas, Austin*

### Documenting Campus Gay Activism through the Michigan Student Press, 1960–1979

*Tim Retzlaff, Instructor, Department of History, Michigan State University*

### Geographies of Lesbian Social Life, 1950–1980

*Lisa Arellano, Visiting Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Mills College*

## ■ FUTURE EXHIBITS HIGHLIGHTS:

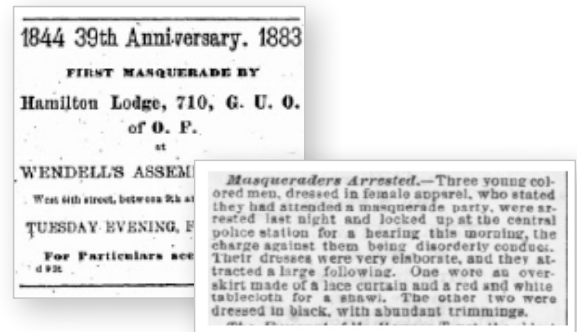
### THE WORLD OF WILLIAM DORSEY SWANN, 1860–1825



**Channing Gerard Joseph**  
Annenberg School for Communication and  
Journalism, University of Southern California

**Exhibit Description:** This collection provides a selection of documents showcasing what is currently known about the development of drag culture and queer activism in the United States, focusing on the remarkable history of William Dorsey Swann.

The exhibit begins with the earliest available evidence of male-male romance among enslaved Americans (1850s). The exhibit includes documents about the earliest published uses of the crossdressing term “drag”; documentation of the queer-sex culture of Washington, D.C. in the 1870s; evidence of crossdressing at an early masquerade among formerly enslaved people; Swann’s drag balls as a community-building tool and his role as “queen” of the earliest queer-resistance organization; the comments of early psychiatrists about Swann’s organization; Swann’s presidential pardon files; and post-Swann drag organizations, queens, and female impersonators in Washington.



### ARE THERE REALLY ONLY TWO ASIAN LESBIANS IN CHICAGO?:” QUEER ASIAN VISIBILITY AND COMMUNITY FORMATION IN CHICAGO 1980S–1990s



**Laura Fugikawa**  
American Studies and Women’s, Gender,  
and Sexuality Studies, Colby College

**Exhibit Description:** This collection considers the invisibility of Chicago queer Asians and the creation of queer Asian community organizations in the 1980s–1990s.

When read as a collection, newspaper articles, community newsletters and oral histories trace a significant, albeit still understudied, history of community organizing in Chicago. These documents provide insight into a myriad of issues relevant to community members, and the reasons queer Asian community groups emerged when and where they did.

The material also illuminates how this experience of feeling invisible and ignored, and specifically disregarded by mainstream and non-Asian gay communities, inspired Asian American acts of visibility and community organizing on the local, national and international scale.



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