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Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project Minutes

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# September 2016; Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project Minutes

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## Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project Monthly Meeting - Sept. 29, 2016

*Dramatis Personae:* Marielle, Bridge, Bridget, Adrienne, Liz, Clarissa, Felix, Camille, Ana

First things first: WE HAVE A NEW NAME! We are now known as the **Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project**. It's a subtle change, but we wanted a name that:

- explains clearly who we are and what we do;
- reflects the fact that we are interested in LGBTQ histories in the entire region, and not just in Buffalo proper;
- has name recognition both within and outside the region (as non-Western New Yorkers often don't know that residents call this area Western New York);
- doesn't give off the mistaken impression that we are active in Rochester, too; and
- is not the mouthful of acronyms that WNY LGBTQ History Project (working name) was.

So, be aware that you will start seeing that name change on social media. Also, hooray! We finally figured out what our group's name is, and it only took us almost a year!

Okay, on with the show.

### Swimming with Lesbians screening:

This has been a couple months in the planning, and you've probably seen whispers of it on social media, but it's official: we have a screening date for *Swimming with Lesbians*! This is a 2009 documentary, directed by David Marshall, which focuses on Madeline Davis-- an amazing local LGBTQ activist which you may alternatively know as the co-author of *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, the singer-songwriter who wrote the protest theme "Stonewall Nation," and of course, the founder of the Madeline Davis GLBT archives. The documentary follows Davis' efforts to create and find an institutional home for the archives, and delves into some of the stories of local activists that inspired the archives in the first place. It also stars our very own Camille Hopkins, reading the letters of local trans activist Peggie Ames.

The documentary itself is only about an hour long, so we'll follow it up with a panel discussion/Q&A, which Adrienne will moderate. The panel will include Ms. Madeline herself, Camille (talking about her involvement in the documentary), and Dan DiLandro who, as we all know, is the current curator of the Madeline Davis Archives.

Important details:

- **Tuesday, October 18, at 7 p.m., at Hallwalls.** (Thanks to Sarah Kolberg and the Leslie Lohman Museum for grabbing that venue for us, for absolutely free!)
- No admission fee, but a **suggested donation of \$5**. More gratefully accepted, and no one turned away for lack of funds. All proceeds go to us. We should make this clear to the audience, and make sure they know that we are a volunteer-run organization who are desperate/grateful for their money.

- Dan DiLandro has been asked to: a) bring some info people can look through prior to the screening, encouraging them to donate to the archives; b) create a mini-exhibit of stuff from the archives that people can look through. He will likely do (a), but it is unclear as of yet whether he will have the ability to do (b).
- Co-sponsored by the Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, the UB Gender Institute, and the Queer Studies Research Workshop.

*How do we prepare for the screening?*

First things first: OUTREACH.

Ana has been our liaison with Sarah Kolberg/the Leslie Lohman Museum, who is co-sponsoring the event. Sarah says that in her position as co-sponsor, she will:

- promote the event on the Leslie Lohman and Queer Studies Research Workshop listservs;
- help share our Facebook event widely (but it is up to us to make the Facebook event);
- help distribute our poster (but it is up to us to make one).

So: Ana is going to make and print a poster for the event. (Note: serious kudos to Madeline Davis and her spouse Wendy Smiley, who gave us the computer files for the original screening poster! Ana will be making a poster based on/inspired by that poster.) That poster will be done by **next Tuesday**, and thanks to Bridge, copies will be available as of **Wednesday, October 5 at No Labels Clothing Cooperative** (224 Allen Street) for pickup.

Here is our plan for distributing the posters. If you want to help, and/or see a place we haven't covered, PLEASE SPEAK UP! We'd love your help!

- Marielle - from Buff State to East Delavan
- Bridge - Dreamland, GLYS
- Liz - Erie County library system, from East Delavan to Summer
- Clarissa - South Buffalo
- Felix - Hertel Avenue
- Adrienne - East Aurora, D'Youville College, Golden Cup on Jefferson, will reach out to Carolyn about flyering in Williamsville, Tipico Coffee
- Bridget - will make sure that UB is covered, Allen Street
- Ana - will help with UB and D'Youville, Black Rock
- Camille - Amherst (the suburb, not the street)

We also have a plan to reach out to publications and institutions for signal boosting. Again, if we've missed something, please speak up!

- Bridget - will make Facebook invite
- Adrienne - CYOA mailing list, *Karibu News*, *The Challenger* (must physically go to offices to do this), Dyke March planning committee, will reach out to Molly about sharing with Silver Pride
- Ana - will promote at UB Gender Institute, will send digital copy of poster to Bridget for inclusion in Facebook invite, Cultivate Cinema Circle

- Bridge - will talk to Pride Center, will talk to Mikey Rizzo about getting screening in LGBTQ events list in *The Public*
- Marielle - *Artvoice* calendar
- Camille - will promote on Spectrum page
- Liz - will reach out to Ambush organizers

Secondly: We need to prep for the event. Some of this work is pretty simple: Ana will ask Sarah how early we need to be at the venue on Oct. 18. Camille, Adrienne, and Liz have offered to be donation takers (let us know if you'd like to help!).

The big thing we need to do to get ready, however, is MAKE SOME INSTITUTIONAL LITERATURE that we can hand out to people at the event, so they know who we are. This a huge opportunity to get new members on board, encourage trans folk in the area to participate in our oral history project, etc. Also, as we'll discuss below, it'll help us prep for tabling, which we need to do a lot of.

So, here's what that prepping process looks like:

- We will make a brochure explaining who we are, what we do, and how people can get involved.
  - Adrienne and Camille - writing
  - Liz - graphics
  - Ana - layout and printing
- Adrienne, Ana, Liz, Camille, and Bridget - will finish drafting release forms and promotional materials for trans oral history project.
  - Ana will set up meeting and/or start Google doc for this purpose.
  - Deadline: **Friday, October 7.**
- Bridge: Will get a WordPress website made.

As with all this other stuff: if you want to be involved and aren't yet, PLEASE LEAVE A COMMENT ON THE FACEBOOK PAGE. We'd love to plug you in!

### Tabling:

It has occurred to us that we should really be promoting ourselves by tabling at public events. We know that it's a bit past prime tabling season, but we figure that: a) we need to prep for the Trans Health Conference anyway, and b) developing an amazing tabling game in the off-season will help us be prepared when next summer comes around.

Carolyn, our publicity maven, has been trying to find tabling opportunities for us, but has been coming up short. She is stumped, in that insidious "I don't know what I don't know" sense. So, she has asked us to come up with ideas for places we can table this fall. Here is what we've come up with this far, and who will make the effort to reach out and reserve us a table. If you know anything we've missed, PLEASE LET US KNOW.

- Trans Health Conference - Nov. 18-19. Carolyn will look into reserving us a table.
- Central Library has tabling all the time. Liz will look at calendar on website/talk to supervisor about tabling opportunities.

- Ana will find out about UB tabling opportunities.
- Second Saturdays at the Foundry usually reserves a couple tables for nonprofit orgs. Adrienne will look into tabling there.
- Women's Gifts at Hallwalls in December. Camille will check this out.

### Party in the Archives!

As part of their background work for the trans oral history project, Adrienne and Bridget visited the Madeline Davis Archives. It was so much fun that: a) they're going to commit to visiting the archives every month, usually around the second Friday of the month, and b) they want to invite EVERYONE in the Buffalo-Niagara LGBTQ History Project to join them, regardless of what committee they're on (or even if they don't work with a committee at all).

Although we love the Madeline Davis Archives, we want to make sure it is not the only place we visit. We know, for example, that a lot of activists in the area maintain massive private archives. And as abundant as the Madeline Davis Archives are, they have some shortcomings--they don't, for example, contain a lot of stuff about LGBTQ people of color, and they don't have a whole lot of information about LGBTQ happenings in Buffalo prior to, say, the mid-20th century. To get some of those histories, we will have to go elsewhere.

Our very own Liz works in the Special Collections at Central Library, in the Grosvenor Room. She thinks this would be a good place to delve into as-yet-unearthed LGBTQ histories in this region. They have a massive newspaper and microfilm collection--and she's already found some stories there, including an article from the *Buffalo Courier* in 1924, which describes a Black drag performer borrowing/being accused of stealing dresses for a performance. There's also a small section focused on LGBTQ issues, and some pamphlets written by Leslie Feinberg.

The Grosvenor Room is open until 8 p.m. on Thursday nights, so in October, we are going to have our monthly Party in the Archives in the **Grosvenor Room at Central Library** on **Thursday, October 13**. Join us if you'd like!

### Trans Committee Update:

Fabulous news: the Trans Committee has conducted their first oral history interview! On Thursday, Sept. 22, five members of the committee descended on Ari Moore's house, with recording equipment rented from Squeaky Wheel, and conducted a interview that lasted about 75 minutes.

It was not perfect. We had A LOT of technical difficulties--the upshot of which is that while we got an audio interview, we only have a very tiny bit of video footage. But! Ari was amazing, and we can use some other footage--maybe from her house or her private archive--to splice with the audio parts of the interview later, if need be. We learned a lot about how we need to alter our interview questions, we got to see Ari's gorgeous house and take a look

at a graphic novel she's working on, and since Ari's life story is extensive, we believe that this will be just one of the first of many interviews with her. Bridget will be putting some photos from the interview up on the Facebook page shortly.

In addition, as mentioned above, this committee has started making archive visits, to which all History Project members are invited. This month, we spent a lot of time looking at the newsletters for the Buffalo Belles, a local crossdressing organization in existence since the early 1990s. We learned a lot about how terminology has changed over the past 20+ years, and found some amazing articles-- for example, one titled "What to Do If You're Read," which admonishes readers who have been read not to jump behind a hedge because it isn't ladylike. We also found a video called *A Life in Transition*-- a Canadian video from 2003 made to educate HR employees about trans issues, starring our very own Camille Hopkins. Archives are the best! Come join us!

The next Trans Committee meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, October 9 at 4 p.m., at Grindhaus Cafe.**

#### People of Color Committee Update:

Marielle, founder and facilitator of the POC Committee, reports that the group is in the very beginning stages of brainstorming some projects. On a recent trip to the Madeline Davis Archives to learn more about Shades, a lesbians of color group founded in the early 1990s, Marielle found a videotaped performance from 1994(?) titled *Dykes Do Drag*, in which the members of Shades featured heavily. As such, this group is thinking about (with the permission of Dan and other private archive holders, of course) trying to digitize and put together a festival/series of curated videos from local LGBTQ archives.

We're also trying to meet pillars of the QTPOC community that we can partner with. We are, for example, trying to meet with John Morgan, who had a hand in A LOT of LGBTQ happenings in Buffalo (the Gay Liberation Front group at UB, MOCHA, etc.). He knows about the group, and he's interested in helping; it's just a matter of contacting him and sitting down with him. We're also interested in looking at the role of certain churches/faith organizations in maintaining QTPOC community--Marielle is working on reaching out to Unity Fellowship Church, Pilgrim-St. Luke's, and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. Finally, there is some talk of the Trans and POC committees working together on reaching out to the house/ballroom scene. Yay, collaboration and intersectionality!

Unfortunately, we do not know when the next POC Committee meeting will be, as Marielle's baby is due next week. Stay tuned for updates!

#### Fundraising:

At present, we are fundraising/looking into fundraising in three ways:

1. **Nola's Burlesque Fundraiser** is a no-go at the moment. The latest update is that we can't have the event at Sugar City, because in that venue we are only allowed to use

music that either is in the public domain, or to which we own the rights. Alas, the search for an affordable and accessible venue goes on.

2. **Swimming with Lesbians Screening** - As previously mentioned, no one will be turned away for lack of funds, but we are asking for a suggested donation of \$5 (or more, if people can give!), all of which will go to us. Hooray!
3. **Embrace Grant** - It has been literally months in the making, but **this Saturday, Oct. 1**, Liz, Camille, and Adrienne are going to FINALLY meet and get the application drafted. If you want to join us, we'll be meeting at **2 p.m. at Liz's house** (please comment on Facebook, or contact Liz or Adrienne directly, if you are interested in joining).

The million-dollar question (or, well, more like the \$3,000 question) is: what do we actually want to spend our money on? Here is what we're thinking about:

- **Display Case.** Bridge has offered us a little space at No Labels for various kinds of archive/historical exhibits. They estimate that buying a display case for said exhibits would cost something like \$200.
- **Recording Equipment.** Although we plan to keep renting from Squeaky Wheel (who have been giving us super generous rates!) for the time being, and would ideally like to have a reservoir of money set aside for rentals, it would be better for us in the long run to invest in our own recording equipment. Isabel, who filmed the interview with Ari Moore, is going to advise us on what to buy. Felix recommends that we use B&H Audio/Video for cheap, refurbished recording equipment.
- **Scanners** for digitizing archival materials.
- **Spare money** for renting venues and advertising events.
- **Long term goal, pending consent:** Maybe helping Ari Moore publish her graphic novel!

Logistics of storing money: Bridge has a personal subaccount which they used to use for No Labels, which they would be glad to hand over to us. Also, massive kudos to **Camille**, who has agreed to step up and be our treasurer (once, you know, we have money).

#### Digitization Project:

Ana reports that Carol Speser has been busy lately, and thus, we haven't been able to start on helping her digitize her personal archive. But... Ari Moore has a massive personal archive, and she may be ready for us to go. Ana is going to talk with her about digitizing some of her materials.

Additionally, Adrienne was given a bunch of archival material by her friend Heddie Swanson, who was active in the lesbian/feminist movements in WNY and Ontario in the 1970s. Adrienne will talk to Heddie about getting some of those digitized.

**NEXT MEETING: Thursday, Oct. 27; time and location TBA**