



A Legacy of LGBTQ+ Health

Glimpses of LGBTQ+ History in
Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania
& Beyond

When we launched Eidos with the mission to build a better future for LGBTQ+ health, we found ourselves reflecting on the past. The foundations of health equity in Philadelphia and at the University of Pennsylvania were built by generations of LGBTQ+ individuals whose contributions and stories remained largely untold.

Our curiosity led us to local archives, where we uncovered remarkable photographs of the communities that came before us. While many stories remain to be found, and the history is far from complete, these images offer glimpses into our shared journey—one of progress, protest, and community.

This book is a tribute to those who paved the way and an inspiration to continue building on their legacy.

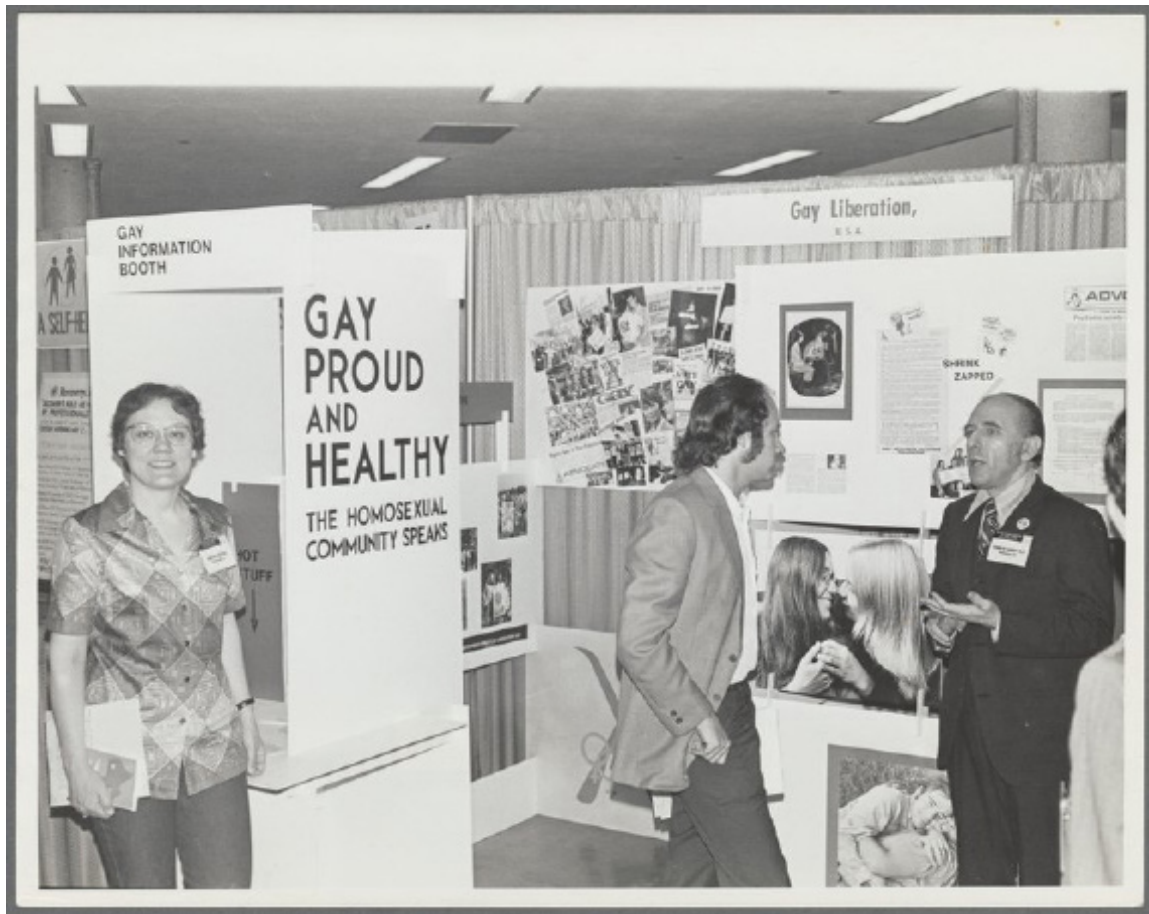


The Annual Reminders were a series of early pickets organized by a group of gay organizations, held yearly from 1965 through 1969. The Reminders took place each July 4th at Independence Hall in Philadelphia and were among the earliest LGBT demonstrations in the United States.

Photo by Nancy Tucker on July 4, 1969. Courtesy of Lesbian Herstory Archives.



John Ercel Fryer, M.D., a psychiatrist and gay rights activist from Philadelphia, made history at the 1972 American Psychiatric Association Conference. Disguised and using the pseudonym "Dr. Henry Anonymous," Fryer delivered a courageous speech challenging the classification of homosexuality as a mental illness. Risking his career and medical license, he declared, "I am a homosexual. I am a psychiatrist." His bold statement became a turning point, paving the way for homosexuality to be removed from the DSM as a mental illness just two years later.



Gay rights leaders Barbara Gittings and Frank Kameny at the “Gay, Proud, and Healthy” booth during the American Psychiatric Association meeting in Dallas, TX. Gittings, known as the “mother of the gay rights movement” would travel to medical conferences across the country with this controversial display, challenging stigma and advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the medical community.

Barbara Gittings and Kay Tobin Lahusen collection, 1964-2001. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



Philadelphia's first Gay Pride Parade on June 11, 1972. Photograph by Kay Tobin Lahusen.
Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



Photos of the crowd and their signs at the Philadelphia Gay Pride Parade in 1972.

Barbara Gittings and Kay Tobin Lahusen collection, 1964-2001.
 Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr.
 Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.





Tommi Avicelli Mecca (left) and Rick Nale (right) standing joyfully with a banner reading "Radical Queens" at the 1973 Philadelphia Pride March at Independence Mall. Mecca was a well-known gay rights activist and poet from Philadelphia.

Jo Hoffman Collection. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



Queer men (top image) pictured together at the Gay Community Center in Philadelphia. Tommi Aviccoli Mecca is pictured on the far right. Queer women (bottom image) pictured dancing at an unknown bar in Philadelphia. Dates unknown.

Jo Hoffman Collection. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



Photographs of joyful drag shows in Philadelphia. Exact dates and locations unknown.

Photographs by Harry Eberlin. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.





The Gay Switchboard of Philadelphia was a confidential hotline for the queer community founded in 1972. It offered callers insider recommendations on gay-friendly bars, medical providers and religious groups until disbanding in 1998.

Photo by Harry Eberlin. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



A billboard in Philadelphia urging gay people to vote, circa 1979. The billboard was created by renowned Philadelphia gay bar, EQUUS, in partnership with the Walt Whitman Democratic Club. In 1980, the Club helped to elect 31 openly gay committeepersons to the Democratic City Committee.

Tommi Avicolti Mecca Collection. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



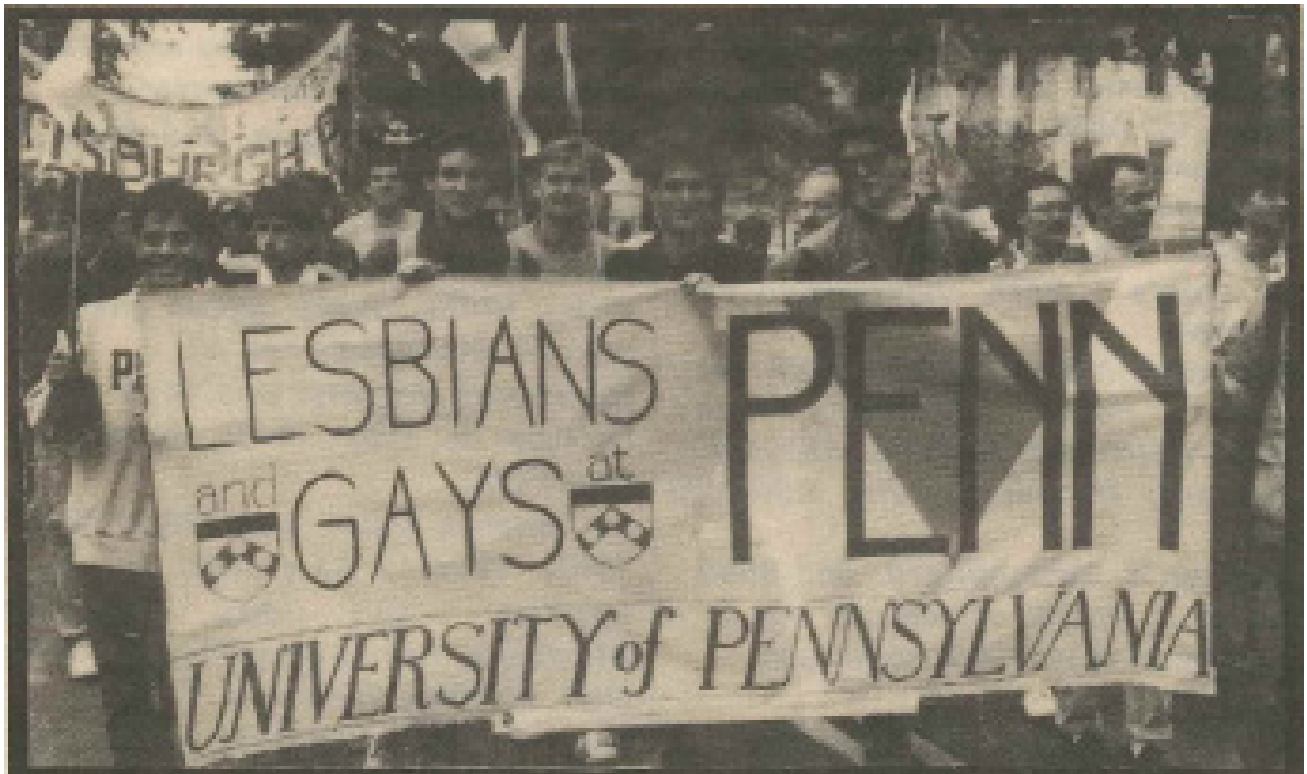
University of Pennsylvania students gather on campus and hold signs at the March Against Homophobia on March 5th, 1986.

Tommi Avicelli Mecca Collection. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



LGBTQ+ students at the University of Pennsylvania hang out on the green together. Circa 1986.

Tommi Avicelli Mecca Collection. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



Lesbians and Gays at University of Pennsylvania (LGAP) organization visits the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, October 1987. This March was the largest representation of Lesbian and Gay people historically at the time.

Courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Archives.



ADAM MARK/DP Senior Photographer
I'M OUT: College senior Malika Levy emerges from a hole in the Button to symbolize 'coming out' yesterday.

OCTOBER 12, 1994

Penn newspaper clipping depicting a University of Pennsylvania student, Malika Levy, celebrating Coming Out Day by emerging from a hole in the infamous Button sculpture on Penn's campus. October 12, 1994.

Courtesy of University of Pennsylvania Archives.



Kiyoshi Kuromiya (1943-2000) was an LGBTQ+ advocate and civil rights activist who attended the University of Pennsylvania and lived in Philadelphia for most of his life. This picture from March 16, 1965, shows young Kuromiya at the infamous civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery in which he and other protestors were attacked for their public support of civil rights.

Courtesy of Glenn Percy, Library of Congress.



In 1998, Kuromiya protested Rite Aid's refusal to carry lifesaving AIDS medication. A lifelong advocate, he was a member of ACT UP, launched Philly's first gay newspaper, and sued the U.S. government to defend the distribution of AIDS information.

AIDS Library Collection. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



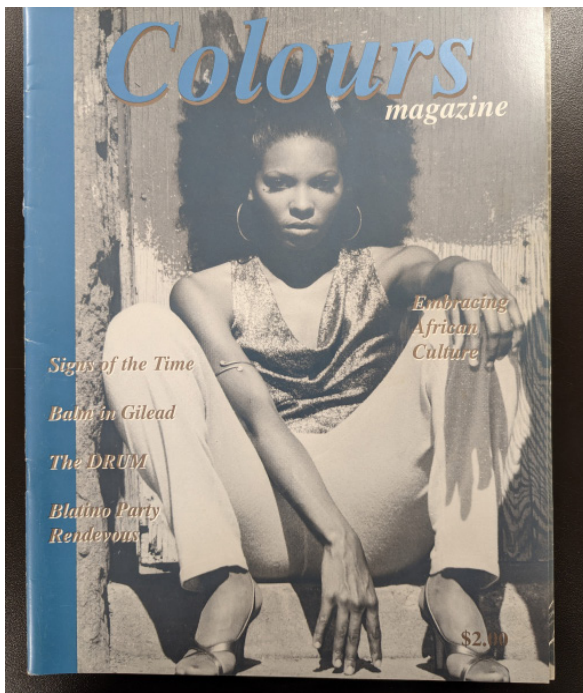
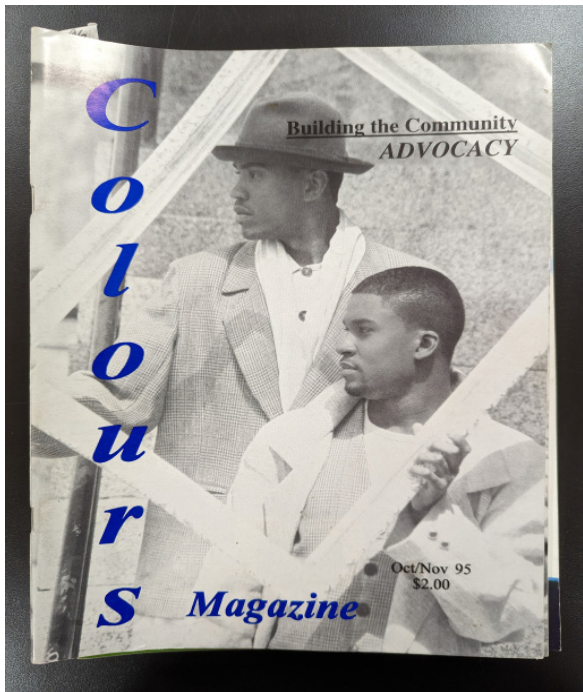
Outraged by the government's mismanagement of the AIDS crisis, concerned individuals united to form the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). Their first demonstration in 1987 took place on Wall Street to protest the profiteering of pharmaceutical companies. Seventeen people were arrested. Shortly after the demonstration, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced it will shorten its drug approval process by two years.

AIDS Library Photographs Collection. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



A vibrant moment during the ACT UP demonstration in New York City, 1987.

AIDS Library Photographs Collection. Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.



Founded in 1991, Colours was a magazine created by and for Black queer readers. Its articles, interviews, and photographs documented much of the life and culture of this community. Though the magazine is no longer published its work still continues today. Becoming an official non-profit in 1994 the mission of Colours today is "to impact, improve, and empower the lives of LGBTQ+ communities of color, especially those of the African diaspora, within the greater Philadelphia metropolitan area."

Courtesy of John J. Wilcox Jr. Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center.

Thank you for being part of our community at Eidos. We are grateful for your support as we work toward a future where LGBTQ+ health equity is a reality.



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