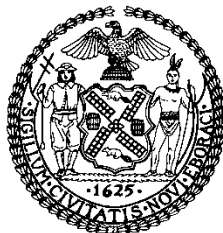


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THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BRIEFING PAPER OF THE HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION

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**COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES, AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

Hon. Jimmy Van Bramer, Chair

January 22, 2019

OVERSIGHT: Arts, Culture, and Stonewall50

Introduction

On January 22, the Committee on Cultural Affairs, Libraries, and International Intergroup Relations, chaired by Council Member Jimmy Van Bramer, will conduct an oversight hearing on Art, Culture, and Stonewall50. This summer will mark the 50th anniversary of the uprising at the Stonewall Inn, which sparked the modern LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) civil rights movement. Accordingly, New York City (NYC) will host both various events to commemorate this historic anniversary on June 28, as well as the world's largest International LGBTQ+ Pride Celebration, known as "Stonewall50" / WorldPride, which will focus on the history of Stonewall, culture, community, and LGBTQ+ pride. At this hearing, the Committee is interested in learning more about current plans for Stonewall50 events in general and beyond next summer's celebration, as well as efforts the arts and cultural communities are creating surrounding Stonewall50's significance. Witnesses invited to testify include the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), NYC & Co., The New York Public Library (NYPL), members of the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG),¹ various arts and cultural groups and organizations, galleries, academic institutions, and other interested parties.

Background:

A. LGBTQ+ Rights Prior to Stonewall

While some trace the origins of the LGBTQ+ rights movement back to 1924 and the founding of the Society for Human Rights, the first organization for LGBTQ+ rights in the United States,² the events that took place around the Stonewall Inn beginning on June 28, 1969

¹ The CIG is comprised of 33 member institutions that exist in a public-private partnership with the City. The CIG includes art and natural history museums, historical societies, theaters, concert halls, performing art centers, botanical gardens and zoos. Member institutions operate as nonprofit organizations whose mandate is to provide cultural services to all New Yorkers. See <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcla/html/funding/institutions.shtml>.

² Chicago Tribune Staff, #7: *First Gay Rights Group in the US* (1924) (Nov. 19, 2013), available at <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/bluesky/originals/chi-top-20-countdown-innovation-07->

remain a pivotal moment in our nation’s history and represent the catalyst that launched the modern LGBTQ+ civil rights movement as we know it today.

The 1950s and 1960s, the LGBTQ+ community in NYC experienced widespread discrimination and an anti-gay legal system.³ Solicitation of homosexual relations was illegal in the City, police had the authority to arrest people for wearing less than three gender-appropriate articles of clothing, and the New York State Liquor Authority penalized and shut down establishments that served alcohol to “known or suspected” LGBTQ+ individuals on the grounds that the gathering of LGBTQ individuals was “disorderly.”⁴ While activists succeeded in overturning the liquor regulations in 1966, meaning that many LGBTQ+ individuals could be served alcohol at public establishments, engaging in so-called “gay behavior” in public (e.g., holding hands, kissing, or dancing with someone of the same sex) remained illegal in NYC.⁵ As a result of these regulations, very few establishments in in the City welcomed the LGBTQ+ community and police harassment or raids on establishments that did serve this community were routine.⁶

B. The Events at the Stonewall Inn

On June 28, 1969, NYC police raided the Stonewall Inn, which was then known as a “gay club” located in Manhattan’s Greenwich Village (“Village”), to “ensure the three piece

bsi,0,2383541.htmlstory; CNN Library, *LGBT Rights Milestones Fast Facts* (Nov. 10, 2018), available at <https://www.cnn.com/2015/06/19/us/lgbt-rights-milestones-fast-facts/index.html> (noting that similar organizations formed decades later, like The Mattachine Society in 1950 and the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955).

³ Neil Frizzel, *Feature: How the Stonewall Riots Started the LGBT Rights Movement* (Jun. 28, 2013), available at <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/06/28/feature-how-the-stonewall-riots-started-the-gay-rights-movement/>.

⁴ *Id.*; History staff (hereinafter “History”), *Stonewall Riots* (last visited Jan. 16, 2019), available at https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/the-stonewall-riots#section_2; Garance Franke-Ruta, *An Amazing 1969 Account of the Stonewall Uprising* (Jan. 24, 2013), available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/01/an-amazing-1969-account-of-the-stonewall-uprising/272467/>.

⁵ David Carter, *What Made Stonewall Different*, THE GAY AND LESBIAN REVIEW (Jul. 1, 2009), available at <https://glreview.org/article/article-509/>.

⁶ *Id.*; History *supra* note 4.

clothing law was being adhered to.”⁷ Thirteen people were arrested, but as police hauled employees and patrons out of the bar in the early hours of the morning, one of the women being arrested yelled to bystanders, “Hey! Why don’t you guys do something?” At this moment, the spontaneous raid, part of a larger crackdown related to the homophobic clothing laws, sparked a riot among bar patrons and neighborhood residents.⁸ The police officers quickly lost control of the situation and tensions between City police and LGBTQ+ residents of the Village erupted into protests, with many of those present being young members of the LGBTQ+ community.⁹ This led to six days of violent clashes and protests, taking place on the streets around the Stonewall Inn, outside the bar on Christopher Street, in neighboring streets, and in nearby Christopher Park.¹⁰

In his article *What Made Stonewall Different*, historian David Carter explains that even though there were several uprisings before Stonewall, the reason Stonewall is considered so historical today is that thousands of people were involved, the riot lasted a long time (six days), it was the first such riot to get major media coverage, and it sparked the formation of many LGBTQ+ rights groups.¹¹ While the Stonewall uprising did garner significant press for the time, it should be noted that change was not immediate and this press reflected homophobic attitudes of the time.¹² Many newspapers in the 1960s, for example, still referred to homosexuals by

⁷ Dean Eastmond, *LGBT+ History Month: How the Press Reported the Stonewall Riots in 1969* (last visited Jan. 16, 2019), available at <https://hiskind.com/lgbt-history-month-how-the-press-reported-the-stonewall-riots-in-1969/>.

⁸ Franke-Ruta, *supra* note 4.

⁹ *Id.* (noting the drinking age was 18 at the time and that many people were around this age).

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Carter, *supra* note 5; See also Franke-Ruta, *supra* note 4.

¹² Daniel Villarreal, Read the Homophobic 1969 News Article About the Stonewall Riots (Jun. 25, 2017), available at <https://hornet.com/stories/1969-news-article-stonewall-riots-two/>.

offensive terms.¹³ However, the coverage was instrumental in bringing the LGBTQ+ community together in unprecedented, positive ways.¹⁴ Within several weeks, Village residents had organized into activist groups to concentrate efforts on establishing places for LGBTQ+ individuals to be open about their sexual orientation without fear of being arrested.¹⁵ Within six weeks, two major gay activist organizations were also formed in NYC—concentrating on confrontational tactics—and at least three newspapers were established to promote LGBTQ+ rights.

LGBTQ+ individuals in NYC continued to face obstacles to becoming a cohesive community after the uprising and do so even today. However, the events now known collectively as the “Stonewall uprising” shifted not only the fight for social and legal equal rights for all sexualities, but led to a shift in our national psyche, a legacy for intergenerational groups of advocates seeking equity, and launched the tradition of Pride Marches that many LGBTQ+ groups still participate in today.¹⁶ On June 28, 1970, the first gay Pride Marches took place in NYC, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago to commemorate the first anniversary of the Stonewall uprising¹⁷ and within a few years of the uprising, numerous additional LGBTQ+ rights organizations were founded across the U.S. and the world.¹⁸ On June 23, 2015, the Stonewall Inn became the first landmark in NYC to be recognized by the NYC Landmarks Preservation

¹³ *Id.*; Eastmond, *supra* note 7.

¹⁴ Carter, *supra* note 5

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

Commission on the basis of its status in LGBTQ+ history, and on June 24, 2016, The Stonewall National Monument was named the first LGBTQ+ monument in the United States.¹⁹

C. Stonewall50 / Worldpride Events

Guided in part by the Stonewall50 Consortium, whose mission includes “helping participating institutions and organizations share ideas and best practices, facilitate potential collaborations, coordinate outreach efforts and avoid scheduling conflicts and duplication of programming”²⁰ in commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, NYC Pride will simultaneously host WorldPride—the first WorldPride event to be hosted in the United States—and a series of events to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall riot and uprising in June 2019.²¹ As such, NYC Pride’s 2019 celebrations are dually branded Stonewall50 and WorldPride 2019 and will include “never-before-seen activities alongside special editions of iconic events such as the March, Rally, and Pride Island.”²² Spanning a period of thirty days, celebrations will include more than fifty events ranging from rallies and parties to lectures produced by NYC Pride and spread across NYC. The events will begin on June 1, 2019 and culminate on June 30, 2019, with the NYC Pride March featuring over 500 unique marching contingents including non-profits, community organizations, corporate sponsors, small businesses, political candidates, activists, and over 100 floats.²³

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Stonewall50 Consortium, *Who We Are* (last visited Jan. 16, 2019), available at <https://stonewall50consortium.org/who-we-are/>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² WorldPride NYC and Stonewall50, *A Global Celebration Arrives in New York* (last visited Jan. 16, 2019), available at <https://2019-worldpride-stonewall50.nycpride.org/history-news/a-global-celebration-arrives-in-new-york/>.

²³ WorldPride NYC and Stonewall50, *Celebrate Millions of Moments of Pride* (last visited Jan. 16, 2019), available at <https://2019-worldpride-stonewall50.nycpride.org/>.

D. Artistic and Cultural Influences of the Stonewall Movement in NYC

In addition to the Stonewall uprising's political and cultural influences, there are numerous ways in which the events that took place in June of 1969 have influenced the artistic community in NYC, many of which have manifested in the decades since the Stonewall uprising. These include work from the following major contributors:

Holland Carter

In 1994, twenty-five years following the Stonewall uprising, Pulitzer Prize winning *New York Times* art critic Holland Cotter chronicled the effects of Stonewall on present day art. Cotter observed “As a direct result of Stonewall, sexual difference has become an area of open inquiry and exploration in contemporary art, whereas a mere generation ago this content was either suppressed or introduced in highly coded form.”²⁴ This “open inquiry” and “exploration” has encompassed a broad landscape of artistic expression ranging from bold public political statements to intimate self-portraits of people living as “other” in a predominantly heterosexual world. In an effort to learn how Stonewall manifested itself in artistic expression within the gay community, Cotter interviewed several artists and found that their creations had created a new language which was “both specific to a subculture, yet accessible to a larger audience.”²⁵ Cotter noted the movement identified itself with and became part of “the global political picture [whose] rich personal histories and diverse challenging work became part of the fabric” of the artistic community that has emerged as a result of the Stonewall uprising.²⁶

²⁴ Holland Cotter, *Art in America*, From the Archives: Art after Stonewall (Part I) (Jul. 7, 2015), available at <https://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/magazines/from-the-archives-art-after-stonewall/>.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

The Center

For over thirty years, The Center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center (The Center) has offered a wide variety of arts and cultural entertainment event programming. Significantly, the ACT UP Organization was founded in 1987 at The Center in response to the AIDS crisis and what was seen as the federal government's inaction to the growing number of deaths from HIV infections and AIDS. The Center has an extensive LGBTQ+ history archive, a lending library, queer bookstore and cultural space that is home to original works of art by Keith Haring and David LaChapelle, The Center continues to serve as an important nexus of advocacy, arts and culture for the entire community and will host a variety of events during the Stonewall50/WorldPride celebrations.²⁷ Notably, The Center is host to the *Stonewall Forever* project which will document the untold stories of everyday people who experienced the events at the Stonewall that catalyzed the national struggle for gay rights.²⁸ As a result of a million dollar grant from Google.Org, The Center is asking anyone to upload film, photographs, protest materials, interviews and oral histories to contribute to the preservation of this important piece of civil rights history.

The New York Public Library

The NYPL will host an upcoming exhibition entitled *Love & Resistance: Stonewall50*, which will feature the photographs of Kay Tobin Lahusen and Diana Davies; described as “two pioneering photojournalists who captured the pivotal events of this era and changed the ways that

²⁷ The Center, *Arts and Advocacy: Arts and Culture* (last visited Jan, 17, 2019), available at <https://gaycenter.org/arts-advocacy/>.

²⁸ A.S. Levine, *New York Today: Can You Help Tell Stonewall's Story?*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Jun. 20, 2018), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/20/nyregion/new-york-today-stonewall-forever.html>.

LGBTQ+ people perceived themselves.”²⁹ The exhibit will also feature images from the Library’s collection of ephemera and periodicals and will take place from February 14th through July 14th, 2019 at the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, Rayner Special Collections Wing and Print Gallery at the library’s Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street location.

The Leslie-Lohman Museum and NYU Grey Art Gallery

Timed to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of the Stonewall uprising, *Art After Stonewall* is “the first major exhibition to examine the impact of the LGBTQ+ civil-rights movement on the art world.”³⁰ Presented simultaneously in two parts and at two locations, it is scheduled to open April 21st and run through July 21st, 2019 at the New York University (NYU) Grey Art Gallery and at the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art. The exhibition will be divided by decades with works of art from 1969 through 1979 being shown at the Leslie Lohman Museum and art works from 1979 through 1989 exhibited at NYU Grey Art Gallery. The expansive exhibit will feature some 150 works of art by openly LGBTQ+ artists including Nan Goldin, Holly Hughes, Robert Mapplethorpe, Tim Miller, Catherine Opie and Andy Warhol.³¹ Key themes of this exhibition will included Coming Out, Sexual Outlaws, The Uses of the Erotic, Gender and Body, Things are Queer, AIDS and Activism, and We’re Here. Organizers of this exhibition include the Columbus Museum of Art in conjunction with the following curator Jonathan Weinberg, Ph.D., artist and independent art historian, Tyler Cann,

²⁹ New York Public Library, *Love & Resistance: Stonewall50* (last visited Jan, 17, 2019), available at <https://www.nypl.org/events/exhibitions/love-resistance-stonewall-50>.

³⁰ Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, *Exhibition: Art After Stonewall* (last visited Jan, 17, 2019), available at <https://www.leslielohman.org/project/art-after-stonewall/>.

³¹ New York University, *Grey Art Gallery Exhibition Art After Stonewall, 1969-1989* (last visited Jan, 17, 2019), available at <https://greyartgallery.nyu.edu/exhibition/art-stonewall-1969-1989april-23%E2%80%92july-20-2019/>.

Curator of Contemporary Art, and Drew Sawyer, Phillip Leonian, and Edith Rosenbaum Leonian
Curator, Photography, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Conclusion

At today's hearing, the Committee expects to receive an overview of the efforts and plans being made by the creative and arts communities in preparation for Stonewall50 / Worldpride. Questions the Committee aims to answer include those about what the City's cultural institutions, including those focused on the LGBTQ+ community, are doing to promote and prepare for this event and its effect, ways in which the City is preparing for the influx in visitors generally, as well as any other issues that the Council should be considering as we near the lead up to this historic anniversary. The Committee would also like to learn about initiatives, exhibitions, projects, and performances related to the Stonewall uprising anniversary, any support that might be available for those that would like to get involved, and timelines for implementation.