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Teaching LGBTQ History and Heritage

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LGBTQ Heritage Initiative: Theme Study Chapter

Imagine a world in which students could visit not just Civil War battlefields that raise the profound issues of slavery and what it means for states to be united, but also buildings that housed places that came to feel like home to people marginalized because of sexuality and gender, places that were important enough to defend against onslaughts by the police. That is the possibility that teaching the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) past through historic sites offers. The houses where famous and less known lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people lived, the commercial establishments they patronized and defended, and even places that mark a history of discrimination and violence offer the opportunity to make LGBTQ history a part of US history in a way that makes a difference for students, wherever they are learning history.

A more inclusive history certainly matters to LGBTQ students, who suffer not just from bullying and other forms of discrimination but also from being deprived of a past. Many years ago, I was teaching an introductory US history course when I ran into a student from the class who was working in the local gay restaurant. He told me that he had never heard of Stonewall until I talked about it in a lecture on social movement of the 1960s. He was so excited to hear a mention of the gay past in a history class that he told his roommate about it. He also came out, since they had never discussed their sexual identities, and then the roommate came out to him. The student described the moment as life-changing.

Robert King, a high school teacher interviewed by Daniel Hurewitz, tell a similar story about Jack Davis, a student in his class at Palisades Charter High School in Southern California. King included LGBTQ content in just one part of one day's lecture on civil rights movements.

After a discussion of Stonewall, Davis raised his hand and came out to the class. In an essay he published later, Davis wrote that he had been looking for a way to come out, and the mention of Stonewall opened a door. His classmates applauded, got up out of their seats, and hugged him. He described it as an amazing experience, and the class as “the most defining moment of my coming out.” Walking out of the classroom, he felt the weight of the world lifted from his shoulders.¹

And it is not just LGBTQ students who benefit from a more complete history. I had another experience in a class I taught on the history of same-sex sexuality that made that clear. One straight male student, who must have signed up for the class simply because it was at a convenient time, started the course expressing strongly homophobic views based on the Bible. The main paper for the class was the analysis of an interview the students had to conduct with an LGBTQ individual, placing the interviewee’s story in the context of the history we had been learning. This student chose to interview a gay coworker, and just hearing about a gay man’s life and his struggles and his relationships and his views—including his religious views—completely transformed the student’s attitude. Research has shown that knowing a LGBTQ person can change someone’s position on political issues connected to sexuality, and in this case, a face-to-face conversation—simply seeing a gay man as a person—was transformative.

This essay addresses the ways that historic sites can be mobilized in the project of teaching about LGBTQ history in high schools, colleges, universities, or in other contexts. I begin by considering what can be gained by teaching courses on queer history or integrating queer history into US history courses. I then address some of the challenges involved in this project. In the bulk of the essay, I provide an overview of existing and potential historic sites that illustrate the main themes in the field, with suggestions for ways to bring LGBTQ history

¹ Quoted in Daniel Hurewitz, “Putting Ideas into Practice: High School Teachers Talk about Incorporating the LGBT Past,” in Leila J. Rupp and Susan K. Freeman, editors, *Understanding and Teaching U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 74.

into the classroom. I end with a brief conclusion emphasizing why teaching LGBTQ history and heritage matters and what historic sites can bring to the project.

Why teach LGBTQ history?

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer history developed as a field within the historical discipline as a result of the LGBTQ movement. As with African American, Asian American, Latina/o, Native American, and women's history, it was social movement activism that stimulated a desire to learn and teach about people too often left out of the mainstream historical narrative and to incorporate those histories into a transformed and inclusive story of the past. In recent years, information about LGBTQ lives has moved into mainstream discourse, thanks to the inclusion of LGBTQ characters in film and television, the coming out of prominent public figures, and debate about, and the rapid change in public opinion on, the issue of same-sex marriage, culminating in the 2015 Supreme Court decision opening marriage to same-sex couples throughout the country. Yet there is little knowledge out there about queer history, so notions about the LGBTQ community exist in a vacuum. Official recognition of this state of affairs was behind California's pioneering legislation, the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Responsible (FAIR) Act, the nation's first legislation requiring public schools to teach about LGBTQ history. The 2011 law amended the language of the state's education code, adding "lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans," as well as disabled Americans, to the list of those, including "men and women, Native Americans, African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, European Americans . . . and members of other ethnic and cultural groups" whose contributions must be considered in classroom instruction and materials.² How pioneering this legislation is can be measured by the heated debate in the Tennessee

² Quoted in Susan K. Freeman and Leila J. Rupp, "The Ins and Outs of U.S. History," in Rupp and Freeman, *Understanding and Teaching*, 5. Some of this essay is drawn from our introduction to this volume. For more information, see the FAIR education website, <http://www.faireducationact.com/>

legislature of the Classroom Protection Act, known as the “Don’t Say Gay Bill,” that, if passed, would have prevented teachers from discussing LGBTQ topics.³

So the first answer to the question of why teach LGBTQ history is that it makes for better history. Over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, history at all levels of education has moved from the story of wars and the men in power to a more complex depiction of the ways that all the people of a society play a part in history. Black history, Native American history, Asian American history, Latina/o history, working-class history, women’s history, the history of disability—all of these fields of study within the discipline of history have transformed how we understand the US past. That is what the extensive literature on LGBTQ history has done as well. Cultural attitudes toward same-sex sexuality and gender transformation and expression tell us a great deal about the sexual and gender systems of Native Americans, European colonists, and the new “Americans.” Same-sex sexuality is part of the story of the evolution of regional differences and the growth of cities. Struggles over civil liberties and the role of government in the lives of individuals are central to LGBTQ history, and the collective resistance of sexual minorities is as much a part of US history as the struggles of other marginalized groups, whose histories intersect and overlap with queer history. We come to understand history differently when we recognize it not as the single story of a dominant group but as the convergence of multiple histories.

The second answer to the question of why teach LGBTQ history is that it matters to students, of whatever age, because of the widespread phenomenon of bullying, harassment, discrimination—or worse—of LGBTQ people. At the university level, the case of Tyler Clementi, the Rutgers University student who killed himself in 2010 after his roommate secretly videotaped him in a same-sex sexual encounter, attracted national attention. At the secondary

³ Shannon Weber, “Teaching Same-Sex Marriage as U.S. History,” in Rupp and Freeman, *Understanding and Teaching*, 306.

school level, the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network's (GLSEN) 2013 school climate study documents the ways that a hostile school climate affects LGBTQ students.⁴ In 2011, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Southern Poverty Law Center, supported by the Justice Department, filed a lawsuit against the Anoka-Hennepin, Minnesota School District over a gag order forbidding discussion of LGBTQ issues after the suicides of four gay or bisexual students. The successful suit cited a California study that showed that any mention of LGBTQ people or issues in the curriculum increased student safety and improved the climate for students.⁵ The GLSEN study also shows that an inclusive curriculum, along with other resources, makes a difference. In high school, college, and university classrooms and in community centers and other places, there are students who have siblings or parents or children or friends or coworkers or neighbors who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. Teaching an inclusive US history makes better history for all of them.

But it isn't easy

Teaching LGBTQ history is important, but it is not always easy. The process begins with introducing students to the social constructionist perspective, which emphasizes that sexuality is historically contingent. That is, societies, through religion, law, science, medicine, and other institutions, shape sexual behavior and identities in very different ways across time and space. Given that the reigning assumption in our society is that sexuality is purely biological and the fact that, in part because it is an easier sell in the struggle for legal equality, the LGBTQ movement has tended to embrace the notion that people are born gay, it can be difficult to teach from a social constructionist perspective. Students tend to experience their sexual desires and identities as innate and to misread social constructionism as an indication that sexuality can be

4Joseph G. Kosciw, Emily A. Greytak, Neal A. Palmer, and Madelyn J. Boesen, "The 2013 National School Climate Survey: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in Our Nation's Schools: A Report from the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network, https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2013%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20Full%20Report_0.pdf

5 Freeman and Rupp, *Understanding and Teaching*, 6.

easily changed. So the first task in any class is to show the ways that sexual desire, behavior, and identities vary across time and in different cultures. Such an approach calls for looking carefully at the evidence we have of what people felt, did, and thought and using language that refers to identities with sensitivity to the times. Historical evidence of different ways that sexuality has been organized can help students understand that experiencing desire for someone of the same sex or engaging in a sexual act with someone of the same sex did not always and everywhere mean that someone was gay or lesbian in the way we understand those terms today. Even after reading about all the different ways that societies have shaped sexuality in the past, students often remain firmly convinced that, in Lady Gaga's words, they were "Born This Way." The challenge is to help them see that their desires and behaviors could have quite different meanings and consequences in other times and places.⁶

As a result of this perspective, it can be difficult to identify who belongs in LGBTQ history. Although there are historians who argue that we can identify gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people in societies (including our own past) in which no such categories existed, most historians would insist that we cannot. As a result, the very question of what LGBTQ history includes is a complex one. Does Eleanor Roosevelt's love for journalist Lorena Hickok make her part of LGBTQ history? In terms of historic sites, should the White House be included? And what about a complex figure such as J. Edgar Hoover, who used the FBI to target those suspected of homosexuality at the same time that he formed an intimate relationship with Clyde Tolson. Is Hoover a part of LGBTQ history?⁷ It is important in identifying sites not to

⁶ The concepts of essentialism and social constructionism, along with the poststructuralist concept of sexuality and gender as performative categories characterized by fluidity, are complex and beyond the scope of this essay. What is important is for students to grasp the notion that sexuality has a history.

⁷ For a sensitive and nuanced consideration of Roosevelt and Hoover in the context of LGBTQ history, see Claire Potter, "Public Figures, Private Lives: Eleanor Roosevelt, J. Edgar Hoover, and a Queer Political History," in Rupp and Freeman, *Understanding and Teaching*, 199-212.0

convey the message that everyone associated with them can be identified as lesbian or gay or bisexual or transgender or queer in our contemporary sense.

Another challenge is attending to the intersections of multiple identities shaped not only by sexuality and gender but race, ethnicity, class, nationality, age, disability, and more. As the US history curriculum adds to the diversity of individuals and groups included as worthy of study, it is important that LGBTQ history not focus only on white people, or men, or the middle-class. Taking inspiration from the title of a classic work in Black women's history, *All the Women are White, all the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave*, we need to make sure that not all the lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and queer people are white and middle class.⁸

And then there is the challenge of transforming, rather than just adding a few queer individuals to, the curriculum. The language of the FAIR Act in California calls for the inclusion of the contributions of LGBTQ individuals. If all we can do is sprinkle in a few people who might have desired, loved, or had sex with others with biologically alike bodies, or who might have thought of themselves as a gender different from the one assigned to them at birth, then we will add little to our understanding of sexuality and gender in the past. What we should be after is a transformational approach that, through considering the forces that have structured the lives of LGBTQ people, opens up new perspectives on families, communities, social practices, and politics.⁹ As does ethnic, working-class, and women's history, a transformational LGBTQ history changes what we know about the agency and impact of people not in the seat of power, and about how power operates in complex ways. It changes history.

Teaching with historic sites

Historic sites provide the opportunity to bring LGBTQ history alive for students of all ages. All over the country there are places—houses, commercial establishments, public spaces,

⁸ Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1982).

⁹ See Don Romesburg, Leila J. Rupp and David M. Donahue, *Making the Framework FAIR: California History-Social Science Framework Proposed LGBT Revisions Related to the FAIR Education Act* (San Francisco, CA: Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History, 2014).

neighborhoods, and locations of significant events—that connect to the kind of transformational history that integrates sexuality and gender into the story of the past. It is possible to connect lessons to local and nearby (at the very least, state-level) LGBTQ historic sites, making this history directly relevant to where students live.

Teaching with these sites is not without its own challenges. For one thing, there is an unavoidable imbalance of recent history, given the more public nature of LGBTQ history in the last century. The National Memorial with the earliest identified LGBTQ significance is the Fort Caroline National Memorial where René Goulaine de Laudonnière and Jacques Le Moyne in the 1650s described two-spirit Timuca Indians.¹⁰ In this case, they were male-bodied individuals who took on the dress and social roles of women, but there are also examples of female-bodied two-spirit people in the historical record (see Roscoe, this volume). The vast majority of LGBTQ historic places are associated with the 20th century, and this has the potential to reinforce a view of LGBTQ history as an uplifting story of progress. Also, the difficulty, as discussed above, of determining who and what is legitimately part of LGBTQ history before the sexological definition of homosexuality and the emergence of the identities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer makes it tricky to avoid an essentializing approach to some of these sites. For example, another early site, Kealakekua Bay in Hawai'i, has a connection to LGBTQ history because a member of the James Cook expedition reported talking with a man named Palea who described himself as *aikane*, a term now interpreted as “friend” that may have then referred to a male sexual companion (see Roscoe, this volume).¹¹ Were the two-spirit people in Florida transgender? Was Palea gay? These are questions that cannot be answered simply, as Native American understandings of two-spirit fall outside our Euro-American concept of a sex and

10 Fort Caroline National Memorial is located at 12713 Fort Caroline Road, Jacksonville, Florida. It was designated a National Memorial on January 16, 1953 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966.

11 Kealakekua Bay is located along Napo'opo'o Road, Hawai'i. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on December 12, 1973.

gender binary. These questions require acceptance that what we can know about sexual subjectivity in the past is limited and recognition that we need to be sensitive about the use of contemporary terms to describe people in the past. And yet another challenge is that many sites, especially the homes of individuals, have the potential to stop at the contribution level of LGBTQ history that emphasizes what a few individuals did rather than moving on to a transformational approach that changes how we view history.

But all of these challenges can be met head on, and a variety of different historic sites can help to breathe life into the study of the past. Whether or not students have the opportunity to visit sites in person, historic places can be brought into the classroom through photographs, and some can be linked to documentary films, oral histories, fiction, or community histories. Students can be encouraged to explore places in their own communities that have significance for LGBTQ history. The key to teaching with these sites is to connect them to the big themes of LGBTQ and US history.

So what might a class—either specifically on LGBTQ history, or a US survey incorporating LGBTQ history—that makes use of historical sites look like? I sketch out here some ways that different kinds of sites can evoke a complex and transformational history. Some of these places are already recognized as historical sites, a few by the National Park Service and some by local or state agencies. Some are recognized in connection to LGBTQ history, some for other reasons. Pre-20th century sites have the potential to open up a discussion of how we understand people's desires and sexual acts and intimate relationships in different cultures and in times before the naming of homosexuality and to undermine a simple progress narrative of US history. This is the case for sites connected to European contact with two-spirit Native Americans and Hawai'ian *aikane*, including (in addition to Fort Caroline and Kealakekua Bay), Fort Wingate in New Mexico, where a two-spirit Zuni named We'Wha was imprisoned in 1892.¹²

¹² Fort Wingate Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on May 26, 1978.

Another recognized site, the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, includes a ledger drawing of Cheyenne two-spirits leading the victory dance after Custer's defeat in 1876.¹³

Students might compare the role of two-spirits with the case of a female-assigned individual, Mary Henly, who wore men's clothing and was charged in colonial Massachusetts with behavior "seeming to confound the course of nature."¹⁴ Contrasting the acceptance of gender-nonconformity among some Native American cultures with the secret gender-crossing of individuals in European and American culture illustrates for students the ways that societies view gender in vastly different ways.

The homes of nineteenth-century women who lived with other women open up the question of how we think about the intense, loving, and committed relationships known as "romantic friendships." Because of the sex-segregated domestic world of "love and ritual" in which white, middle and upper-class women lived, romantic friendships between women (and, although in a somewhat different way, between young men) flourished.¹⁵ As middle-class women gained entry to professions such as teaching and social work, romantic friends could choose to forego marriage and make a life with each other in what were known as "Boston marriages." Hull House in Chicago, home to Jane Addams and Mary Rozet Smith, illustrates the role of settlement houses in fostering such Boston marriages.¹⁶ Likewise, Mary Dreier and Frances Kellor, active in the labor and social reform movements, lived together for fifty years in their New York City residence located near the Museum of Modern Art. Women's colleges were another location for long-term marriage-like relationships between women. Katherine Bates,

¹³ The Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument is located at 7756 Battlefield Tour Road, Crow Agency, Montana. It was first preserved as a US National Cemetery in 1879 and designated a National Monument on March 22, 1946. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966.

¹⁴ Quoted in Genny Beemyn, "Transforming the Curriculum: The Inclusion of the Experiences of Trans People," in Rupp and Freeman, *Understanding and Teaching*, 115.

¹⁵ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1, no. 1 (1975):1-29.

¹⁶ Hull House is located at 800 S. Halsted, Chicago, Illinois. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966 and designated a National Historic Landmark on June 23, 1965.

feminist author of “America the Beautiful” and English professor, lived in Wellesley, Massachusetts with Katherine Coman, professor of history and economics and later dean of Wellesley College, for twenty-five years. Looking at the homes that women made together, students might consider how the ideology of separate spheres for women and men—with women assigned the domestic sphere of love and care and men the public sphere of work and rationality—created the conditions for romantic friendships. Boston marriages, in turn, provided women freed from the necessity of marriage the support to enter into the professions of social work and higher education.

The connection between romantic friendships and Boston marriages, on the one hand, and emerging lesbian subjectivity can be illustrated through such sites as Clear Comfort, the home of Alice Austen (1866-1952), who lived for fifty years with another woman, Gertrude Tate, and who photographed women dancing together, embracing in bed, and cross-dressing.¹⁷ Students might consider the persistence into the 20th century of Boston marriages such as Austen’s and Tate’s, as well as relationships such as that of Eleanor Roosevelt with Lorena Hickok, even as public awareness of the new category of “lesbian” grew.¹⁸ Austen’s photographs and Eleanor Roosevelt’s love letters to Hickok might be set against texts that warned against the danger of “schoolgirl friendships” or masculine “inverts” out to seduce innocent women.¹⁹

A variety of homes of individuals can be used to illustrate LGBTQ lives in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The poetry of Walt Whitman (1819-1892), whose Camden home is a recognized historical site, calls attention to the complexity of male love and homoeroticism in the nineteenth century, since Whitman’s love for men did not lead him to claim an identity as

17 Clear Comfort is located at 2 Hylan Boulevard, Staten Island, New York. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on July 28, 1970 and designated a National Historic Landmark on April 19, 1993.

18 Eleanor Roosevelt’s home at Val Kill in New York State is a National Park Service property, part of the Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, established in 1977.

19 See Leila J. Rupp, *Sapphistries: A Global History of Love between Women* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2009).

homosexual.²⁰ Equally important for LGBTQ history is the hospital where Whitman, along with Dr. Mary Walker, who dressed in men's clothing, lavished attention on soldiers wounded in the Civil War.²¹ The exuberance of Whitman's appreciation of male friendship and American democracy in his poetry opens up for students the connections between masculinity and US industrial and urban growth in the 19th century. Students might consider his *Leaves of Grass* alongside photographs of men and letters written between male friends to bring alive a world in which male friendship was valued.²²

The Murray Hall Residence in New York City is where a gender crossing female-born New York City politician (ca. 1840s-1901) lived. His secret came out after 25 years when he developed breast cancer and his physician shocked the world by sharing the news of Hall's anatomical sex. Students can follow the publicity about Hall and consider how people might have thought about him at the time. Outhistory.org, the premier source for LGBTQ history on the Web, includes material about Hall as well as the memoir of Earl Lind, also known as Ralph Werther, also known as Jennie June, a person who considered themselves both male and female.²³ The stories of Hall and Lind continue a consideration of how we think about gender non-conforming individuals in periods before the concept of transgender and the possibility of sex-reassignment surgery. The transition to a period in which changing one's bodily sex became possible is marked by the Dawn Pipita Simmons House in Charleston, South Carolina, the home of one of the first transsexual women in the United States. Gordon Langly Hall (1922-2000) had sex reassignment surgery at Johns Hopkins in 1968 and, as Dawn Pipita Simons, lived in

20 Whitman's Camden home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966 and designated a National Historic Landmark on December 29, 1962.

21 The site is the United States Patent Office, Ninth and F Streets NW, in the District of Columbia. The building is now the location of the National Portrait Gallery.

22 See David A. Doyle Jr., "Nineteenth-Century Male Love Stories and Sex Stories," in Rupp and Freeman, *Understanding and Teaching*, 132-142.

23 The use of plural pronouns for gender-nonconforming individuals is one alternative to the use of gendered pronouns. On Earl Lind and Outhistory.org more generally, see Catherine O. Jacquet, "Queer History Goes Digital: Using Outhistory.org in the Classroom," in Rupp and Freeman, *Understanding and Teaching*, 115.

Charleston, where she married her much younger black male servant, John Paul Simmons. Theirs was the first legal interracial marriage in South Carolina. Publicity about the case connects gender, sexuality, and race, raising issues for students to consider about the variety of ways in which legal and social restrictions have policed intimacy.

Historic sites also include commercial establishments catering to LGBTQ people, illustrating the emergence across time of queer communities and the struggle for the right to gather in public. The Ariston Hotel Baths in New York City, which men interested in sex with other men patronized as early as 1897, was the site of the first recorded police raid on a gay bathhouse in 1903.²⁴ There are many other sites from the days before the emergence of gay liberation, ranging from Café Lafitte in Exile in New Orleans, operating as a gay bar since 1933; to Finocchio's in San Francisco, from 1933 to 1999 a famous drag club and tourist destination; to the Jewel Box Lounge in Kansas City, opened in 1948 and Missouri home of the touring Jewel Box Review that featured male and female impersonators, including the famous Stormé DeLarvarie; to the Shamrock in Bluefield, West Virginia, opened in 1964 as a gay bar at night in what was a straight diner during the day.²⁵ The variety of clubs and their spread across the country speaks to the importance of LGBTQ people having access to spaces where they were welcome. Students learning about the variety of LGBTQ commercial spaces—not just in New York and San Francisco—can come to understand how much industrialization and geographical mobility loosened the hold of the family and facilitated the emergence of new subcultures, both heterosexual and homosexual.

24 The baths were located in the basement of the Ariston Hotel, Broadway and 55th Street, New York City, New York.

25 Café Lafitte in Exile is located at 901 Bourbon Street, New Orleans, Louisiana; it is located in the Vieux Carre National Historic Landmark District, designated on December 21, 1965. Finocchio's was located at 506 Broadway, San Francisco, California. The Jewel Box Lounge was located at 3219 Troost, Kansas City, Missouri (for the early days of the Jewel Box Review, see the theme study chapter on Miami). The Shamrock was located at 326 Princeton Avenue, Bluefield, West Virginia.

The importance of commercial establishments to the LGBTQ movement can be seen in the connections that developed between culture and politics. Bars and clubs both facilitated collective identity, which is the foundation of social movements, and served as central community spaces. A good example is Jewel's Catch One, the country's first black gay and lesbian disco, opened in 1972, which was associated with a community center, non-profit medical clinic, and the first residential home for homeless women and children with HIV/AIDS.²⁶ Another example is Julius's Bar, a straight bar where, in 1966, Mattachine members held a "Sip-in," ordering drinks and announcing they were gay, in that way challenging the law against serving alcohol to homosexuals.²⁷

The connection between commercial LGBTQ spaces and resistance becomes even clearer when we consider the kinds of activism that preceded the iconic response to a police raid at the Stonewall Inn in New York City, traditionally considered the launch of the gay liberation cycle of the LGBTQ movement.²⁸ In San Francisco, often considered the premier LGBTQ city, the sites of such protests include the Black Cat Club, where José Sarria, famous drag entertainer who ran for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1961, performed; California Hall, where activists responded to a police raid of a drag ball in 1964; and Compton's Cafeteria, scene of a riot by young gay and transgender customers against police repression in 1966.²⁹ In Los Angeles customers demonstrated against a police crackdown at Cooper's Donuts in 1959 and the Black

26 Jewel's Catch One was located at 4067 W. Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, California. It was the last black-owned gay club in Los Angeles when it closed in 2015.

27 Julius's Bar is located at 159 W. 10th Street, New York City, New York.

28 The Stonewall Inn is located at 51-53 Christopher Street, New York City, New York. Stonewall was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on June 28, 1999 and designated a National Historic Landmark on February 16, 2000.

29 The Black Cat Club is located at 710 Montgomery Street, San Francisco; it is a contributing property (though not for its LGBTQ history) to the Jackson Square Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 18 1971. California Hall is located at 625 Polk Street, San Francisco, California. Compton's Cafeteria was located at 101 Taylor Street, San Francisco, California; this building is a contributing property (though not for its LGBTQ history) to the Uptown Tenderloin Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 9, 2005.

Cat Tavern in 1966.³⁰ Many of these early protesters were people of color. Like the more genteel Mattachine “Sip-in,” these street protests show how important physical spaces were to diverse members of the LGBTQ community. The film *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria*, can be used to illustrate the impact of these pre-Stonewall protests and to raise the question of why certain events come to stand for the beginning of movements or the transition to a new historical period.³¹

As the number of locations connected to resistance to police raid suggests, there are many historical sites that document repression and discrimination against LGBTQ people. The Willard Asylum for the Chronic Insane in Ovid, New York, one of the many institutions where gay, lesbian, and gender-nonconforming people were locked up under “sexual psychopath laws,” is already on the National Register.³² The YMCA in Boise, Idaho, gained national attention in 1955 for the arrest of sixteen men accused of homosexual activity.³³ The home where transman Brandon Teena was murdered in Humboldt, Nevada, in 1993 illustrates the widespread violence against transgender people, as does the site of the murder of African-American transwoman Rita Hester in her apartment in Allston, Massachusetts in 1998. Her murder inspired the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance. The intersection of Pilot Peak and Snowy View Roads in Laramie, Wyoming, is another site of violence as the place where gay youth Matthew Shepard was beaten and left to die in 1998. A discussion of such cases can be set in the history of other forms of violence, such as the lynching of Black people, as an extreme form of social control. Violence can also be linked to school bullying, not just of LGBTQ people but, for example, in the form of slut-shaming directed at women.

30 Cooper’s Donuts was located at 553 or 557 S. Main Street, Los Angeles, California between two gay bars. The Black Cat Tavern was located at 3909 W. Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, California.

31 Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman, *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria* (San Francisco, CA: Frameline, 2005).

32 The Asylum was listed on the National Register on June 7, 1975.

33 The YMCA was located at 10th and Grove, Boise, Idaho.

More empowering are the wide variety of sites that document the emergence of the homophile movement, gay liberation, and lesbian feminism in the early 1970s, and the bisexual and transgender movements in the 1980s and 1990s. The earliest, albeit short-lived, organization dedicated to gay rights was the Society for Human Rights, launched out of the Henry Gerber House in the Old Town Triangle neighborhood of Chicago in 1924.³⁴ The Harry Hay House overlooking the Silver Lake Reservoir in Los Angeles marks the spot where Hay and some friends launched the Mattachine Society, the first lasting organization committed to civil rights for homosexuals, in 1950. The Daughters of Bilitis headquarters in San Francisco illustrates the growth of the homophile movement as lesbians began to organize separately from gay men.³⁵ The Dr. Franklin E. Kameny Residence in the northwest of the District of Columbia is important because Kameny was a central figure in the emergence of homophile militancy in the 1960s, fighting the federal government after he was fired for being gay. Students are often astonished to learn that there was a social movement fighting for the rights of LGBTQ people in the 1950s, so teaching about the homophile movement contributes to a rethinking of the supposedly conformist and domestic post-Second World War period. Analyzing the factors that gave rise to the homophile movement—wartime geographic mobility, response to the postwar crackdown on homosexuals in government, the spread of information about gay men and lesbians—helps students to think broadly about the motor forces in history.

Frank Kameny was one of the figures who bridged the largely assimilationist homophile movement and the emergence of a more militant gay liberation movement. The Gay Liberation Front emerged in New York City shortly after Stonewall, and the Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse in New York City was the center for an important group that split from the Gay

34 The Henry Gerber House was designated a National Historic Landmark on June 19, 2015.

35 The Daughters of Bilitis Headquarters were at 165 O'Farrell Street, San Francisco, California.

Liberation Front.³⁶ A range of other sites throughout the country housed short-lived gay liberation organizations in the early 1970s. Castro Camera, the location of Harvey Milk's shop, apartment, and campaign headquarters, is one of only a very few city-recognized LGBTQ historical sites in San Francisco, despite the city's prominence in queer history.³⁷ One site that marks the impact of HIV/AIDS on the LGBTQ movement in the 1980s is the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City.³⁸

Emerging out of gay liberation and the resurgent women's movement in the early 1970s, lesbian feminism is associated with a variety of places throughout the country. Its regional reach can be illustrated through such sites as the 31st Street Bookstore in Baltimore, a women's bookstore with a strong lesbian feminist presence, which opened in 1973; the home of the newspaper *Ain't I a Woman* in Iowa City, published out of an apartment by the Women's Liberation Front; the Furies Collective house in the southeast of the District of Columbia, home of the influential newspaper *The Furies*; and Olivia Records, founded by members and associates of The Furies, which calls attention to the lesbian feminist goal of creating an alternative culture.³⁹

For those close enough to visit, the Lesbian Herstory Archives, originally housed in founder Joan Nestle's Upper West Side Manhattan apartment, is a valuable resource for the study of the lesbian past and illustrates the importance of history to the LGBTQ movement.⁴⁰

Hesperia, MI, the site of the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival from 1977 to 1981, illustrates the strong connection between culture and politics in the lesbian feminist movement. The

36 The Gay Activists Alliance Firehouse is located in the So-Ho Cast Iron Historic District (listed on the National Register of Historic Places and designated a National Historic Landmark District on June 29, 1978) at 99 Wooster Street, New York City, New York.

37 Castro Camera was located at 573-575 Castro Street, San Francisco, California.

38 The Gay Men's Health Crisis was founded at 318 W. 22nd Street, New York City, New York.

39 The 31st Street Bookstore was located at 425 E. 31st Street, Baltimore, Maryland. Olivia Records operated out of 4400 Market Street, Oakland, California.

40 The Lesbian Herstory Archives is located at 484 14th Street, Brooklyn, New York, within the Park Slope Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 21, 1980.

struggle over the policy of the Festival to admit only “womyn-born womyn,” and the subsequent founding by transwomen of Camp Trans outside the festival gates, is illustrative of the ongoing tension about boundaries and belonging within the LGBTQ movement.

Learning about internal struggles over who belongs calls attention to a process at work in all social movements. Students can trace the addition of “lesbian” and then “bisexual,” “transgender,” and “queer” to “gay” in the name of the movement as a way to consider the expansion of boundaries. Marking that transition are sites connected to bisexual and transgender mobilization, such as the Bisexual Resource Center in Boston, founded in 1985, which grew out of the first national conference of bisexuals, who oftentimes met hostility from gay men and lesbians who assumed they were just avoiding coming out.⁴¹ The Erickson Educational Foundation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, was where transman Reed Erickson funded research and activism on behalf of transgender rights. Pier 45 in New York City has been, since the 1970s, a gathering place for gay men, drag queens, transgender youth, and other members of the African American ballroom community.⁴² Illustrating the inclusion of those beyond what Gayle Rubin calls the “charmed circle” are sites including the Leather Archives and Museum in Chicago, documenting the leather community’s role within the LGBTQ world.⁴³

The history of the LGBTQ movement in all of its cycles can be easily connected to the story of the other social movements of the 1960s and beyond. Kurt Dearie, a public high school teacher in Southern California, organizes a unit on civil rights that compares the goals, strategies, and support for the civil rights, women’s, Native American, Latina/o, Asian American, LGBTQ, and disability movements. The students write a paper evaluating what they see as the most

41 The Bisexual Resource Center is located at 29 Stanhope Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

42 The body of transgender and gay rights pioneer Marsha P. Johnson was recovered from the waters off Pier 45 in the 1990s.

43 Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” In Carole S Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (Boston, MA: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 267-319. The Leather Archives and Museum are located at 6418 Greenview Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

effective movement strategies.⁴⁴ In this way, students learn about social movement processes in general and can apply what they learn to thinking about the contemporary issues they see in the news.

As the expansion of the letters in LGBTQ illustrates, a number of historic sites show the diversity of LGBTQ life. Bayard Rustin's childhood home in West Chester, Pennsylvania, can be used in a discussion of the Quaker values that Rustin brought to the civil rights movement and the difficulties he encountered in that movement as a gay man. The A. Billy S. Jones Home in northwestern District of Columbia calls attention to Jones as the co-founder of the National Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays and key organizer of the first LGBTQ people of color conference in association with the first Gay and Lesbian March on Washington in 1979. Black lesbian feminist poet and scholar Audre Lorde's home with her partner, Frances Clayton on Staten Island, New York, recalls the central role Lorde played in the movement. Identifying locations that mark the contributions of Latinas and Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans to LGBTQ history beyond the ones mentioned here are a priority for celebrating a complete story of the LGBTQ past.

In all of these ways, then, recognized historic sites and those that might become part of our official heritage can be utilized to teach about LGBTQ history, either in discrete courses or as part of a survey of US history. Sites connected to just one individual or one event can be used to open up a broad consideration of the queer past, as I have pointed out above. And important developments in LGBTQ history, in turn, connect to themes that are part of the mainstream narrative of US history. The encounters between Native two-spirit people and European explorers and settlers, for example, provide insight into the deep impact of colonialism. Romantic friendships and Boston marriages illustrate the ways that economic structures and

⁴⁴ See Daniel Hurewitz, "Putting Ideas into Practice: High School Teachers Talk about Incorporating the LGBT Past," in Rupp and Freeman, *Understanding and Teaching*, 47-76.

social organization shape intimate relationships. The flourishing of commercial establishments catering to people with same-sex desires ties in with the growth of cities and the importance of social spaces to the building of communities and movements. The history of the homophile, gay liberation, lesbian feminist, and contemporary LGBTQ movements add to the story of organizing to end discrimination and win basic civil rights in the post-Second World War period.

Conclusion

Recognizing LGBTQ history as one thread in the fabric of the US past makes for better history: better for all students, who can see how historically contingent sexuality is, and better because more complete and more complex. A variety of social justice and multicultural education organizations utilize the metaphor of mirrors and windows to describe the relationship between students and those who people the history they are studying. When history is about great white men, then elite white male students see themselves as in a mirror. Other students are looking through windows from the outside, viewing a history of which they are not a part. Our goal should be to provide mirrors and windows for everyone, so students learn about the histories of their families, communities, and worlds as well as those of others from different genders, races, ethnicities, classes, sexualities, and abilities. At the same time, we need to problematize the concept of mirrors, so that students—in this case, LGBTQ students—do not think that women who loved other women or men who had sex with other men or individuals who presented in a gender different than the one they were assumed to be at birth are just like them.

A history enriched by an understanding of how concepts of sexuality and gender, in conjunction with race, ethnicity, class, disability, age, and other categories of difference, have changed over time is a better history. Such a history fuels new ways of thinking about contemporary debates, including same-sex marriage; gay, lesbian, and transgender people in the military; immigration; and citizenship. What a historical perspective brings is a deeper

understanding of why change has happened, why some things have not changed, and how change is not always progress. Legal, social, political, urban, and cultural history lend multiple dimensions to thinking about the LGBTQ past and present, and, in turn, the history of same-sex sexuality and gender nonconformity expands our understanding of all of these facets of history.

The central narratives of US history speak to queer lives and, just as important, vice versa.

What teaching with historic sites can do is to help make the past come alive. Houses, official buildings, neighborhoods, commercial establishments, and the scenes of historic protests can make concrete the idea that there is a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer past, that what it means to have same-sex desires or to love someone of the same sex or to cross the lines of gender has changed over time, and that LGBTQ history is not a simple story of progress from the bad old days to the liberated new ones. From the representation of Cheyenne two-spirits leading a victory dance at the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument to Hull House to the Willard Asylum for the Chronic Insane to Compton's Cafeteria to Castro Camera, the places where diverse people lived their lives and struggled and made history have the potential to enrich our understanding of the past. In a society in which bullying, hate crimes, homelessness, and suicides are all too common in the lives of LGBTQ youth, teaching about queer history embodied in historic sites can inspire young minds to imagine and work for a more open and accepting future society. That is my hope.