



FOR LOVE AND COMMUNITY

Queer Asian Pacific Islanders Take Action 1960s–1990s

A new exhibition opening Sept. 18, 2012

In 1968, when Crystal Jang was a student at San Francisco State College, she decided to do a paper on gay people. Just eight years earlier, she had gone to the library in the city's North Beach neighborhood and had read about the Kinsey scale, which scientifically vouched that her eighth-grade crush on a ninth-grade girl was perfectly normal. Across town Canyon Sam fell hard for Jan, a band mate at St. Peter's Church in the Richmond District. Jan's infectious laughter sounded like soul music to Canyon in 1972. In Sacramento, as Zee Wong and her siblings gathered around their father to give him a massage during "family time," he corrected Zee's twin sister, telling her to not use the word "homosexual," but to say "gay" or "lesbian" instead.

Neither Crystal, Canyon nor Zee had yet fully formulated their lesbian identities at the time, though they all knew they liked women. Within 15 years, however, the three would come together at one of San Francisco's earliest Asian lesbian potlucks hosted by Zee. Each came from different activist communities: Canyon had helped organize an Asian American feminist group, Zee had played in a queer women-of-color softball team, and Crystal had come of age among white lesbian feminists. All three believed in the importance of Asian lesbians finding each other to forge community.

By reflecting these and other lives, "For Love and Community" recounts the beginnings of San Francisco's Asian Pacific Islander queer women's and transgender community. Many of its members were born in the city, with deep roots in San Francisco Chinatown. Others such as Willy Wilkinson and Marion Abdullah moved as adults to the Bay Area, where they actively worked to build support networks and to advocate for change. Snapshots from the cameras of these and other API organizers tell a story of family, community, activism and love from the 1960s to the 1990s. Audio clips from queer API women bring voice to a history that has never been heard. In a city of rich legacies from both API and queer communities, the GLBT History Museum unveils a show that finally reveals organizing at their intersection.

"API queer women and transfolks have been out and working towards social change in San Francisco since at least the 1960s. What's most incredible is that this movement reflects activism en masse. So many people have contributed towards creating the queer API women and trans community as it exists today. And every single one defers to someone else as an important force. It's inspiring to see so many people taking action to make a more compassionate world accepting of difference. The purpose of this exhibition is to serve as a beginning rather than to mark an end. I hope it will encourage conversations and spur movement to preserve stories that are constantly at risk of being lost. We must hold close and make public our own histories since no one will do it for us."

—Amy Sueyoshi, curator

GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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EXHIBITION CREDITS

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