

## **Finding aid of the Gay Activists Alliance, New York Collection Coll2010-002**

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**Language of Material:** English

**Contributing Institution:** ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

**Title:** Gay Activists Alliance, New York collection

**creator:** Owles, Jim

**creator:** Rash, John

**creator:** Gay Activist Alliance

**creator:** Lauritsen, John

**source:** O'Hara, Jerome

**source:** Perez, Angel

**creator:** Wandel, Richard

**creator:** Kennedy, Joe

**Identifier/Call Number:** Coll2010-002

**Physical Description:** 2 Linear Feet2 archive cartons, 1 flat box

**Date (inclusive):** 1969-1998

**Date (bulk):** bulk

**Abstract:** Constitution and bylaws, correspondence, committee structure and reports, along with newspapers, informational pamphlets, fliers, lists of gay and lesbian organizations, photographs, and clippings of the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), New York. The GAA sought to avoid internal conflict by democratically electing an executive committee and to avoid entangling alliances by focusing on gay and lesbian rights issues. The organization utilized coordinated non-violent confrontational actions in the attempt to leverage the power of the straight and gay press to increase the awareness of gay and lesbian civil rights issues, 1969-1981.

**Access**

The collection is open to researchers. There are no access restrictions.

**Publication Rights**

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**Preferred Citation**

Box #, folder/item #, Gay Activists Alliance, New York Collection, Coll2010-002, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

**Acquisition Information**

Donated by Jerome O'Hara and Angel Perez, date unknown.

**Processing Information**

Processing this collection has been funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Formerly housed in boxes 103-034, 103-035, 103-036, 103-90 and Gay Activists Alliance -- New York, ONE subject files. Collection processed by Michael C. Oliveira, 18 June 2010.

**Administrative History**

Jim Owles, Marty Robinson, Arthur Evans, and others disenchanted by the lack of structure and focus of the Gay Liberation Front and the rigid hierarchical structure of the Mattachine Society of New York formed the Gay Activists Alliance, GAA. The founders sought to avoid conflicts that had plagued other civil rights organizations by democratically electing an executive committee, holding regular membership meetings, observing parliamentary procedure, and focusing on a single issue, gay and lesbian rights. In December 1969, Owles, Robinson, Evans, Arthur Bell, and eight others (which according to some sources included Kay Tobin, Vito Russo, and Morty Manford) gathered in Bell's apartment to begin the process of forming a new organization. The GAA focused on exclusively on gay and lesbian rights issues, such as the end of discriminatory practices in housing and employment, the repeal of the consensual sodomy statute, and the end of police harassment. The group specialized in direct confrontational actions, "zaps," challenging homophobic comments and politicians to take a stand on issues concerning gays and lesbians. The leadership of GAA attempted to plan their "zaps" to leverage the power of the gay and straight media. What little media coverage GAA received provided some protection against police abuses, increased awareness of gay and lesbian rights issues, and fueled the expansion of the GAA organizational model to other cities across the United States and Canada.

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Beginning in 1971, weekly dances held at the organization's headquarters, a rented firehouse on Wooster Street in SoHo, a neighborhood in Manhattan, attracted new members and provided a regular source of income until an arsonist struck in 1974. While the group contributed to the successful campaign of Bella Abzug to the United States Congress and Mayor Lindsay's executive order to end discrimination in city hiring, the passage of a bill to end discriminatory practices in housing and employment in the city would not pass until the 1986. Overtime people splintered from GAA, many women left to form Lesbian Feminist Liberation in 1972 and in the next year, others formed what would become the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. GAA members would also contribute to the organization of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, PFLAG and Lambda Legal. While the group continued its "zaps" membership dwindled. In 1977, Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign spurred membership. However by 1981, there had not been a regular meeting in years, and unauthorized letters on the organization's stationery began appearing. The veterans and the last remaining active members called a meeting to pass the necessary resolutions to dissolve GAA.

Bell, Arthur. *Dancing the Gay Lib Blues: A Year in the Homosexual Liberation Movement*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

Branson, Lindsay. *Gay Activists Alliance Out History.org*, May 01, 2010 [cited June 30, 2010]. Available from [http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Gay\\_Activists\\_Alliance](http://www.outhistory.org/wiki/Gay_Activists_Alliance).

Hogan, Steve and Lee Hudson. *Completely Queer: The Gay and Lesbian Encyclopedia*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998.

Kantrowitz, Arnie. "The Day Gay Lib Died." *New York Native*, November 2-15, 1981, 1, 14-15.

Kennedy, Joe. *Summer of '77: Last Hurrah of the Gay Activists Alliance*. Westport, CT: PPC Books, 1994.

Marotta, Toby. *The Politics of Homosexuality*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1981.

Rapp, Linda. *Gay Activists Alliance* glbtq, Inc., January 15, 2007 [cited June 30, 2010]. Available from [www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/gay\\_activists\\_alliance.html](http://www.glbtq.com/social-sciences/gay_activists_alliance.html).

Teal, Donn. *The Gay Militants*. New York: Stein and Day, 1971.

Tobin, Kay and Randy Wicker. *The Gay Crusaders*. New York: Paperback Library, 1972.

#### **Scope and Contents**

The collection consists of the Gay Activists Alliance, New York (GAA) constitution and bylaws, publications, newsletters, newspapers, fliers, and news clippings along with limited correspondence, committee report files, conference fliers, and photographs of early picketing and zaps. The GAA published materials include The Activist newsletter and newspaper and public outreach pamphlets proving general information on homosexuality, the repeal of the consensual sodomy statute, and the fight for gay and lesbian civil rights. The collection also includes reports on employment discrimination, information on the state and city gay and lesbian civil rights bills, and 3 editions of an international list of gay and lesbian organizations. Information on the choice of the lambda symbol, a typescript copy of Joe Kennedy's *The Summer of 1977: GAA's Last Hurrah*, and a few buttons along with a small frisbee complete the collection. Photographs by John Lauritsen, John Rash, and Richard C. Wandel captured picketing and zaps by GAA members including John Paul Hudson, Bob Milne, Jim Owles, and others. The demonstrations documented include; a synagogue, Saint Patrick's Cathedral, CBS Broadcasting Center, Household Finance Corporation, and New York City Hall.

#### **Related Archival Materials**

MssCol 1121 : Gay Activists Alliance records, 1970-1983. Gay Activists Alliance. New York Public Library, New York.

Morris Kight papers, Coll2010-008, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California. - see Morty Manford correspondence.

*Advocate* records, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, Los Angeles, California.

#### **Separated Materials**

The following books were relocated to the ONE library

"And God Bless Uncle Harry and His Roommate Jack, Who We're Not Supposed to Talk About:" Cartoons from *Christopher Street Magazine*. New York: Avon, 1978.

Boggan, E. Carrington, Marilyn G. Haft, Charles Lister and John P. Rupp. *The Rights of Gay People: The Basic ACLU Guide to a Gay Person's Rights*. New York: Discus, 1975.

Clark, Don. *Loving Someone Gay*. New York: Signet, 1978.

Curry, Hayden and Denis Clifford. *A Legal Guide for Lesbian & Gay Couples*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1980.

Fisher, Peter. *The Gay Mystique*. New York: Day Books, 1978. *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity among Men and Women*. New York: Simon Schuster, 1978.

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Jay, Karla and Allen Young, ed. *After You're Out: Personal Experiences of Gay Men and Women*. New York: Links Books, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation*. New York: Jove Book, 1977.

Klaich, Dolores. *Woman Plus Woman: Attitudes Toward Lesbianism*. London: New English Library, 1975.

Kleinberg, Seymour, ed. *The Other Persuasion*. New York: Vintage, 1977.

Miller, Neil. *In Search of Gay America: Women and Men in a Time of Change*. New York: Harper & Row, 1990.

Ricardo, Jack. *The Night G.A.A. Died*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

Society, Gay Theory Work Group of the Movement for a New. *Gay Oppression and Liberation or Homophobia: Its Causes and Cure*. Philadelphia: Movement for a New Society, 1977.

Warren, Patricia Nell. *The Fancy Dancer*. New York: Bantam Book, 1977.

Watmough, David. *The Connecticut Countess: Chronicles of Davey Bryant*. Trumansburg, New York: The Crossing Press, 1984.

Weinberg, George. *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1973.

The following newsletters, newspapers, and pamphlets were relocated to the ONE archives periodical collection:

*The Body Politic: Gay Liberation Journal*: 3 issues; May 1974 to October 1974.

*Christopher Street*: 53 issues; September 1976-October 1981; November 1981-March 1982, 58 to #62; September 1983, #80.

*Fag Rag*: Summer 1972.

*Faggots on Faggotry*: November 09, 1974.

*The Fountain: Voice of the Gay Northwest*: 6 issues; January 1972, May 1972, May 1973, June 1973, October 1973, December 1973.

*Gay*, New York: 2 issues; April 26,1971, October 25,1971.

*Gay Clone*, New York: May 1976.

*Gay Flames*: newsletter; December 14, 1970.

*The Gay Journal*: Spring 1979, #2.

*Gay Liberator Detroit*: 5 issues; February 1974 to June 1974.

*Gay People and Mental Health*: Volume 1, number 6.

*Gaysweek*: February 20, 1978, April 03,1978, July 17,1978.

*Lavender Opinion*: October 1974.

*Manhattan Gay Scene Guide: Interesting, Hysterical & Historic Places* .

*Mattachine Book Service*: Spring 1970.

*Mattachine Midwest Newsletter* : February 02, 1973.

*Mattachine Review*: 6 issues; September 1955, December 1955, February 1956, June 1959, July 1960, August 1963

### **Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Newspapers

Photographs

Gays -- Civil rights

Gay liberation movement -- New York (State) -- New York

Associations, institutions, etc. -- New York (State) -- New York

Clippings

Gay activists

Gay rights -- United States

Discrimination in employment

Owles, Jim

Rash, John

Gay Activist Alliance


Lauritsen, John

O'Hara, Jerome

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Perez, Angel  
Wandel, Richard  
Kennedy, Joe

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Box 1, Folder 2	<b>Creation of the Lambda Symbol 1969-1971</b>
Box 1, Folder 1	<b>Constitutions and By-Laws 1969-1977</b>
Box 1, Folder 3	<b>Correspondence 1970-1980</b>
Box 1, Folder 4	<b>Press Releases 1972-1980</b>
Box 1, Folder 5	<b>Committee Structure and Reports 1971-1974</b>
Box 2, Folder 5-6	<b>Gay Activist Newsletter and Newspaper 1971-1977</b>
Box 3, Folder 1	<b>Gay Activist Newsletter and Newspaper (oversized) 1971-1980</b>
Box 1, Folder 6	<b>Employment Discrimination Reports 1970-1971</b>
Box 1, Folder 7	<b>New York Gay Rights Bills 1970-1973</b>
Box 1, Folder 8	<b>Gay Right Pamphlets 1971-1975</b>
Box 1, Folder 9	<b>Lists of Gay Organizations 1971-1973</b>
Box 1, Folder 10	<b>Fliers 1970-1978</b>
Box 2, Folder 1	<b>Photographs 1970-1974</b> 
	<b>Physical Description:</b> [9 photographic prints and 2 negative strips]
	<b>Scope and Contents</b>
	Includes photographs of GAA protests taken by Richard Wandel, John Rash, and John Lauritsen.
Box 1, Folder 11	<b>Gay Conference Fliers and Reports 1971-1980</b>
Box 2, Folder 2	<b>Typescript Draft <i>Summer of '77: Last Hurrah of GAA</i> by Joe Kennedy 1994</b>
Box 2, Folder 3	<b>Administrative records 1969-1978</b>
	<b>Scope and Contents</b>
	Includes bylaws, contact lists, and a "Questions on homosexuality" article.
Box 2, Folder 4	<b>Guides to New York Public Library Collection 1997-1998</b>
Box 3, Folder 2	<b>Clippings 1969-1977</b>