
Accession number: 1993-02

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

San Francisco, California

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October 1996
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Descriptive Summary

Title: Queer Nation Records,
Date (inclusive): 1990-1996 (bulk dates 1990-1991)
Accession number: 1993-02
Creator: Queer Nation
Extent: 1 linear foot
San Francisco, California.
Language: English.

Acquisition
The bulk of the records were received in 1993 (#1993-02).

Access
Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights
Copyright to unpublished manuscript materials has been transferred to the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California.

Audio-Visual Materials
There is one videotape in the collection.

Preferred Citation

Historical Note
Queer Nation San Francisco was a direct action group with the purpose of advancing queer rights. Founded in July of 1990, one month after New York City's Queer Nation, it deployed tactics similar to those of the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power (ACT-UP), namely street protests, posterings, and other "unapologetic," "in your face" political demonstration. Like ACT-UP, it lacked clear boundaries of membership and had no official leadership structure. Weekly meetings, held at the Mission District's Women's Building, were open to all, and decisions were made by consensus. Meetings included reports and proposals from focus groups, which met during or outside the general meeting to concentrate on their affinity, such as
police violence or activist art. However, unlike ACT-UP, Queer Nation was not oriented toward ending the AIDS crisis. Rather its general objective was to reverse the perceived trend of increasing homophobia which had followed the AIDS pandemic. Also, Queer Nation organized under the polymorphous identity of "queer" which was intended to be more inclusive of diversity and less exclusive of cultural (as opposed to legal) action than other, more "assimilationist" gay or lesbian groups.

Among the more prominent focus groups of Queer Nation SF were LABIA (Lesbians And Bi-women In Action), United Colors of Queer Nation, UBIQUITOUS (Uppity Bi Queers United In Their Overtly Unconventional Sexuality), Queer Planet, and DORIS SQUASH (Defending Our Rights In the Streets, Super Queens United Against Savage Heterosexism). Much internal communication was accomplished through Queerline, a voice mail service, and Queer Week, a photocopied newsletter.

No records exist of the group’s dissolution, although there is documentation of internal disputes among active members in the summer of 1991 which followed a controversial political action outside the home of then San Francisco Board of Supervisors member Roberta Achtenberg.

**Scope and Content**

The Queer Nation San Francisco records (1 linear foot) document the weekly meetings, regular political and cultural actions, and press coverage of this short-lived but prominent coalition of the early 1990s. The records range from the group’s inception in 1990 until 1991 (with the addition of an open letter published in 1996 intended to clarify the group’s founding). The records are divided into five series: chronological, visuals, focus groups, communications, and non-Queer Nation San Francisco.

The **chronological series** is comprised primarily of files documenting each weekly general meeting. Interspersed are files documenting actions and workshops sponsored by the group between meetings. Some consecutive general meeting records are combined. Folders contain agendas, notes from meetings, newsletters, proposals for action, notices of upcoming events, and press clippings in this order. Some files contain records of topical discussions beyond the usual business, for instance, a forum on race and racism in the queer community (December 5, 1990), an effective media outreach workshop (February 2, 1990), a forum on sexism and women’s issues (March 9, 1991), a discussion of an action at Mayor Agnos’ house (March 27, 1991), and a forum on HIV presented by 4H: Happy, Healthy, Hip Homosexuals (April 3, 1991).

The **chronological series** were organized by a Queer Nation archivist and are incomplete. The contents of each chronological file have been maintained, although items have been re-arranged to form a consistent order. Stickers distributed at meetings have been removed for preservation purposes to a folder in the visuals series. Non-Queer Nation SF fliers distributed at meetings have been compiled in a folder in the final series. Records which were not originally included in the chronological files have been organized by subject in later series. Within these subjects, items have been arranged in chronological order when possible.

The **visuals series** contains examples of Queer Nation’s distinctive graphic style, which was primarily circulated through small, brightly colored stickers. The photographic holdings contain news photographs from Queer Nation-sponsored shopping trips to suburban malls. The photographs are in several forms: black and white prints, contact sheets, and negatives.

The **focus groups series** is comprised of files documenting the activities of several prominent committees within Queer Nation, which often functioned independently of the larger group or which undertook to inform the larger group of their area of interest. Included are: printed materials intended to educate Queer Nationalists about racism, essays collected for a forum on bisexuality, and fliers and postcards for a campaign against Amnesty International’s exclusion of queer human rights issues.

The **communications series** contains materials documenting both internal and external communication of the group. The Queerline scripts document the regularly up-dated messages broadcast to callers of this Queer Nation phone information service. Included in each script are calendars of upcoming actions, schedules of upcoming focus group meetings, and emergency activations. The Queer Week newsletters are filed with a fact sheet from its publisher, the Media Committee of Queer Nation San Francisco,
describing its distribution, circulation, contributors, content, purpose, and production. Included are Volume I, numbers 1-14, and Volume II, number 1. Queer and Out, also published by the Media Committee, is a compilation of coming out stories in celebration of National Coming Out Day 1990. Press clippings from September 1990 to March 1991 primarily document Queer Nation actions in the Bay Area, a significant number of which pertain to the GHOST (Grand Homosexual Outrage at Sickening Teleevangelists) focus group's opposition to a city-wide "Halloween exorcism" planned by two ministers in 1990. The miscellaneous file contains unattributed, undated notes as well as a Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) survey containing opinions on the use of the term "queer."

The

**Title:** non-Queer Nation SF series

includes materials from other Queer Nation chapters in the United States, including a file on the development of the original Queer Nation in New York as a response to that city's rash of anti-queer violence during the summer of 1990. This series also contains a file of fliers which were distributed at weekly general meetings. Since these meetings were fairly open, it is unclear to what degree the groups and activities promoted in these fliers were associated with Queer Nation, although it is likely that there was significant overlap in some cases.

**Queer Nation related collections**

**Title:** Brian Bringardner Papers, 1992-16

**Title:** Gerard Koskovich Papers, 1991-20

[documents related to an attempt to revive the group in 1992]

**Title:** Bob Smith Papers, 1993-21

**Title:** Ephemera files on ACT-UP

**Title:** Stephen Fish Papers, 1991-19

**Title:** Sheldon Ramsdell, 1996-28

**Title:** Bob Smith Papers, 1993-21

**Title:** Hank Wilson Papers, 1996-2

**Title:** AIDS/ARC Vigil Records, 1991-05

**Title:** AIDS/ARC Vigil II Records, 1994-21

**Title:** Meg Barnett Papers [Lesbians Against Police Violence], 1989-05

**Title:** Boy with Arms Akimbo/Girl with Arms Akimbo Records, 1996-41

**Title:** Forget-Me-Not Records, 1989-10

**Title:** Lesbian Avengers Records, 1996-10

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**Chronological**

**Box Box 1**

**General Meetings**

- Jul 18 through Aug 15, 1990
- Sep 12 through Oct 10, 1990
- Oct 17, 1990
- Oct 24, 1990
- Oct 31, 1990
- Nov 7, 1990
- Nov 14, 1990
- Nov 21, 1990
- Nov 28, 1990
- Dec 5, 1990
- Dec 12, 1990

**Gallagher Protest, Dec 14, 1990**

**General Meeting, Dec 19, 1990**

**General Meeting, Jan 2, 1991**

**Wilson Inaugural Action, Jan 7, 1991**

**General Meetings**

- Jan 16, 1991
- Jan 23, 1991
Jan 30, 1991
Feb 2, 1991
Feb 6, 1991
Serramonte Shopping Center Trip, SHOP, Feb 9, 1991
General Meeting, Mar 9, 1991
Police Misconduct Actions, SQUELCH, Mar 11, 1991
General Meeting, Mar 20, 1991
Forum on the History of Activism in San Francisco, Mar 24, 1991
General Meeting, Mar 27, 1991
General Meetings
   Apr 3, 1991
   Apr 17, 1991
   May 8, 1991
   May 15, 1991
   May 22, 1991
Teaching the Body Queer Series, Jun, 1991
Notes Toward a Chronology of Queer Nation San Francisco, May 28, 1991
General Meetings, July 10 through Jul 24, 1991
HIV Youth Outreach Funding/Achtenberg Action, Aug, 1991
Great America (Unofficial) “Queer Day”, Aug 17, 1991
First Regional Bay Area Queer Nation Meeting, Sep 14, 1991

Visuals

Box 1

   Posters
   T-shirt graphics (originals)
   Sticker graphics (originals)
   Stickers
   Photographs, Shopping Actions, Aug 25 and Nov 17, 1990

Focus Groups

Box 1

   GHOST (Grand Homosexual Outrage at Sickening Televangelists)
   LABIA (Lesbian and Bi-women In Action)
   Queer Planet
   Queer Scouts
   QUID (Queers Undertaking Income and Disbursement)
   SQUELCH, Legal Observation Notes, Sep 6, 1990
   Street Patrol
   UBIQUITOUS (Uppity BI Queers United In Their Overtly Unconventional Sexuality)
   United Colors of Queer Nation
   Miscellaneous

Communications

Box 1

   Queerline Scripts
   Queer Week Newsletters
   Queer and Out Publication
   Press Clippings
   Miscellaneous

Non-Queer Nation San Francisco

Box 1

   Other Queer Nation Chapters
   New York City
   California (outside San Francisco)
   Atlanta, Georgia
   Lincoln, Nebraska
   Salt Lake City, Utah
   Correspondence
   Suppliers
Videotape

Box Box 1