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MEDIA RELEASE

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New Online Exhibition Explores 50 Years of Groundbreaking LGBTQ Newspaper Bay Area Reporter

San Francisco — A new online exhibition hosted by the GLBT Historical Society and curated by photojournalist Rick Gerharter will examine the history of the *Bay Area Reporter* (BAR) on the occasion of the paper's 50th anniversary. The oldest continuously published LGBTQ newspaper in the United States, the BAR has been serving the San Francisco Bay Area since 1971. *Stories of Our Movement: The Bay Area Reporter at 50* will display digitized pages of the paper, with links to full issues, photographs, testimonials and other audiovisual materials. The exhibition is made possible by generous support from the Bob Ross Foundation, and opens on the GLBT Historical Society's website on April 26, 2021.

From its very first issue on April 1, 1971 — adorned with a smiling clown face and inviting readers to "meet your friends" at a fundraiser called "Circus Circus" — to its coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Bay Area Reporter* has positioned itself as an invaluable source of news, site of information exchange and tool of community-building for the LGBTQ community. Over its half-century lifespan, the publication has evolved along with its readers and the community itself. It has become increasingly professionalized, with improved production quality and color printing, has expanded its audiences and has successfully broadened its coverage. After five decades, the paper has undergone a transformation from being primarily a bar-focused, community niche paper to a publication serving San Francisco, the Bay Area, California and ultimately a newspaper of national and international consequence — all while maintaining its LGBTQ focus.

Stories of Our Movement examines this groundbreaking paper's trajectory, impact and continued relevance. It demonstrates that the BAR has not only reflected the dramatic diversity of the LGBTQ community and the evolution of community priorities. Through its Bay Area focus, news and cultural reporting, sex-positive outlook, editorials and endorsements, the paper has also helped to shape, interpret and define the interests of its increasingly heterogeneous readership. For fifty years, the paper's personal ads, business and events listings have enabled its readers to build communities, establish networks and construct chosen families. The exhibition is curated by Rick Gerharter, a San Francisco-based photojournalist who has documented the queer communities of the city and beyond for nearly 35 years. Gerharter has carefully selected historic headlines, cover images, articles and advertising from the BAR's complete back run, which are paired with archival footage and photos from the GLBT Historical Society's archives. The exhibition is organized thematically, highlighting news, politics, culture and sex-positive reporting, opinions and reviews, neighborhood issues, letters to the editor and personal ads.

"My research in the BAR's back issues really underscores just how much the paper has evolved in 50 years, right along with the community," says Gerharter. "I want viewers to come away from this exhibition appreciating the tremendous advances the LGBTQ community has made in five decades, and with an understanding of how important the vital work of the *Bay Area Reporter* has been and continues to be in building and strengthening that community."

Stories of Our Movement is being accompanied by a series of public programs, beginning with a living history panel on April 2 with former and current members of the BAR's staff. Other events will include a virtual curator-led tour of the exhibition and a creative-writing salon and zine-making workshop that continue the paper's venerable legacy of LGBTQ activism, resistance and history-making through the written word. The GLBT Historical Society will also be co-sponsoring additional programs hosted by BAR Media, Inc.

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ABOUT THE CURATOR

Rick Gerharter is a San Francisco-based photojournalist who has documented the queer communities of San Francisco and beyond for nearly 35 years. He has been regularly published in the *Bay Area Reporter* since 1987. Gerharter's extensive editorial work and travel photography documents performing arts, portraits, architecture and LGBTQ life, and has appeared in a wide variety of periodicals, newspapers, books, films and exhibitions. He is also a contributor to Getty Images. His work is in the collection of the James C. Hormel Center at the San Francisco Public Library and the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco. For more information, visit https://www.rickgerharterphotos.com.

ABOUT THE GLBT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

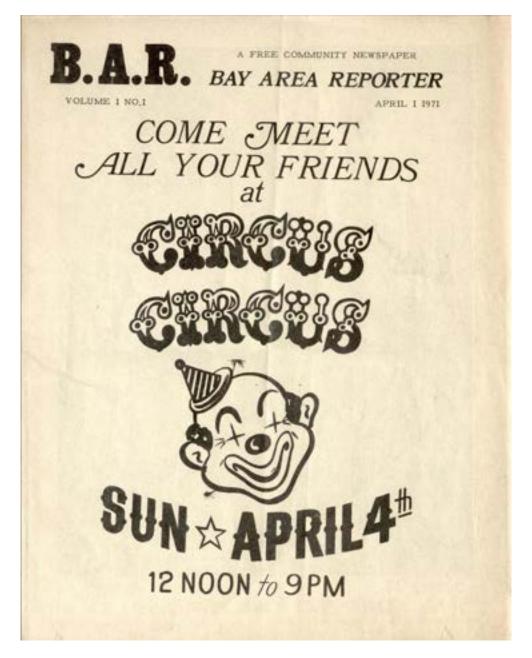
The GLBT Historical Society is a public history center and archives that collects, preserves and interprets the history of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people and the communities that support them. Founded in 1985, the society maintains one of the world's largest collections of LGBTQ historical materials. For more information, visit <u>www.glbthistory.org</u>.

ABOUT THE BOB ROSS FOUNDATION

Based in San Francisco, the Bob Ross Foundation was established in 1996 by Bob Ross (1934–2003). A pioneer of LGBT community journalism, Ross was the co-founder of the *Bay Area Reporter*. He served as publisher from 1971 until his death in 2003. Tom Horn, publisher emeritus of the *Bay Area Reporter*, is now the trustee of the foundation, which provides grants to a Bay Area LGBTQ nonprofits and supports charities and causes that reflect the philanthropic priorities established by Ross.

GRAPHICS

The following images may be reproduced only in association with coverage of the exhibition *Stories of Our Movement: The Bay Area Reporter at 50*. Credits noted in captions are mandatory.



The first issue of the *Bay Area Reporter*. Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1, 1971; Periodicals Collection, GLBT Historical Society, copyright BAR Media, Inc.



by Timothy Rodrigues

First-time ladies, having a ball by Dennis Conkin

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Famed 1998 "No Obits" issue of the Bay Area Reporter; Vol. 28, No. 33, August 13, 1998; Periodicals Collection, GLBT Historical Society, copyright BAR Media, Inc.



A colorful 2005 Pride issue of the *Bay Area Reporter*; Vol. 35 No. 25, June 23, 2005; Periodicals Collection, GLBT Historical Society, copyright BAR Media, Inc.

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