

John D'Emilio. *Queer Legacies: Stories from Chicago's LGBTQ Archives*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2020.

Stories of individuals and the groups they formed make up the many essays in John D'Emilio's *Queer Legacies: Stories from Chicago's LGBTQ Archives*. Pulled from archived materials of the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives, the essays cover audio interviews, meeting notes, journals, pamphlets, and many more items that help preserve a history of queerness and LGBTQ activism in Chicago. The essays create a nuanced and interwoven view of this local history within the broader anchor points of the Stonewall Uprising of 1969 in New York and the national Marches on Washington for LGBTQ rights that occurred in 1979, 1987, and 1993. Another goal of *Queer Legacies* is to highlight on the micro-scale how individuals working to create community often also inadvertently or intentionally created larger movements that impacted beyond the borders of Chicago and the Midwest.

D'Emilio dips firstly into a few stories preserved in the archives of individuals who grew up prior to these keystone events and contrasts their shared experiences existing in eras where queerness was hidden and criminalized to the latter experiences of those engaging in openly challenging societal norms. These first personal narratives describe people who existed under the radar, living and loving quietly to avoid exposure. By the time their stories were recorded in the archives, Stonewall was more than a decade past, and their world was dramatically different, a place where being open was, while not without difficulty, more of a possibility than in their earlier years. Further essays then relate individuals for

whom the Stonewall Uprising was a formational event: college-age people coming into activism at the beginnings of what was at the time called the gay liberation movement.

Activism has a leading role in many of the essays D'Emilio writes. He shares many explorations of groups that formed as part of this liberation momentum, such as Chicago Gay Liberation, Transvestite Legal Committee, and the Illinois Lesbian and Gay Rights Task Force. However, some groups formed as social clubs like the brunch group Amigas Latinas which then evolved into a decade-spanning organization with activist impact on the national level. This is a thread that D'Emilio weaves throughout the essays – organizations created around social activities like Amigas Latinas or the running club Frontrunners that brought attention via large groups of people attending marathons and parades, often became forces of political change and visibility beyond their initial creation. Many of these organizations only have documents that cover a few years, but the collective impulse to come together can be seen in the variety of ways that queer people started to congregate around political action, police abuse protests, music, athletics, and the desire for community.

Where the essays may leave one wanting are further details of individual stories. As D'Emilio points out, personal narratives from regular people are less likely to be preserved. The Gerber/Hart archives thankfully have abundant organizational records, but they often only hint at the lives people led. We get glimpses of the way people felt through newsletter articles from these organizations, but because queer people were purposefully overlooked and their

lives elided, it is challenging to paint a more detailed picture of queer life in these times.

A liberationist impulse propelled a massive shift in society, but a plethora of individual stories have yet to be told. D'Emilio makes this plain throughout his essays; he says several times that more research, more preservation, and more archival exploration will hopefully uncover these stories, and states that this underscores the vital need for community archives and research done in them. Many times, he relates his surprised joy in discovering a facet of history about which he, a professional historian and professor of history, gender, and women's studies, was unaware. In the vein of the activist framework of *Queer Legacies*, D'Emilio leaves the reader with a call to arms, an intense curiosity about what else might be stored in the archives of not only the Gerber/Hart, but also the other queer archives and broader community archives that have formed around the world.

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