



June 9, 2021

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VILLAGEPRESERVATION.ORG

Hon. Bill de Blasio

Mayor, City of New York

City Hall

New York, NY 10007

Hon. Sarah Carroll

Chair, NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

One Centre Street, 9th floor

New York, NY 10007

Re: Unprotected Landmarks of LGBTQ+ History

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Chair Carroll,

As we mark LGBTQ+ Pride and History Month, I write to call to your attention multiple sites of tremendous significance to LGBTQ+ history and the LGBTQ+ civil rights movements which [we have long asked the City's Landmarks Preservation Commission to consider for landmark or historic district designation](#), but which it has thus far refused to act upon. All remain without protection, and thus are vulnerable to demolition and loss, and all are located within our [proposed South of Union Square Historic District](#). As we celebrate the history, struggles, and contributions of the LGBTQ+ community in our city, I strongly urge you to reconsider your prior rejection of these and other sites for landmark designation. These include:

- **80 Fifth Avenue:** This elaborately-detailed Renaissance Revival style structure built in 1908 housed the headquarters of what was then known as the National Gay Task Force (which became the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in 1985, and is now the National LGBTQ Task Force) from its founding in 1973 until 1986. The Task Force was the very first national LGBT rights organization in the United States, accomplishing groundbreaking social, legal, and political change in those first dozen or so years, and laying



80 Fifth Avenue today

the foundation for many more in the years which followed. While here they also initiated battles for civil rights which are still being waged today. This was the Task Force's very first headquarters, and its only in New York.

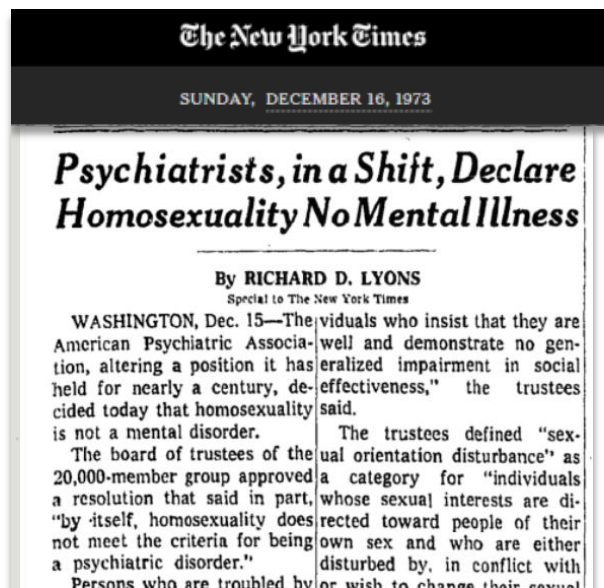
The Task Force's accomplishments during the time they were located here represented several giant leaps forward for LGBTQ Americans. After employing tactics like staffing booths at the American Psychiatric Association's Convention to challenge the group's official categorization of homosexuality as a mental illness, in 1973 the Task Force secured the removal of homosexuality from the APA's official Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, reducing a significant stigma attached to LGBT people and paving the way for further legal reforms. In 1975 the Task Force advocated for the successful ruling by the U.S. Civil Service Commission eliminating the longtime ban on gay people serving in federal government employment, ending decades of witch hunts against government workers suspected of being gay which dated back to the McCarthy

era and before. In 1977, the Task Force brokered another historic first – the very first meeting of any LGBTQ+ group with the White House. The meeting directly resulted in changes in policies at the Bureau of Prisons and the Public Health Service, while also initiating policy discussions that would continue for decades and contributed to the incorporation of support for gay rights within the Democratic Party platform. In 1978, the Task Force got the U.S. Public Health Service to stop certifying gay immigrants as "psychopathic personalities."

Also during its time at 80 Fifth Avenue, in the late 1970s the Task Force staff conducted the first national survey of corporate hiring policies (called Project Open Employment) to determine whether U.S. employers explicitly barred discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This was followed a few years later by another of survey municipal police departments, laying the groundwork for successful campaigns, beginning at this time and continuing to this day, to secure protections by government and private employers against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (and eventually gender identity as well).



Press conference in 1973 announcing the formation of the National Gay Task Force, the first national gay rights organization in the United States. NGTF co-founders (l. to r., front row) Ron Gold, Dr. Howard Brown, Dr. Bruce Voeller, and Nathalie Rockhill (l. to r. back row) Martin Duberman, Barbara Gittings, Frank Kameny.



(Left) Koch and Abzug, both Congressmembers from Greenwich Village representing neighboring districts, were often rivals, but came together to introduce the first federal gay rights legislation in 1975. (Right) Task Force co-director Jean O'Leary

Toward that end, the Task Force was instrumental in drafting and securing introduction of the very first federal gay rights bill in Congress in 1975 by local Congressmembers Bella Abzug and Ed Koch, as well as several other representatives. While the bill did not pass then and still has not passed the entire Congress (a current more limited version, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, has passed both the Senate and the House, but not in the same session), it has been consistently reintroduced in various forms in the forty-six years since, gaining increasing support. This bill, first put forward by the Task Force, has become the basis for non-discrimination laws passed by 22 states and the District of Columbia, as well as hundreds of cities, counties, and localities throughout the United States.

During its years at 80 Fifth Avenue, the Task Force also played a critical role in winning support from the mainstream women's movement for lesbian and gay rights, which had previously been cool or even hostile to the cause. This most notably manifested itself in 1969 when NOW President Betty Friedan warned of the 'Lavender Menace' faced by the women's movement becoming too closely associated with lesbians, and dropped the organization's connections to lesbian groups. The Task Force successfully campaigned for a lesbian rights resolution at the 1975 national convention of the National Organization for Women, reversing NOW's prior stance. In 1977 Task Force co-Executive Director Jean O'Leary and women board members obtained endorsement of lesbian and gay rights from the U.S.-sponsored conference for International Women's Year. O'Leary was also the only openly lesbian delegate on President Carter's International Women's Year Commission.

The Task Force also began the national response to an epidemic of hate crimes against LGBTQ individuals during its time here. In 1982, it began its Anti-Violence Project, which focused on data-gathering on anti-LGBTQ hate crimes when almost no other entities were collecting such information, producing reports that were regularly cited as authoritative on the subject of homophobic violence. That same year they set up the first national telephone crisis line designed to provide assistance to people who had been harassed or assaulted, and in 1984 the Task Force issued the first comprehensive report on hate crimes directed at the gay community nationally. During their time at 80 Fifth Avenue the Task Force also laid the groundwork for securing passage of the Hate Crimes Statistics Act by the House of Representatives in 1987-- the first federal law to address sexual orientation (the bill was finally passed by both houses and signed into law in 1990).

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Task Force also led national response to a growing backlash against gay rights laws and increasing gay and lesbian visibility. Right-wing groups and the newly-constituted 'Moral Majority' were leading campaigns to repeal gay rights laws in Miami-

Dade, Florida; St. Paul, Minnesota; Wichita, Kansas; and other locales across the country, and to prevent states from Hawaii to Massachusetts from passing gay rights laws. Anita Bryant, who said "What these people really want, hidden behind obscure legal phrases, is the legal right to propose to our children that theirs is an acceptable alternate way of life... I will lead such a crusade to stop it as this country has not seen before" led a campaign called "Save Our Children." Its intent -- often successful -- was to block or repeal laws prohibiting employment discrimination against lesbians and gay men, using fear of recruitment of children into "the homosexual lifestyle" as an organizing tool. These efforts laid the groundwork for the right wing's promotion of anti-gay referenda in the 1990s and 2000s, and their more recent efforts against bills which prohibited discrimination based upon gender identity.

The Task Force also led the successful opposition to the so-called 'Family Protection Act' introduced in Congress at the behest of the Moral Majority in 1981, which would have had disastrous consequences for LGBTQ Americans if enacted. The bill would have banned federal funding of any organization which in any way supported gay rights or even preached tolerance of gay people; allowed any state, local, or private entity to fire teachers on the basis of sexual orientation; amended the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to specify that anti-gay discrimination is legal; and prohibited any federal agency and the federal government itself from enacting or enforcing any non-discrimination measures based upon sexual orientation -- illustrating the steep barriers the Task Force faced, and overcame, at the time.

In 1985, the Task Force secured the favorable Supreme Court decision of *NGTF v. Oklahoma*, which partially overturned a law prohibiting gay teachers from discussing gay rights -- one of the few positive Supreme Court decisions regarding LGBT rights during a decade that saw a significant backlash against gay and lesbian rights.

During its time at 80 Fifth Avenue, the Task Force also took a lead role in the fight against AIDS, at a time of indifference at best, and overt hostility and discrimination at worst, from many institutions and branches of government. The Task Force's Executive Director, Dr. Bruce Voeller (who lived nearby at [186 Spring Street](#)), conducted early research establishing that condoms prevent the spread of AIDS, and established the use of the term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, rather than the inaccurate and stigmatizing "Gay Related Immune Deficiency" -- the name by which what came to be called AIDS was originally known. In 1983 the Task Force hired the first AIDS lobbyist from a gay organization to work the halls of Congress and federal agencies. That same year the Task Force's Executive Director Virginia Apuzzo testified before Congress to excoriate the Reagan Administration for the lack of federal response to AIDS. In 1984, she and others raised funds to

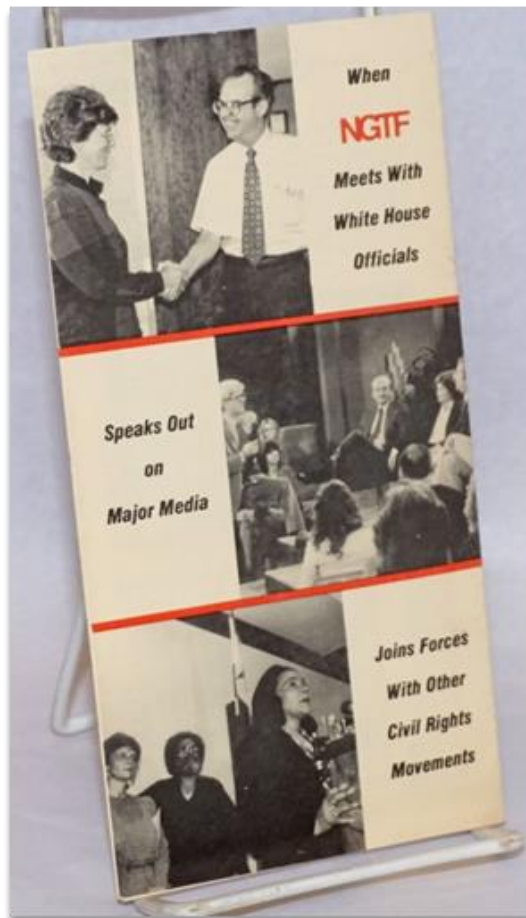
launch the AIDS Action Council, the country's first advocacy organization focused on public policy and funding to meet the AIDS crisis, securing the first federal funding for community-based AIDS education and helping to negotiate FDA approval of the first HTLV-III antibody test. All of this work took place at a time when thousands of people, initially largely gay men in cities like New York, were being infected with HIV and eventually dying from AIDS, with little to no federal government response or assistance.

From the beginning of its existence, the Task Force also lobbied heavily for overturning the ban on gays serving in the military, and advocated for fair treatment for gay and lesbian servicemembers who were still being dishonorably discharged by the thousands simply on the basis of their sexual orientation. With the tremendous growth of the Task Force during its thirteen years at 80 Fifth Avenue and the increasing need for a day-to-day presence in Washington D.C. to respond to the AIDS crisis and other federal legislative matters, the organization moved its headquarters to the nation's capital in 1986. Its time at 80 Fifth Avenue, however, was one of historic accomplishments, challenges, and laying the groundwork for decades of advocacy and social change which would follow (more information [here](#)).

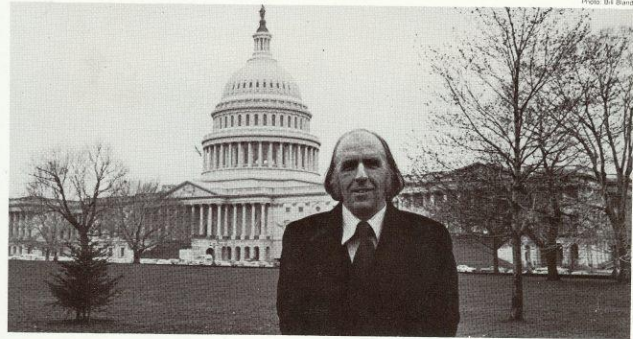
[It should be noted that the National LGBTQ Task Force has urged the City to landmark this and other buildings in the proposed South of Union Square Historic District.](#)



National Gay Task Force members after the historic 1977 White House meeting.



Join the People of NGTF



Franklin E. Kameny

HOME: Washington, D.C.

PROFESSION: Gay Activist and Lecturer

OTHER INTERESTS: Science, Law, Civil Liberties, Politics, Classical Music, Gardening.

MOST RECENT ACHIEVEMENT: Appointment to District of Columbia Human Rights Commission and Reversal of United States Civil Service Commission anti-Gay policy.

PROFILE: At home on Capitol Hill, in court rooms, and in legislative chambers, his long and effective advocacy of Gay rights has won him praise from both ally and adversary.

QUOTE: "We all know that Gay is Good. It's up to us to get out there and make it better—much better!"

MEMBER: The National Gay Task Force

REASON: "The need for some kind of informal, non-authoritarian, voluntary machinery for helping to centralize and coordinate Gay Movement activity, and for dealing with non-local concerns of broad implication has long been recognized. NGTF held out and has met the promise of meeting that need."

NGTF

National Gay Task Force, Dept. C, Rm. 506, 80 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011, Tel.: (212) 741-1010

Yes, I would like to join NGTF. Enclosed is my contribution for:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Basic Member | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Supporting Member | <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Household Member (for two) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Contributing Member | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Lifetime Member | <input type="checkbox"/> \$5 Limited Income Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Sustaining Member | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Sponsor | |

I understand that I will receive the NGTF newsletter, IT'S TIME, with my membership.

☐ Please keep my name and mailing confidential.

cst

Name	Address	
City	State	Zip





Left – Anita Bryant, 1977. Right - Task Force Director Virginia Apuzzo being arrested for protesting in front of the White House, 1984

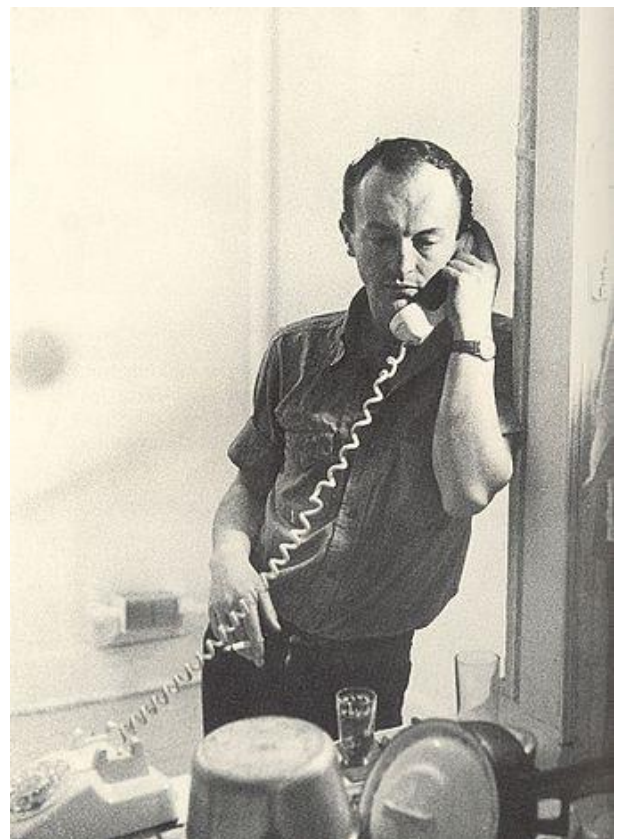


The Task Force's Kevin Berrill testifying before Congress regarding anti-gay hate crimes and violence, 1985.

- **55 Fifth Avenue:** From 1926 until 1934, this Neo-Renaissance-style loft building constructed in 1912 was the home of Columbia Phonograph Recording Studios and Okeh Phonograph Recording Studios. Several openly-LGBTQ performers recorded at this address, including Blues singer Bessie Smith, who completed her last records here, and jazz pianist Garland Wilson (more [here](#)).
- **90 University Place:** The celebrated "New York School" poet Frank O'Hara lived here in the late 1950s during the height of his career, in this structure converted from a stable built in 1851-52. The openly-gay O'Hara published a poem entitled "Homosexuality" in 1954, not long after the American Psychiatric Association listed homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance, and President Dwight Eisenhower signed an executive order banning homosexuals from working for the federal government or any of its private contractors.
- **86 University Place:** From 1952 to 1959, the ground floor this building, originally constructed as a private house in 1840 and expanded in 1880 and 1919, housed "The Bagatelle" or "The Bag," a popular lesbian bar run by Barney Gallant. "The Bag" was frequented by famed lesbian writer and activist Audre Lorde, and pulp-novelist Ann Bannon. Like many other gay and lesbian bars in Greenwich Village at the time, the Bagatelle was run by the Mafia, since such establishments were considered illegal, and frequently raided by the police. "The Bag" was known to attract a largely working-class clientele, had a small dance floor, and employed guards to keep gawkers and other "undesirables" out. Employees at the Bagatelle would switch on a red light when the police were entering for a raid, so patrons knew to scatter or try to hide any activity for which they could be arrested, which included dancing with someone of the same sex or wearing clothing considered inappropriate for their gender (more [here](#)). It should be noted that the Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History, and the writer Ann Bannon, among others, [have urged the City to landmark this site and the proposed historic district](#).
- **64-66 University Place:** [Grove Press](#), called "the era's most explosive and influential publishing house" and "the most innovative publisher of the postwar era," produced incredibly important pieces of 20th century literature while working aggressively and effectively to transform American culture in relation to issues of censorship, sexuality, race,



Left – 55 Fifth Avenue today. Top Right – Okeh label, Bessie Smith's "Gimme a Pigfoot".
Bottom Right – Bessie Smith, 1938



Left – 90 University Place today. Right – Frank O'Hara



Left- 86 University Place today. Top Right - Barney Gallant (seated), date unknown. Bottom Right-(l.) Audre Lorde (right in picture) with friend, 1950s; (r.) Ann Bannon



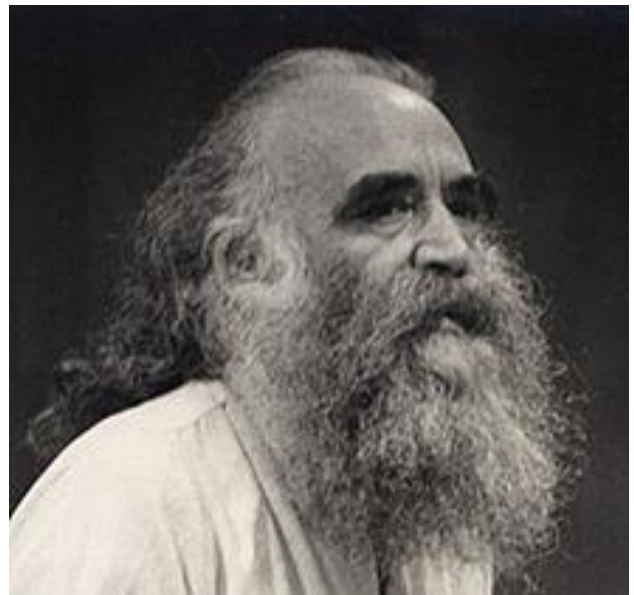
Left – 64-66 University Place. Right – Barney Rosset at Grove Press Offices, 64 University Place.

and class. Founded in 1947 on Grove Street in the West Village, Grove Press fully rose to prominence after it was purchased by Barney Rossett in 1951. In 1959, Rossett moved Grove Press to 64-66 University, built as a pair of loft buildings in 1869-70, which were combined and reduced to their current 4-story height in 1958. While here, Grove Press continued to push boundaries by publishing gay-themed fiction like John Rechy's *City of Night* and the previously banned writings of the Marquis de Sade. It should be noted that this building is currently slated for demolition (more [here](#)).

- **The Hotel Albert, 23 East 10th Street, 61-77 University Place, 40-52 East 11th Street:** The National Register of Historic Places-listed Hotel Albert, consisting of multiple conjoined buildings constructed in 1875-76, 1881-82, 1903-1904, and 1922-1924, was an unprecedented hub for radical and creative figures, many of whom were LGBTQ. This includes Salvador Dali, Walt Whitman, Anais Nin, and Andy Warhol. Samuel Delany, an acclaimed writer of non-fiction and science fiction, lived at the Hotel Albert during the 1970s. While here in 1971, he wrote, directed, and edited the film *The Orchid*.
- **34-36 East 10th Street:** This 1902 Beaux Arts style structure housed the printing house of Igal Roodenko, an anti-capitalist, socialist, and anti-war and civil rights activist who participated in a number of the most significant civil rights and social justice movements of the twentieth century, including the first Freedom Ride. During World War II, Roodenko was a conscientious objector, and served 20 months in federal prison. In 1950, Roodenko started his own press, which he maintained for about two decades. In 1957, his business was listed at 36 East 10th Street. In his later life, Roodenko spoke openly about being gay, and supported the Gay Liberation movement. Upon his death, he was part of the group Men of All Colors Together, which confronted racism in the gay community.
- **795 Broadway:** This 2-story commercial building was originally constructed in 1846-47 for Peter Lorillard Jr., and altered to its present form in 1927. In the 1970s and 80s the building was the home of the Robert Samuel Gallery/Hardison Fine Arts, a trailblazing gallery which brought homoerotic photography by gay male artists to the fore, showcasing the work of Robert Mapplethorpe, Peter Hujar, and Christopher Makos, among others.
- **816 Broadway:** One of the most celebrated DJs and remixers of his time, house music innovator Junior Vasquez had a recording and mixing studio in this building, originally constructed as a house in 1830 and extended in 1851. Vasquez (b. Donald Gregory Mattern, August 24, 1949 in



Left - Hotel Albert today. Right – Samuel Delany, photograph by Kyle Cassidy.



Left – 34-36 East 10th Street today. Right – Igal Roodenko



Left – 795 Broadway today. Right - Robert Mapplethorpe, self-portrait, 1980.



Left – 816 Broadway today. Right – Madonna and Junior Vasquez

Lancaster, PA) was also the co-founder of the legendary Sound Factory dance club in the latter half of the 1980s, Vasquez became one of the hottest figures on the club circuit, honing a trademark fusion of bass-heavy house beats with obscure samples, and utilizing innovative mixing techniques such as spinning records backwards or at the incorrect speed. In 1989 he co-founded the Sound Factory Club in Chelsea. During its six years of its existence, the Sound Factory was among New York's hottest night spots and highly influential in the nightlife and music world. Catering to an ethnically diverse, primarily gay crowd, the Sound Factory became the place for new dance records to be debuted by Vasquez during his marathon Saturday night sessions. After its closure in 1995, Vasquez DJed at the Tunnel, the Palladium, and Twilo, where he hosted a Saturday party called "Juniorverse." Vasquez has produced albums of original remixes under his own name, as well as produced and remixed recordings for Madonna, Beyonce, Britney Spears, Kylie Minogue, Cher, David Bowie, Donna Summer, and Justin Timberlake, among many others.

- **61 Fourth Avenue:** The openly-gay artist Robert Indiana, best known for his iconic "LOVE" sculpture, lived and worked in this 1889 Romanesque Revival style six story structure in the 1950s. At this time, the area south of Union Square was at the center of the New York School of artists and the art world (more [here](#)).
- **St. Ann's Church, 120 East 12th Street:** In 1985, the funeral mass for transgender performer Jackie Curtis, a "superstar" in Andy Warhol films, was held at the 1847 church whose steeple and façade remains at this location. Curtis grew up around the corner from the building and lived in the vicinity through adulthood.
- **17 East 13th Street:** The openly bisexual Anaïs Nin, one of the 20th century's most revolutionary female writers, established her own press in this two-story brick structure built in 1911 in the 1940s. According to the diary of Anaïs Nin, she moved her printing company, Gemor Press, into the building in 1944. According to Nin's diary, special care and thought went into all aspects of the printing process here, including the selection of the type face, the quality of the paper and the accompanying engravings. The books themselves were special artifacts in their own rights, and an extension of the author's writings and creative process. Nin (1903-1977) was an essayist and memoirist; she also self-published and very often re-published her text when it went out of print. Today she is regarded as one of the leading female writers of the 20th century and a source of inspiration for women challenging conventionally defined gender roles. Gemor published *Winter of Artifice*, *Under a Glass Bell*, *This Hunger*, *A Child Born Out of the Fog* and *House of Incest*. Nin's press would publish works by other authors as well, including Max Ernst and Hugh Chisolm. The period in which Nin and her press were located at 17 East 13th Street was significant both for



Left – 61 Fourth Avenue. Above – Robert Indiana in front of his iconic Love print.



*Above Left – Façade of St. Ann's church. Above Right – Jackie Curtis
Bottom Left – 17 East 13th Street today. Bottom Right – Anais Nin*

connecting Nin to an American audience and to a large publisher (Dutton), and for expanding her role and autonomy in her publication and in developing her creative process (more [here](#)).

This district [South of Union Square](#), which saw a unique confluence of progressive politics, art, and commerce, was home to a particularly high concentration of LGBTQ+ artists, writers, activists, and organizations. With considerable prodding, in recent years the Landmarks Preservation Commission has made some progress on designating and recognizing sites connected to LGBTQ+ history. But it must be noted that the Commission has refused to protect or acknowledge several LGBTQ+ historic sites which have been demolished as a result, including the 1824 house at [186 Spring Street](#), which had extraordinary significance to LGBTQ+ civil rights movements. It should also be noted that within this area south of Union Square, [64-66 University Place](#), a building with an extremely rich cultural history, including LGBTQ+ history, is currently slated for demolition, and will soon be lost if the LPC does not act.

This vital history of LGBTQ+ life, culture, and struggle remains unrecognized and unprotected. I strongly urge you to reassess prior decisions and to consider these sites, and the entire proposed [South of Union Square Historic District](#), for landmark designation.

Sincerely,



Andrew Berman
Executive Director

Cc: Borough President Gale Brewer
City Council Speaker Corey Johnson
City Councilmember Carlina Rivera
State Senator Brad Hoylman
State Senator Liz Kruger
State Assemblymember Deborah Glick
Community Boards 2 and 3, Manhattan
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Preservation League of New York State
Municipal Art Society
New York Landmarks Conservancy

Historic Districts Council
NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project