

Finding Aid to the George Choy papers

(1994-35)

Repository: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

Collection Title: George Choy papers

Collection Number: 1994-35

Physical Description: 3.8 linear feet (2 manuscript boxes and 1 oversized folder)

Creator: Choy, George, 1960-1993

Date (inclusive): 1978-1993

Language of Material: English, Japanese, Chinese

Abstract: This collection documents the life and activism of George Choy, a gay Chinese-American graphic designer and prominent member of Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA) and GAPA Community HIV Project (GCHP). Correspondence, organizational records, and photographs document Choy's work with GAPA and GCHP in the early 1990s, including his role in building ties with the Japanese gay rights organization OCCUR. Limited personal materials, including photographs, a resume, a high school yearbook, and a small folder of correspondence and writing, help to illuminate Choy's biography.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of item], George Choy papers (1994-35), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Conditions Governing Access:

Collection is open for research.

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Acquisition Information:

The collection was donated to the GLBT Historical Society by Prescott Chow in 1995.

Processing Information:

Collection reprocessed and finding aid created by Devin McGeehan Muchmore and Ash Waltz in 2024 with funding provided by the National Archives' National Historical Publications & Records Commission.

This collection was originally arranged and described by Joseph Plaster, then an intern, in the summer of 1999. In 2011, GLBTHS Archivist Marjorie Bryer revised Plaster's finding aid. In 2024, McGeehan Muchmore updated the collection's arrangement, creating three series: Personal (for folders originally labeled Personal), Activism (for folders originally labeled Organizations), and Photographs (for photographs and other graphic materials separated from manuscript materials by Plaster). Folders and titles in the Personal and Activism series were retained where possible. McGeehan Muchmore reorganized most of the photographs into new folders with new titles.

This finding aid uses terminology for LGBTQ people that was in current use at the time of its creation. Descriptive language for queer identities evolves quickly and some of these terms may now be dated or even offensive. Finding aids are themselves historical documents; they reflect the moment in which they were written and often reflect the terms that subjects used for themselves. Please contact the GLBT Historical Society Archivist with questions or comments.

Biographical Note:

George Choy (February 6, 1960-September 10, 1993) was a gay Chinese-American activist, graphic designer, and prominent member of Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA) and GAPA Community HIV Project (GCHP). Born in San Francisco in 1960, Choy grew up across the street from the International Hotel in San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood. He attended San Francisco Public Schools and graduated from Mission High School in 1978. He earned a B.A. in Graphic Design from San Jose State University.

Choy became a member of GAPA in 1989, and later co-edited GAPA's newsletter *Lavender Godzilla*, served on the Board, helped to lead the Political Awareness Committee, and acted as a liaison to HIV/AIDS organizations, including GCHP. In May 1990, he rallied community support for Project 10—a counseling program for LGBT teenagers in public high schools—for a hearing held by the San Francisco Board of Education. Choy also played a central role in building ties among GAPA, GCHP, and the Japanese gay rights organization OCCUR. He helped to host OCCUR members during their visit to San Francisco in June 1991, joined a contingent of GAPA members on a visit to Japan later that year, and helped to mobilize support from San Francisco's lesbian and gay rights movement for OCCUR's lawsuit against the Tokyo

government, which was publicized at the time as the first gay rights case in Japanese history. Choy was heavily involved in GCHP, too, serving on its board and eventually joining its staff as Outreach Coordinator in 1992. He was awarded a Godzy Award for his contributions to GAPA in 1992.

Choy passed away at the Maitri Hospice on September 10, 1993.

Historical Note:

The Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA) was founded in 1988 with the goal, as described in the February 1988 issue of its newsletter *Lavender Godzilla*, of “creating awareness, developing positive identity, and establishing a supportive community for gay Asian Pacific Men.” Within the organization’s first few years, GAPA members established a chorus, produced several performance showcases, hosted support groups and annual banquets, mobilized gay and bisexual API men in support to lesbian and gay youth counseling, published a regular newsletter, and, in 1989, established the GAPA Community HIV Project (GCHP), which eventually spun off as an independent organization. GAPA changed its name to the GLBTQ+ Asian Pacific Alliance in 2021.

Beginning in 1991, GAPA forged ties with the Japanese gay rights organization OCCUR. GAPA members hosted OCCUR representatives during their visit to San Francisco in June 1991 and sent a delegation to Japan later that fall. A key focus of the exchange was OCCUR’s lawsuit against the Tokyo government. The previous year, members of OCCUR had been refused use of a municipal youth facility in Tokyo upon announcing themselves as a homosexual organization. OCCUR charged discrimination, and appealed to GAPA for help in securing statements of support from representatives of San Francisco’s lesbian and gay movement. Then San Francisco Board of Education Tom Ammiano testified on behalf of OCCUR in 1992.

Scope and Content: This collection contains materials related to the life and activism of George Choy, a gay Chinese-American graphic designer and prominent member of Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA) and GAPA Community HIV Project (GCHP). Correspondence, meeting agendas and minutes, speeches, printed materials, and photographs document the work of GAPA and GCHP, particularly in 1991. Among these records of activism are correspondence, printed materials, and photographs documenting OCCUR’s visit to San Francisco, Choy’s trip Japan, and OCCUR’s court case. Limited personal materials, including photographs of family and friends, a small folder of correspondence and writings, a resume, a 1978 high school yearbook, help to illuminate Choy’s biography.

Indexing Terms:

LGBTQ

Gay men

Asian Americans

AIDS (disease)

Activism
San Francisco (Calif.)
Photography
Photographs

Container Listing

Series I: Personal, circa 1978-1991

Physical Description: 7 folders and 1 object box

Scope and Content: This series consists of materials related to Choy's education, personal relationships, and work as a graphic designer. It also includes a piece of writing describing his experience of coming out, as well as an unidentified necklace.

Arrangement: alphabetical by folder title

Box 1:Folder 1	Business cards, circa 1991
1:2	Correspondence and writings, circa 1991-1992 <i>Scope and content:</i> Includes a letter from OCCUR member Hiroshi Niimi, a draft letter to Niimi, and an undated piece of writing about coming out.
1:3	Mission High School yearbook, 1978
Box 2	Necklace, undated
1:4	Painted Japanese language characters, circa 1991
1:5	Planner, 1991
1:6	Resume, circa 1991
1:7	Stationery and graphics samples, circa 1991

Series II: Activism, 1990-1992

Physical Description: 12 folders

Scope and Content: This series includes materials created or accumulated by Choy through his activist work with GAPA and GCHP, primarily in 1991. Among these materials are correspondence and printed materials related to OCCUR's visit to San Francisco, Choy's trip Japan, and OCCUR's court case; an autobiographical speech given by Choy at a benefit for AIDS in API communities; GAPA and GCHP organization records; and a mailer from the conservative Chinese Family Alliance.

Arrangement: alphabetical by folder title

Box 1:Folder 8	Chinatown Youth Center 21st anniversary celebration, 1991
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1:9	Chinese Family Alliance, 1991
1:10	GAPA arts events ephemera, 1990-1991
1:11	GAPA financial records, 1991
1:12	GAPA minutes and agendas, 1991
1:13	GAPA speeches and correspondence, 1991
1:14	GCHP records, 1991-1992
1:15	George Choy M. Butterfly speech, 1991 August 18
1:16	News clippings and press release about OCCUR, 1991
1:17	OCCUR correspondence, 1991
1:18	OCCUR pamphlets and flyers, 1991-1992
1:19	OCCUR printed materials, 1991-1992

Series III: Photographs, circa 1982-1993

Physical Description: 15 folders and 1 oversized folder

Scope and Content: This series includes photographic negatives, prints, and slides documenting Choy's friendships and family relationships; activism with GAPA and GCHP, especially relating to their connections with OCCUR; and travels to British Columbia, Hawaii, Japan, and New York City. Also included are large, hand drawn, blocking and set design illustrations for a joint GAPA and GAPA and Asian Pacifica Sisters, as well as images displayed at Choy's funeral.

Arrangement: alphabetical by folder title

Box 1:Folder 20	British Columbia and Hawaii, circa 1988-1992
1:21	Family, circa 1980s
1:22	GCHP, 1991
1:23	George Choy and others with volleyball, circa 1987-1992
2:1-3	Japan, 1991
2:4	Miscellaneous, circa 1988-1992
2:5-7	Negatives, circa 1980s-1992 <i>Scope and content:</i> The negatives depict a series of portrait photoshoots (some of which feature Choy as the subject), GAPA events, and shots from OCCUR and JILGA's visit to San Francisco for Gay Freedom Day. Also included are negatives from Top 25 Party, as well as various concerts, architecture, and landscapes.
2:8	New York City, circa 1988-1992

2:9	Photo albums, circa 1990-1992
2:10	Slides, 1983-1988
2:11	Tropical Fish, circa 1980s-1992
OS folder	<p>Oversized photographic prints and hand-drawn theater designs, circa 1990-1993</p> <p><i>Scope and content:</i> According to the 2011 version of this collection's finding aid, the oversized, photographic reproductions in this folder were displayed at Choy's funeral. These images include a group photo of OCCUR members, a headshot, and Choy's <i>Lavender Godzilla</i> cover.</p> <p>The folder also contains several blocking and set design illustrations for a performance featuring GAPA and Asian Pacifica Sisters, an organization for lesbian and bisexual API women.</p>