

Finding Aid to Bang Hai Nguyen Papers

(#2022-51)

Repository: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

Collection Title: Bang Hai Nguyen papers

Collection Number: 2022-51

Physical Description: 0.4 linear feet (1 manuscript box)

Creator: Nguyen, Bang Hai

Date (inclusive): 1987-2021

Language of Material: English

Abstract:

The papers of Bang Nguyen, a founding member of the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA; now the GLBTQ+ Asian Pacific Alliance), GAPA Community HIV Project (GCHP), and the Asian/Pacific AIDS Coalition. Organizational records, newsletters, and digitized photographs, dating to 1987-1988, document GAPA's founding and first activities. An oral history details Nguyen's biography and reflections on GAPA, GCHP, and Asian American, gay, and San Francisco Bay Area HIV/AIDS movements during the 1980s and 1990s. Also included are GAPA newsletters, event programs, member lists, and digitized photographs from the early 1990s; and a C.V., reference letter, and magazine profile on Nguyen.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of item], Bang Hai Nguyen papers (#2022-51), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Conditions Governing Access:

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights:

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Acquisition Information:

The collection was donated to the GLBT Historical Society by Arjan Walia in June 2022. Permission to digitize photographs given by Bang Hai Nguyen in August 2024. Addition by Arjan Walia in September 2024.

Processing Information:

Finding Aid created by Devin McGeehan Muchmore and Ash Waltz in 2024 with funding provided by the National Archives' National Historical Publications & Records Commission.

A majority of the collection arrived already divided into distinct groupings by year. These groupings have been retained in the folders labeled "GAPA file." All other folders and groupings were created by the processing archivists.

Bang Hai Nguyen gave permission to digitize 13 color photographs and two documents. The titles and dates for the photographs are derived from Nguyen's own inventory. As of September 2024, Nguyen retains the originals.

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 Finding aids are themselves historical documents; they reflect the moment in which they were written and often reflect the terms that subjects used for themselves.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:

Bang Hai Nguyen was born in Saigon, Vietnam (presently Ho Chi Minh City) in 1960 as the youngest of 7 children. Nguyen's mother passed away when he was 2 years old and, upon his father remarrying, Nguyen and his siblings went to live with their stepmother. Nguyen lived in South Vietnam throughout the Vietnam War, but was forced to relocate at 15 years old after the fall of Saigon. Alongside his uncle, Ngyuen left the country by boat and began a multi-month, difficult journey that included stops in refugee camps in the Philippines and Wake Island before ending up in Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. Ngyuen, considered an unaccompanied minor, was sponsored and given housing alongside other Vietnamese refugees by a professor from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. In an oral history interview, Ngyuen explains that his experience as a refugee was deeply formative, shaping his career endeavors, commitment to community and coalition building, and political activism throughout his life.

In 1976, Ngyuen came in contact with family members in California, leading to his move to the state. He completed high school and began his undergraduate studies in economics at UCLA. Ngyuen's time at UCLA was characterized by significant involvement in community and political student organizations. He was elected as the vice president of the Vietnamese Students' Association and later became the vice president of the Associated Students. UCLA was also where Ngyuen reports first coming into contact with other gay Asian men and LGBT organizations.

After graduating from UCLA, Nguyen moved to San Francisco, where he took a job at the Center for Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement. Nine months later, in 1984, Nguyen moved to Cambridge, MA to attend a summer program and then the Master of Public Policy program at the Harvard Kennedy School. He returned to San Francisco after earning his M.P.P. in 1986, taking a job with the Mayor's Office of Housing and Economic Development.

With his return to San Francisco, Nguyen became active in Bay Area gay, Asian American, and AIDS movements and organizations. In 1987-1988, he joined with fellow members of the Pacific Center for Human Growth's gay Asian rap group to form the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance (GAPA). He was also a co-founder and active member of the GAPA Community HIV Project (GCHP) and Asian/Pacific AIDS Coalition.

After leaving the Office of Housing and Economic Development in 1988, Nguyen shifted his professional focus toward public health. He earned a Dr.P.H. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1998, and held positions at the AIDS Office of the San Francisco Department of Public Health (1988-1990), Vietnamese Community Health Promotion Project at University of California, San Francisco (1994-2000), Cancer Prevention Institute of California (1999-2014); and the Division of Epidemiology at the Stanford University School of Medicine (2005-2016).

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.

Scope and Content:

This collection primarily consists of materials accumulated by Bang Nguyen in the course of his activism with GAPA. Meeting agendas, announcements, and notes from 1987-1988; the 1988-

1993 issues of the *Lavender Godzilla* newsletter; event programs; member lists; and digitized photographs document GAPA's founding and early activities. A December 1987/Winter 1988 *Rice* magazine profile and 2021 oral history interview by Stanford student Arjan Walia offer insight into Nguyen's role in and reflections on GAPA, GCHP, and Asian American, gay, and HIV/AIDS movements during 1980s-1990s, as well as information about his biography. The collection's limited professional materials include a 2021 C.V. and a digitized, 1990 reference letter.

Indexing Terms:

LGBTQ
Gay Men
People of color
Asian Americans
Activism

Container Listing

Box 1:Folder 1	"Asians & Gay Porn" chapbook, 1991 February
1:2	C.V., 2021 October
1:3	GAPA event programs, 1990-1993
1:4-9	GAPA file, 1987-1993
1:10	GAPA publications, 1990-1992
1:11; Digital Files	Oral history, 2021
1:12; Digital Files	Photographs, 1987-1994
Digital Files	<i>Rice</i> magazine profile, 1987 December-1988 January
Digital Files	Sandra Hernandez reference letter for Bang Nguyen, 1990 July 13