

SUE: On the last day of June, 60,000 people marched through Seattle in the 2019 Pride Parade. For reference, CenturyLink Field has about two-thirds that attendance on a good day.

TK: My word.

SUE: These people marching were taking up the cause of 173,000 LGBTQ Seattleites, which is the 5th-largest LGBTQ-identifying population of cities in the US. Seattle also has the 3rd-largest number of same-sex marriages.

TK: Not to mention that the rest of the list is dominated by cities several times larger than Seattle.

SUE: Exactly. This city punches well above its weight class in terms of LGBTQ representation, and it's visible in so many aspects of Seattle life. But it wasn't always like that, was it?

TK: No, it was not. Seattle began passing anti-sodomy laws not too long after Washington became a state.

SUE: So quite a bit has changed since then.

TK: Quite a bit, and it didn't happen overnight. Seattle's LGBTQ history dates back to the 1890s, and the road was anything but straight.

[intro music plays]

Voice 1: Seattle is...

Voice 2: Well, we don't use umbrellas.

Voice 3: Coffee.

Voice 1: Computers?

Voice 3: It's a city with a needle.

Voice 2: Home to Sasquatch!

Voice 4: Home to the Museum of History and Industry.

Voice 2: Innovation.

Voice 1: Rain!

Voice 3: A story.

Voice 4: A history.

[intro music finishes]

SUE: I'm Sue.

TK: And I'm TK. We're Youth Advisors at the Museum of History and Industry in Seattle.

SUE: And this is *Rainy Day History*, a podcast by the MOHAI Youth Advisors that explores inclusion, exclusion, objects, people, and how the Seattle we know now -

TK: - the questions we grapple with now about what it means to be a Seattleite—

SUE: are all part of a bigger story.

TK: This season, we're taking a closer look at the physical and intangible marks that aspirations of growth have left on the city, and ways periods of growth have impacted Seattle communities differently.

SUE: Just a quick note about some terminology in this episode. We'll be using LGBTQ as a shorthand for LGBTQIA+. There are many other identities besides the ones in this acronym that are part of this community and new ones are always being added.

TK: And I'll be using the word queer because as a young queer person of color, I want to reclaim its historical power and use it as a positive identifier for people with many identities in the community.

SUE: This season was also recorded from our homes via the wonderful internet during the coronavirus pandemic.

TK: So stay safe, stay healthy, stay at home, and enjoy the show whether it's raining outside or not.

[rain sounds fade in and out]

SUE: So, before rainbow crosswalks and Pride flags in the windows of businesses became a common sight in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, it took decades of social reform for the LGBTQ community to be substantially visible today. You can hear more about this phenomenon in season one, episode five titled "Dancing Out of the Shadows," which is about Shelly's Leg, an iconic and unique gay bar that was highly visible and open to heterosexuals.

TK: But just in case you forgot or don't know about Seattle's history with the LGBTQ community, here's a quick rundown! In the mid to late 1800s, waves and eras of booming business in the Puget Sound area brought groups of workers together in a unique way. These constantly shuffling groups of workers through the years all lived, worked, and socialized pretty closely.

SUE: And very few women lived in this burgeoning city, so cases of sodomy were frequent, and anti-sodomy laws were put in place in 1893 by Washington State Legislature. This brought more publicity to homosexuality in the area.

TK: There were other parts of the queer community in Seattle that were misunderstood too. Such as those who didn't conform to traditional gender norms of the time. Starting in 1900, The *Seattle Times* ran many stories on a transgender man named Harry Allen. Unfortunately, he was subjected to a lot of news articles covering his blatant rejection of being assigned female and conforming to society's norms of female conduct, while also misgendering him in the process.

SUE: But it really wasn't until the 1930s, did a visible gay Seattle begin to emerge with the standard markers of an LGBTQ community. This community mostly used bars heavily concentrated in the Tenderloin, now known as the Pioneer Square area.

TK: After WWII, gay bars expanded in the city. And the first lesbian-only bars sprung up in the 1950s. But of course, they had to reckon with the police.

SUE: The policing of LGBTQ communities in other cities was well-known to be very brutal. But in Seattle, the police were more corrupt than they were violent. Business owners could pay bribes to the police to avoid raids, violence, and the shutdown of their business. But this only proved that there was a more profound political problem to solve.

TK: These police practices attracted more activists to come to Seattle, which spurred on the creation of more concrete LGBTQ organizations. And then came the Stonewall riots in New York City that effectively launched the Gay Liberation movement in the 1970s. The Seattle Chapter of the Liberation Front was formed, and the city was one of a few to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall riots.

SUE: One such group created was Seattle's first gay organization, the Dorian Society, which opened two years before Stonewall even happened. They operated in a house in the Capitol Hill neighborhood, but it was the first gay community center in all of Seattle.

TK: Membership was predominantly middle-class young white men who wanted to (quote) "create a more respectable image of the Seattle homosexual" (unquote). They published newsletters about current issues and events in the gay community, sponsored public activities, and wanted to reform the sodomy laws.

SUE: The LGBTQ community needed more meeting places than just inside bars, such as a safe space for counseling, especially during a time when being LGBTQ was considered a mental illness. This is where the Seattle Counseling for Sexual Minorities came in, which still operates to this day with an expansion on understanding sexual minority and gender identity issues. Many other organizations throughout Seattle consisted of drug rehabilitation centers, safe spaces for sexually transmitted infections screenings, and groups advocating for nondiscrimination in housing and employment, women's rights, sexual minorities' rights, child custody for lesbian mothers, and support against racial oppression. So, with this dramatic upswing of activism and visibility in the 1970s, a market emerged for LGBTQ-friendly businesses.

TK: But these new businesses faced all sorts of challenges when they cropped up, in an atmosphere that remained hostile to this sort of cultural change.

SUE: What they needed was a place where they could shift the balance and, through mutual support, achieve a sort of localized acceptance.

TK: Enter Capitol Hill, stage right.

SUE: In the decades following World War II, Seattle's predominantly white upper-middle-class had relocated to the suburbs, leaving the urban center much more diverse, but also wanting in terms of economic activity and opportunity.

TK: Kevin McKenna and Michael Aguirre, writing for the University of Washington Civil Rights and Labor History Project, note (quote) “that the expansion of the African American population in the adjacent Central District during and after World War II also made the southern part of Capitol Hill less attractive to more well-to-do white residents, driving rents down and thereby making the area more affordable for gay residents.” (end quote)

SUE: The Boeing Bust further depressed the city economically in the 1970s, and as Seattle’s economy collapsed, neighborhoods were changing rapidly in response. Bars and bathhouses sprung up on Capitol Hill in one of the few areas of new activity and excitement. At the same time, Capitol Hill was becoming (quote-unquote) increasingly bohemian.

TK: Ooh, that sounds like the right vibe for LGBTQ businesses to open or relocate. This neighborhood shift led the way for new music and artistic expression, and before long, the area had found new life.

SUE: As a focal point for the LGBTQ movement, Capitol Hill started to turn the tide for Seattle. The creation of the Greater Seattle Business Association, which is Washington State’s LGBTQ and Allied chamber of commerce, helped implement a much-needed LGBTQ business network. The association is mainly made up of small businesses throughout the Puget Sound Area.

TK: The association’s mission is to combine business development, leadership, and social action to expand economic opportunities for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community. Once this kind of network of support was put in place and allowed to develop, it helped the community thrive. This, of course, led to more and more people feeling able to live as their full selves, which added further strength to this movement. People living openly, and doing so in full view of the city, makes it a little easier for the next to do the same.

SUE: People had deep feelings about what establishments on Capitol Hill meant to them. Here is what Randy Henson told the *Seattle Gay Scene* newspaper in 2015 about one of Capitol Hill’s oldest surviving gay bars, The Eagle, on the bar’s 35th anniversary: (quote) “It was a place of escape for those of us who were dealing with the stresses and losses brought with the AIDS epidemic. We went there for the camaraderie of men and for the music — sounds you couldn’t experience in any other gay bar — hard rock from the 70s and 80s, soul anthems, R&B, and occasionally some Country.” (unquote)

[jaunty piano music starts playing and fades out in underneath]

TK: But then, what was there to do for the youth? History covers the visibility of adults, but there’s little record of youth.

SUE: As it turns out, there is one such place for LGBTQ youth right here on Capitol Hill. Lambert House is the only social service agency in King County with a mission dedicated solely to LGBTQ youth. According to their website, there is a huge range of over 30 different programs, activities, resources, and services on an ongoing, year-round basis, available for youth ages eleven to twenty-two.

TK: Lambert House was founded in 1981 by a doctor named Bob Dicer. He was a professor at the University of Washington as well as director of what is now known as the Center for Human Development and Disability. He had a particular interest in adolescent health and had noticed in the 1970s that many LGBTQ youth that came through the clinics he oversaw did not have positive health outcomes across a range of issues.

SUE: Dicer realized that what the youth needed was a place to meet other people like them, make friends, and feel better about themselves. So, he founded what he called the Association of Gay and Lesbian Youth Advocates, where they facilitated weekly support groups, all gender groups, for any LGBTQ youth that wanted to come. While this was a cutting-edge idea, it was a bit difficult to operate in many different borrowed spaces throughout Capitol Hill.

TK: A young man in his 20s named Gray Lambert and many others, including the author of *Gay Seattle*, Gary Atkins, worked hard to get the money for a lease on a Victorian house on Capitol Hill in 1991. Later, in 1993 AGLYA was renamed to Lambert House to honor Gray Lambert who died of HIV/AIDS related complications. Lambert House continues to provide and connect queer youth with important social services from this location, where queer youth get resources and get to just be kids within a queer context.

SUE: Establishments such as Lambert House are of vital interest to the LGBTQ population and a defining feature of the Capitol Hill neighborhood.

TK: But, these important community centers are at risk of getting pushed out of the neighborhood. Gentrification in the heart of Seattle has been taking the diverse and varied elements of this cultural center and scattering them to the wind. Seattle is the 3rd fastest-gentrifying city in the country, and in this area, Capitol Hill is a victim of its success.

SUE: As a cultural center, Capitol Hill has developed a reputation that motivates more and more people to pay top dollar to live there. Consequently, it has become a hotspot for development, even relative to the rest of the city.

TK: Median sale prices for houses and condos is increasing at a rate of 3.79% per year.

SUE: Rent is increasing even faster, at 4.1%. The same people that have made this city are being pushed out, and the LGBTQ population is caught squarely between the jaws of this gentrification.

TK: The effects of these changes may take years to sink in fully, but people are already feeling them. The number of same-sex households on Capitol Hill has fallen by 23%, and has no signs of slowing down.

SUE: This may significantly change the shape of the city, and at this moment, the continued LGBTQ heritage of Capitol Hill is far from certain.

TK: And here to share more with us about the history of Lambert House and its relationship to the neighborhood of Capitol Hill, is Ken Shulman executive director of Lambert House.

[slow reflective piano music starts playing and fades out in underneath]

KEN: So my name is Ken Shulman. I'm the Executive Director of Lambert House LGBTQ Youth Center. And I do this work because it gives me a way to make the world a better place by supporting a population that I care deeply about.

So... Lambert House is the only social service agency in King County with a mission dedicated solely to LGTBQ youth. There are other LGBTQ youth organizations like gay-straight alliances in schools, and there's Diverse Harmony, which is a chorus, but as a social service agency with a range of programs, Lambert House is the only one in King County dedicated solely to LGTBQ youth. There are only about 30 independent self-sustaining LGBTQ youth organizations in the country. The primary reason to have an organization like Lambert House is because LGBTQ youth are isolated, often invisible to other LGBTQ youth who are not out. And it's very important for adolescents to have a peer group. In addition, if they are also psychologically isolated from the adults in their lives (typically their parents) because the adults either don't know that they're LGBT or they know and they're not very accepting...then the youth has neither connected adults that they can open up to uh, in addition to basic needs, and then they may also lack the peer group. The reason that LGBTQ youth have high rates of depression and suicide is because of the social isolation from both peers and adults.

So what Lambert House does, in answer to your question, is it provides LGBTQ young people with a peer group with whom they can connect, *and* it gives them a large pool of adults. So there's a pool of a hundred active volunteers; most of them are LGBT. This gives young people an opportunity to get to know LGBT adults and to confide in them, and also to see possibilities for their own futures in terms of education career, family and all kinds of other decisions that young people are starting to think about.

JULIA: What is kind of like, the origin story of Lambert House, like when and who it was founded by... and the backstory if you will?

KEN: So Lambert House was founded in 1981 by a doctor named Bob Dicer. In the 1970s as I can well remember, hardly anybody was out. My generation (the Baby Boomers) were really the first generation to come out in significant numbers, but it was nothing like today. And so the idea of getting LGBTQ youth together so that they could make friends and just feel better about themselves was still fairly uncommon. There were no GSAs in high schools or QSAs in high schools or middle schools at all, not anywhere. The first one in the country was in 91. So he founded what he called the Association of Gay and Lesbian Youth Advocates and they started facilitating weekly support groups, and they used borrowed spaces. And over the course of the 80s, some other folks got interested in helping support this effort. There was a young guy in his 20s named Grey Lambert who with two friends decided that it would be useful to have a dedicated space that wasn't used by other people for other things. And so they got together with some other folks and they raised some money privately and eventually in 1991 one of the folks, Gary Atkins...so Gary wrote a \$30,000 grant to the city of Seattle and that money was what they used to lease the facility on Capitol Hill that we're still in.

When the organization moved into its Capitol Hill facility in 1991, Capitol Hill was still very much the most visibly LGBTQ neighborhood in Seattle. There were more LGBTQ people visible

on the street, visible in stores, there were more LGBTQ businesses of various kinds, and so it was a natural fit that this would be the neighborhood where LGBTQ youth would be most comfortable. There would be ideally the least amount of violence or threat of violence. *Now*, the reason we stay on Capitol Hill is somewhat the same. It's still the most visibly LGBTQ neighborhood in Seattle *although* queer people have come out in many other neighborhoods over the last 29 years. However, Lambert House serves youth at our central facility... we serve youth from about 135 zip codes a year who come to the Capitol Hill location. And they come from north south east and west, and most of them are coming on public transit, so we really feel it's important to stay centrally located. Capitol Hill is good for that.

I would say there is a different feeling on Capitol Hill now than there was in 1991 mostly due to population growth and demographic changes in the city as a whole. Just in the last couple of years the city council raised the height limit on buildings in almost every neighborhood in the city. And with the height increases, and the construction, the increased density in the population... the feeling of the neighborhood has become more like a bigger city than it used to be, because we *are* a bigger city than we used to be. So nowadays, what's great for queer youth about Lambert House's location is that we're within a few blocks of three different bus lines from different areas and it's a 7 minute walk to the Light Rail station on Broadway and John. In addition, that big volunteer pool that I mentioned does most of the direct service. Many of those volunteers commute from far away, and therefore we need to have parking for them, and our current facility accommodates 10 cars. Nobody has parking on Capitol Hill. And so that's one of the reasons why purchasing our current facility, the one that we had been in since '91 was a big win for us.

So in early 2016, our longtime landlords announced that they were going to sell the building. They were going to list it in two weeks from when they told us. They had already been getting unsolicited offers from numerous developers who wanted to tear it down, put up condos and they predicted that they would accept an offer within 48 hours of listing and then we would have 60 days to leave. That was a crisis for the organization because in the real estate market that Seattle is in, and was even more in in 2016, prices had gone up so fast so much there were no other rental spaces we could find to move to. There was almost nothing to rent in a location that would work for the youth - meaning public transit access from north south east and west, a well-lit street, and where we had more confidence that they would not be harassed or subject to physical violence. And so we looked intensively from mid-march until mid-October. And then in October I was negotiating with another landlord for an old house on Capitol Hill similar to ours but only about two-thirds the size. And in the midst of that negotiation with the landlord, one of our biggest donors called me and said that he had raised the money to loan us the purchase price of our current facility, so about ten weeks before Lambert House was going to become homeless as an organization. And the loan was very generous. There's no interest, because the purpose of the donor who also was a longtime volunteer, his purpose was to save the organization. That two million-dollar loan comes due in September of 2021 and we've raised about 1.35 million of the two million so far.

So the imminent sale of the property in 2016 was a crisis for the organization. We did communicate very quickly about it internally. I sent out a letter to the volunteers first and foremost, planning not to involve the public through a press release until later. But some volunteer or other shared the letter - they weren't, it wasn't meant to be confidential but they you

know but they shared it with somebody in the press - and there was immediate serious interest from all four of the network affiliates. And those pieces were really from the point of view that Lambert House was a valuable community resource and that it needed to be saved. There was enormous community support, but it was very, very stressful. For the youth, I felt that it was important to keep them apprised of what was going on, but not to alarm them in a way that they wouldn't be able to do anything with the information. Um, and they did. There were youth that made banners about saving Lambert House; they wrote testimonials for fundraising about the importance of Lambert House to them; and they contributed in every way they could. The volunteers were also deeply concerned, and many of them offered (without being asked) to host fundraisers or simply to help in any way that they could if we could give them some direction.

Ultimately, Lambert House is about relationships, and I've already talked about the relationships between peers and the relationships between young people and trusted adults, but there's also a relationship between the organization and the community. And that relationship became very positively apparent in the response of the community to the crisis of potentially losing the organization due to a loss of a place to operate. One of the great ways that the community connection and care for Lambert House and the youth that it serves has been expressed is through elected officials. This happens because Seattle has been a progressive city for over a hundred years. It happens because a majority of the Seattle population has moved here from other places, which makes Seattle a particularly cosmopolitan city. It happens because we consistently elect *mostly* progressive elected officials, and it happens because Seattle has been on the forefront of LGBTQ rights since the early 1970s. And because of this long deep history of support for LGBTQ people in the population and in our elected officials we could get 1.1 million dollars allocated from the state and the city for our capital campaign.

TK: So what are your hopes and dreams for Lambert House?

KEN: So I'll just share a few facts. When I started working at Lambert House in October of 2003, 80% of the youth that we served were between the ages of 18 and 22. Now 70% of the youth that we serve 11 and 17, and 30% of the youth are between 18 and 22. We are not serving fewer young people in the 18-22 range, age range, we are simply serving *vastly* larger numbers of young people coming out at earlier ages, and that's just within my tenure. That is a reflection of the world getting better for queer youth. That is a reflection of attitudes changing as laws change. Laws and attitudes kind of leapfrog with each other on many oppression issues and liberation issues. You need the laws to get better but the laws by themselves don't change hearts and minds, but you need to change hearts and minds to get the laws changed. And you - in my opinion - in social change work you need both to happen.

If I were omnipotent, we wouldn't need Lambert House or any place like it anywhere, because LGBT people of all ages of all ages would simply be accepted casually as a fact of life. In the real world... I think the need for Lambert House is indefinite. I think it will go on for decades just as the civil rights movement of the 50s and 60s did not end racism or anti-Black racism in particular. So I think the need for Lambert House will continue. And I look forward to serving more youth in more areas, and by enabling youth to come out in smaller towns in rural areas Lambert House will continue to effect social change in those communities. I'd like to see Lambert House offer new programs; I'd like to purchase a facility for homeless youth and run queer specific transitional living, transitional housing; and the other thing is Lambert House has

been gradually expanding our work on systems change and I look forward to us continuing to have a voice nationally and to some extent internationally. Those are the kind of things I look forward to doing more of. I have a goal for interplanetary peace for all queer youth.

[slow music fades back in and plays out]

JULIA: Hi, I'm Julia, one of the producers for this episode. To close out, I have a few questions for our hosts about what we've been learning today. So to start off, why was this a topic you wanted to explore in season 2?

SUE: I really wanted to learn more about the local LGBTQ history in Seattle and what went behind the making of how it is now.

TK: Yeah, that definitely was also a major motivation for me because like I said at the beginning, I'm a young queer person of color and um, even I myself felt like I don't fully understand (again) this relationship with the LGBTQ community here in Seattle. But I just know that it's very strong here, and I don't know why. You know, not all people do know why; people act like they know because "oh we have rainbow sidewalks," but mostly I feel people do not. And where else are we going to get this information? You know, it's not going to happen, really, in school. And so, to have this exploration and...on a platform of the podcast, was something I've always, always wanted to do from the get go.

JULIA: So, the next question's kind of loaded (*chuckles*) but I think it's important. Basically, Why should listeners care, and why should they seek out this kind of learning, and kind of history, and learn about that stuff?

SUE: I think that this history helps us be more aware of forces that are going on currently, and you gain a better appreciation for how far the LGBTQ community in Seattle has come and developed, and what sort of problems they've gone through, and what new ones that they're facing now.

This episode did touch on gentrification, and gentrification is everywhere. Understanding the real life, like, how it works out, how it pushes minorities out. I feel like lessons that come from those experiences and events are very applicable to things that are happening currently.

TK: Yeah, the gentrification on Capitol Hill is a serious problem, and it follows the inclusion and exclusion theme that the podcast wants to address. Cause these are you know, beloved people in communities in the city, but more increasingly it's...you know, minorities are targeted and in a power struggle and it's just really, really sad. And um...I was really wanting to highlight what I learned from my interview with Ken Shulman and the services of Lambert House, is that historically LGBTQ youth just do not have positive health outcomes, like I said across a range of issues, if they are not fully accepted and understood. I know that through a podcast and you know the numbers that we throw out that it feels that you know these are just stats and people that uh, you may or may not have ever heard of. But these are real people living in our cities, and our communities, and if you haven't really been able to learn that much, or understand in general what these topics are that we're talking about, then I - we want the podcast to hopefully

be that stepping stone and helping to understand the obstacles in which these groups and communities have bene though. And you know, hopefully also figure out that defining moment of what you're going to do with that lesson and in understanding.

[ending theme music plays music]

TK: Thanks for listening to this episode of *Rainy Day History*. We hope you enjoyed what you learned.

SUE: To learn more, check out the show notes for research highlights and sources we mentioned in the episode.

TK: And to learn more about Lambert House, you can visit their website at lamberthouse.org, that's l-a-m-b-e-r-t-house-dot-org.

Sue: You can also visit the MOHAI website at mohai.org, that's m-o-h-a-i-dot-org.

TK: You can also follow us on Instagram at @mohaiteens and follow the museum at @mohaiseattle.

SUE: When we safely re-open, come visit the museum in sunny South Lake Union Seattle!

[jaunty piano music starts and plays out underneath the credits]

TK: Hello, this is TK, and I'm here with the credits! Stay tuned through the end for a sneak peek trivia question from India!

Many, many thanks to Ken Shulman for sharing with us about Lambert House, its programs, and purpose.

The script was researched by TK & Ethan, written by TK & Ethan, edited by TK & Karl. This episode was produced by Julia and edited by Sue & Vance. Show notes and transcripts were built by Julia, Ziah, India, & Ethan. Marketing help came from TK & Ziah.

This season was imagined by the 2020 MOHAI Youth Advisors. The podcast was developed by the 2019 MYA. Grace designed the logo, and Finch wrote the theme music and performed it along with Tyler and friend of the pod Sylvie Wang.

Thank you to all of our MOHAI staff cheerleaders, and special thanks for this season goes to Chris, Leonard, Sondra, Tori, and of course Emily T.

[8-bit elevator music starts playing and plays softly underneath]

INDIA: Hello! It's your trivia master, India. Last time we asked: What was Cal Anderson (the person, not the park) known for? And the answer was A, politics. Cal Anderson was both a Representative and a Senator within the Washington State Legislature. He served the 43rd

District, which mostly covered downtown Seattle. Anderson was Washington's first openly gay legislator.

Here's a bit of a preview for what's coming up in the next episode: What is the name of Microsoft's most well-known Office Assistant? Was it...

- a. Chip
- b. Rocky
- c. Clippy
- d. Morris

Find out the answer on the next episode of *Rainy Day History*!