

# TELLING QUEER HISTORY

Annual  
Report  
Fiscal year  
2019-2020

**We envision** an intersectional LGBTQ+ community dedicated to authentic conversations that strengthen a sense of belonging, connection, agency, and hope, where all voices are heard, valued, and respected.

**The mission** of Telling Queer History is to connect Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer + people across generations and identities through storytelling gatherings which bring communities together to foster compassion, empathy, and healing.



TQH team and featured storyteller at the Feb 2019 gathering.  
L to R: Jo Garlich, Rebecca Aylesworth, Mikko Blaze Bordeaux,  
Rebecca Lawrence, Meghan Lafferty, and David Lawrence

“ I am deeply grateful for your sharing of stories, resources, time, listening, funds, and skills. You are what makes connecting people across generations and identities possible and sustainable. ”

Dear Friend of Telling Queer History,

We are living during a time when our interconnectedness is more vital than ever. Amid the pandemic and the many challenges our communities face, we are particularly mindful of Telling Queer History's core principles – most especially that we are connected, and our liberation is dependent on the liberation of those around us.

During this period of uncertainty, I am very proud to share that – thanks to your generosity – the TQH team has been able to foster additional interconnectedness throughout our fiscal year, both within our own LGBTQ+ community and beyond. I am deeply grateful for your sharing of stories, resources, time, listening, funds, and skills. You are what makes connecting people across generations and identities possible and sustainable.

We officially became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit this January, meeting the goal set in summer 2019 by our team to do so within the year. Together, we built the systems, documents, and support needed to launch as an independent organization. Before the pandemic, we engaged middle school, high school, and college students, meeting our intergenerational goals through collaboration and community outreach. TQH continued our storytelling mission amongst the COVID-19 pandemic and the uprising for justice. We connected LGBTQ+ people across generations virtually—including launching our first podcast.

We received four grants this fiscal year! These funds support us in collaborating with community partners for joint projects, allow us to enhance our event

offerings, provide seed funding for our podcast, and maintain our budget and programming.

During this unique historical moment, our board and I paused our TQH work in June to provide support for our neighbors. Whether organizing food drives, delivering meals, protesting, connecting people to resources, sharing our financial support and skills, or gathering medical supplies to bring to the front lines, we showed up for our communities wherever we could.

On a personal note, I am very grateful for your financial support of Telling Queer History. This year is the first year since founding TQH 7 years ago that I have been compensated consistently. It helped me weather some hard times earlier this year when I could not do other work because of a fractured knee cap I suffered on January 1st and laparoscopic surgery on March 17th. Special thanks to sustaining donors that made it possible for me to take that time to heal.

As you review the progress and data in our annual report, know that you are the reason we were able to continue to tell stories that matter, and capture our history together.

**I am honored to work side by side with our volunteers and supporters, as we all remain very much in the work needed to repair, build, and sustain a world that cares for all of us. Black Lives Matter.**

Gratefully,  
Rebecca Lawrence  
Founder and Executive Director, Telling Queer History

## Fast Friends Virtual Event Features Stories & Performances, Raises Funds

When Harry Waters Jr. was coming of age as a gay man, not sharing was a way of life for people in the LGBTQ+ community. Thanks to TQH and organizations like ours, times have changed. During our Fast Friends virtual fundraiser, we heard from Harry, who brought a Baby Boomer generation's perspective.

“I was there in that era, I'm really happy to say that I'm still here in this era. It's been really sort of transformative to be a part of TQH, because in my time as opposed to your time, there was no place that people were sitting around talking about being gay, being lesbian, trans, being bi, being questioning—there was no place, there was no time for it. Because, we were trying to survive. We were trying to not be killed. We were trying to keep our jobs. We were trying to be fully realized human beings, and now we get to do it in groups,” said Harry.

The Fast Friends Fundraiser for TQH generated \$5,278 in one-time gifts and ticket sales. Fast Friends also brought together members of our community and allies virtually for stories, “speed-friending,” a musical performance by Randy Dandy, and a concluding dance party.

Harry expressed the joy of being able to share and be free of secrecy among a group like TQH now. “If you can find those friends that you can safely say the secret to, it might give you a little break so that you can relax somewhere and think about ‘I'm not keeping secrets because I'm free to be,’ ” said Harry.

Harry emphasized the need to expand our inclusivity in 2020 and beyond.



“Be friends, be friends, be friends. Love and listen.”  
Harry Waters, Jr.

“How are we inclusive? How do we judge each other? If we could release ourselves from so much judgment, it just allows so much more space for us to have those friends in our heart.”

Harry also celebrated and emphasized the importance of the friendships and openness we share.

“You're living in places in spaces that you can thrive, hopefully that you're safe. We can, we should, we must look out for each other. That's another part of friendship. How do we consciously take care of each other? Loving. Listening.”

**Thank you for enabling us to tell our queer histories!**

Dear TQH Supporters,

Although this past year has been challenging for all of us, one thing that continues to give me hope is the connection I find through our Telling Queer History storytelling gatherings. I have had the pleasure of talking with LGBTQ+ folks from across the United States and beyond over the past eight months, since we moved all of our events online due to COVID-19. As a queer from the rural Midwest, I can't imagine telling my 14-year-old self what her life would be like here in 2020.

In this time of pandemic isolation, queer community is more important than ever. We recognize our collective humanity and vulnerability when we share stories, as listeners or speakers. I have learned from our speakers and attendees, and I am grateful for the education they have given me. I am a better, more compassionate, and more loving person because of our storytellers, guests, and supporters, and I am forever changed because they have chosen to share their words with me.

I had a conversation with a young queer attendee at an event last year. They shared that they were grateful to me for the paths I had walked before them, in coming out, fighting for same-sex marriage, and advocating for protections for LGBTQ+ people. I had never thought of myself as having walked any path but the one I was meant to, living my ordinary life. And yet, this life I have lived as an out queer adult made an impact on a younger person I had never met before. The power of community and Telling Queer History's intergenerational mission allowed our paths to cross in an unexpected way.

I believe in the power of stories bringing us together and teaching us powerful lessons. We need each other and we need to elevate the voices of our BIPOC, trans, and young queers, because with their wisdom we can grow and thrive in these challenging times.

Please take care of yourselves and your families – we need to hear your voices in the years to come.

Warmly,  
Rebecca Aylesworth  
Chair, Telling Queer History Board



## Elders Share Stories During Virtual LGBTQ+ and Aging Event

**Community elders Patricia Nelson, T. Mychael Rambo, Venus de Mars, and Harry Hartigan shared their experiences during this virtual event for TQH.**

T. Mychael Rambo, artist, actor, activist, vocalist, storyteller, and public speaker opened the stories with song, and said, "I can't speak of a moment when my queer history wasn't impacted, informed, and integrated with the sound of music."

T. Mychael reminded us that "Black queer men and women, people who look like me, are at the core, at the foundation of what it means to be queer in America... we must always lift our voices."

Performer Venus de Mars discussed an era of "not having the language to describe myself to the community" shortly before coming out. "The drag culture was there, but not the trans culture. Not in the way we think of it today," said Mars.

Patricia Nelson talked about living during a period when recognizing her own sexuality took time and work. Like Venus, she discussed lacking "the words" to describe an early crush on a woman.

Patricia said that over the years, "Something just kept saying to me, 'You need to explore this.'" Patricia believes that "coming out is a lifetime event...it's also coming out to yourself more and more, peeling the layers back."

Harry Hartigan spoke of coming out later in life and the work TQH is doing to build generational bridges between older and younger LGBTQ+ people. "I always encourage my friends, you know, we may be getting older, we're not dead. We have had experiences that we can share with other folks that they won't even believe... building that bridge is the hardest thing that we as a community need to do."

The pieces of history shared offered common themes yet wholly different experiences and paths, helping us to increase our archive of diverse queer stories.

T. Mychael offered an African proverb during his talk that sums up the way this event aligned with TQH's mission: "We must look back and look forward."



## Mikko Blaze Bordeaux Shares

**"It's just so important for me to finally feel like I have the power, the ability to put my mind to something and just do it regardless of what everybody else thinks, because we have to live our lives for ourselves."**

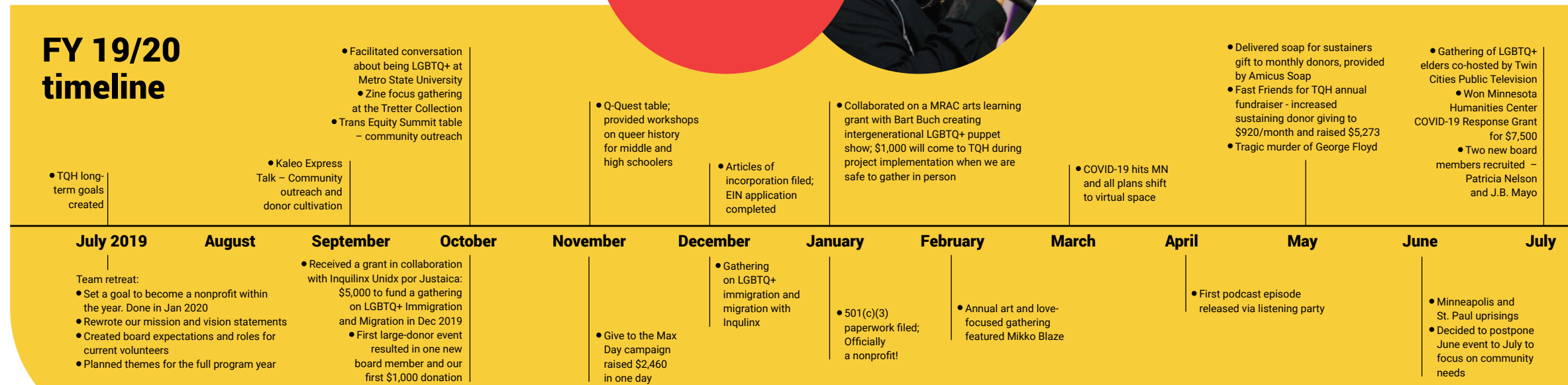
Mikko Blaze Bordeaux shared the story of recovering from severe burns as a child, grappling with his identity, and journey toward full expression of self, during our 5th annual February queer-love-themed event.

Florida-born, Minnesota-raised Mikko is an Afro-Latinx transgender singer, song writer and activist. He is the 2018 Karaoke World Championships Solo Gold Medalist, and the 2017 Karaoke World Championships Duet Silver Medalist. Mikko lives a life of empowerment and enjoys a fulfilling relationship.

"I met my partner who is also gender neutral. And it was the first time that I've ever been with somebody that I could be like, I don't have to explain this to you. You just get it," said Mikko.

He performed several songs during the gathering, leaving attendees wowed by his artistry, and appreciative of his contributing to queer history with his personal story.

Mikko reminded everyone that self-love is essential and music is powerful. "I want people to take [his song "Good Enough"] on their way to work, and just sing at the top of their lungs, and not even realize you're saying all these nice wonderful things about yourself," said Mikko.



# The Telling Queer History Team



## Rebecca Aylesworth, Board Chair

Rebecca Aylesworth is a Midwestern born-and-raised Queer High Femme. When she is not chairing the Telling Queer History board, she spends her time working with college students, volunteering for causes in the fight for equity, rhinestoning costumes for stage performances, keeping company with beloved friends and family, making cocktails, baking delectable sweet treats, and parenting a teen who often masquerades as a mermaid.



## Jo Garlich, Exiting Board Member

Jo Garlich is a psychotherapist and volunteered with TQH for 3 years. They were the Vice President of the board when we became a non-profit in Jan 2020. Jo has taken leave of the board to focus on work and family amid the pandemic.

Attendees at the Kaleo Express that RJ led in Sept 2019, add to the collective LGBTQ+ history timeline



## Jo Herrera, Board Member

Jo Herrera joined the TQH team in 2018 and became a board member in 2020, excited to continue amplifying LGBTQ+ stories. Outside of TQH, they are the training coordinator for Report for America, an organization dedicated to strengthening communities and democracy through local journalism. Herrera is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where they live with a small zoo of three cats, a dog, and a rabbit.



## Meghan Lafferty, Secretary

Meghan Lafferty is Board Secretary, Telling Queer History. She has been a part of Telling Queer History since 2015, making use of her information-organizing skills. She was born in North Carolina and moved from state to state for various schools before moving to Minneapolis to work as an academic science librarian in 2004. She spends a lot of time with her dog, Leia, when she isn't librarian-ing or working with Telling Queer History.



## David Lawrence, Treasurer

David Lawrence, the TQH Finance Board Chair, is the North America FP&A Manager at Rosemount, a division of Emerson. He is also the LGBTQ + Allies ERG chair and founder of the Minnesota chapter for Emerson. David recently graduated from the Carlson Executive MBA program (2020), holds master's and bachelor's degrees focused in Accounting from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and was a CPA earlier in his career. In his free time, he spends time seeing operas, biking, traveling with his husband, and playing with their dog, Ruthie.



## Rebecca Jean Lawrence, Founder and Executive Director

Rebecca Jean Lawrence is the Founder and Executive Director of Telling Queer History. They are also a photographer, working primarily with nonprofits and the LGBTQ+ community to document events and make portraits for the last 10 years. Rebecca was raised in Minneapolis and attended college at Seattle University in Washington. They have worked with many companies to connect with LGBTQ+ community and history, including Twin Cities Public Television (TPT), Minnesota Opera, Kaleo, Metro Transit, and Metro State. Rebecca also spends a lot of time cooking, reading about queer history, gardening, learning and practicing herbal medicine, dancing, and listening to podcasts.



## J.B. Mayo, Jr., New Board Member

J.B. is an Associate Professor of Social Studies Education at the University of Minnesota. J.B.'s research centers on the lives of queer teachers and students in school settings. His ultimate goal is to increase LGBTQ+ and queer histories within the larger social studies curriculum. To that end, he has written about Two Spirit indigenous people, the queering of media images in the social studies, and the queer legacy of the Harlem Renaissance. One of his biggest opportunities for growth during his professional career has centered on his nuanced understanding of gender identity/expression and the role(s) it plays in students' lived/learning experiences at school. In his spare time, J.B. enjoys long walks, short jogs, or hours-long bike rides outside.



## Patricia (Pat) Nelson, New Board Member

Patricia (Pat) Nelson has been lending her voice to make sure that all voices are heard, and continues to reach wider still. Pat also serves on the board of UCare (a MN health plan). She is the owner/principal of NelsonWorks LLC, providing computer support for homes and small offices. Her interests include Amateur Radio (call letters KE0QXD); she is a member of the LGBT Amateur Radio Network, OMIK, RARA, and Rainbow Access groups. Originally from Brooklyn, NY, she lives in Minneapolis with her partner, playwright/director/author Kim Hines.



**12 storytellers**  
**301 attendees**  
**4 gatherings**

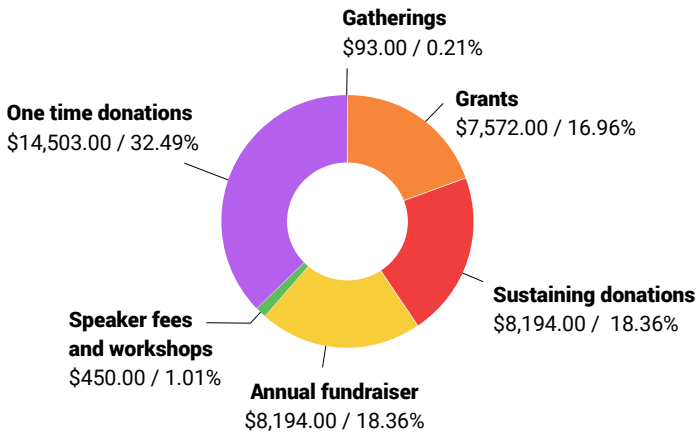
**+ plus a podcast listening party and a virtual fundraiser**



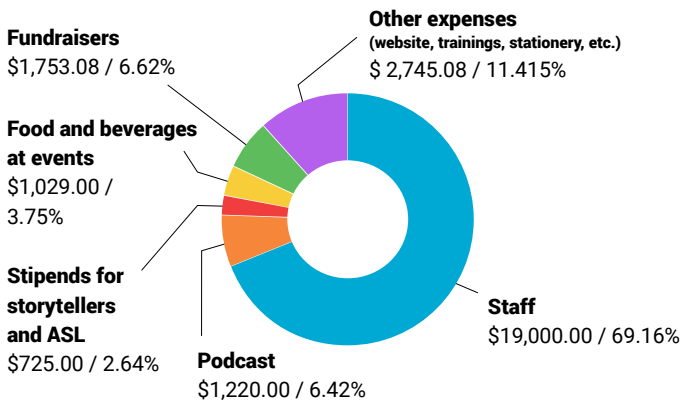
Recording and editing our first podcast episode from home while in quarantine in April, 2020

# Fiscal report FY19/20

## FY 19/20 Income



## FY 19/20 Expense



# Sustaining donors

- July 2019 we had 43 sustaining donors giving \$850/month
- July 2020 we had 38 donors giving \$925/month

Over the last fiscal year we were able to increase the honorarium to all storytellers from

**\$50 to \$100**

because of your support.

**100% of people paid**

by TQH are

**local LGBTQ+ people**

In January 2020 the board

**approved a monthly stipend**

to our Executive Director. They are now compensated consistently for their labor thanks to your support.

# Thank you, donors

Ashley Anderson  
Anonymous x 11 lovely people  
Blessing Awodoyin  
**Rebecca Aylesworth**  
Maya Beck  
**Rachel Bedor**  
Christine Bergeson  
Chris Braddock  
Kathryn Martin Briem  
**Erin Bryan**  
Bart Buch  
**Ryan Clanton**  
**Robb Clasen**  
Dawn Clawson  
Hadday Copley-Woods  
**Jay Cowles**  
**Luca Cowles**  
Page Cowles  
Melissa Curran-Moore  
Jessica Dungca

**Elisabeth Ellsworth**  
William Emory  
Sarah Fastner  
Robert Frame  
**Diana Fraser**  
Anya Gage  
**Joanne Garlich**  
Fiona Garlich Horner  
**Patricia Good**  
Edgar Governo  
Jan Griffith  
Lisa Gulya  
Matthew Halliday  
Cat Hammond  
Eric Hankin-Redmon  
**Melissa Harl**  
Angela & Ashley  
Harness-Jimenez  
Schanan Harris  
**Daniel Hawkins**

Anna Hayek  
**Jo Herrera**  
Kellee Hunkapi  
Tim Hyland  
**LJ Jordan**  
John Junek  
Julia Kambiri  
**Meghan Lafferty**  
**David Lawrence**  
**Mary Lewis**  
Elizabeth Loeb  
**Gretchen Lucken**  
Catherine Lundoff  
M Mara  
**Mary Martin and Fred Smith**  
Shannon McCarville  
Emma Molls  
Zach Moser  
Carly Olds  
**Mykel Pennington**

**David Portillo**  
Susan Raffo  
**David Ramthun**  
**Kian Rank**  
Tarsha Rice  
Freya Richman  
Abbey Riley  
**Jason Rodney**  
**Margaret Rozycki**  
**Craig Ruhland**  
Rebecca Saltzman  
Gabriela Santiago  
Dex Santillan  
**Janine Schug**  
Erika Shearer  
**Becky Shipman**  
**Noam Sienna**  
Stacy Sowinski  
Heather Spear  
Alex Stoiaen

John Sullivan  
Carolyn Szczepanski  
**Sara Van Norman**  
Anita Vanderploeg  
Kassian Vaubel  
Rebecca Voelkel  
**Chris Walsh**  
**Harry Waters Jr.**  
**Nicole A Weiler**  
Ramona C Welter  
**Samuel Welter**  
Alfonso T Wenker  
**G Zachariah White**  
Julia Wolfe  
Margaret Wurtele  
Amanda Yourd  
Beth Zemsky  
  
**The bold names are sustaining monthly donors**