



*Testimony in Support of the Proposed Designation of the  
Lesbian Herstory Archives, 484 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn,  
as a New York City Landmark*

*Tuesday, October 25, 2022*

My name is Amanda Davis and I am the project manager of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, a cultural heritage initiative founded by historic preservationists in 2015 to document historic places connected to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community in the city's five boroughs.

The Project strongly supports the designation of the Lesbian Herstory Archives as a New York City Landmark, the first LGBT historic site to be designated in Brooklyn. When we launched our website with an inaugural 100 sites, the Lesbian Herstory Archives was included. Founded in 1974 in the Upper West Side apartment of Joan Nestle, the Archives bought its current Park Slope rowhouse in 1991, officially reopening in June 1993. The purchase ensured that the Archives would have a permanent space, which continues to serve the lesbian community today. Its resources, particularly its archival photographs, have been invaluable to our Project in documenting many of the over 400-plus sites on our website.

With a history that spans nearly fifty years – thirty of those years in Park Slope – the Lesbian Herstory Archives is likely the first, long-standing, lesbian-specific community space in New York City. It is also an early example of a group run by and for lesbians. The Archives was born out of a need to provide a voice for lesbians, who often felt underrepresented and unheard in gay male-dominated groups, and to connect emerging lesbian artists and writers with more established ones, at a time when lesbians were less visible in mainstream culture. Access to previously unknown lesbian-affirming literature, ephemera, and other archival items has also empowered women and linked them with their past. Archives coordinator Saskia Scheffer once noted that “Most people would throw everything out about lesbians, or only keep the negative things. ... But the Archives house the collective memory of what happened to us as a group.”

The Lesbian Herstory Archives' location in Park Slope also speaks to the importance of the neighborhood to LGBT history. By the 1990s, Park Slope was popular with lesbians and their families as a place to live and find community, and several lesbian-associated groups and businesses, including the Archives, operated there. As a result, the designation of the Lesbian Herstory Archives building as a New York City Landmark would also highlight and celebrate Park Slope's historic significance to the lesbian community.

The NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project proudly supports this proposed designation.

Thank you.