



DVLF Featured Grantee: Kathy Padilla

Kathy Padilla is an activist and leader in our LGBT community, with emphasis on transgender equality. Kathy's current project is a documentary film focusing on the history of the transgender community in Philadelphia. She took part in DVLF's technical assistance program to help produce her film. In addition, Kathy served as co-president of OutFront, an organization whose mission is to fill the need for an inclusive, issues-based and bi-partisan group to represent the political and legislative concerns of the city's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities. OutFront was instrumental in the research, preparation, advocacy, and passage of the addition of "gender identity" to the nondiscrimination language of the Philadelphia Fair Practices Code. Kathy, along with OutFront co-president Michael Williams, testified before Philadelphia City Council in support of the ordinance. Kathy and OutFront have also worked to pass similar legislation in New Hope, Allentown, and Norristown, PA. Kathy bears no relation to DVLF's featured volunteer Anthony Padilla.

DVLF: What do you intend to accomplish with your project? Why did you choose film as your medium?

KP: The documentary will be on the history of the transgender community in Philadelphia, focusing on the April 1965 sit-in at Dewey's Lunch Counter. The project will use interviews with participants and contemporaries, archival records and video news archives to preserve the fast disappearing history of transgender/gender variant people from this time period and reinforce their relevance to the movement for LGBT equality. My hope is that the format will preserve this story in a manner much more accessible than a paper on the subject might.

DVLF: Tell us about the history behind your project. Why are the events of 1965 significant?

KP: The sit-in was the first known organized LGBT demonstration in the USA. It was prompted by discrimination against transgender people, but the action included people from all parts of the LGBT community. Like most transgender history and contributions to the fight for LGBT equality, it has been forgotten

or suppressed. One of the goals of the project is to address statements that some have made against inclusion of gender identity and expression in nondiscrimination legislation. From Stonewall to Compton's to Dewey's, transgender people have been part of many of the iconic moments of the LGBT community's demanding equality. In Dewey's we also see LGB people stating the importance of gender expression to their lives, rights and community.

DVLF: Why did you reach out to DVLF? How has DVLF been able to help you achieve your goals?

KP: DVLF and Perry Monestaro have been instrumental in helping to birth this project. DVLF facilitated contacts and resources and provided personal support, especially Perry's sharing his ideas and his insights. This project would not have even begun without DVLF's support. I hope to enjoy DVLF's continued collaboration and support to realize its completion.

DVLF: What do you foresee for our transgender community? Socially, politically, culturally, economically?

KP: I think we've seen an amazing growth in the acceptance of transgender and transsexual people over the last 8 years. The recent Harris/Out and Equal survey documents 71% of straight people supporting non-discrimination legislation. We're seeing not only more fully realized portrayals of our lives in the popular media, but for the first time having people from our community portray our own lives. I hope to see our community be included in the appointments process for the next administration, an executive order covering gender identity and expression, inclusion in the next version of ENDA and to see some from our community elected to higher levels of public office, as has happened in other countries. I don't hope for these things for merely their own sakes but with the hope that they will begin to address the employment, health care access, safety and economic challenges we face.