
Finding aid prepared by Celia Caust-Ellenbogen and Michael Gubicza through the Historical Society of Pennsylvania's Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories on

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Summary Information

Repository: John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center
Creator: Garcia-Vera, Oscar, 1954-1995
Title: Oscar Garcia-Vera papers
ID: Ms.Coll.14
Date [inclusive]: 1971-1992
Date [bulk]: 1992
Physical Description: 1.67 Linear Feet
Physical Location: Collections 14
Language of the Material: English
Abstract: Oscar E. Garcia-Vera was a gay rights activist who enjoyed singing and theater work and was also very involved with the Hispanic community in Philadelphia. An appointee of the Mayor's Commission for Sexual Minorities, he played a major role in organizing the first national conference dealing with AIDS and mental-health issues, held in Philadelphia in 1992. The Oscar Garcia-Vera papers, 1971-1992, consist of conference pamphlets and materials, four photograph albums, and scattered additional correspondence, ephemera, and other miscellaneous items. The collection reflects Garcia-Vera's work as a gay rights activist and interest in singing and theater.

Biographical/Historical Note

"Oscar E. Garcia-Vera, an AIDS and gay-rights activist, died [in 1995] of complications from AIDS. He was 41 and lived in Germantown. Garcia-Vera was active in a number of community groups, said Carole Smith, a longtime friend. He was a board member of Penguin Place, a gay and lesbian community center [now the William Way Center], and of CHOICE, the health-care advocacy group.

"In 1990, while Wilson Goode was mayor, Garcia-Vera served as co-chairman of the Mayor's Commission for Sexual Minorities. He was re-appointed to the group by Mayor Rendell, said Smith."
Garcia-Vera played a major role in the first national conference dealing with AIDS and mental-health issues. The conference was held in Philadelphia in 1992. He was a lecturer and workshop leader for the Pennsylvania Department of Health on such issues as AIDS and teen sexuality. He also worked with the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging on expanding its domiciliary-care program to include AIDS patients.

"Garcia-Vera's tireless volunteer work was in addition to a full-time job as a probation/parole officer for the Philadelphia Adult Probation Department. Garcia-Vera worked for the department for about five years, said Smith. He dealt mostly with probationers and parolees who were Latino or had special medical needs.

"A native of Puerto Rico, Garcia-Vera lived and attended school in Washington, D.C., for 12 years. He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Georgetown University, and a master's degree in journalism from American University. He moved to Philadelphia in 1983, and landed a job as a court transcriber with the Philadelphia courts system.

"Garcia-Vera enjoyed singing and theater work. He was a founding member of the Spruce Street Singers. He also helped design sets and costumes for the theater ensemble at the Allen's Lane community center, and for two gay theater groups, Daylight Zone and Avalanche.

"A well-liked, extroverted man, Garcia-Vera had a great sense of humor and a talent for storytelling, said Smith. Even though he knew he was HIV-positive since 1986, Garcia-Vera was selfless with his time and his friendships, she said. He was always upbeat. Yet, in private, he was very sentimental and sensitive, she said. "He did not wear his heart on his sleeve," she said."

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**Scope and Content Note**

This collection consists of conference pamphlets and materials, four photograph albums, and scattered additional correspondence, ephemera, and other miscellaneous items.

The bulk of the collection is pamphlets, schedules, and materials from conferences on GLBT issues held in Philadelphia, circa 1989-1992. It appears that Garcia-Vera attended most of the conferences after his appointment to the Mayor's Commission on Sexual Minorities in 1992. There is also a bag of about one-dozen pins from GLBT events.
The four photograph albums are from Garcia-Vera's time as a student at Georgetown University, 1971-1972. The photographs mostly depict his friends, student theatre performances, and ethnic affinity and GLBT groups. Many individuals are identified.

Finally, this collection contains small amounts of: ephemera from the Spruce Street Singers (Garcia-Vera was a performing member) and other GLBT choirs across the United States; personal papers and correspondence; correspondence relating to Garcia-Vera's GLBT advocacy; correspondence with, and minutes of, the Mayor's Commission on Sexual Minorities; and newspaper clippings and academic articles on GLBT issues.

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**Administrative Information**

**Publication Statement**

John J. Wilcox, Jr. LGBT Archives, William Way LGBT Community Center

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**Conditions Governing Access Note**

Contact John J. Wilcox Jr. LGBT Archives of Philadelphia for information about accessing this collection.

**Immediate Source of Acquisition Note**


**Processing Information Note**

Summary descriptive information on this collection was compiled in 2011-2012 as part of a pilot project conducted by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to make better known and more accessible the largely hidden collections of small, primarily volunteer run repositories in the Philadelphia area. The Hidden Collections Initiative for Pennsylvania Small Archival Repositories (HCI-PSAR) was funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

This is a preliminary finding aid. No physical processing, rehousing, reorganizing, or folder listing was accomplished during the HCI-PSAR project.
In some cases, more detailed inventories or finding aids may be available on-site at the repository where this collection is held; please contact John J. Wilcox Jr. LGBT Archives of Philadelphia directly for more information.

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## Controlled Access Headings

- AIDS activists
- Choirs (Music)
- Gay choirs
- Gay liberation movement
- Gays
- Minority gays
- Philadelphia (Pa.)
- Washington (D.C.)
- Georgetown University.
- Philadelphia (Pa.). Mayor's Commission on Sexual Minorities.