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**WILLIAM WAY LGBT COMMUNITY CENTER PRESENTS *SPEAKING OUT FOR EQUALITY: THE CONSTITUTION, GAY RIGHTS, AND THE SUPREME COURT* AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER THIS SUMMER**

**Exhibition Commemorates the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the First Gay Rights March, Held on Philadelphia's Independence Mall on July Fourth**

Philadelphia (March 10, 2015) – Planned to coincide with Gay Pride Month in June and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary the first in a series gay rights marches, which took place on the Fourth of July on Independence Mall in Philadelphia, the William Way LGBT Community Center will present *Speaking Out for Equality: The Constitution, Gay Rights, and the Supreme Court*, a new exhibition at the National Constitution Center. Opening Friday, June 5, 2015, and continuing through Labor Day, Monday, September 7, 2015, *Speaking Out for Equality* utilizes pivotal court cases, artifacts and personal stories to chronicle the decades-long debate over gay rights, a debate that ultimately brought issues of LGBT equality before the Supreme Court.

“On July 4, 1965, LGBT activists picketed for justice in front of Philadelphia's Independence Hall. Clad in suits and dresses to appear ‘normal,’ they carried posters that demanded equality for gays and lesbians in a society that treated them as criminals and deviants,” said Chris Bartlett, executive director, William Way LGBT Community Center. “The public demonstrations, which were called Annual Reminder protests and would last until 1969, were sparked by one person's failed effort to bring a discrimination case before the Supreme Court. They would become the first sustained national effort to focus attention on the discrimination faced by gay people and became a catalyst for LGBT Americans to organize for equality,” he said.

*Speaking Out for Equality* will be the centerpiece of **Reminder 2015: Celebrating 50 Years of LGBT History, Art and Culture**, a series of anniversary events planned under the leadership of the William Way LGBT Community Center and its Wilcox Archives and Library. The William Way Center will co-host programs at the African American Museum in Philadelphia, the Free Library of Philadelphia, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Independence Visitor Center, and the National Museum of American Jewish History. A reenactment of the original Annual Reminder demonstration in front of Independence Hall will be held on July 4, 2015.

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“This exhibit is historic in many respects,” said Bartlett. “It is the first time that LGBT history, viewed through a Constitutional frame, is being explored at a national museum. It’s also historic given the time frame of the American LGBT civil rights debate: with a major LGBT civil rights case to be handed down by the United States Supreme Court while the exhibit is open in June. For July 4, 2015, Independence Mall will be ringed with a major LGBT civil rights exhibit and partner exhibits at other institutions on the mall. LGBT history is truly coming of age.”

“We are pleased to participate in Reminder 2015 and partner with the William Way LGBT Community Center on *Speaking Out for Equality*,” said Vince Stango, chief operating officer, National Constitution Center. “As the Museum of We the People, we continue to serve as a center of exhibits and materials on the history and contemporary significance of the Constitution. The exhibition will inform about pivotal Supreme Court cases in the fight for gay rights and create a platform for discussion about the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment,” he said.

Visitors to the exhibition will be greeted by images of Annual Reminder protests as well as media projections of current LGBT issues told through film, headlines and photographs, and then proceed through six sections.

1. In section one, “Being Gay in Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century America: A Climate of Fear and Intimidation,” which includes media, personal stories, and law enforcement accounts, visitors explore the extent of discrimination faced by LGBT people and learn about the risk of being visible.
2. In section two, “Frank Kameny, 1957: A Fired Government Employee Challenges the Status Quo,” tells the story of the Lavender Scare, a time when government employees believed to be homosexual could be fined at will, and a rising astronomer who is fired and fights back. Kameny’s petition to the Supreme Court ignited a sustained public debate over LGBT rights.
3. The right to speak out – guaranteed by the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment – became a springboard in the LGBT movement for equality and is the subject of section three, “1960s Protest: Testing the Promise of the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment.” The exhibition will explore the rising visibility and activism in the gay community during this tumultuous decade.
4. As the gay rights movement emerged into public consciousness and the call for LGBT equality gained wider support, the debate over gay rights increasingly played out in the

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courts. In section four, “Coming Out for Liberty: Amendments V, XIV, and the Response to Bowers v. Hardwick,” visitors learn how a 1987 Supreme Court ruling helped fuel the change in focus for LGBT people, who would increasingly shed the cloak of invisibility to seek equality.

5. “A Debate Over Dignity: Amendment XIV,” addresses the timeframe after the Bowers v. Hardwick Supreme Court decision when LGBT people turned to their neighbors, employers and communities. This section explores the ongoing debate over legal protections for LGBT individuals and families from the 1990s to today.
6. The exhibition concludes by asking, “The End, The Beginning: What Does Equality Mean?” Visitors look at current issues surrounding LGBT rights and the courts. Legalizing marriage of same-sex couples, which the Supreme Court will address in June 2015, is an entry point to larger debates over anti-discrimination laws and exemptions.

Forty partner organizations are participating in Reminder 2015 events, including: The ACLU of Pennsylvania, Action AIDS, African American Museum in Philadelphia, Arcadia University, Asian Arts Initiative, Attic Youth Center, City of Philadelphia, DMH Fund, Eastern State Penitentiary, Equality Forum, Free Library of Philadelphia, Friends Select School, GALAEI, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Independence National Historical Park, Independence Visitor Center, Kimmel Center, Library Company of Philadelphia, Mazzoni Center, Mural Arts Program, National Constitution Center, National Museum of American Jewish History, New York Public Library, Opera Philadelphia, Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau, Philly Pride Presents, PHL Diversity, PFLAG Philadelphia, Philadelphia Dance Projects, Philadelphia FIGHT, Philadelphia Gay News, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Rosenbach of the Free Library of Philadelphia, Rutgers University – Camden Women’s & Gender Studies Program, Smithsonian Institution, Taller Puertorriqueño, The Philadelphia Foundation, William Penn Foundation, WHYY, and Visit Philadelphia.

The National Constitution Center is located at 525 Arch Street on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall. The Center is open 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, until 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and from noon to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. General admission is \$14.50 for adults, \$13 for seniors, students with ID, and youth (ages 13-18), \$8 for children (ages 4-12), and is free for active military. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit [constitutioncenter.org](http://constitutioncenter.org).

### **About the William Way LGBT Community Center**

The William Way LGBT Community Center seeks to encourage, support, and advocate for the well-being and acceptance of sexual and gender minorities through service, recreational, educational, and cultural programming. For more information, call 215-732-2220 or visit [waygay.org](http://waygay.org).

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### **About the National Constitution Center**

The [National Constitution Center](#) in Philadelphia is the Museum of We the People, America's Town Hall, and a Headquarters for Civic Education. As the **Museum of We the People**, the National Constitution Center brings the United States Constitution to life for visitors of all ages and inspires active citizenship by celebrating the American constitutional tradition. The museum features interactive exhibitions, engaging theatrical performances, and original documents of freedom. As the only institution established by Congress to "disseminate information about the United States Constitution on a non-partisan basis," the National Constitution Center serves as a **Headquarters for Civic Education**—offering cutting-edge learning resources including the premier online Interactive Constitution. As **America's Town Hall**, the National Constitution Center hosts timely constitutional conversations uniting distinguished leaders, scholars, authors, and journalists from across the political spectrum. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit [constitutioncenter.org](#).

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