

Remembering TL's all-but-forgotten riot

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waiting to be publicized. When we were out in the neighborhood doing research and shooting, people started coming forward and telling us their stories and saying, "Thank you for confirming the memory I had!"

That written description was by Raymond Broshears, a cofounder of Gay Pride events. The publication, Gay Pride, was the program for the initial Gay Freedom Day Parade. With its next edition, Gay Pride became Gay Pride Quarterly, making the premiere publication more obscure until Stryker came across a copy at the GLBT Historical Society.

"By the scale of the day," Stryker concedes, as riots go, what happened at Compton's was nothing compared with what had gone down in Watts a year before or would follow the next year in cities across the country, such as Newark and Detroit. But the tenor of the times played a part in encouraging resistance.

"It was bigger than a bar fight, smaller than a military invasion," Stryker said. "Compton's was completely trashed, a police car was demolished, a newsstand was set afire and general havoc was caused that night in the Tenderloin."

Stryker's film won an Emmy for Best Cultural or Historical Special and aired repeatedly on PBS. She was just in time, though. Two key sources in her film, community artist St. Jaymes, also known as Amanda Taylor or Mandy Taylor, and former SFPD Community Relations Officer Elliott Blackstone, for instance, have since died.

"I think all of the people who had firsthand knowledge aren't with us anymore," Stryker said. "I don't know of anyone who was a living witness and can speak of it."

"It's so vague," Elizondo said. "I try to remember, but at that time we were all trying to survive, on drugs, prostitution. We didn't know we were making a statement. We were tired of being harassed."

"We were called the Gutter Girls because we had no education, no skills," she said at the Cadillac event. "Prostitution and selling drugs is the only career we had because they would not hire us. We had to do something to survive!"

"The kids of today don't know how easy they have it. We didn't know if we were gonna come home, who was gonna pick us up. But we had to survive. We had the balls to be who we were. Nobody could take that away from us."

In a year when transgender issues have moved into the national spotlight, San Francisco is honoring a barely known ground zero in the long campaign for safety, respect and fair treatment.

On June 24, Vicki Mar Lane, aka the 100 block of Turk Street, will meet Gene Compton's Cafeteria Way, when the 100 block of Taylor takes on a new identity, per the Board of Supervisors' May 17 unanimous vote approving Supe Jane Kim's proposal to honorarily rename that block.

"Today, the tide is changing, but there's also pushback — North Carolina comes to mind," former Assemblyman and S.F. Supervisor Tom Ammiano said outside the Cadillac after speaking at the LGBT Elder Life Conference. "Those people in North Carolina have to understand that their words cause violence. They have blood on their hands."

Nowadays, there's a halfway house in the building above where Gene Compton's Cafeteria once operated. Its corner entrance is boarded up in favor

of a doorway at 111 Taylor. Across Taylor sits the Warfield Hotel, recently cited by the city for numerous health code violations, and the plywood boards concealing the renovation of the recently closed dive bar, the 21 Club. Across Turk from there is a parking lot abutting the Warfield Theatre. On the southwest corner is another refurbishing site, where the much-ballyhooed but long-delayed restaurant Local is expected to open this year, reportedly bringing healthy fast food at affordable prices.

The corner of Vicki Mar Lane and the soon-to-become Gene Compton's Cafeteria Way has a long and enduring history as a hot spot, usually in the worst of ways. It's the roughest intersection in the city's toughest neighborhood.

"In the mid-'80s, that became the crack cocaine corner," said Del Seymour, who worked it as a dealer, pimp and drug user and visits it still as he leads techies on neighborhood tours. "That became the place to go," he says, explaining that he and other dealers found safety in numbers from law enforcement. "If you're selling by yourself," he said, "you're vulnerable." But if you're just one in a group of 25, "they can't arrest everybody."

Nonetheless, "I got 14 felony arrests for drug sales on that corner, in front of the 21 Club."

"Turk and Taylor is ground zero for the Tenderloin," Gary Jimenez, then captain of the TL police, told the Chronicle in 2009. "It is, it always has been and it continues to be." This was the day after Leticia Hunter, 33, died in a hail of gunfire that injured five others standing outside Grand Liquors one February evening that year. The silver Mercedes SUV from which the shots were fired evaded



MARK HEDIN

Felicia Flames Elizondo holds a framed copy of Gay Pride's account of the Compton's Cafeteria riot at the Howard Grayson LGBT Elder Life Conference at the Cadillac Hotel on May 21.

police going 110 mph on the Bay Bridge. It was found "abandoned and aflame" on an Oakland street a few hours later, Tom Carter reported in The Extra and the book "Death in the Tenderloin."

Two years later, on March 23, 2014, eight people were hit by semiautomatic gunfire when one of a group reportedly playing dice on the street got upset, went to his car, pulled out a weapon and opened fire before speeding off, police said. Writing in BeyondChron a week af-

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