

Finding Aid to the Felicia Elizondo Papers (#2021-06)

Repository: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

Collection Title: Felicia Elizondo papers

Collection Number: 2021-06

Physical Description: 26 linear feet (9 cartons, 5 oversize boxes, 2 large folders)

Creator: Felicia “Flames” Elizondo

Date (inclusive): Circa 1965-2016 (bulk 2000s)

Language of Material: English

Abstract: The collection includes materials documenting the life and work of Felicia "Flames" Elizondo (July 23, 1946 – May 15, 2021). Elizondo was a Latinx woman, community leader, drag artist, transgender activist and AIDS activist. She was a regular patron of Compton's Cafeteria, site of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot, in the Tenderloin District in San Francisco. Materials include clothes and performance costumes, personal writings, correspondence, personal biographical documents, photographs, signs, flags, CDs and DVDs, clippings and ephemera, and materials relating to Vicki Marlane. This collection is part of the Calle 16 and Beyond Archives Project of the GLBT Historical Society.

Preferred Citation:

[Identification of item], Felicia Elizondo Papers (2021-06), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

Conditions Governing Access:

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights:

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Acquisition Information:

The collection was donated to the GLBT Historical Society by Rena Betancourt in 2021. Addition by Tina Aguirre in February 2024.

Processing Information:

Finding Aid created by Isaac Fellman, Vi Bui, and Marisol Medina-Cadina in 2021.

This finding aid uses terminology for LGBTQ people that was in current use at the time of its creation. Descriptive language for queer identities evolves quickly and some of these terms may now be dated or even offensive. Finding aids are themselves historical documents; they reflect the moment in which they were written and often reflect the terms that subjects used for themselves. Please contact the GLBT Historical Society Archivist with questions or comments.

Biographical Note: Felicia “Flames” Elizondo (1946-2021) was a self-described “Mexican spitfire, screaming queen, pioneer, legend, icon, diva, 29-year survivor of AIDS and Vietnam veteran.” Her activism has been crucial in raising public awareness of transgender rights and history. Ms. Elizondo was a fixture in the San Francisco LGBTQ community for many years. She was a native of San Angelo, Texas. In her teens, she lived in San Jose, and would skip school to visit the Tenderloin and Compton’s Cafeteria with friends; she continued to frequent Compton’s throughout the 1960s. She joined the Navy at age 18 and volunteered to serve in Vietnam, “hoping that the military could change me. I wanted to be the man that I was drilled to be since I was little. I lowered my voice so nobody could tell that I was gay.” She later accepted she was attracted to men and told her commanding officer. She was then interrogated by the FBI and received an undesirable discharge from the Navy. Later, she successfully petitioned to have her discharge reversed as honorable.

In 1972, Elizondo transitioned and began living full-time as a woman. In 1991, she permanently moved to San Francisco. She was known for performing with the Tenderloin Queen’s Revue, a musical drag group, among many others. She was a longtime volunteer for LGBTQ+ and AIDS groups in which she organized many fundraisers to help raise money. Elizondo was featured in the documentary “HIV Stops with Me,” as well as “Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria,” which won an Emmy. In 2008, she was given the senior leader award from UC Berkeley’s Department of Public Health.

Scope and Content: The collection includes materials documenting the life and work of Felicia "Flames" Elizondo (July 23, 1946 – May 15, 2021). Elizondo was a Latinx woman, community leader, drag artist, transgender activist and AIDS activist. She was a regular patron of Compton's Cafeteria, site of the Compton's Cafeteria Riot, in the Tenderloin District in San Francisco. Materials include clothes and performance costumes, personal writings, correspondence, personal biographical documents, photographs, signs, flags, CDs and DVDs, clippings and ephemera, and materials relating to Vicki Marlane. This collection is part of the Calle 16 and Beyond Archives Project of the GLBT Historical Society.

Indexing Terms:

Trans women
Transgender people
Drag
People of color
Latinx people
Latinas
Photography

Container Listing

Carton 1 - 5 wigs

Carton 2 - 3 wigs

Carton 3 - 1 wig and mannequin head

Carton 4 - Heels

Carton 5 - Vicki Marlane Papers (1 folder pertaining to Felicia Elizondo)

Folder 5:1 Felicia Elizondo photographs (circa 1990s), clippings, cds

Folder 5:2 Street Proclamation (2014)

Folder 5:3 Vital records (circa mid 2000s) and 1 death certificate for Gina Calabrese.

Folder 5:4 Street renaming petitions (2013)

Folder 5:4 Street renaming petitions (2013)

Folder 5:6 Pageant, play, and festival playbills (2004-2010)

Folder 5:7 Greeting cards (1995-2005)

Folder 5:8 Greeting cards (circa 2000s)

[Folder 5:9 omitted]

Folder 5:10 Newspaper clippings (2003, 2013)

Folder 5:11 local newspapers (2011, 2013)

Folder 5:12 photographs (circa 1965-2000)

Folder 5:13 flyers (2001-2013)

Folder 5:14 photography scans (1960s-2000s)

Folder 5:15 photography scans (1980s-1990s)

Folder 5:16 *photographs* (1960s-1990s)

2024 Addition – Folders of personal papers, photographs, CDs and DVDs

Carton 6 - Feather boas

Carton 7 - Feather boas

Carton 8 - Feather boas, T Shirts, and textile wall hangings

Carton 9 – Dresses and Clothing

Oversize Box 1 - Felicia Elizondo's drag outfits

6 gowns

1 denim and bedazzled jacket

1 brown faux fur coat

1 black net dress with tassels

Oversize Box 2 - Felicia Elizondo's drag outfits

- 1 gold sequined gown
- 1 blue gown with sequins
- 1 purple and silver gown with massive frills
- 1 purple dress with cotton lace
- 1 red shall and matching polyester gloves
- 1 black sequined blouse with gold flowers
- 1 black sheer top with rainbow glitter
- 1 child size serape poncho
- 1 Vicki Marlane dress (gold sequined, floral design, fringe trim)

Oversize Box 3 - Flags, banners, and flag-themed drag

- 2 paper banners commemorating compton's cafeteria riot
- 1 6 x 9 ¾ yrd trans flag
- 1 vinyl banner commemorating 50th anniversary of compton's cafeteria riot
- 1 correspondence about trans flag
- 1 cape with the colors of trans flag

Oversize Box 4 - Felicia Elizondo's drag outfits

- 1 red floor length dress with beads and sequins
- 1 blue sequin top
- 1 light blue sequin beaded dress with floral dress and matching dress
- 1 white polyester dress
- 1 green polyester dress with cotton lace and sequins
- 1 black and polyester dress with tulle
- 1 sheer black overcoat dress
- 1 silk lilac dress with gold sequins
- 1 satin dress with black beads and embellishments
- 1 blue rayon dress with gold sequins and silk
- 1 purple rayon and silk dress with gold and brown sequins
- 1 green and black gown
- 1 polyester dress with silk lining and beads
- 1 velvet black dress

Oversized Folder 1 - Vicki Marlane and Felicia Flames posters

Vicki Marlane documentary poster, 2008

Vicki Marlane enlarged photograph, circa 2000s

Felicia Flames sign "1960s Tenderloin queen/I'm still here" circa 2000s

Oversized Folder 2 - Vicki Marlane hand drawn portrait with feathers and sequins