

# **Finding Aid to the Victoria Fernandez/Vicki Starr Papers**

**(#2024-01)**

**Repository:** Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society

**Collection Title:** Victoria Fernandez/Vicki Starr Papers

**Collection Number:** 2024-01

**Physical Description:** 1.5 linear feet (two manuscript boxes)

**Creator:** Victoria Fernandez

**Date (inclusive):** circa 1910s-1990s, bulk 1950s-1980s

**Language of Material:** English and Spanish, with occasional material in French

**Abstract:** Victoria Fernandez, who performed as Vicki Starr and also went by Vicki or Julie Fernandez, was a transgender woman best known for performing in topless clubs in North Beach during the 1960s. Among other materials, the collection contains extensive correspondence, a folder of personal notes and letter drafts, and a folder of materials related to Fernandez' struggle to visit her incarcerated partner, in which she worked with legal aid to counter transphobic and homophobic restrictions on her visitation rights. The collection also contains a box of photographs chronicling roughly forty years of Fernandez' life.

**Preferred Citation:**

[Identification of item], Victoria Fernandez/Vicki Starr Papers (#2024-01), The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society.

**Conditions Governing Access:**

Collection is open for research.

**Publication Rights:**

Copyright to material has been transferred to the GLBT Historical Society. All requests for reproductions and/or permission to publish or quote from material must be submitted in writing to the GLBT Historical Society Archivist.

**Acquisition Information:**

The collection was donated to the GLBT Historical Society by Paul Kagawa in 2023.

**Processing Information:**

Finding Aid created by Isaac Fellman in 2024.

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 Finding aids are themselves historical documents; they reflect the moment in which they were written and often reflect the terms that subjects used for themselves.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 History Note:** Victoria Fernandez, who performed as Vicki Starr and also went by Vicki or Julie Fernandez, was a transgender woman best known for performing in topless clubs in North Beach during the 1960s. Born in 1932 to an unaccepting family in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Fernandez moved to New York in the late 1940s and began transitioning in the 1950s. By 1965, she was in San Francisco working as a topless dancer, part of a local craze for topless entertainment whose first famous performer was Carol Doda. At the North Beach venue Coke's, Fernandez performed alongside another trans woman, Roxanne; the two women were billed as novelty acts, with promotional language that emphasized their assigned sex at birth. Fernandez continued to perform until the early 1980s, and was also involved in other forms of sex work. Towards the end of her life, she struggled with her mental health and with alcoholism. Scholar Horacio Roque Ramirez recorded an oral history with Starr before his 2015 death, which is now apparently lost. This collection, acquired by the donor's brother in a storage unit auction, was likely previously owned by Roque Ramirez.

In addition to the collection itself and conversations with researchers, portions of this note are sourced from Michael Flanagan's 2022 *Bay Area Reporter* piece:

<https://www.ebar.com/story.php?ch=bartab&sc=barchive&id=321295>

**Scope and Content:** The collection is divided into two series, Manuscripts and Photographs. Manuscript materials of particular interest include extensive correspondence, a folder of notes and letter drafts (some as brief as a jotted address, others which reveal Fernandez' emotional and spiritual life), and a folder of materials related to Fernandez' struggle to visit her incarcerated partner, in which she worked with legal aid to counter transphobic and homophobic restrictions on her visitation rights. Other materials in this series include press clippings and various ephemera. The Photographs series chronicles roughly forty years of Fernandez' life, from her early years in Puerto Rico, through her early transition, her career as a performer, and her later years in San Francisco. Fernandez' dancing career has limited representation in this collection. Interested researchers will find more about this aspect of her life in the private collection of Albert Tanquero and Lewis Rawlinson, whose book *Remember Me, Vicki Starr* documents their own holdings.

The collection arrived without an original order (and had had at least two owners since Fernandez). Only the materials related to Fernandez' struggle for visitation rights were originally organized into their own folder. GLBT Historical Society archivists arranged the remainder of the collection. Photographs have been organized by format, but not by date.

**Indexing Terms:**

LGBTQ

Transgender people

Trans women

Sex work

People of color

Latinx people

Latinas

Religion and spirituality

Dance

Incarcerated people

Mental health

Addiction and recovery

Photography

San Francisco Bay Area (Calif.)

**Container Listing**

**Series I: Manuscripts**

**Box 1**

- 1:1 Clippings, circa 1965-1990
- 1:2 Correspondence, 1952-1979, undated
- 1:3 Empty envelopes, 1967-1983, undated
- 1:4 Hair clippings, undated
- 1:5 Jackie Pfeifer death – police and necropsy report, 1981
- 1:6 Notes and drafts, 1959-1981, undated
- 1:7 Passports and marriage court folder with furniture inventory, 1966-1981
- 1:8 Professional ephemera, resume page – unknown person, circa 1965-1978
- 1:9 Publications, 1974-1976, circa 1970s
- 1:10 School records, 1947-1965
- 1:11 Tickets, business cards, religious and general ephemera, 1973-1981, undated
- 1:12 Visitation case regarding incarcerated partner Richard Smith, 1971-1975

**Oversize folder 1**

Pastel drawing

## **Series II: Photographs**

### **Box 2**

- 2:1 Photographs, circa 1950s-1980s
- 2:2 Photographs, circa 1910s-1980s, bulk circa 1950s-1980s
- 2:3 Photographs, circa 1950s-1980s, bulk 1980s
- 2:4 Photographs, circa 1950s-1980s
- 2:5 Photographic negatives and slides, circa 1950s-1970s
- 2:6 Photographic negatives, circa 1950s
- 2:7 Large-format photographs, circa 1950s
- 2:8 Decorative photographs, circa 1920s, undated