

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE CAPITAL JEWISH MUSEUM ANNOUNCES THE SPECIAL EXHIBITION  
*LGBTJEWS IN THE FEDERAL CITY OPENING IN MAY 2025***

*A Landmark Exhibition That Intertwines More Than a Century of DC, Jewish, and Queer Histories*

*"This exhibition will help write the local, regional, and national history of the Jewish LGBTQ community."*

- Esther Safran Foer  
Former President of the Board of Directors

**Washington, DC (February 25, 2025)** - The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum is pleased to announce the major new exhibition, *LGBTJews in the Federal City*, to open in May 2025. The exhibition explores the history, culture, and activism of the local queer Jewish community—from the congregations to the clubs to the Capitol.

*LGBTJews in the Federal City* will open in time for Washington, DC's observation of its **50th Capital Pride** celebration and as the city hosts **World Pride** for the first time, offering an unprecedented opportunity to infuse Pride with local Jewish history. This landmark exhibition intertwines more than a century of DC, Jewish, and queer histories.

**SAMPLE OF ARTIFACTS**



Bet Mishpachah members marching at the Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, October 11, 1987. Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Gift of Bet Mishpachah with thanks to Al Munzer and Joel Wind



"A Jewish Lesbian Feminist Hagada for Passover" 1982. Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Gift of Susan Hester in memory of Mary-Helen Mautner



Button from Washington, D.C. Pride Day on June 23, 1991. Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum Collection. Gift of Michael Garbus

*LGBTJews in the Federal City* will present more than 100 artifacts and photographs representing the region's (DC and the suburbs of Maryland and Northern Virginia) Jewish LGBTQ+ places, events, struggles, joys, and personal stories. With access to the Museum's collection of oral histories—including recent recordings conducted in partnership with the **Rainbow History Project**; research into businesses and events drawn from the **Washington Blade** collection at the **DC Public Library**; and the first-ever display of materials collected for this exhibition from Bet Mishpachah —America's third-oldest LGBTQ+-friendly synagogue (and DC's first), and other local Jewish organizations and individuals, the show covers a century of history. Materials to be displayed include posters and photographs from the long campaign by **Frank Kameny** to open federal employment to LGBTQ+ workers. A special loan from the **AIDS Memorial Quilt** will provide a dramatic reminder of, and memorial to, some Jewish Washingtonians who died during the AIDS epidemic.

Stories focusing on federal DC will situate the exhibition squarely in the nation's capital. Here is where national legislation and policies shape the lives of Americans. Institutions and historical moments tell the story of change over time, including the Supreme Court, the State Department's "Lavender Scare," the **National Institutes of Health**, the incarceration of homosexuals at **St. Elizabeths**—the federal mental health hospital, and more. Ephemera and memories from **various** protest marches **and vigils** that could only occur here in the nation's capital will be displayed. These are local stories with national resonance.

Interactivity is a fundamental component of the exhibition. Visitors will learn about the **Nonbinary Hebrew Project**, developers of a third-gender grammar systematics for Hebrew, and even pick up a few new vocabulary words. They will also ponder new ways to understand Jewish teachings and values. An oral history listening area will provide a quiet place to hear from LGBTQ+ Washingtonians in their own words. The exhibition is full of joy, supportive communities, and legislative triumphs, while also considering moments of grief, struggle, and fear. Visitors will have the opportunity to contribute to the Museum's collecting and storytelling in several ways, by sharing photographs, recording their own stories, and responding to prompts throughout the exhibition.

Beating at the heart of this exhibition is a new Museum acquisition: the **Bet Mishpachah Collection**. DC's LGBTQ+-friendly congregation was founded in 1975 and is set to celebrate its 50th anniversary of service to the community. The archive—which will be digitized and available to researchers —represents more than four decades and includes newsletters, fliers, photographs, and notes from congregational meetings. This assemblage represents one of the most extensive archives of an LGBTQ Jewish congregation in the nation. Selections from the collection will be on view for the first time in this Exhibition.

This unprecedented acquisition joins recent additions of LGBTQ objects and stories to the Capital Jewish Museum's collection, including a feminist Haggadah from the 1980s; the **David Green Collection**, documenting the life and work of Green (1952-89), a member of Bet Mishpachah and an AIDS educator and activist; and dozens of recent oral histories produced in collaboration with the Rainbow History Project, a non-profit collecting and promoting the culture and history of metropolitan Washington, DC's diverse LGBTQ communities.

These new initiatives underscore the Museum's commitment to representing the diversity of the region's Jewish community combined with an intentional effort to highlight marginalized voices. Visitors and researchers will be inspired to dig more deeply into this history and re-evaluate what they thought they knew about Jewish DC, regardless of whether they identify as a member of these communities. Seeing LGBTQ+ stories proudly displayed in a Jewish history museum is an important step toward the goal of true recognition and belonging.

"We are deeply honored to present this show, our first self-generated special exhibition—adding Jews into the rich, proud history of LGBTQ+ DC," noted **Esther Safran Foer**, former President of the Board of Directors. "This exhibition will help write the local, regional, and national history of the Jewish LGBTQ community."

*LGBTJews in the Federal City* is curated by **Sarah Leavitt**, Curator, and **Jonathan Edelman**, Collections Curator. The exhibition is designed by **The Design Minds**.

### **About the Capital Jewish Museum**

The Lillian and Albert Small Capital Jewish Museum opened to the public in June 2023. The new Museum explores the Jewish experience in the national capital region and inspires visitors to connect personally and collectively, reflect on the relevance of the past to today, and act on behalf of their communities and values. With its experimental spirit, the Museum connects the past to the present through thought provoking exhibitions, dynamic programming, and creative public experiences. The Museum's archival collections are available to the public by appointment.

<https://CapitalJewishMuseum.org>.

### **Location, Hours, and Admission**

Wed—Sun: 11 am–6 pm (Through May 2025)

First Wed of Each Month: 11 am–8 pm

575 3rd Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Ongoing Exhibitions: Free  
Special Exhibitions: Fees Vary

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