

## A SHORT HISTORY OF LGBT ACTIVISM IN THE USA

hospitalized with a fractured skull. Several hundred people spontaneously demonstrated on Sunset Boulevard and picketed outside the Black Cat.



Jack Nichols (left) pickets Independence Hall at the first Annual Reminder in 1965

The **Annual Reminders** were a series of early pickets organized by homophile organizations. The Reminders took place each July 4 at Independence Hall in Philadelphia beginning in 1965 and were among the earliest LGBT demonstrations in the United States. The events were designed to inform and remind the American people that LGBT people did not enjoy basic civil rights protections. The Reminders were held each year until 1969, with the final picket taking place shortly after the June 28 Stonewall riots.

**Vanguard**, founded in the fall of 1965 by Adrian Ravarour and Billy Garrison, was the first LGBT gay liberation youth organization in San Francisco, California. Ravarour trained members in principles of Rousseau's Social Contract, Payne's Rights of Man, The Bill of Rights and Dr. King's civil rights movement - so the youth would gain a philosophy to act from and to become a force of its own. Vanguard elected officers, published a newsletter and, in the spring, swept the streets, demonstrated on the street and picketed the Golden Gate Theater that had discriminated against them. A lesbian group of street people was also formed called the **Street Orphans**.



The **Compton Cafeteria Riot**, in August 1966, was one of the first recorded transgender riots in United States history. Compton's Cafeteria was one of a chain of cafeterias, owned by Gene Compton, in San Francisco from the 1940s to the 1970s. The Tenderloin location of Compton's at 101 Taylor Street (at Turk)—open from 1954 to 1972—was one of the few places where transgender people could congregate publicly in the city, because they were not welcome in gay bars. In addition, the cafeteria was open all hours. In July 1966, drag queens, hustlers, and transvestites were sitting in Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco when the police arrived to arrest men dressed as women. Because cross-dressing was illegal at the time, police could use the presence of transgender people in a bar as a pretext for making a raid and closing the bar. This harassment by guards and police led to picketing of the restaurant. In August, gay and transgender customers rioted at Compton's in response to continued police harassment. Many of the militant hustlers and street queens involved in the riot were members of **Vanguard**. The restaurant