

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico

Other names/site number Casa Orgullo

Name of related multiple property listing N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & Number 3 Saldaña Street

City or town San Juan

State Puerto Rico

County San Juan

Not for publication Vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Diana López Sotomayor SHPO/Director
Signature of certifying official/Title:

17 March 20 2016
Date

Diana López Sotomayor, Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting Official

Date

Title

State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

5-1-2016
Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property (Check only **one** box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/ not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

Spanish/Mediterranean Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Reinforced concrete

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Description

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The building that served as the locale for the *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico*, the first established gay/lesbian organization, commonly known as *Casa Orgullo*, is a two-story, reinforced concrete, Spanish/Mediterranean Revival apartment house located in #3 Saldaña Street in the San Juan ward of Rio Piedras. It measures 60 feet long by 28 feet wide and sits in a 360 square meters lot within an urban block of irregular configuration. The building type is associated with the local development of the modern apartment house during the 1920's and 1930's which, in turn, was intrinsically related to key character defining features of Hispanic and Mediterranean provenance such as arches, porches or balconies, cast concrete ornamentation, ornate hydraulic tiles, glass mosaics, terracotta tiles. Its main façade overlooks the short, narrow street which runs perpendicular to the nearby Juan Ponce de León Avenue. The building's immediate context is densely developed and holds uniformity in terms of mass and scale. Despite the fact that the first floor spaces have been recently remodeled by its owner for a gastronomic venue, the overall, physical integrity of the portion of the property that is significant under Criteria A – the second floor former apartment – has been significantly retained and preserved.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

The site boundaries of the block of which *Casa Orgullo* is part are the Dr. José N. Gándara Avenue to the north; Saldaña Street to the south; Juan Ponce de León Avenue to the west and; Rosales Street to the northeast. Even though the block is comprised to the north by two high-rise apartment buildings overlooking the main avenues (Gándara and Ponce de León), the buildings site is surrounded by moderate to low scale, mixed use (commercial / residential), buildings. The two-story *Casa Orgullo*, along with its adjacent structures, is one of those examples (**Fig. 1**). Though it is not vacant, the property is currently being remodeled to serve commercial functions on the first floor while the second floor's use has not been defined to this date.

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Figure 1. General southwest view of the building in its current condition as seen from Saldaña Street. The west elevation features access at ground level and the main staircase towards the upper floor apartment unit.



Built in 1937, since its origins, this apartment house or *casa de apartamentos* has been associated to Vicente Suárez¹ who came to be known as very successful merchant in the liquor distribution industry. The owner used to live on the first floor while the upper floor apartment unit was rented to a tenant, usually staff related to the nearby University of Puerto Rico.² The *casa de apartamentos* is an architectural type developed during the 1920's and 30's in the island and became a very popular option among real estate investors and the middle and professional classes that were starting to settle in San Juan. Initially, in terms of style, it integrated elements of Spanish and Mediterranean cultures

¹ *Inventario de Recursos Arquitectónicos de Puerto Rico*. State Historic Preservation Office. Inventory form prepared by Alicia Díaz de León for the Consejo Seguridad Vecinal de Rio Piedras (1995). It has not been possible to determine if Suarez was the original owner for whom the building was designed and, thus, its precise date of construction. Díaz's primary reference was Florencio Sáez *Rio Piedras: estampas de mi pueblo*. San Juan: Palma Real, 1988.

² *Ibid.*

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and, most importantly, “*the durability and strength of modern, American construction, [...] a new and surprising type of building.*”³ Architect Pedro de Castro (1895-1936) was influential in the design, construction and proliferation of the type, particularly in Santurce (**Fig. 2**).⁴ Typically, two or more apartment units in one *casa de apartamentos* shared a similar, if not exact, layout. Just as in *Casa Orgullo*, the staircases played a key role in segregating access to both units by the owners and their guests on the one hand and, on the other, the service staff. For the former, the first floor entrance balconies were for the most part accessed laterally through a set of three to four steps usually flanked by stoops, garden boxes or ornate wrought iron railings. The main staircase, a key feature of the type, that could usually be exterior or enclosed, frontal or lateral, was the main access to the second floor apartment. Because service spaces (kitchen, pantries, breakfast rooms, servant’s bedrooms, garages, etc.) were located in the rear portion of each unit, a secondary first floor entrance and service staircase would be part of the ensemble.

The basic floor plan of *Casa Orgullo* is of rectangular configuration (28 feet wide by 60 feet deep) in which wide, open balconies for each unit face Saldaña Street with two, interior door openings facing them. Within the rectangle, spaces are segregated along a main corridor which bisects the interior spaces distribution according to function or use and not only physically but also visually connects both front and back balconies. The east portion adjacent to the corridor consisted of a four-bedroom enfilade and the west portion contained a living-dining area measuring 13’ x 23’, a common rest room, a fifth bedroom and the kitchen.⁵ The main staircase is located on the west portion of the building. From the sidewalk, a flight four steps lands on a square-shaped slab that serves, as explained above, as point of entrance to the first floor unit balcony whose floor is finished with ornate hydraulic tiles. Also from there, a single flight of seventeen steps rises and ends up on an upper landing sheltered by a canopy of terracotta tiles that conducted the tenants (and, many years later, the members of the COG) to the second floor unit’s main entrance.⁶ (**Figs. 3 and 4**) The floors on both landings are also finished

³ Enrique Vivoni Farage, *Architect of Dreams: Pedro de Castro y Besosa* (San Juan: AACUPR, 1999), 73.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For a description of the function or use of each space while it served as the locale for the COG, please refer to Section 8, figure 9.

⁶ According to several of the COG, the simple act of going up or down this staircase for official or social meetings at *Casa Orgullo* held a strong symbolism to them for it meant the physical threshold between social repression and a safe haven. Therefore, the main staircase could be considered a character defining feature directly associate with the buildings significance under Criteria A. Santiago Gala Aguilera, *Evelyn Otero Figueroa: a personal interview* (2015).

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with plain-colored and ornate hydraulic tiles and their banisters are decorated with cast concrete balusters (Fig.5). The rear service balcony (Fig. 6) and staircase connect the *casa de apartamentos* to its adjacent, two-story, outbuilding with garage and servant's bedrooms on its two levels.

Figure 2. Examples of *casa de apartamentos* designed by Pedro de Castro (1895-1936), from left: Antonio J. Miró; Fernando Chardón; Arturo Bravo and; J. Abarca. The main elevations and their corresponding floor plans illustrate the interior layouts, but most importantly, the several locations, forms and relations between of the main staircase and service access.



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Figures 3 and 4: Main staircase view from the elevated point of entrance and; ornate hydraulic tiles on the upper landing.



Figures 5 and 6: Detail of the banister at the point of entrance featuring cast concrete balusters and; view of rear service balcony looking west.



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The main façade overlooks Saldaña Street and its architectural composition is characterized by its symmetry. The building sits on a 3 feet high base which provides an elevated, physical limit between the first floor balcony and the sidewalk. One of its main, character defining features are precisely the two projecting balconies whose front openings are framed by an upper horizontal beam with slanted contours towards the supporting columns at each end. Lateral openings are also topped by triangular heads whose angles match the front ones. The second floor balcony is surrounded by a segmented cast concrete railing whose grilles feature diamond and droplet-shaped perforations. The composition is topped at the roofline by a single row of terracotta tiles which is also replicated in the garage outbuilding. Additional features include ornamental bands and impostes (see **Fig. 1**). Originally, this façade was profusely adorned with bright colored, glass mosaics of rectangular and polygonal shape at the base and top of each column (including the impostes), the posts and rails of the second floor balcony banister, the trims along the balconies' beams and heads as well as rosettes.⁷ All lateral windows of the main building and the front ones at the garage and servant's bedrooms outbuilding feature reinforced concrete, concave awnings to protect all interiors from natural light.

The two-story garage outbuilding is located in the northeastern corner of the property's lot with direct access from Saldaña Street through a lateral driveway. As mentioned above this service building is connected to the main apartment house's rear portion through a series of staircases and corridors at both levels.

Even though the property no longer serves its original function as a *casa de apartamentos*⁸, the various uses through time (including the COG locale) has not significantly altered the basic, character defining features of neither its general façades or the second floor interior layout, thus, retaining an adequate level of integrity to convey its significance under Criteria A.

⁷ On our May 12, 2015 field inspection of the property we were able to corroborate that all mosaic detailing are currently covered by multiple layers of paint and, in some cases, cement stucco.

⁸ During the period of time the second story apartment unit served as the locale for the COG, on the ground level unit the space was already adapted to serve as local bookstore called *Librería Internacional* (see Figure 8).

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a grave.
- D** A cemetery.
A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- E** A commemorative property.
- G** Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Period of Significance

1975-1976

Significant Dates

1974

1975

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The property known as ***Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico*** (commonly known as ***Casa Orgullo***) is statewide significant under Criterion A, in the area of Social History, as the building served as the meeting hall for the first gay/lesbian organization properly established in Puerto Rico. Founded in 1974, ***Comunidad de Orgullo Gay*** became the first gay/lesbian attempt to organize in order to confront the social, political and legal discrimination against the local LGBTQ community. Inspired by the 1969's Stonewall Revolt and its aftermath, ***Comunidad de Orgullo Gay*** pioneered the organized resistance against the heterosexual social dominance through political action, outreach educational programs, public exposition and confrontation and social support and assistance to the local LGBTQ community. Although short-lived (disbanded by 1976), and with less than fifty-years in achieving its significance, the **Edificio Comunidad Orgullo Gay**, evaluated under Criteria Consideration G, is exceptionally important as the home of the organization that spearheaded the gay liberation movement in Puerto Rico.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

One of the biggest social movements currently taking place in the United States and Puerto Rico is the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) rights movement. In the United States, some attempts were made to create advocacy groups supporting gay and lesbian relationships before World War II, as prewar gay life flourished in urban centers such as Greenwich Village and Harlem during the 1920's *Harlem Renaissance*. The disruptions of WWII, however, allowed formerly isolated gay men and women to meet as soldiers, war workers, and other volunteers uprooted from small towns and posted worldwide, creating the material and social conditions for the eventual development of a truly gay community.

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The LGBT movement in the United States, 1950-1960s

If a movement is defined as an organized, collective and sustained effort to produce, prevent or reverse social change, then the United States' gay and lesbian movement began in the 1950s with the formation of the *Mattachine Society*. Established in 1950 in Los Angeles (California) by Harry Hay, a labor organizer with very close ties to the Communist party and considered by many the founder of the gay rights movement, the *Mattachine Society* aimed to eliminate discrimination, derision, prejudice and bigotry, to assimilate homosexuals into mainstream society and to cultivate the notion of an ethical homosexual culture. Primarily focus in acceptance and assimilation into mainstream society, the *Mattachine* was oriented towards the male homosexual.

During the early 1950s, another important homophile organization developed on the West Coast. In 1955, Phyllis Lyon, Del Martin and three other lesbian couples, two of them interracial, formed the *Daughters of Bilitis* (DOB). Although the presence of women within the *Mattachine* group was strong, there was a reluctance of lesbians to participate in such organizations. The reluctance could be attributed to male gay sexism, but also reflected the still determining fact that the social worlds and the political priorities of lesbians were different from those of gay men. Lesbians were submitted to multiple level of oppressions as women and as homosexuals. The male dominated homophile groups did not respond or address the problems lesbians experienced as women. The difficulties for lesbians multiplied if they were defined as part a racial minority like African American, Hispanic, or other. In many aspects, gay men's problems related to their negative visibility (when they were identified as degenerates, deviants, psychopaths, etc.), while lesbians confronted public invisibility.⁹

Unlike the *Mattachine Society*, whose founding was intentionally political, the *DOB* was conceptualized as a social group and a way to meet other lesbians. However, the *Daughters* included also in their objectives social and political work. Within a year they were sponsoring lectures and discussions, even working with *Mattachine* when it was beneficial to both groups. In 1956, the *DOB* began publishing *The Ladder*, similar to *The Mattachine Review*, but focused only on issues of interest to lesbian.

⁹ Marc Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 54-55.

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In the 1950s these organizations eventually established chapters in several cities and their magazines became a beacon of hope to the gay/lesbian readers. Through meetings and publications, these groups offered information, emotional support, counseling and legal assistance to many homosexuals that couldn't find such services through the regular channels because of their sexual orientation.

From the early 1950s until the late 1960s, the gay/lesbian movement engaged in four main activities. First, homophile groups organized meetings, discussions and events at which participants could share their thoughts and feelings about topics related to sex, gender and sexuality. Second, it strode to provide an array of services to individuals in need. The services went from referring members of the gay community to sympathetic lawyers, doctors, counselors and other professionals, helping with problems like depression, homelessness, illness, poverty, violence, legal persecutions, etc. Third, it focused on education and communication. The effort to promote these two were facilitated mostly by magazines and newsletters. Publications like One, The Mattachine Review, and DOB's The Ladder, jointly reached 10,000 to 20,000 readers monthly by the early 1960s. The movement's fourth main activity consisted of direct political action to defend and promote gay and lesbians rights.

However, even with this active schedule, the groups that formed to organize gays and lesbians in the 1950s remained small, largely disconnected and conflicted in their political agendas well into the 1960s. Seven years after its New York City launch, the Mattachine Society's chapter had fewer than one hundred members in 1963, while New York's DOB chapter had twenty-two voting members in 1965.¹⁰ The continued insistence on referring to their movement as "homophile", to avoid any explicitly sexual connotations, betrayed the groups' conservatism. Most telling was the internalized homophobia that dominated the homophile movement's leadership, which looked to medical professionals who deemed their sexuality "deviant" and requiring cure. DOB's publication, The Ladder, was used to urge its members to "*stop the breeding of defiance toward society*" and to exhibit "*outward conformity*".¹¹

¹⁰ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 138.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

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However small, the emergence of an organized presence of the gay community provoked latent prejudices ingrained within the heterosexual establishment. The United States' federal government took the lead on the crusade of persecution against the gay population. In October 1949, the newly established Department of Defense issued a memorandum that left no doubt about how rigid the policy regarding homosexual men and women would it be: *"Homosexual personnel, irrespective of sex, should not be permitted to serve in any branch of the Armed Forces, in any capacity, and prompt separation of known homosexuals from the Armed Forces is mandatory"*.¹² During the 1950's, military discharges based on homosexuality double to 2,000 per year. In February 1950, Undersecretary of State John Peurifoy, testifying before the United States Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Department, revealed that 91 employees had resigned since 1947, due to their dubious sexual preference. By the end of 1953, the State Department dismissed more than four hundred employees based on allegations concerning homosexuality.

Sitting at that Senate Committee in 1950 was Joseph McCarthy, who had just given his infamous *"Wheeling Speech"* that very same year, claiming to have in hand a list of hundreds of communists employed at the State Department. By April 1950, McCarthy pressured the Civil Service to begin rooting out gays and lesbians from federal offices, combining the *Homosexual Scare* with the nascent *Red Scare* as the twin threats to American Liberties. By the end of 1950, anti-homosexual hysteria was in full motion and it raged for the next three years as McCarthy presided over countless hearings on the imagined threat of homosexuals and communists in the government. The McCarthy era is normally remembered for its demagogical search for communists who had supposedly infiltrated the American society. In fact, it was homosexuals who were the primary victims of this twentieth century witch-hunt.

The federal persecuting policies towards the gay community culminated on April 27, 1953, when President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander in WWII, declared "war" on homosexuals issuing Executive Order 10450, which banned gay men and lesbians from working for any agency of the federal government. The president ordered also, that all private contractors doing

¹² Department of Defense to Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force, October 11, 1949. Report of the Board Appointed to Prepare and Submit Recommendations to the Secretary of the Navy for the Revision of Policies, Procedures and Directives dealing with homosexuals, March 15, 1957.

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business with the federal government had to impose a similar policy in their companies and even urged United States' allies overseas to conduct similar purges in their countries.¹³

Following the federal lead, state, local governments, and private business, developed their own initiatives to exclude homosexuals from public and private sector jobs. In 1952, the US Immigration and Nationality Act authorized the exclusion and deportation of aliens afflicted with psychopathic personality, which the US authorities interpreted to apply to homosexuals. In the same year, adding its scientific weight, the *American Psychiatric Association* classified homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance.

Complementing the official establishment campaign against homosexuality, many police forces in the US increased their arrests and harassments of "deviants". The best estimate is that from 1946 to 1965, there were approximately 1,000 to 4,000 annual sodomy arrests based on consensual adult same-sex intercourse in the US.¹⁴ Vice officers regularly raided gay bars, sometimes arresting dozen of men and women on a single night. Gay bars were at least the one public venue for socializing where gays and lesbians in most major towns and cities could go. But as with all public life for LGBTQ people, the bars also provided a site for police and authorities to harass and humiliate their victims.

Things took a different turn, however, when one of those raids was conducted on the late hours of June 28, 1969, in New York City against the *Stonewall Inn*, a gay hangout in the heart of Greenwich Village. Established in 1967 and located at the crossroads of Christopher Street and Seventh Avenue, near a major subway station, and steps away from the former offices of the nation's largest independent weekly, the *Village Voice*, the *Stonewall Inn* was dark, with two bars, a jukebox, and an eclectic crowd of drag queens, gay street youth, cruising men, and a smattering of lesbians. There was no running water to wash the glasses of watered-down booze and beer that were rinsed in a murky tub behind the main bar, leading to at least one known outbreak of hepatitis among customers.¹⁵ As with most drinking establishments that catered to gays, *Stonewall Inn* was owned and operated by the Mob. Puerto Ricans, African-Americans and poor white LGBTQ folks mixed and mingled there, one of the few joints around with a dancing floor. Filmmaker Vito Russo described the place as "a bar for the

¹³ David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Op. Cit., 48.

¹⁵ David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St Martin's Press, 2004), 14-15.

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people who were too young, too poor or just too much to get in anywhere else. The Stonewall was a street queen hangout in the heart of the ghetto”.¹⁶

In this dark, poorly kept bar, six days of riots and confrontation among police forces and thousands of gays and lesbians, led by the usually forgotten Puerto Rican and African American drag queens, initiated a new chapter in the gay’s rights movement. By the time the riots subsided, activists distributed leaflets that read “*Do you Think Homosexuals Are Revolting? You Bet Your Sweet Ass We Are*”.¹⁷ The Stonewall Revolt announced the development of a more militant and combative gay movement. Inspired by the 1960s’ civil rights struggle, the new homosexual organizations formed after Stonewall, like the *Gay Liberation Front* and the *Gay Activist Alliance*, derived their confrontation methods, political agendas and even their new cadre of leaders from the immediate civil rights upheaval. Gone were the assimilationists and conformists positions of the 1950s Mattachine’s and DOB’s groups alike. In the words of historian Martin Duberman, the events in Stonewall became “*a symbol of global proportions*”.¹⁸ In many ways, the establishment of ***Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico*** reflected this national struggle.

The LGBT movement in Puerto Rico: Comunidad de Orgullo Gay

Coming out of the closet in the 1960s and 1970s (or any other previous time) in Puerto Rico was not an easy task. Codified into the local legal code as an undesirable act punishable by law since 1902, same-sex relationships were among the first social conducts that the United States attempted to control after 1898.¹⁹ During the first five decades of the twentieth century, most homosexuals in the island lived a very “heterosexual” life style, keeping their sexual orientation in a very discrete, quiet and invisible mode.

Just like in the United States, it would take the economic and social conditions created by the Second World War to allow for a more visible presence of a gay community, especially within the

¹⁶ Ibid, 74.

¹⁷ Donn Teal, *Gay Militants: How Gay Liberation Began in America, 1969-1971* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1971) 37.

¹⁸ Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993), XV.

¹⁹ *Laws of Puerto Rico 1937*, page267, Act 116, enacted may 13, 1937, effective August 11, 1937.

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urban context. The national factors combined with the life-changing social and economic policies locally administered through Operation Bootstrap (*Manos a la Obra*) to promote the conditions in the eventual development of a local gay subculture. Most significant were the insertion of women in the labor force which significantly changed the power relations between males and females, weakening the structures of the patriarchal family and challenging the traditional assigned gender roles. The new working women were able to break away from a socially imposed sexual role. Able to get hold of the birth control devices and pills introduced during the 1950s and 1960s, the wage earner females removed the divine mission of reproduction from the male/female sexual binomial, exposing the possibility of sex been used just as a simple tool of pleasure.

Just as significant in making possible the formation of a gay subculture post WWII in the island, was the massive exodus of population, first, from the countryside towards the urban centers, and later across the ocean, towards the United States of America. The placement of *Manos a la Obra's* factories within the urban centers brought thousands of new workers into the cities. This young labor force (male and females alike) came in contact with the new social/sexual opportunities provided by the anonymous life within the big cities.

Tens of thousands of this new labor force continued their exodus towards the *American Dream* crossing the Atlantic to establish themselves in the obligated cultural pockets founded by previous Puerto Rican migrants in the ghettos (transformed into the *barrios*) of Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Hartford, Worcester and most definitely, New York City. The new migrants became cultural bridges between the mainland and the island, through which social projects, colonial discourses, class and gender aspirations and struggles were exchanged.

Between the 1950s through the 1970s, these socio-economic factors prompted the formation of a gay subculture visually represented in the form of the social spaces used by the gay community: clubs, bars and public spaces used for cruising (movie theaters, hotel nightclubs, and parks, among others).²⁰ Certain clubs gravitated towards the transvestites/transgender (with the nightclub **El Cotorrito**, being the most successful), allowing for the exposure of that particular group, which was even marginalized by the very same gay community.

²⁰ José D. Rodríguez Allende, *El movimiento homosexual puertorriqueño y su impacto social, 1950-1997*. Tesis para la obtención del grado de Maestría en Historia. Universidad de Puerto Rico. Mayo 2000.

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Dorr Legg, one of the founders of the United States gay rights movement, had once remarked that homosexuals had four deadly enemies. He called them, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: the Social, the Scientific, the Religious and the Legal.²¹ As the gay community in Puerto Rico became more openly exposed, just like in the US, local representatives of the four horsemen's centers of power responded in kind. For one, the federal policies established in the mainland to marginalized homosexuals were automatically imposed in the federal circles operating in the island. The conservative voices of the Establishment began to give the sound of alarm about the undesirable presence of the gay population. In 1956, an editorial of a mayor newspaper warned the population about the "*sexual degenerates*", "*mentally sick*", "*effeminate men*", which "*constitute a danger to the young*", a "*repugnant spectacle*" and most definitely a "*focus of moral disease*".²² In 1961, Governor Luis Muñoz Marín requested a detail report from the Police Commissioner about the extension of the "*homosexual problem*" in Puerto Rico. The report, submitted in July 1961, highlighted the alarming increased in homosexuality in both males and females and that, based in the numbers of bars and clubs, the undesirable conduct was becoming a serious problem in the island.²³

The religious horsemen (the Catholic Church in this particular instance) strongly commented about the obvious moral disintegration of the Puerto Rican society caused by homosexuality and blamed its emergence upon the government's lenient policies.²⁴ Following in the steps of the "scientific" opinion of the *American Psychiatric Association*, the local Secretary of the Department of Health announced in 1961, that homosexuality was a mental disease that could have serious repercussions for the families having members affected by the "*condition*".²⁵

In such atmosphere, it's no surprise that in 1962, a project came forward in the State Legislature to actually impose a prohibition upon homosexuality declaring gay people "*estorbos públicos*" (*public nuisances*), subjectable to be arrested because of their "*offensive, provocative and indecent*" conduct.²⁶

²¹ Lillian Faderman, *The Gay Revolution. The Story of the Struggle*. Simon & Schuster EBook, 2015.

²² *El Mundo*, 31 de julio de 1956, 6. *Una Lacra Social* (editorial).

²³ *El Debate*. Semanario Católico. 18 de junio de 1961, 6. *Homosexualismo en Puerto Rico*.

²⁴ *Ibid*.

²⁵ *El Mundo*. 8 de junio de 1961, 4. *Cree problema homosexual PR no es grave*.

²⁶ *El Mundo*. 12 de mayo de 1962, 4. *Prohíbe Homosexualidad*.

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Although non-approved, the failed law project reflected the hostile atmosphere against the gay community, as it became more socially visible.

Adding to the previous, as the gay's socializing spaces (bars, clubs, cruising sites) became more evident and numerous, the police raids increase in numbers and intensity. Previous to this period, it was common to find the police intervening with the so called "sexual deviants", when the homoerotic conduct or the accusation of such alleged conduct ended-up in public exposure or violence. Such cases were usually registered as "peace alteration" in the police records. Examples of these are mentioned in the recently published work of historian Fernando Picó, *Santurce y las voces de su gente*: on May 20, 1937, Martín Calderín (19 years-old, black male) and Ventura Pérez, (22 years-old, white male) were arrested for disorderly conduct at the *Imperial Theater* as they were passionately hugging and kissing each other; on June 23, 1947, José Enrique Angueira, an 18 years-old white male, was arrested at the Luis Muñoz Rivera Park, as he was with others effeminate males touching each other parts.²⁷

During the 1960s and 1970s, however, the police intervention changed in nature as they were directed towards places and sites used by the gay population, regardless if their conduct was "public". In one example, on April 4, 1964, a group of travesties were detained at a locale in Santurce and accused of immoral conduct, even so there were at a private bar, and the police had no witness of the alleged misconduct.²⁸ In June 1971, in a locale known as *Limón Guest House*, in the town of Mayaguez, thirty males were arrested and charged with prostitution. According to the newspapers, the arrested gay males included some minors and US citizens. The locale was described as "*a homosexual center*".²⁹

Even with all the conservative powers in motion against the gay population, by the late 1960s, influenced by the civil rights struggles in the US, a reformist feeling took hold among some local lawmakers that questioned the legality of the sodomy laws, indicating that they violated the rights of privacy and that the state shouldn't have any jurisdiction in the sexual relations of consenting adults.³⁰ Since 1902, Article 278 of the Penal Code penalized "*acts against nature, committed with another human being or with beast*", which directly codified as a crime same sex relationships, especially

²⁷ Fernando Picó, *Santurce y las voces de su gente*. San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, 2014, 167-169.

²⁸ José D. Rodríguez Allende, *El movimiento homosexual puertorriqueño y su impacto social, 1950-1997*, 60-61.

²⁹ *El Mundo*. 17 de junio de 1971. *Arrestan a más de 30 en prostíbulo varones*.

³⁰ *El Mundo*. 15 de mayo de 1969, 12. *Amadeo pide anular fallos por delito contra natura*. See also, *El Mundo*, 23 de octubre de 1969, 5-A, *Dice castigo por sodomía viola constitución*.

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among gay males.³¹ The possibility of derogating the sodomy laws became a frequent discussion during the early years of the 1970s. But all the wish-full thinking came to an end in 1974, when the penal code was reformed without any significant change to the articles that criminalized same-sex relations. In 1974, the code was re-phrased, separating the bestiality act from the human intercourse, creating different statutes for each action. The old Article 278, became Article 103, stipulating that any person sustaining sexual relations with another person of the same sex or that committed acts against nature with another person would be penalize with a fixed term of ten years in prison.³² In actuality, the 1974 “reform” criminalized same-sex relations with a more accurate specificity. It was also more inclusive, as the law’s new wording could it be now clearly applied to lesbian relations.

The local government’s announcement pertaining the sodomy laws was the immediate catalyst that motivated the creation of **Comunidad de Orgullo Gay (COG)** in 1974. In response to the dispositions of Article 103, a call was made by a group of young male gays for a meeting to create a new organization as part of a deliberate “*act of rebellion against the oppression of the government*”.³³ The bilingual flyer used to announce the meeting invited gays and lesbian to:

*“Meet with your Gay brothers and sisters in an atmosphere of friendly social exchange for developing Gay consciousness and gay support. Come share your ideas on how this new group can best serve you and the Gay community”.*³⁴**(Fig. 7)**

³¹ Revised Statutes and Codes of Porto Rico. San Juan; Boletín Mercantil Press, 1902. Penal Code, enacted March 1, 1902.

³² Código Penal de Puerto Rico (1974). Ley Núm. 115 del 22 de julio de 1974. Puerto Rico remained one of the few states/territories that still had anti-sodomy laws after the Supreme Court ruled in *Lawrence vs. Texas* in 2003. It was in 2005, that Puerto Rico repealed its sodomy law.

³³ *Pa’fuera!* Vol. 1, Núm. 1, Septiembre de 1974.

³⁴ Flyer reproduced in *Avance*, 2 de septiembre de 1974, 13.

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Figure 7. Copy of the flyer used by Comunidad de Orgullo Gay, announcing their first meeting.

COMUNIDAD DE ORGULLO GAY

another way to GET YOURSELF TOGETHER with other Gays

Meet with your Gay brothers and sisters in an atmosphere of friendly social exchange for developing Gay consciousness and Gay support. Come share your ideas on how this new group can best serve you and the Gay community.

SUN. AUG. 4 7:00 P.M.

Unitarian Fellowship on 53 Sevilla Street, between Sevilla and F.D. Roosevelt Ave., one block east of Ponce de Leon in Hato Rey.

otra manera PARA REUNIRTE CON otra gente Gay

Reúnase con sus hermanos y hermanas Gay en un ambiente social de amistoso intercambio a fin de desarrollar conciencia Gay y lograr respeto Gay. Venga a expresar sus ideas acerca de cómo un nuevo grupo puede ser más útil a tí y a la comunidad Gay.

DOM. AUG. 4 7:00 P.M.

San Juan Unitarian Fellowship, Calle Sevilla 53, Hato Rey.

NO SE PUESTA FUERA DE LA

Map labels: F.D. Roosevelt Ave., Calle Sevilla, Calle Athambra, Ponce de Leon, Calle Ombre, Muñoz Rivera.

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The meeting, the first gay public reunion conducted in Puerto Rico, was held at 7:00 pm, on August 4, 1974, in a locale provided by the *San Juan Unitarian Fellowship*, a religious organization then located at #53 Sevilla Street, Hato Rey (San Juan).³⁵ Members of *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* consider August 4, 1974, as the organization's foundational date. As indicated in the first issue of *Pa'fuera!*, COG's official publication, approximately one hundred homosexuals reunited that night at the locale, formerly establishing the first gay/lesbian organization in the island. **Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico** was initially formed by a group of gay males (no lesbians), led by Rafael Cruet, a trained accountant, who later on became the elected president of the organization and served as such for the following two years.³⁶ Another important founder was Ernie Potvin, whom later on became a well-known gay activist in the United States.³⁷

Even without a proper place, by September 1974, one month after its formal initiation, *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* had approximately one hundred and fifty members, and were meeting twice a month. Along with Rafael Cruet and Ernie Potvin, acting as President and Vice-President respectively, thirty-five-almost-full-time volunteers took charge of running the outreach committees oriented towards the organization's two main goals: to have their civil rights recognized and to develop a sense of solidarity and proudness among the gay community.³⁸ By October 1974, an election was proposed to provide for a permanent leadership cadre, the program's directors and a set of rules to regulate the organization. To balance the male predominance that existed in similar gay organizations in the United States, it was included among the proposed governing rules that both sexes would have representation in the executive committee. The actual elections took place on January 19, 1975. Rafael Cruet, COG's

³⁵ Curiously, the first gay convention in the US, called by the *Mattachine Society* in 1953, took place in a meeting hall loan to them by the *Los Angeles First Unitarian Church*. The religious order showed an unusual openness to the gay movement in the US, as much as in Puerto Rico. The building used by the Unitarian's in Hato Rey no longer exists.

³⁶ Juan Llanes Santos, *Rafael Cruet, an oral interview*. Interview conducted with Rafael Cruet on December 10, 2015. The interview was recorded and a copy was placed at the PRSHPO's archives as additional information to this nomination. Most of the information contained directly related to *Comunidad Orgullo Gay* comes from this interview.

³⁷ Ernie Potvin, born in Massachusetts in 1931, moved to Puerto Rico in 1956. After twenty years in the island, he moved to Los Angeles, California, in 1976, working as an actor, a journalist for local gay publications, and a commercial graphic artist. He volunteered for gays organizations such as the Los Angeles Gay Men's Chorus, Christopher Street West and the ONE Institutes Archives. Potvin died of heart failure in 1998. The University of Southern California it's the custodian of a collection called "*Ernie Potvin Papers*", which contained information directly related to Puerto Rico's *Comunidad Orgullo Gay*, but not accessible online.

³⁸ *Pa'fuera!* Vol. 1, Núm. 1, septiembre de 1974, 1/ 4.

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founder, was choose as president; Carmen Torres, became Vice-president; Arthur Gaylor, Treasurer; Francisco Torres, Finance Secretary; and Edgar Soberón, Secretary.³⁹

In order to give an institutional legality to the organization, *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* was properly incorporated as a non-profit organization at the Puerto Rico Department of State by Rafael Cruet, Ernie Potvin and Paul Dirks. It became legally recorded on January 21, 1975. The incorporation document clearly expressed the objective of the organization:

*“To achieve for every homosexual the liberty to express our dignity and our value as human beings and to eradicate all the economic, social, political and religious mechanisms that unjustly oppressed us. In addition, we fight to achieve a unity among all homosexuals and to rise the pride of being gay, for which we will use all means available”.*⁴⁰

The Unitarian Fellowship locale became the initial meeting hall for the organization, but it didn't last. The building used by the Unitarian was actually owned by the *Autoridad de Carreteras*, a local government agency. By the end of August 1974, as soon it became public that the religious group was allowing COG the use of the building, the Unitarian Fellowship received an official communication ordering them to move. The letter explained that the building was schedule to be demolished, to allow for a road expansion. The November 5, 1974's meeting was the last one held at the Unitarian' site. Due to the generous assistance of the Order of the Capuchins, COG found a refuge at the assembly hall in San Francisco's Church in Old San Juan, where the meetings began to be conducted by December 1974. By April 1975, however, a change in the Order's hierarchy forced *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* to move once again, as the assembly hall in the old church was to be used as a museum. The organization then moved into a space provided by the *Centro Nacional de Las Artes* in Old San Juan.⁴¹ It was very clear to COG's leadership the need to find a more adequate and permanent place.⁴²

³⁹ Pa'fuera! Vol. 2, Num. 1, febrero de 1975, 1.

⁴⁰ Departamento de Estado de Puerto Rico. Registro de Corporaciones y Entidades. Expediente 7706.

⁴¹ Pa'fuera! Agosto-Septiembre, 1975, 1/14.

⁴² The need for a permanent place was evident to COG from the very beginning. In the October 1974 edition of Pa'fuera! it is mentioned the initiation of a campaign asking for financial support to raise money for the acquisition of a permanent locale and the required equipment. Pa'fuera!, Vol. 1, Num. 2, octubre de 1974, 1.

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By August 1975, *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* was able to formalize the acquisition of a permanent place, renting for a three hundred dollars (\$300.00) monthly fee, the upper level of a 1930s, two story, reinforced concrete, Spanish Revival, commercial/residential building, located at # 3 Calle Saldaña, in the ward of Río Piedras (San Juan). As COG's home-base, the locale became known as *Casa Orgullo* (Fig. 8).

Figure 8. Casa Orgullo, 1975. A book store (Libreria Internacional) was located at the first floor.⁴³



The upper level lay-out of the rented building corresponded to the typical residential arrangement: an openly combined living/dining space; four bedrooms, a bathroom, a kitchen, a large and wide balcony facing south towards Saldaña Street and a long and narrow balcony at the building's rear (northern façade). Without any structural alteration, *COG* organized the spaces accordingly: the living area was used as the reception/ waiting room; one of the bedrooms became the President's (Rafael Cruet) office; another bedroom became the organization's library and two conference/ meeting rooms. The room adjacent to the bathroom, became one of the most significant spaces in the building, a free clinic (Fig. 9). From the early start, *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* established a working relationship

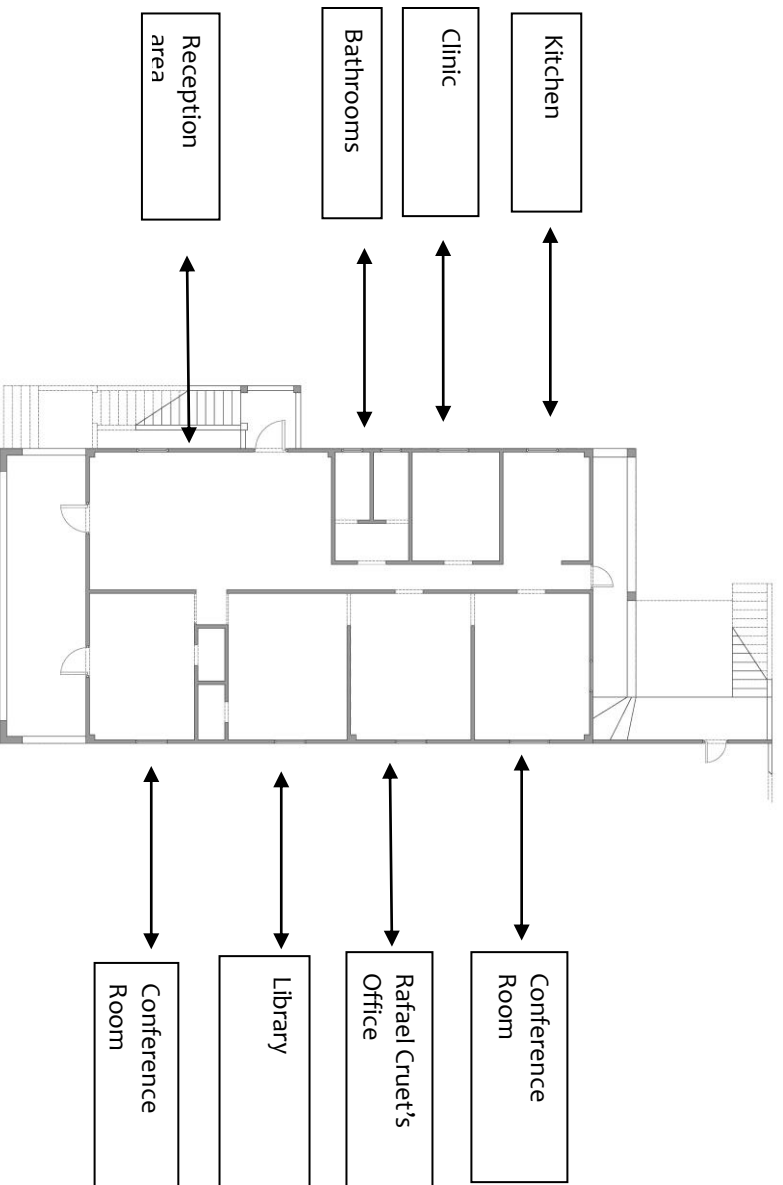
⁴³ Pa'fuera! Agosto-Septiembre 1974, 14.

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with the local Department of Health. Having a gay nurse as one of the volunteers, early detection tests of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) were freely administered at the clinic. The samples were then sent to the Department of Health, who covered the expenses of testing, and the results were later sent back to the clinic. COG's clinic was a tremendous contribution as part of the organization's outreach program. In the clinic, the gay attendee had a private space in which he/she could feel comfortable to ask and receive medical assistance, away from the judgmental scrutiny of the regular state-run medical facilities.

Figure 9. Lay-out/use of Casa Orgullo.⁴⁴



Having a permanent place, a full time executive committee, and a cadre of volunteers, allowed *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* to run *Casa Orgullo* every day. The locale was open from Monday thru Friday, from 7:00 am until 10:00 pm; and from 3:00 pm until 8:00 pm on weekends. With its lounge and recreational room with game tables, the house became an alternate space for socializing, away

⁴⁴ Casa Orgullo's drawing was prepared by Marel Del Toro, Architect, PRSHPO. 2015.

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from the frequently-police-raided bars and clubs. With its library and conference rooms, the facility became a learning center, used to provide workshops to all attendees on subjects ranging from legal assistance, to the need to organize as a community, to governmental actions denying and limiting the community's civil rights, among many other subjects. The outreach programs established in *Casa Orgullo* and administered by an all-volunteer staff were sectionalized in five committees: Publications, Information and Propaganda, Legal, Community Services and Activities. Each committee had specific objectives and assigned missions: Community Services, for example, was responsible for the clinic's administration available in *Casa Orgullo*; Information and Propaganda organized the leadership's public appearances, lectures, debates and symposiums; Activities ran and organized social gatherings like recreational trips and dances; Publications was mainly responsible for Pa'fuera!

COG's selection of Río Piedras as the home for the organization was a strategic move. The rented building was just one block south of the University of Puerto Rico's main campus, a hotbed at the time for new social discourses.⁴⁵ During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the students at the Rio Piedras' campus were spearheading a long, and many times, violent fight against the Vietnam War, the mandatory war draft and the repudiated presence of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) facility within the campus. To the inspiring global situations like the European students militancy, the success of the Cuban Revolution, and the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the students at the UPR added no less significant local issues like the constant and violent use of force by the police against students manifestations, the military occupation of Culebra by the US Navy as a training site, the US military presence island-wide and the US colonial policies toward the Puerto Rico as a whole, as part of their mostly leftist ideological arsenal. In such intellectual ambiance, the students at the University of Puerto Rico, not only at Rio Piedras but at other UPR's campuses as well, became one of the most important and fertile audiences for the COG's leadership speeches' pushing for equal rights and social justice for the gay community.

⁴⁵ In the December 10, 2015, interview with Rafael Cruet, when asked why Rio Piedras was selected as the base for COG, he simply said, "*Because of the University*".

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Although COG's leadership approached the militant advocacy of the UPR's students' body for support, the organization stood apart from becoming associated with any specific local political organization.⁴⁶ However, COG did establish connections with gay groups in the United States, especially the *National Gay Task Force (NGTF)*. Founded in 1973, the NGTF supported actions and activism on behalf of LGBTQ people and advanced a progressive vision of liberation.⁴⁷ One of NGTF's founding leaders, the well-known gay pioneer activist, Dr. Franklin E. Kameny, became a COG's close advisor and came to Puerto Rico in one occasion invited by the local activists. COG's connection with US based gay organizations, provided a beneficial flow of information concerning law projects, proposals and collective efforts in the US that could have a repercussion or helped the gay struggle in the island. In 1975, the organization established also its presence within the United States' gay movement participating for the first time in the annual Gay Pride Parade in New York City that, since 1970, commemorated the Stonewall Revolt (**Fig. 10**)

Figure 10. Members of COG at the NYC's Gay Pride Parade, 1975.⁴⁸



⁴⁶ It would be thought, that considering the political activism of the time, the leftist organizations would it had welcomed *Comunidad Orgullo Gays'* claims as a legit struggle. However, it seems that none of the leftist parties were too receptive to the gay community.

⁴⁷ The organization is currently active under the name of National LGBTQ Task Force.

⁴⁸ Pa'fuera! Agosto-Septiembre 1975,9.

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As *COG* considered public exposure a vital aspect of its strategy, the creation of an official publication became imperative. Fortunately, among *COG*'s founding members there were some volunteers with the skills to make that happen, among these, Donald Babb, a Puerto Rican born journalist (with a US born father and a locally born mother), who was by 1974 working for *The San Juan Star*, a local English-written newspaper; Ernie Potvin, who at the time had his own publicity business, and Grosny Román, one of the first lesbian that joined *COG* and who became the main space-selling promoter of the publication. The first issue of *Comunidad Orgullo Gays*'s official publication, *Pa'fuera!*, came out by September 1974 (**Fig. 11**).⁴⁹

Figure 11. Detail of *Pa'fuera!* first issue, announcing the creation of the organization and picturing Rafael Cruet, *COG*'s founder.



⁴⁹ The influence of the US gay movement upon the local scene it's obvious even in the name selected by *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* for its publication. In the US, the Gay Liberation Movement's main publication was "Coming-Out"; "Pa'fuera!" it's almost an exact translation.

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The publication was totally written at the *Casa Orgullo*; volunteers worked in typing the articles and selecting the graphics. It was later printed for mass distribution at the very same press where the well-known leftist newspaper “*Claridad*” was printed. “*Pa’fuera!*” became a monthly publication, distributed freely at various locations by the volunteers. The magazine became COG’s most significant economic support, as the organization required only an initial five dollars fee from its members. The promotional spaces sold within the magazine provided an important part of the funds necessary to cover the building’s rent and utilities, clinic’s expenses, and every other economic need required by *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay*. *Pa’fuera!* was a significant contribution to the gay movement. It was not only the first gay’s publication in the island, it was also the first one in Latin America.⁵⁰

The articles in the publication, which ranged from a call to organized, to describe the lack of recognition to the gay’s s civil rights and the absence of medical and social programs, brought into the public light issues that were not discussed elsewhere. *Pa’fuera!* provided a “voice” to a population made silent by the establishment. It also helped to create a sense of self awareness among the gay community. The magazine was also essential in projecting *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* and the struggles of the gay community in Puerto Rico out of the local boundaries, as it was distributed among New York City’s gay bars that catered to Latino customers and sold in gay libraries like *Oscar Wilde Library* in Greenwich Village and *Lambda Rising* in Washington D.C.⁵¹. The magazine was also very effective in bringing to the local gay community, the struggles and accomplishments of their counterparts in other countries, as articles covered subjects like the formation of new gay organizations in the US, or the repressive policies against gays in countries like Mexico, Argentina, Chile and Cuba.

⁵⁰ Pa’fuera’s existent copies are held by private collectors. Descriptions of the magazine and its content is commented in works like José D. Allende Rodríguez, *El movimiento homosexual puertorriqueño y su impacto social, 1950-1997*; Aixa A. Ardin Pauneto, *Elyibiti. Historia del activismo LGBTT en Puerto Rico. Desde los 70 a mediados de los 90*. Universidad de Puerto Rico. Diciembre 2001; and Javier Laureano Pérez, *Negociaciones especulares: creación de una cultura gay urbana en San Juan a partir de la Segunda Guerra Mundial hasta principios de los 1990*. Tesis para la obtención del grado doctoral en Historia. Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2012 Dr. Javier Laureano Pérez was kind enough to loan PRSHPO eleven originals of the publication. Copies were made and placed as Additional Information at the PRSHPO’s archives.

⁵¹ *Pa’fuera!* Mayo 1975,4.

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As part of COG's public exposure strategy and its commitment to promote gay pride among the homosexual population, the organization didn't miss the opportunity to face-up against stereotypes that misrepresented the gay community. This commitment placed COG against local television stations that used comic male effeminate characters in their programs, and against radio stations that played musical themes which wording ridiculed homosexuals.⁵² Equally significant in *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay's* mission of exposure and gay pride, the organization's leadership was always available to participate in TV, radio programs, symposiums or magazines and newspapers interviews that sponsored a real and legit conversation about the lack of recognition and equal rights for the local gay community.

As part of its persistency in breaking with the heterosexual misguided representation of the homosexual personality, COG's emphasized the need to educate the general public through any means possible. It organized symposiums where the subject of homosexuality in Puerto Rico was addressed from different points of view, even inviting people known to be against the gay population. COG's speakers appeared in TV shows and radio programs, where the subject of gay rights was controversially argued. Through all their appearances, COG's leadership went to the extent of carefully considering even the image projected by the organization's speakers when participating in public events.⁵³

As in many other gay militant groups from this period in the US, male homosexuals had a dominating presence within *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay*. But it wasn't long before a number of lesbians became significantly active in the organization. By October 1974, responding to the known fact that they confronted very special and different problems than the male homosexuals, the lesbians in COG

⁵² One such example was *Comunidad Orgullo Gay's* campaign against the TV character known as *Serafin Sin Fin*, a highly popular comic representation of an exaggerated effeminate male gay performed by local comedian José Miguel Agrelot. Due to COG's public petitions to the channel's management, the character was removed. A more remembered battle was against a 1970s song called "Las Mariposas" ("The Butterflies"), which ridiculed the effeminate attributes of gay males. The song became a dancing theme, even played at gay's clubs and bars. COG organized public demonstrations in front of those gay's locales that played the song.

⁵³ In an interview conducted by the magazine *Avance* with COG's executives Rafael Cruet and Grozny Román, the first comment of the reporter was "Went I saw them, I was confused. Their appearance is not the one expected from the typical homosexuals. They look like two serious and sober persons. I asked them: "Are you homosexuals?"...They said: "Yes we are"...and I said: "You don't look like." *Avance*, 2 de septiembre de 1974, 12.

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established *Alianza de Mujeres* (Women’s Alliance).⁵⁴ The *Alianza* was not formed or perceived as a separate entity from *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay*, but as an extension of the same, dealing with issues that responded directly to the lesbians and their multiple layers of oppressions as gay females and women. Just like COG, *Alianza de Mujeres* used *Casa Orgullo* as their meeting hall.

By late 1976, after two years of a struggling but militant existence, *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* disbanded. Personal and economic hardship placed an enormous pressure among the fulltime leadership and the almost fulltime volunteers that administered the various programs. By April 1976, the publication of Pa’fuera! was suspended due to lack of funds.⁵⁵ The organization even tried to use *Casa Orgullo* to generate the money needed renting the place for reunions, birthdays, etc. Adding to the financial problem, the organization was unable to create a renovated cadre of volunteers that could take over from the original members. Attempts were made to create other chapters throughout the island, but none were successful.

However, although short-lived, *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* was successful in many significant aspects. It created a safe haven in *Casa Orgullo*, where hundreds of members of the gay community were able to receive legal advice, medical assistance and moral/social support. The permanent medical clinic at *Casa Orgullo* was a pioneering facility, not from the medical standpoint, but from its social approach in providing a comfortable/safe space to the gay population. Extremely significant also was the organization’s efforts in creating a sense of pride, dignity and identity among the gay community through its lectures, symposiums, public appearances in radio and TV debates, and its fight against damaging public stereotypes. COG’s Pa’fuera!, the first publication of its kind in the island and in Latin America, allowed for relevant issues to the gay community to be properly and publicly expressed for the first time. In many ways, through its activism and militancy, *Comunidad de Orgullo Gay* breached and created a space of visibility for a community that languished for many years under an institutional obscurantism. As expressed by the COG’s founder and president, “*When you hide, they will look for*

⁵⁴ Pa’fuera! Vol.1, Num. 2, octubre de 1974, 4.

⁵⁵ Pa’fuera II. Vol. 1, Num. 1, Agosto de 1976. A new issue of Pa’fuera, rename as Pa’fuera II was published in august 1976. The new version was very simple in format, and consisting of four pages only. Apparently only one issue came out.

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you. When you come out and present yourself, they will respect you".⁵⁶ Comunidad de Orgullo Gay proved to the heterosexual establishment that there were unapologetically homosexual people in the island, while simultaneously proved to the closeted homosexuals, and to the gay community in general, that they were not alone. **Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico** is exceptionally significant as the home of the organization that spearheaded in many ways the gay liberation movement in Puerto Rico.

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El Debate. Semanario Católico.

18 de junio de 1961, 6. *Homosexualismo en Puerto Rico*.

⁵⁶ Juan Llanes Santos, *Rafael Cruet, an oral interview*. Interview conducted with Rafael Cruet on December 10, 2015.

Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico
Name of Property

San Juan, Puerto Rico
County and State

El Mundo

- 31 de julio de 1956, 6. *Una Lacra Social* (editorial).
- 8 de junio de 1961, 4. *Cree problema homosexual PR no es grave.*
- 12 de mayo de 1962, 4. *Prohíbe Homosexualidad.*
- 15 de mayo de 1969, 12. *Amadeo pide anular fallos por delito contra natura.*
- 23 de octubre de 1969, 5-A, *Dice castigo por sodomía viola constitución*
- 17 de junio de 1971. *Arrestan a más de 30 en prostíbulo varones.*

Faderman, Lillian. *The Gay Revolution. The Story of the Struggle.* Simon & Schuster EBook, 2015.

Inventario de Recursos Arquitectónicos de Puerto Rico. State Historic Preservation Office. Inventory form prepared by Alicia Díaz de León for the Consejo Seguridad Vecinal de Rio Piedras (1995).

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Laureano Pérez, Javier. *Negociaciones especulares: creación de una cultura gay urbana en San Juan a partir de la Segunda Guerra Mundial hasta principios de los 1990.* Tesis para la obtención del grado doctoral en Historia. Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2012.

Laws of Puerto Rico 1937, page 267, Act 116, enacted may 13, 1937, effective August 11, 1937.

Llanes-Santos, Juan. *Rafael Cruet, an oral interview.* Interview conducted with Rafael Cruet on December 10, 2015.

Pa'fuera!

- Vol. 1, Núm. 1, septiembre de 1974.
- Vol. 2, Núm. 2, octubre de 1974.
- Vol. 2, Núm. 1, febrero de 1975.
- Vol. 2, Núm. 3, abril de 1975.
- Mayo, 1975.
- Agosto-Septiembre, 1975.

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Picó, Fernando. *Santurce y las voces de su gente.* San Juan: Ediciones Huracán, 2014.

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Rodríguez Allende, José D. *El movimiento homosexual puertorriqueño y su impacto social, 1950-1997.* Tesis para la obtención del grado de Maestría en Historia. Universidad de Puerto Rico. Mayo 2000.

Stein, Marc. *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico
Name of Property

San Juan, Puerto Rico
County and State

Teal, Donn. *Gay Militants: How Gay Liberation Began in America, 1969-1971* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1971).

Vivoni Farage, Enrique. *Architect of Dreams: Pedro de Castro y Besosa* (San Juan: AACUPR, 1999.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Primary location of additional data:

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other (Name of repository)

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than an acre USGS Quadrangle San Juan

(Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates. Delete the other.)

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map): _____

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | | | | | |
|----|------|------------|---------|---------------|----------|----------------|
| 1. | Zone | <u>19Q</u> | Easting | <u>811493</u> | Northing | <u>2037039</u> |
| 2. | Zone | _____ | Easting | _____ | Northing | _____ |
| 3. | Zone | _____ | Easting | _____ | Northing | _____ |
| 4. | Zone | _____ | Easting | _____ | Northing | _____ |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lot of three hundred and sixty (360) square meters, recorded at the *Centro de Recaudación de Ingresos Municipales* (CRIM) under number 087-012-337-02-001.

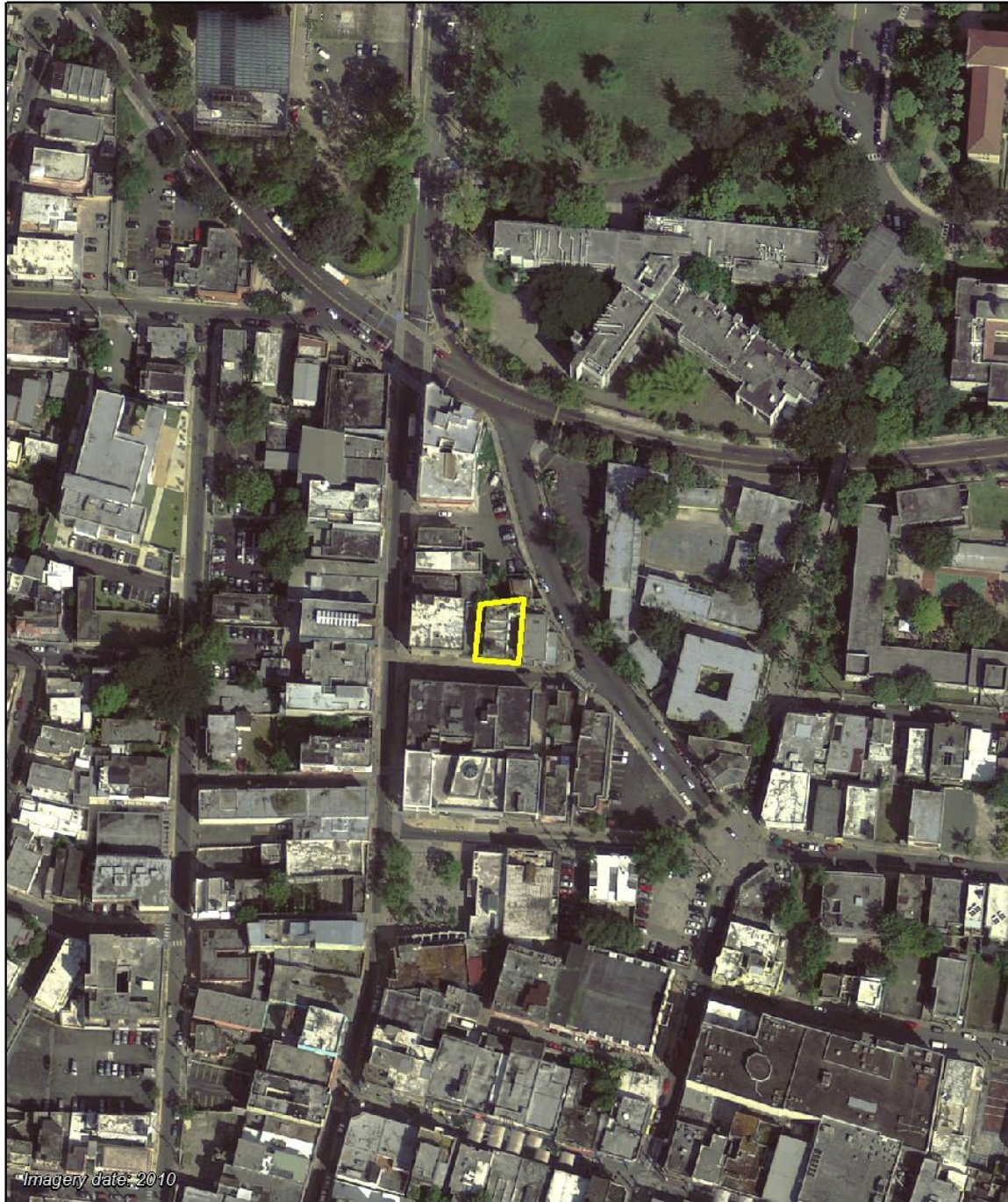
Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the lot directly and historically associated with the building.

Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico
Name of Property

San Juan, Puerto Rico
County and State

Map 1. Regional Vicinity Map. (Scale 1: 1,800)



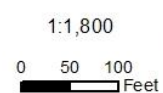
Imagery date: 2010



Comunidad de Orgullo Gay

San Juan, Puerto Rico

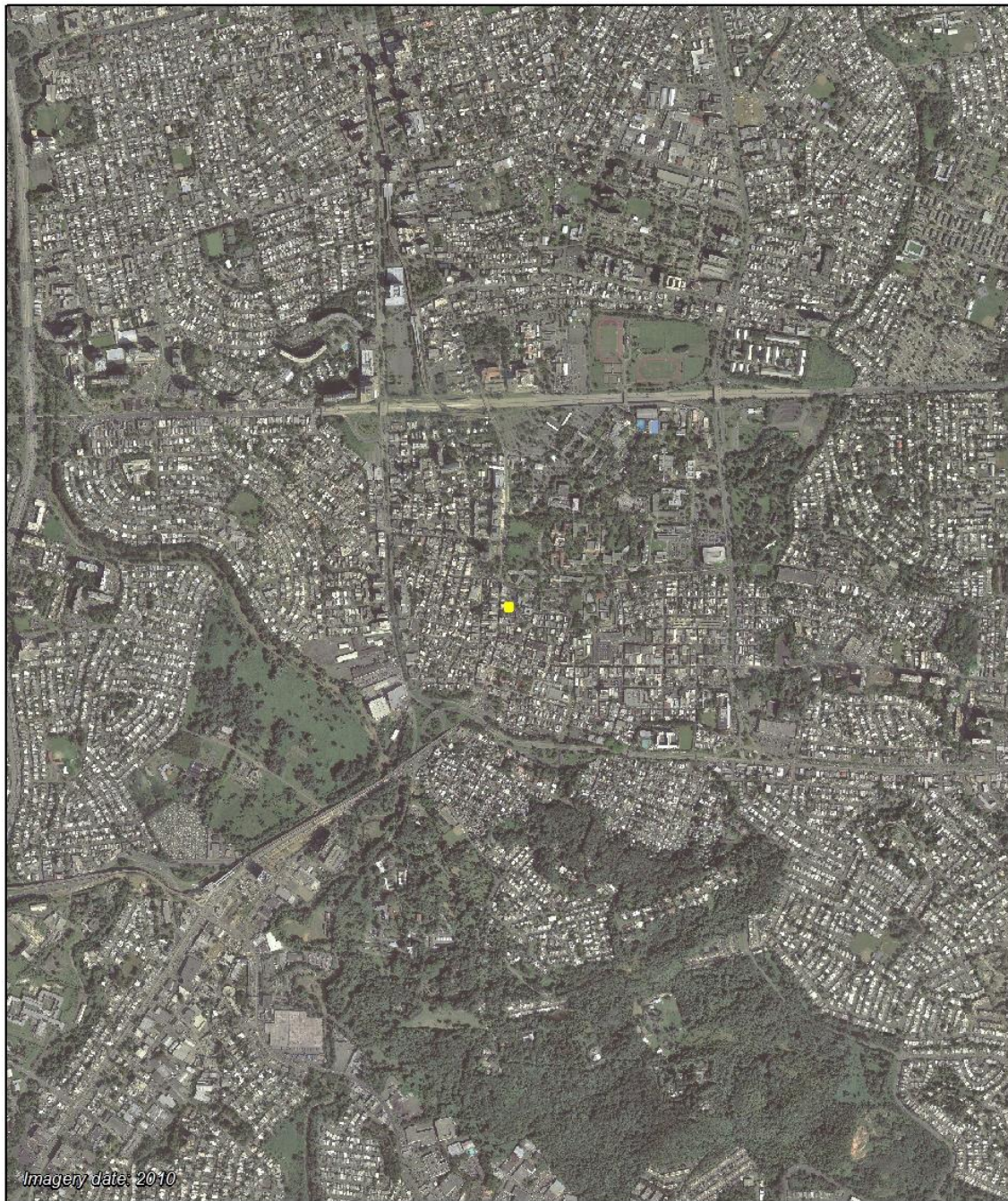
19Q 811493E 2037039N UTM



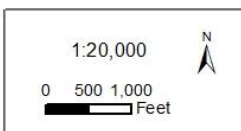
Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico
Name of Property

San Juan, Puerto Rico
County and State

Map 2. Site Map (Scale 1: 20,000)



Comunidad de Orgullo Gay
San Juan, Puerto Rico
19Q 811493E 2037039N UTM



Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico
Name of Property

San Juan, Puerto Rico
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Santiago Gala, Architect / Juan Llanes Santos, Historian
organization PR State Historic Preservation Office date March 14, 2016
street & number PO Box 9023935 telephone 787-721-3737
city or town San Juan state PR zip code 00902-3935
email _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico

City or Vicinity San Juan County San Juan State Puerto Rico

Photographer Santiago Gala Date Photographed May 12, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera.

1. South elevation, main façade, looking north. 0001.
2. South and west elevations, looking northeast. 0002
3. Main façade, with stairs to upper level, looking north. 0003
4. Front balcony, main façade, looking east. 0004
5. Main living area, used by COG as reception area, looking south. 0005
6. Kitchen area, looking northwest. 0006
7. Main living area, looking north. 0007

Edificio Comunidad de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico

San Juan, Puerto Rico

Name of Property

County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



NO
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: Nomination

PROPERTY Edificio Communida de Orgullo Gay de Puerto Rico
NAME: (Casa Orgullo)

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PUERTO RICO, San Juan

DATE RECEIVED: 3/25/2016 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/15/2015
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/30/2016 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/9/2016
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000237

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 5-2-2016 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Exceptionally important building associated with the genesis of
LGBT rights in Puerto Rico. The Pride House (Casa Orgullo) served
as the first permanent home for the nascent gay rights organization
where social & medical services were offered & publications printed (distributed
as far as New York, to reach Puerto Ricans who had left the island).

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A

REVIEWER J. Gabby DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the
nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park
Service.



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PUERTO RICO

Oficina Estatal de Conservación Histórica
State Historic Preservation Office

RECEIVED 2280

MAR 25 2016

**Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service**

March 17, 2016

Stephanie Toothman, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye Stree, NW, 8th floor (MS 2280)
Washington, DC 20005

**SUBMISSION – *Casa Orgullo*, San Juan; Observation Tower, San Germán;
and MPS New Deal Era Constructions in the Forest Reserves in Puerto Rico,
1933-1942 (Amended Submission)**

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of two nominations - *Casa Orgullo*, Municipality of San Juan and Observation Tower, Municipality of San Germán – and the MPS New Deal Era Construction in the Forest Reserves in Puerto Rico, 1933-1942 (Amended Submission) to the National Register of Historic Places. The *Casa Orgullo* nomination was prepared by our Office in response to the Secretary of the Interior's LGBTQ Heritage Initiative.

Should you have any questions on the nominations, please contact José E. Marull, Senior Historic Property Specialist, at 787-721-3737 ext. 2011 or jmarull@prshpo.pr.gov.

Sincerely,


Diana López Sotomayor, Archaeologist
State Historic Preservation Officer

DLS/BRS/NPT/JEM

Enclosures