

SLNC Remembers 50th Anniversary of First LGBT Civil Rights Demonstration, Which Took Place in Silver Lake

Many people believe the Stonewall Riots, which took place in 1969 in New York City, were the first LGBT civil rights demonstrations. But, according to the website [Thirsty in LA](#), peaceful protests held a month after the infamous New Year's Eve raid of The Black Cat Tavern in Silver Lake by Los Angeles police are considered the first documented gay rights demonstrations in the U.S. The SLNC History Collective produced this sometimes-shocking [interview](#) with Alexei Romanoff, a surviving participant of the Black Cat demonstration and pioneering LGBT civil rights advocate.

Romanoff, who was interviewed by History Collective Co-chair Michael Masterson, recounts the beatings at the Black Cat and describes how some area bars frequented by LGBT patrons had two juke boxes, so dancers could change from same-sex partners to opposite-sex partners in case the police showed up.

These video interviews offer a fascinating look at Silver Lake's LGBT community and the important role it played in LGBT rights and history:

- The original SLNC History Collective [interview](#) with Alexei Romanoff, who was a part of the protests following the Black Cat arrests;
- SLNC History Collective [video](#) documenting the historic designation of the Black Cat in February 2009;
- Alexei Romanoff also talks about the Black Cat in this short LA Queer History [video](#).