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*For immediate release May 24, 2017*

*Tom Taylor & Dr. Jerome Goldstein and the Diversity Foundation present...*

## **A Celebration of Life - honoring**

**Gilbert Baker (1951 - 2017)**

***Creator of the Rainbow Flag***

**Thurs. June 8, 2017 - 7:00 pm (doors 6:30 pm)**

**Castro Theatre**

**429 Castro St. in SF 94114**

**Free & Open to the Public**

<https://www.facebook.com/events/288275641626061>

**Gilbert Baker**, creator of the Rainbow Flag (*known affectionately as "The Gay Betsy Ross"*), which became the international symbol for the LGBT community, died on March 31, 2017 in NYC He was 65. With innumerable friends, colleagues and admirers in disbelief that Gilbert is no longer with us on earth, a CELEBRATION OF LIFE - one that he would be proud of - has been planned for **Thurs. June 8, 2017 - 7:00 pm** at the **Castro Theatre - 429 Castro St. in SF 94114. Doors open at 6:30 pm.**

The event is **FREE** and open to the public. **Tickets must be obtained in advance at:**

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gilbert-baker-memorial-celebration-tickets-34415110522?aff=ampmlt>

The purpose of the celebration of Gilbert Baker's life is to give recognition to the person who recognized the significance of The Rainbow and the message of hope. Although 99% of anyone on the street in most places of the world recognize the Rainbow Flag, almost no one knows the name Gilbert Baker.

The evening will be a multimedia celebration of all stages of Gilbert Baker's life and work, including music, visual art, video, film and photography.

**Scheduled to appear and speak at the celebration of life for Gilbert Baker are:**

- **Paul Gabriel & Dr. Jerome Goldstein** (co-masters of ceremonies)
- **Mark Leno** - Former State Senator and 2018 candidate for SF Mayor
- **Jeff Sheehy** - SF Supervisor – Castro District

- **Cleve Jones**
- Members of **San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus**
- **Thrillpeddlers** - SF Theatrical Troupe
- **Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence** – Invocation
- Members of **Gay Freedom Marching Band**
- **Connie Champagne**

Please come as who you are. Festive attire is highly recommended and encouraged!

**What: A Celebration of the Life of Gilbert Baker**

**Location: Castro Theatre - 429 Castro St. in SF 94114**

**Date: Thurs. June 8, 2017**

**Time: 7:00 pm**

**Cost: Free & Open to the Public**  
**Tickets must be obtained in advance at:**

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### **Gilbert Baker: The Rainbow Flag**

A powerful design, the original 1978 iteration of the Rainbow Flag has become a symbol of lesbian, bisexual and transgender pride and community worldwide. The two original flags were first unfurled at the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Parade in 1978. They had been hand-dyed and stitched by Gilbert Baker and a group of volunteers. The flag's design stems from Baker's admiration for the universality of the rainbow as a "natural flag in the sky." He was also inspired by the USA bi-centennial celebrations where the flag had been used as a symbol of commemoration, power and festivity. He says: "Our job as gay people was to come out, to be visible, to live in the truth as I say, to get out of the lie. A flag really fit that mission, because that's a way of proclaiming your visibility, or saying, "This is who I am!""

The rainbow flag is in the public domain, as are all flags, and he did not profit from its usage as a commercial product. Mr. Baker refused to apply for a trademark for his creation. It was his gift to the world. Baker said "when the flag first went up that I knew at that moment that it was my life's work."

### **Gilbert Baker - Bio:**

Gilbert Baker was born on June 2, 1951 in Chanutte, Kansas and died in NYC on March 31, 2017. At the time of his death he was embarking on an ambitious display at SF Int'l. Airport, as well as other advocacy efforts against prejudice and hate. He was also scheduled to be honored in Parsons, KS at their film festival for his work on the Rainbow Flag. As any true drama "queen" would do, Gilbert insisted that the Chief of Police, Captain of the Fire Department, and a few military persons be there at all times for his safety and protection. He reveled in the fact that the sponsors in Parsons, Kansas agreed to all his demands. After all, who else from Parsons was a guest at the White House with

President and Michelle Obama. Moreover, Gilbert Baker was involved or named “grand marshal” at countless Pride Parades worldwide. As he was one of the first “Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence” he relished the spotlight whenever and wherever it could happen. Sadly, we who knew and worked with Gilbert Baker never witnessed any of his family at any of the many honors bestowed on Gilbert. They became known only after his death as he died without a will and his closest relatives were in charge of the estate. We felt that his LGBT alliance and identity stood in the way of a family that should have taken great pride in his attempts to make and leave the world a truly better place.

As is the case with many of us in the LGBT community Gilbert recounted his being harassed as a teen and clearly he was on the first stagecoach out of Parsons. He served his country in the US Army for 2 years and the blessing was that he was stationed in SF, just as the gay liberation movement was getting underway in the city.

Upon discharge from the Army, Gilbert remained in SF and worked at the Paramount Flag Company. His vision of the Rainbow Flag as worldwide symbol of gay pride and unity blossomed throughout his adult life. His ability to generate new thoughts and new ways of making art - changing the world, were countless. Many of his ideas came to fruition, such as his mile long flag up 5th Ave. in 1994 in NYC during their gay pride parade to mark the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. The flag broke the record for the world's largest flag. He surpassed that record in 2003, the 25th anniversary of the rainbow flag, by creating one that stretched "from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean in Key West," according to his biography. Mr. Baker recently completed a nine-color rainbow flag that added the color lavender, for diversity, to go along with the original colors: hot pink represented sexuality; red, life; orange, healing; yellow, sunlight; green, nature; turquoise, magic/art; blue, serenity/harmony; and violet, spirit. The common rainbow flag seen today has six colors – the hot pink and turquoise were left off. His explanation for why he chose a rainbow design is simple. "It fits us," he explained in 2012. "We're all the colors, all the sexes, all the genders. Infinite people. Infinite colors."

He wrote published works, he marched and protested at every opportunity at significant risk. He loved thinking and doing “outside the box”. Like many great artists of the world Gilbert Baker’s name will fade with time but the Rainbow Flag is forever. Like any great showman Gilbert Baker had his “back up crew” - Tom Taylor, Jerry Goldstein, and the Diversity Foundation of San Francisco.

**For journalists working on tributes:**

**Below is a link to the Gilbert Baker videos, oral histories & obits:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAsEr6hXi2Q>

<https://soundcloud.com/gilbertbaker/sets/rainbow-flag-history-2014>

**Obits:**

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/31/us/obituary-gilbert-baker-rainbow-flag.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/31/us/obituary-gilbert-baker-rainbow-flag.html?_r=0)

<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Gilbert-Baker-designer-of-the-rainbow-flag-dies-11042312.php>

<http://time.com/4721931/gilbert-baker-rainbow-flag-dead/>

<http://www.ebar.com/news/article.php?sec=news&article=72484>

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