

Tanya Domi:

Hello. This is Tanya Domi. Welcome to the Thought Project recorded at the CUNY Graduate Center. In this space, we talk with faculty and doctoral students about the big thinking and big ideas generating groundbreaking research, assisting New Yorkers and informing the world. During Pride Month and over the course of the next few weeks, the Thought Project will host conversations on CUNY activities, research and engagement on LGBTQ issues. Thanks for listening to the Thought Project and happy pride. Dr. Anne Valk is a specialist in oral history, public history and the social history of 20th Century United States. Before coming to the Graduate Center in 2020, she was Associate Director for Public Humanities and a lecturer in history at Williams College, where she taught experiential in community based classes in oral history and public history. Prior to that, she was Associate Professor of History and Director of Women's Studies at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and Deputy Director of the Center for Public Humanities at Brown University.

Tanya Domi:

And she teaches Public History at the Graduate Center and has written extensively in the areas of women's history, history of feminism and oral history. Her books include the Companion to American Women's History, Second Edition, co-edited with Nancy Hewitt. She is also the author of Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C., 1968 through 1980, and Living with Jim Crow, African American Women and Memories of the Segregated South coauthored with Leslie brown. And recipient of the 2011 Oral History Association Book Prize. From 2015 to 2016, Valk served as President of the Oral History Association. She currently is Book Series Editor of The Oral History Series published by Oxford University Press, and the Humanities and Public Life Book Series published by the University of Iowa Press. Welcome to the Thought Project, Dr. Annie Valk.

Anne Valk:

Good afternoon. And I'm happy to be here today.

Tanya Domi:

It's great to have you here at first time guest, and we're delighted to have you here as not only a historian at the Graduate Center, but as the Executive Director of the American Social History Project. First time.

Anne Valk:

First time. That's right.

Tanya Domi:

Yes. And during Pride Month, there could be nothing more appropriate. So given that you are joining us during June Pride Month and given the work of the American Social History Project, we are happy to have you here. And unfortunately, many people may not know Professor Valk, but she had the unfortunate timing of arriving at the Graduate Center just within weeks of the pandemic when we shut down to the world. So I am personally delighted that you could join us today. What was that like to be at the Graduate Center, you had just moved here, you just probably moved into your office, you had your desk, your keys, you were just getting used to even being here and all of a sudden you were sent home?

Anne Valk:

That's right. Yes. Well, thank you, Tanya, first, for giving me the chance to talk with you today and with your listeners and yeah, that's absolutely right. I started my job at the GC at the end of January in 2020. And so I think I had worked five weeks before everything changed, and it's been pretty amazing couple of years. I think probably any transition to a place like the Graduate Center would be challenging, just figuring out a new bureaucracy and a very complex institution. And then, certainly this wasn't what I had imagined at all. I would say really, in addition to my work with the American Social History Project, which has just been humming along without stop. One of the other highlights has been teaching, and I've had the chance to work with students pretty closely and regularly since I've been here, including teaching in person.

Anne Valk:

So that's given me some chance to have face to face opportunities with the students who are really just fantastic and wonderful people. And I would say I'm hopeful, I feel like one of the lessons for me about this whole experience has just been the importance of being patient and reminding myself that hopefully I will be here for a while. And even though the start to my experience at the GC has been slower or more complicated than I imagined, I think that this is a place that's just full of, lots of potential. And so I look forward to things continuing to open up and to have lots of opportunities to get to meet people in the years to come.

Tanya Domi:

Absolutely. And students have a way of grounding you in reality, because they're grappling with new material or they need guidance or advice. And so that gets you into the rhythm of the classroom and the project students are working on.

Anne Valk:

That's right. And I don't think I've been aware what a hard time this is for students over and over. I think the students are fantastic and they're figuring out ways to manage under these incredibly stressful and trying times. But also they're continually offering us reminders about how hard things are, and how far our ideals as an institution and as individual educators are from what we can actually deliver at a moment like this. And I think especially in a field like history where the job market has really narrowed in the last few years, especially on top of what had already been a trend in narrowing.

Tanya Domi:

Humanities in general.

Anne Valk:

Exactly. Exactly.

Tanya Domi:

Yes. But it is better and we're more open and we're doing more things in person, and let's just hope that everybody keeps masking and keeps getting vaccinated.

Anne Valk:

That's right. And here we are in the studio together.

Tanya Domi:

Absolutely. And as my audio engineer, Kevin, knows we haven't been doing it a lot consistently, but now I'm really happy that we can because it just makes such a big difference. So we begin from the beginning, you are a scholar, a historian, and you teach in the areas of women's history, history of feminism and oral history. You are the author of *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C., 1968 to 1980*. And also in that vein with contemporary history, we can look back 30 or 40 years, and we can actually fully appreciate both you and I have actually lived it. But what in your view has second-wave feminism done for American women. And secondly, we're all talking about it while we have coffee and we're talking to our friends and we're worried, are you not concerned about the efforts of the rabid right wing to reverse or eliminate many of those advances as we steer into the abyss of Roe in anticipation of this upcoming Supreme Court decision? What are your thoughts here?

Anne Valk:

Right.

Tanya Domi:

This is a big thing.

Anne Valk:

That's right. We could go on for hour.

Tanya Domi:

We could. We could, but we should talk about it. Yes.

Anne Valk:

Right. Well, I guess I would say I got interested in the history of second-wave feminism because, as you just said, it very much was part of my own life experience. I went to college in the mid 1980s and had the opportunity to take women's studies classes and women's history classes, which were pretty new things at that time. And because there was so little published historical scholarship on those periods, we had the chance in my classes to read what historians call Primary Sources. The actual documents that activists had created in the 1960s and the 1970s. And so that really just got me to understand, really feel the relevance of that history. And it raised so many questions for me about where had that movement come from and what were the various ideas and political influences that shaped that movement. So that was what I studied when I was in graduate school and what became my first book.

Anne Valk:

So you ask, how did that movement shape America? Well, first I would say just for people who might not be familiar when we talk about second-wave feminism. What we mean is really the period from the mid 1960s through the 1980s or so, which was this incredible flowering of women's activism across the political spectrum, really. And I would say when I think about the impact of that movement, I can think of few, if any corners of our society that have been untouched by that movement. Everything from sports and culture and media, to economics and political life, all of that really has changed in so many ways, in part because of the ideas and the activism that emerged during that period.

Anne Valk:

I was thinking about things like the fact that in the 1970s, married women couldn't own credit in their own name, that it was legal for banks to discriminate against married women and to deny them credit cards and loans, for instance. That's a huge shift that has happened in part because of the activism of that period. And in particular people like Ruth Bader Ginsburg, who were really on the front lines in terms of thinking about how to create a legal foundation to expand opportunities for women. So I think that's one particular example, women now get more college degrees. In fact, since the 1980s, women have gotten more college degrees in the United States.

Tanya Domi:

Title IX.

Anne Valk:

Title IX. Exactly.

Tanya Domi:

And it just so happens that Title IX was written by my US Senator Birch Bayh in the United States Senate, and he was a feminist. He actually was a feminist. He was very strongly backed his wife. I was actually entering college the first year into Title IX in '73.

Anne Valk:

And I think that's such a great example too, because things like Title IX were not partisan issues. They were things that people across the political spectrum understood the importance of. And I think that in that way, it's such an interesting example of how feminism has become a much more partisan issue over time. Or as our country has become more partisan and more divided around political parties. That feminism is one of the things that has been moved to the center of that-

Tanya Domi:

Debate.

Anne Valk:

Of that debate. Exactly.

Tanya Domi:

That's true. It's about gender and sex. If you see that CPAC, the Annual Republican Conference. Just met in Hungary with Victor Orban who has systematically attacked gender studies, queer people in Hungary. And he actually banned the teaching of gender studies in that country, and that's one of the reasons George Soros' university had to move. So that's an example of how... You're right, when it was passed in 1972, nobody thought of it as a partisan issue, they thought about it as an opportunity.

Anne Valk:

That's right. And I think that what you just said gets at the fact that even though women have more equality under law and more opportunity, that underlying misogyny and the sexism has not disappeared. And in fact can be mobilized by people who are afraid of change as a kind of political

wedge issue. And I think it's also important to really recognize that there were always limits on the impact of feminism, the positive impact on feminism, people who benefited more than others. I think about the fact that when the EEOC, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission was set up.

Anne Valk:

That most of the people who filed EEOC lawsuits were white women, and white women have really been able to take advantage of a lot of the legislation and the new policies that were passed in a way that has not been the case equally. Yeah. And I think COVID is a great example of the way things haven't changed, and the ways in which women and particularly women of color, low income women who have lots of responsibility as caretakers, both in and out of the home have really suffered during these moments of crisis.

Tanya Domi:

Oh, for sure. And also, when we think about it, Roe was adopted by the Supreme Court in 1973, and now we are facing what is likely to be a reversal of Roe this month. What are your thoughts on that? I mean, this is about bodily, integrity and autonomy. And we're old enough to remember when Roe didn't exist and that many women had to seek illegal abortions with great risk, and that God only knows how many people died as a consequence. But now we're looking at post 30 some years and a reality that most younger women, the millennials, the zoomers, they have never lived at a time when Roe didn't exist.

Anne Valk:

Yeah. I think it's appalling and shocking but not surprising. I guess that it's inconceivable to so many of us that Roe, one, wouldn't be there and the rights that it ensures that women have to bodily autonomy and to be able to make decisions about families. But on the other hand, Roe has been eroded almost immediately since it was decided, starting in the late 1970s with the Hyde Amendment and the decision to not have federal funding go to support poor women. It is something that from the outset has been vulnerable and gradually being eroded. I don't say that to say that is not a big deal. I think it's a huge deal. And as a number of political commentators that I've read and listened to over the last few weeks have talked about. It is a reversal of what the Supreme Court has done when they've overturned their own decisions. That always, that has been in the direction of expanding rights. And here we have a moment where the Supreme Court is on the cusp of doing something in a direction that is in fact limiting rights and taking them back.

Tanya Domi:

Have we really experienced that before in our country? And I think there's always been a presumption that we were always going to advance, that we were always going to progress. It wasn't necessarily linear, but in fact, the expectation, the anticipation. Just as when Hillary Clinton ran, many women believed that this was the moment, and we can see what happened with that. So I can't think of another time and I would have to pull out a history book to look at what happened after the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution was established. And the freeing of slaves of which were getting ready to commemorate on Juneteenth, that there hasn't been a reversal probably since the 19th century.

Anne Valk:

Yeah, I think that's right. So much of what you just said really resonates with me. I think as a society, we are deeply invested in the idea that there's a progressive arc to history. As Martin Luther King put it, this

notion that the moral universe bends towards justice, the arc of the moral universe bends to justice. But I think if you look historically that it's much more complicated than that, and always has been more complicated than that. So what happened coming out of the Civil War is a great example of that, this moment that in many ways was full of possibility and opportunity for freed people and people of African descent in the United States, which then got very quickly closed down or really dramatically narrowed.

Anne Valk:

So I think we probably do have to look back that far in terms of looking at really major legislative and Supreme Court actions that have had that basis. But I think if we expand beyond just thinking about constitutional rights and Supreme Court decisions, that we see that it hasn't been at all a progressive narrative. And in fact that we've constantly seen people who hold power in this country doing extraordinary things to hold on to that power through laws and through violence, and through the power of social and cultural institutions. And that has been cyclical and repeated and continuous.

Tanya Domi:

Sure. I mean, we've always had extremism in America, but it was on the margin. So you're talking about Father Coughlin and during the '30s. And Huey Long?

Anne Valk:

Long.

Tanya Domi:

Yeah. Huey Long, they weren't elected to president, and it wasn't during a time when you had 24/7 media, social media and nonstop production of news. So that would be interesting, I was actually watching the McCarthy hearings again the other night and just looking at what he did, and he was shut down by his own party. And it's just like when Richard Nixon, Barry Goldwater went to him and said, "You have to resign. We have the votes and we're going to impeach you," that's just not going to happen now.

Anne Valk:

Right. I mean, first I would object a little with what you just said in that extremism. I guess it depends on how we define it because we have certainly had elected officials, including at the highest level who were people who were openly racist and advocates of race.

Tanya Domi:

I agree with that. I agree with that. I'm thinking more about the Oval Office.

Anne Valk:

Well, I am too.

Tanya Domi:

Okay. So presidents like Ronald Reagan, maybe.

Anne Valk:

And Woodrow Wilson.

Tanya Domi:

Yes, of course. Of course.

Anne Valk:

Yeah. Who were really actively promoting the KKK and refusing to take positive action around lynching, for instance.

Tanya Domi:

For Sure. For sure.

Anne Valk:

But I think you're absolutely right that the 24-hour media does change.

Tanya Domi:

The equation.

Anne Valk:

It changes the equation and it means that all of this is happening in real time all the time. And that in many ways, it's not that the stakes feel higher, but that it's hard to escape. And to feel like there are moments of calm within this constant storm.

Tanya Domi:

True. I think there's also a sense of futility. It's really hard to push back against this. It feels really, really hard. I'm just going to say that I did have my moment of despair a couple of weeks ago. And in Judaism you're taught you can't despair, that in fact you must persist. You must be the light. You must find joy or joy is even in the depths of the worst situations. And secondly, we're meant to heal the broken places within ourselves and more broadly in the world. And I was like, "Oh my God, how am I going to get over this?" So I do want to say that it feels like everything is on the edge. What other horrible thing is going to happen today?

Anne Valk:

Right. On a personal level, I couldn't agree more sure. In the fall when Texas passed its new legislation around abortion, I went to a big rally in Manhattan. And it was striking the number of people who were these second-wave feminists who were there, who were holding signs saying, "I can't believe I have to do this again," or "I can't believe I'm still having to do this." And I do feel so much of that despair, I mean, don't even get me started.

Tanya Domi:

It started about despair, but yes.

Anne Valk:

But on the other hand, as a historian and a historian whose work has really focused around social movements, I also know that is the hope and that is the only way that positive change has happened. That people in power are never just waking up in the morning and saying, "I think I'm going to give up power." It never has happened that way. And the only way that positive change has happened is because of people pushing for it at all different levels and in lots of different forms. And so I think it is our challenge as individuals perhaps to figure out how to balance that despair with also the recognition-

Tanya Domi:

Of opportunity.

Anne Valk:

Yeah.

Tanya Domi:

Of opportunity

Anne Valk:

And obligation.

Tanya Domi:

Yes. And obligation as a citizen of this country.

Anne Valk:

As a citizen, as a community member, as a member of a church.

Tanya Domi:

Or synagogue or whatever.

Anne Valk:

Exactly.

Tanya Domi:

Yes. And I will say this, I mean, I didn't think about this earlier, but when you look at it, because I actually participated in the LGBT movement myself. I used to be what I called a professional lesbian when I did my work in Washington. And that was a fast movement compared to racial rights, racial freedom from discrimination based upon race. And even with women, I mean, those took decades and decades and decades. And so I do believe that the LGBTQ movement stands on the shoulders of all those folks. And speaking of which, I mean, I personally worked with Coretta Scott King on the introduction of the Equal Non-discrimination Act, which actually finally became law in a different form by the Supreme Court just two years ago. We obtained status under federal law.

Tanya Domi:

It's an unbelievable decision. Everyone thought it was not going to be delivered, as an example. So you think about that and you also think about the quick reversal on *Hardwick v. Bowers*, which was the

quickest reversal ever. And so now everyone's worried that it'll be reversed again. Lawrence v. Texas will be overturned by this court, as well as Overtveldt on same sex marriage or marriage equality. So these kinds of things they're all hanging out there, and we're all going, "Oh my God, what will happen next?" And I appreciate your view as a historian here in this moment.

Anne Valk:

Yeah. Well, I think I'm also feeling so much of that is hanging out there to your list I would add Loving versus Virginia.

Tanya Domi:

Oh, for sure.

Anne Valk:

And Griswold v. Connecticut, the right of married couples to use birth control.

Tanya Domi:

Are these all circle around the issue of privacy?

Anne Valk:

Yes.

Tanya Domi:

And so if you got privacy in Roe, where does that go?

Anne Valk:

That's right. I mean, I don't know where to go with this, but I have several nephews who are college students. And I was talking to my sister, their mom like, "Do they see reproductive rights as their issue?" And they don't, I think there is a way in which we, as a society, continue to talk about these as solely women's issues and solely issues that affect who are the people who might bear children. But that clearly, they are also issues that are about the right of everybody to make decisions about their sexuality, their reproductive life, what kind of a family they want to live in and create. And so I think we also have to figure out how to talk about all of it in the way that also is very inclusive and that it isn't just a marginal issue, but that it is something that every American would be affected by.

Tanya Domi:

Absolutely. We actually have an alumni, and I'm remiss because I don't remember her name. But she just published an oped in the New York Times about how Roe, if revoked will affect men too. It's very well done. I'll send it to you.

Anne Valk:

Okay.

Tanya Domi:

But in that vein, we're talking about history. There's a whole issue of, and you and I have spoken about this, about public history and what is public history. And we're talking about a lot of things that we all experienced in different ways in the past few minutes. But you're a historian that I think clearly understands and yields, and maybe even leverages public history through the American Social History Project. But can you explain what is public history and how's it produced and how does it function alongside the academy?

Anne Valk:

Yeah. I appreciate that question because I think public history is a terminology that people within universities and cultural organizations use. But it's not necessarily a term that other people are aware of, but people do know what public history is separate from that definition. And I would point to things the big public debate in this country around Confederate monuments, for instance, which is very much both those monuments themselves are public history. And then, those debates around them and what should happen to them is public history. So public history is the study of the many different ways that history is preserved and presented outside of classrooms and outside of academic settings. And then, also the study and the learning of the methods that get used to present history in those public venues. So public history includes things like the work of museums and historical societies. It includes historical monuments and-

Tanya Domi:

Maybe even libraries.

Anne Valk:

Libraries, absolutely. Archives, organizations that are actively collecting documents that can be used to study the past. My own work in public history primarily has been focused around oral history and the recording and collecting of individual life stories. And thinking about those as sources for understanding the meaning of the past to people, as well as a way to create documents for studying the past. So it's a very big and diverse field. And one of the reasons that I'm here and teaching that at the Graduate Center is, as we've talked about, as some of the academic job market in the humanities has dried up. One of the places that more and more graduate students are interested in and being prepared to work is within public history fields.

Anne Valk:

And I just frame that as though it's just a matter of where the jobs are, but I think it's also because they, like me and like many people have this sense that as historians, we can be talking to audiences who are much bigger than just our class. Just our students and our peers in academic institutions. And that it's important to understand what histories matter to the public, and then also to think about how to shape that.

Tanya Domi:

I think the other thing that comes to mind about public history for me, there are a lot of people that believe in lifelong learning. And they aren't going to college when they're 50 or 60, they have their life, they have their families, whatever. But they will go to a museum and they will go to a lecture. And there are a lot of people like that in New York, which is amazing thing about the cultural intellectual aspects of living in New York, because you have these incredible museums and so many talented and smart people. And so going to the New York Historical Society, this is really pretty remarkable. The exhibits they have

and what I notice more and more is if people aren't in that milieu they go, "Oh, history. Yeah. Well, I studied that in high school," or college and they don't know anything beyond what they were taught. And we know that those histories have changed.

Anne Valk:

That's right. And I so often have conversations with people who say, "I hated history in school, but I love history." They are the people who love to go to museums or they watch documentaries on TV. And we have to talk about people like Ken Burns-

Tanya Domi:

Of course, as a public historian.

Anne Valk:

As a public historian or historical movies of various kinds. Certainly the internet opens up and things like podcasting also open up so many other venues for thinking about ways that people are learning history. And I think there are so many people who feel alienated from the history that gets presented to them in school, but who really are avid about learning history. And who trust those institutions, maybe even more than they trust scholars.

Tanya Domi:

I've actually saw a recent public opinion poll where people do trust, there's very high level trust in museums.

Anne Valk:

Yes.

Tanya Domi:

That's very interesting.

Anne Valk:

Yeah.

Tanya Domi:

Well, I think it's important that we talk about it because at the Graduate Center you teach public history. There's such a thing as public sociology, which I'm just getting accustomed to. But this is important in our role here at the Graduate Center and in our interaction with people outside of the academy. But not only do you teach about history of women and feminism, but you also teach public history. And in this role that you have as Executive Director at the American Social History Project, you have walked into a situation where you explained to me that a lot had already been done with respect to LGBT programming and perhaps research. And you said you basically started from that point pivoted off that work, and then successfully applied for a National Endowment for Humanities grant of which is now being implemented. Could you tell us about that activity, which is specific to pride month for sure.

Anne Valk:

Sure. Thank you. A lot of that work through the American Social History Project has focused specifically around creating materials and resources for secondary school teachers and students. And so the grant that we got through the NEH is to run a two week summer institute for middle and high school students. So starting next month, we'll be doing that.

Tanya Domi:

Like seventh grade?

Anne Valk:

It is fifth through 12th.

Tanya Domi:

Oh, okay. Five through 12. Okay.

Anne Valk:

That's right.

Tanya Domi:

Okay.

Anne Valk:

That's right. And we have 30 teachers from around the country who are going to be participating in that institute and we're all online, unfortunately. But we'll have scholars also from around the country who will be presenting, talking about their research and also thinking with the teachers about how they could incorporate some of that research into their own classrooms. And then, thinking more generally about pedagogy and some of the kinds of issues that might or do come up in classrooms when it comes to talking about the history of gender and sexuality.

Tanya Domi:

And it's interesting, you mentioned that there are a few states that do have requirements for a curriculum and LGBTQ curriculum, which states are, are those?

Anne Valk:

Right. There are currently six states that have state level mandates to include LGBTQ+ content in some capacity. So the first one of those was California, which passed the Fair Act in 2012. And now, it's been joined by Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey and Oregon. And a number of those states have just very recently within the last two years passed that legislation. And one of the things that we know is that even places like California, which have now had it in place for 10 years. That there are a lot of teachers who still feel they don't actually know how to implement that legislation. So the kind of work that we are going to be able to do with the summer institute, hopefully is really going to equip people in those states to figure out how to incorporate some of that material into their classes. We also have teachers coming from states that do not have that legislation or states like Florida and Texas, which more recently have been moving in exactly the opposite direction.

Anne Valk:

And like in Florida famously the 'Don't Say Gay' legislation. Places like Texas, which have been outlined or banning certain books from the library. For instance, that there are lots of teachers who are trying to figure out within highly politicized context like that, how can they serve the needs of their students, including their LGBTQ identified students to understand more about the history of gender and sexuality. And there's a lot of research, if your listeners might know about GLSEN, which is a New York based organization.

Tanya Domi:  
Yes, GLSEN.

Anne Valk:  
That has been studying school climate around LGBTQ+ issues. And GLSEN's work shows that still only between 15 and 20% of students encounter any positive representations of LGBTQ experiences in their schools. And fewer than half have any LGBTQ+ content in their school libraries. But when they are at a school where they have the chance to learn within a classroom or to encounter LGBTQ+ positive representations through their libraries. It's clear that it has positive effects on students' mental health, that rates of bullying go down. So there's a positive impact on LGBTQ identified students perception of their safety. And so there is a very clear positive benefit to making sure that this history isn't just ignored or marginalized.

Tanya Domi:  
Marginalized. Of course. Yeah. I've read some work on any school that has a GSA, Gay-Straight Alliance. That's really important for kids, because then you have allies that are heterosexual and that they're affirmative. And they are among their friends, and so that creates a safer environment. So all these things seem to go together.

Anne Valk:  
That's right. I think that's right.

Tanya Domi:  
But this is all happening. I mean, you're bringing 30 teachers into this training and they're going to get a lot of presentations and information, which would seem to be very exciting against a backdrop across the country that it's probably the most aggressive anti-LGBTQ period that I've seen in a long time. I mean, really, personally, I'm not saying that it didn't happen back in the '40s and '50s. People just got locked up and went to jail, and then probably many of them committed suicide because it ruined the rest of their life. But now we're talking about they're going after kids, they're targeting trans kids, and other kids that identify differently. They're going after them. And I think of being a teacher in this situation wanting to teach these subjects would also could be in jeopardy as well.

Anne Valk:  
Yeah. I do think that teachers may be taking a risk. Some teachers may be taking a risk or they may find that what they learn at the institute, they will have a hard time implementing in any fashion. Well, I guess I'd say two things. One of our other hopes for the institute is that we can help create a sense of community and network among the teachers. So that they can be supports for each other and share ideas about strategies for how to address things, whether they're coming from students or they're

coming from parents or they're coming from administrators in their schools and communities. So I think that networking piece is going to be a really important aspect of the Institute. The other thing that was clear to me from reading the applications submitted by people who wanted to come to the institute. And I would say we had about 150 applications for 30 spots.

Anne Valk:

So there was a lot of interest amongst people in doing this. And what was clear from reading those applications is that a number of the applicants are queer educators themselves. And so they've lived this and this experience of what it means to be invisible, or what it means to be demeaned within your school setting. And so they're very deeply personally invested in this history or in taking on this kind of a project. And they understand absolutely the impact, and they have students who are coming to them saying, "We need this information." So that personal investment is also because they know how necessary it was for them as youth to not have it, and to imagine now being able to have it. And how necessary it is for their students, even if, or maybe because they're in this highly politicized and mean, cruel moment. So the need doesn't go away, even though the challenge of figuring out how to do it.

Tanya Domi:

How to navigate it, right?

Anne Valk:

Yeah.

Tanya Domi:

Well, hopefully they will see each other as resources and maybe they will come out of this with a network that they can call on one another, which would be really amazing.

Anne Valk:

Yeah. I really hope so.

Tanya Domi:

Well, do you have any last thoughts as we begin, I mean, pride celebrations have already started. And there's going to be the first time in two years of Pride March in New York City, which was the first in the country.

Anne Valk:

Yeah. In fact, I was at Queens Pride on Sunday.

Tanya Domi:

I heard it was great.

Anne Valk:

It was great. It was great. And it was such as pride can be, this amazing representation of our LGBTQ+ communities with everything from the Democratic Party to nightclubs and businesses, to political organizations and people dancing in the street.

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Tanya Domi:

Of course.

Anne Valk:

It felt good to be able to do that in person. And to be reminded how urgent this moment is to have opportunities for people to celebrate together, but also to really be reminded what those issues are and who the allies are.

Tanya Domi:

Absolutely. Thank you so much for being here.

Anne Valk:

Thank you for giving me the chance.

Tanya Domi:

Happy Pride. Thanks for tuning into the Thought Project and thanks to our guest, Dr. Annie Valk, Historian and the Executive Director of the American Social History Project at the CUNY Graduate Center. The Thought Project is brought to you with production engineering and technical assistance by Audio Engineer Kevin Wolfe and CUNY TV. I'm Tanya Domi. Tune in next week.