

Communication from Public

Name: Claire Downs

Date Submitted: 09/14/2021 11:53 AM

Council File No: 21-0438

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Los Angeles CHC Commissioners, I am submitting a letter in strong support of Council Record 21-0438 which nominates Oil Can Harry's as a Historic-Cultural Monument. Oil Can Harry's, which shuttered in January 2021, is an LGBTQ landmark that should be preserved for myriad reasons: it was a safe space for queer individuals for over 50 years; it played a distinct part in AIDs history as a community and fundraising anchor; it was the site of a 1990s ACT Up protest, and a hot spot for celebrities - queer and allies - to relax, let loose and often perform. From the Oil Can Harry logo to the peephole, the building itself has many features that tell the story of gay rights in Los Angeles. Even more specifically is the fact that the bar is located in Studio City. The Valley has lost many gems over the years. By keeping OHC around, we challenge the stereotype of this neighborhood as "suburban" and "boring." This area had and has so much culture and history; it shouldn't be removed. I worked on the 2020 Apple TV documentary Visible: Out on Television. As the associate story producer, it was my job to track queer history in Los Angeles. I watched thousands of hours of archival video footage. We hoped to find images and videos relating to celebrities partying at gay institutions from the mid-century. Oil Can Harry's certainly came up in my research and I was struck by all the photos and videos that could be found. But, I think too few people know of OCH or its history. Many know of the Stonewall Inn in NYC; some know of The Black Cat bar in Silver Lake, but I believe very few people outside of LA know about OHC. By adding Oil Can Harry's to the list of Historic-Cultural Monuments in Los Angeles, we can assure that queer history in LA won't be lost, or worse, forgotten. Sincerely, Claire Downs