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**interview**

**Angela Brinskele, 2006**

**Angela Brinskele on her work Preserving Pride**

By Wik Wikholm



Detail from a photograph of Angela Brinskele by Rita Belter.

Photographer Angela Brinskele began capturing images of California pride celebrations and protests in 1984, and has not missed a single pride season since. Brinskele, who studied photography at Fullerton College, California State University at Fullerton, and UCLA, strives to capture images of people in the most natural settings possible.

I first met Angela in May 2006 at a California Pizza Kitchen in Long Beach, California. Angela brought a laptop containing an extraordinary collection of hundreds of images she has created that document California glbtq history. This interview is based on that meeting and e-mails she and I have exchanged since.

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**Wikholm:** Since 1984, you have photographed an enormous number of glbtq events and celebrities. What possessed you to start?

**Brinskele:** It seems I have always been driven to both tell the truth and document what has been important or empowering to me. I see it as the best way to show my appreciation for it and to honor it.

**Wikholm:** What are the most significant changes you have seen in Pride events since you began documenting them?

**Brinskele:** I see people relaxed about being photographed but only in recent years. I see a big change in law enforcement. They were always the enemy in the past and can now be our friends and family for the first time.

**Wikholm:** What are the biggest challenges you've faced in creating your photographs of glbtq parades and marches?

**Brinskele:** My biggest challenge for many years was being able find willing subjects who were not afraid their lives would be devastated if they were out. These people are still around, but they are no longer the majority.

**Wikholm:** When I first saw your work, it struck me as photojournalistic, but after spending more time with your images, I've come to see them as documentary. More *National Geographic* than *Washington Post*. Is that a good characterization?

**Brinskele:** Yes, I am glad you see that. The great clarity is essential but first is the integrity, always.

**Wikholm:** In addition to your work documenting glbtq history and personalities, what other photographic subjects interest you?

**Brinskele:** People are my favorite subjects. I feel a need to show the overall beauty I see in each person. Often someone will say they hate photos of themselves but they like themselves in my photos. Nothing is better to me than that.

**Wikholm:** Documenting glbtq history probably doesn't pay the rent. What kinds of day jobs have you had to support your passion for photography?

**Brinskele:** I had a twenty-year career in the casino business as a dealer and then a pit boss. It enabled me to have the free time to do this work in the glbtq community. More recently I have been an aerial photographer.

**Wikholm:** During the last few years, there has been much talk about Americans entering a post-gay period. Your images of recent glbtq events seem to contradict that.

**Brinskele:** I am very proud of being a lesbian. I belong to the part of the glbtq community who have never wanted to just blend in to mainstream society. We will keep the community from ever being post-gay.

**Wikholm:** What kinds of projects and exhibitions do you have planned in the near future?

**Brinskele:** I have a photography exhibit spanning twenty years of work at an independent glbtq bookstore in Long Beach called Equal Writes in June. I am organizing photos to give to some glbtq archives in the near future as well. I take new photos in the glbtq community for myself and for *The Lesbian News* every week.

**Wikholm:** This is your twenty-second year documenting queer California. How long to you plan to continue?

**Brinskele:** I have no plans to stop.

#### About Wik Wikholm

**Wik Wikholm** is the publisher of glbtq.com.

#### Related Special Feature

##### [Angela Brinskele: Preserving Pride.](#)

Fifteen slides of Brinskele's work documenting parades and marches in California.