

Timeline of Important Historical Events in LGBTQ History

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The Stonewall Riots (June 28, 1969)

In 1969, a riot at the Stonewall Inn (later known as the Stonewall Riots) became a turning point. Though few records of the actual raid and riots that followed exist, the oral history of that time has been captured by the participants -- both those who rioted and the police. The Stonewall Riots ignited after a police raid took place at the Stonewall Inn. The tension from ongoing harassment galvanized the LGBTQ community to riot for six days. The protest through the streets of New York City is memorialized as the annual Gay Pride parades that are now celebrated around the world.

Harvey Milk (1930-1978)

When he won the election to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977, Harvey Milk made history as the first openly gay elected official in California, and one of the first in the United States. His camera store and campaign headquarters at 575 Castro Street (and his apartment above it) were centers of community activism for a wide range of human rights, environmental, labor, and neighborhood issues. During his tenure as supervisor, he helped pass a gay rights ordinance for the city of San Francisco that prohibited anti-gay discrimination in housing and employment.

National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights (1979)

Marches on Washington, D.C. can serve many functions: to protest peacefully, to make visible the commitment and volume of support behind a movement, to mobilize and nationalize otherwise more fractured, local efforts to organize. The LGBTQ community and its allies have marched on the nation's capital on numerous occasions, beginning with a march and rally that took place on October 14, 1979.

The HIV/AIDS Epidemic (1980s)

The United States was the focal point of the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s. The disease was first noticed en masse by doctors who treated gay men in Southern California, San Francisco, and New York City in 1981. When cases of AIDS first emerged in the U.S., they tended to originate among either men who had sex with other men, hemophiliacs, and heroin users. The prevalence of the disease among gay men in the U.S. in the 80s and 90s initially resulted in a stigma against homosexuals and a general fear and misunderstanding regarding how AIDS was spread. However, as celebrities like Rock Hudson and Freddie Mercury revealed that they had the disease, and Magic Johnson came forward with HIV, and dedicated his retirement to educating others about the virus, attitudes began to change.

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell and DOMA (1990s)

In 1993, the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” policy was instituted within the U.S. military, permitting gays to serve in the military but banning homosexual activity. President Clinton's original intention to revoke the prohibition against gays in the military was met with stiff opposition; this compromise, which led to the discharge of thousands of men and women in the armed forces, was the result. On April 25, an estimated 800,000 to one million people participated in the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. The march was a response to “Don't Ask Don't Tell”, Amendment 2 in Colorado, and rising hate crimes and ongoing discrimination against the LGBT community. Amendment 2 in Colorado, sought to deny gays and lesbians protection against discrimination, claiming that such rights were "special rights."

DOMA (1996)

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) was enacted in 1996 and defined marriage, at the federal level, as the union of one man to one woman. DOMA was primarily brought about by a fear that if states granted same-sex couples the right to marry, the federal government, and other states would have to honor those marriages. DOMA allowed states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages granted under the laws of other states. While DOMA did not bar individual states from recognizing same-sex marriage, it imposed constraints on the benefits that all legally married same-sex couples could receive. These benefits included insurance benefits for government employees, social security survivors' benefits, immigration assistance, ability to file for joint bankruptcy, and the filing of joint tax returns, financial aid eligibility otherwise available to heterosexual married couples, and other laws that applied to heterosexual married couples.

Proposition 8 (2008-2013)

Prop 8, was a California ballot proposition and a state constitutional amendment passed in the 2008 California state election. The proposition was created by opponents of same-sex marriage brought before the California Supreme Court. As an amendment, it was ruled constitutional by the California Supreme Court in 2009. Among the advocates for Prop 8 were religious organizations, most notably the Roman Catholic church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Once Prop 8 had been upheld by the state courts, two same-sex couples filed a lawsuit against Prop 8 in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in *Hollingsworth v. Perry*. On June 26, 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its decision in *Hollingsworth v. Perry*, ruling that proponents of initiatives like Proposition 8 did not possess legal standing to defend the resulting law in federal court. Thus, Prop 8 was held unconstitutional and Governor Brown was free to permit same-sex marriages to recommence.

Obergefell v Hodges – Marriage Equality (2015)

2015 - The U.S. Supreme Court makes same-sex marriages legal in all 50 states in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

The following is a quote from that decision:

“No union is more profound than marriage, for it embodies the highest ideals of love, fidelity, devotion, sacrifice, and family. In forming a marital union, two people become something greater than once they were. As some of the petitioners in these cases demonstrate, marriage embodies a love that may endure even past death. It would misunderstand these men and women to say they disrespect the idea of marriage. Their plea is that they do respect it, respect it so deeply that they seek to find its fulfillment for themselves. Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization's oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.”

US Supreme Court ruling protections for LGBTQ employees (June, 2020)

In a historic decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act protects gay, lesbian, and transgender employees from discrimination based on sex.

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