

LGBT RIGHTS: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Social Movements

Though the movement for gay rights began in the U.S. in the early 1900's, it was not recognized as a civil and human rights issue by the general public until the late 1960's. As the civil rights and women's rights movements began to make progress from the bottom up, gay rights advocates and groups began to push not only for equal treatment under the law, but also to try and change the perception and related laws that labeled their sexual orientation and acts as illegal.

In 1969, a now-famous event catalyzed the gay rights movement: The [Stonewall Riots](#). The Stonewall Inn was a clandestine gay club institution in Greenwich Village because it was large, cheap, allowed dancing and welcomed drag queens. But in the early hours of June 28, 1969, New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn. Fed up with years of police harassment, patrons and neighborhood residents began throwing objects at police as they loaded the arrested into police vans. The scene eventually exploded into a full-blown riot, with subsequent protests that lasted for five more days.

Shortly after the Stonewall uprising many people created a group called the Gay Liberation Front, a group that launched public demonstrations, protests, and confrontations with political officials.

In 1970, at the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, New York City community members marched through local streets in commemoration of the event. Named the Christopher Street Liberation Day, the march is now considered the country's first gay-pride parade.



The increased visibility and activism of LGBT individuals in the 1970s helped the movement make progress on multiple fronts. In 1977, for example, the New York [Supreme Court](#) ruled that transgender woman Renée Richards could play at the United States Open tennis tournament as a woman.

Additionally, several openly LGBT individuals secured public office positions: Kathy Kozachenko won a seat to the Ann Harbor, [Michigan](#), City Council in 1974, becoming the first out American to be elected to public office. [Harvey Milk](#), who campaigned on a pro-gay rights platform,

became a San Francisco city supervisor in 1978, becoming the first openly gay man elected to a political office in California.

The following year, in 1979, more than 100,000 people took part in the first National [March on Washington](#) for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

In 1992, the District of Columbia passed a law that allowed gay and lesbian couples to register as domestic partners, granting them some of the rights of marriage (the city of San Francisco passed a similar ordinance three years prior and California would later extend those rights to the entire state in 1999). In 1993, the highest court in Hawaii ruled that a ban on [gay marriage](#) may go against the state's constitution. State voters disagreed, however, and in 1998 passed a law banning same-sex marriage.

Federal lawmakers also disagreed, and Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which Clinton signed into law in 1996. The law prevented the government from granting federal marriage benefits to same-sex couples and allowed states to refuse to recognize same-sex marriage certificates from other states.

Though marriage rights backtracked, gay rights advocates scored other victories. In 1994, a new anti-hate-crime law allowed judges to impose harsher sentences if a crime was motivated by a victim's sexual orientation. A couple of years later, the Supreme Court ruled against Section 3 of DOMA, which allowed the government to deny federal benefits to married same-sex couples. DOMA soon become powerless, when in 2015 the Supreme Court ruled that states cannot ban same-sex marriage, making gay marriage legal throughout the country.

