

Milestones in 20th Century LGBT History



1930s: The pink triangle first appears as a visible sign of homosexuality used to identify homosexuals in the Nazi Holocaust. It is later reclaimed as an empowering symbol of gay identity.

1961: Illinois is the first state in the US to decriminalize homosexuality.

1964: Life magazine runs a 14-page article on gay life in America. Though the writer called it a "sad and often sordid" life, the article helped bring news of a nationwide queer culture to non-urban gays and lesbians.

1969: Stonewall Riots occur in New York City. A crowd of gays, lesbians, hippies and drag queens had enough of harassment from police and responded with taunting, resistance and even violence, marking the definitive turning point of the gay rights movement.

1970: The first Pride Parade, commemorating the Stonewall Riots, occurs in NYC and LA.

1973: Homosexuality was removed from the "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)" and no longer considered a mental disorder.

1977: Openly gay Harvey Milk was elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. During his tenure, Milk helped raise visibility for gay issues. Unfortunately, Milk was killed by an ex-board member and political rival the following year. In death, his name became known worldwide and he was hailed as an emblem of gay rights cause.

1980: AIDS appears. The devastation of the disease increases solidarity between community members and brings the plight of queer Americans to the forefront of the national consciousness.



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1982 Wisconsin becomes the first state to pass a statewide same-sex rights bill, banning discrimination.

1992: "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy enacted by President Clinton. The policy serves to further silence LGBT people.



1997: Ellen DeGeneres becomes the first openly gay main character in a US television series.

1999: Vermont becomes first state to give same-sex couples the right to enter a "Civil Union," conferring virtually all of the same benefits accorded to heterosexual marriages.

2003: the US Supreme Court decriminalizes homosexual sex.

2004: Massachusetts becomes first state to legalize gay marriage.

2008: California legalizes gay marriage.