



Out of the Closet and Into the Streets!

**The Stonewall Uprising
and the Fight for LGBT Rights**



On the night of June 27th, 1969, New York City police tried to raid the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. Instead of acquiescing to the arrests, as usually happened, the gay men and women in the bar resisted. The protests that followed for several days marked the beginning of the gay rights movement in the United States.

Picture source:

- Stonewall Inn: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stonewall_Inn_1969.jpg

Essential Questions

- What common stereotypes about homosexual men and women did many people in society hold?
- What laws did communities use to restrict homosexual activity?
- How did the Stonewall Uprising affect the LGBT community?
- How has the gay liberation movement affected attitudes toward and beliefs about LGBT people?

Against the Law



Advertisement for public baths that were "Men Only"



Coded advertisement for a gay bar in Westport, Connecticut

Gay life was hidden for much of America's history. Gay men and lesbians grew up largely in isolation, concealing their sexual orientation. Psychiatrists listed homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disorder; it was thought to be rare and treatable. Some homosexuals were committed to mental asylums, treated with aversion therapy (given electric shocks while shown erotic pictures of the same-sex), and even subjected to lobotomies.

During the 1920s, as societal norms began to change some gay men and lesbians began to come to cities where greater anonymity and less regimented social standards permitted greater freedom to express their sexuality. During World War II, gay men and women served their country and met others like themselves. After the war, many settled in port cities: gay communities began to coalesce in San Francisco's Barbary Coast, New Orleans' French Quarter, and New York City's Greenwich Village. By the 1950s, these cities and others had a growing underground gay culture consisting of clubs, bars, and public baths where gay men and women could meet. Even in these places, however, gays faced discrimination, police harassment, and even violence.

Because of social disapproval and the consequences of being known as gay, most LGBT people kept their sexual identities hidden from their families and co-workers. They referred to this hidden life as being "in the closet." Revealing one's sexuality was called "coming out of the closet."

The 1950s



Frank Kameny, fired in 1958 from his government job for being gay



Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, organizers of the Daughters of Bilitis, at their 2004 wedding



A scene from the film of Lillian Hellman's play *The Children's Hour*, in which a rumor of lesbianism destroys two women's lives

In the 1950s, homosexuals were considered by society to be mentally ill and/or criminal deviants. The majority of the public thought of gay men as effeminate and lesbians as women who dressed and acted like men. The government and groups such as Citizens for Decency through Law put out literature and public service announcements warning people—especially adolescents—to beware of such “sick” individuals who might try to entice them into dangerous and psychologically damaging acts.

In 1950, Harry Hay and several other gay men formed the Mattachine Society, which dedicated itself to educating the public (and homosexuals themselves) about homosexuality and to fighting against the oppression of gays. In 1955, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, who had been together as a couple for several years, founded the Daughters of Bilitis, an organization for lesbians. They published a journal, *The Ladder*, which provided lesbians with a means for sharing their stories and experiences at a time when most were isolated from other women like themselves.

During the Cold War and the McCarthy era, the federal government deemed homosexuals as security risks because they were vulnerable to blackmail. Executive Order 10450 declared that homosexuals could not have top-secret clearances and thousands were dismissed from government jobs. Frank Kameny, who worked for the Army Mapping Service, was fired from his job in 1958. He sued the Civil Service Commission over his firing, but lost his case in 1961, when the Supreme Court ruled against him. He became a campaigner for gay rights, later forming the Gay Activist Alliance in 1971.

Against the Law



Booking photos for a woman
arrested for being a lesbian



Gay man being arrested by police

States considered homosexuals as criminals and used a wide range of laws to persecute them, charging them with anything from lewd behavior and public indecency to dressing as the opposite sex (as many performers know as “drag queens” did). Police would go so far as to dress up in women’s clothing to attract men looking for drag queens or hang out in public bathrooms to entrap gays. Newspapers printed the names of those arrested, along with their home addresses, which often resulted in these people losing their jobs and alienating their families. Many homosexuals from the 1940s through the 1960s married because of social pressure to conform to society’s values; when they were caught in these police roundups, they often were cut off by their families, as were those whose parents only learned of their child’s sexuality by reading it in the newspapers.

Gay bars were the epicenter of gay life. Because even one known homosexual customer could cause a bar to lose its liquor license, many bars that catered to gay men and lesbians were owned by organized crime. The money they made from liquor sales, cigarette machines, and jukeboxes made it easy and profitable for them to pay off police and make deals that allowed for some raids and arrests, but also allowed the bars and clubs to stay open.

Still, every year in New York about 300 were arrested for “crimes against nature” and another 3000–6000 were cited for loitering or “lewd behavior.”

June 28th, 1969



Police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York City. Patrons of the bar resisted, and a riot ensued.



At 1:30 a.m. on June 28th 1969, New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village. The Stonewall Inn was one of New York's seedier gay bars. Its patrons ranged from young gay kids from the streets to drag queens, lesbians, and middle-class people. It was a place where gays could dance and show affection without feeling ashamed.

Police raids were nothing unusual. Usually, raids were conducted early in the evening and on weeknights, when the bars were not so busy. On this Friday night, six policemen entered the bar and told everyone that they were all under arrest and to have identification out as they exited the building.

The Stonewall had been raided just a few nights before, and patrons were tired of the harassment. Instead of going along as they usually did, many resisted. A crowd gathered outside, intrigued by the commotion. One lesbian was pulled out for resisting arrest and policemen started beating her with their nightsticks. This enraged the crowd, which reacted by chanting "pigs" (a negative slang term for policemen) and throwing things. The police retreated into the bar, barricading themselves inside waiting for help to arrive.

By this time, several thousand people had gathered outside the Stonewall. When the riot police arrived and started to force the crowd back, the people pushed back against them. Drag queens started dancing in a kick line, taunting the police. When the police beat them with their clubs, the crowd turned violent, slashing tires on police cars and breaking windows. Outnumbered, the police withdrew, but the confrontations between gay men and women and the police continued for two more nights.

Reaction

First gay protest march in New York City following the Stonewall Uprising



Many in the gay community felt that they had found their voices at Stonewall: as one participant put it, “We discovered a power we didn’t know we had.” They decided to build on the moment and called for a march up 6th Avenue to call attention to their demand: an end to police entrapment and harassment. The march started out at Christopher Street with only a few people, but it grew as it continued and by the time they reached Central Park, over 2000 people had joined what was in essence the first “Gay Pride” parade. People who had hidden in the shadows and lied about their lives for years marched in the open. In the years that followed, the anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising became the date for Gay Pride parades worldwide.

Coming Out

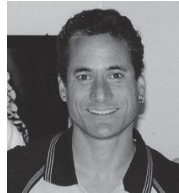
In support of gay rights,
more LGBT people
made their sexual
orientation public



Congressman
Barney Frank



Eugene Robinson,
Episcopal Bishop



Greg Louganis,
Olympic Diver



Ellen DeGeneres

The Gay Rights movement that started with the Stonewall Uprising encouraged LGBT people to come out to their friends, family, co-workers, and, in the cases of famous people, the public. In 1997, Ellen DeGeneres, a comedian, had her character come out on her situation comedy show, *Ellen*. She herself came out as a lesbian at the same time. Although the coming-out episode earned high ratings, after her revelation ratings dipped and the show was eventually cancelled. In 1998, the comedy *Will and Grace* premiered. Although the comedy series *Soap* (1977–1981) featured a gay character, in *Will and Grace*, two of the three main characters were gay. Other celebrities began coming out, too, including Rosie O'Donnell, the comedian and talk-show host, and Neil Patrick Harris, who played a straight “ladies’ man” on the situation comedy *How I Met Your Mother*. Gay men and women in other walks of life stopped hiding their identities. Barney Frank, who served as a congressman from Massachusetts, revealed that he was gay. Eugene Robinson was installed as the Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, despite protests from many in the Anglican community over the issue of his sexuality; Robinson was supported by the Episcopal churches in New Hampshire, who had known him for years. Greg Louganis, a gold-medal-winning Olympic diver, also made his homosexuality public.

Picture sources:

- Ellen DeGeneres: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ellen_DeGeneres_at_Emmys.jpg
- Eugene Robinson:
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bishop_Gene_Robinson_portrait_2005.png
- Greg Louganis: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Greglouganis.jpg>

Changing Attitudes



In 2010, a CBS News poll showed that in 1992 only 42% of people knew someone who was gay or lesbian. By 2010, that number had increased to 77%. As more LGBT people came out to people they knew, the public discovered that the negative stereotypes characterizing male homosexuals as pedophiles and naturally promiscuous were not true. As more people learned that some of their family members, co-workers, neighbors, and friends were gay, attitudes about homosexual relationships began to change. In 2010, a survey by Gallup, one of the oldest and most respected polling organizations in the country, showed that more people now felt that 52% felt that LGBT relationships were morally acceptable while only 43% disapproved.

Picture source:

- Women kissing: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kiss_at_Gay_Pride_2005.JPG

The Fight for Marriage Equality

- LGBT couples demand recognition of their relationships on equal terms with heterosexual couples
- 1993—Hawaii’s State Supreme Court ruled that same--sex marriage should be legal; the decision was later overturned by a popular vote
- 1989–2003—Denmark, Canada, Croatia, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Argentina, France, Finland, Germany, and other countries legalized some form of same--sex marriage
- 2004—Massachusetts became the first state to legalize same--sex marriages
- By 2011, six states had legalized same--sex marriage, and four others recognized civil unions



Pro-gay marriage marchers in San Francisco

One area of particular concern to gay couples was recognition by state and federal governments of their relationship status. Not being officially married caused many problems for gay couples. If one became ill, the partner could be barred from visiting because he or she was not technically a family member. Same-sex partners did not qualify to share healthcare or retirement benefits, as a heterosexual spouse would. In addition, inheritance matters were also complicated. If one partner died and a house or lease was in his or her name, the other often would have to find another place to live, something that was difficult—particularly for the elderly. Same-sex couples also could not file joint tax returns or collect each other’s Social Security survivor benefits.

In 1984, the city of Berkeley, CA became the first in the U. S. to recognize “domestic partnerships” that applied to both same-sex and heterosexual couples who were living together without being married. These couples could register and receive some of the benefits of married couples, such as the right to make hospital visits when a partner was ill. In 1993, the State Supreme Court of Hawaii ruled that unless the government could present a “compelling state interest” why same-sex couples should not be allowed to marry, the ban was unconstitutional.

The court decision in Hawaii set off a storm throughout the United States because of Article IV, Section 1 of the Constitution, also known as the Full Faith and Credit clause. This article says that “full faith and credit shall be given in these states to the records, act, and judicial proceedings of the courts...of every other state.” In other words, the Constitution mandates that legal proceedings recognized in one state (including divorces, adoptions, and marriages) would have to be recognized in all the states. Therefore, if a same-sex couple were legally married in Hawaii, that marriage would have to be recognized in all other states.

Opponents of same-sex marriage called for a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as between a man and a woman. The Clinton Administration, wary of such an amendment, worked out a compromise, called the Defense of Marriage Act. DOMA, as it was called, held that states did *not* have to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states.

Between 2003 and 2009, five more states legalized same-sex marriage either through legislative action or court order. In 2008, the California Supreme Court ruled that laws barring same-sex marriage violated the equal protection clause of the California state constitution; gay couples began marrying, but in November of that year Californians overturned the court’s ruling by passing Proposition 8, an amendment to the state constitution that prohibited such marriages. Two couples sued in U. S. District Court, claiming that Proposition 8 violated their due process and equal protection rights. The Court agreed with them, but was appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, which in 2012, upheld the District Court’s ruling, but on very narrow grounds. Supporters of Proposition 8 indicated they would appeal the decision to the U. S. Supreme Court.

The first couple to be married in California was Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, who had founded the Daughters of Bilitis in 1953. They had been together for 55 years when they said their vows. Del Martin died six weeks later.

Picture source:

- Pro-gay marriage marchers: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:San_Francisco_pro_gay_marriage_protest.jpg

Fighting Discrimination



People protesting "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

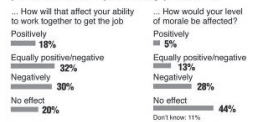


Lt. Dan Choi, West Point graduate and gay rights activist

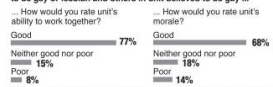
Study: Gays in the military

Gays and lesbians could begin openly serving with minimal risk to U.S. military readiness, according to a long-awaited study by the Pentagon.

If Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) is repealed, and someone in your immediate unit says he/she is gay or lesbian ...



Asked to those who said they served with leader they believed to be gay or lesbian and others in unit believed to be gay ...



How much did the belief that a service member was gay or lesbian affect the unit's combat performance?



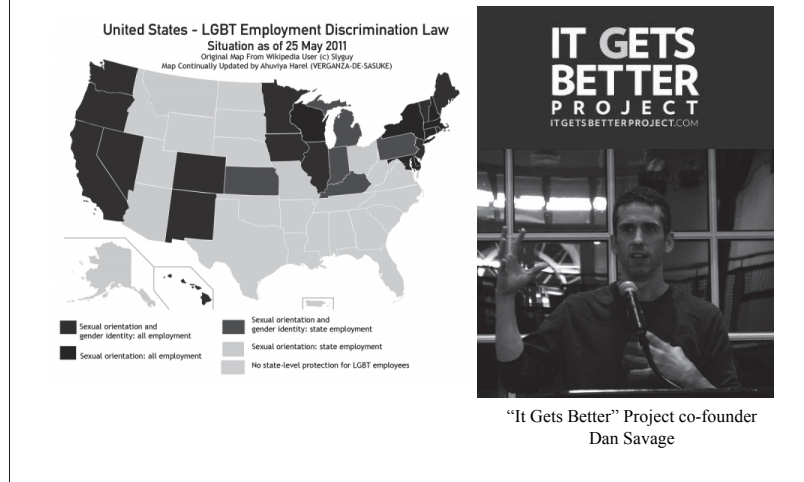
© 2010 MCT
Source: U.S. Defense Department
Graphic: Jody Freeman

At least since World War I, homosexuality was grounds for exclusion or dismissal from the armed forces of the United States. When he became president in 1992, Bill Clinton, tried to fulfill a campaign promise to allow gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the military. His attempt sparked an uproar of protest from conservatives, some veterans' groups, and General Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Clinton compromised by instead proposing a new policy that came to be known as "Don't Ask Don't Tell" (DADT), under which gays could serve in the military as long as they didn't make their sexual orientation public. This resulted in 14,000 service people being dismissed under Don't Ask Don't Tell—more than had been dismissed under the previous regulations. By 2011, attitudes had changed to the point where supporters of repealing DADT felt they could try again. President Barack Obama ordered the military to do a study on how the men and women in the service felt about serving alongside gay people. Most said it would not affect them one way or the other. Colin Powell, who in 1992 as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had resisted opening the military to gays, now supported eliminating Don't Ask Don't Tell. Many gay veterans came forward to attest to their service and display their medals, as did many who had been dismissed from the military because they had been exposed as gay. In September 2011, the policy officially ended. Celebrations and parties were held throughout the gay community, including on military bases.

Picture sources:

- Dan Choi: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dan_Choi_at_Bryant_Park_NYC.JPG
- DADT protest: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dadt.JPG>

The Fight Goes On



Over half the states in America have laws on the books prohibiting discrimination against members of the LGBT community in employment and/or other areas. However, problems still exist—especially for LGBT youngsters. A survey reported that 31% of gay teens reported being bullied in school. In 2010–2011, there was a rash of suicides by teens and pre-teens who had been bullied for being gay. One gay eighth grader, Lawrence King of Oxnard, CA, was shot and killed by a classmate. In response, columnist Dan Savage and Terry Miller started the “It Gets Better” Project, a media campaign to provide support for LGBT youth. They got many celebrities—both gay and straight—to record messages for broadcast. Schools, parents, and student groups began to pay more attention to bullying and finding ways to combat it.

Stonewall started a movement, but the fight for gay rights will not be complete until all LGBT people are given the respect and dignity that all human beings deserve.