

The Stonewall Uprising of 1969

June 28, 1969 marks the beginning of the Stonewall Uprising, a series of events between police and LGBTQ+ protesters that stretched over six days. It was not the first time police raided a gay bar, and it was not the first time LGBTQ+ people fought back, but the events that would unfold over the next six days would fundamentally change the nature of LGBTQ+ activism in the United States.

LGBTQ+ New York in the 1960s

In 1969, the Stonewall Inn was one of the most popular gay bars in New York City. Throughout the state it was illegal to serve alcohol to a gay person until 1966, and in 1969, homosexuality was still considered a criminal offense. This led many gay establishments to operate sans liquor license, providing an open door for raids and police brutality. The Stonewall Inn was owned by the mafia, and as long as they continued to make a profit, they cared very little about what happened to their clientele. The police raids on gay bars and spaces were not isolated to the East and West coasts, but were a phenomenon happening across the U.S. during this time.

June 28, 1969: Stonewall Inn

During the early morning hours (around 1:15-1:20a.m.) on June 28, 1969, plainclothes officers from the New York Police Department arrived at the Stonewall Inn. The police justified the raid with a search warrant, authorizing them to investigate the illegal sale of alcohol at Stonewall. Led by Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine, the police entered the establishment and began to interrogate the patrons. The raid was routine for a bar like Stonewall, but this time, events did not unfold according to the inspector's plans.

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Information obtained from
Library of Congress (<https://www.loc.gov>) and Wikipedia

The Turning Point

The turning point came when the police had difficulty keeping a dyke in a patrol car. Three times she slid out and tried to walk away. The last time a cop bodily heaved her in. The crowd shrieked, "Police brutality!" "Pigs!" A few coins sailed through the air...escalated to nickels and quarters. A bottle. Another bottle. Pine says, "Let's get inside. Lock ourselves inside, it's safer."

While locked inside, the interrogation of patrons and employees continued. Those who had identification were slowly released into the gathering crowd outside, while others were kept inside the bar in preparation for their arrest. The employees and those that were "cross-dressing" were the most visible law-breakers, and therefore the most vulnerable to arrest. Inspector Pine ordered all "cross-dressers" detained, and while a few were able to escape in the commotion, several were arrested. The resistance raged on through the night, with most of the crowds dispersing by 4:00a.m. on June 28th.

But the uprising was far from over. Word of the Stonewall raid spread quickly throughout the city. By that evening (Saturday, June 28), thousands of protesters had gathered at the Stonewall and in the surrounding area. The protests continued into the next week, with another outbreak of intense fighting occurring on that following Wednesday.

Who was at Stonewall?

As Stonewall has become mythologized in history, important details have been obscured. For instance, many have decried the erasure of lesbians, drag queens, queer youth, transgender and gender non-conforming people and their role in the uprising and the political organizing that led to the moment. These individuals and communities were an easy target for the police because in New York in 1969, it was illegal to wear fewer than three items of "gender-inappropriate" clothing. In fact, we know, according to newspapers and other first-hand accounts, that at least two "drag queens" were arrested at Stonewall.



**Traverse Area
Community of Kinksters**

History of Pride

Stonewall Riots: The Aftermath

On June 28, 1970, on the one year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, the first Pride marches were held in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. Thousands of LGBT+ people gathered to commemorate Stonewall and demonstrate for equal rights. The events of Stonewall and the liberation movements that followed were a direct result of prior decades of LGBT+ activism and organizing.

In particular, Pride traditions were adapted from the "Reminder Day Pickets" held annually (1965-1969) on July 4 at Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Annual Reminder Day Pickets were organized by the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations (E.R.C.H.O). E.R.C.H.O. (initially called E.C.H.O.) was formed in 1962 as an organization of east coast homophile groups which included the New York Chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis, the Janus Society in Philadelphia, and the Mattachine Society of Washington and New York, and would grow to include others.

After the Stonewall Uprising (June 1969), the organizers of the Annual Reminder Day Picket (Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations) suggested that they shift focus from planning the Reminder Day Picket to organizing an annual demonstration in commemoration of Stonewall.



The Resolution

At the November 1969 E.R.C.H.O Conference, the 13 voting organizations present adopted the following resolution:

"We propose that a demonstration be held annually on the last Saturday in June in New York City to commemorate the 1969 spontaneous demonstrations on Christopher Street and this demonstration be called CHRISTOPHER STREET LIBERATION DAY." The Stonewall Inn is located on Christopher Street, and was the origin point for the Uprising.

From the outset, organizers envisioned it as a national celebration, "We also propose that we contact Homophile organizations throughout the country and suggest that they hold parallel demonstrations on that day. We propose a nationwide show of support."

To get planning underway, they formed the Christopher Street Liberation Day Umbrella Committee. The committee defined it's aim of holding a massive march at the culmination of a Gay Pride Week (June 22-28).

The first Christopher Street Liberation Day was a resounding success, the thousands of attendees surpassing organizers expectations. New York, Los Angeles and Chicago quickly began planning for 1971, and soon other cities, states, and countries would begin to establish their own annual Pride traditions.

Since June 1970, LGBTQ+ people have continued to gather together in June to march with Pride.

Modern Pride

In 1994, a coalition of education-based organizations in the United States designated October as LGBT History Month.

In 1995, a resolution passed by the General Assembly of the National Education Association included LGBT History Month within a list of commemorative months.

National Coming Out Day (October 11), as well as the first "March on Washington" in 1979, are commemorated in the LGBTQ community during LGBT History Month.

Pride month is not (yet?) recognized internationally as pride celebrations take place in many other places at different times, including in the months of February, August, and September. Increasingly, June is being recognized as Pride Month outside the United States.

50 Years of Pride

2019 marks 50 since the Stonewall riots and 2020 marks 50 years of Pride Celebrations!

Be proud of how far we have come as a community!

