

## The Stonewall Uprising - Inspiring Change



In the 1960s, hostility towards those who did not conform to broadly accepted norms was rampant. This was evident in the treatment to those who lived openly as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQIA+) person.

Perhaps surprising today, these sentiments were especially harsh in New York City. Laws provided you could be arrested for wearing less than three articles of clothing that -- according to convention - matched your sex assigned at birth.

It was illegal to serve alcoholic beverages to homosexuals. Unable to legally marry who they truly loved; homosexuals also had to live out their romantic lives secretly. Sometimes even entering heterosexual marriages to avoid social stigma.

Blackmail was not uncommon.

Fueled by this social context, in 1969, police raids of gay bars in Manhattan followed a standard path of behavior. Officers would enter the building, threatening, and beating staff and clientele. The bar patrons would then leave the building to line up in the street so police could arrest them.



On June 28, 1969, NYC police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club located in Greenwich Village in Manhattan. After the police, acting without respect for human dignity, roughly forced employees and patrons out of the bar, the community took action.

What followed was the Stonewall Uprising - protests in the community that served to both draw attention to these injustices and launched the gay rights movement. At first, they were referred to as a "riot."



Two leading participants in the Stonewall Uprising were Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, both transgender women of color. A memorial to this brave pair is being built in Greenwich Village, the first monument to transgender activists in the world. This memorial is part of a national park dedicated to the memory of the Stonewall Uprising.

The first Pride march took place in New York City on June 28, 1970, on the one-year anniversary of that horrible scene in Greenwich Village. They marched from the Stonewall Inn to Central Park in what was then referred to as "Christopher Street Liberation Day," or America's first gay pride parade.

The parade's official chant was: "Say it loud, gay is proud."

In 2016, then President Barack Obama designated the Stonewall Inn, Christopher Park and the surrounding streets and sidewalks as a national monument in recognition of the area's contribution to gay rights.

Now over 50 years later, events occur across the country, and the world, on or about this date to celebrate Gay Pride and the rights and respect all people should experience.