

The Stonewall Uprising - Inspiring Change



The first Pride march took place in New York City on June 28, 1970, with the official chant, "Say it loud, gay is proud."

About 150 people marched 50 blocks 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.

It is important to understand the history of events leading up to this day and the courageous acts of a few to stand up for their rights - leading to history forever being changed.

That event took place on the one-year anniversary of a horrible scene in Greenwich Village when Police raided a gay club - roughly forcing employees and others out into the street to be arrested.



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/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) person.

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.

Laws prevented LGBTQIA+ individuals from being served alcoholic beverages. Same sex couples needed to live their lives in secret. Homosexuality was considered a crime and LGBTQIA+ individuals were targeted and arrested for dancing with same-sex partners or cross-dressing.



Those identifying as LGBTQIA+ were denied basic protection against discrimination in employment, housing and other areas of life.

Blackmail was not uncommon, and the medical establishment classified homosexuality as a "mental disorder" furthering the negative stigma attached to those identifying as LGBTQIA+.

Gay bars were considered a safe haven and a place where those in the community could socialize and express themselves. That eventually changed.

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 was 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.

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.



That little parade in New York city has now grown from 150 participants to over 2.5 million today. The courageous acts of a few impacted history.