BACKGROUND

“All people have an equal right to live free from violence, persecution, discrimination and stigma. International human rights law establishes legal obligations on States to ensure that every person, without distinction, can enjoy these rights” (The World Health Organization 2017).

Throughout United States history, and certainly at the time of the Stonewall Uprising in 1969, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) persons have been denied many of their basic rights as U.S. citizens. In fact, LGBT people have been actively and openly discriminated against in all areas of life—in schools, the workplace, housing, family life, and the judicial system. Moreover, historically, when LGBT citizens made efforts to assert their basic rights they were often met with harassment and violence from law enforcement. When the LGBT community succeeded in creating public gathering spaces where LGBT persons could openly express their identities, specifically gay bars, in more tolerant parts of New York City and San Francisco, police would target these places for humiliating raids. In these raids bar patrons would be questioned, cited, and occasionally arrested for the illegal act of publicly expressing their sexual orientation and/or gender.

The Stonewall Uprising was a turning point for the LGBT community. Inspired by the counterculture movement peaking in 1969 which included the black rights and women’s movements, the LGBT community did not want to live in the shadows any longer. The Stonewall Inn was a popular gay bar in New York City that often got raided by local police. On the night of June 28, 1969, there was yet another raid. But that night, the LGBT community decided spontaneously to resist the police and their discriminatory practices. During the raid, the bar patrons fought back against the police and as word spread of the resistance, hundreds in the community—LGBT and allies—joined them in the streets. For four days and nights, the police barricaded themselves in the bar while the community protested against centuries of unfair and illegal treatment. The protests provided an opportunity for the LGBT community to publicly express their outrage at the discrimination they were facing. Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, two trans women of color, are credited as being 2 of the main leaders of these events.

The Stonewall Uprising was a turning point for the gay rights movement. Following this event, the movement coalesced around the organization The Gay Liberation Front. The group founded the Gay Pride parade movement as well as many other initiatives to support the LGBT community. Many critique the resulting actions and coverage of the event, then and now, as being narrowly focused on rights for white, gay,
individuals, and not representative intersectional identities, especially those of the trans women of color who are credited to have started it all. The historic importance of this event was cemented when President Obama declared Stonewall a national monument in June of 2016. Furthermore, we can see the legacy of the Stonewall Uprising in the LGBT rights movement today such as in the legal fight against the transgender bathroom bills passed in several states.

RESOURCES

Personal Stories
- Stonewall Participants (PBS)
- Channel 13 Mark Segal’s Story (NY PBS)
- Free and Equal Personal Stories (UN)
- * Gavin Grimm’s Case at the Supreme Court (ACLU)

Art and Images
- Marsha “Pay It no Mind” Johnson (Micah Bazant)
- Marsha P Johnson "A message for you"
- * #BlackOutPride photo album and action overview
- On This Day - June 28 - The Stonewall Riots (Getty Images)
- Images From the Stonewall Uprising’s Final Night (NYT)

Articles
- Citizens’ Rights (USHS)
- Bill of Rights (Scholastic)
- Explaining Stonewall (NPR)
- Stonewall Inn Response to LGBT Executive Order (The Guardian)
- An Amazing 1969 Account of the Stonewall Uprising (The Atlantic)
- * Obama Announces Stonewall Inn National Monument (The Guardian)
- Cuba’s Gay Rights Evolution (NYT)
- * Gavin Grimm’s Story (Washington Post)

Gay rights activists give their verdict on Stonewall: ‘This film is no credit to the history it purports to portray’ (The Guardian)

Data & Maps
- Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Throughout History (UNFE)
- * Infographic: Pride Parades Around the World (Column Five)

Videos
- American Experience Stonewall Movie Clip (PBS)
- * Rights Watch Transgender Students (ACLU)
- Stonewall Uprising (PBS)
- * Happy Birthday Marsha
- Did Hollywood Whitewash Stonewall? (Decoded)
- Intersectionality 101 (Teaching Tolerance)

Websites
- * Stonewall Forever
- Citizen Rights Sources (National Geographic)
- * Free and Equal Site (UN)
- Stonewall Rebellion Collection & Archives (NYT)

* = this resource includes a solution