

THE HISTORY OF PRIDE MONTH

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On a summer night in 1969, a routine police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City, sparked rebellions and protests that changed the course of LGBTQ+ history. The series of clashes that erupted over the course of six days, now known as the Stonewall riots, was a pivotal moment in the fight for equality and liberation for the LGBTQ+ community.

Raids on gay bars were extremely frequent, and often came with the use of excessive force and humiliation. The LGBTQ+ community faced constant discrimination and harassment as homosexuality was criminalized in most states and gay bars were viewed as disorderly by the police. While Stonewall didn't start the LGBTQ+ rights movement, it spurred a new age of activism for the community that included a demand for not just tolerance, but liberation and equality. They challenged the notion of normalcy and insisted that LGBTQ+ identities were valid and deserving of respect. The Stonewall uprising fueled decades of activism that led to landmark victories such as the passage of anti-discrimination legislation and the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2015.

On June 28, 1970, one year after the Stonewall uprising, the first Pride marches were organized in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. These marches were vibrant displays of LGBTQ+ culture and identity with participants carrying signs advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, chanting slogans, and wearing clothing that celebrated their identities. These early marches set the stage for Pride parades currently seen around the world. Pride parades have evolved from protest marches to celebrations with floats representing LGBTQ+ organizations and businesses, performances from LGBTQ+ artists, and fundraisers for LGBTQ+ foundations, drawing millions of people to New York City. Parades are a chance for the LGBTQ+ community and allies to come together, celebrate their identities, and find a sense of belonging.

After the first Pride march in 1970, it took nearly 30 years for Pride Month to become an official observance. In 1999, President Bill Clinton issued the first Pride Month Presidential proclamation. Since then, two other Presidents, Barack Obama and Joe Biden have issued further declarations to celebrate Pride Month and many state governments acknowledge and embrace this time of year. Governor Phil Murphy has issued Pride Month proclamations in New Jersey since taking office in 2018.

Since the 1969 uprising, the Stonewall Inn has become a national monument, making it the first national monument designated for an LGBTQ+ historical site in the United States. While the fight for LGBTQ+ rights is far from over, the movement has made significant strides since the first brick thrown at the start of the Stonewall uprising.