

GLBT Movement

Although a Chicago Society for Human Rights was founded in 1924 to support homosexual rights, the United States had nothing comparable to the organized homosexual movement that developed in Germany in the 1920s. A social base for the gay movement developed after World War II, when many returning gay soldiers and sailors stayed on in large coastal cities like New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

The contemporary gay rights movement dates from the founding of the Mattachine Society in 1951 by Harry Hay (a Communist Party member who was promptly expelled) who developed the theory that gays are an oppressed cultural minority. ONE Magazine was started by associates of Hay's in Los Angeles in 1952, and the first lesbian organization, Daughters of Bilitis, was founded in San Francisco in 1955.

The development of a political gay movement was influenced by the growing militancy of the black civil rights movement, the peace movement, and the women's liberation movement in the late 1960s. The June 1969 "Stonewall riot" in New York's Greenwich Village marked the public emergence of a militant gay rights movement. A Gay Liberation Front was active in New York in the early 1970s. In the liberal political mainstream, gays and lesbians organized the Alice B. Toklas Memorial Democratic Club in San Francisco in 1971.

As gays clustered in San Francisco's Castro district, Harvey Milk realized he had an electoral base, and was elected a county supervisor as the country's first openly gay elected official in 1977 -- and a martyr assassinated together with mayor George Moscone in 1979 by fellow supervisor Dan White. San Francisco's Gay Freedom Day parades drew large numbers in the late 1970s, and the first "National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights" was held in October 1979 -- in part a response to the New Right campaign against gay rights led at that time by singer Anita Bryant, and against California's Briggs Initiative (defeated that fall).

The movement has developed a set of national lobbying and legal defense groups as well as a political action committee: a national lobby was organized in 1973 as the National Gay Task Force ("and Lesbian" was added in 1985, making NGLTF); and the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF) began in 1980 as a PAC, but reorganized as a lobby with an associated PAC in 1989. These and other gay organizations have had substantial success in getting sodomy laws repealed in about half the states. The Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund was established in New York in 1973 on the NAACP LDF model to litigate issues of gay rights.

As the AIDS epidemic spread during the 1980s, much activist energy was channeled into support structures -- pioneered by New York's Gay Men's Health Coalition -- for people infected with the HIV virus. ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) was formed in New York by gay writer and activist Larry Kramer to make militant demands for medical research, rapid release of experimental drugs, and provision of services to people with

HIV. Autonomous ACT UP groups sprang up around the country, inspiring a parallel Queer Nation movement flaunting the slogan, "We're here, we're queer, get used to it!"

Annotated Bibliography

GLBT Rights: The little-known early history is reviewed in John Lauritsen and David Thorstad, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)*, revised ed. (1974; Times Change Press, 1995). The gay rights movement up to Stonewall is covered in John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983). Barry D Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, revised ed. (1987; Twayne, 1995) brings an international perspective to a social history through 1985. For a woman's perspective, see Margaret Cruikshank, *The Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement* (Routledge, 1992). For a biography of the Mattachine Society's founder, see Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Alyson Publications, 1990).

San Francisco journalist Randy Shilts wrote two books essential to understanding the contemporary gay movement: *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life & Times of Harvey Milk* (St. Martin's Press, 1982), about the nation's first openly gay elected city official; and *And the Band Played On: Politics, People, and the AIDS Epidemic* (St. Martin's Press, 1987; Penguin, 1988). Larry Kramer describes the founding of ACT UP in *Reports from the Holocaust: The Making of an AIDS Activist* (St. Martin's, 1989). For a historical survey of the years from 1967 to 1992, see *Long Road to Freedom: The Advocate History of the Gay and Lesbian Movement*, ed. By Mark Thompson (St. Martin's Press, 1994). Conducting extensive interviews with leaders and participants in a number of cities across the country, journalists Dudley Clendinen and Adam Nagourney trace the history of the movement from 1969 to 1992 in *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (Simon & Schuster, 1999).