

Living Memory LGBT History Timeline

Current Elders Would Have Been This Old When These Events Happened...

Compiled by Loree Cook-Daniels

Introduction

Lesbian, gay male, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) elders may approach “mainstream” aging, health, and other public and private services differently than their heterosexual and/or gender-normative peers. Every person is shaped in part by the major public events that happen during their lifetime, whether these events are tragedies like 9/11 or struggles and triumphs like the Civil Rights Movement or passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Although each individual will draw different conclusions and make different life choices in reaction to such public events, knowing what was reported in the media and discussed at dinner during a person’s lifetime may help others understand how that individual’s worldview was shaped.

LGBT people who are now aged 50 - 100 (i.e., elders) have lived through a lot of changes in how the wider society views LGBT issues. Even those who know LGBT history well may forget just how much of it elders have personally lived through. Those who are younger and/or see how much progress the LGBT movement has made may not fully recognize how often advances have been accompanied by setbacks, and may therefore find it harder to understand the level of fear and uncertainty that may be felt by LGBT people who are old enough to remember losing rights that had previously been won.

How To Use This Timeline

The Transgender Aging Network constructed this timeline as a reference tool for those working with LGBT people in the U.S. who are age 50 and older. It lists major events that happened by decade, starting in the 1920s. Looking across the top row of the timeline, pick the column closest to the current age of the person or persons you are working with. Trace that column down the pages until you find “13-22.” The page you on which you find “13-22” is the first decade for which this elder is likely to have personal, or “living” memory; the elder was in his or her teens or early twenties when these events happened. Now review the rest of the timeline for some of the events this elder has lived through since, to get a sense of the changes she or he has experienced. For instance, if you are working with a 72-year-old bisexual woman, her living memory may begin with events from the 1950s (the page on which “13-22” appears in the “70” column).

To help you further place world events within the context of a lifespan, you can also use the right-hand columns to cross-reference how old people were when events happened. For example, look at the page on the 1960s. LGBT people who are currently 90 and older would have been in their 40s or older before they could have heard a positive radio or television interview of a known gay person. On the other hand, LGBT people currently in their 60s would have been teens when that happened, and may consequently not remember a time when openly gay people had never appeared in mass media.

Timeline Caveats, Limitations, and Evolution

This timeline was developed in relationship to the living memory of LGBT elders in the U.S. Many events important in world LGBT history are not listed here unless they were likely to have been covered by mainstream U.S. newspapers at the time. We encourage users to adapt the idea of this timeline to their own locality, adding items that might have been more salient to people living in their area during those times.

This timeline may also be copied and distributed in its entirety if it is used solely for educational purposes. All other potential users should contact tan@forge-forward.org to discuss reprint permission.

This timeline is a work-in-progress. Please send comments and suggestions to tan@forge-forward.org.

About TAN

The Transgender Aging Network (TAN) is a project of FORGE. FORGE was founded in 1984 to support, educate and advocate for the rights and lives of female-to-male (FTM) transgender individuals and SOFFAs (Significant Others, Friends, Family, and Allies). FORGE is dedicated to helping move our fragmented communities beyond identity politics and forge a movement that embraces and empowers our diverse complexities. Our website is at www.forge-forward.org

1920s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
1920 - "Gay" first used to refer to homosexuals in the publication Underground 1921 - U.S. Naval report on entrapment of "perverts" within its ranks 1924 - First commercially produced play with a lesbian theme, "God of Vengeance," opens on Broadway; theatre owner and 12 cast members found guilty of obscenity (later overturned) 1924 - Illinois charters the Society for Human Rights 1925 - After a year of police raids, New York City's roster of 20 gay and lesbian restaurants and "personality clubs" is reduced to 3 1926 - The Hamilton Lodge Ball of Harlem attracts thousands of cross-dressing men and women 1927 - New York state legislature tries to ban gay-themed plays 1927 - "Well of Loneliness" by Radclyffe Hall published, all British copies destroyed as "obscene"	13-22					

1930s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
1930 - <i>Encyclopedia of Sexual Knowledge</i> illustrates first "sex-change" procedures 1932 - <i>Man Into Woman, the Story of Lili Elbe's Life</i> , published 1933 - Hitler bans gay and lesbian groups, burns the Institute of Sexual Science library 1934 - Lillian Hellman's <i>The Children's Hour</i> opens on Broadway to rave reviews 1935 - "Successful" electric shock therapy treatment of homosexuality reported at American Psychological Association meeting 1937 - Morris Kight organizes the Oscar Wilde Study Circle at Texas Christian University 1939 - New York City "cleans up" in preparation for the World's Fair, closing most of the city's best-known gay bars	23-32	13-22				



1940s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
1940s – Revealed that Holocaust victims include LGTs 1940 – Courts rule New York State Liquor Authority can legally close down bars that serve “sex variants” 1941 – “Transsexuality” first used...in reference to homosexuality and bisexuality 1942 – Switzerland decriminalizes adult homosexuality (men only; lesbianism wasn’t outlawed to begin with) 1943 – U.S. military bars gays and lesbians from serving in the Armed Forces 1945 – The Quaker Emergency Committee of New York City opens the first social welfare agency for gay people, serving young people arrested on same-sex charges 1945 – First known female-to-male sex change surgery, on Michael Dillon in Britain 1947 – “Lisa Ben” publishes the first <i>Vice Versa</i> 1948 - <i>New York Times</i> refuses advertisements for Gore Vidal’s <u>The City and the Pillar</u> 1948 – <i>The Kinsey Report</i> says homosexual behavior among men is widespread 1948 – Hollywood Ten and the Blacklist	33-42	23-32	13-22			



1950s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
<p>1950 – A Senate hearing reveals the majority of State Department dismissals are based on accusations of homosexuality; Senate approves wide-ranging investigation of homosexuals “and other moral perverts” in national government</p> <p>1951 – The Mattachine Society founded</p> <p>1951 – “Donald Webster Cory” publishes <i>The Homosexual in America</i></p> <p>1952 – Christine Jorgensen comes to public attention</p> <p>1952 – British mathematician and computer pioneer Alan Turing sentenced to a year of hormonal treatments causing impotence and breast development for “gross indecency with males.” He commits suicide in 1954.</p> <p>1952 – American Psychiatric Association includes homosexuality under “sociopathic personality disturbance” in its first official list of mental disorders</p> <p>1952 – Immigrants banned from U.S. if they have “psychopathic personality,” including homosexuality</p> <p>1953 – Twenty-nine out of 30 men arrested during an 8 day period, charged with engaging in homosexual acts in the Atlanta public library restroom, lost their jobs after newspapers printed their names and addresses at least 6 times</p> <p>1953 – President Dwight D. Eisenhower orders dismissal of all federal employees guilty of “sexual perversion”</p> <p>1953 – Kinsey report on women’s sexuality, including lesbian behavior, released</p> <p>1954 – Dr. Evelyn Hooker presents a study showing gay men are as well-adjusted as straight men, at an American Psychological Association meeting</p> <p>1955 - <i>Howl!</i> published; Allen Ginsberg unsuccessfully prosecuted for obscenity</p> <p>1955 – Daughters of Bilitis formed; publication “The Ladder” launched the next year</p> <p>1955 – In the wake of the murder of a boy, 29 Sioux City, Iowa men suspected of homosexuality are committed to mental asylums as a preventive measure</p> <p>1956 – James Baldwin publishes <i>Giovanni’s Room</i></p> <p>1957 – “Transsexual” coined by Harry Benjamin</p> <p>1957 – Ann Bannon publishes <i>Odd Girls Out</i></p> <p>1957 – American Civil Liberties Union approves a policy statement saying laws against sodomy and federal restrictions on employment of lesbians and gay men are constitutional</p> <p>1958 – U.S. Supreme Court rules ONE magazine is not obscene and can be sent through the postal system</p>	43-52	33-42	23-32	13-22		



1960s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
1960 – First U.S. public gathering of lesbians, at San Francisco’s Daughters of Bilitis national convention 1961 – First openly gay person runs for U.S. public office (drag queen Jose Sarria, running for San Francisco city supervisor) 1961 – First use of the term “homosexual” in a feature film shown in the US (British movie <i>Victim</i>); motion picture code seal of approval is denied 1962 – Illinois becomes first state to make consensual same-sex acts legal 1962 – First known positive radio program about homosexuality (Randy Wicker and 7 gay people, on WBAI in New York City) 1963 – American Civil Liberties Union opposes government interference in the private sex lives of consenting adults 1964 – <i>Life</i> magazine runs positive cover story on “Homosexuality in America” 1964 – The first openly gay person appears on national television (Randy Wicker, on The Les Crane Show) 1964 – Series of public demonstrations held in Washington, D.C. by the East Coast Homophile Organizations to protest U.S. government discrimination against lesbians and gay men 1966 – “Lesbian” heard for the first time in a Hollywood movie (<i>The Group</i>) 1966 – First U.S. gay community center opens, in San Francisco, led by The Society for Individual Rights 1966 – Harry Benjamin publishes <i>The Transsexual Phenomenon</i> 1966 – First transgender public uprising at San Francisco’s Compton’s Cafeteria 1967 – England and Wales legalize male homosexuality 1967 – Bisexual rap group held in San Francisco 1967 – New York and New Jersey decide that state liquor commissions can no longer forbid bars from serving gay men and lesbians 1967 – First gay bookstore in the U.S. opens: Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop 1967 – “John” turned into “Joan” at John Hopkins Hospital after a circumcision accident; published case widely impacts gender theory 1968 – Metropolitan Community Church formed 1968 – The American Psychiatric Association moves homosexuality from “sociopathic” category to “sexual deviation” 1968 – Bi Alliance begins at the University of Minnesota 1969 – Betty Friedan warns feminist movement of the “lavender menace” within its ranks 1969 – Stonewall Riots 1969 – National Institute of Mental Health study chaired by Dr. Evelyn Hooker urges decriminalization of private sex acts between consenting adults	53-62	43-52	33-42	23-32	13-22	



1970s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
1970 – <i>Boys in the Band</i> , first major Hollywood movie on gay life, premieres 1970 – Gay “zaps” begin; first against New York City Mayor John Lindsay 1970 – Unitarian Universalist Association becomes first U.S. mainstream religious group to recognize LGB clergy and laity within its ranks and to demand an end to anti-gay discrimination 1970 – The Vatican issues a statement reiterating that homosexuality is a moral aberration 1972 – “Ithaca Statement on Bisexuality,” by the Quaker Committee of Friends on Bisexuality, is published in <i>The Advocate</i> ; National Bisexual Liberation Group forms in New York 1972 – East Lansing, Michigan, becomes first city to ban anti-gay bias in city hiring 1972 – First openly gay man ordained, by the United Church of Christ (William Johnson) 1972 – First time a U.S. national political convention (the Democrats) addressed by gay leaders 1973 – American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses 1973 – U.S. Supreme Court refuses to hear case on the firing of an Oregon teacher for lesbianism 1973 - Lesbian Herstory Archives founded 1974 – First state-level openly gay person elected: Elaine Noble of Massachusetts 1974 – Ohio Supreme Court rules that even though homosex is legal, the state can refuse to incorporate a gay organization because “the promotion of homosexuality as a valid life style is contrary to the public policy of the state.” 1974 – AT&T becomes first major American corporation to agree to an equal opportunity policy for lesbians and gay men 1974 – <i>Time</i> and <i>Newsweek</i> run “bisexual chic” articles 1975 – U.S. Civil Service Commission stops banning gay men and lesbians from federal jobs 1975 – Footballer David Kopay is first major sports star to come out (voluntarily) publicly 1976 – First openly gay police officer hired (by San Francisco) 1976 - “Tales of the City” published by the <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i> , includes LGB and T characters 1976 – Doonesbury is the first mainstream comic strip to feature a gay male character 1976 – Lynn Ransom of California is one of the first openly lesbian mothers to win custody of her children in court 1976 – Renee Richards outed as MTF and barred from a women’s tennis tournament 1976 – San Francisco Bisexual Center opens 1977 – Anita Bryant and Save Our Children succeed in repealing Miami law against discrimination based on sexual orientation 1977 – 80% of surveyed Oregon doctors say they would refuse to treat a known homosexual 1977 – Arkansas recriminalizes gay sex after two years without such a law 1977 – Florida forbids adoption by gays and lesbians 1977 – White House sponsors first-ever meeting with gay activists 1978 – Openly gay San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk murdered by colleague 1978 – National Coalition of Black (later Lesbians and) Gays formed in New York City 1978 – Rainbow flag debuts in San Francisco 1979 – First National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights; 100,000 attend 1979 – Moral Majority founded 1979 – First openly gay judge appointed (Los Angeles, CA)	63-72	53-62	43-52	33-42	23-32	13-22



1980s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
1980 - First Harry Benjamin Standards produced for therapists working with transgender persons 1980 – BBC broadcasts “A Change of Sex” about an MTF 1980 – Aaron Fricke takes Paul Guilbert to his high school prom after winning a lawsuit against the school 1980 – Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence debuts 1981 – First reported cases of what came to be called AIDS 1981 – <i>The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies</i> published 1982 – Wisconsin enacts first statewide gay civil rights legislation 1982 – Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) founded 1982 – Gay Men’s Health Crisis formed 1983 – Congressman Gerry Studds comes out; first federal official to come out as gay while in office 1984 – FBI releases 7,500 pages of information gathered over 30 years of watching gay groups 1984 – Martina Navratilova’s female lover publicly sits in her “box” at Wimbledon and the French Open 1984 – Berkeley (CA) becomes first U.S. city to extend domestic partnership benefits to lesbian and gay employees 1984 – San Francisco Department of Public Health closes the city’s bathhouses 1985 – NAMES Project memorial quilt for AIDS victims launched 1985 – First school for openly lesbian and gay teenagers opens in New York City (Harvey Milk School) 1985 – Rock Hudson comes out, admits he has AIDS 1986 – U.S. Supreme Court rejects challenge to state sodomy laws 1987 – Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights; Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt shown 1987 – What becomes BiNet USA formed 1987 – ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) is formed 1988 – National Coming Out Day launched 1989 – Jazz musician Billy Tipton dies and is revealed to be FTM 1989 - BiPAC New York successfully challenges Hetrick-Martin Gay and Lesbian Health Clinic to remove a “Bisexual men: Fact or fiction?” workshop from curriculum. 1989 – First Lambda Literary Awards given	73-82	63-72	53-62	43-52	33-42	23-32



1990s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
1990 – First National Bisexual Conference held in San Francisco 1990 – Federal Hate Crimes Statistics Act passed; first law extending federal recognition of gay men and lesbians 1990 – U.S. restrictions against gay immigrants lifted 1991 – First Black Lesbian and Gay Pride celebration held in Washington, D.C. 1991 – Amnesty International decides to work on behalf of those imprisoned for consensual same-sex acts 1991 – Karen Thompson named Sharon Kowalski’s legal guardian after an eight-year fight 1992 – World Health Organization removes homosexuality from its classification of illnesses 1992 – Press for Change founded in Britain to work for trans people’s equal rights 1992 – Colorado voters ban state and municipal rights laws for lesbians and gay men 1993 – Intersex Society of North America founded 1993 – “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” U.S. military policy adopted 1993 – Brandon Teena and two SOFFAs murdered in Nebraska 1993 – March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation held 1994 – Olympic gold winner swimmer Greg Louganis comes out 1994 – At U.S. insistence, United Nations suspends observer status of the International Lesbian and Gay Association 1995 – First U.S. conference for FTMs 1995 – President Clinton names the first-ever White House liaison to the gay and lesbian communities 1995 – Million Man March has no openly gay speakers 1996 – Congress passes Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), forbidding federal recognition of (and benefits for) married same-sex couples 1997 – South Africa becomes the first country to enact a constitutional ban outlawing sexual orientation discrimination 1997 – <i>Rolling Stones</i> article details failure of John Money’s John/Joan case from the 1960s 1998 – Matthew Shepard murdered in Wyoming 1998 – First open lesbian elected to federal legislative office (Tammy Baldwin) 1999 – Britain bans discrimination against trans people 1999 – Texas post-op MTF Christine Littleton ruled legally male and not the legal widow of her husband	83-92	73-82	63-72	53-62	43-52	33-42



2000s	Age in 2007:					
	100	90	80	70	60	50
2000 – British ban against lesbians and gay men serving in the military is lifted						
2000 – Britain outlaws discrimination against lesbians and gay men						
2000 – Vermont offers civil unions to same-sex couples						
2002 – MTF teenager Gwen Araujo murdered by sex partners, in California						
2003 – Massachusetts Supreme Court rules it is unconstitutional to deny marriage to gay and lesbian couples	93+	83+	73+	63+	53+	43+
2003 – U.S. Supreme Court strikes down remaining state sodomy laws						
2004 – United Kingdom: trans people allowed to change the gender on their birth certificates						
2005 – New Zealand first country to outlaw employment discrimination and hate crimes on the basis of gender identity						
2006 – South Africa begins recognizing gay marriages						

Sources:

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