

LGBTQA+ History Resource Guide

CW: The following resources contain discussions of homophobia, transphobia, White Supremacy, racism, colonialism, hate crimes, violence, policing and police violence, and sexual assault.

Looking for more information or resources about LGBTQA+ history?

Note: These resources are primarily focused on LGBTQA+ history in the United States.

Articles

[“Introduction to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History \(LGBTQ History\) in the United States”](#) – Leisa Meyer and Helis Sikk

[“LGBTQ History”](#) – GLSEN

[“The History of Queer History: One Hundred Years of the Search for Shared Heritage”](#) – Gerard Koskovich

[“Breathing Fire: Remembering Asian Pacific American Activism in Queer History”](#) – Amy Sueyoshi

[“Timeline of Asian and Pacific Islander diasporic LGBT history”](#) – Wikipedia

[“A Forgotten Latina Trailblazer: LGBT Activist Sylvia Rivera”](#) – Raul A. Reyes

[“Black LGBT Pioneers You Should Know”](#) – Michelle Garcia

[“4 Black LGBT Heroes You Should Know”](#) – GLSEN

[“The Way of the Two-Spirited People: Native American concepts of gender and sexual orientation”](#) – Sandra Laframboise and Michael Anhorn

Videos

[“LGBT History: What’s The Point?”](#) – Novara Media

[“Black History Month: Gay Edition”](#) – NoMoreDownLow

[“Pioneering Icon Paris Dupree Explaining the History of the Harlem Drag Ball Scene”](#)

[“Mexico’s Dance of the 41 Is a Lesson in Queer History”](#) – Hornet

[“Being Two Spirit: A Brief History of Queer Native Culture”](#) – Splinter Video

[“LGBT History by the Decades: The Roaring Twenties”](#) – AreTheyGay

[“LGBT History by the Decades: The World At War”](#) – AreTheyGay

[“LGBT History By The Decades: Age of Conformity”](#) – AreTheyGay

[“LGBT History By The Decades: The Golden Age”](#) – AreTheyGay

[“LGBT History By The Decades: Before Stonewall”](#) – AreTheyGay



Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P (“Pay It No Mind”) Johnson, two trans women of color activists who worked for queer and trans liberation and who founded Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) in 1970

Films

[After Stonewall](#) (1999, documentary)

“Documentary/Historical retrospective of the Gay Rights movement from the 1969 Stonewall riots to the present.”

[And The Band Played On](#) (1993, documentary)

“Based on the book of the same name, *And the Band Played On* is an account of the doctors who investigated the early stages of the HIV and AIDS epidemic. The film shows the involvement of gay activists in the discovery of AIDS, and how many scientists were being stymied by lack of funding, institutionalized homophobia, and red tape.”

[Before Stonewall](#) (1985, documentary)

“This documentary dives deep into the often-unheard history of the community prior to the 1969 Stonewall riots. This Emmy-award winning documentary covers multiple decades of the 20th century, including WWII and the resulting population shift to big cities and founding of queer neighborhoods, and Harlem nightclubs in the 1920s.”

[Brother Outsider](#) (2003, documentary)

“This documentary chronicles the life of Bayard Rustin, an openly gay African American man who worked for more than 50 years as an advocate for various human rights initiatives. He most famously advised Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and was the chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington.”

[The Celluloid Closet](#) (1995, documentary)

“The documentary version of GLAAD co-founder Vito Russo's book of the same name, *The Celluloid Closet* documents the portrayal of LGBTQ characters in Hollywood.”

[Free CeCe](#) (2016, documentary)

“This film confronts the culture of violence surrounding trans women of color. It is told through the voices of Laverne Cox and Cece McDonald.”

[Freeheld](#) (2007, documentary)

“The documentary film “Freeheld” chronicles Laurel's struggle to transfer her earned pension to her domestic partner, Stacie Andree. With less than six months to live, Laurel refuses to back down when her elected officials - the Ocean County Freeholders -deny her request to leave her pension to Stacie, an automatic option for heterosexual married couples. The film is structured chronologically, following both the escalation of Laurel's battle with the Freeholders and the decline of her health as cancer spreads to her brain.”

[Freeheld](#) (2015, drama)

“This scripted film starring Ellen Page and Julianne Moore is based on the documentary of the same name about police Lieutenant Laurel Hester (Moore) who fought for her pension benefits to be extended to her partner Stacie Andree after she passed away.”

[How To Survive A Plague](#) (2012, documentary)

“This Oscar-nominated documentary about early HIV and AIDS activists shows the extent of the AIDS crisis in America. The film is an unflinching look at how the activists behind groups like ACT UP and TAG formed and forced the medical establishment into action following its tragically stunted response to the HIV and AIDS crisis.”

Films

[I Am Divine](#) (2014, documentary)

“Packed with great interviews and clips, this dynamic, fun and often poignant portrait of the legendary Divine brings to life a complex understanding of John Waters’s favored muse Divine, aka Harris Glenn Milstead, from his humble beginnings as an overweight, teased Baltimore youth to internationally recognized drag superstar.”

[Kinsey](#) (2004, drama)

“The story of Alfred Charles Kinsey, *Kinsey* details how he went about conducting one of the first studies in human sexuality. Kinsey is most famous for creating the Kinsey scale; he was one of the first in the scientific community to promote the idea that there was more to sex and attraction than just exclusively straight or gay.”

[Major!](#) (2015, documentary)

“MAJOR! is a documentary film exploring the life and campaigns of Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, a formerly incarcerated Black transgender elder and activist who has been fighting for the rights of trans women of color for over 40 years. Miss Major is a veteran of the Stonewall Rebellion and a survivor of Attica State Prison, a former sex worker, an elder, and a community leader and human rights activist.”

[Milk](#) (2008, drama)

“The Oscar-winning biographical film on Harvey Milk’s life, *Milk* details the story of Milk’s growing involvement in San Francisco politics and how he became one of the most prominent gay rights activists before his assassination. *Milk* honors his legacy as the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in California, and shares his legacy with a bigger audience.”

[Matt Shepard Is A Friend Of Mine](#) (2013, documentary)

“Fifteen years ago, on the night of October 6, 1998, two men lured Matthew Shepard, a gay freshman at the University of Wyoming, from a bar in Laramie, WY. He was kidnapped and driven to a field where he was tortured and tethered to a fence and left to die. Never regaining consciousness, Matthew succumbed to the severe injuries from the attack and died on October 12, 1998. *Matt Shepard Is A Friend Of Mine* follows director Michele Josue, a close friend of Matt’s, as she travels to pivotal locations in Shepard’s life, interviewing other friends and family members, and gaining insight into the beautiful life and devastating loss of Matthew Shepard.”

[Out Of The Past](#) (1998, documentary)

“In 1995, Kelli Peterson started a gay and straight club at her Salt Lake City high school. The story of her ensuing battle with school authorities is interspersed with looks back at the diary of Michael Wigglesworth, a 17th-century Puritan cleric, at the 30-year love affair of Sarah Orne Jewett and Annie Adams Fields, at Henry Gerber’s attempt after World War I to establish a gay-rights organization, at Bayard Rustin’s role in the civil rights movement, and at Barbara Gittings’ taking on of the American Psychiatric Association’s position that homosexuality is illness. One person comments, “To create a place for ourselves in the present, we have to find ourselves in the past.””

[Paris Is Burning](#) (1990, documentary)

“A chronicle of New York’s drag scene in the 1980s, focusing on balls, voguing and the ambitions and dreams of those who gave the era its warmth and vitality.”

Films

[Paris Was A Woman](#) (2003, documentary)

"Female (many of them lesbian) artists, writers, photographers, designers, and adventurers settled in Paris between the wars. They embraced France, some developed an ex-pat culture, and most cherished a way of life quite different than the one left behind. Archival footage, music, paintings, literature, and interviews with folks who were there."

[Screaming Queens: The Riot At Compton's Cafeteria](#) (2005, documentary)

"Documentary about transgender women and drag queens who fought police harassment at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco's Tenderloin in 1966, three years before the famous riot at Stonewall Inn bar in NYC."

[State of Marriage](#) (2015, documentary)

"This documentary focuses on the the two-decade struggle for marriage equality in Vermont, particularly the efforts of Mary Bonauto of Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders and local attorneys Beth Robinson and Susan Murray. Vermont was the first state to introduce civil unions for same-sex couples in 2000 after the state Supreme Court heard the case on appeal by Bonauto, Robinson, and Murray. In 2009, Vermont became the first state to institute marriage equality by legislation."

[Vito](#) (2011, documentary)

"Chronicling the life and work of GLAAD co-founder Vito Russo, *the* film follows Russo's life from his childhood to becoming a leading voice in the movement."

[We Are Here](#) (2011, documentary)

"This documentary tells the story of the gay community in San Francisco, and how it was affected and shaped by the HIV and AIDS crisis. The film is driven by stories told by the people living in San Francisco before, during, and after HIV and AIDS struck, their reflections on that heartbreaking time, and how the community bonded during that time of crisis."

[We've Been Around](#) (2016, documentary)

"This series of documentary short films celebrate the lives of transgender pioneers throughout history. Episodes cover the Street Transgender Action Revolutionaries (STAR) co-founded by Marsha P Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, Little Axe, Lou Sullivan, Albert Cashier, Lucy Hicks Anderson, and Camp Trans."

[8: The Mormon Proposition](#) (2010, documentary)

"Director Reed Cowan initially planned on making a documentary about gay teen homelessness and suicide in Utah but soon realized that the homophobia that prompts otherwise loving parents to kick teenagers out of their homes is deep-seated in current Mormon ideology. Cowan, with his fellow filmmakers, experienced first-hand what it was like to grow up gay in Utah in the Mormon faith, then turned their attention to the historic campaign by the Mormon Church to pass Proposition 8 in California believing that it was the cornerstone of an ideology that has worked for decades to damage gay people and their causes. The film is their emotional outcry to what they found."

Books

Barker, Meg-John. *Queer: A Graphic History*. Icon Books, 2016.

Bornstein, Kate and S. Bear Bergman. *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation*. Seal Press, 2010.

Boyd, Nan Alamilla. *Wide-Open Town: A History of Queer San Francisco to 1965*. University of California Press, 2005.

Bronski, Michael. *A Queer History of the United States*. ReVisioning American History, 2012.

Driskill, Qwo-Li. *Asegi Stories: Cherokee Queer and Two-Spirit Memory*. University of Arizona Press, 2016.

Duberman, Martin Baulm. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. Dutton Adult, 1989.

Faberman, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. Harper Paperbacks, 1998.

Feinberg, Leslie. *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*. Beacon Press, 1997.

Frank, Miriam. *Out in the Union: A Labor History of Queer America*. Temple University Press, 2014.

Habib, Samar. *Female Homosexuality in the Middle East: Histories and Representations*. Routledge, 2007.

Hogan, Kristen. *The Feminist Bookstore Movement: Lesbian Antiracism and Feminist Accountability*. Duke University Press, 2016.

Johnson, David K. *The Lavendar Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Kennedy, Elizabeth Lapovsky and Madeline D. Davis. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*. Routledge, 2014.

Kumashiro, Kevin. *Restoried Selves: Autobiographies of Queer Asian/Pacific American Activists*. Haworth Gay & Lesbian Studies, 2003.

McLellan, Diana. *The Girls: Sappho Goes To Hollywood*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2001.

Prager, Sarah. *Queer, There, and Everywhere: 23 People Who Changed the World*. HarperCollins, 2018.

Pohlen, Jerome. *Gay & Lesbian History for Kids: A Century-Long Struggle for LGBT Rights*. Chicago Review Press, 2015

Books

Quesada, Uriel, Letitia Gomez, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz. *Queer Brown Voices: Personal Narratives of Latina/o Activism*. University of Texas Press, 2015.

Rolle, Elisa. *Days of Love: Celebrating LGBT History One Story at a Time*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014.

Rupp, Leila J. *Sapphistries: A Global History of Love Between Women*. NYU Press, 2011.

Rupp, Leila J. and Susan K. Freeman. *Understanding and Teaching U.S. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2017.

Schwarz, A.B. Christa. *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*. Indiana University Press, 2003.

Snorton, C Riley. *Black On Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Streitmatter, Rodger. *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America*. Faber & Faber, 1995.

Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History Reader: Second Edition*. Seal Press, 2017.

Thompson, Mark. *Long Road To Freedom: The Advocate History of the Gay and Lesbian Movement*. St. Martins Press, 1994.

Acknowledgements:

Many of these books were taken from the list, [“25 LGBT History Books to Add to Your Epic Queer History Reading List”](#) by Carolyn Yates of Autostraddle.

Organizations

[Latino GLBT History Project](#)

[Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender History](#)

[GLBT Historical Society](#)

[OutHistory](#)

[The Arizona LGBT Storytelling Project](#)

[Arizona Queer Archives](#)