

U.S. LGBT History Quiz Timeline Activity

Grade Level:
9-12

MATERIALS:

Adding machine tape, markers, scissors, note cards.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS:

Hang adding machine tape around the room. Write the following dates and important historical facts in the tape in chronological order. Copy LGBT U.S. history facts on the index cards (without dates). Have students tape the cards to the wall in the order they think is correct.

Historical Facts and Dates:

1492: Columbus "discovers" America.

1607: First permanent English colony established at Jamestown, Virginia.

1776: Thirteen colonies declare independence from Britain.

1787: Constitution approved; United States government takes current form.

1790: Samuel Slater establishes first American textile factory in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. The "Industrial Revolution" follows, with rapidly-growing cities gradually replacing the farm as the living and working environment of most Americans.

1865: Civil War ends. Slavery abolished and voting and citizenship rights granted to blacks by Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments.

1920: Women win the right to vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

1941: United States enters World War II.

1949: Soviets explode the first atomic bomb, and communists take over China, prompting hysteria in America over "Communist threat." Sen. McCarthy begins charging that "subversives" have undermined our government and begins "witch hunts" to get rid of them.

1954: In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* the Supreme Court overturns the principle of "separate but equal."

1964: U.S. begins military presence in Vietnam.

1965: Voting Rights Act nullifies local laws and practices that prevent minorities from voting.

1969: Neil Armstrong becomes the first man to walk on the moon.

1973: Vietnam Peace Accords signed.

1989: Berlin Wall falls.

2001: 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York City.

2003: U.S. begins military presence in Iraq.

A Timeline of Gay and Lesbian History in the United States

1566: First known execution in North America of a person for same-sex sexual activities (by the Spanish in Florida).

1610: Virginia adopts "sodomy laws" of England, making sex between two men a "capital crime" punishable by death. Although no longer a capital crime, sodomy remains an imprisonable offense in the laws of sixteen states.

1642: Elizabeth Johnson becomes the first woman to be punished for violating sodomy laws (Essex County of the Massachusetts Bay Colony).

1744: French missionary Father Charlevoix describes the transgender and homosexual behavior of the Iroquois berdache: "There are men unshamed to wear women's clothing and to practice all the occupations of women, from which follows corruption that I cannot express. They pretend that this usage comes from their religion." In fact, the Iroquois are among 133 North American tribes that honor their two-spirit men and women with a sacred ceremonial role.

1777: In a move seen as "liberal" at the time, Thomas Jefferson proposes a revision of Virginia law to reduce the penalty for sodomy from death to castration. This is never enacted.

1778: Gotthold Enslin becomes the first American discharged from the Army for sodomy.

1860: Walt Whitman publishes "Calamus" poems in *Leaves of Grass*, celebrating his "love for comrades," a veiled reference to his homosexuality. Whitman is typical of the new gay subculture emerging in American cities. Away from the prying eyes of family and small-town neighbors, gay people in cities were freer to act on their sexual orientations than before and found it easier to meet others like themselves. Noted psychiatrist Havlock Ellis was to comment, after a 1915 visit to the United States, that "the world of sexual inverts, indeed, is a large one in any American city."

1869: Hungarian psychologist Benkert invents the word "homosexual" to describe people attracted to the same sex. This signals an important attitude shift brought on by the new medical profession; rather than being a criminal act of a sin (as the act of sodomy was considered to be), loving someone of the same sex was now seen as a psychological "condition" or illness which should be cured, not punished. There is some debate about this date, however. The noted historian Jonathan Katz notes that Benkert uses the word "homosexual" in a letter to Ulrichs in 1868.

1889: Lesbian Jane Addams found Hull House in Chicago, America's first "settlement house" offering services for the poor. Addams is vital in founding the new profession of "social work." As educational and economic opportunities begin to expand for women in the late nineteenth century, more and more enter this new profession. Other professions, like teaching and nursing, also became available, allowing more women to earn their own incomes and live independently, without husbands. Some then were able to act on their same-sex desires. The term "Boston marriage" comes to refer to two women who live together for a long period of time, derived from the large number of professional women who did so in Boston. This independence was the prerequisite for the emergence of lesbian communities.

1924: The Society for Human Rights, America's first known gay rights organization, is founded in Chicago. Police and media harassment forces its disbandment in less than a year. Nevertheless, the "Roaring Twenties" sees a new openness toward homosexuality with gay artists such as Langston Hughes and Bessie Smith achieving prominence.

through the Harlem Renaissance. The new “nightlife” of the era included many “bohemian” clubs where gay people were welcomed.

1929: Stock Market Crash brings on Great Depression of the Thirties, where restricted economic opportunities mean a loss of individual freedom for many, a setback for gays.

1942: U.S. military, under influence of psychiatric establishment, revises codes on homosexual behavior as part of general revisions brought on by World War II. Previously, soldiers could only be expelled if witnessed committing “sodomy”; now being “homosexual” is enough for dismissal. The Army begins asking entering soldiers about their sexual orientations and expelling any recruits or present soldiers who “admit” to their homosexuality, whether or not they have ever acted on these desires. These expulsions are known as “blue discharges” because of the color of the paper on which they are printed. Approximately 100,000 Americans are discharged on this basis over the next 50 years.

1945: World War II ends. The Veterans Benevolent Association is founded in New York by gay service people to fight the “blue discharge” system.

1949: Harry Benjamin begins to treat transsexuals in San Francisco and New York with hormones.

1950: Undersecretary of State John Puerifory speaks of a “pervert peril” in testimony before Congress, leading to “witch hunts” for gays who work in the federal government. Mass expulsions of gay employees begin.

1950: Harry Hay and others found Mattachine Society in Los Angeles, America’s first ongoing gay rights organization.

1953: Newly-elected President Dwight Eisenhower bans employment of gays by the government in Executive Order 10450. Employees of federal, state, and local governments must take “loyalty oaths” to gain employment, swearing (among other things) that they are not homosexual. These regulations are not repealed until 1975.

1955: Phyllis Martin and Del Lyon found America’s first lesbian rights organization, the Daughters of Bilitis, in San Francisco.

1955: Gay African-American activist Bayard Rustin visits Montgomery, Alabama in midst of the famous “bus boycott” led by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. He instructs King and other activists in the techniques of civil disobedience, which becomes the chief tactic of the black Civil

Rights Movement. Rustin later organizes the 1963 March on Washington where King delivers the famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

1958: One magazine, a publication affiliated with Mattachine, wins a case before the Supreme Court against the U.S. Postal Service, which had banned distribution of any publications on homosexuality through the mail as "obscenity."

1965: Gay and lesbian people picket outside federal offices in Washington to protest the government's employment discrimination against gays. This is the first public protest by gay people in the nation's capital.

1969: Angered by police harassment, patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a New York gay bar, fights back during a raid, initiating several days of violence known as the "Stonewall Riots." Gay leadership adopts a new militant attitude, borrowing from other movements of the time, to use such slogans as "Gay is Good" and to found a "Gay Liberation Front." Many cities begin "Gay Pride Marches" in late June to commemorate this uprising against oppression.

1973: The American Psychiatric Association votes to remove homosexuality from its list of "illnesses," ending a century of efforts to "cure" gays by psychologists.

1974: Elaine Noble becomes the first openly lesbian or gay elected to state office when she wins a seat in the Massachusetts State House of Representatives.

1975: Leonard Matlovich sues the Air Force for discharging him because he is gay, and the Army begins to pursue discharge proceedings against openly gay sergeant Perry Watkins. Five years later a federal judge orders the Air Force to reinstate Matlovich. The Air Force offers the former sergeant a \$160,000 settlement instead, and Watkins eventually wins his battle. The rulings pave the way for other successful challenges to the military policy.

1977: In Miami, Florida, Anita Bryant, a former beauty queen, launches a nationwide crusade against gay and lesbian rights in response to Dade County's new municipal rights ordinance forbidding housing and employment discrimination against lesbian and gay men. Accusing lesbians and gay men of corrupting the nation's youth, Bryant dubs her crusade the "Save our Children" campaign.

1977: Harvey Milk is elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, the first openly gay city official in a major American city.

Among his accomplishments was the successful passage of the city's first ordinance protecting lesbians and gay men against discrimination in jobs and housing. One year later he is assassinated by former supervisor Dan White.

1978: The National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays is founded to support local organizing efforts of lesbian and gay African-Americans across the country.

1979: First "March on Washington for Gay Rights" draws 100,000 marchers.

1980: Embracing support from the "Moral Majority," Republican Ronald Reagan in his presidency having pledged to "resist the effortsto obtain government endorsement of homosexuality."

1981: A new disease appears disproportionately among gay men, earning it the media tag "gay cancer" and the medical name "Gay-Related Immune Deficiency." Later known as "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" (AIDS), this disease sweeps through the gay community and other marginalized groups in American society, primarily people of color. Over 100,000 gay men die in the next decade. The "Moral Majority" decrees that the disease is "God's punishment for homosexuality." and the Reagan administration is extremely slow in response to this health crisis. President Reagan does not even mention the word AIDS in public until well into his second term in office, several years into the epidemic. Public health officials cite the Administration's slow rate of response as the central reason for AIDS becoming an epidemic in America.

1982: Wisconsin becomes the first state to ban employment discrimination in the basis of sexual orientation.

1983: The first Gay Games are held in San Francisco. The U.S. Olympics Committee brings the issue of the name "Gay Olympics" to court, though they have allowed both commercial and non-profit groups to use the word "Olympics" in the past.

1986: In a 5-4 vote, the Supreme Court upholds the sodomy laws of the state of Georgia in the *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision. This decision was overruled in 2003 with *Lawrence v. Texas* which struck down remaining sodomy laws in 14 states.

1986: In Fremont, California, Becky Smith and Annie Afelck become the first openly lesbian couple in the United States to be granted legal, joint adoption of a child.

1987: Activists form the "AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power" (ACT UP) in New York. Using direct action civil disobedience techniques, this group spreads nationwide and, through its protest, forces the government to take substantial action to fight AIDS for the first time.

1987: Five hundred thousand attend the second March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which displays the NAMES project AIDS Memorial Quilt for the first time.

1988: The National Education Association adopts a resolution calling for every school district to provide counseling for students struggling with their sexual orientation.

1988: Lesbian and gay men celebrate the first annual National Coming Out Day (October 11).

1989: Denmark becomes the first nation to legalize gay marriage. Norway becomes the second in 1993.

1990: President Bush signs into law the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, the first federal law to include the term "sexual orientation."

1990: Queer Nation, its rhetoric, militancy, media savvy, and membership drawing from ACT UP, is formed in New York.

1991: The "culture war" against art with gay or lesbian content results in the prosecution of a museum displaying a Robert Mapplethorpe exhibit and the rescinding of National Endowment of the Arts' grant to three openly gay lesbian or gay artists.

1992: Bill Clinton is elected to the White House. His views on employment discrimination and gays in the military place him in stark contrast with George Bush. Analysis will show that a decided gender gap in favor of Clinton and a first-ever tangible gay voting bloc are decisive in his winning the presidency.

1992: The Lesbian Avengers is founded in New York, and stages an "International Dyke March" the night before the March on Washington in 1993)

1992: Colorado passes Amendment 2, prohibiting local entities from enacting civil rights protection for lesbian and gay men in the future. One year later, a state district court will overturn the measure. In 1996, the Supreme Court will uphold the district court's decision in *Romer v. Evans*, declaring that "a State cannot deem a class of persons a stranger to its laws."

1993: Massachusetts becomes the first state to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation against public school students, heralding emergence of widespread gay youth activism.

1993: President Clinton's promised lifting of the ban of gays in the military meets with such Congressional and military establishment opposition that he signs the so-called "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" compromise. Activists object that the compromise leaves virtually all of the discriminatory practices intact and even leads to a greater number of gay and lesbian related discharges.

1993: The third March on Washington draws one million to Washington. Its official title is now bi-inclusive (1979 was only "gay"; 1987 was "lesbian and gay"): "March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Rights."

1994: In response to a Hawaii Supreme Court decision questioning the state's right to bar same-sex marriage, the state senate passes a bill declaring that the need to "foster and protect the propagation of the human race" is justification for the ban.

1995: President Clinton finally ends the ban on security clearances for gay people, the last vestige of the McCarthy-era restrictions imposed in the 50s when gays were deemed an automatic threat to national security because of their sexuality.

1995: Coors Brewing Company and the Walt Disney Company begin offering health benefits to domestic partners of the employees.

1996: The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) passes with overwhelming bipartisan support and President Clinton's signature. The law allows states not to recognize same-sex marriages, even when preformed legally in other states.

1996: The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would have prohibited discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation, fails in the Senate by a vote of 50-49. In the event of a tie, Vice President Al Gore had been prepared to vote in favor, and President Clinton had pledged to sign the bill into law. It's the first time a vote on lesbian and gay civil rights has come before the full senate.

1997: Ellen DeGeneres, and her television character Ellen Morgan, came out. Ellen is the first prime time television show to feature an openly gay or lesbian lead character.

1998: Tammy Baldwin is elected to Congress, the first openly gay or lesbian candidate ever to win a first-time election to the House of Representatives.

1998: Matthew Shepard is murdered in Laramie, Wyoming in a hate crime motivated by homophobia.

1999: President Bill Clinton declares the month of June "Gay Pride Month."

1999: A federal judge rules that El Modena High School's Gay/Straight Alliance in Orange County, California must be allowed to meet.

1999: The New Jersey Supreme Court rules that the Boy Scouts' exclusion of gay scouts is "based on little more than prejudice." This decision is overturned by a 5-4 Supreme Court vote in 2000. Following the decision, municipal governments in cities including Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C. sever ties with the Scouts.

2000: Barry Winchell is murdered by a gay basher in an army barrack at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Winchell's parents demand that the military end its "don't ask, don't tell" policy regarding gay recruits, which they say contributed to their son's death.

2000: Vermont passes a "civil unions" law granting gays and lesbians "all the same benefits, protections, and responsibilities...as are granted to spouses in a marriage."

2000: The nation's three largest automakers announce they will offer domestic partner benefits to same-sex partners of employees. More than 3,400 public and private employees now provide such benefits, as opposed to fewer than two dozen companies ten years ago.

2000: Gay activists attempt to stop Dr. Laura Schlessinger, a popular radio show host who describes homosexuality as "a biological error," from producing her own TV show this fall. Major advertisers such as Procter & Gamble and United Airlines withdraw their support of the program.

2002: Discharges from the military for homosexuality and harassment complaints from gay troops set record numbers.

2002: TV celebrity Rosie O'Donnell comes out as a lesbian and provokes discussion about gay adoption.

Adopted from GLSEN, 121 West 27th Street, Suite 304, New York, NY
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