

# PRIDE Month and The History of Stonewall

By Harriet Cripps

PRIDE Month is celebrated every June by members of the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) community and their allies.

The LGBTQ+ RESPECT group will be writing and sharing a series of articles in order to raise awareness of issues relating to the LGBTQ+ community, in the hope that we can share knowledge and insight, and celebrate some of the amazing achievements of this culture.

In this first article we explain some of the history behind PRIDE, including the importance of the Stonewall Riots which took place on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1969 in New York City. As this is one of the most notable events in LGBTQ+ history, the whole month is now dedicated to PRIDE; 30 days of “communities coming together in celebration, protest, unity and solidarity”.<sup>2</sup>



***The rainbow flag is a worldwide symbol of PRIDE***

## History of the LGBT Community in New York

Homosexuality was not decriminalised in New York until 1980. A huge number of LGBT people were regularly arrested as they went about their everyday lives.

Many transgender people or people in drag were arrested due to an antiquated law prohibiting “the dress of the opposite sex”. It was also illegal to serve alcohol to gay people, and to sell alcohol in a ‘disorderly’ establishment. Therefore, venues deemed to be a ‘gay bar’ were raided by police on a regular basis, patrons and staff arrested, alcohol confiscated and the doors padlocked.

Despite all this, New York in 1967 had a vibrant underground LGBTQ+ scene. The Stonewall Inn on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village was one of the most popular places to go.



***The Stonewall Inn, New York City, February 2020***

## The Stonewall Riots

On the night of the Stonewall riots, the Inn was raided. For most of the patrons this would be a usual turn of events, but that night something was different. Fed up of being persecuted and marginalised for nothing more than daring to be themselves in public, people began to fight back, ending with the police barricading themselves inside the Stonewall building.

The riots went on over 6 consecutive nights and ended with 21 arrests in total.

Although uprisings following police raids had occurred prior to this, the scale of the Stonewall riots caused a turning point in the fight for equality and LGBTQ+ civil rights, with organisations being formed globally to help create a fairer future for members of the LGBTQ+ community.



***The very first PRIDE event, New York city, 1970***

Across the street is the Stonewall National Monument, erected in 2016 as a permanent reminder of the events of 51 years ago. It's a beautiful place, and can be explored virtually at <https://stonewallforever.org/>

## **LGBTQ+ Society Today**

While this is a clear sign of how far we as a society have moved forward, it's not enough. Members of the LGBTQ+ society are still attacked, shunned, judged and excluded on a daily basis.

In the last year in the UK:

- 20% of LGBT people have experienced discriminatory comments from work colleagues
- One in eight trans people have been physically attacked whilst at work
- Over one third of LGBT people are so afraid of discrimination in the workplace that they have actively hidden their gender identity or sexual orientation.



***Stonewall National Monument, New York, 2020***

We want this to be a workplace in which everyone feels comfortable being their true self. Everyone can help; even if you don't identify as LGBTQ+. You can pledge to be an ally, speak up if you hear something that isn't right and you can actively learn about LGBTQ+ history. We will be publishing a set of intranet articles on a variety of topics, and during PRIDE month there will be various events that you can get involved in.

Keep an eye out on the ["Hyperion LGBT+ and Allies Network" Workplace Group](#), or contact [Harriet Cripps](#), [Annabel Francis](#), [Caroline Chippett](#) or [Elliott Nice](#) for more information.

**References:**

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