

Bottles, coins and ripped cobblestones flew towards the police officers. The sudden explosion forced the police to retreat inside Stonewall, where they had to endure the siege while waiting for backup. When the New York Police Department's prevention squads arrived on Christopher Street the clash with the gathered crowd began. How many times the policemen pushed the protesters away, the protesters gathered again. Such a 'dance' continued until dawn. The heroine of these events was Marsha P. Johnson, whom many protesters remembered as the bravest and most charismatic leader of the struggle.

Just when it seemed to be all over during the day, another crowd gathered in front of the Stonewall Inn in the evening, and the rioting continued for another night before finally dying down on the morning of June 30.



Aftermath

The uprising at the Stonewall Inn proved to be fraught with consequences. The energy unleashed by the clash with the police gave momentum to the movement to fight for the rights of LGBTQ+ people. The number of organizations active in the U.S. grew from about 60 to 1,500 within a year. On the anniversary of the uprising, the first-ever equality marches passed through the streets of New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. From that point on, there was no turning back and the movement to fight for equal rights began its march.



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EQUAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY - STONEWALL RIOTS





LGBTQ+ and 'Era of Conformism'

LGBTQ+ people have faced persecution for centuries. It was no different in the U.S. after the end of World War II, during the so-called 'Era of Conformism.' Post-war America was swept by a wave of conservatism and aversion to otherness, which lasted until the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s. One manifestation of this attitude was the increased persecution of LGBTQ+ people, which manifested itself in the form of, among other things, bans on working for homosexuals in federal institutions, or the increased frequency and brutality of police raids on premises where LGBTQ+ people met. All states had laws providing for imprisonment for homosexual relations.

At the same time, this period is the birth of the movement to fight for rights for sexual minorities. In 1950, the first organization fighting for gay rights, the Mattachine Society, was founded, joined in 1955 by the lesbian organization Daughters of Bilitis. Progress was also made in the field of science when, in 1948, Alfred Kinsey published the book *Sexual Behavior of Men*, revolutionizing how homosexuality was viewed.

Despite this, until the late 1960s, LGBTQ+ people had to live in the shadows and face harassment. The most spectacular were police rallies, during which officers were often very violent, especially against people dressed in a manner inconsistent with their gender. Sometimes these rallies were met with active resistance, as happened, for example, at the Compton Cafeteria in Los Angeles in 1966, but these riots had little resonance.

Stonewall Inn

A haven for LGBTQ+ people in New York was the Greenwich Village neighborhood, which had many 'gay-friendly' establishments. One such place was the Stonewall Inn pub on Christopher Street. Commonly, the place was considered a tavern serving watered-down drinks that was run by the Mafia. However, it was also one of the few places that was friendly to drag queens and transgender people, as well as a place where homeless youth living in Christopher Street Park could afford a drink.



Uprising

On June 28, at around 1 a.m., six policemen and policewomen entered the Stonewall Inn. On the pretext of selling alcohol without a license, they closed the premises and questioned the customers. Those without documents or dressed incongruously were detained and were to be taken to the station. Unlike in cases of previous rallies, the expelled and released from Stonewall did not disperse, but gathered in front of the entrance to the premises. The protracted intervention caused the crowd to grow larger and become increasingly agitated. Finally, the policemen began to bring out the detainees and lead them to the radio car. One of the detainees, brutally held down by the officers, shouted: 'Do something!' It was the spark that caused the explosion.