Adapted with permission from *Out of the Past: 400 Years of Lesbian and Gay History in America* (Byard, E. 1997, www.pbs.org/outofthepast) with additions and updates from *Bending the Mold: An Action Kit for Transgender Youth* (NYAC & Lambda Legal); *The American Gay Rights Movement: A Timeline*; Just the Facts about Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators, and School Personnel (Just the Facts Coalition).

Additional materials and study guide by GSAFE (www.gsafewi.org)

READ MORE

This resource has primarily been adapted from PBS Online's *Out of the Past: 400 Years Lesbian and Gay History in America* (Byard, E., 1997, www.pbs.org/outofthepast/). The interactive timeline online allows users to click on dates to read details about people, policies, and events that have shaped the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people living in the United States.

Several items on the PBS timeline online expand to reveal more details and in-depth descriptions. These have been marked with the bolded words **READ MORE** on this document.

Three examples of the expanded readings you will find online are shared at the end of this document. We encourage you and your students to go online to READ MORE about the people, places, and events that capture your attention.

Each item on this timeline, of course, offers an opportunity to read more. The PBS site includes an extensive bibliography for further research and exploration. GSA for Safe Schools also offers a bibliography of suggested reading in LGBT history.

WATCH

Six of the people featured on the PBS timeline are profiled in the documentary *Out of the Past* and have been marked with the bolded words **WATCH** on this document. These individuals are:

- Michael Wigglesworth
- Sarah Orne Jewett
- Henry Gerber
- Bayard Rustin
- Barbara Gittings
- Kelli Peterson

The documentary is available for purchase through various retail and online stores for about \$10. It is an excellent resource for your GSA and school library.

The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) published a teachers' guide to accompany the documentary. The 31-page resource contains historical context, ideas for discussion, and suggested assignments for each of the video's six segments. A glossary, bibliography and resource section are also included. The teachers' guide is available as a free download from the GLSEN website (www.glsen.org).

Many additional films and documentaries have captured the events, individuals, and issues that have shaped and defined the progress of the LGBT community in the U.S.

Ways to Use this Timeline

This timeline was designed as a starting point for classroom and student club discussions, exploration, and research. A sample lesson plan is included. However, there are many additional ways to use this resource.

The timeline can be printed, copied, and posted in full or in part in the classroom, on a bulletin board, or in a display case.

Another option is to search the timeline and build smaller timelines based around themes ("Famous Lesbian," "LGBT People of Color," "LGBT People and the Military") or time periods ("The Modern Gay Rights Movement," "Early Gay American History").

Make your own version of LGBT Jeopardy and divide your class or club into teams. Create a multiple choice quiz from the timeline and post the group results in your room. Consider taking the quiz as a school staff.

Use the timeline as the starting point for research projects. Another class or group project could involve researching and presenting local LGBT history and/or gathering oral histories.

Hold a movie night or show segments of films or documentaries in your classroom that profile people and events from the timeline.

Create a library display feature books with LGBT themes or by LGBT authors.

1624

Richard Cornish is executed in Virginia for alleged homosexual acts with a servant.

READ MORE
"Sodomy Laws"

1642

In Essex County,
Massachusetts,
Elizabeth Johnson
is fined and
whipped for
"unseemly
practices with
another maid
attempting to do
that which man
and woman do."

1652

Joseph Davis of Haverhill, New Hampshire, is fined for "putting on women's apparel" and made to admit his guilt to the community.

READ MORE
"Colonial European
Cross-Dressing"

1677

The sodomy trial of Nicholas Sension of Windsor, Connecticut, reveals that Sension has been open about his desire for men for more than 30 years.

READ MORE
"Act v. Identity"

1698

A French explorer among the Illinois Indians remarks on the number of "berdaches" (men living as women) and the prevalence of homosexual activity. Note: "berdache" is considered and offensive term by Native American and Two-Spirit people.

READ MORE
"Native American
Sexuality"

1636

In Massachusetts, the Reverend John Cotton proposes including sexual relations between women in the definition of "sodomy" for the first time.

1649

Sara Norman and Mary Hammon of Yarmouth, Plymouth Colony, are taken to court for "leude behaviour each with [the] other upon a bed."

1662

The first edition of Michael
Wigglesworth's The Day of Doom is
published. This epic poem about the Day
of Judgement quickly becomes America's
first best seller, with 1800 copies sold
during the first year.

READ MORE "Michael Wigglesworth"

WATCH
The Diary of Michael Wigglesworth

1691

In Massachusetts, Deborah Byar is fined and publicly humiliated for wearing men's clothes.

1704

Lord Cornbury, the royal governor of New York and New Jersey, is accused by his critics of dressing as a woman to hold court.

1756

Steven Gorton, a married Baptist minister, is suspended from his position in New London, Connecticut, for "unchaste behavior with his fellow men when in bed with them." Gorton confessed and the congregation voted to reinstate him.

1779

In an example of "romantic friendship" between men, Alexander Hamilton writes to his friend, John Laurens, "I wish, my dear Laurens, that it might be in my power, by action, rather than words, to convince you that I love you."

READ MORE
"Romantic Friendships
Among Men"

1782

Deborah
Sampson,
disguised as
"Robert
Shurtleff," enlists
in the Continental
Army.

1752

"Dr. Charles
Hamilton" is
arrested in Chester,
Pennsylvania, and
revealed to be
Charlotte Hamilton,
who confessed to
having lived in
disguise as a man
for several years.

1777

Thomas Jefferson revises Virginia law to make sodomy (committed by men or women) punishable by mutilation rather than death.

1780

A Native American
"joya" (a man living as
a woman) and her
husband visit a Spanish
mission near Santa
Barbara, California. A
priest notes how
common joya are in
local villages.

1798

Moreau de St.
Mery, a Frenchman
living in
Philadelphia, writes
that the women he
has met "are not at
all strangers to
being willing to
seek unnatural
pleasures with
persons of the
same sex."

1826

Jeff Withers and James Hammond, two young Southerners who would become prominent citizens, write playfully and graphically erotic letters about their past involvement with each other.

1850

Crow nation Woman
Chief Barcheeampe is
spotted by appalled
white travelers in
Wyoming and
Montana; she is
renowned for her war
exploits and for
having several wives.

1857

Charlotte Cushman, an actress famous for playing male roles, begins living with sculptor Emma Stebbins. It was the last in Cushman's long sequence of relationships with women. The two remained together until Cushman's death in 1876.

1860

New edition of Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass includes the homoerotic Calamus Poems.

READ MORE "Walt Whitman"

1863

Colonel Conrad of the 15th Missouri discovers that two women passing (being regarded as a sociological group other than a person's own) as men have enlisted as soldiers in his detachment, and that "an intimacy had sprung up between them." At least 400 women passed as men and served as soldiers in the Civil War, according to a 20th-century researcher working with wartime medical records.

READ MORE "Passing Women"

1846

A white traveler in Wyoming records the deep friendship of two Sioux men, Hail-Storm and Rabbit, who "ate, slept, and hunted together, and shared almost all that they possessed." Such romantic friendships, he noted, were "common among many of the prairie tribes."

1856

Woman Chief, a woman warrior of the Crow Nation, is killed on a peacemaking expedition. She left behind four wives.

1859

Addie Brown and Rebecca
Primus, two AfricanAmerican women living in
the North, begin their
loving correspondence.
Brown writes to Primus, "If
you was a man, what
would things come to?
They would come to
something very quick."

1861

Franklin Thompson, born
Sarah Emma Edmonds,
fights for the Union Army
in the Civil War. During
the war, Franklin serves as
a spy, nurse, dispatch
carrier and later is the only
woman mustered into the
Grand Army of the
Republic.

1875

In San Francisco, passing woman Jeanne Bonnet leads an all-woman gang of former prostitutes who swear off men and support themselves through theft and shoplifting. In 1876, Bonnet was murdered by an angry pimp while sleeping with her lover, Blanche Buneau.

1878

"Mrs. Nash," a
laundress with the 7th
US Cavalry who had
several soldier
husbands, dies in the
Dakota Territory and is
revealed to have been
a man. Her last
husband, a corporal,
committed suicide after
the revelation.

1886

We'Wha, an accomplished Zuni Weaver and potter, is two spirit – born male but living as a woman. She spends six months in Washington, DC, and meets President Grover Cleveland, who never realizes this sixfoot Zuni maiden was born male.

READ MORE "We'Wha"

1890

Frances Willard, a white temperance activist, writes in her autobiography: "The loves of women for each other grow more numerous each day. That so little should be said about them surprises me, for they are everywhere."

1895

Angelina Weld
Grimke, a young
woman who would
become a celebrated
poet of the Harlem
Renaissance, writes
to Mamie Burrill, "If
you only knew how
my heart beats when
I think of you. Your
passionate lover,
Angelina."

1876

Fitz-Green Halleck, a popular poet whose defenses of love between men influenced Walt Whitman, is honored with the first statue commemorating an American poet, unveiled in New York's Central Park by President Rutherford B. Hayes.

1882

A young Oscar Wilde calls on Walt Whitman in Camden, New Jersey, in the midst of a triumphant cross-country speaking tour. Widespread press coverage of the tour noted Wilde's effeminacy, and one newspaper wrote, "There is a school of gilded youths eager to embrace his peculiar tenets."

1889

Jane Addams and her "devoted companion," Ellen Gates Starr, found Hull House in Chicago.

READ MORE "Women's Independence and Sexual Possibility"

Dr. G. Frank Lydston reports that "there is in every community of any size a colony of male sexual perverts known to each other, likely to congregate together, and characterized by effeminacy of voice, dress, and manner."

1894

"Frank Blunt," a married man, is convicted of theft in Font du Lac, Wisconsin, and is revealed to be a woman named Anna Morris. Gertrude Field, Morris' wife, vows to appeal the conviction.

1896

Writer Sarah Orne Jewett publishes "Martha's Lady," a short story celebrating the redemptive power of love between women. Jewett lived for nearly 30 years in a "Boston Marriage" (romantic friendship) with Annie Adams Fields.

WATCH Scenes From a Boston Marriage

READ MORE
"Sarah Orne Jewett"

1907

A German paper supportive of homosexuals prints an anonymous "Letter from Boston," which reports: "Here, as in Germany, homosexuality extends throughout all classes, from the slums of the North End to the highly fashionable Back Bay. Reliable homosexuals have told me names that reach into the highest circles of Boston, New York, and Washington, DC, names which have left me speechless with astonishment."

1915

On a speaking tour crossing the country Emma Goldman defends lesbianism and homosexuality. Goldman's appearances prompted many women, unhappy with having to hide their lesbianism, to share their stories with her.

Havelock Ellis notes customs of "sexual inverts."

READ MORE "Gay Codes"

1925

Blueswoman Ma Rainey is arrested in her house in Harlem for having a lesbian party. Her protege, Bessie Smith, bails her out of jail the following morning. Rainey and Smith were part of an extensive circle of lesbian and bisexual African-American women in Harlem.

READ MORE "Blueswomen in Harlem"

1926

Crow warrior hero Osh-Tish, a "bade" (man who dressed as a woman), dies. White Indian agents had attacked Osh-Tish and the bade tradition for years, and no other Crow men took up the bade role after his death.

The Broadway performance of The Captive, a play about a lesbian relationship, prompts a New York State law making the performance of any play depicting "sex perversion" a misdemeanor. The law remained on the books until 1967.

1914

Medical article links women's participation in the suffrage movement with "repressed homosexuality."

READ MORE
"Medical Theory and
Homosexuality"

1917

US immigration law is modified to ban "persons with abnormal sexual instincts" from entering the United States.

1924

Henry Gerber and six other men in Chicago found the Society for Human Rights, the United States' first known gay-rights organization.

> WATCH Henry Gerber's Declaration

> READ MORE "Henry Gerber"

1925

Eva Kochever, a Polish-Jewish immigrant, opens "Eve Addam's Tearoom" in Greenwich Village. The lesbian gathering place had a sign at the door which read, "Men are admitted but not welcome." In 1926, the tea room was raided, and Eva Kochever was deported, charged with "disorderly conduct" and writing an "obscene" book, Lesbian Love.

1928

Radclyffe Hall's Well of Loneliness, a novel banned in England for its lesbian content, is published in the United States and becomes an immediate best-seller. In 1929, an appellate court holds that the book is not obscene, and the book is even more widely distributed.

1931

The Baltimore Afro-American covers a local drag ball, describing the "coming out of new debutantes into gay society."

READ MORE "Coming Out"

1933

Eleanor Roosevelt and her lover, journalist Lorena Hickok, begin their voluminous correspondence as Roosevelt moves into the White House. During one separation Hickok writes: "I've been trying today to bring back your face. Most clearly I remember your eyes, with a kind of teasing smile in them, and the feeling of that soft spot just north-east of the corner of your mouth against my lips."

1935

Sigmund Freud writes
"Letter to an
American Mother,"
urging compassion
and tolerance for
homosexuality.

READ MORE
"Freud's Letter to
an American
Mother"

1941

Gay men and lesbians become part of the massive mobilization for World War II, transforming lesbian and gay life in the United States.

READ MORE
"World War II and
the Growth of Gay
Communities"

1944

The Army conducts an investigation of lesbian activity at the Women's Army Corps training center in Georgia. Its findings lead to a call for more stringent screening of WAC recruits.

1948

Kinsey's study of sexuality in the US reveals that 50 percent of American men and 28 percent of American women have "homosexual tendencies," shocking the American public.

Gore Vidal's novel *The City* and the *Pillar* is published, providing readers with an insider's portrait of gay life.

1932

Molly Dewson, a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, is appointed head of the Women's Division of the Democratic Party by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Dewson had a life partnership with another woman, and was one of many women in such partnerships who held positions in the Roosevelt administration.

1934

Hollywood adopts the socalled "Hayes Code," which stipulates, among other things, that "sex perversion or any inference to it is forbidden on the screen." lesbianism, to share their stories with her.

1939

The Jewel Box Revue, a troupe of female impersonators, begins touring the US from its base at the Jewel Box in Miami. The show is integrated, featuring African-American, Latino, Native American, and white performers, and is introduced by Storme DeLarverie in drag as a man.

1942

Working with psychiatrists, the military develops guidelines for recruiters in order to identify and exclude gay men from the services.

1947

The State Department begins firing suspected homosexuals under President Truman's National Security Loyalty Program. By 1955, anti-gay witch hunts cost more than 1,200 men and women their jobs with the federal government.

READ MORE
"Government Witch Hunts
and Military Discharges"

1950

The Mattachine Society, a "homophile" organization aimed at promoting tolerance of homosexuality, is founded in Los Angeles by Harry Hay.

READ MORE 'The Mattachine Society"

The lesbian-themed novel Women's Barracks becomes a bestseller.

1953

President Dwight D. Eisenhower issues Executive Order #10450, banning the employment of homosexuals by the federal government. Many state and local governments soon adopted similar policies.

One, the first openly lesbian and gay national publication in the United States, puts out its first issue. In 1958, the US Supreme Court ruled that the publication was not obscene and could be distributed through the US mail.

1955

Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon, and six other women found Daughters of Bilitis, the first national lesbian rights group, in San Francisco.

Allen Ginsberg gives a public reading of *Howl* in San Francisco. The police charge him with obscenity but lose in court.

READ MORE
"Allen Ginsberg"

1957

A Navy report concludes that there is no evidence that "homosexuals cannot acceptably serve in the military" or that they are security risks. The report is suppressed until 1967.

The American Civil Liberties Union declares that "homosexuality is a valid consideration in evaluating the risk factor in sensitive positions," and advises lesbians facing official discrimination to become heterosexual.

1952

Christine Jorgensen is the first American whose sex reassignment surgery became public. Her surgery causes an international sensation, and for many, she is the first visible transsexual in the media.

1954

The Army-McCarthy hearings include the gay-baiting of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy's aide Roy Cohn and Army attorney Jack Welch before a national television audience.

1956

James Baldwin,
African-American
novelist and
intellectual, publishes
Giovanni's Room, a
male love story.

1958

Barbara Gittings forms the first East Coast Chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis.

READ MORE "Daughters of Bilitis"

1960

Daughters of Bilitis hold the first "national lesbian convention" in San Francisco.

1962

Illinois becomes first state to decriminalize homosexual contact between consenting adults.

1964

Just before the election,
Walter Jenkins, President
Lyndon Johnson's chief of
staff, is arrested in a
bathroom two blocks from
the White House for
"indecent gestures." He
resigns immediately.

1967

The Student Homophile League at Columbia University becomes the first lesbian and gay campus group to gain official recognition.

The Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, the first gay book store in the United States, opens in Greenwich Village.

1961

Hollywood studios alter the production code to allow the depiction of gay men and lesbians again, as long as the subject is treated with "care, discretion, and restraint."

1963

Senator Strom Thurmond attempts to derail the Civil Rights March on Washington by accusing March organizer Bayard Rustin of being a Communist and a "pervert." Thurmond failed, and in August, more than 250,000 people converged on the nation's capital to demand jobs and freedom for African-Americans.

WATCH The Baiting of Bayard Rustin

READ MORE "Bayard Rustin"

1965

Barbara Gittings, Frank Kameny and other homophile activists stage the first public picketing to protest government discrimination against lesbians and gay men. Pickets are held at the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon, and Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

WATCH Barbara Gittings: A Fate on the Front

READ MORE "Barbara Gittings"

1969

Transgender and gendernonconforming people are among those who resisted arrest in a routine bar raid by police on June 28 on the Stonewall Inn in New York City's Greenwich Village, thus helping to ignite the modern LGBT rights movement.

READ MORE "The Stonewall Riots"

1970

Lesbians stage
"Lavender Menace"
protest action at a
feminist conference,
pressing The National
Organization for
Women, and the
women's movement in
general, to change its
stance on lesbianism.

READ MORE "Lesbian Feminism"

1973

The American Psychiatric Association declares that homosexuality per se is not a psychiatric disorder.

1975

US Civil Service Commission announces it will no longer exclude homosexuals from government employment.

Elaine Noble becomes the first openly lesbian or gay legislator as she takes her seat in the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

Minneapolis, Minnesota becomes the first U.S. city to protect transgender people by amending its local non-discrimination law to include the phrase "having or projecting a self-image not associated with one's biological maleness or one's biological femaleness."

1977

Anita Bryant founds
"Save Our Children,"
and starts organized
opposition to the
movement for lesbian
and gay rights.

READ MORE
"Anti-gay Organizing
on the Right"

1979

Over 100,000 people take part in the first March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

1972

In *Baker v. Nelson* the Minnesota Supreme Court rules that state law limits marriage to opposite-sex couples and that this limitation does not violate the United States Constitution. The United States Supreme Court dismisses an appeal, thereby establishing the precedent on same-sex marriage.

1974

The Lesbian Herstory
Archives open to the public
in the New York apartment
of Joan Nestle and Deborah
Edel. In 1993, the Archives'
large and growing collection
moved to a Brooklyn
brownstone.

Disco introduces gay culture to the mainstream.

READ MORE
"Disco Decade"

1976

The first Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is held in Hart, Michigan. The festival is one of the largest and most visible lesbian events in the United States.

1978

Harvey Milk, gay San
Francisco city supervisor and
"Mayor of Castro Street,"
and Mayor George Moscone
are murdered in City Hall by
former city supervisor Dan
White.

READ MORE "Harvey Milk"

1981

Doctors identify first cases of what they term "Gay-Related Immune Deficiency" (GRID). Soon the disease's name is changed to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

The Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press is founded by Barbara Smith, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Hattie Gossett, and Myrna Bain in New York City. That same year, Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua co-edit This Bridge Called My Back: The Writings of Radical Women of Color.

READ MORE
"AIDS" and
"Woman of Color Organize"

1985

Rock Hudson acknowledges that he has AIDS, prompting widespread public attention to the epidemic.

The Times of Harvey Milk, a documentary about the career and the murder of the gay San Francisco city supervisor, wins an Academy Award.

1987

ACT UP (Aids Coalition to Unleash Power) is founded in New York City. The group's tactics rejuvenate lesbian and gay activism.

READ MORE "AIDS and ACT UP"

The Second National March on Washington for gay and lesbian equality draws 500,000.

1989

Celebrated jazz musician Billy Tipton dies in Spokane, Washington, revealing that he is a woman. Tipton, who played in big bands in the '40s and '50s, lived for 56 years as a man, marrying several times and raising children.

1982

Wisconsin passes the first lesbian and gay civil rights bill in the United States. The law prohibits bias in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

1986

In Bowers v. Hardwick, the Supreme Court rules that the Constitution allows states to pass and enforce sodomy laws targeting homosexuals.

READ MORE "Bowers v Hardwick"

Conservative activist Terry Dolan dies of AIDS. His funeral is attended by conservative political associates such as Senator Orrin Hatch and Pat Robertson, as well as by Dolan's gay friends.

1988

The first National Coming Out Day is observed on October 11 to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the 2nd National March on Washington.

The governing board of the City College of San Francisco approves the creation of the first gay and lesbian studies department in the United States.

READ MORE "Lesbian and Gay Studies"

1990

The Gay and Lesbian Independent School Teachers Network (GLSTN) is founded. Only two known high school student clubs, known as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), exist in the US at the time.

Term "outing" is coined by *Time* magazine to describe Michelangelo Signorile's campaign to identify closeted celebrities and elected officials.

Policies restricting the immigration of lesbians and gays to the United States are rescinded. Immigration restrictions on people with HIV and AIDS, however, remain in place.

1992

Black lesbian poet Audre Lorde dies of breast cancer. At the time of her death, she was the poet laureate of New York State.

1995

President Bill Clinton signs an executive order forbidding the denial of security clearances on the basis of sexual orientation. Being closeted and vulnerable to blackmail, however, is still a possible grounds for a clearance denial.



1991

FTM activist Jamison "James" Green takes over Lou Sullivan's FTM newsletter and transforms it into FTM International, Inc., the world's largest information and networking group for female-to-male transgender people and transsexual men.

Karen Thompson is named legal guardian of her lover, Sharon Kowalski, eight years after a car accident left Kowalski paralyzed and speech-impaired. Kowalski's family had refused to recognize the pair's relationship, and the ruling was a major victory for lesbian and gay couples.

1993

The Minnesota state legislature enacts the first statwide law banning discrimination against transgender people.

Cheryl Chase founds the Intersex Society of North America to build awareness and offer support to intersex people.

Transgender youth Brandon Teena is raped and murdered in Humboldt, Nebraska. This crime brings attention to transgender discrimination and violence and becomes the subject of the award-winning film, *Boys Don't Cry*.

Senator Sam Nunn's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy for the US military becomes law. The law includes the determination that "persons who demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in homosexual acts" are an "unacceptable risk" for inclusion in the military. Witch hunts against gay men and lesbians in the military continue to this day.

The third lesbian and gay March on Washington draws over 1 million participants.

1996

President Clinton signs the Defense of Marriage Act, denying federal benefits to same-sex spouses should gay marriage ever become legal, and creating an exception to the US Constitution to allow states to disregard same-sex marriages performed in other states.

Kelli Peterson founds a Gay-Straight Alliance at East High School in Salt Lake City, Utah. The city school board bans all "non-curricular" student clubs in order to keep the group from meeting.

WATCH Kelli Peterson and a New Generation of Activists

READ MORE
"Kelli Peterson"

1998

Wisconsin Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin becomes the first openly gay person to win election to a first-term seat in Congress.

Matthew Shepard is tied to fence, beaten, and left to die by Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson outside Laramie, WY on October 7th. The incident gains national media attention and sparks vigils around the world. Shepard dies five days later. His death inspires the award-winning play *The Laramie Project*

1996 (cont)

Students at the University of Virginia organize the first Day of Silence in response to a class assignment about non-violent protests.

A federal appeals court issues the first judicial opinion in US history finding that a public school could be held constitutionally accountable for not stopping antigay abuse. Ashland, WI school officials knew of anti-gay abuse directed at student Jamie Nabozny but did not intervene. Those officials later offer a settlement of nearly \$1 million to Nabozny.

In Romer v. Evans, the Supreme Court strikes down Colorado's Amendment 2, which denied gays and lesbians protections against discrimination, calling them "special rights." According to Justice Anthony Kennedy, "We find nothing special in the protections Amendment 2 withholds. These protections . . . constitute ordinary civil life in a free society."

1997

Trans Activist Leslie Feinberg published *Transgender Warriors:* Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman, a who's who of transgender people throughout world history that traces the roots of transgender oppression.

1999

The American Counseling
Association Governing Council
adopts a position "opposing
'reparative therapy' as a 'cure'
for individuals who are
homosexual." Numerous
medical, health, and mental
health organizations –
representing over 480,000
professionals – adopt position
the "homosexuality is not a
mental disorder and thus not
something that needs to be or
can be 'cured.'"

2000

Vermont becomes the first state in the country to legally recognize civil unions between gay or lesbian couples. The law states that these "couples would be entitled to the same benefits, privileges, and responsibilities as spouses." It stops short of referring to same-sex unions as marriage, which the state defines as heterosexual.

2004

Massachusetts legalizes samesex marriage, officially becoming the first state in the U.S. to do so.

2008

The California Supreme Court rules that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry. California becomes the second state in the U.S. to legalize same-sex marriages later that year.

2003

The U.S. Supreme Court rules in *Lawrence v Texas* that sodomy laws in the U.S. are unconstitutional. Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote, "Liberty presumes an autonomy of self that includes freedom of thought, belief, expression, and certain intimate conduct."

V. Gene Robinson is elected bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. He enters office in 2004, becoming the first openly gay, non-celibate priest to be ordained a bishop in a major Christian denomination.

The Massachusetts Supreme Court rules that barring gays and lesbian from marrying violates the state constitution. The Massachusetts Chief Justice concludes that to "deny the protections, benefits, and obligations conferred by civil marriage" to gay couples is unconstitutional because is denies "the dignity and equality of all individuals" and makes them "second-class citizens."

1624 - Sodomy Laws

European colonial governments sought to control the sexual behavior of the people within their settlements. The British, French, and Spanish all passed laws regarding sex outside of marriage and "sodomy" - a range of same-sex sexual activities. In early British colonies, as under English law, sodomy was a capital crime (punishable by death). One of the earliest recorded convictions for sodomy in the colonies was that of Richard Cornish, a sea captain executed in Virginia for an alleged sexual assault on another man.

Colonial authorities were not always certain which sexual acts fell under the category of "sodomy." Religious leaders debated the point in the early 1600s, and the laws adopted by different colonies varied in what specific acts were punishable by death. Most only dealt with sexual acts between men. One law also covered sexual activity between women. Despite the severity of the laws, however, we know of only a few instances of executions in sodomy cases during the colonial period. People were more likely to be tried for the lesser offense of "lewd behavior," which did not incur the death penalty. Sodomy was a difficult charge to prove - two witnesses were required, and there was no possibility of a tell-tale pregnancy - and people may have been reluctant to place their neighbors' lives in jeopardy with such a dire accusation.

1652 - Colonial European Cross-dressing

Men dressing as women (and, to a lesser extent, women dressing as men) was not uncommon in European society, usually among common people in the context of social protests and Carnival celebrations. Men who crossdressed were more likely to be in disguise or making a political statement than expressing anything about their sexual identity in the manner of a modern-day "drag queen." Colonial laws actually made it a crime to crossdress, usually imposing a fine and some form of public contrition for the offense. Laws about what people could wear were generally intended to preserve social order and maintain a hierarchy within society, and were not directly concerned with homosexuality. However, evidence from England in the early 1700s indicates that there was some link between cross-dressing and male homosexuality in British popular culture. In London, observers wrote about a type of man referred to as a "mollie," who enjoyed sex with other men. Some mollies wore women's clothes. The accusations of cross-dressing lodged against New York's royal governor in 1704 may have been meant to make this association in order to ruin his reputation.

Women's motives for dressing as men were also probably mixed - to lodge a protest or to be in disguise. However, the possible sexual aspects of women's cross-dressing should not be overlooked. A writer describing Deborah Sampson's career as a male soldier during the Revolutionary War took great pains to explain Sampson's reported affairs with other women while disguised: "It must be supposed that she acted more from necessity than voluntary impulse of passion; and no doubt succeeded beyond her expectations, or desires."

1677 - Acts v. Identity

Looking at historical evidence of homosexual behavior, it is hard to figure out how people in the past understood and interpreted same-sex sexuality. In New England, for example, laws and religious thinkers condemned many different kinds of sexual activity (both heterosexual and homosexual) as sinful acts, but it is not clear whether people who engaged in sexual activity with people of the same sex were considered to be a different kind of person - like a "gay man" or a "lesbian" in modern society. It is also unclear whether all members of the society shared the official attitude toward homosexuality expressed by harsh anti-sodomy laws.

The 1677 sodomy trial of Nicholas Sension offers some interesting clues as to popular attitudes toward and perceptions of homosexual activities in colonial society. Historian Richard Godbeer points out that Sension had been open about his desire for other men for many years, and had not faced any serious punishment for his behavior despite his notoriety. His neighbors who testified in court had resisted his advances, but hadn't felt the need to report him to the authorities. Godbeer notes that witnesses at the trial also used language which might suggest that they understood Sension to be a different kind of person who was attracted to other men.