LGBT History Timeline **
This is a collection of some of the major happenings in the LGBT community during the 20th century through today. Please note that this is not a comprehensive list.

1913 Alfred Redl, head of Austrian Intelligence, committed suicide after being identified as a Russian double agent and a homosexual. His widely-published arrest gave birth to the notion that gay people are security risks.

1919 Magnus Hirschfeld founded the Institute for Sexology in Berlin. One of the primary focuses of this institute was civil rights for women and gay people.

1933 On January 30, Adolf Hitler banned the gay press in Germany. In that same year, Magnus Hirschfeld’s Institute for Sexology was raided and over 12,000 books, periodicals, works of art and other materials were burned. Many of these items were completely irreplaceable.

1934 Gay people were beginning to be rounded up from German-occupied countries and sent to concentration camps. Just as Jews were made to wear the Star of David on the prison uniforms, gay men were required to wear a pink triangle, and lesbian women, a black triangle.

1947 The first U.S. lesbian magazine, Vice-Versa, was published.

1948 The Kinsey Report surprised almost everyone with its findings that 4% of men identified themselves as exclusively homosexual while 37% had had sexual relations with other men in their adult lives.

1950 The Mattachine Society, often considered the beginning of the contemporary organized gay rights movement in the U.S., was first organized. Its goal was to challenge prejudice and to help gay and lesbian persons realize their collective histories and experiences. The name Mattachine was derived from medieval French history and referred to jesters who always wore masks in public.

1955 The Daughters of Bilitis, a lesbian organization, was founded. The name was taken from the poem “Songs of Bilitis,” by Pierre Louys.

1957 The Kinsey Report revealed that 10% of the male population is predominantly gay.

1961 Illinois became the first state to decriminalize homosexual acts.

1967 Britain decriminalized gay sex between consenting adults.

1968 The Metropolitan Community Church is founded in Los Angeles by Rev. Troy Perry.

1969 In June, the Stonewall Riots in New York City’s Greenwich Village marked the beginning of major resistance by gay men and lesbians to discrimination. Police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay pub, and were caught off guard by the amount of resistance levied by patrons. The police barricaded themselves inside the Inn to protect themselves from the patrons, who were throwing bricks and bottles. This was the first substantial resistance to harassment that gay men and lesbians had put forward.

1969 Canada decriminalized homosexuality.

1970 In the summer about 200 Chicagoans took to the streets of their city with signs carrying simple messages such as “I am Gay,” “Gay is as Good as Straight,” and “I Exist!”

1972 The United Church of Christ becomes the first mainline Christian denomination to ordain an openly gay man as a minister.

1973 The board of the American Psychiatric Association voted unanimously to remove Homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses.

1977 Anita Bryant launches her “Save Our Children” campaign, protesting the Miami-Dade County gay rights ordinance. Voters subsequently overturned the ordinance by a 2-1 margin.

1978 In San Francisco, openly gay city council member Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone were murdered. In 1979, the convicted murderer Dan White received a verdict of voluntary manslaughter and a sentence of 7-8 years. This caused massive protests throughout the country as gay men and lesbians saw this as yet another blatant example of discrimination.

1979 On May 31, the California Supreme Court made a landmark decision that public utility companies may not arbitrarily refuse to hire homosexuals, nor can they interfere with employee involvement in gay organizations.

1979 On October 14, over 100,000 people participated in the first National March on Washington (DC) for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

1981 Wisconsin became the first state to pass state-wide gay rights legislation.
1981 Doctors at the CDC first report cases of a rare form of skin cancer and a rare lung infection among gay men. This is generally regarded as the beginning of the AIDS crisis in the U.S.

1982 The first International Gay Games were held in San Francisco. Over 1,300 gay men and lesbian athletes from 28 states and 10 nations participated.

1982 The first public mention of AIDS by the Reagan administration occurs during a press briefing. Larry Speakes, the White House press secretary, responds to a reporter’s question about the emerging virus by turning it into a joke.

1984 The *Wall Street Journal* changed its editorial policy and now permitted the use of the word “gay” as an alternative to “homosexual” in the news. Previously the newspaper only used the word gay in quotes. *The New York Times* and Associated Press still banned the word gay except when meaning “happy” or when in quotes.

1984 Charles Howard, a 23-year-old gay man, was attacked by three teenagers while walking home from church on July 7. The assailants kicked and beat him and threw him in a stream, where he drowned. The boys bragged to their friends and were arrested. They were convicted on the charge of manslaughter, a crime that legally implies that they did not act in malice.

1985 Rock Hudson announces that he has AIDS. He dies later the same year.

1985 President Reagan publicly mentions the AIDS virus for the first time, in response to a reporter’s question at a press conference.

1986 The Reagan Administration Budget Director James Miller stated that the treatment and care of persons with AIDS was a state and local concern — not a federal one.

1987 On October 11, the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights drew over 500,000 people, making it the largest civil rights demonstration in U.S. history. This date became National Coming Out Day.

1987 The Names Project first unveiled the AIDS Memorial Quilt on the Capitol Mall in Washington, D.C. At that time, the Quilt covered the area of two football fields. Today, the Quilt is too large to be displayed in its entirety in any one place.

1988 The 10th Annual National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays conference took place.

1988 The Episcopal Diocese of Newark, New Jersey became the first church in the country to support ministers and congregations who condoned and blessed relationships between gay and lesbian couples.

1990 The Hate Crime Statistics Bill passed through Congress in February. Previous legislation required the collection of data on crimes motivated by racial, ethnic, or religious prejudice. This new law also required that data be collected on crimes motivated by prejudice against people of differing sexual orientations.

1990 At the 101st Annual Conference of American Rabbis, it was decided that gay men and lesbians would be accepted as rabbis. The resolution states that “...All Rabbis, regardless of their sexual orientation, be accorded the opportunity to fulfill the sacred vocation which they have chosen.”

1992 The University of Iowa extended its health benefits to the domestic partners of lesbian and gay employees. The University of Chicago soon followed suit.

1992 Canada joined the vast majority of other NATO countries permitting military service by lesbians and gay men.

1992 Voters in the state of Colorado pass Amendment 2, which prohibited any legal protections for gay and lesbian persons. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down the amendment in 1996.

1993 The first large study of female sexual orientation found that there was a strong genetic component to homosexuality and heterosexuality, as reported by researchers at Boston University and Northwestern University.

1993 By a narrow margin, voters in San Francisco rejected a city-wide partnership ordinance that would grant legal recognition to the relationships of gay men and lesbians.

1994 The first-ever school district-sanctioned gay youth prom is held in Los Angeles.

1995 Coors Brewing Company and Walt Disney Company announce they will offer health benefits to domestic partners of their gay employees. Allstate Insurance changes its policies to offer joint coverage to same-gender homeowner couples.

1996 The Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would have prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace, narrowly fails in the U.S. Senate in a vote of 50-49. It is the first time a vote on lesbian and gay civil rights has ever been before the full Senate.
1996 President Bill Clinton signs the Federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), denying same-sex couples the right to have their unions/partnerships recognized by the federal government.
1997 Ellen DeGeneres comes out in her U.S. TV sitcom.
1997 A Virginia court permits lesbian adoption.
1998 Maine rescinds the state’s gay non-discrimination statute.
1998 Matthew Shepard brings hate crimes against gays to the forefront of the news. The 21-year-old gay college student in Wyoming was beaten, tied to a fence, and left to die.
1999 Billy Jack Gaither was murdered because of his sexuality on February 19.
1999 Actress Hillary Swank receives an Academy Award for her portrayal of Brandon Teena in “Boys Don’t Cry.” Brandon was a female to male transsexual who was murdered in 1993.
2000 Vermont’s Civil Union bill was signed into law.
2000 Suspects in the Billy Jack Gaither and Matthew Shepard cases were found guilty of murder and given life sentences in prison.
2000 Fifteen-year-old Anthony Colin wins a court battle in California after being denied the formation of a Gay Student Alliance group in his high school.
2000 For the first time, the U.S. census attempts to estimate the number of same-sex (“unmarried partners”) households.
2001 A federal judge upholds Florida’s ban on adoptions by gays and lesbians.
2001 Appearing on TV with Pat Robertson, the Rev. Jerry Falwell blames gays and lesbians (among other groups) for contributing to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.
2001 In San Francisco, Diane Whippel dies after being mauled by two dogs outside the apartment that she shared with her partner, Sharon Smith. The dogs belonged to Whippel’s next door neighbors, who did not try to prevent or stop the attack. Smith filed a wrongful-death suit against the neighbors, in part to hold them accountable for their actions but also to challenge California law, which said same-sex partners have no legal standing to file such suits. The court permitted Smith to file her suit; both Knoller and Noel were convicted of murder.
2002 Comedian and actress Rosie O’Donnell publicly comes out in a television interview.
2002 Finland grants same-sex couples the same legal rights as heterosexual couples.
2002 A Philadelphia court struck down a 1998 ordinance that recognized city employees’ “life partnerships,” claiming the ordinance “unsurped” the power of the state to regulate marriage.
2002 The Ohio Supreme Court ruled a same-sex couple can adopt a last name they created for themselves, reversing the lower court’s decision.
2003 Texas Gov. Rick Perry signs the state’s version of the Defense of Marriage Act, denying same-sex couples the right to marry or receive any benefits of marriage.
2003 Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Penn) compares homosexuality to polygamy, incest and adultery when commenting on the sodomy case being heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.
2003 The U.S. Supreme Court overturns the Texas sodomy law in a highly publicized case (Lawrence et al. v. Texas). The Court determined the law was unconstitutional based on infringement of citizens’ privacy in their home.
2003 CNBC host Michael Savage is fired after making homophobic remarks to a man who called into his television show.
2003 Canada allows same-sex couples the right to marry.
2003 Rev. Gene Robinson becomes the first openly gay man to be confirmed a bishop in the Episcopal Church USA.
2004 The Massachusetts Supreme Court rules in favor of the right of gay and lesbian couples to marry.
2004 12 U.S. states amend their constitutions to ban same-sex marriages.
2005 Illinois becomes the 15th U.S. State to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
2005 Maine becomes the 5th and final New England state to ban discrimination against LGB persons.
2005 South Africa becomes the 5th nation (following the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, and Canada) to allow same-sex couples to marry.

** Adapted from a timeline originally compiled by the Aggie Allies program at Texas A&M University. Included here with their kind permission.