

# Mapping Transgender History

University of Minnesota and Transgender Oral History Project, part of The Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies



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## INTRODUCTION

History of transgender, transexual, MTF, FTM, and queer peoples is exceedingly significant towards understanding transgender rights, advocacy, and pro-trans policy.

The history of transsexuality and transgender has been significantly impacted by incorrect assumptions and perceptions of normal sex and gender behaviors. The Transgender Oral History Project (TOHP) as part of the The Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies within University of Minnesota Libraries works to give voice back to transgender people, who have repeatedly had their voices ignored, through the medium of oral history.

This research has focused on the task of creating a comprehensive timeline for transgender history in the United States. For any movement it is essential to know where you are from, to know where you are going. Outlined in this document are the major transgender history events, along with influential people, and historical changes to the language of transgenderism.

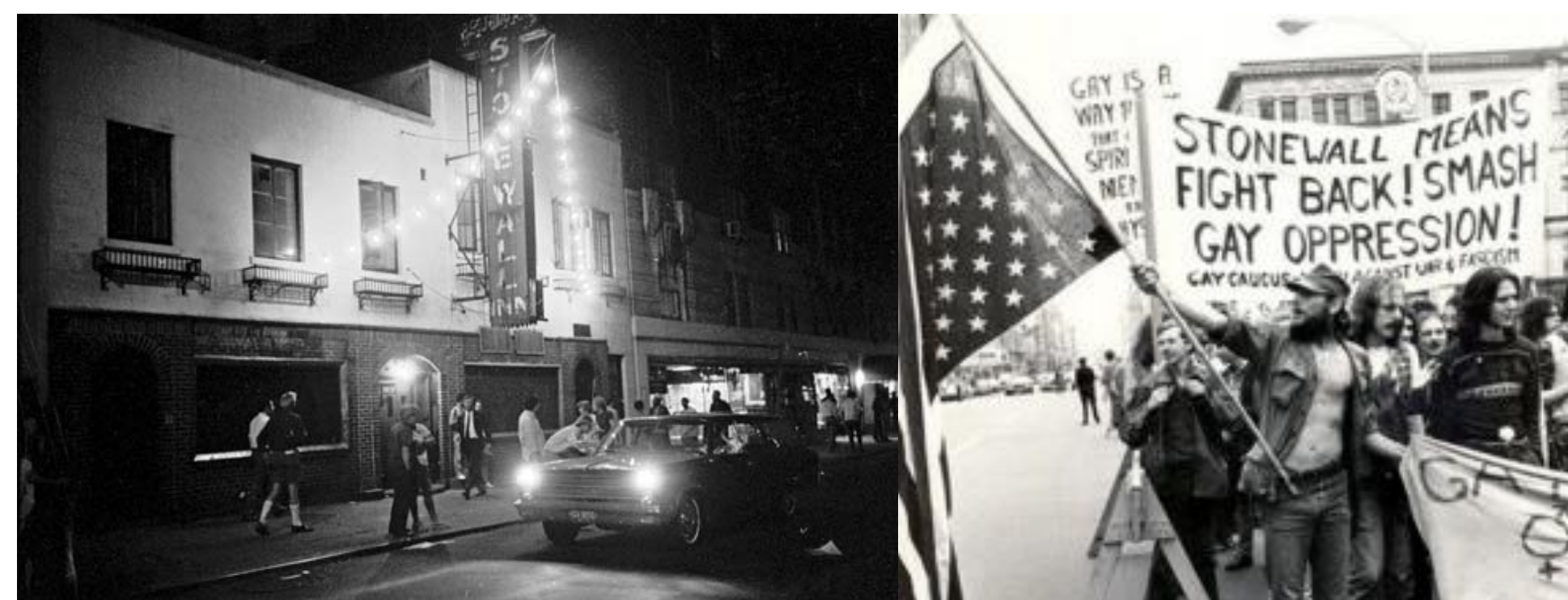


Figure 1

Figure 2

## POWERFUL VOICES

“With so many seeking to erase transgender people -- sometimes in the most brutal ways possible -- it is vitally important that those we lose are remembered, and that we continue to fight for justice.” - Transgender Day of Remembrance founder Gwendolyn Ann Smith

“I would like them to understand that we are people. We're human beings, and this is a human life. This is reality for us, and all we ask for is acceptance and validation for what we say that we are. It's a basic human right.” – Andreja Pejic, Australian model

“I believe much more in love and heart. That's much bigger [than] to see what you have in the middle of your legs.” – Lea T, Brazilian Fashion Model

“Being LGBT is innovative, in and of itself. In a hetero-normative world, we've managed to be here, collectively sharing our resources, struggles, successes and our visions for a more just and compassionate world.” – Geena Rocero, named one of the Transgender Pioneers



Figure 3



Figure 4

## MAJOR TIMELINE EVENTS

**1952** – Christine Jorgensen became the most famous transgender person in the world when news of her “sex change” surgery in Copenhagen, made global headlines. Jorgensen was the first transgender person to receive significant media attention who was from the United States

**May 1959** – Cooper’s Donuts, late-night coffee house frequented by drag queens, and male hustlers, many of which were people of color, police entered the coffeehouse and arbitrarily started rounding up the patrons, the rest of the customers resisted en masses and the incident lead to fighting in the streets, mass arrests, and ensuing chaos.

**April 1965** – Dewey’s lunch counter started refusing to sever young customers wearing “nonconformist clothing”. Customers rallied to protest. April 25<sup>th</sup> three teenagers refused to leave after being denied service in what is noted as the first act of civil disobedience over anti-transgender discrimination.

**1966** – Compton’s Cafeteria Riot, Tenderloin District of San Francisco. Compton’s 24hr cafeteria’s management became annoyed by a noisy young crowd of drag queens and called in the police to roust them. A surly police officer grabbed the arm of one of the queens trying to drag her away when she threw a coffee in his face. Melee erupted with plates, trays, cups, silverware, and tables being thrown. The occupants of the restaurant moved into the streets where vandalism and street fighting broke out.

**June 1969** – Stonewall Riots, NY’s Greenwich Village. The riots inspired the formation of Gay Liberation Front cells across the United States. Riots broke out at the Stonewall Inn after a familiar occurrence of police raids when the crowd of people escalated and opposed the police action. The riots lasted a few days.

**The most militant phase of the transgender movement for social change is considered to be from 1966-1969**

**1972** – Sweden Legalizes Gender Reassignment. First nation in the world to allow citizens to legally change their sex.

**1975** – Minneapolis adopted an ordinance barring discrimination on the basis of “having or projecting a self-image not associated with one’s biological maleness or one’s biological femaleness.” The policy was the first in the nation to specifically protect LGBT people in employment, labor union membership, property ownership, property rental, enrollment in schools and use of public services and accommodations (like bathrooms).

**1977** – Trans woman Renee Richards wins her New York Supreme Court case against the U.S. Richards is allowed to play tennis as a woman

**1999** – First international Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), one year after the murder of Rita Hester, the day is observed to honor her and other victims of anti-trans violence

**2010** – Gender Identity is listed in the federal Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statement of federal job postings, and employment protections are extended to Transgender federal employees

## IMPORTANT PEOPLE

**Pre 19<sup>th</sup> Century – 1897**, Magnus Hirschfeld, a pivotal figure in the political history of sexuality and gender, cofounded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, typically regarded as the first organization in the world to effectively devote itself to social reform on behalf of sexual minorities.

**1931** – Dora Richter underwent the first documented male-to-female genital transformation surgery, arranged on her behalf by Hirschfeld

**1964** – Reed Erickson establishes Erickson Education Foundation (EEF). Erickson funded the medical-legal-psychotherapeutic institutional framework within which transgender concerns have been addressed in the US for more than forty years.

**1966** – Dr. Harry Benjamin published path-breaking book *The Transsexual Phenomenon*. Benjamin argued that a person’s gender identity could not be change, and that the doctor’s responsibility was thus to help transgender people live fuller and happier lives in the gender they identified as their own.

**1993** – Transgender youth Brandon Teena is violently murdered in Nebraska, the film “Boys Don’t Cry” later tells Brandon’s story.

**1999** - Infantry soldier Barry Winchell is murdered by other soldiers after they discovered he was in a relationship with Clapernia Addams, a trans woman

**2006** – Kim Coco Iwamoto becomes highest elected trans official in the United States, on the Hawaii Board of Education

**2007** – Candis Cayne appears in ‘Dirty Sexy Money’ as the first trans woman in primetime drama

**2008** – Angie Zapata, trans teen, is murdered in Colorado. Her killer becomes the first in the U.S. to be convicted of a hate crime for violence perpetrated against a trans victim

**2008** – Stu Rasmussen is re-elected after transition as the first openly transgender Mayor in the United States, in the city of Silverton, Oregon.

**2010** – Laverne Cox becomes the first black transgender woman to produce and star in her own TV show on VH1, “TRANSform Me”

**2011** – Kye Allums becomes the first NCAA trans athlete. Kyle played Division 1 basketball for George Washington University

**2011** – Trans Woman CeCe McDonals arrested in Minnesota, LGBTQIA community rallies to support CeCe who was sentenced to 41 months in prison for stabbing a man who violently attacked her

**2012** – Kylar Broadus, founder of the Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC) is the first trans person to testify before the U.S. Senate. Kylar testifies in support of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act



Figure 5

## LANGUAGE CHANGES

**1910** – Magnus Hirschfeld coins the word *Transvestite* in his publication, *The Transvestites*, the first book-length treatment of transgender phenomena.

**1949** – The first documented use of the word *Transsexual* in an article by D.O. Cladwell, “Psychopathia Transexualis”, but the word was popularized by Dr. Harry Benjamin in the 1950s, and became widely known as a result of the spectacular publicity give to the 1952 surgical “sex change” of Christine Jorgensen.

**Early 1990’s** – People started to take back the word “queer”, which had been used derogatorily for homosexuality. When the word was reclaimed many started calling themselves *Genderqueer*, often used to refer to people who resist gender norms without “changing sex”

**Throughout the 1970’s and 1980’s** a “transgenderist” was most likely somebody born with a penis who lived socially as a woman

**~1990** – The word “transgender” first started to acquire its current definition as a catchall term for all nonnormative forms of gender expression and identity

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Figure 13



Figure 6

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Figure 10

Figure 11

Figure 12