

a chronology of U.S. lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender history

The chronology below documents the pervasiveness of LGBT issues, struggles, and contributions since the beginnings of U.S. society, from the time of the first European invasions of North American territory, to surges in visibility in the late 1960s, to the gains and new obstacles experienced in the twenty-first century.

Terms appearing in bold indicate they are entry titles (though in some instances are in abbreviated form). Other cross-references appear in bold following most chronicled events.

Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

Various **Native American** groups accept same-sex sexual practices and treat with respect males who take on traditional female roles and females who take on traditional male roles. (*See also Native American Religion and Spirituality; Two-Spirit Females; Two-Spirit Males.*)

Many British, Dutch, French, and Spanish colonial invaders disapprove of and attack **Native American** gender and sexual practices and identities, while also taking Native land, spreading disease among Native Americans, and disrupting Native cultural practices. Despite attempts to destroy Native traditions, gender diversity remains an important part of many Native American cultures through the nineteenth century. (*See also Colonial America; Colonialism and Imperialism.*)

Some free and enslaved Africans in the New World and some British, Dutch, French, and Spanish colonial invaders engage in same-sex sexual activities. High male-to-female sex ratios in some

colonies and African and European cultural traditions contribute to these practices. (*See African Americans; Colonial America; Interracial and Interethnic Sex and Relationships; Slavery and Emancipation.*)

White colonists are both attracted to and repulsed by Africans and Native Americans of the same sex. Some white men rape and commit other acts of sexual violence toward African and Native American men. (*See Colonial America; Interracial and Interethnic Sex and Relationships; Race and Racism; Slavery and Emancipation.*)

1566 Spanish military authorities in Florida execute a French interpreter named Guillermo, who lives with a local Native American man and is accused of being a “great Sodomite.” (*See Interracial and Interethnic Sex and Relationships; Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Law and Policy.*)

Seventeenth Century

At least nineteen men are prosecuted and five are executed for sodomy (anal sex) from the early seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth century. Many more individuals are charged with lesser offenses or are not prosecuted because a sodomy conviction requires penetration and allegations generally have to be substantiated by at least two independent witnesses. (*See Colonial America; Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes*

against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Law and Policy.)

Only a few women in the American colonies are charged with engaging in same-sex sexual acts. Perhaps reflecting how women's sexuality is often taken less seriously than men's, the punishment is less severe than the death penalty for male same-sex sex. (See **Colonial America; Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Law and Policy.**)

Throughout the era of slavery, white men continue to rape and commit other acts of sexual violence toward enslaved African American men. (See **African Americans; Interracial and Interethnic Sex and Relationships; Race and Racism; Slavery and Emancipation.**)

1610 The Virginia Colony passes the first law against sodomy in the American colonies. Like the English "buggery" statute on which it is based, the law makes sodomy a capital offense. Other colonies enact similar legislation in the decades that follow. (See **Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Behavior.**)

1624 Hanged for making sexual advances toward his indentured steward, ship captain Richard Cornish of the Virginia Colony becomes the first person known to have been executed for sodomy in the British colonies in America. (See **Colonial America; Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Law and Policy.**)

1629 On the long voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, "5 beastly Sodomitical boys" are discovered on an English ship. Upon arrival in Massachusetts, they are sent back to England, along with colony representatives to explain their crime to English authorities. (See **Colonial America; Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Law and Policy.**)

In Plymouth, Virginia, **Thomasine/Thomas Hall**, who claims to be both a man and a woman, is brought to court to determine her/his "true" gender. The colony's governor agrees with Hall and requires her/him to wear items of clothing associated with both men and women. (See also **Transsexuals, Transvestites, Transgender People, and Cross-Dressers.**)

1642 In the first documented case of a woman prosecuted for same-sex sexual relations, Elizabeth Johnson, a servant in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, is found guilty of "unseemly practices betwixt her and another maid" and severely whipped. (See **Colonial America; Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Law and Policy.**)

William Bradford describes an outbreak of sodomy and other sex offenses in the Plymouth Colony. (See also **Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Behavior.**)

1646 Convicted of a second sodomy offense, Jan Creoli, a "negro" in the New Netherland Colony, is executed by being choked and then "tied to a stake, and faggots piled around him" and set afire. (See also **Colonial America; Interracial and Interethnic Sex and Relationships; Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Law and Policy.**)

1649 In Plymouth, Massachusetts, two married women, Mary Hammon and Sara Norman, are accused of "lewd behavior each with [the] other upon a bed." Perhaps because Hammon is only 15 years old, the charges against her are dropped. Slightly older, Norman is required to confess her "unchaste behavior" publicly. (See **Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Behavior.**)

1652 Joseph Davis of New Hampshire is fined and made to admit his guilt to the community for "putting on women's apparel." (See **Transsexuals, Transvestites, Transgender People, and Cross-Dressers.**)

1653 The Reverend **Michael Wigglesworth**, a Puritan divine, writes in his diary about being tormented by feelings of affection and lust for the male students he tutors at Harvard University. (See also **Colonial America; Protestants and Protestantism.**)

1655 The New Haven Colony becomes the only American colony to enact a sodomy law that explicitly criminalizes sexual acts between women, an offense which is made punishable by death. (See **Colonial America; Sodomy, Buggery, Crimes against Nature, Disorderly Conduct, and Lewd and Lascivious Law and Policy.**)