

GLSEN

**SOLIDARITY
WEEK**



Undoing the Whitewashing of LGBTQ+ History

The history of LGBTQ+ rights activism is incredibly diverse, yet many mainstream narratives center the experiences of LGBTQ+ people with privileged identities.

This resource aims to serve as a starting point for undoing the whitewashing of LGBTQ+ history, and to encourage you to learn more about the contributions of people from historically marginalized identity groups. Whitewashing is a term used to describe the ways in which certain, privileged narratives erase the experiences and perspectives of historically marginalized people. This results in LGBTQ+ history that only reflects the experiences of people with privileged identities.

This Solidarity Week and year-round, GLSEN is committed to safe and affirming schools for ALL LGBTQ+ K-12 students, not just some. This guide offers activities, discussion questions, and action steps for folks who are interested in undoing the whitewashing of LGBTQ+ history.

The activities in this guide are intended to be used in a group setting, such as a classroom or GSA, to learn more about intersectional contributions to LGBTQ+ history. The research topics listed below are just a starting point. If there's a particular topic you're curious about, feel free to do some searching on your own!

Topics to research:

This list includes some diverse facets of LGBTQ+ history of which you may not be aware. Each link goes to an article about the listed item, but there's lots more information out there about these and other topics. If you want to do additional research, you can look up the listed items online, or you can try reaching out to real people to learn more. School or public librarians, university professors, and museum curators can be great resources, and they may be willing to share their expertise or offer book recommendations on various topics. You can also find great resources, videos, and infographics on social media!

- **Global History of Nonbinary Identities**
- **Asian Pacific American Activism in Queer History**
- **The Intersection of LGBTQ+ History and Disability**
- **William Dorsey Swann, America's First Drag Queen**
- **LGBTQ+ People in the Harlem Renaissance**
- **Kiyoshi Kuromiya**
- **LGBTQ+ Resistance Against Police**
- **José Julio Sarria**
- **Stonewall Riots (Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and Stormé DeLarverie)**
- **STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries)**
- **The Black Panther Party and Gay Liberation**
- **Gloria Anzaldúa**
- **Miss Major Griffin-Gracy**
- **Philadelphia Pride Flag**

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Activity ideas:

- Divide into groups within your GSA and have each group research one of the topics above, and create a short slideshow about the topic. Then, come together as a large group and share each group's presentation. Alternatively, you can select an individual or group to present on one topic each week, rather than having a longer session with a lot of presentations.
- Make a poster, infographic, or **zine** about any (or all) of the topics above. You can use posterboard and markers or an online tool like **Canva** to create your poster! Ask your teacher, GSA advisor, or school librarian if you can display your work in their room or in the library.
- As a group, identify a historical topic or era of interest. Each person pick a different LGBTQ+ community to research, and craft the story of that time from their perspective. Share with each other, and discuss what you noticed about the differences in each story.

Discussion questions:

- Come up with some examples of ways that history has been whitewashed. These don't have to be LGBTQ+ specific. Why do you think these whitewashed narratives have been popularized? Who do they serve?
- What are stories you've been told about LGBTQ+ history? Where did you hear those stories? What are stories that you want to make sure are told about LGBTQ+ experiences happening in your lifetime?
- Who are LGBTQ+ leaders in your community who you look up to? They can be famous people or people you know. Discuss why you look up to them, and what contributions they've made to LGBTQ+ movements.

Action steps:

- Once you begin to understand the diversity of various historical movements, both students and educators can find opportunities to undo whitewashing within your school curriculum. If you're a student and you feel that your teacher is excluding a particular identity or perspective when discussing a topic, consider raising your hand to ask about how historically marginalized people played a role. If you're an educator, take some time to review your curriculum and see if there are areas where you can take more diverse perspectives into consideration.
- Host an LGBTQ+/BIPOC history panel at your school. If you're part of a GSA, this can be a great way to collaborate with other student organizations to organize this event. You can reach out to librarians in your area, or try to bring in someone from a local university to talk about LGBTQ+ history in general, or to provide insights on a more specific topic.
- With your GSA, set up a collaborative meeting with other identity-based student groups to come up with a shared understanding of history. What intersections can you find between the groups?