

# **OUT OF THE PAST**

## **Teachers' Guide**

A publication of GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network

## Table of Contents

Why LGBT History?	2
Goals and Objectives	3
Why <i>Out of the Past</i> ?	3
Using <i>Out of the Past</i>	4
Historical Segments of Out of the Past:	
Michael Wigglesworth	7
Sarah Orne Jewett	10
Henry Gerber	12
Bayard Rustin	15
Barbara Gittings	18
Kelli Peterson	21
OTP Glossary	24
Bibliography	25
<i>Out of the Past</i> Honors and Awards	26

## Why LGBT History?

It is commonly thought that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) history is only for LGBT people. This is a false assumption. In our current age of a continually expanding communication network, a given individual will inevitably be interacting with thousands of people, many of them of other nationalities, of other races, and many of them LGBT. Thus, it is crucial for all people to understand the past and possible contributions of all others. There is no room in our society for bigotry, for prejudiced views, or for the simple omission of any group from public knowledge. In acknowledging LGBT history, one teaches respect for all people, regardless of race, gender, nationality, or sexual orientation.

By recognizing the accomplishments of LGBT people in our common history, we are also recognizing that LGBT history affects all of us. The people presented here are not amazing because they are LGBT, but because they accomplished great feats of intellect and action. These accomplishments are amplified when we consider the amount of energy these people were required to expend fighting for recognition in a society which refused to accept their contributions because of their sexuality, or fighting their own fear and self-condemnation, as in the case of Michael Wigglesworth and countless others.

**By recognizing the accomplishments of LGBT people in our common history, we are also recognizing that LGBT history affects all**

Traditionally these people, their accomplishments, and the important shaping factors in their lives have been left out of history. In omitting them, we perpetuate an inaccurate and faulty historical record, and secure a faulty and inaccurate future. A person who does not see himself reflected in the great achievements of history cannot believe in his or her ability to become historically worthy. LGBT students are

constantly being fed a history, which has no place for them, and are indirectly learning that the society in which they live has no use for their efforts. We can overcome the fear and hopelessness of these students by acknowledging that yes, society does value their achievements, and yes, we are ready for whatever they have to offer in their life. In teaching the place of LGBT people in history, we are securing their place in the history yet to be told.

For non-LGBT students, such lessons can also erase the fear and discomfort that results when meeting people from a group one knows little about, and can ensure that respect replaces bigotry and misinformation.

In learning about histories that have previously been left out of the canon, students are learning that history is in large measure made by the people who do the telling. Teachers have often found it difficult to explain that history is a collection of documents, stories, and versions of stories, and that no history can be said to be whole and complete. Through analyzing and evaluating primary documentation and considering its historical context, students will gain a richer sense of the tapestry of history, of the factors affecting historical players' lives, and of the positive and negative impact of social movements. This sense is increased as *Out of the Past* brings history into the present, allowing students to see that history is being made today; and that they, themselves, are a part of it.

On the following page, we've listed some simple and clear goals and objectives for the lessons contained within this guide.

## Goals and Objectives:

- To encourage critical thinking in a historical context.
- To allow students to view the creation of history through the use of original documents and interviews.
- To create an excitement about history as a series of evolving stories and discoveries, which involve and affect real people.
- To spark discussion on, and a critical examination of, the history which students have been taught.
- To teach a fuller, more accurate history.
- To enable students to see individuals as proactive in society, and to see themselves as potential contributors to history-in-the-making.
- To create an open learning environment in which all people can see themselves reflected in history.

## Why *Out of the Past*?

*Out of the Past* illuminates hidden facets of the American past, while bringing history to life for today's students. From the beginning of American history, homosexuality and love between people of the same sex have been part of the social and political landscape. This documentary tells some of the many stories that have been left out of our textbooks, while following the story of a young American who is making history today. Individual portraits from nearly 400 years of American history illustrate the changing place of LGBT people in U.S. society, and highlight the echoes of the past in our current experience.

This teaching guide provides additional historical context for each of the stories in the documentary, and suggests how segments of the film can be incorporated into lessons about various periods of U.S. history. You may also wish to use *Out of the Past* in its entirety, to prompt a broader discussion.

As you will see in the suggested lesson plans, which follow, each of the stories in *Out of the Past* provides a variety of insights into the social and political history of a particular era. These individual stories also lend a human face to the issues of the period, making the past more vivid for students in a way they may find surprising. Taken together, the individual profiles in *Out of the Past* offer a moving overview of a key current in U.S. history: how "private" issues shape public lives, and the impact of those lives upon the evolving American story.

Some may dismiss consideration of a person's intimate life as an unnecessary diversion into private matters. Yet in the case of those individuals featured in *Out of the Past*, their emotional and physical attraction to people of the same sex indelibly marked their lives, shaping their careers and affecting their place in the world and their effect on society. As historian John D'Emilio remarks in the prologue to *Out of the Past*, "to not acknowledge this as a shaping fact in their life is to mis-write and mis-read history."

*Out of the Past* is only a beginning, introduction to a few of the individuals and issues raised by a burgeoning field of an academic study. This teaching guide offers suggestions for further research, and provides an introduction to some of the many resources available in print and on the internet.

## Using *Out of the Past*:

*Out of the Past* (OTP) has been used in a variety of school settings, as well as for community screenings, events, festivals, and small house parties to educate peers and colleagues.

In this Teachers' Guide, we will share ideas and insights gathered from teachers, counselors, and administrators from around the country who have used the film in their schools. OTP can be viewed in selected segments related directly to current topics in class curricula, or in its entirety, either by a whole school assembly or by an individual class.

It can be helpful to establish some group discussion guidelines prior to discussions of the video. The purpose of these guidelines is to create a climate in which participants can engage in a discussion where different perspectives and opinions can be expressed and all participants can freely explore their own and other perspectives in a respectful manner.

### Some Suggested Discussion Guidelines:

Listen and learn

Maintain confidentiality

Talk respectfully

No personal "put downs"

Everyone sets own boundaries for personal disclosure

Explore new ideas

Respect different experiences

Take turns

(Students may themselves add other guidelines)

### Methods for Use

**Using smaller segments related directly to class curricula-Many teachers have suggested that for classroom purposes the film is most effective when used in segments. Some things to consider:**

- a. Design a lesson focusing on one theme or question (please see the themes listed inside, and the subsequent suggested lessons). Before introducing topics related to LGBT history, you should decide which questions you would like to raise, and how those Questions fit into your curriculum. There are many different ways to use *Out of the Past*. For instance, you may wish your students to walk away with an increased sense of tolerance, or you may wish them to go away with different perspectives on American history. An example: one teacher used the film for a history elective, in a unit on the Puritans. From reading several original documents (Jonathan Winthrop's speech about the Puritans, and Jonathan Edwards' sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God") the class could see "the Puritans' heavy concern for communal conformity." After viewing the Wigglesworth piece in the film, they discussed "the policing of sin and desire in such a conformist community." In

this way, the film was used to support ongoing class work, integrated into the course, rather than presented as a separate, unrelated issue.

- b. If this is the first time your students have ever been asked to talk about LGBT people in the classroom, they may have many questions. Some students with LGBT family members may feel uncomfortable, and may be afraid of being put on the spot. Some students may be questioning their own sexuality. Also, the tenor of the conversation may have a bigger impact on them than one might imagine. Prepare for students' responses by reading through our lists of the questions students are likely to ask. While you may want the students to focus on the subject area, they may raise more general questions. GLSEN makes a wide variety of general use materials available on our website, at [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).

**Large assembly / whole school screening – Schools may also choose to use *Out of the Past* in a large group or assembly setting. Such occasions, which may be inspired by LGBT History Month (October) or a Diversity Day-type program, can afford the opportunity to initiate a community-wide dialogue. Some suggestions for schools considering large screenings include:**

- a. Encourage administrators and colleagues to view the film together, before the large screening, and discuss what kinds of conversations you'd like to have with the students afterwards. Mutually arrive at goals for the presentation. For instance, you may decide that the film will encourage tolerance and a broader general understanding of people living in a complex society. Think about how that can be brought back to your school, and how you envision its impact on your students.
- b. Share copies of the film with other opinion leaders such as district superintendents, school board members, or PTSA leaders. *Out of the Past* makes its own case for its usage, and ensuring that key players understand the film and its content can build support and derail angry or hostile reactions driven by surprise or misinformation about the program.
- c. Be sure to allow plenty of time for questions and answers following the screening of the film.
- d. Some students may approach teachers following the screening. They are likely to express a wide variety of responses. Some may be bewildered, some fascinated. Some students may wish to continue the conversation; some may wish to express their belief that homosexuality is repugnant, or their religiously grounded beliefs that it is immoral. While no teacher wants to stifle conversation, they should be prepared to lay down some guidelines, such as "Be respectful of others," and, "Don't assume that everyone agrees with you." Likewise, offensive language, graphic gestures, and questions of an inappropriately explicit nature remain off-limits. A school's standards for behavior, and the prohibited use of pejorative language, should remain constant and clear. Academically meaningful dialogue cannot occur if name-calling—such as "faggot" or "dyke"—is allowed. Furthermore, faculty should prepare themselves to point out students' use of stereotypes, as opposed to legitimate information, as they come up situationally. This conscientiousness is necessary to encourage critical thinking, and to keep the classroom atmosphere safe for all.
- e. Conversations may continue in the hallways, cafeterias, and other public spaces in the school. While most students seem deeply affected by the film, and sympathetic to the subjects, others may express their discomfort by making harsh or hurtful comments. Where possible, the faculty should discuss- in advance of the film- a response policy for incidents or comments. If school personnel are uncomfortable, and choose to ignore or laugh-off certain comments or insults, a very specific message- that intolerance is acceptable- is sent to the students. Every time a teacher chooses to differentiate between other forms of bigotry (or epithets) that are not tolerated and homophobic comments that are, anti-gay attitudes are reinforced. Studies show that the average American student hears anti-gay epithets in the school 26 times a day. Otherwise well-meaning teachers may have a "boys-will-be-boys" response to the use of words like "fag". You may wish to ask your colleagues to consider the position of students who may be extremely isolated and lone in dealing with these issues, and how the attitudes of their peers and adults in their environment affect them

and their self-esteem. Or, you may wish to point out to your colleagues that they already hold the value that name-calling and bullying are unacceptable, and already have the skills, language and policies to address these problems. It is consistent for them to treat “fag” or “dyke” just they would a racial or religious slur.

- f. Students should be made aware that many of their peers might be LGBT, or that their peers' parents, siblings or family members may be. Cite the statistics that while studies vary greatly, it is possible that out of every ten students, at least one is, or will be, LGBT self-identified. It is even more likely that out of every ten students, at least one will have an LGBT parent, sibling, or close family relative.

### **General lessons for showing the whole film as a unit:**

- 1) If you are doing the whole film over the course of several days, ask your students to write journal entries regarding their ideas about LGBT people before seeing the film, each day after viewing a segment, and at the end, to see if their feelings have changed.
- 2) After seeing the film: use the board as a writing surface, ask your students to list out loud words that people associate with LGBT people. Explain that this is an exercise in understanding social attitudes, and that they should “brainstorm” words; not that they necessarily believe these words are accurate, and that they should “brainstorm” words; not that they necessarily believe these words are accurate. Then, using the other side of the board to make a second list, ask your students to identify traits that they think made it possible for Kelli Peterson, Henry Gerber, and Bayard Rustin to do what they did, and to be effective in their respective time periods.
- 3) Have a general discussion. Ask your students to identify people outside of the school who are publically LGBT identified (including celebrities, such as Elton John, Alice Walker, or K.D. Lang; or this could include family members such as aunts, uncles, or cousins). Then ask the students: Do you think that these people should have equal civil rights?

### **Outside of Class:**

- 1) Ask students to identify historic figures from other civil rights movements, then research and write comparisons between a protagonist in the film and one of these figures.
- 2) Many other take-home activities within this guide are era-oriented, but are easily adapted into more general lessons.

## Historical Segments of *Out of the Past*: Background and Suggestions for Use

### Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705)

#### Historical Context:

The founders of the Puritan New England colonies hoped to create societies run on biblical principles, where the church would be the center of each town's life and the study of scripture would guide individual behavior. Devout members of Puritan communities spent a great deal of time contemplating their relationship to God, and whether or not they were among God's chosen "elect". The weekly sermons of local preachers exhorted congregants to contemplate their spiritual state. Lesson-books in schools employed simple rhymes to reinforce moral and Biblical teachings. The sermons of famous ministers were often published so that more people could benefit from their words.

#### MAIN THEMES:

- Puritans and Puritanism
- Group vs. individual (pressure conform)
- Separation of church and state (or lack thereof)

In 1662, a Puritan minister in Malden, MA, published a long and fiery poem about the Day of Judgement titled *The Day of Doom*. The epic poem was composed in simple rhyming stanzas to facilitate memorization. It contained vivid descriptions of the Last Judgement, the point at which the Puritans believed each person's sins would be evaluated and his or her soul eternally condemned or exalted. Michael Wigglesworth's rhetoric was meant to scare his readers into behaving well in the interest of preserving their eternal souls. The poem quickly became a best seller; the first eighteen hundred copies sold within a year and the book remained continuously in print until the 1800's.

**Many stanzas in *The Day of Doom* refer to the futility of attempting to keep secrets from God. For example:**

- 1) No hiding place can from his face sinners at all conceal/Whose flaming eyes his things doth spy/and darkest things reveal.
- 2) Deeds of the night shunning the light, which darkest corners sought/To fearful blame and endless shame are there most justly brought.

For Wigglesworth himself, these verses has a particular resonance, for he was keeping a secret from his friends, neighbors, and congregants which he feared would seal his fate on the Day of Judgement. Wigglesworth was attracted to other men.

Michael Wigglesworth graduated from Harvard College in 1651 and thereafter continued his studies towards becoming a minister. Like many Puritan clergymen, Wigglesworth kept a diary to record his daily activities, meditations on faith, and his battles with lust and temptation. Wigglesworth, however, was afraid to record his feelings for other men even in these private diaries. Wigglesworth had earthly, as well as divine, punishment to worry about. His society was ruled by laws derived from an interpretation of scripture that prescribed harsh penalties for offenses such as worshipping false idols. The laws of Massachusetts and other British North American colonies made sexual relations between men (called "sodomy") capital crimes, punishable by death. In 1655, the New Haven Colony revised its laws to include sexual activities between women as a capital crime as well. Historical records show that executions for sodomy occurred in Massachusetts, New Haven, and Virginia in the first half of the seventeenth century.

The passages in Wigglesworth's diary about his same-sex attractions are written in a secret code, which allowed him to be explicit about his feelings and fears. On April 5, 1653, Wigglesworth wrote, "I find my



spirit so exceedingly carried with love...that I can't tell how to take up my rest in God." Even after Wigglesworth got married in 1655, his attraction to men continued. The day after his wedding Wigglesworth confessed to his diary: "I feel stirrings and strongly of my former distemper even after the use of marriage...which makes me exceeding afraid." Wigglesworth's carefully encoded confessions were not revealed until the 1960's, when historian Edmund Morgan decoded the passages and published a full version of the diary.

Today, excerpts from Wigglesworth's poem are sometimes used in college courses to illustrate the tone of New England Puritanism in the 1600's. But Wigglesworth's seldom-mentioned private torment offers a deeper understanding of his motivations for writing about the eternal torment of damnation.

**Source:** Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.*, New York: Meridian Books, 1992.

### IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Why might someone with these feelings and fears have taken it upon themselves to write a book like this? What did he gain by hiding? What did he lose?
- 2) Would Wigglesworth's contemporaries have read and relied on the "Day of Doom" if they had known about his desires? Is it possible that some of his readers experienced same-sex attraction themselves? What effect would "Day of Doom" have had on those readers?
- 3) What difference does it make to know the history of an author, in our perception of their work?
- 4) What beliefs or norms do people take for granted today? What are some of the other restricted forms of behavior then (such as drinking on Sundays, not going to church) that are not as restricted today? Or vice-versa?

### Suggested assignments:

#### Social Studies

- 1) Place within the context of the Puritans. Discuss the policing of sin and desire, in a community with such a heavy concern for conformity. Suggested reading: Jonathan Winthrop's speech on "a city upon a hill"; and Jonathan Edwards's sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God". Social Studies classes may wish to put into context of other periods and movement within American history, when there have been conflicts between the individual and society. What are some of the conflicts between community norms and the individual? Why might this be an especially American tension?
- 2) Your students may wish to learn more about Wigglesworth or the Puritans, and can be encouraged to do their own research.
- 3) Ask your students to think about groups today, which are self-contained, have their own ethics, or sanctioned behavior. Examples could include Hasidic Jews, members of Alcoholics Anonymous, professional athletes or other well-known groups. Ask them to consider what it means to believe in a particular way of living, based on a philosophy or set of beliefs. Then ask them to research a modern era group and compare and contrast it with the Puritans, in an essay or presentation form.

- 4) More specifically, you may ask your students to research and present how different religions address homosexuality, treat their homosexual members, or how they do or do not talk about sexual orientation. Some religious organizations have been internally divided over this issue, with some congregations condemning homosexuals, while others are inclusive and conduct LGBT weddings; and many have LGBT ministers or rabbis. Ask your students to pick two major religions and study their stances and history with this issue.

## **English literature**

- 1) Raise a discussion about the writing code. What does it mean? What did Wigglesworth have to gain or lose by writing in code? Who or what was he hiding from?
- 2) Sermons are a unique form of literature. In order to understand more about the form, develop their expository writing skills, and understand more about Wigglesworth the individual, ask your students to read selected sermons (the Edwards sermons mentioned above, Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, or others) and then to write a sermon on a topic they feel strongly about. This could be any subject, ranging from a major world issue to a local or school matter. Explain that a sermon requires the writer to build their persuasive arguments on a combination of reason, fact, and anecdotal/personal experience. After your students have established a topic (you may ask them to write down the subject or topic sentence on a blank piece of paper), ask them to take the opposite stance of what they believe, and write a powerfully persuasive argument. Have your students present the best pieces in class (as sermons are meant to be read aloud). After completing the first round, ask your students to go back, and write an argument along the lines of their original thesis, trying to make it as persuasive and compelling as their first writing.

## Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909)

### Historical Context:

In the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women's place in America society was undergoing profound changes. Educational opportunities were expanding – many colleges, such as Vassar, Wellesley, Smith, Radcliffe and Barnard, were founded in the 1880s – and women were increasingly involved in social work, reform efforts, and labor organizing. For some women, these opportunities represented a chance for greater independence and the possibility of living outside of the traditional structures of marriage and family. Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, intense and loving friendships between people of the same sex were common (historians call these relationships “romantic friendships”). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some women could make these relationships permanent partnerships, choosing not to marry and establishing households with the women they loved.

#### MAIN THEMES:

- Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century New England
- Women's liberation/independence
- Censorship/first amendment rights/self-censorship
- Late 19<sup>th</sup>-century New England authors (Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Stowe)

These partnerships were most common in the Northeast, especially in New England. Women in these areas were more likely to be college-educated, employed, and to have inherited wealth from their parents. Consequently, they were better able to be independent. This was particularly true in Boston, where popular politics had allowed money or property to be left to daughters, as well as to sons. The association of these relationships with Boston was further solidified and popularized by Henry James'

novel, *The Bostonians*, which deals with a passionate female relationship, although in a negative way. Through these conduits, permanent partnerships between women became known as “Boston Marriages.”

Sarah Orne Jewett shared such a partnership with Annie Adams Fields. Jewett was a prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century writer whose most famous work, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, gained her considerable fame and a place in the canon of American letters. Henry James praised the book for being “so absolutely true—not a word overdone—such elegance and exactness.” A reviewer of Jewett's work wrote in 1880 that she had already, at the age of 31, begun to attract a devoted audience with her numerous and widely-published short stories. Much of Jewett's writing centered on friendships and love between women, a theme that was a reflection of the way she led her life.

In 1882, Jewett began a relationship with Fields, a Boston philanthropist and socialite, which would last until Jewett's death in 1909. Such Boston Marriages were not uncommon in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century among educated, well-off women. While it was clear to the world that the women in these couples were everything to each other, society did not generally think about the sexual possibilities of their relationships. Nor is it clear how the women themselves defined their connection. While the correspondence between Jewett and Fields, and between many other such couples, are full of intimate endearments and references to physical closeness, it is impossible to tell the exact nature or extent of their physical relationship. It is clear, however, that many women in such relationships saw direct parallels between their unions and heterosexual marriage.

Over the course of Jewett's life, society's attitude toward Boston marriages began to change. The new science of psychology denounced same-sex love, equating it with arrested development and mental disorder. The growing suspicion of Boston Marriages affected Fields' efforts to publish their correspondence after Jewett's death in 1909. While Fields was quite comfortable having their loving correspondence published for the world to see, her editor insisted that readers might “get the wrong idea”. As a result, the true nature of Jewett and Fields' relationship was hidden from view until historians began reading and quoting from their original letters, rather than the edited versions.

**Source:** Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1981).

### IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) What is a “Boston Marriage”? Is this the same as being a lesbian? What makes a “lesbian”? See “Questions Students May Ask” for ideas of how to steer this discussion.
- 2) Why were Jewett’s letters to Fields hidden or altered? Is it right that they were so? Think about current issues of censorship and free speech.
- 3) What factors limited women’s independence before the turn of the century? What conditions are necessary precursors for women to have the option to engage in “Boston marriages” or any non-traditional relationships? (examples: the right to education, the ability to support themselves financially)

### Questions students may ask:

Students may wish to discuss whether we know if Fields and Jewett were lesbians. Discussions may focus on the relationship between identity and action and the differences between loving relationships and sexual orientation/identity. You may wish to introduce the notion that language and identity change over time, and the difficulty that presents for historian. (See Jennings’ *Becoming Visible*, or *Making History*, or Chauncey, *Gay New York*.) You may also look at the writing of Fields and Jewett and ask your students if it matters whether they had sexual relations or not. It is clear that their love for each other was of utmost importance; and the impact on their lives came about when that love came to be seen as abnormal.

### Suggested assignments:

- 1) How did society’s attitude change against Boston marriages? Research the origins of the science of psychology. What did it mean to have one definition for “normality”? What other medical/psychological beliefs have changed over time? “Examples: performing hysterectomies after menopause, believing the brain to be located in the heart, believing that races “inferior” to Euro-Americans had smaller brain capacity.) How is it that to be non-normal is to be an aberration, or to be considered “sick”? What is the difference between “normal” as an average, a “normal” as a standard everyone must meet? Students may wish to research other times when this notion has been used to justify certain behavior through the construction of social codes.
- 2) Compare the writing of Willa Cather and Jewett, paying particular attention to the use of gender. In one letter to Cather, Jewett wrote, “The lover is well done as he could be when a woman writes in the man’s character...you could almost have done it as yourself-a woman could love her in the same protecting way-a woman could even care enough to wish to take her away from such a life, by some means or other,” Ask your students to read the dialogue between Cather and Jewett in their letters.
- 3) Place Jewett and Fields into the context of such writers as Hawthorne, Emerson, Thoreau, and Harriet Beecher Stowe: what kind of authors were these? What sort of themes permeated their lives and their work? Emphasize independence and the importance of the individual living an independent, just and moral life, free from the oppressive constraints of society.
- 4) Examine Jewett’s poetry: what were her strong central themes? How might being a woman, or having a relationship with a woman, have affected Field’s writing in terms of theme and style?

## Henry Gerber (1892-1972)

### Historical Context:

While we often think of the 1920s as “The Roaring Twenties,” a time of jazz, flappers, and a general atmosphere of permissiveness, the reality was more complicated. While lesbian and gay communities began to take shape in urban centers, they were still vulnerable to punitive laws, and there was a backlash against the political and social liberalism of the period. In the wake of World War I and the

#### MAIN THEMES:

- America circa 1920
- Civil rights (lack thereof)
- Censorship/first amendment rights

Socialist revolution in Russia, the U.S. Government began cracking down on political radicalism. In response to immigration from eastern and southern Europe and the migration of African Americans to northern cities, the Ku Klux Klan had a renaissance, casting itself as the champion of “Americanism” and “traditional values”.

In 1923, a 31-year-old named Henry Gerber began a pioneering effort to better the position of gay men in U.S. society. Gerber had served in the Army, spending three years in Germany in the wake of World War I. In Germany, Gerber had witnessed the rise of a large, organized movement to secure civil rights for homosexuals. The successes of that growing movement gave Gerber a new sense of possibility, and he returned home to Chicago determined to begin a parallel effort in America.

However, few others were willing to take the risks that such activism entailed. Even though gay communities were growing in Chicago and other cities during the 1910s and ‘20s, official repression could still come down swiftly and heavily when authorities chose to act. It took Gerber a year to find six men to join him in his project. Finally, in December, 1924, Gerber and his allies founded the Society for Human Rights, America’s first-known gay rights organization.

Gerber began publishing a newsletter called *Friendship and Freedom* in order to spread the word about the work of the Society. Shortly thereafter, the police raided Gerber’s home, arresting him and confiscating all of his papers, including his personal diary. Gerber and the other members of the Society were jailed for three days, though no charges were filed against them.

As a result of his arrest Gerber lost his job, and the Society disbanded. Gerber, however, continued his efforts on behalf of homosexuals, writing letters to the editor under the pen name “Parisex”. In 1932, an essay by “Parisex” entitled “In Defense of Homosexuality” ran in a periodical called *The Modern Thinker*.

Despite his pioneering work, however, succeeding generations of LGBT activists knew little of Gerber. The police raid of 1925 effectively erased him and the Society for Human rights from the public record. All of Gerber’s papers were destroyed, and only one photograph of the activists survives. In 1952, when a new “homophile” organization called the Mattachine Society began publishing *One*—the first national LGBT publication—Gerber wrote to inform them of his earlier activities. Finally, in 1963, a full account of his work appeared in the magazine. Earlier in the 1990’s, the Gerber-Hart Library was established in Chicago.

Gerber was at the vanguard of a growing awareness among LGBT people that their problems stemmed not from their sexual natures but from societal oppression. And it was this very oppression that has prevented most modern-day activists from learning of and drawing inspiration from Gerber’s work.

**Source:** Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: Meridian Books, 1992).

**IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- 1) How do we think of the 1920's? How accurate do you think that image is? Imagine people of the future discussing the 1990's. What would they remember as the tone of the decade? How accurate do you think that is?
- 2) World War I allowed many young men to see the world, bringing back new and radical ideas, which flourished in the 1920's. However, the 1918 Russian Revolution scared many authorities into political conservatism. How were these two trends in opposition? How does Gerber's story epitomize this clash?
- 3) Henry Gerber was the first in the U.S. to attempt to start a gay rights organization. What risks did he take to do so? What were the consequences? What risks do you take to do what you think is right? How much would you risk to fight for your freedom?
- 4) Why do you think Gerber's efforts failed? Do you think he was wrong to start such an organization at that time and place? What factors contributed to the demise of the Society for Human rights? Could history have turned out differently if Gerber had pursued a different approach?

**Suggested Assignments:****Social Studies**

- 1) Henry Gerber lost his job as a postal worker because of his work in gay activism. Do you think that being a gay man affected his ability to be a conscientious postal worker? Why or why not? Is losing your job still a possible consequence of coming out? (Yes, in some states and cities.) Research on-discrimination laws in your state or school district. What do they say about sexual orientation? Is there protection for LGBT teachers? How about LGBT students? For a more in-depth or on-going assignment, find out more about the series of lawsuits filed recently by teachers and students against their school districts for the district's failure to protect them. Articles and information on these is available on the following websites: [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org) and [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org).
- 2) See what you can find out about the gay rights movement in Germany in the 1910's and 1920's. Who supported this movement? What was the fate of the movement? What factors helped or hindered it in Germany in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century? Who started it? What was the purpose? What happened to its members?
- 3) Research the people who started civil rights efforts of some kind in your community (against racism, sexism, ageism, disability discrimination, heterosexism, etc.) How and when did they do it? What were the obstacles and the results?
- 4) Henry Gerber's story has been hidden because of the loss of his own documentation. How has the media changed since 1920? How does our present abundance of communication and documentation affect how history is written? Who participated in the writing of history then? Who participates now? Pick a person, event, or organization in a specific time period. What documents can you find about your choice? Are they media documents or original documents? How would his story change or not change if there had been the intense media coverage then that there is now?

**English/Language Arts**

- 1) Gay men had to be very careful about revealing their sexuality, so Gerber had a very difficult time finding other men to join the Society for Human Rights. Have your students try to find another student with their same birth month, imagining that revealing which month they were born in could have them expelled or even put in jail. As a writing assignment, ask your students to talk about how it felt to hide information that they could not control, and to think about how easy or difficult it was to find others. Draw the parallel to Henry Gerber's experience.
- 2) Write a newsletter as a class, or discuss creating a newsletter, based on a single class-chosen theme, or on many themes. What kinds of problems arise in creation? How is the newsletter going to be distributed? Who will read it? What is/will be the reaction to the newsletter? Discuss the parallels or differences between the class project and Gerber's newsletter, *Friendship and Freedom*. What risks did Gerber take/what risks did the class take in putting their views in writing? What might happen if a teacher or principal disagrees with a student?

## Bayard Rustin (1910-1987)

### Historical Context:

Non-violent action was the hallmark of the Civil Rights Movement in the United, and students of American History often learn that the renunciation of violence was a key to the success of the movement's tactics. But those same students are unlikely to learn about Bayard Rustin, a man who was instrumental in developing those tactics. Civil rights activists, writer, and pacifist, Bayard Rustin, was a key figure in the struggle for racial and social justice from the 1940s on. Despite his role as a key advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., however, and his influence in the decisive years of the Civil Rights Movement, Rustin's story has been largely hidden from history. Bayard Rustin was a gay man, and because of prejudice against homosexuality, most Americans do not know who he was or what he accomplished.

#### MAIN THEMES:

- Civil Rights Movement
- Civil disobedience
- Group vs. individual
- Racism, heterosexism
- Radical social change

Rustin was raised as a Quaker by his grandparents, and was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. In the 1930s he became a member of the Communist Party, but left the Party when its leaders forbade him to advocate racial integration in his work as an organizer. He was a Conscientious Objector (his beliefs and faith did not allow him to support war) during World War II, refusing to serve in the military because of his religious

commitment to non-violence. His anti-war efforts landed him in jail for two years. Tireless in his quest for pacifism and equality, he was arrested again and again for civil disobedience and for his efforts to undo racist "Jim Crow" laws in the South. But one arrest was different. In 1953, Rustin was jailed in Pasadena, CA, on a "morals charge": he was accused of having sex with another man in a car. Rustin struggled to keep his job with a pacifist organization after the arrest. That arrest would haunt him for the rest of his career.

During the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Rustin traveled to Alabama to advise Dr. King, counseling him on the strategies and tactics on non-violent resistance. In the wake of the eventual triumph in Montgomery, Rustin became one of King's most trusted advisors and a highly influential strategist for the movement.

While Rustin helped to orchestrate King's rise to power, his sexual orientation made King and the movement vulnerable to attack. In 1960, King and Rustin planned to stage a demonstration at the Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles. Adam Clayton Powell, the Democratic Congressman from Harlem, feared the demonstrations would undermine his own power within the party. Powell called King and told him to cancel the demonstrations, threatening to "reveal" that King and Rustin were having an affair. There was no affair, but King, fearful, cancelled the demonstrations, and Rustin resigned, forced out of the movement he had helped create.

For three years, Rustin lived in a kind of exile. During that time, white opposition to the Civil Rights Movement intensified, and the South erupted in violence. Finally, in June of 1963, the leaders of the movement decided it was time to organize a massive march on Washington. Movement leaders knew that Rustin was best qualified to organize the march, but feared his sexuality would be used to discredit the movement. As a compromise, they appointed labor leader A. Philip Randolph to serve as director of the march, and he, in turn, appointed Rustin his deputy.

But civil rights opponents were not fooled. The movement's leaders' fears were realized when Strom Thurmond, the segregationist Senator from South Carolina, spoke on the Senate floor, with Rustin's arrest record in hand, declaring that the march was being organized by a "pervert." This time, however, movement leaders stood by Rustin. In August of 1963, a quarter of a million Americans gathered in Washington, demanding that Congress put an end to officially sanctioned racism. The march was the



watershed event in the history of the Civil Rights Movement, leading to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and Rustin was largely responsible for its success.

During the later 1960's, the non-violent Civil Rights Movement was eclipsed by the radical tactics of the Black Power movement. Rustin continued to urge non-violent resistance, and emphasized the primacy of both economic reform for blacks and coalition politics with sympathetic groups. Because of his moderate views, Rustin was often dismissed and vilified, by both the new black leadership and by white leftists. These philosophical differences and the homophobia of some within the Civil Rights movement kept Rustin from taking his rightful place within the ranks of honored civil rights pioneers. Rustin was not even invited to the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the March on Washington in 1973. Towards the end of his life, Rustin began to give vocal support to the gay rights movement, granting several interviews in which he discussed his sexuality. Bayard Rustin died in 1987.

**Source:** John D'Emilio, "Reading the Silences in a Gay Life" in Mary Rhiel and David Suchoff, eds., *The Seductions of Biography* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

### IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) What were the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement? Were these ideals reflected in the actions of the Movement leaders? How?
- 2) Why did Rustin agree to resign? Would you have made the same decision? (Discuss group vs. individual; the movement as a whole was more important to him than his own involvement.) Are people still afraid to be "outed"? What are the consequences?
- 3) What would it have been like to have been either African-American or gay in the 1950's? What would it have been like to be both? Discuss legal rights, discrimination, social prejudice, job/housing opportunities, education opportunities, etc.
- 4) Do you think being LGBT impairs one's ability to lead? What are the qualities of a leader? What made Rustin a successful leader?
- 5) Why do we remember King and not Rustin? How is history created/written? Who determines whom we remember as a leader?

### Suggested Assignments:

#### Social Studies

- 1) discuss civil disobedience as a form of protest. Is this an effective or ineffective form of rebellion? Ask your students to look at other individuals and groups who have used civil disobedience or pacifism as a catalyst for change. Discuss the Civil Rights Movement, Gandhi, and the Quakers. Have your students identify something that they would change about their world, from as small as elimination a cafeteria menu item to as large as ending all wars. Ask them how they would go about advocating this change. Ask them to design a protest using the tenets of Civil Disobedience (For information on these tenets, read *Civil Disobedience*, by Thoreau). Share these ideas in class and then ask the students if they would consider doing any of these. Discuss possible consequence of their actions, the balance of power in their lives, and the magnitude of their own power. Why would they or wouldn't they go through with this action? What consequences might they have faced as a part of the Civil Rights Movement? What power did the participants have? What additional risks did Bayard Rustin face? Ask the students if they would have become a part of the protests; why or why not?

- 2) What makes a movement? How do leaders emerge? What makes a good leader? Suggested reading: *Parting the Waters*, by Taylor Branch.
- 3) For students with a stronger background in European and American History and Current Events or who would like to research: How do the ideals of the Civil Rights Movement compare to the ideals of other revolutions (American, French, Russian, Feminist Movement, Gay Rights Movement, South African Anti-Apartheid Movement)? What are the similarities? Ask your students to discuss why these revolutions and movements happened and why they continue to happen. Do you think these revolutions have succeeded or failed? How?
- 4) Research the record of Congressional Representative John Lewis. Find the stances he took for ENDA (the Employment Non-Discrimination Act) and against DOMA (the Defense of Marriage Act). Read Lewis' speeches from the floor. How might knowing Rustin have influenced Congressman Lewis?

### English/Language Arts

- 1) How do you think Rustin was influenced by the ideals of his upbringing (discuss the ideals of Quakers)? You may want to talk about individuals, opening a discussion on how individuals are shaped by their surroundings. This discussion could culminate in a writing assignment in which students are asked to trace one belief that they have: Why do you hold this belief? Where did you learn it? Do you think that you might have believed something different at a different time or in a different place? What if you were another race, gender, or sexual orientation? How might these factors color your outlook and change your beliefs?
- 2) Read Rustin's writing. What do you think was the quality, which most defined him? Who did Rustin identify with? What can we learn about Rustin as a person from this writing? Does reading Rustin's writing change your opinion of him? Ask your students to pick a leader to ask one question of, then to write a response in the manner of this leader, considering time period, area, age, educational status, etc. What was difficult in writing the response? How accurate do you think the response is?

## Barbara Gittings (1932- )

### Historical Context:

When most people think of the 1950s, they imagine the world of “Ozzie and Harriet,” or “Leave it to Beaver,” a booming consumer society with growing suburbs returning to “normalcy” after World War II, a country united in the Cold War struggle against the Soviet Union. The reality, of course, was much more complex, and LGBT people in particular had a far different experience of the decade. Along with the Cold War concern about Soviet spying and influence came an almost hysterical worry about LGBT people as a security risk for the United States, and as a sign of moral degeneracy more generally. In the late 1940s and 1950s, the federal government took drastic measures to discover and fire lesbian and gay men who held government jobs. In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued an executive order that

#### MAIN THEMES:

- America circa 1970
- Employment discrimination
- Visibility of minorities vs. “passing”
- Gay Liberation
- Societal attitudes affecting psychological classifications

Prohibited the employment of known homosexuals by the federal government. State and local governments did the same. The 1950s and early 1960s were a time of fear and persecution for many LGBT people.

At the same time, however, some people were beginning to organize and fight back, despite the risks. In 1950, an organization called the Mattachine Society was founded in Los Angeles. In San Francisco a few years later, a group of women founded the Daughter of Bilitis (DOB). These organizations

were known as “homophile” organizations, and they began to attempt to change society’s ideas about lesbian and gay men. They also provide a chance for people who were often isolated to find one another. Soon, chapters of these organizations began to form in other cities.

Barbara Gittings was a key figure in this early homophile organizing, leading the way in promoting the visibility of LGBT people in U.S. society. Her activism grew out of personal experience, and a refusal to accept society’s condemnation of homosexuality. As a student at Northwestern University in 1949, Gittings was coming to terms with her feelings for other women. With no one to talk to about it, she went to the library to try to learn about homosexuality. Every book that she found referred to homosexuality under “sexual perversion,” or “abnormal” sexuality. “Everything I found was so alien, so remote,” she said some years later, “It didn’t give me any sense of myself or what my life and experience could be.” Gittings spent much of the rest of her life forging a new path for LGBT people, creating a new visibility to make sure that other people would have models to look to as they first explored their homosexuality.

Gittings dropped out of Northwestern and returned home in disgrace, unable to tell her family what was troubling her. In 1956, on a trip to California, Gittings met the leaders of the DOB. In 1958 Gittings founded the first East Coast chapter of the DOB, and eventually became the editor of *The Ladder*, the DOB’s magazine. As editor, she pushed for greater visibility, adding the words “A Lesbian Review” to the title, and eventually persuading group members to come out in photographs published on the cover. Her vision for the magazine brought her into conflict with the DOB’s governing board, whose members were not convinced that this was yet right for such tactics. Gittings lost the editorship in 1966.

Gittings had already begun a new phase of her work, however. In partnership with Frank Kameny, who had lost his government job because of the policy banning homosexuals from federal employment, Gittings began publicly picketing government offices in 1965, demanding civil rights for LGBT people. In some of the first public gay-rights demonstrations ever, Gittings, Kameny, and others picketed the White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department in Washington, D.C., as well as Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Gittings also took on the mental health establishment, running exhibitions at American Psychiatric Association (APA) conferences to illustrate the full range of LGBT life to doctors who had been trained to think of homosexuality as an illness. Her work was part of a larger effort that led, in 1973, to the APA’s removal of homosexuality from its list of psychiatric disorders.

During the 1960's, American society was changing radically. Student activists demonstrated against the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement made significant gains, and feminism challenged ideas about women's place in society. All of these changes affected the early gay-rights movement as well. The homophile movement, while groundbreaking and brave, had generally taken a buttoned-down approach to organize. The spirit of the '60s, however, began to inspire a more radical approach. On June 29, 1969, the New York City police made a routine raid on a gay bar in Greenwich Village called the Stonewall Inn. LGBT people knew at that time that police harassment and arrest were risks they took every time they entered a gay bar. However, the patrons of the Stonewall Inn fought back that night, starting four nights of demonstrations and disturbances that have come to be known as the "Stonewall Riots." Stonewall is seen as the spark that ignited a new phase of gay activism, known as Gay Liberation, more radical and confrontational than the early work of the homophiles. LGBT Pride events are held in many cities in June to commemorate the Stonewall riots.

Gittings continued her activism in the wake of Stonewall, helping to found an organization called the National Gay Task Force (known today as the National LGBT Task Force or NGLTF). Gittings also focused on work with the American Library Association, in order "to counter the lies in the libraries about homosexuality, so that gay people will no longer be assaulted or bewildered or demoralized by almost everything they read on the subject," as she had been as a college student. Throughout her life, Gittings took chances that created new public images of LGBT people, providing a human face for others to look to as they came to central premise of Gay Liberation before an audience of millions: "Homosexuals today are taking it for granted that their homosexuality is not at all something dreadful – it's good, it's right, it's natural, it's moral, and this is the way they're going to be!"

## IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) Why was Gittings fighting to be visible? Some LGBT people wish to live there quietly and unobtrusively, "passing" as straight, or without drawing attention to their sexuality. Is "visibility" the right strategy for LGBT people?

Why would "passing" seem like a horrible option to some people, but not to others?

Would LGBT people have achieved the equality and rights, which they have, without "visibility"? How could people achieve civil rights without visibility?

- 2) Why were people afraid to join the picket lines, give their names to reporters, or have their photos taken? What were the threats posed to their lives and careers?
- 3) Is employment discrimination legal in the U.S.? (Yes, people have been fired for appearing to be LGBT, without legal protections or recourse.) Is it legal in your state or country? (try accessing [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org), [www.nglftf.org](http://www.nglftf.org), and [www.lambdalegal.org](http://www.lambdalegal.org) for information on pending lawsuits and current policies.)
- 4) Until 1976, the Federal government could refuse to hire, or to fire people for no other reason than their perceived homosexuality. Although the policy was not enforced after 1976, the law remained on the books until the Clinton administration.

Do your students believe that it is fair that LGBT people may be fired, or not hired, by companies for no other reason than their perceived sexual orientation? Do they believe that government has the right to legislate what private corporations do? If not, what do they believe about laws legislating fairness regarding sex, race, religion, disability, etc.? How can these groups achieve equality if fairness cannot be legislated by the government?

- 5) How is the increased visibility and action of Gittings and her cohorts similar to or different from other struggles taking place in the 1960s? (Civil Rights, Anti-War, Black Power, Feminist empowerment, etc.)

### Suggested assignments:

- 1) Research the legality of job protection/discrimination in your state/city/county in regards to sexual orientation.
- 2) Study the history of psychological “treatments” for homosexuality. Compare such treatments to the modern “reparative therapy” movement. What are the similarities and differences? What are the “success” rates?
- 3) Gittings states “I don’t want to see young people go through what I went through...in school...”Contemplate what it would be like to be the ONLY one of any type of person in a school environment, without any reference to people like you, even in history books (examples: imagine being the only Jewish person without any notion of accomplishments of Jewish people in history; or the only Black person without learning about the history and success of African-American people; or the only male person, without any learning about the accomplishments of men in society).
- 4) Research the Daughters of Bilitis and old copies of *The Ladder*. This might be accomplished through your local LGBT Community Center, if it has an archive; or through a university collection. Compare and contrast with other Civil Rights groups and literature.
- 5) Interview an older member of the LGBT community, as part of an oral history project. Find out how her/his life has been affected by the movement, how times have changed. Ask about connections with family members, community, and the role of “being out” and identity. Ask what, if anything, about his/her personal path (or education) this person wished could have been different. To find someone who would like to be interviewed, try contacting the local LGBT Community Center; usually they will be listed in the phone book, or in the yellow pages under “LGBT.” Students can interview various older people, and then compare their results. Ask the students to write up these interviews in both Q and A style, and in paragraphs, as expository writing, where they describe their own revelations. For example of oral history see the Foxfire series or books by Studs Terkel.
- 6) Compare and contrast the rhetoric of the Homophiles and Gay Liberationists.

## Kelli Peterson (1979- )

### Historical Context:

There are thousands of Gay/Straight Alliances (GSAs) and other gay-related student groups in secondary schools from Alaska to New Hampshire that have equal status with other student clubs in their schools. A number of other groups have a kind of “second-class citizenship” in schools where the administration won’t allow them to meet at the same time as other clubs, for example, or to make announcement over the P.A. system or post flyers on school bulletin boards. GSAs attempt to create safer environments

#### MAIN THEMES:

- American circa 1995
- Student rights
- First amendment rights
- Contemporary LGBT movement

LGBT youth in high schools and provide support for those for those facing harassment. Ultimately, the hope is that all youth will have equal access to education free from harassment or intimidation.

In the fall of 1995, Kelli Peterson and a friend were talking about the difficulties they faced as LGBT teenagers at East High School in Salt Lake City, Utah. Wouldn’t it be great, they thought as they compared stories, to have a place where we could meet regularly and talk about this stuff? A place where we could feel safe and just be ourselves with our

Friends? They asked a teacher to serve as the faculty advisor for a GSA, and sought a classroom space for regular meetings. By December, their request had made the pages of the local papers. Ultimately, their attempt to create a safe space launched a statewide controversy and catapulted Peterson into the national spotlight, as she and her friends fought for the right to meet on campus like any other student group.

At East High, school officials balked at Peterson’s initial request. Some parents, teachers, and administrators were concerned that allowing a GSA would constitute an “endorsement” of homosexuality, and would be a forum for “recruiting” other students to become LGBT. The school administration turned to the state attorney general for a legal opinion. He determined that the school was legally required to allow the students to meet under the terms of the Federal Equal Access Act. The Equal Access Act, passed in 1984, applies to any public secondary school that receives federal money. If such a school allows even one “non-curricular” student club to meet, the school cannot then deny any other student group equal status on the basis of the topic the group focuses on. “Non-curricular” clubs are groups that do not relate directly to the courses offered by the school; a Spanish club is curricular, but Students Against Drunk Driving or Young Republicans or Democrats are non-curricular.

The School Board and the State Legislature met to discuss options available to them in order to keep Peterson’s group from meeting. At the time, Peterson was baffled by the response to her request: “What has made it a big deal is the senators have blown this out of proportion,” she said. “All we are asking for is one hour a week in a classroom and faculty sponsor.” Ultimately, the school board banned all “non-curricular” clubs at local public high schools, and then began to redefine selected clubs as “curricular,” in order to allow them to meet. The East High Gay/Straight Alliance now rents space at the school after school hours, but has no official standing at the school. They cannot announce meetings or post notices of their activities, and many students at East High have no idea that the group exists. Student members of the East High GSA are suing the Salt Lake City school board. Their case will go to trial in 1999.

### IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION:

- 1) What does it mean to not see yourself reflected in history?
- 2) Kelli expresses early in the film that she was “taught that gay people were evil, horrible people and that you’d never want to be one of them.” From what sources do we learn our attitudes about different types of people (parents, TV, religion, etc.)? Have you ever had a belief about a type of person that changed once you had real-life experiences with them?

- 3) Have you ever had a secret you couldn't tell people? (Perhaps something which would separate you from others?) How did that make you feel? Have you ever felt like people wouldn't like you if they knew the "real" you?
- 4) Why did the idea of a Gay-Straight Alliance cause so much disruption? Why do you think the decision was made to ban all of the non-curricular clubs at the school? How might students in clubs other than the GSA have reacted? Is a GSA different from other school clubs based on beliefs or interests? Why or why not? Does your school have a GSA? If not, how might it be received?
- 5) Early in the film, Mr. and Mrs. Peterson refer to the "nuclear family" and how they were raised (in the 1950's) with certain expectations. What do they mean? What are you students' expectations of their peers' families? How has the idea of the "family" changed over time?
- 6) What would be the concerns of a teenager in telling friends or parents about their sexual orientation? What advice could you give a peer who was struggling with the decision to tell their friends and family?
- 7) Why is there an "s" in GSA? What is the role of straight students in a GSA, or straight allies in the LGBT rights movement at large? Why would heterosexuals get involved? What do they risk? What can they contribute (energy, talent, credibility in larger society, support for LGBT people who have had straight friends, family, etc. reject them...)?

### Questions students may ask:

"Isn't homosexuality an abomination?" You may answer that some religions suggest so; and that some people may believe so, on the basis of those religious convictions. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that there is a wide range of beliefs, even within the major religions, regarding the status of homosexuals. Suggest your students research the topic.

A student may ask, "How do these kids know they're gay?" [When does sexuality become fixed?] Some students may suggest that Kelli's choices are a "phase" or a "stage". You may answer that a number of studies have been done on the topic, and the majority of them suggest that the vast majority of self-identified LGBT people knew of their feeling at an early age, and generally spent a great deal of time fearful of letting anyone know. At the same time, you may mention that some studies suggest that sexuality is not necessarily a completely fixed thing, and that for many people it may evolve over time. Remind them, nonetheless: should one student, or set of students with a particular type of desire, be targeted for discrimination, isolation, or suspension of privileges that other students take for granted? How would this make you feel? You may simply state that a public school is a place where everyone is entitled to an equal opportunity, an equal chance at learning.

### Suggested assignments:

- 1) What is "separation of church and state"? Research the history of this phrase and the idea behind it. How could the actions of the Salt Lake school board be seen as a violation this concept?
- 2) The case of the Salt Lake City GSA went before a judge in November, 1998 and continues to be contested. Ask your students to research its current status, as well as the status of GSA's everywhere. (Suggested topics: how many states have GSA's, or laws protecting LGBT students? What precedents have been cited in court rulings regarding LGBT students' right to meet? Much of this information is available on the GLSEN website at [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).)

- 3) Write on this topic: How might Kelli Peterson's actions be construed as "American" or "un-American"? American history? How have they affected each other? How do these issues apply to the right of a GSA to meet? Explain to your students that following the trajectories of controversies, and understanding their connection to the present day, comprises much of the work of historians; it's how history is made.
- 4) Discuss student rights, free speech, and the right to assemble. How have these issues arisen in American history? How have they affected each other? How do these issues apply to the right of a GSA to meet? Explain to your students that following the trajectories of controversies, and understanding their connection to the present day, comprises much of the work of historians; it's how history is made.
- 5) What issues or battles are prominent now in the LGBT movement?
- 6) Write on the topic: has the idea of "the family" changed over time? Research: statistics on the family structure, the number of single-parent homes, media representations of families. Your students may wish to research their peers' attitudes. An interesting study would include data on the families of students (asking how many live with two parents, siblings, non-relatives, etc.) contrasted with their own visions for, and attitudes towards, adulthood.



## OTP Glossary

### General

**Lesbian**—a woman who is emotionally and physically attracted to women.

**Gay**—a common term for a person who is attracted primarily to people of their own gender.

**Bisexual**—being emotionally and physically attracted to all genders.

**Asexual**—having no sexual attraction to either gender.

**Heterosexual**—a person who is emotionally and physically attracted to members of the other gender.

**Transgender**—not following the traditional gender roles; many transgendered people dress and live as the other gender, although some people who identify as transgendered do not consider themselves a member of either gender.

**Homosexuality**—sexual attraction to persons of the same gender.

**Abomination**—something morally wrong.

**Bigotry**—hatred and/or violence toward entire groups of people based on limited knowledge of them.

### Wigglesworth segment

**Façade**—a false outward appearance that looks real.

**Earthly punishment**—a religious term that refers to a punishment imposed by other human beings during the physical lifetime of the accused, as opposed to a punishment imposed by God upon the eternal soul.

### Jewett segment

**Philanthropist**—a person who donates money to various charities and organizations.

**Boston Marriage**—a permanent partnership between two women, including the establishment of a joint household; the phrase was used in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Gerber segment

**Blasé**—casually unconcerned.

### Gittings segment

**Homophile**—an individual or organization which supports civil rights for homosexuals.

**Passing**—being perceived publicly as something or someone contrary to actual personal identity; for examples, an African-American being perceived as a Caucasian, or a homosexual being perceived as a heterosexual.

### Peterson segments

**Neophyte**—a beginner.

**Inalienable**—unable to be taken away; in the United States, inalienable rights are rights that all citizens are entitled to under constitutional law, and it is illegal for anyone, even the government, to violate these rights.

### Rustin segment

**Sublimate**—to divert prohibited impulses, such as sexual desire or anger, into more socially acceptable activities.

**Civil Disobedience**—a non-violent form of protest which is best known for its implementation by the Mahatma Gandhi in India and Civil rights movement in America in the 1960's.

**NAACP**—National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a civil rights organization established in the 1960's.

**Segregationist**—one who believe that Caucasian-Americans and African-Americans should lead their lives separately, with separate schools, restaurants, public restrooms, water fountains, etc., and with interracial relationships and marriages prohibited by law.

## Bibliography

•The PBS *Out of the Past* Website: [www.pbs.org/outofthepast](http://www.pbs.org/outofthepast)

The official PBS website for *Out of the Past* includes a timeline highlighting events and individuals in lesbian and gay history from 1600 to the present. The timeline is divided into six sections. Each section of the timeline includes introductory text describing the place of LGBT people in American society during that era of U.S. history, and features one of the stories from the documentary. The six sections are:

**Keeping secrets 1600-1800 Michael Wigglesworth**

**Finding Love 1800-1900 Sarah Orne Jewett/Annie Fields**

**Creating worlds 1900-1940 Henry Gerber**

**Facing fear 1940-1964 Bayard Rustin**

**Taking chances 1964-1980 Barbara Gittings**

**Making history 1980-present Kelli Peterson**

Each section of the timeline also highlights between 15 and 20 events and individuals. Some entries are brief, others include a more extended discussion of an issue or even in that era of LGBT history. All entries are footnoted with a link to the source of the information. The website also has a substantial bibliography of sources and a list of other LGBT history resources on the web.

•Sources for further research

Lesbian and Gay Studies, including LGBT history, is an expanding field within academia. What began as the domain of a few pioneering scholars has become a vibrant and crowded field, and a great deal of information about LGBT history is now available to even casual researchers. The following is an introductory list of books for further research:

Berube, Allan, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in the World War II*, Plume (1991).

Chauncey, George, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, Basic Books (1995).

Faderman, Lillian, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*, Columbia University Press (1991).

Faderman, Lillian, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*, William Morrow (1981).

The History Project, *Improper Bostonians: Lesbian and Gay History from the Puritans to Playland*, Beacon Press (1998).

Jennings, Kevin, *Becoming Visible*, Alyson Publications (1994).

Katz, Jonathan, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.*, Meridian Books (1992).

Miller, Neil, *Out of the Past: LGBT History from 1869 to the Present*, Vintage Books (1995).

## OUT OF THE PAST

### Honors and Awards

Audience Award for Best Documentary, 1998 Sundance Film Festival

Audience Award for Best Documentary, 1998 Los Angeles LGBT Film Festival

Audience Award for Best Documentary, 1998 Philadelphia LGBT Film Festival

Bronze Apple Award, National Educational Media Network (NEMN)

### Reviews and Endorsements

...a startlingly good contribution to all of American History...a riveting, sensitive, well-told human story with appeal for everyone.

Ken Burns, director and producer, *Baseball* and *The Civil War*

OUT OF THE PAST should be must-viewing in every high school in America.

Marlo Thomas and Phil Donohue

A solid documentary...a dialogue between the past and present, and an emotionally textured treatise on alienation and marginalization, which is intelligent and entertaining.

Bruce Diones, *The New Yorker*

The best gay television documentary in years.

Charles Kaiser, author of *The Gay Metropolis*, *The New York Observer*

Eye-opening and moving...OUT OF THE PAST demonstrates why it earned top documentary honors at Sundance this year.

*The New York Post*

OUT OF THE PAST speaks powerfully to the high school audience. The film...provides a case study of courage in the face of intolerance. Every school's effort to celebrate diversity and promote tolerance is advanced by showing and discussing this film.

Eileen Mullady, Principal, The Horace Mann School, New York

Grade: A-. A moving testament to individual courage, as well as to the nation's cherished rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

*Entertainment Weekly*

Powerful and entertaining...demolishes the argument that gayness is not part of the fabric of national life.

*New York Newsday*

Outstanding...makes a strong case for the importance of reclaiming gays from history in giving young people a sense of identity and in breaking down stereotypes.

*Los Angeles Times*

OUT OF THE PAST should be included on the resource list of every history teacher and history textbook publisher who knows and understands the value of an inclusive curriculum.

Steve Ruzicka, Executive Director

The Association of Boarding Schools

**About GLSEN**

GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, is the leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students. Established in 1990, GLSEN envisions a world in which every child learns to respect and accept all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression. GLSEN seeks to develop school climates where difference is valued for the positive contribution it makes to creating a more vibrant and diverse community. For information on GLSEN's research, educational resources, public policy advocacy, student organizing programs and educator training initiatives, visit [www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org).