

Learning Pathway

History of LGBTQ+ Rights in Los Angeles

Recommended for Adults

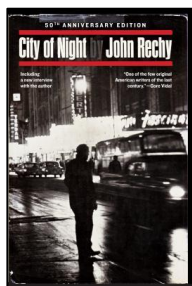
The rise of a collective effort for recognition and protection under the law by the LGBTQ+ community has a long history in Los Angeles. In celebration of the 50th anniversary of our Pride Parade, this Learning Pathway will help you explore events, places, and accomplishments that commemorate the struggles and celebrations of a community that has helped shape Los Angeles as a city, and the greater LGBTQ+ culture worldwide.

Indeed, while New York and San Francisco are central to the history of LGBTQ+ rights, Los Angeles is truly a city of firsts! While the Stonewall Uprising is often seen as the beginning of collective action for LGBTQ+ rights, Los Angeles was actually the home of the first recorded incident of protest against police actions against the community (Coopers Do-Nuts, May 1959), as well as one of the first demonstrations against police raids of bars after the Black Cat Tavern was raided on New Year's Eve, 1966. Following that event, a civil demonstration was organized by PRIDE (Personal Rights in Defense and Education) on February 11th, 1967. But even before those events, Los Angeles had the first organized LGBTQ+ rights organization (the Mattachine Society) in 1950, the first LGBTQ+ magazine (*The Advocate*, founded in 1967)¹, the first "gay motorcade," organized in 1966 to fight discrimination against gays in the military, to give a few examples. Moreover, the first use of the word Pride to refer to LGBTQ+ rights has been attributed to the aforementioned Personal Rights in Defense and Education (PRIDE) organization, founded in 1966.

The first Pride march in Los Angeles (even in the world, some say) took place on June 28th, 1970, and has been organized by the Christopher Street West Association ever since. While the first parade was attended by scarcely 1,000 people, the LA Pride parade is now a two-day event, including a festival, that draws tens of thousands of people every year. While the few paragraphs above could not do justice to the progress of LGBTQ+ rights in Los Angeles, hopefully it has given you a snapshot of the importance of the City of Angels in this regard. Below is a compilation of resources that develop a much deeper picture of the role Los Angeles played in LGBTQ+ rights.

¹ Los Angeles was also place of the first lesbian magazine, *Vice Versa*, in 1947. Interestingly, both *The Advocate* and *Vice Versa* were initially printed, in secret, out of Hollywood studios: ABC Television Studios West and RKO Studio, respectively, the workplaces of the founders.

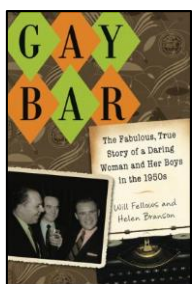
Books



***City of Night* by John Rechy**

“When John Rechy's explosive first novel appeared in 1963, it marked a radical departure in fiction, and gave voice to a subculture that had never before been revealed with such acuity. It earned comparisons to Genet and Kerouac, even as Rechy was personally attacked by scandalized reviewers. Nevertheless, the book became an international bestseller, and fifty years later, it has become a classic.”

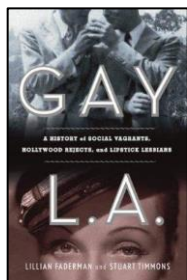
Catalog Link: <https://tinyurl.com/y6oah6fq>



***Gay Bar: The Fabulous, True Story of a Daring Woman and Her Boys in the 1950s* by Will Fellows and Helen Branson**

“Vivacious, unconventional, candid, and straight, Helen Branson operated a gay bar in Los Angeles in the 1950s--America's most anti-gay decade...In 1957 she published her extraordinary memoir *Gay Bar*, the first book by a heterosexual to depict the lives of homosexuals with admiration, respect, and love...In this new edition of *Gay Bar*, Will Fellows interweaves Branson's chapters with historical perspective provided through his own insightful commentary and excerpts gleaned from letters and essays appearing in gay publications of the period.”

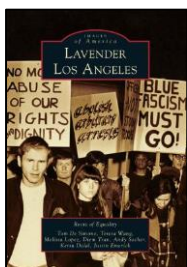
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***Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* by Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons**

“The exhortation to “Go West!” has always had a strong hold on the American imagination. But for the gays, lesbians, and transgendered people who have moved to L.A. over the past two centuries, the City of Angels has offered a special home--which, in turn, gave rise to one of the most influential gay cultures in the world. Drawing upon untouched archives of documents and photographs and over 200 new interviews, Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons chart L.A.'s unique gay history...”

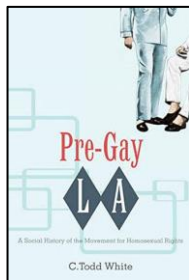
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***Lavender Los Angeles* by Roots of Equality (a grassroots LGBT organization)**

Born out of the “Lavender Los Angeles” exhibit, *Lavender Los Angeles*, uses images (mostly from the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives) to document the birth and progress of the LGBTQ+ movement in Los Angeles from its beginnings.

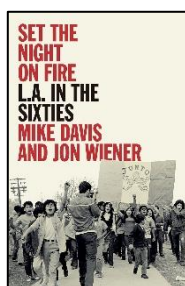
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***Pre-Gay L.A.: A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights* by C. Todd White**

“This book explores the origins and history of the modern American movement for homosexual rights, which originated in Los Angeles in the late 1940s and continues today. Part ethnography and part social history, it is a detailed account of the history of the movement as manifested through the emergence of four related organizations: Mattachine, ONE Incorporated, the Homosexual Information Center (HIC), and the Institute for the Study of Human Resources (ISHR)...”

Catalog Link: <https://tinyurl.com/y4gqshcy>



***Set the Night on Fire: LA in the Sixties* by Mike Davis and Jon Wiener**

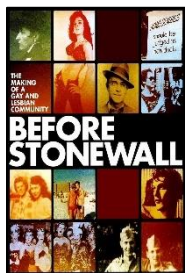
A substantial (800+pages) general history of various movements in 1960s Los Angeles, including a chapter called “Before Stonewall: Gay L.A. (1964-1970). While the other books on this list focus specifically on LGBTQ+ right history in Los Angeles, this book helps to put that activism in context of a particular place and time.

Overdrive: <https://tinyurl.com/y7wa4lmw>

Catalog Link: <https://tinyurl.com/y3jsxcph> (as of 6/11/2020, the book is still on order but holds can be placed on it)

For more books and other items, check out the special LGBT Collection at West Hollywood Library.

Video



Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community

“Traces the social, political and cultural history of homosexuality in America from the 1920s to 1969; the beginning of the Gay Liberation Movement after a police raid on Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York City; and the three-day riot that followed.”

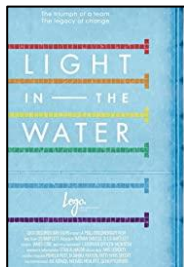
Catalog Link: <https://tinyurl.com/y5prng62>



Call Me Troy

“Profiling the life and times of one of the gay community's most visible and tenacious advocates for change, Rev. Troy Perry, *Call Me Troy* is a truly inspirational story about a remarkable and dynamic individual whose activism was decades ahead of its time.”

Kanopy Link: <https://tinyurl.com/ybkhhyxu>



Light in the Water: The Story of the First Openly Gay Masters Swim Team

“In 1982 soon after the first Gay Games, West Hollywood Aquatics registered as the first openly gay masters swim team in the world. This athletic powerhouse fought injustice in the world of competitive sports, and ultimately became a family.”

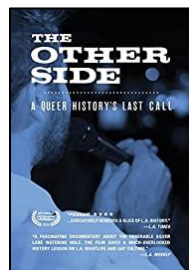
Kanopy Link: <https://tinyurl.com/y9psyp7y>



Political Animals: Pioneering Women Who Paved the Way for LGBT Equality

Winner of multiple awards, including Best Documentary at the Los Angeles Film Festival, *Political Animals* follows the first four members of the California LGBT Legislative Caucus, including former Los Angeles City Councilmember (and now member of the LAUSD Board), Jackie Goldberg, and Sheila Kuehl, current member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (3rd District), as they as they fight for equality.

Kanopy Link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycna7rhx>



The Other Side: A Queer History's Last Call: A Documentary

This film documents the history of gay Los Angeles set against the backdrop of The Other Side, a venerable piano bar in the Silver Lake neighborhood.

Catalog Link: <https://tinyurl.com/yymodrwh>

Websites

***Before Stonewall, the Queer Revolution Started Right Here in Los Angeles* by Jason McGahan**

This engaging article from the *Los Angeles Magazine* provides an ideal introduction to the historical struggle for LGBTQ+ rights in Los Angeles, covering both the events at Coopers Do-Nuts, the Black Cat Tavern, and more. <https://tinyurl.com/y5wrty92>

Curating the City: LGBTQ Historic Places in L.A.

A project the LA Conservancy to highlight landmarks of LGBTQ+ history in Los Angeles, including short films about The Black Cat (mentioned in the introduction), The Woman’s Building, and the Great/Long Hall at Plummer Park. <https://www.laconservancy.org/lgbtq>

***Mapping Los Angeles's groundbreaking role in LGBT history* by Bianaca Barragan**

A selection of places important to LGBTQ+ history in Los Angeles with short descriptions images, and a map, published at *Curbed LA*. <https://tinyurl.com/yaj65ssx>



SurveyLA: LGBT Historic Context Statement

Not a website, but a 101-page pdf document containing informative sections on topics such as the gay liberation movement, LGBT community and the media, and others on literature and art.

<https://tinyurl.com/y9cdw97e>

The LGBTQ History Project

Interviews with participants in LGBTQ+ rights efforts including those prevalent in Los Angeles including Rev. Troy Perry, Dan Kilhefner, Karla Jay, and others, including activists from New York and San Francisco as well. <https://www.augustnation.com>